Mosaics of the Self:

Kantian Objects and Female Subjects
in the Work of
Claire Goll and Paula Ludwig

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Acknowledgements

Summary

Mosaics of the Self: Kantian Objects and Female Subjects
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In this thesis, I use poetic texts by two German women Expressionist authors, Claire Goll and Paula Ludwig, to examine questions of selfhood, aesthetics and sexual difference within a Kantian philosophical frame.

The thesis is structured in two parts. In Part One, I situate the project via a critical examination of Lyotard's reworking of the Kantian sublime. I argue that Lyotard closes down the gaps within Kant's system that feminist philosophy could usefully exploit and explore. I then position German Expressionism as an alternative mode of post-Kantianism. I argue that although the male Expressionist poets break down the Kantian subject-object distinction, they continue to position woman as the "other".

There follows a brief bridging section, in which I outline work by some of the key women Expressionists, and argue that the theoretical frameworks used in Expressionist scholarship are inherently gendered.

In Part Two of the thesis, I explore texts by both Goll and Ludwig in detail. I argue that whilst the male Expressionists are concerned with dissolving male subjecthood, these writers can be read as subverting Kantian space-time to produce alternative modes of female selfhood and of the sublime.

In chapter 4, I examine Goll's disruptive exploration of a mode of embodied selfhood generated through productive play and movements of relationality.

Chapters 5 and 6 extend the theme of relationally generated selfhood by tracing the subversive use of neoplatonic and Orphic elements in a short story by Goll. In chapter 7, I show how Ludwig radically reconfigures the limits of both body and self to produce identities no longer constructed via oppositional boundaries in the manner of the Kantian subject. I conclude by arguing that the work of these authors provides feminist philosophy with productive models for rethinking immanent transcendence and relationally generated selfhood which can incorporate both difference and change.

Introduction

Journeying into the Darkness

This thesis began because of a gap, a puzzling and troubling absence. Whilst researching for a paper on German Expressionist poetry, I realised how few women writers were included in the anthologies and literary criticism dealing with this period. Else Lasker-Schüler was the only female poet whose work was included with any regularity, with the infrequent addition of a few poems by two or three other women. As I was using the work of the French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray as the frame for my research, this absence became increasingly pointed. Irigaray offers a powerful critique of woman's positioning as the "other" of man within Western metaphysics; gradually, I came to feel that women writers were the "other" of Expressionism.

Turning to more recent feminist literary criticism, I was again surprised to find that - despite the important work that has already been done to reclaim many German women writers from obscurity - the women German Expressionists did not seem to have resurfaced there either. Several more names did begin to appear alongside that of Lasker-Schüler: I found sporadic references to Claire Goll, Emmy Hennings, Berta Lask and Paula Ludwig. However, where such references did exist, they gave no sense of these writers as part of the Expressionist movement, but presented them as disconnected voices within modernity.

Indeed, alongside the absence of any adequate representation of individual women Expressionists, I became intensely aware of the detail with

which literary criticism has traced the networks and patterns of influence between the male writers - and how these accounts persistently lack any sense either of the participation of women authors in these networks, or of the links that existed between the women themselves. However, these links did exist, and they slowly began to emerge as I gathered material on and by these women writers over the next few years. Using Raabe's *Index-Expressionismus* as a starting-point, I discovered there were almost three hundred women who had published in Expressionist journals, and at least eighteen who had also had individual works published that Raabe classed as Expressionist.[1] Chapter three below gives an overview of some of these women authors, and indicates just some of the connections between them. Out of what had at first seemed a dark absence at the centre of German modernity, some powerful and imaginative female voices finally began to emerge.

My own work has focused on the women poets in Expressionism. Though I began by narrowing the field to some five authors (including Lasker-Schüler) whose work was especially striking and/or innovative, the project became focused on texts by two poets who are both far less well-known than Lasker-Schüler: Claire Goll and Paula Ludwig. Not only did the richness and originality of their work seem to demand a detailed engagement, but their texts - despite their extremely different writing styles - also seemed to overlap in interesting and productive ways. Biographical and bibliographical information on both these writers and their texts will be offered in chapter three. However, for the time being, it is worth noting that Ludwig's work has almost entirely

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[1] Paul Raabe, *Index - Expressionismus: Bibliographie der Beiträge in den Zeitschriften und Jahrbüchern des literarischen Expressionismus 1910-25*, 18 vols (Liechtenstein: Kraus Thomson Organisation, 1972), I-IV: *Alphabetisches Index*. For a full list of the women contributors to the Expressionist journals, see Appendix 1, below.

disappeared from the history of modernity; there are no major critical studies of her poetry, and her remarkable early collection, *Die Selige Spur* (1920), on which I will focus here, has been unjustly forgotten.

Goll, on the other hand, has remained within the literary imagination, but primarily as the wife of her more famous spouse Yvan Goll, the Expressionist and surrealist. In particular, her early collections of poetry (*Mitwelt* (1918); *Lyrische Filmy* (1922)) have been largely neglected, as has the short story (*Der Gläserne Garten*; 1918) which I have decided to include here because of the way it extends the exploration of selfhood undertaken in the poetic texts. Over recent years, however, two studies have appeared which begin to challenge this reductive view of Goll and to reclaim her own place within the history of modernity.

Margaret Littler's article, "Madness, Misogyny and the Feminine in Aesthetic Modernism: Unica Zürn and Claire Goll", uses Irigaray to show how Goll becomes trapped by a contradictory logic: as a writer, she has to situate herself within a tradition where genius is inherently male, yet, simultaneously, she wants to insist on her own femaleness.[2] I will return to this persuasive essay later in this study. The only book length study of Goll's work is Verena Mahlow's "*Die Liebe, die uns immer zur Hemmung wurde. . .*": *Weibliche Identitätsproblematik zwischen Expressionismus und Neuer Sachlichkeit am Beispiel der Prosa Claire Golls.* (1996).[3] This text goes a long way towards situating Goll within the literary context of both Expressionism and the "Neue Sachlichkeit" of

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[2] Margaret Littler, "Madness, Misogyny and the Feminine in Aesthetic Modernism: Unica Zürn and Claire Goll", in *Yvan Goll - Claire Goll: Texts and Contexts*, ed.s Eric Robertson and Robert Vilain, IFAVL XXIII (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), pp. 153-173.

[3] Verena Mahlow, "*Die Liebe, die uns immer zur Hemmung wurde. . .*": *Weibliche Identitätsproblematik zwischen Expressionismus und Neuer Sachlichkeit am Beispiel der Prosa Claire Golls*, *Studien zur Deutschen und Europäischen Literatur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 31 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996).

1920s Germany; Mahlow focuses on Goll's early short stories written throughout this period.

However, though I will refer to Mahlow in Part Two of this thesis, I will not engage with her study in detail for two reasons. Firstly, neither the early poetry, nor, interestingly, the particular short story with which I am concerned, are among the texts Mahlow examines. Secondly, Mahlow positions Goll within a theoretical frame I find extremely problematic, both philosophically and, more importantly, because this framework would block a productive reading of Goll's poetry and of *Der Gläserne Garten*. Mahlow uses Lacan and above all Kristeva to establish a model of the feminine imagination; she analyses the stories by Goll in terms of a model of a discursively constituted "subject-in-process".[4] This model does not challenge an underlying conception of the subject as dependent on establishing boundaries which secure identity via the oppositional exclusion of otherness; it merely destabilises this subject by insisting that the externalised "other" can erupt back into view, particularly through poetry and art. Mahlow explores the ways in which Goll's short stories powerfully undermine traditional modes of containing one such "other", namely woman. However, she concludes by suggesting that Goll does not succeed in making space for a subject-in-process, but remains caught in a dialectic of challenging and reinforcing the conventional boundaries delimiting female identity.[5] Despite the detail in which Goll's work is examined, this book-length study would therefore seem - somewhat perversely - to implicitly return Goll to the category of failed modernist.

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[4] See Mahlow, pp. 66-71.
[5] See Mahlow, pp. 297-9.

In this thesis, I will argue that both Goll and Ludwig fundamentally

challenge the model of oppositionally constructed identity which is retained by

Mahlow's critical frame. Indeed, as I will show, the radicality of these writers

lies in the ways in which their work explores modes of selfhood which do not fit

neatly into the dominant categories defining the subject of modernity - or, for

that matter, of postmodernity.

Before giving a brief outline of the thesis that follows, I would like to

indicate the two other key elements which combined to shape this study. The

first of these, as indicated above, is the work of Luce Irigaray. In her books

Speculum of the Other Woman and *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Irigaray offers a

compelling account of the way woman has functioned as the "other" and the

object against which Western metaphysics has constituted its (male) subject.[6]

Thus, to borrow a chapter title from *Speculum*, "Any Theory of the 'Subject' Has

Always Been Appropriated By the 'Masculine'". Of particular relevance for this

thesis is the skilful way in which Irigaray shows that the subject of philosophical

modernity - including the Lacanian self that underpins Mahlow's "subject-in-

process" - reinscribes a masculine subject-position that is constructed via the

"othering" of woman. As for Plato, so too for Lacan: woman remains the

maternal ground from which man must separate himself to become a properly

constituted (male) subject.

In *Speculum*, Irigaray engages in an excessive and subversive mimicry of

this masculine metaphysics, to suggest that far from being a passively

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6 Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985). Originally published as *Speculum. De l'autre femme*, (Paris: Minuit, 1974). Henceforth referred to as *Speculum*.
Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (New York: Cornell U.P., 1985). Originally published as *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un*, (Paris: Minuit, 1977). Henceforth referred to as *This Sex*.

containable "other", woman may take on - and indeed may always have had - a life of her own, beyond man's specul(aris)ations. Alongside disrupting the psychoanalytic systems of Freud and Lacan, as well as Plato's metaphysics, she puts particular pressure upon the philosophical move which brings the modern subject into being: Kant's "Copernican revolution". Kant rejects the self-positing Cartesian "I", and instead recognises that the "subject" can only be posited with and in relation to the "object". Women, however, cannot attain the status of this (supposedly) "universal" subject, for their female nature is aligned with the inert materiality, with the objectified "otherness" against which this subject constitutes his identity. Woman becomes the "'Matter' upon which he will ever and again return to plant his foot in order to spring farther, leap higher", for

> he can sustain himself only by bouncing back off some objectiveness, some objective. If there is no more "earth" to press down/repress, to work, to represent, but also and always to desire (for one's own), no opaque matter which in theory does not know herself, then what pedestal remains for the ex-istence of the "subject"?[7]

Thus Irigaray subversively suggests that Kant's Copernican revolution "has yet to have its final effects".[8] The "other"/"object" constituted by woman/passive matter may after all be "a benchmark that is ultimately more crucial than the subject."[9] For this subject is dependent on the inert stability of opaque matter, against which man's self-sufficiency is asserted; his own autonomy is guaranteed by the "silent allegiance" and mute acquiescence of the "other" - but this guarantee is secure only as long as "no questioning of this mutism as a symptom - of historical repression - is required."[10] Thus Irigaray asks: "what if the 'object' started to speak? Which also means beginning to 'see',

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[7] Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 134 and p. 133 respectively.
[8] Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 133.
[9] Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 133.
[10] Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 135.

etc."[11] By asking this question, Irigaray opens up a potentially different perspective within philosophy. She asks us to rethink female selfhood not by attempting to add woman in to the category of the (male) subject - a project that is self-negating from the start - but to reimagine woman by rethinking philosophy from the side of the "object" and the "other".

As Irigaray's reading of Kant suggests, precisely because he insists that the subject can only be posited in relation to an object, there are spaces within his transcendental philosophy where it becomes possible to begin the work of philosophising from the side of the "other". Thus the second element which has shaped the trajectory of this thesis is my own engagement with Kant, in which I have sought to work with his transcendental structures to produce subversions that are productive for thinking alternative - and, in particular, female - modes of selfhood. For Kant, the subject is never "given" as such but can only be posited in relation to objects constructed by the imagination. The imagination schematises (or maps) the manifold of sensory intuition in ways that allow for the configuration of objects that remain stable enough both in space, and across time, for an enduring subject to be positioned against them, as a kind of reference point for perception. The schemata or "blueprints" are thus the necessary transcendental grounding which allows objects to persist through time. These imaginative maps organise sensory materiality in ways that permit the fundamental distinction between "self" and "not-self" which brings Kant's transcendental "I" into being.

Thus the (transcendental) subject does not simply *impose* order on the world, but only comes into existence as the correlative of the "not-self" and the world that is ordered in space and time. Hence, the forms of space and time

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[11] Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 135.

which condition human perception are in effect restricted in advance by Kant to those that allow for the clear division of "self" from "not-self", thus making it possible to posit an enduring subject. Time for Kant is therefore modelled on the notion of an infinite but essentially linear time-line. Moreover, although space is "given" as an infinity which cannot be represented as the sum of its parts, nonetheless, it is an infinity which lends itself - rather like a kind of giant container - to being divided up into containable parts or units.[12] Moreover, Kant necessarily presumes that sensory/sensible matter cannot order itself, but must be given spatio-temporal form via the imagination's schemata. If this were not the case, it would be conceivable that matter could shape itself in ways that would not necessarily fit within the space-time required for the construction of a stable, persistent subject.

Hence within Kant's transcendental philosophy, there are several sites of potential disruption. Firstly, Kant restricts the constitutive subject-object relation to the oppositional mode of relationality required to posit an enduring "I". However, it is possible to put pressure on this restriction by exploring the potential for different, non-oppositional modes of relation, which would generate different spatio-temporal realities - and different kinds of selves. Secondly, whilst maintaining Kant's transcendental insight that reality is constructed in space and time, the centrality of the subject to this construction

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[12] In fact, there are tensions within Kant's account of space. In the first *Critique*, he both positions space as an infinity "given" in a priori intuition [*CPR*: A25; B39-40], but also suggests that space is the pure *form* of intuition (ie, not "given") [*CPR*: B160-1fn]. These very contradictions indicate the importance for Kant of accounting for space in ways that make it possible to posit a persistent subject (the transcendental "I"). /

References are to Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan 1929). References to this text (henceforth abbreviated to *CPR*) give the pagination for Kemp-Smith's translation, followed in square brackets by the pagination of the *Akademie* edition of the first and second editions, referred to as A and B respectively (*Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, 29 vols (Berlin: Preussiche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1900-1985), Vols 3 and 4).

can be displaced by questioning what would happen if matter could shape itself, generating what Irigaray calls a sensible transcendental. If spatio-temporal order could emerge through a productive and manifold materiality, this would generate "objects" that would take shape through material becomings, rather than being permanently fixed as the "other" of the "subject". Such "objects" open a space for imagining a different kind of embodied identity, a different mode of selfhood from that of the autonomous male individual. Both these areas will be explored in more detail at relevant points throughout this thesis.

However, the other site within Kant's system which will be privileged in this study is the sublime. I will focus on this aesthetic mode of experience not only because we are here dealing with poetry, and the sublime, particularly in the German Romantic tradition from which Expressionism develops, is a key aesthetic category. I will also privilege the sublime because of the way it is central to the Kantian construction of the subject, for it is in the sublime that the antinomies structuring the subject's existence to come to the fore. The Kantian subject's spatio-temporal, conditioned (phenomenal) world is positioned as objective reality by marking off the absolute inaccessiblity of the unconditioned (noumenal) realm. To posit a realm of the knowable, the Kantian subject must delimit the horizons of the unknowable. In Kant's system, the unconditioned is not a "lost" reality covered over by the construction of an illusory world, but functions as a necessary negative limit, against which phenomenal reality is constituted. In the sublime, the importance of this antinomical structure is emphasised, as the noumenal ceases to function in a strictly negative sense, but is imaginatively accessed in ways that strengthen the boundaries of the rational subject. As the sublime will be treated in detail in chapter one, at this point a

brief outline of the dynamic sublime which so influenced the German (and English) Romantics will suffice.

The sublime is not strictly in nature itself for Kant, but is the feeling produced in man when, on being confronted with potentially overwhelming natural forces, he finds the strength to transcend his terror. In doing so, he makes an imaginative leap, positioning himself as independent of the phenomenal world. This generates a sublime feeling of awe [*Achtung*], which is projected onto nature, but which reflects man's capacity to imaginatively position himself in relation to the noumenal, and thereby overcome both nature within (fear) and without (the might of nature).[13]

This feeling of awe or respect is also what man feels for the moral law, that is, for his capacity to judge independently of any conditions, in accordance with the categorical imperative. A lack of sublime feeling therefore indicates a lack of proper reverence for the moral law, and hence a lack of moral capacity. Furthermore, the capacity to transcend the limits of (constructed) phenomenal nature is the key characteristic of genius, which for Kant consists of an imaginative power to *re*-schematise and hence recreate the world. In this way, a capacity for the sublime is both fundamental to any proper human subject capable of developing moral will, and essential generating works of genius. Women's exclusion from the sublime is thus more than an exclusion from an aesthetic experience; it is simultaneously an exclusion from full subject-hood and from the potential to produce great works of art.

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[13] See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), sect. 28, pp. 119-23 [5:260-4]. For the feeling of "Achtung" generated in the sublime, see also sect. 27, p.114 [5:257]. This text is henceforth abbreviated to *CJ*; the numbers in square brackets indicate relevant volume and page numbers in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Preussiche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1900-1985).

It is important to note that Kant does not claim that women *cannot* access the sublime, but only that they *should* not. Although his position changes importantly between the pre-critical *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* and the *Critique of Judgement*, this exclusion remains constant.[14] In the *Observations*, Kant is explicit that women have a *"beautiful understanding"* and men a *"deep understanding,* an expression that signifies identity with the sublime."[15] Though exceptional women could develop this profound and sublime understanding, they *should* not, because it would make them ugly.[16] In the third *Critique*, women's exclusion is less explicit, but it remains clear from the gendering of the sublime - which is associated with warriors and generals - that "there is no inference that women should be educated into the kinds of courage and self-confidence that would enable them to rise above fear."[17] Moreover, in the *Anthropology*, Kant explicitly claims that as women are responsible for the future of the human species, they should feel remain fearful and timid in the face of physical danger.[18] Their duty to the species precludes their education out of a fear of nature's might, which rightly makes them act so as to protect their offspring. Thus woman's reproductive body aligns her with the instinctual, and bars her from developing the capacity to transcend either her terror or phenomenal nature via sublime reflection.

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[14] Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, trans. John T. Goldthwait (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960 [first German edition: Königsberg, 1764]).

[15] Kant, *Observations*, p. 78. For a rigorous analysis of the development of Kant's account of the sublime in relation to gender, see Christine Battersby, "Stages on Kant's Way: Aesthetics, Morality, and the Gendered Sublime", in *Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics*, ed. Peggy Zeglin Brand and Carolyn Korsmeyer (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp. 88-114.

[16] Kant, *Observations*, pp. 78-9.

[17] Battersby, "Stages on Kant's Way", p. 96.

[18] Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Mary J. Gregor, (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974 [first German edition: 1798]), see especially p. 169 [7: 306].

However, as we will see in later sections of this thesis, woman's alignment with matter again leaves space within the Kantian system for thinking the sublime from other side, from the side of the "other" - particularly when combined with the fact that, for Kant, noumenal Nature (Nature as a totality rather than the constructed phenomenal world) is represented by Isis, the female figure of Mother Nature. Again, I will be concerned throughout this thesis not with adding woman into the sublime as it stands, but with exploiting her position as "other" and "object" in the Kantian system to explore possibilities for a female sublime, which would involve both a different kind of transcendence and a different kind of self - as well as a different model of genius or aesthetic creativity.

Such a sublime has already been explored by Christine Battersby, whose work will be referred to throughout. Battersby has written on the female sublime in the work of an earlier German woman writer, the poet Karoline von Günderode.[19] In this thesis, I hope to explore modes of the female sublime in the work of two women Expressionists writing in German, who can therefore be positioned in a genealogy stretching back to Günderode (and beyond). By returning to the forgotten work of both Claire Goll and Paula Ludwig, I hope to contribute to the collective feminist project of rethinking aesthetics and selfhood which demands that we "open ourselves up to this impossible past and examine the tactics employed by previous generations of creative women."[20]

Thus my interests in Kant, Irigaray and the lost women writers of Expressionism came together through the ways in which the work of both

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[19] Christine Battersby, "Unblocking the Oedipal: Karoline von Günderode and the Female Sublime", in *Political Genders: texts and contexts*, ed. Ledger, McDonagh and Spencer (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), pp. 129-143.
[20] Battersby, "Unblocking the Oedipal", p. 139.

Ludwig and Goll subverts the transcendental structures of the Kantian subject to produce alternative modes of female subjecthood and of the female sublime. Indeed, as I will argue in chapter two, the poetry of the male Expressionists already figures the breakdown of oppositional subject–object relations, a crisis that brings about a genuine and radical rupture in the history of the modern Kantian subject. However, on reading the work of the female Expressionists, and particularly Ludwig and Goll, it soon became apparent that these writers were not on the whole charting the crisis of the (male) subject, but exploring selfhood from the side of an "object" no longer determined by this subject's needs. Their poetry explored embodied, female, self-shaping identities, selves not constructed via oppositional boundaries - and hence not threatened (like the male Expressionists) when the constitutive Kantian subject–object relation began to be put under pressure by life in the modern city. It is these alternative modes of selfhood which I will explore in the work of both Ludwig and Goll throughout the second half of this thesis.

However, I will begin in Part One by providing a map of the post-Kantian context through which the radicality of the work by these women poets can emerge. I will begin not with Expressionism but with a recent mode of post-Kantianism which remains blind to the need to create spaces for thinking sexual difference. By engaging with the postmodern sublime of Jean-François Lyotard, I will chart in more detail the gaps and spaces within the Kantian system which can be productively explored for a feminist rethinking of the self - gaps which Lyotard's sublime closes down. In chapter two, I will argue that the male Expressionists offer a different mode of post-Kantianism, one which fits with Deleuze's posthuman rather than with Lyotard's postmodern sublime. I will show how, although these Expressionist poets figure a breakdown of subject–

object relations which leads to the dissolution of the autonomous male subject, they do so in ways that are extremely problematically gendered, and that involve the continued objectification of woman.

Part One will be followed by an *Interlude* chapter, in which I will chart Expressionist attitudes towards women's emancipation, showing how the gendering of Expressionism is perpetuated in Expressionist scholarship, from which the women writers have largely disappeared. I will provide a bibliographical and biographical outline of just some of the most important women writing during Expressionism, including both Ludwig and Goll. Finally, I will argue that these women fall out of most Expressionist scholarship because of its inherently gendered theoretical frame.

Part Two will then explore the different and differently gendered post-Kantianism of the female poets, Ludwig and Goll. I will begin with a close examination of Goll's poetry, in which I will trace her poetic exploration of a mode of embodied selfhood generated through productive play and acrobatic movements of relationality. In this chapter (chapter 4), I will show how she privileges the relation between mother and daughter as well as a mode of immanent transcendence. The theme of relationality is developed throughout chapter five, which concentrates on Goll's short story *Der Gläserne Garten*. At this point, I use material from Plato's *Phaedrus* to explore the complex and subversive mode of mirroring that Goll develops between the female lover and beloved who are the protagonists of this story. The chapter is centred on a poem which occurs within the tale and which, I will argue, can be read as a map of the whole. This poem refers to Greek mythology in a quest for a female identity where women are no longer reduced to the "other" of man. I will show that, by

the end of the tale, Goll's protagonists have indeed found a mode of manifold female selfhood which privileges female relationality rather than a male norm.

Chapter six turns back through the story from another perspective, examining the theme of the Orpheus/Eurydice relation which runs throughout *Der Gläserne Garten*. I position this text in relation to work by Adriana Cavarero and Maurice Blanchot, as well as poems by Rilke and H.D., to argue that Goll's tale makes space for Eurydice's voice to be heard. Chapter Seven explores the poetry of Paula Ludwig, picking up on the themes of music, relationality, and darkness which emerged through the previous chapters. I show how Ludwig radically reconfigures traditional models both of the spirit and of material embodiment to produce a relational subject no longer constructed via oppositional and exclusionary boundaries. In her poems, the limits of the self are constituted by its embodied capacity to incorporate otherness in patterns of becoming and change which generate and sustain - rather than undermining - the identity of the self. The chapter culminates in a reading of a poem, "Die Blaue Ferne", which reworks the Kantian transcendental framework in ways that draw together the key aspects of both Ludwig's and Goll's productively subversive texts.

In the conclusion, the modes of selfhood and of the sublime which have been explored through the texts of both authors are situated within recent debates in feminist aesthetics, using the work both of Battersby and of Patricia Yaeger. Finally, I return to the figure of Kant's Isis, arguing that Ludwig and Goll transform the dark absence she protects into a space-time resonating with potential for sublime female selves.

A Note on Translation

Firstly, I would like to thank both Georgina Paul and Christine Battersby for their extremely helpful suggestions with regard to translating the texts of both Ludwig and Goll. In particular, I would like to thank Adrian Armstrong, who has worked with me on the translations throughout, as well as providing translations from the Italian for Adriana Cavarero's new book (see chapter six); his (extremely patient) work has been invaluable. Any mistakes that remain are of course my responsibility.

My policy for providing translations is as follows:

— for prose in languages other than English, translations are given in the footnotes below, except for short phrases that are given in the text in square brackets; these are my own unless otherwise indicated.

— for poems by the male Expressionists and Rilke, I have used published translations wherever possible; these are again given in the footnotes and are supplemented where necessary by my own translations.

— for the poems by both Ludwig and Goll, as well as Goll's short story *Der Gläserne Garten*, no published versions are available; my own translations - developed with the advice and contributions of those acknowledged above - are provided in the footnotes. It should be noted that these are intended as a workmanlike guide, not as English equivalents for either Goll's or Ludwig's remarkable poetic texts.

— a few longer poems from both Part One and Part Two are given in full only in Appendix 2; where this is the case, it will be indicated in a footnote.

Part One

Subjects of Dissolution

Chapter One

The Dissolution of Woman:
Lyotard, Difference
and the Postmodern Sublime

In the first part of this thesis, I will be concerned with opening the question of sexual difference in modernity. In particular, I will go on to examine the positioning of woman in the work of the male Expressionist poets who were Claire Goll's and Paula Ludwig's contemporaries. In chapter two, I will argue that these poets represent a genuinely subversive moment in the history of modernity founded in the autonomous Kantian subject; nonetheless, I will also show that their subversiveness does not extend to the poetic representation of gender. However, the radicality of the possibilities for female selfhood offered by the work of both Ludwig and Goll not only emerges more clearly when situated within the context of German Expressionism; their imaginative refigurings of the self also need to be set against a more recent and extremely influential mode of blindness towards the question of sexual difference within modernity and postmodernity. Hence I will begin in this chapter by opening a dialogue with the post-Kantian philosopher Jean-François Lyotard. I will argue that his postmodern theory creates less, rather than more, space for thinking sexual difference than the Kantian philosophy which he positions himself as subverting.

In an essay entitled "One of the Things at stake in Women's Struggles", Lyotard articulates the discomfort of the male philosopher writing on sexual

difference.[1] On the one hand, to claim "no assignable difference between feminine and masculine" is a "*neutralization* of the question" which is "very suspect (as when someone says that he's not political, neither on the right nor the left; everyone know he is on the right)".[2] On the other hand, the very question of "'the difference *between the sexes*'" or of "men's relationship to women" can only be posed in the "metalanguage" of philosophy, and such a language "is already the language of masculinity in the western, and particularly Greek, sense".[3] Philosophy is established in Greece via the oppositional exclusion of the "other" which it governs and orders: "women [. . .] along with children, foreigners, halfbreeds, slaves".[4] Thus the discourse which allows the question of relations between the sexes to be raised has always already established this difference by positioning woman as its border and its outside.[5]

> Hence the philosopher,
>
> knows the so-called question of a masculine/feminine opposition, and probably the opposition itself, will only disappear as he *stops philosophizing*: for it exists as opposition only by philosophical (and political) method, that is, by the male way of thinking.[6]

Lyotard thus claims that what is at stake in "women's" struggles is the destruction of the meta-discourses which delimit sexual difference, including

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[1] Jean-François Lyotard, "One of the Things at Stake in Women's Struggles", in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 111-121 (p. 111). This article will henceforth be abbreviated to WS.

[2] Lyotard, WS, p. 111.

[3] Lyotard, WS, pp. 117; 118-9; my emphasis in italics.

[4] Lyotard, WS, p. 119.

[5] See Lyotard, WS, p. 119: "The frontier passing between the two sexes [...] is [...] the border where the Empire comes into contact with barbarians, but also the line of demarcation between an empirical given, women, the great unknown, and a transcendent or transcendental order that would give them meaning."

[6] Lyotard, WS, p. 111.

the binary discourse of anatomical sex.[7] In its place, he proposes a flow of

partial differences which no longer give rise to any identity or self:

> If differences traverse individual bodies rather than opposing a 'woman's'
> body to 'man's', then those regions "belonging" to two individuals (or more)
> would be connected ..., without prejudging what goes on in other regions of
> the 'same' bodies.[8]

This flux of partial relations would produce no-body but a *"patchwork* of

affective elements", where "there is no longer *anyone,* no superior central

identity to control and relate what takes place on these intensified surfaces".[9]

Thus the paradoxical result of Lyotard's discussion is that what is at stake in

"women's struggles" becomes the dissolution of woman herself: "into a puzzle

of potentialities".[10]

However, this fragmentation of woman figures the dissolution of meta-

discourses and thereby frees the way for "we Westerners" to "rework our space-

time and all our logic on the basis of non-centralism, non-finality, non-truth."[11]

Thus what is at stake in "the women's struggle" is not what it is to be female,

but the freeing of those formerly male subjects of philosophy from the

constraints of their own oppositional logic. [12] Philosophy itself is reinscribed as

the subject of the "women's struggle", together with the anxiety of the male

philosopher who desires to escape his guilt-ridden dominance. Moreover, the

"topology of erotic potentialities", which Lyotard would substitute for

oppositional difference, is "another sexual space" where "activity is not the

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[7] See Lyotard, WS, p. 117.

[8] Lyotard, WS, p. 117.

[9] Lyotard, WS, p. 118 and p. 117.

[10] Lyotard, WS, p. 117.

[11] Lyotard, WS, p. 120.

[12] Lyotard, WS, p. 111. This philosophical turn can be compared to Maurice Blanchot's equally astonishing reading of the Orpheus-Eurydice relation. Blanchot claims that the book is sacrificed to Eurydice, and seems not to see that it is Eurydice who is sacrificed in order that literature can begin, in the form of Orpheus's laments; Blanchot's reworking of the Orpheus myth (amongst others) will be discussed in detail in chapter 6 below.

unhappy lot of *masculine bodies*" and where "the signifier's *imperium* over *the masculine body* can be undone"[13]. Far from being absolved of the signifier's imperious discourse, the dissolution of woman signifies the re-birth of the male body from bounded autonomy into the brave new world of polymorphous intensities. Woman provides the passage into a new mode of (man's) existence as well as a new mode of philosophising.

In this way, woman passes from non-existence in the old discourse of Western metaphysics to non-existence in the new patchwork of libidinal intensities, without ever having had a life of her own in-between. Lyotard's solution assumes that the question of sexed identity can *only* be raised in the oppositional language of Western metaphysics, and hence that this question must be dissolved along with its terms. For Lyotard, woman's identity is either founded on an opposition to man, which makes of her the "other" of the masculine subject, or it is nothing. The destruction of all meta-languages liquefies all stable subjects and bodies: Lyotard cannot imagine that bodies and selves could be differently formed.

Unlike Irigaray, who also offers an analysis of woman as the "other" against which the subject of Western metaphysics constitutes himself, Lyotard does not explore whether there could be a way of configuring a sexed female identity *without* founding it on an oppositional relation between the sexes.[14] He cannot imagine an identity formed between women who speak together without being one, women who are neither one nor two. He has no ear for the speech of two lips, each to the other where neither is completely separable from

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[13] Lyotard, WS, p. 117; my emphasis.

[14] See Irigaray, *Speculum*. For a detailed account of Irigaray's analysis of woman's reduction to "the Other of the Same", see Margaret Whitford, *Philosophy in the Feminine* (London: Routledge, 1991), especially chapter 5: "The Same, the Semblance and the Other".

the other, yet each has an identity of her own.[15] Thus for Lyotard, to think

woman is to "*stop philosophising*": he cannot imagine that it could be possible to

philosophise sexual difference *without* establishing the authority of one's voice

on the Greek model of oppositional exclusion. Ultimately, he never questions

that the philosopher is male. Where Irigaray mimics Western discourse to

unsettle its assumptions that woman/its object is indeed passive or behaving as

she should, Lyotard doubly re-naturalises philosophy's own myth of itself: if the

self is not male, philosophy has no subject.

It is precisely this assumption which will be undermined throughout this

thesis, beginning in this chapter with an examination of Lyotard's reworking of

the Kantian sublime. By comparing Lyotard's postmodern sublime to both the

mathematical and the dynamic sublime in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, I will

show that there are in fact gaps and spaces within the history of Western

philosophy for selves who are not modelled on the autonomous (male) subject. I

will argue that Lyotard's post-Kantian position obscures such openings,

together with the potential Kant's own system offers for those seeking to think

modes of female selfhood which do not persist in reducing woman to the

"other" of a male subject and norm. Indeed, as will be seen in later chapters of

this thesis, Kant's system can be productively reworked to generate the

possibility of a female sublime - a possibility Lyotard's frame would not even

allow him to envisage.

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[15] See Irigaray, "When our Lips Speak Together", in *This Sex*.

The Postmodern Sublime

Initially, Lyotard's position in "Women's Struggles" might seem to be quite at odds with the concerns of his work on the sublime. The dissolution of the sexed subject into partial flows seems to be in tension with his later emphasis on being "witnesses to the unpresentable" as a kind of radically *in(dis)soluble* difference or 'otherness'.[16] However, both discourses are concerned with "waging a war on totality"[17], the former by liquefying meta-discourses, the latter by arguing that no single discourse can ever represent the whole of "reality". I will argue that the notion of bearing witness to the unpresentable fits only too well with the dissolution of the self into a "patchwork", and in fact confirms the lack of any space to think difference productively within Lyotard's post-Kantian frame.

Lyotard turns to Kant's account of the sublime in several key articles in the early and mid-1980s. These inaugurate an aesthetic project motivated by the ethical imperative to think difference and ethics after Auschwitz. This name carries with it a double demand in Lyotard's work: the need to find ways of not forgetting the horror that is unimaginable and unrepresentable, and the urgent call for ways of thinking difference that do not assimilate, totalise or destroy its "otherness", but instead preserve its incommensurability. However, when read in relation to the need to open spaces for sexed difference, Lyotard's interpretation of the sublime has significant and troubling implications.[18] I will argue that these result from Lyotard's reading of Kant, which precisely closes

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[16] Jean-François Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", in *Postmodernism: A Reader*, ed. Thomas Docherty (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 46.

[17] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 46.

[18] The problematic implications of Lyotard's account of the sublime for feminist philosophies of difference also bear on his attempt to hold open a space for Judaism and for all that is gathered together for Lyotard under the sign of "Auschwitz"; however, it does not lie within the scope of this study to examine these implications in detail.

down the gaps and absences within the Kantian system that feminist philosophy could usefully explore as sites of difference.

Lyotard famously characterises the Kantian sublime as "presenting the unpresentable" and thus as presenting "the fact that the unpresentable exists".[19] Modernity begins with Kant for Lyotard, because the mark of the modern is the "discovery of the 'lack of reality' of reality, together with the invention of other realities".[20] This "lack of reality" is exemplified by the sublime, which turns man towards what can be thought but which lacks any presentation to the mind. The sublime is produced by "a kind of cleavage within the subject between what can be conceived and what can be imagined or presented" and thus implies "the incommensurability of reality to concept".[21] He describes the productive tension between the imagination and reason which reflects this incommensurability as follows:

> We can conceive the infinitely great, the infinitely powerful, but every presentation of an object destined to "make visible" this absolute greatness or power appears to us painfully inadequate. Those are Ideas of which no presentation is possible [. . .]. They can be said to be unpresentable.[22]
>
> The unpresentable is what is the object of an Idea, and for which one cannot show (present) an example, a case, even a symbol.[23]

Thus according to Lyotard, the imagination fails to be able to match an Idea of reason with a "case" or example which exhibits this Idea in reality, that is, the phenomenal world. However, this very failure constitutes the recognition

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[19] Jean-François Lyotard, "Presenting the Unpresentable", *Artforum*, 20:8 (1988), 64-69 (p.64); Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 42.
[20] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 43.
[21] Jean-François Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde", in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity 1991), pp. 89-107 (p. 98); Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 44.
[22] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 43.
[23] Jean-François Lyotard, "Representation, Presentation, Unrepresentable", in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, pp. 119-128 (p. 126).

that not everything can be brought under the gaze of the subject. When reality comes to be lacking, the subject is confronted with that which he can only represent as that which he cannot re/present. The incommensurability between thought and reality manifested in the sublime holds open a space for "bearing witness" to that which cannot be represented within the space-time framework which the subject uses to organise "reality": "in singling out the sublime, Kant places the accent on something directly related to the problem of the failing of space and time."[24]

The sublime inaugurates a different mode of seeing and of being a subject. It is the moment when the subject's failure to see becomes another kind of enlightenment: the awareness that "the unpresentable exists". Thus the sublime lies at the heart of an avant-garde aesthetic which "will enable us to see only by making it impossible to see".[25] Citing instances of avant-garde painting, Lyotard privileges Malevich's white squares and Barnett-Newman's canvases as exemplary forms of this aesthetic, which devotes itself to "making an allusion to the unpresentable by means of visible presentations."[26]

On the basis of his underlying account of the sublime, Lyotard delineates two possible forms of this aesthetic: the modern, nostalgic sublime and the postmodern sublime. The nostalgic sublime emphasises the "powerlessness of the faculty of presentation" together with "the nostalgia for presence felt by the human subject".[27] This form of the sublime mourns a lost wholeness: "It allows the unpresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents, but the form, because of its recognisable consistency, continues to offer the reader or viewer

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[24] Jean-François Lyotard, "Something Like: Communication without Communication" in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, pp. 108-118 (p. 113).
[25] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 44.
[26] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 44.
[27] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 45.

matter for solace and pleasure."[28] This mourning can become dangerous if translated into the desire to re-establish a unity or totality of being in the real. When the absence of the unpresentable became identified with

> a waiting for some fabulous subject or identity [. . .]. The aesthetics of the sublime, thus neutralised and converted into a politics of myth, was able to come and build its architectures of human 'formations' on the Zeppelin Feld in Nürnberg.[29]

The postmodern sublime places the emphasis on the "power of the faculty to conceive, on its 'inhumanity'" which nonetheless permits the joyful search for new ways of presenting "the unpresentable in presentation itself".[30] The questioning of grammatical and literary forms by a writer such as Joyce questions the "givens" of literary presentation which "prevent the unpresentable from being put forward".[31] The continual search for new forms of re/presentation "not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable" characterises a postmodern sublime which focuses on "the increase of being and the jubilation which result from the invention of new rules of the game".[32]

> In the postmodern sublime, the painter comes to be like the philosopher:

> the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules or categories are what the work of art itself is looking for.[33]

Lyotard's avant-garde philosopher/painter purports unsettle the gaze of the (Kantian) subject by radicalising the sublime, but he does so via powers which

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[28] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 46.
[29] Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde", p. 104.
[30] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 46.
[31] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 45.
[32] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 45.
[33] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 46.

bear a striking resemblance to Kant's delineation of genius: "Genius is a *talent* for producing something for which no determinate rule can be given".[34] Hence "the foremost property of genius must be *originality*" and the rule given to fine art "must be abstracted from what the artist has done", though it can only serve as an example and is never simply to be "copied" or applied by others.[35]

The way in which Lyotard's postmodern philosopher maps so neatly onto the Kantian figure of genius indicates that far from *"undoing* the presumption of the mind"[36] by presenting the unpresentable, the postmodern sublime re-empowers the philosophical subject at another level. All that is "other" to the space-time of the subject is identified with "the unpresentable", but this is only articulable *as* unpresentable from the side of those who command the powers of re/presentation, ready to be extended via their own "subversion". Thus, though Lyotard desires to "wage a war on totality", he totalises the differences between that which is other to the subject: all "others" are homogenous in their unpresentability, which can only be presented as such to/by the subject-genius-philosopher.

I will argue that the root of this re-totalisation of difference and "otherness" lies in Lyotard's reading of the sublime as the attempt "to present that there is *something* that is not presentable".[37] Thus according to Lyotard, in the sublime, the imagination "fails to present an object which might, *if only in principle*, come to match a concept".[38] This move is repeated in various forms in several articles, and always underlies the characterisation of the sublime as

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[34] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 46, p. 175 [5:307].
[35] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 46, p. 175 [5:307]; and sect. 47, p. 177 [5:309].
[36] Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde", p. 107; my emphasis.
[37] Lyotard, "Representation, Presentation, Unrepresentable", p. 125; my emphasis.
[38] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 43; my emphasis.

"presenting the unpresentable". [39] Thus in "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde",

Lyotard describes the sublime as follows:

> In the event of an absolutely large object - the desert, a mountain, a pyramid -
> or one that is absolutely powerful - a storm at sea, an erupting volcano -
> which like all absolutes can only be thought, without any sensible/sensory
> intuition, as an Idea of reason, the faculty of presentation, the imagination,
> fails to provide a representation corresponding to this Idea. [40]

This account is troubling not only because it blurs the distinction

between Kant's mathematical and dynamic sublime - a lack of distinction to

which I shall return - but also because it suggests that the imagination fails to be

able to represent an object in the world - "something" - which can nonetheless

be *thought* as an object by reason. This formulation suggests that reason is a

capacity to think those phenomenal objects which exceed the imagination's

grasp, but which could *potentially* represent the Absolute. The Ideas of reason

are reduced to Ideas of "something" which at least in theory still belongs to the

order of representation, even if the imagination cannot in fact represent it.

However, in Kant's account of the mathematical sublime, it is vital that

the imagination's limits could not *even in principle* be overcome. The

mathematical sublime is indeed produced by the imagination's failure to exhibit

reason's Idea of the Absolute. The sublime is generated by the appearance of

excessively large objects, the intuition of which "carries with it the idea of their

infinity".[41] Such objects cannot be properly represented because the standard of

measurement which appears to be appropriate to their excessive largeness is

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[39] Thus Martin Jay, for example, in his excellent analysis of Lyotard's postmodernism in *Downcast Eyes*, also uses the previous quotation from "What is Postmodernism?" to characterise Lyotard's account of the sublime; see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 582.
[40] Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde", p. 98.
[41] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 26, p.112 [5:255].

that of infinity itself: such vast objects could be represented as objective wholes only in relation to *infinity as a whole*. Hence reason demands that this standard of measurement is provided, and calls for the "comprehension in one intuition, and exhibition of all the members of a progressively increasing numerical series, and it exempts from this not even the infinite (space and past time)".[42] However, the imagination cannot comprehend infinity as a whole. It fails to produce any representation exhibiting the Idea of the totality of infinity, and hence the representation of seemingly infinite objects remains impossible; instead, man becomes pleasurably aware of his ability for Ideas exceeding the limits of the sensible.

However, firstly, it the primary *measure* constituted by the totality of infinity which can be thought but not imagined, and not the "large object" itself as Lyotard's account suggests. Moreover, Kant stresses that man is unable to think this "proper unchangeable basic measure of nature" because "this basic measure ... is *a self-contradictory concept (because an absolute totality of an endless progression is impossible)*".[43] Reason's demands cannot be matched because no such representation could exist: the whole of infinity cannot be represented by/in an object because its totality erases all limits and hence all objects. The imagination constructs the world of objects which constitute reality for the subject by ordering the manifold of sensory intuition within spatio-temporal conditions; reason's Ideas on the other hand are the necessary and necessarily abstract formulations of that which is *unconditioned* by space-time limits. *Nothing, no object,* could even potentially re-present the Idea of the totality of infinity. This "nothing" is what we encounter via the imagination's failure in the

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42 Kant, *CJ*, sect. 26, p.111 [5:254].
43 Kant, *CJ*, sect. 26, p.112 [5:255]; my emphasis.

sublime, but it is an absence which cannot be recuperated as a "*lack of reality*". The Absolute (infinity as a whole) is not "something" lacking in objective re-presentation but is beyond the spatio-temporal conditions of reality and objectivity.[44] The imagination's failure is a failure to re/present an Idea whose principle is that it is impossible to re/present. Hence in reaching its limits in the sublime, the imagination makes the subject aware of a power to think that which *logically* cannot be exhibited and that "even to be able to think the infinite as *a whole* indicates a mental power that surpasses any standard of sense...a power that is supersensible".[45]

For Kant then, the inability of the imagination to represent infinity as whole stems from a *logical* gap between reason and the imagination. The powerful feeling of the sublime is generated because the very attempt to think the Absolute/the totality of infinity/the noumenal as a re-presentable object is *inherently* contradictory. For Lyotard, by contrast, the imagination strives to present an object which could *potentially* re-present an Idea, and thus its failure is only empirically and not logically determined. It is conceivable that "something" excessively large could represent reason's Idea of the Absolute if only such objects did not in fact exceed the imagination's power. In this way, the logical gap between the imagination and reason which generates the Kantian sublime is undone: the absence of *any* possible figuration of Ideas is translated into an absence *of* (potential) presentation.

Lyotard's version of the sublime generates several simultaneous reductions within the Kantian system which paradoxically destroy the very

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[44] If Ideas lack anything, it is their proper *ideality* which would be given via unconditioned intellectual intuition: this form of intuition would exactly eradicate the need for "matching" cases to concepts, as in intellectual intuition, "concept" and "exhibition" would be one.

[45] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 26, p.111 [5:254].

logic of the sublime aesthetic. Firstly, that which "cannot be figured" fails to be represented more as a matter of empirical weakness on the part of the imagination than because reason's Ideas logically allow for no figuration. Hence Lyotard's version of the sublime overemphasises the imagination's "failure" and underestimates its more positive role. The imagination is characterised throughout Lyotard's sublime by "impotence", "powerlessness" and "painful inadequacy".[46] The sublime depends on "the disaster suffered by the imagination" which, at best, can be read as "a negative sign of the immense power of ideas."[47]

However, Kant attributes a more positive pleasure to the imagination, which is not limited to passively responding to reason by attempting (and failing) to represent the totality of infinity. On the contrary:

> that magnitude of a natural object to which the imagination fruitlessly applies its entire ability to comprehend must **lead** the concept of nature to a supersensible substrate (which underlies both nature and our ability to think), a substrate that is large beyond any standard of sense and hence makes us judge as *sublime*
> attunement in which we find ourselves when we estimate the object.[48]

Thus for Kant, the imagination's "failure" to directly represent Ideas does more than merely signal the comparative power of reason: it *leads* reason to an Idea of the supersensible and thus *generates* the powerful and pleasurable sense of reaching beyond the sensible. The imagination's striving to overcome its limits produces a feeling of awe for man's own ability to transcend the conditions of phenomenal reality. It generates a sense of man's supersensible, moral destiny by making him "conscious of our [sic] *superiority* to nature within us, and

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46 Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde", p. 98.
47 Jean-François Lyotard, "After the Sublime, the State of Aesthetics", in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, pp. 135-143 (p.136); Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde", p. 98.
48 Kant, *CJ*, sect. 26, p. 112 [5:255-6]; my emphasis added in bold.

thereby also to nature outside us."[49] Hence it becomes possible for man "to

judge nature without fear and to think of our vocation as being *sublimely above*

nature."[50]

In Lyotard's account, however, the sublime merely generates a painful

awareness of the *incommensurability* of Ideas and reality: the imagination's

failure to represent the Absolute indicates that reason's - in principle presentable

- Idea is the thought of something that *lacks* presentation in the phenomenal

world. Thus instead of producing a sublime feeling of transcending nature, the

imagination's striving only makes the subject aware "that the mind is lacking in

nature, that nature is lacking for it".[51] This not only reduces the imagination's

role to painful failure, but the "immense power of ideas" to which the sublime

supposedly testifies is itself reduced.

For Kant, Ideas refer to the radical absence of the unconditioned *beyond*

the spatio-temporal limits of objective reality. Lyotard, however, limits reason to

a power to think the Absolute as excessive phenomena, that is, as some-thing

which exists as an object of nature - a desert or mountain - whose potential for

presentation is not realised due to its *excessive* spatio-temporal form. The

noumenal becomes "some-thing" which lacks proper presentation as an object:

Lyotard's sublime attests to "*the fact that the unpresentable exists*". In this way, the

noumenal is still contained by the realm of knowledge and of being, though

what we "know" is that we cannot re/present it, and its "Being" is identified

with a lack within the re-presentational order. The noumenal becomes "some-

thing" that appears within the order of objective presentation *as that* which does

not appear; it is made present in the order of objects *as that* which lacks

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[49] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 28, p. 123 [5:264].
[50] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 28, p. 123 [5:264]; my emphasis.
[51] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 137.

presentation. The radical no-thing of the Kantian noumenal, beyond the reach of the human gaze, becomes a lack *of presence/re-presentation* in the eyes of the subject.

Thus reason's Idea does *not* strictly speaking "lack" an objective representation in Lyotard's account: the Absolute/noumenal itself is objectified as the appearance of lack within the order of re/presentation.[52] In this way, reason's (non-exhibitable) *Idea* of noumenal absence is reduced to a *concept* of lack, represented by "the unpresentable" which appears within the phenomenal realm of the visible as a kind of negative or shadow image of the presentable - or indeed as a monogram, those blackened templates (schemata) which the imagination constructs to order sensory intuition.[53] Hence reason has an object because the unpresentable is mapped out in space and time via the schema or monogram of lack. In some ways this is the most visible of all schemata, for it needs no perceptual detail to be filled in and thus retains its dark limpidity. Though Lyotard writes that "one cannot show (present) an example, a case, even a symbol" of the unpresentable, this is no longer strictly true: the unpresentability of the noumenal has itself become *a representation*, within the spatio-temporal framework, of that which cannot be presented in space and time.[54] The noumenal exists *as* the exemplar, case or symbol of this lack.

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[52] Whereas for Kant "the object of an Idea" is opposed to an object of reality as that which can never appear - even in theory - in space and time, except by the indirect means of analogy, Lyotard's notion of "the unpresentable" reduces the object of an Idea to an object of reality which exhibits a lack of proper spatio-temporal representation.
See Lyotard, "Representation, Presentation, Unrepresentable", p. 126; and Kant, *CPR*, pp. 566-7 [A697-699].

[53] Monograms are eighteenth-century shadow pictures, composed only of the darkened silhouette of their subjects. Kant describes the schemas produced by the imagination as "monograms" in the First *Critique*: these schemata are maps which make it possible to order sensory matter in space and time. The imagination can thus be thought of as producing darkened templates - "shadow pictures" - for constructing reality via the organisation of spatio-temporal grids. See Kant, *CPR*, p. 183 [A142; B181].

[54] Lyotard, "Representation, Presentation, Unrepresentable", p. 126.

Hence the paradoxical result of Lyotard's reading of the sublime: the imagination far from failing, carries out its normal function of schematisation, but its schemata of lack are dissimulated by Lyotard as a lack of schematisation. Reason becomes a faculty which conceives of objects that exist but lack presentation, and is thus identified with a particular function of the understanding, whose object is the conceptualisation of lack. Thus both reason and the imagination are reduced: the former is robbed of its supersensible capacity, the latter of its power to generate a sense of the supersensible and of transcendence. Furthermore, despite Lyotard's recognition that space and time are "not relevant" to the sublime, the Absolute to which reason refers becomes some-thing which exists only from *within* the order of space and time where it can *appear as* and thus be objectified as lack.

Thus the noumenal has been reduced to a shadow of itself. That which for Kant was beyond the spatio-temporal logic of visible presentation becomes that which is seen as invisible or as blocking vision. That which might have resisted vision by not succumbing to the limits of its frames is reduced to that which will still "enable us to see" even if "only by making it impossible to see". Indeed, I have suggested that by making visible the darkness of the monograms which structure the Kantian world, this not-seeing is the purest form of re/presentation, illuminating from within the limits of the spatio-temporal framework. Such a darkness is a revelation of limits, rather than their transcendence, and makes their presence only stronger. Thus the noumenal is no longer the radical absence where another space-time could emerge, undetermined by the logic of visible representation.

Isis and Exodus

The closure of absence into a lack of re/presentation becomes even more problematic in relation to the dynamic sublime, where Lyotard merges several different absences within the Kantian system into the single figure of "the unpresentable". I will show how this transforms Kant's system into a binarism which does not do justice to the complexity of Kant's structures.

As in the mathematical sublime, Lyotard's descriptions of the dynamic sublime suggest that reason can "think" the might of nature which overwhelms the imagination, and thus that the "Absolute" of which reason conceives is nature at its wildest: an object that is "absolutely powerful - a storm at sea, an erupting volcano - [. . .] like all absolutes can only be thought, without any sensible/sensory intuition, as an Idea of reason".[55] However, this nature of raging storms and overflowing volcanoes remains a phenomenal power: far from "lacking" in sensory intuition, this nature bombards and threatens to overwhelm man's physical well-being with an excess of sensory data which cannot be adequately ordered. Thus, though the power of a volcano lacks complete and reassuring presentation, it does not lie outside the space-time of the presentable, or the bounds of human existence.

However, Lyotard identifies the Absolute with this phenomenal force and thus again reduces reason to a capacity to conceptualise excess *within* the sensible realm. To read excessive natural forces as "the Absolute" in this way is not only to dangerously blur the boundaries of understanding and reason, but also those of phenomena and noumena. Though Nature has a noumenal aspect for Kant (Isis), as we shall see, this must be carefully separated from nature's

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[55] Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde", p. 98.

phenomenal forms, which even at their most powerful and form-less do not thereby become noumenal, though they may inspire man to contemplate his own supersensible capacity.

This is precisely what happens in the Kantian sublime, where the Absolute is not identified with nature's might, but is on the contrary invoked to allow man to temporarily counter and contain phenomenal excess. Indeed, Kant explicitly emphasises that it is not phenomenal nature that is sublime; rather, sublimity lies in man's response to mighty natural forces which, on a physical level, have the power to (potentially) destroy him. If in the face of such fearful forces of nature, man finds the strength to transcend his terror and "to regard as small the [objects] of our [natural] concerns: property, health, and life," this produces a sublime feeling of awe for man's capacity to imaginatively position himself in relation to the noumenal and thus judge himself independent of nature.[56] It is this sublime capacity which - even in the face of volcanos and hurricanes - "keeps the humanity in our person from being degraded, even though a human being would have to succumb to that dominance [of nature]."[57] Such encounters with phenomenal nature at its wildest - albeit from a safe distance that allows for reflection - thus reveal in man "a superiority over nature that is the basis of a self-preservation quite different in kind from the one that can be assailed and endangered by nature outside us."[58]

Hence the sublime is the feeling produced when we regard nature's might:

> as yet not having such dominance over us, as persons, that we should have to bow to it if out highest principles were at stake and we had to choose between upholding or abandoning them. Hence nature is here called sublime [*erhaben*] merely because it elevates [*erhebt*] our

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[56] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 28, pp. 121 [5:262].
[57] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 28, pp. 121 [5:261-2].
[58] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 28, pp. 121 [5:261].

imagination, [making] it exhibit those cases where the mind can come to feel its own sublimity, which lies in its vocation and elevates it even above nature.[59]

Thus the phenomenal power of nature is overcome in so far as we find the strength to resist by considering ourselves as more than merely phenomenal beings, and instead as persons, capable of Ideas of freedom, unconditionality and God whose moral force is unassailable by threats to our mortal, physical existence. The dynamic sublime depends on this double structure: nature's *phenomenal* power over man as a human being is precisely *not* Absolute because man can master its threat and transcend his own fear by imaginatively accessing the supersensible realm of Ideas. If the sublime is to function as an imaginative encounter between the two aspects of man, between his physical limits and the unlimited capacity of reason, the phenomenal/natural/sensible/causal must not be confused with the rational/noumenal/supersensible/free. Only if this complex structure is preserved can the sublime lead us to "[feel] our superiority to nature within ourselves and hence also to nature outside us insofar as it can influence our feeling of well-being."[60]

It is vital to Kant's account that an *imaginative* leap is required to feel respect for the sublimity of the mind in the face of overpowering nature. It is the imagination which in an inspired moment supplants fear of nature with an awe-inspiring vision of man as capable of generating more powerful principles of action than mere physical responses. Though the imagination cannot represent Ideas themselves, nonetheless, it allows man to withstand the onslaught of empirical nature by re/presenting himself as rational force to be reckoned with. Hence Kant emphasises that though man's morality is characterised by reason

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[59] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 28, pp. 121 [5:262]; original italics, square brackets added by translator; my own emphasis in bold.

[60] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 29, p. 129 [5:269]; see also sect. 28, p. 123 [5:264].

exerting its dominance over man's sensible faculties, "in an aesthetic judgement about the sublime we present this dominance as being exerted *by the imagination itself, as an instrument of reason.*"[61]

By contrast, Lyotard's account produces no sense of the imagination's power in generating the sublime and this reflects the way in which he neglects the integral complexity of the Kantian dynamic. Kant's sublime produces a *three-fold* power-relation between man, phenomenal nature and the noumenal/ supersensible: power is transferred *from* phenomenal Nature *to* Man as a being over whom Nature's might has no dominion via an imaginative encounter with the noumenal. However, in Lyotard's account, the noumenal is identified with the unpresentable might of nature *within* the phenomenal world. This produces a *binary* power relation: man is opposed to a single "other" wherein external nature's excesses are combined with the absolute power of the noumenal. Thus instead of reflecting the way man is caught *between* his phenomenal and rational aspects, *between* nature's might and the dominance of the supersensible, in Lyotard's account of the sublime, the subject confronts a single excessive "other", which overpowers the imagination such that man is forced to form an Idea of it as that which lacks proper re/presentation. Hence Lyotard's subject does not *transcend* the phenomenal so much as *contain* the radical "otherness"/absence of the noumenal: whilst appearing to relinquish his powers of representation, noumenal "otherness" is re-schematised to match the subject's Ideas of lack.

The key move which distorts the power relations of the dynamic sublime is thus the identification of phenomenal and noumenal forces. Lyotard thereby reduces the sublime to a single oppositional structure, whereas Kant's sublime is

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[61] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 29, p. 128 [5:269]; my emphasis.

structured by a more complex set of relations. This can be seen by comparing Lyotard's reading of Kant's reference to Exodus both to an alternative (and I will argue more Kantian) reading, and to the very different dynamic represented by the figure of Isis.

Kant describes the ban on graven images in Exodus as "the most sublime passage in the Jewish Law", because it commands that the sublime feeling of respect for man's moral vocation is exhibited only in "an abstract way . . . wholly negative as regards the sensible."[62] Such "negative presentation" gives the sublime its true force:

> For though the imagination finds nothing beyond the sensible that could support it, this very removal of its barriers also makes it feel unbounded, so that its separation [from the sensible] is an exhibition of the infinite; and though an exhibition of the infinite can as such never be more than merely negative, it still expands the soul.[63]

Lyotard's reading of this passage allows him to solidify a fundamentally binary version of the sublime. Lyotard reads Kant as suggesting that reason's Idea of the Absolute is an Idea of some-thing/Being which is unpresentable: "one cannot present the absolute. But one can present that there is some absolute. This is a "negative" presentation.[64] Thus a sublime painting "will of course 'present' something, though negatively; [. . .] it will enable us to see only by making it impossible to see", and thereby "puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself."[65] Negative exhibition is thus read as presenting the impossibility of presenting *something*. The separation of the imagination from the sensible indicates not that there is no-thing for the imagination to represent,

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[62] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 29, p. 135 [5:274].
[63] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 29, p. 135 [5:274].
[64] Lyotard, "Representation, Presentation, Unrepresentable", p. 126.
[65] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 44.

instead that the absolute is represented as "some-thing" always lacking or resisting its proper ("positive") presentation.

However, I would argue that for Kant, this separation precisely generates the most appropriate representation of the noumenal. Exactly because it is the power of sensible representation, only *the imagination* can make us aware that our Ideas of the Absolute are wholly independent of space-time limits and thereby *exceed* the very conditions of sensible representation and remain unaffected by even the mightiest of phenomenal powers. When the imagination determines itself in relation to Ideas which cannot be represented directly, it separates itself from the sensible to the extent that it represents the Absolute as that which takes it beyond its own limits, as *super*-sensible, as unconditionally absent from the sensible world. Thus Lyotard's account misrepresents the force of Kant's statement that the imagination finds *"nothing to support it"*. To find nothing is not equivalent to lacking "something": in finding nothing, the imagination encounters the noumenal *as nothing, as absence.*

Thus the "negative exhibition" of Ideas is more properly read as referring to the way in which the noumenal is presented as supersensible via this imaginative encounter with nothing. Far from marking the imagination's failure, this encounter removes the imagination's barriers. It extends our imaginative scope beyond the limits of the sensible world, and allows man to feel himself capable of legislating freely, surpassing empirical constraint. As Kant puts it:

> a liking for the sublime in nature [. . .] is a feeling that the imagination *by its own action* is depriving itself of its freedom, in being determined purposively according to a law different from that of its empirical use. The imagination *thereby acquires an expansion and a might that surpasses the one it sacrifices*[66]

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[66] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 29, p. 129 [5:269]; original italics; my emphasis.

This contrasts with Lyotard's account, which removes all possibility of this imaginative transcendence of empirical limits precisely because it supplants the encounter with no-thing (noumena) *beyond* man with a representation of lack *within* (phenomenal) reality.

In contrast to the way in which Lyotard privileges the passages on Exodus, he remains relatively silent about the figure of Isis. Isis appears only in a footnote in the *Critique of Judgement*, but as the figure symbolising Mother Nature, she must be read in relation to the dynamic sublime:

> Perhaps nothing more sublime has ever been said, or a thought ever been expressed more sublimely, than in that inscription above the temple of *Isis* (Mother Nature): "I am all that is, that was, and that will be, and no mortal has lifted my veil."[67]

Isis instantiates Kant's view of Nature conceived as a totality, that is, as noumenal. Sublimity depends on the impossibility of lifting the veil from this totality that is both temporal (that "is", "was", "will be") and also spatial (the "all"), and thus beyond man's conditioned spatio-temporal limits. Only in so far as we conceive Isis as necessarily *beyond* sensible intuition is the imagination elevated by its confrontation with her: only a confrontation with the noumenal as *super*-sensible nothingness can produce the sublime feeling that reason's capacity for Ideas of the Absolute is itself a supersensible power.

Thus in her article "Stages on Kant's Way", Christine Battersby appeals to a later essay by Kant that refers to Isis to argue that the sublime figure of Mother Nature is constructed as in principle unobtainable, exactly in order to prevent the emasculation of reason. She shows how Kant explicitly uses the term "Entmannung" ["emasulation"] to characterise those who think they can

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[67] Kant, *CJ*, sect. 49, p. 185 [5:316].

see through or penetrate the "veil" of Isis.[68] Hence she concludes that for Kant "Emasculation (*Entmannung*) comes from a false relation to the real: from claiming that the veil of Isis is thin enough for us to be able to sense what is beneath."[69] Were Isis to be intuitable, the faculty of reason would no longer be a supersensible power, reason would indeed be limited to its normal function of matching sense-data to concepts: "The sublime demands a reason that is male: unemasculated by an apparently penetrative act of intellectual intuition that merely signifies a passive and dependent relationship to matter."[70] Yet Lyotard's account of the sublime produces just such an emasculation by making the noumenal in principle exhibitable, and thus reducing reason's Ideas of a radically absent Isis into a mode of conceptualising lack within the phenomenal space-time frame of reality. Thus Lyotard's sublime is in fact closer to the use of the Isis metaphor by the German poet and dramatist, Friedrich von Schiller.

Battersby offers an analysis of Schiller's poem "The Veiled Image at Sais" which makes it clear that for Schiller, as for Lyotard, Isis is only unobtainable as a matter of empirical weakness:

> Schiller [. . .] does not deny man (males) the capacity to see what is hidden behind the veil of appearances; he only denies that there are now males strong enough - sublime enough - to actively seek truth in the manner of Moses.[71]

Both Lyotard and Schiller can be read as producing, in Kantian terms, a double emasculation of reason. Positioning Isis as necessarily inaccessible not only guarantees reason's status as supersensible, it also preserves the infinity of phenomenal appearances for man's speculation. Were the totality of Nature to

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[68] The essay by Kant referred to in Battersby's article is: "On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy", in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Peter Fenves (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993).
[69] Battersby, "Stages on Kant's Way", p. 103.
[70] Battersby, "Stages on Kant's Way", p. 103.
[71] Battersby, "Stages on Kant's Way", p. 101-2.

be intuitable as such, man would no longer be presented with an infinity of appearances which exactly in their *incomprehensibility* as a single whole offer him endless resources for speculation. Reason's demand for unconditioned totality can only make itself felt against this infinite play of appearances which require endless ordering in space and time. At the same time, without this manifold of intuition to work over, the subject could never come into being: the transcendental subject can only be posited via its relation to (transcendental) objects, since each requires the other as the reference point making their construction in a space-time frame possible. Thus for Kant, the possibility of intuiting Isis does not hold out the possibility of actualising man's transcendence of Nature. On the contrary, such immediate (intellectual) intuition would *erase* the conditions under which both the human subject and phenomenal nature come into being, and would thus also erase the very possibility of transcendence.

Lyotard risks just such a collapse of the Kantian system by making the Absolute "in principle" intuitable. However, this does not mean that man's encounter with the Absolute in Lyotard's sublime results in the immediacy of purely intellectual intuition. Instead, the possibility of transcending the sensible is erased because of the way that noumenal absence has been identified with nature's phenomenal excesses: the sublime affirms man's rational capacity to think that which lacks presentation *within* sensible reality.

At the same time, exactly because Lyotard constructs the noumenal/Isis as "something" in principle presentable, it is *his* construction of the sublime which is structured by a logic of loss. For Kant, Isis is *necessarily* absent: far from "nostalgically" longing for re-union with Nature in its totality, Kant's sublime only functions if such longings are banished as illusory. For Lyotard, by

contrast, the desire for reunion is rejected in the postmodern sublime *not* because there is *nothing* to be found but because what is lost is empirically irretrievable as anything other than lack without committing violence against it. Thus Lyotard differs from Schiller to the extent that, for Lyotard, the attempt to represent the lost wholeness of nature will *always* result in mis-representation because of the empirical limits of the imagination. The postmodern alternative to violation becomes the celebration of reason's power to think the unpresentable as marking the moment when the human mapping of reality fails.

If Isis is "something" behind the veils which man *fails* to represent, as Lyotard would have it, she becomes the momentary suspension of presentation held within and between spatio/temporal structures. Reason's "inhumanity" no longer lies in the way that its pure supersensible form would annihilate all human existence. Instead, reason becomes a capacity to think these suspensions in/of the human framework of perception. This capacity generates the "infinity of plastic essays" which allude to the "invisibility in the visible": ever new maps with which to frame the subject's lack of vision as moments where there is *"something"* which is always already lacking within the space-time frame that would make it presentable to man.[72] Thus the Enlightenment logic of "here and now" is replaced with the postmodern future-perfect: with a rule for thinking Isis as that which will always already have eluded us by the time we attempt to frame it.[73]

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[72] Lyotard, "Representation, Presentation, Unpresentable", p. 127 and p. 126.
[73] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 140. See also Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 46.

Lyotard claims that this undoes "the presumption of the mind with respect to time"[74]. However, by locating Isis as that which falls between the bars of space and time, he captures her as the presentation of lack within the space-time frame. Far from failing, man has found a new grammatical tense by which to extend his being: reason extends the phenomenal power of man to include the conceptualisation of the gaps within reality. The inhumanity of reason becomes another way of extending the scope of the subject to *encompass* its "other".

Lyotard robs Isis of her own inhumanity. For Kant, Isis does not belong to the order of things that man *could* violate: there is nothing behind the veils that can be thought of as even potentially presentable. In trying to lift the veil, he destroys only himself. Kant's Isis retains a power unconditioned by man's space-time frame - including its more complex grammatical forms. For Kant, Isis is not lack, and the limits of human knowledge and experience cannot be simply extended to include her as such: on the contrary, her very absence preserves the possibility of an imaginative transcendence lost in Lyotard's account.

Immaterial Materiality

The Kantian subject constructs himself *between* nature as appearance and Nature as Isis, and thus preserves a space for both sensible being and transcendence of that limited existence. In Lyotard's sublime, these two different constructions of nature collapse into a single figure of "otherness": this single opposition asserts reason's power to think the unpresentable at the double cost of losing the space for imaginative transcendence and reducing noumenal absence to a lack of presence/presentation. In fact, Lyotard reinscribes the most basic of

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[74] Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde", p. 107.

metaphysical binarisms in his rewriting of the sublime: the "other" which lacks

presentation turns out to be none other than Matter itself.

As I have shown, according to Lyotard, the avant-garde

painter/philosopher continually alludes to the absolute as that which cannot be

presented except as something lacking presentation. Lyotard also describes this

as "the avant-gardist attempt" to inscribe "the occurrence of a *sensory now* as

what cannot be presented and which remains to be presented in the decline of

great representational painting".[75] In "After the Sublime, the State of

Aesthetics", this identification of the noumenal Absolute with a "sensory now"

becomes even more explicit:

> As every presentation consists in the 'forming' of the matter of the data,
> the disaster suffered by the imagination can be understood as the sign
> that the forms are irrelevant to the sublime sentiment. But in that case,
> where does matter stand, if the forms are no longer there to make it
> presentable? How is it with presence?[76]

The immediate presence of materiality via the senses becomes the Absolute

which cannot be presented. Lyotard positions the sensory immediacy of matter

as if it were the thing-in-itself which would match reason's Ideas of the Absolute

except that it always withdraws from the terms that would make it presentable

as such: "By matter, I mean the Thing [. . .]. How can the mind situate itself, get

in touch with something that withdraws from every relationship?"[77] The failing

of the imagination in the sublime becomes an opening onto this sensory

immediacy: it "turns towards" matter as "presence without recourse to the

means of presentation".[78] Thus in the sublime matter "is presence as

unpresentable to the mind, always withdrawn from its grasp".[79]

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[75] Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde", p. 103.
[76] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 136.
[77] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 142.
[78] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 142 and p. 139.
[79] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 142.

In this way, Lyotard conflates the absent wholeness of noumenal Nature, with an immediate presence of phenomenal materiality, perceived through the senses but always already "lost" to presentation in its pure and excessive immediacy. This is because for Lyotard "to present is to relativize, to place into contexts and conditions".[80] This reflects a fundamental misunderstanding which short-circuits the Kantian system. Lyotard performs the dogmatic error of presuming sensation as immediate access to the thing-in-itself, which is then necessarily and eternally lost from the forms "imposed" by the subject. However, for Kant, man has no direct access to the thing-in-itself precisely in order that human experience is *not* reduced to a distorted or "relativised" representation of 'things as they really are'. Kant's insistence that reality is constructed blocks the sceptical production of a loss at the heart of reality: the noumenal must be an absence beyond reality, not a "lack within" the forms of space and time.

Hence there is *no-thing* (logically) prior to spatio-temporal conditioning to be relativised, contextualised, or placed within a frame. Instead, the materiality of sensory intuition, far from being the unconditioned thing-in-itself, is *produced* as reality only within a spatio-temporal framework: material immediacy is the reality of our conditioned senses. There is no "lost" pre-spatio-temporal immediacy for Kant, because the transcendental conditions of space and time are already embedded in the manifold of sensory intuition as the very forms of intuition. Specific spatio-temporal orderings within this un-differentiated space-time manifold are generated by the imagination, which schematises intuition to produce the maps or templates (transcendental objects) which order and construct our reality. Thus sensory immediacy *becomes* reality

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[80] Lyotard, "Representation, Presentation, Unpresentable", p. 126.

by being schematised in space and time, generating an objective world in relation to which it becomes possible to posit a subject. The reality of *both* the subject and the object/s of the senses are simultaneously generated via the organisation of the spatio-temporal frame. The subject only comes into being *with* the construction of transcendental object/s, which function as that which is other to the subject in space and time. Subject and object are thus wholly interdependent.

However, once Lyotard maps the manifold of sensory intuition onto the thing-in-itself, the "other"/object against which the subject orients himself is *always already* constituted. Far from being generated *with* the subject via the spatio-temporal framing of reality, sensory immediacy is positioned as an "other"/object constituted as absolutely present in and to itself, prior to the forms of space and time: hence spatio-temporal conditions become an imposition which *de-realise*. The transcendental object, rather than being understood as the *construction* of schemata within space and time, is reduced by Lyotard to the violent and violating *imposition* of spatio-temporal conditions on the unformed immediacy of sensation.

Thus the subject is no longer constructed as a logical reference point *together with* the space-time maps of objective reality. Instead, spatio-temporal structures are governed by a subject already secured via an opposition to an absolutely unconditioned "other". This "other" can only be recognised by the subject if the necessary conditions are imposed upon it to make it visible to the human eye; at the same time, this precisely eradicates the otherness of absolute immediacy against which the subject defines himself. Hence the subject and his "reality" are always already constituted as lacking. Indeed, insofar as the transcendental object is that which *structures* man's reality, in Lyotard's system

the object that performs this function is *lack*: lack of the immediate presence of materiality constitutes man's "reality" as always already "missing".

Hence according to Lyotard, the "unpresentable" object of Ideas is the sensible aspect of materiality which cannot be captured by Kant's Newtonian spatio-temporal abstractions. Lyotard identifies "nuance and timbre" as qualities which precisely "escape this sort of determination".[81] Nuance and timbre are the "scarcely perceptible differences between sounds or colours which are otherwise identical in terms of the determination of their physical parameters".[82] These qualities disrupt the clear division of one note or shade from another within the frame of a "sound- or colour continuum" and thereby "introduce a sort of infinity".[83]

Lyotard is here referring to the same kind of sensory "real" that Kant is concerned with in the section of the First *Critique* entitled "The Anticipations of Perception". Here Kant discusses the way that the quality of a sensation cannot be quantified as such, but can only be represented as a degree of intensity in relation to the absence of sensation, the "degree-zero".[84] Intensity thus holds open the possibility of an infinity of degrees of sensation within the real.

Lyotard equates this potential infinity of intensities with "the unpresentable" because in their lack of quantifiability "nuance or timbre are the distress and despair of the exact division and thus the clear composition of sounds and colours according to graded scales and harmonic temperaments".[85] However, this description suggests that intensive material qualities are inherently characterised by their "escaping" the subject's representational

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81 Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 139.
82 Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 140.
83 Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 140.
84 See Kant, CPR, pp. 210-3 [A166-169; B207-211].
85 Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 140.

frame. The timbre and nuance of sensory matter are thereby collapsed into the *unpresentable absence* of sensation, the degree-zero. As both unquantifiable intensity and the degree-zero of sensation are "unrepresentable" by the subject, both are mapped onto the unpresentable Absolute towards which man turns in the sublime.

Once again, this is to short-circuit the Kantian system. Firstly, the matter of sensation is not simply absent for Kant, and hence cannot be equated with the degree-zero of sensation: indeed, the model of intensity exactly provides a way for constructing (re-presenting) sensory immediacy via *relation* to this degree-zero. Secondly, the latter is constructed as absence *within* the space-time manifold:

> from empirical consciousness to pure consciousness a graduated transition is possible, the real in the former completely vanishing and a *merely formal a priori consciousness of the manifold in space and time remaining*. Consequently there is also possible a synthesis in the process of generating the magnitude of a sensation from its beginning in pure intuition=0, up to any required magnitude. [86]

Hence the notion of intensity in fact points most clearly to the *unmappability* of the sensory and the noumenal: for Kant, the absence of sensation is an absence constructed *within* the manifold of intuition, whereas the noumenal is that which can be properly characterised only in negative terms as standing beyond the spatio-temporal manifold.

Furthermore, I would argue that within the Kantian system nuance and timbre are perceived as "something" which "distresses" precisely because they are empirical, sensory, wholly *phenomenal* matters which nonetheless do not easily lend themselves to ordering within the subject's linear space-time model. By mapping sensory immediacy onto the noumenal via the figure of the

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[86] Kant, *CPR*, pp. 201-2 [B208]; my emphasis.

unpresentable, Lyotard captures materiality in a much more straightforward binary than the Kantian system. For Kant, sensory immediacy is constructed as the real within the space-time frame, but it also holds open gaps *within* that space-time reality in several different ways: not only via the formless chaos of phenomenal nature which *lacks* spatio-temporal order, but also via the degree-zero of sensation as *absence* within, via intensive sensation which *resists* ordering into neatly divisible units of space and time, and via the difference between mirror-images which makes itself felt through the senses though it escapes any *conceptual* differentiation (see chapter three).

The notion of sensory intensity is thus one of a number of sites in Kant's system which allow that the manifold of intuition cannot always be fully captured within the subject's linear space-time frame. This is not to claim that these gaps are straightforwardly unconditioned, but that they hold open spaces within (phenomenal) reality, within the space-time frame, for *different conditions* of existence and therefore for *another kind* of self. As we will see, in the second part of this thesis I will link these potentially productive gaps in Kantian space-time to the alternative modes of female selfhood explored in the poetry of women Expressionists.

However, for Lyotard, the sensory intensity which the subject's transcendental framework cannot fully capture cannot function as a gap *within* linear space-time which might open into a *different* spatiality and temporality, because he positions it as "the unpresentable" thing-in-itself whose noumenal immediacy is beyond *all* forms of spatio-temporal order. Hence Lyotard cannot question the assumption that form is only produced by the Newtonian abstractions of the subject: in his account, matter that absents itself from the subject absents itself from any active formation. He thus re-inscribes the

hylomorphic assumption that matter requires ordering by the subject if it is to take on any spatio-temporal form.

Timbre and nuance escape the grading and ordering, the "exact division" and "clear composition", that would be brought to them by the subject because they take place only where the subject's capacities are suspended: they are "presence in the absence of the active mind".[87] However, for Lyotard, this means that "the matter thus invoked [nuance and timbre]....is *in no way a material whose function would be to fill a form and actualise it*".[88] Nuance and timbre are conceived only as that formless passivity which eludes formation by the subject and thus remains beyond all space-time. Their manifold materiality cannot be imagined as the site of a different relation between matter and (spatio-temporal) form. Lyotard's account of intensity as the "distress" and "despair" of the quantifying subject overlooks the way in which intensity, even within Kant's system, could be explored as offering an alternative mode of ordering, one that *resists* linear temporality and divisibility in terms of spatial units. His reductive reading leaves him with no space for imagining a different space-time, wherein form might be generated within the "diverse, unstable and evanescent" manifold.[89]

Thus, in Lyotard's reworking of Kant one reduction leads to another, setting up a trap which erases the differences within difference, and which reduces all difference to the "other" of the masculine subject. Ultimately, in so far as sensory materiality is mapped onto the noumenal as absent presence, such materiality itself becomes inherently absent from the subject's world. For Lyotard, sensory materiality requires the suspension of the subject's mind if its

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[87] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 140.
[88] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 141.
[89] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 138.

immediate presence is not to be erased by the subject's conditioning. However, at the same time, things can only acquire form and hence reality via the subject's representational frame: thus if material immediacy lacks presentation to the subject, then it does not exist as all.

This goes beyond the hylomorphism which Lyotard shares with Kant, where passive matter requires formation by an active subject. For on Lyotard's account, if timbre and nuance are not presentable to the subject in their material immediacy, then they are not material:

> From this aspect of matter, one must say that *it must be immaterial* [. . .]. The matter I'm talking about is 'immaterial', anobjectable, because it can only "take place" or find its occasion at the price of suspending these active powers of the mind.[90]

Once again, within Lyotard's frame it is not possible to think of sensory material intensities as the site of another kind of materiality which does not depend on ordering by the subject for the generation of its space/place or time/occasion. Thus, whilst the "mindless state of mind" required of the subject in immediate sensation can be celebrated in representation via a constant play of forms, materiality itself is radically absent from Lyotard's system - matter has simply disappeared.[91]

By mapping the manifold of intensities onto the noumenal thing-in-itself, Lyotard performs a familiar conjuring trick: materiality becomes immaterial to philosophy's discourse on matter. Lyotard reinscribes the metaphysical sacrifice which allowed Western philosophy to "get off the ground". Moreover, just as phenomenal nature provides the Kantian subject with endless resources for speculation, the material singularity of the unpresentable provides the grounds for ongoing avant-garde productions by

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[90] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 140; my emphasis.
[91] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 140.

the postmodern artist/philosopher. Lyotard's notion of the unpresentable must be read in a double perspective: as logical within its own philosophical frame, and as astonishing and disturbing in its reinscriptive force. Despite his desire to think "how it is" with man's "other", Lyotard reinforces the very structures keeping the dark realm of matter in its place. Refused the active capacity for self-formation, materiality remains lacking in reality, except as the subject's necessary "other".

Incomparable Differences

Lyotard's mapping of materiality onto the unpresentable consolidates the same elision that underlies his reading of the dynamic sublime. As matter disappears, so Isis is confirmed not as absence but as lack of presence/ presentation. By identifying the elusive presence of sensory materiality with the absolute that cannot be presented, Lyotard equates the noumenal with the formlessness of phenomenal nature in its chaotic immediacy. Once again, the noumenal becomes *something* lost from representation, rather than no-thing; it becomes that which lacks within and withdraws from the ordering of the subject. The materiality of the sensory now and the noumenal totality of Mother Nature (Isis) become one presence where the only "absence" is the absence of the subject's "active powers of the mind".[92]

Thus I would argue that Lyotard extends hylomorphism to the noumenal. The nuance and timbre of the sensory manifold are unpresentable because their impenetrable immediacy evades the imposition of the subject's representational forms. Once the noumenal is identified with this "sensory

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[92] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 140.

now", it too becomes an absolute passivity which is formless because it lacks or resists being formed by the subject. The noumenal is thus no longer unconditioned because it stands beyond the forms of space and time, but merely because the subject has not been able to condition it: it is not absence but presence which lacks presentation because "the forms are no longer there to make it *presentable*".[93]

Hence both the noumenal and the sensory manifold become the pure presence which the subject must allow to lie at the heart of presentation in order that there be some-thing to present, yet which withdraws from all forms of representation. The noumenal is made to make sense by becoming the sensory blindspot/s of the subject. Lyotard closes down the possibility that the *super*-sensible is not the deepest essence of sensation, but that which does not pertain to the order of intuition. By turning this "nothing" into "something", he negates the more radical absence of Kant's Isis. By sealing Mother Nature into an eternally lacking presence, Lyotard closes over the imaginative space where the subject's spatio-temporal forms do not apply - and where another mode of ordering might emerge.

Indeed, Lyotard's oppositional system reduces any "other" - including Isis - to the immateriality of the unpresentable; he thus reduces her noumenal absence to a mere shadow of itself. By mapping the noumenal onto the sensory immediacy of matter conceived as formless lack, Lyotard collapses the different kinds of absences within the Kantian system into one nebulous figure of "otherness": the pure presence which lacks form in the eyes of the subject. His re-working of the sublime erases the difference between the gaps within the manifold of sensory intuition which might lend themselves to other modes of

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[93] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 136.

spatio-temporal ordering, and the radical absence of Isis as absolutely beyond the subject's space-time frame.

Thus all gaps, lacks and absences look - and feel - the same: they are the sublime "material event" which has:

> a singular, incomparable quality - unforgettable and immediately forgotten - of the grain of a skin or a piece of wood, the fragrance of an aroma, the savour of a secretion or a piece of flesh, as well as a timbre or a nuance. *All these terms are interchangeable*" [94]

The singularity for which Lyotard seeks to preserve a space is precisely what is lost: materiality cannot be thought or remembered in its difference so that all material singularities become "interchangeable". This again reflects the way that Lyotard takes Kant's hylomorphism as the norm: he presumes that the only way in which something can take on an identifiable form is if the subject compares his intuitions across linear time and divisible space to produce objects as such. That which is *in*comparable therefore cannot exist as a differentiated object: it exists only as that which cannot be represented to the subject.

Hence there are no differences here but only one immaterial "other", eternally repeated: each timbre or nuance or piece of flesh or grain of skin represents only the same blindspot in the subject's mind as all other materialities. Thus when Lyotard writes that: "One cannot get rid of the Thing. Always forgotten, it is unforgettable", the multiple differences which he seeks to protect collapse into that which is only memorable as that which cannot be remembered.[95]

Lyotard's re-reading of the sublime is designed to preserve a space whereby difference is never reduced to the single reality of the subject. However, as all that is other to the subject's space-time is encompassed as "the

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[94] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 141; my emphasis.
[95] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 143.

unpresentable", all differences are identified exclusively in the subject's terms as that which troubles and escapes him and nags at his guilty conscience. In their interchangeability these differences,

> all designate the event of a passion, a passibility for which the mind will not have been prepared, which will have unsettled it, and of which it conserves only the feeling - anguish and jubilation - of an obscure debt [96]

Within this frame, it becomes unimaginable that what might be most important about the "other" is *not* that it is un-presentable or un-knowable to the subject, that what is specific about the flesh of the slave or the woman or the Jew might not be that *the subject* was unprepared for it and cannot represent it to himself. It becomes impossible to suppose that the differences which the subject cannot see might nonetheless emerge in a different space-time ordering, where the "other" might not, after all, be wholly indebted to the subject for its lived form. Lyotard's sublime leaves no gaps in which to imagine a spatiality where form might emerge from within material relationalities, instead of being imposed on passive matter by the subject; it leaves no time for a memory immanently produced within temporal patternings of change and repetition. The figure of Lyotard's "unpresentable" threatens to engulf not only materiality and Isis, but also the very spaces in which differences might configure themselves as something more than the "other" of the subject.

Hence the importance of tracing the ways in which the different potential sites of resistance to the subject's re-presentational order are dissolved into each other in Lyotard's sublime and thereby become indistinguishable, immaterial, and ineffective in disturbing the subject's gaze. Kant's system is radically short-circuited by Lyotard in two related ways. Firstly, Lyotard collapses the noumenal and the manifold of intuition into one site of

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[96] Lyotard, "After the Sublime", p. 141.

"otherness" whose unmediated presence is perceived by the subject as lacking from the spatio-temporal conditions of "reality". Secondly, therefore, instead of *constructing* human experience and reality in Kantina fashion, these conditions relativise and distort a given sensory immediacy. Thus Lyotard reduces the transcendental object either to a schema of lack - to a blackened shadow frozen in space and time, against which the subject always perceives himself - or to the mere imposition of form that at once de-realises material presence and produces the lack within the real. Within Lyotard's binary version of Kant, the relation between subject and object ("real" or transcendental) is always already structured by lack.

I want to argue that it is of vital importance to read Kant in a way that recognises that space and time are not merely a framework imposed by the subject but are generated *relationally* between a transcendental subject and transcendental object/s. Such a reading can allow that the specific *mode* of relationality producing both the space-time frame and the subject–object relation is not necessarily determined in advance. Kant himself restricts the forms of space and time shaping the subject–object relation to the linear temporality and geometrically divisible space required to secure the identity of an autonomous individual. Nonetheless, a reading that recognises that the spatio-temporal meshes of reality are generated as much by the constitution of schematised objects as by the simultaneously posited subject, can also hold open the possibility of a differently consituted subject–object relation generated together with different spatio-temporal forms.

However, if the spatio-temporal conditions are equated with the imposition of form onto the unmediated presence of the "sensory real", space and time are not generated as the forms of a specific mode of subject–object

relation. Instead, the subject is always already opposed to objects which he perceives only as lacking in their proper reality, in their immediacy and presence; the forms of space and time are thus limited to those necessary for capturing or, at best, marking out the impossibility of capturing this lack of/in the real. Given Lyotard's binary (mis-) reading of Kant, it becomes impossible to question the forms of spatio-temporal structures by questioning the underlying mode of subject–object relationality which generates the space-time of reality.

Moreover, Lyotard also closes down the very sites within Kant's system wherein a different kind of relationality, generating a different kind of space and time as well as a different kind of subject, could develop. As the materiality of sensation which resists linear spatio-temporal ordering is equated with the absolutely unpresentable, so the gaps within the sensory manifold also become lack, instead of openings into other space-times wherein non-hylomorphic modes of ordering could emerge. Thus in Lyotard's re-reading of the sublime as a dynamic structured around lack, all sites of "otherness" within the Kantian system are reduced to the same lack of form in the subject's eyes: neither the intensity of timbre and nuance, nor the transcendental object with which the subject comes into existence, can be reworked as anything else.

Whether this lack is mourned as a loss of presence (as in the modern sublime), or celebrated as representing the infinite necessity and potential for man to re-invent his own rules of representation (as in the postmodern sublime) is then, to borrow Lyotard's own terminology, immaterial. Difference is defined by its eternal incommensurability with the subject, providing an infinite space in which inhuman reason can continually reinvent the forms of humanity. Hence man is only de-mastered in relation to time to the extent that he now runs continually ahead and behind of himself, capturing the "other" in the

postmodern tense such that it always *will have been* for the subject and never comes into a time of its own.

The postmodern inventiveness of the philosopher/painter creates precisely that patchwork of flows and intensities where there is no longer any space for the specificity of sexed difference: the patches are almost seamless, the gaps between them sealed over by the continually repeated figure of lack which holds together the fabric of the subject. In contrast, I would argue that preserving the non-identity of absences within Kant's philosophy holds open a space for feminist subversion to which Lyotard's reading blinds him. Whilst Kant, too, has an essentially hylomorphic account of the matter/form relation, there are spaces within Kant's system that make it possible to reconfigure this relation - spaces which are sealed over in Lyotard's account.

I want to argue for a reading of the sublime that privileges the radical absence of the noumenal as figured by Kant's Isis. Only if Isis is preserved as a necessary absence, rather than a lack of phenomenal presence/presentation, can she occupy a privileged relation to difference. In her absence from the subject's gaze, Isis maintains a space for imagining modes of ordering unlimited by the need to protect the subject's boundaries, so that difference/s and "otherness" need not be reduced to the oppositional "other" of the same. Via the abyss of her noumenal absence, Isis hold open the possibility of accessing the gaps in the manifold which resisted the subject's space-time, but without identifying those gaps merely as that which is "unpresentable" to man, and without reducing them to those insubstantial inversions of spatio-temporal form, visible only as lack. Within the dark absence of Isis, these gaps are no longer seen as the formless chaos which must be contained to preserve the subject's security: her inhuman power protects a space where the manifold diversity of materiality can

resonate differently. In this way, Isis instantiates a site for reworking the constitutive relationality that generates both self and world: she protects a dark space where the relations between form and matter, subject and object can be reworked to produce different kinds of selves.

As I have shown, Lyotard's reworking of Kant dissolves noumenal absence into invisible and immaterial lack: a disappearance to which only the postmodern philosopher can bear witness. I would like to replace Lyotard's blinding sublime with the different darkness of Isis. Moreover, in the second part of this study, I will argue that it is this very darkness which is explored in the work of Claire Goll and Paula Ludwig. Through their writing, both authors seek out that shadowy absence where woman is irreducible to the "other" of the subject. I will examine the ways in which their poetic texts subvert and rework the Kantian subject–object relation to produce female selves which emerge from generative relationalities such that their difference/s are no longer merely excluded or contained. I will argue that in the work of Ludwig and Goll, identity is not only shaped within the dark absence protected by Isis, but that absence of identity remains essential in the generation of sublime female selves.

However, before proceeding to a detailed analysis of selected texts by both authors, it is necessary to examine the context of German Expressionism within which these texts were produced. Hence, in the next chapter, I will argue that Expressionism itself should be situated within a post-Kantian tradition, and moreover, that early Expressionism in particular belongs to a very different kind of modernity than Lyotard's nostalgic sublime. At the same time, I will demonstrate that the representation of woman in early Expressionism remains deeply problematic. By reducing Isis to lack, Lyotard's postmodern sublime bears out Lacan's assertion that "Il n'y a pas La femme puisque - [. . .] - de son

essence, elle n'est pas toute."[97] In a earlier variation on the same theme, the poetry of early Expressionism repeats a long tradition in Western "civilisation", whereby, as Adorno puts it, woman's essence emerges only "out of her distortion."[98] As I will show, woman's distortion is no less fundamental to the Expressionists' reworking of the Kantian world than is her dissolution to Lyotard's postmodern patchwork.

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[97] Jacques Lacan, *Le Seminaire Livre XX: Encore, 1972-3* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p. 68. Lacan's phrase suggests both that woman lacks a universal, and that woman is essentially lacking (incomplete).

[98] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York, London: Verso, 1979 [first published: 1944]), p. 249.

Chapter Two

The Dissolution of Man:

German Expressionism

and the Post-human Sublime

In a "Note on the Meaning of Post-", Lyotard argues that postmodernity should

not be understood as following modernity but as an eruption within its time-

frame.[1] Despite his problematic reworking of Kant, this refusal to adopt a linear

account of modernity and postmodernity as successive epochs remains

valuable: it allows that history contains gaps and fissures which cannot be

accounted for in terms of the linear unfolding of a teleological project. One of

the avant-garde movements which Lyotard lists as such a rupture is German

Expressionism, which he uses to map out the difference between the modern

and the postmodern sublime: "What I have in mind will become clear if we

dispose very schematically a few names on the chessboard of the history of

avant-garde: on the side of melancholia, the German Expressionists....".[2]

However, in this chapter, I will argue that although Expressionism does indeed

disrupt the security of the Enlightenment subject, the Expressionists' response to

the dizzying reality of modernity is not try and recuperate a lost version of

world. Hence I will argue against Lyotard's subsumption of Expressionism

under the modern, nostalgic sublime, and will use the work of Richard Murphy

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[1] See Jean-François Lyotard, "Note on the Meaning of Post-", in *The Postmodern Explained to Children*, trans. and ed. Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas (London: Turnaround, 1992 [first published in France: 1986]), pp. 89-93.
[2] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 45.

to demonstrate that even within Lyotard's philosophical framework, early Expressionism would more readily be positioned alongside the postmodern sublime.[3]

However, I will go on to argue that Murphy's postmodern reading remains reductive, and that the literary critic Silvio Vietta provides a more convincing analysis which recognises the specificity of the disruptions effected by early Expressionism.[4] I will complement Vietta's framework with Deleuze's account of Expressionist cinema as a post-human reworking of Kant's dynamic sublime, and will show that Deleuze's analysis can be readily extended to Expressionist poetry.[5] However, I will also argue that Expressionism's destruction of the human subject depends upon what Barbara Wright has called "an 'eternal' - or in our view a very traditional - kind of woman".[6] Using close readings of selected Expressionist poems, particularly works by Gottfried Benn, I will demonstrate that these "eternal" aspects of female nature take on a new significance in Expressionism, as male identity once again reconfigures itself in opposition to woman, albeit by constructing his own demise around her stable form.

"German Expressionism" refers to a period of intense literary and artistic activity in Germany and surrounding German speaking countries in the period immediately before, during and after the 1914-1918 war.[7] It cannot be

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[3] I will use Richard Murphy's article "The Expressionist Revolution: The Re-writing of the Discursive World", *The German Quarterly*, 64.4 (1991), 464-474.

[4] Though Silvio Vietta and Hans-Georg Kempner co-authored the extremely influential study *Expressionismus* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1975), I will be using material from part two, written solely by Vietta; this text will therefore be referred to under his name.

[5] See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement - Image*, trans. Barbara Habberjam and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Athlone Press, 1986), pp. 49-55.

[6] Barbara Wright, "'New Man', Eternal Woman: Expressionist Responses to German Feminism", *The German Quarterly*, (1987), 582-599, (p. 583).

[7] Many features of Expressionism are shared by much European (especially Scandanavian) and North American art and literature of the early modernist period, for

described as a coherent movement, but instead encompasses work by writers,

artists and theorists with highly disparate and rapidly changing political and

aesthetic concerns.[8] Indeed, though Expressionism encompasses several

contemporaneous groups whose activity is of particular importance, only some

of these groups developed specific styles and modes of artistic expression, and

many artists moved between groups. This complex interrelation between the

key centres of artistic and cultural activity is reflected in a multiplicity of artistic

styles and modes of production. These both make Expressionism notoriously

difficult to summarise, yet also reflect its key aesthetic characteristic: intense

pressure was brought to bear on all forms of artistic representation in the search

for a means of expressing man's experience of the modern world. This

expressive pressure sometimes resulted in the mute scream of Munch's agonised

painting that has come to be an icon of Expressionism.[9] However, constantly

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example, the drive towards abstraction or the questioning of the unity of the subject. Moreover, the theorists and artists of the German movement themselves argue that Expressionism is not confined to the early twentieth-century but is a mode of artistic expression which resurfaces throughout history; in particular the Expressionists align themselves with the German Gothic tradition. For an account of German Expressionism which situates its specificity within an international context, see Walter H. Sokel, *The Writer in Extremis: Expressionism in Twentieth-Century German Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1959); for an account positioning Expressionism within a detailed analysis of early modernism in general, see Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music and Painting in Europe 1900-1916* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); for an analysis of the relationship between Expressionism and the Gothic, see Geoffrey Perkins, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism*, British and Irish Studies in German Language and Literature, I (Frankfurt: Herbert Lang, 1974), especially chapter 3, pp. 69 - 91.

[8] The most important and influential of these groups include *Die Brücke* based in Dresden; the *Blaue Reiter* group based in Munich; the New Artists' Association in Munich; the circle surrounding Stefan George in Munich; those involved with *Der Sturm* and Herwarth Walden in Berlin; the writers exiled in Switzerland during the 1914-18 war, some of whom became the founders of dada.

[9] The Viennese critic and playwright, Hermann Bahr, was one of the first to define Expressionism in terms of the shriek: "der Mensch schreit nach einer Seele, (...). Auch die Kunst schreit mit, in die tiefe Finsternis hinein, sie schreit um Hilfe, sie schreit nach dem Geist: das ist der Expressionismus" (Hermann Bahr, *Expressionismus* (Munich: Delphin-Verlag, 1920; 1st edn: 1916), p.123). See also Walter Sokel: "Many Expressionists endeavoured to give the same effect on the printed page that Munch achieved in his painting" (Sokel, p. 4).

renewed challenge to find new ways of representing the world reflects a persistent and unsettling questioning of the nature of reality and of the self, with both philosophical and political implications.

The early period of Expressionism in particular can be characterised as the attempt to open up representation by reaching beyond the perceptual framework of the stable autonomous individual. This more radical phase of Expressionism, characterised by the critic Vietta as a period of *Ichdissoziation*, can be seen as symptomatic of and as a response to the disorienting experience of life in the modern city.[10] Thus Pinthus, the editor of the first major anthology of Expressionist poetry *Menschheitsdämmerung* (1920), emphasises the almost overwhelming speed and noise of city-life, where man's environment was transformed by new technologies of transportation and communication, by artificial light, by the sheer mass of people, by advances in medicine, by the increasing power of capital and the dominance of machines.[11] The 1914-18 European war intensified this experience of dislocation to the extreme; the devastation of the battlefield extending the landscape of disorder against which early Expressionism must be read. In later Expressionism however, and particularly in the immediate post-war period, the desire for a new order leads to a search for the "Neue Mensch", reinscribing the autonomous subject in visions of messianic leaders uniting a new Germany under common goals and principles.[12]

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[10] See Vietta, pp. 30-185; see pp. 35-7 especially on the explosive growth of Berlin around the turn of the century. See also Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music and Painting in Europe 1900-1916*, chapter 5: The City, § 5: Berlin, pp. 176-208.

[11] Kurt Pinthus, quoted in Vietta pp. 11-12; see also Pinthus's original foreword (republished as "Zuvor: Berlin, Herbst 1919") to *Menschheitsdämmerung*, (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1993 [first pub: 1920]), pp. 22-32.

[12] See Vietta, pp. 186 - 213.

Hence in what follows, I will focus on the earlier, more disruptive phase

of Expressionist poetry, using Deleuze and Vietta to argue that it instantiates a

different and more radical subversion of Kantian metaphysics than that

manifested in Lyotard's postmodern sublime.

Weltende: Revolutionary Poetics

A constant theme of Expressionist poetry is the apocalyptic end of the world.

Jacob van Hoddis's treatment of this *topos* in his short poem "Weltende", first

published in 1911, had an enormous impact on his contemporaries and is

generally regarded as opening the way for Expressionism within the German

literary context.[13] Indeed, Lichtenstein's poem "Die Dämmerung" published

later in the same year could almost be read as an extension of van Hoddis's text

in terms of both content and form. These poems have an exemplary status

within Expressionist criticism and theory: Murphy stresses the importance of

van Hoddis's poem and privileges Lichtenstein's use of metaphor, whilst Vietta

reads both poems in detail. Hence I will use these two texts both to critique

Lyotard's description of Expressionism as nostalgic, and to compare the very

different readings of early Expressionism generated by Murphy and Vietta

respectively. Indeed, what is at stake in these different interpretative

frameworks is the nature and extent of the apocalyptic explosion of order.

"Weltende" is written in the *Reihungsstil* (a style based upon the

contiguous threading of images) which comes to characterise much early

Expressionist poetry:

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[13] The Expressionist poet Johannes R. Becher, for example, wrote that van Hoddis's poem completely transformed himself and his contemporaries, showing them the way out of the suffocating bourgeois life they so despised. See Vietta p. 30.

Dem Bürger fliegt vom spitzen Kopf der Hut,
In allen Lüften hallt es wie Geschrei,
Dachdecker stürzen ab und gehn entzwei
und an den Küsten - liest man - steigt die Flut.

Der Sturm ist da, die wilden Meere hupfen
An Land, um dicke Dämme zu zerdrücken.
Die meisten Menschen haben einen Schnupfen.
Die Eisenbahnen fallen von den Brücken.[14]

The poem comprises a series of disparate images which resist ordering: "Die Bilder fügen sich nicht in die Einheit eines kohärenten Gedankenablaufs oder gar eines räumlich-situativen Zusammenhangs".[15] Indeed, the images are linked only by the way that each indicates the collapse of propriety and order: whether through natural catastrophe that threatens the very boundaries of man's territory (lines 4-6), through seemingly random disasters (lines 3, 8), through the absurdity of hats that seem disinclined to obey the laws of gravity or through the banal ubiquity of the common cold. As well as spatial disruption the simultaneity of the images suggests a lack of temporal ordering. This is emphasised by lines 4-5 of the poem, for no sooner are the rising tides read about than "Der Sturm ist da": the speed of modern communications means one can read about disasters as they happen. This creates a lack of temporal perspective, reflected in the ambiguity of the adverb "da": the storm is both "there", at the coast, and has come, is happening as if here and now. Hence instead of suggesting an ordered and symmetrical world, the tight rhyme pattern and regular metre contrasts with the lack of any temporal, spatial or

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[14] *Menschheitsdämmerung*, p. 39 [poem originally published: 1911]. "From pointed pates hats fly into the blue,/ All winds resound as though with muffled cries./ Steeplejacks fall from roofs and break in two,/ And on the coasts - we read - flood waters rise.// The storm has come, the seas run wild and skip/ Landwards, to squash big jetties there./ Most people have a cold, their noses drip./ Trains tumble from the bridges everywhere." Translation from: *German Poetry 1910-1975*, trans. and ed. Michael Hamburger (Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1977) p. 83.

[15] Vietta, p. 31. "The images do not obey the unity of a coherent train of thought, or even of a spatial-situational context".

causal coherence between and within the images and reinforces the sense of an almost mechanical arbitrariness and contingently related set of chaotic events.

Lichtenstein's poem "Die Dämmerung" conveys a similar sense of the overwhelming and threatening absurdity of a disorienting and disoriented world:

> Ein dicker Junge spielt mit einem Teich.
> Der Wind hat sich in einem Baum gefangen.
> Der Himmel sieht verbummelt aus und bleich,
> Als wäre ihm die Schminke ausgegangen.
>
> Auf lange Krücken schief herabgebückt
> Und schwatzend kriechen auf dem Felde zwei Lahme.
> Ein blonder Dichter wird vielleicht verrückt.
> Ein Pferdchen stolpert über eine Dame.
>
> An einem Fenster klebt ein fetter Mann.
> Ein Jüngling will ein weiches Weib besuchen.
> Ein grauer Clown zieht sich die Stiefel an.
> Ein Kinderwagen schreit und Hunde fluchen. [16]

In this poem, the laws governing both man and nature seem to have disintegrated. As in "Weltende", the poem's tightly structured form only serves to emphasise the disorderliness of the world it represents, a world which resists coherent causal and spatio-temporal regulation. Both poems, however, are also marked by a tone of detachment, which, rather than reflecting a systematic objectivity, instead indicates a passive indifference to the loss of any objective ordering. Hence though "Weltende" figures the inadequacy of man's structures for construct events meaningfully in space and time, the parenthetical remark in line 4 indicates man's physical distance from the reported catastrophes, whilst the lack of any further comment suggests this physical remove is matched by an

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[16] *Menschheitsdämmerung*, p. 47. "A fat boy plays with a pond./ The wind has got caught in a tree./ The sky looks run-down and pale,/ as if he had run out of make-up.// On long crutches, crookedly stooped/ and prattling, two cripples crawl on the field./ A blond poet loses his mind perhaps./ A house trips over a lady.//A fat man sticks to a window./ A youth wants to call on a soft woman./ A grey clown pulls his boots on./ A pram cries out and dogs curse."

indifferent attitude. Equally, in both poems, the absence of any poetic self marks an ironic distance from this "end of the world", as does the grotesque juxtaposition of the catastrophic and violent with the banal and merely absurd.

As Vietta notes, however, the safety provided by this irony is far from secure: it indicates the total collapse of man's power to order via judicious judgement. Far from reflecting a nostalgic desire to find a lost relation to the world, the poems express no sense of human feeling or judgement at all. Rather than attempting to regain a lost wholeness, the *Reihungsstil* instantiates a grammar of a-causality and existential disconnection which extends its indifference to the demise of man's rational ordering powers, and instead focuses attention on the chaotic vitality of a disturbed and disorderly world. Indeed, it is this very ambivalence towards the fate of human judgement that marks the "end of the world" of the reasonable *Bürger* most clearly.

The importance of the *Reihungsstil* in dislocating rational man from the centre of the world and of the poem suggests that it would be more appropriate to position the early Expressionists alongside the postmodern artist, as represented by Joyce. According to Lyotard, for Joyce "the grammar and vocabulary of literary language are no longer accepted as given".[17] Moreover, just as Lyotard describes Joyce postmodern because he draws attention to the unpresentable via "his writing itself, in the signifier", Richard Murphy describes the Expressionist poets as revolutionary because they question the "givenness" of reality via "an attack upon codes of representation".[18] According to Murphy in his article "The Expressionist Revolution: The Re-writing of the Discursive World", the "contorted and daring comparisons for which the expressionist

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[17] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 45.
[18] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 45; and Murphy p. 470.

poets showed a fondness" have a double aim: "first to shock the audience and forestall the reassurance it derives from recognising the familiar, and secondly to undermine its comfortable illusion of having grasped or fixed reality."[19] For Murphy, Expressionist poets defamiliarised the signifying codes in order to force their readership into questioning their relationship to reality itself.

Hence the disorienting and unnatural world depicted by van Hoddis and Lichtenstein reflects what Murphy calls a "poetic re-orientation". Such Expressionist texts perform "an assault upon traditional modes of perception and experience" by self-consciously destabilising traditional modes of representing phenomenal reality.[20] Within Murphy's framework, the ways in which "Weltende" and "Die Dämmerung" radically undo seemingly "natural" laws and reinscribe the world via a logic of disconnection and chaos would be read as "foreground[ing] the fact that the perception of phenomena rests on a fiction, a metaphor imposed upon the world."[21] Van Hoddis and Lichtenstein can be positioned as inaugurating what Murphy understands to be the revolutionary aspect of Expressionist poetics. The "new generation" of Expressionist writers inscribe an epistemological revolution by marking the fictionality of the real and the lack of any unmediated, "given" object of experience:

> By emphasising the artificial and constructed nature of their texts and the contingency of its images vis-a-vis the notional object of representation, they foreground the inherent fictionality and perspectivism in any form of representation. Thus they draw attention away from the referential object as such and toward the materiality and mediated nature of the text and its signs.[22]

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[19] Murphy, p. 471.
[20] Murphy, p. 470.
[21] Murphy, p. 470.
[22] Murphy, p. 469.

Within this reading of Expressionism, the a-causal and "non-realistic" images of Lichtenstein's and van Hoddis's poems must be read as serving a double function. Firstly, they exemplify the way in which the Expressionists' "foregrounding of fictionality through the violence of an imposed image" draws attention to the fact that what seemed like given laws of experience are "mere hypotheses [. . .] an ideological system of fictions that places limitations on experience".[23] Such Expressionist poets therefore "displace a previous reality, which is now perceived to have lost its legitimacy".[24] In particular, they displace a "reality" presented as "given" and "fixed" by ideological codes which purport to be unmediated modes of experience giving direct access to the referential object. Hence, for Murphy, the tension between the disconnected chaotic images and the tightly structured form of the Reihungsstil would be read as drawing attention to the very constructedness of the poem. Both "Weltende" and "Die Dämmerung" would be seen as exemplifying the Expressionists' opposition "to the kind of text that erases the marks of the enunciation and thus effaces the indications of its own fictionality, attempting to become a transparent window on the world."[25]

Moreover, by foregrounding the fictionality of the real, van Hoddis and Lichtenstein, like other Expressionist poets and painters, emphasise not only that "there is no longer any ideological constellation that can have an ultimate claim on the truth", but also that, consequently, "alternative discourses may be created to displace the dominant ideological constructs".[26] If the real is a "mere fiction", then no single construction of it can claim priority or completeness but

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[23] Murphy, p. 465.
[24] Murphy, p. 467.
[25] Murphy, p. 469.
[26] Murphy, p. 466.

"can only be grasped or comprehended in a very provisional sense, since [. . .] they are involved in a permanent process of slippage and displacement".[27] Hence the second exemplary function of the two poems when read within Murphy's framework: their bizarre and disconnected imagery would be seen as exemplifying the "apparent arbitrariness" via which the Expressionists emphasise that each text "presents its message as merely one possible mode among many."[28] According to Murphy, by pointing up the fictionality of the real, Expressionism brings with it the need and possibility of continuously regenerating alternative realities. Thus Murphy argues that the Expressionists inscribe: "a revolutionary openness and a resistance to closure into the texts, thereby holding open [...] the infinite re-writability of the real".[29] Thus though he uses the language of Derridean deconstruction, Murphy gives an account of the Expressionists which aligns them with Lyotard's postmodern philosopher-artists, for the final aim of Expressionism lies in the very act of inventing new fictions and new orderings, in "the very act of revolution itself as a constant and ongoing process".[30]

However, for Murphy, as for Lyotard, representation amounts to no more than a relativising "distortion" imposed by the subject. Expressionist poetry illuminates that what seemed to be the perceptual conditions "naturally" pertaining to the given are in fact "patterns of meaning postulated by man, that are imposed upon the phenomenal world in order to formulate it and bring it under his control."[31] Murphy's reading of Expressionism draws out the logical conclusion of reducing the Kantian construction of reality to the mere

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[27] Murphy, p. 470.
[28] Murphy, p. 470.
[29] Murphy, p. 471.
[30] Murphy, p. 464.
[31] Murphy, p. 465.

imposition of order upon an unmediated world; rather than recognising that the world of human experience and objective reality is constructed as such, Murphy's frame positions all constructions of order as subjectivised and essentially random fictions. The Expressionists' "revolutionary" gesture is to mark the fictionality of any version of reality, displacing belief in any objective actuality and opening the way for "an altered relationship to experience based on the imposition of an intensely personal version of the world."[32] Despite his use of post-structuralist theory, Murphy thereby reflects a common understanding of Expressionism, namely, that it figures a general epistemological crisis as objective reality collapses and is replaced with a subjectivised and personified vision of the world.

However, these accounts of Expressionism stem from what is in fact a false genealogy of the history of representation. This is exemplified by Murphy's account, which relies on the same kind of mis-reading of the representational norms of the nineteenth-century as underlies Lyotard's (mis-)reading of Kant. Like the avant-garde for Lyotard, for Murphy the Expressionists shatter the Enlightenment belief in "the transparent and the communicable experience" and instead highlight the ways in which a seemingly fixed "reality" is, in fact, always an imposed fiction.[33] As I have already suggested in chapter one, this is to seriously misrepresent the transcendental philosophy which shaped the German nineteenth century from Kant onwards, and which positioned itself as the search for the necessary conditions of possibility for both the "subject" and "objects" of reality. This transcendental tradition can easily embrace the postmodern "insight" that reality is a construct, though within its terms the real

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[32] Murphy, p. 467.
[33] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", p. 46.

is the product of a necessary, and not merely arbitrary, fiction. Murphy, on the contrary, equates the constructedness of reality with the imposition of subjective fabrications, and positions the Expressionists as revealing that all transcendental signifieds are "fictional" concepts which can be arbitrarily replaced. In this way, Murphy also removes from his account any awareness that particular kinds of transcendental construction are necessary for particular kinds of subject - an insight which was already immanent to the German transcendental tradition, with its focus on the necessary conditions of possibility for man to exist as an autonomous and (at least potentially) moral individual.

Hence the problematic status of Murphy's claim that the Expressionism "rebels against the real": if the real was, in fact, always already created through a fiction, then merely highlighting this fictionality seems less like revolution and more like stating the obvious.[34] Any specificity involved in the Expressionist's attack on reality is thus lost. Instead of critiquing the particular terms of the construction of reality, Expressionism merely seems to open the way for the endless and undifferentiated slippage of the real. Moreover, this reduction of Expressionism to mere subjectivism actively reinscribes an oppositional and fundamentally binary relation between man and the world. As in Lyotard's account of the sublime, Murphy contends that any provisional, subjective determination of "reality" still depends on the "imposition" of a fictional system onto an unmediated phenomenal world - even though this world is no longer regarded as accessible to the subject, but is given only as absent or lacking. Hence to claim as Murphy does that reality is not transparently fixed, but that there are as many "realities" as there are shifting and contingent fictions, is to obscure the fact that all of these supposedly contingent "realities" are already

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[34] Murphy, p. 471.

fixed by an underlying subject-object opposition. Moreover, this "revolutionary" reality and subjectivity has the added bonus of being "infinitely re-writable". Representation itself is "liberated" by the disappearance of objective reality: autonomous signifiers play over its absence which remains the essential ground for their unceasing activities.[35]

Murphy's framework has several other serious consequences for his reading of Expressionism. Firstly, his misrepresentation of the philosophical background of Expressionism is reflected in his comments on nature in Expressionist poetry. He claims that the Expressionists valorise "the artificial world of human creativity and the autonomy of consciousness" instead of "the organic, referential realm of the given".[36] However, though it is certainly true that the Expressionists' view of nature differs significantly from the views of their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century predecessors, Murphy's comments set up an opposition between them which is far too clear-cut, and which makes the Expressionists seem more radical than they actually are. His argument overlooks the ways in which the organic, from Kant onwards, is not figured as "referential" or "given" but a constructed realm. More importantly, in this context, he also fails to acknowledge the way in which the organic realm was precisely privileged by the Romantics as a metaphor for human consciousness, and, especially, (male) creativity and genius.[37] Thus to valorise the autonomy

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[35] Murphy, p. 468, 469.

[36] Murphy, p. 467.

[37] See M.H. Abrams *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), especially chapters VII ("The Psychology of Literary Invention: Mechanical and Organic Theories") and VIII ("The Psychology of Literary Invention: Unconscious Genius and Organic Growth"), pp. 156 - 225. See also Christine Battersby on the relation of metaphors of organic production and male creativity in the early nineteenth century: "the valued 'natural' kind of labour was endlessly described by metaphors taken from the plant and insect kingdoms. The early Romantics appealed to spiders spinning webs, bees building hives, seeds sprouting, and plants burgeoning and blossoming." (*Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics*, 2nd ed., (London: The Women's Press, 1994 [first pub: 1989]), p. 107). Battersby also

and creativity of the human (male) consciousness is less of a break with tradition than Murphy's frame allows him to see.

Indeed, Murphy himself perpetuates this Romantic tradition whereby nature reflects the human mind, albeit in a reductive fashion. He claims that "the organic world is now [in Expressionism] frequently reduced merely to a set of signs pointing to man's spiritual abandonment [. . .] a mere correlative or icon for man's troubled existence in a world of pain and anxiety".[38] This comment reflects a fundamental conflict within many readings of Expressionism, where it is simultaneously claimed that Expressionist art reflects the collapse of reality into mere subjectivism, yet that Expressionist artists are striving to express a more "wesentlich" ["essential"] and spiritual realm of Being.[39] Hence Murphy claims both that the Expressionists project the world as a merely contingent fiction, and that each of their "contorted" comparisons expresses a "*particular concretisation of 'das Wesen'*", albeit provisionally.[40] Yet if the world has truly dissolved into arbitrary and anthropomorphosed projections, the "Wesen" for which the Expressionists were searching simply cannot emerge at all,

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explores the way in which metaphors of pregnancy and childbirth were appropriated in the later nineteenth century, most famously by Friedrich Nietzsche (pp. 107, 173-78). With this in mind, the poetic destruction of the mother's reproductive body by Expressionists such as Heym and Benn (discussed in detail later in this chapter) can also be seen as the destruction of a self-reflexive image of their own artistic creativity. The stress the Expressionists place on fluxing, dark forces suggests that genius is now the product of uncontrollable unconscious or irrational drives, rather than labour and organic production.

[38] Murphy, p. 467.

[39] See for example György M. Vajda, "Outline of the Philosophic Backgrounds of Expressionism", in *Expressionism as an International Literary Phenomenon*, ed. Ulrich Weisstein (Paris: Didier, 1973), pp. 45-55 (see esp. pp. 46-8). See also Sokel, p. 4: "Expressionism as abstract form, as part of the Modernist movement, and Expressionism as formless shriek arise from the same factor - subjectivism."

[40] Murphy, p. 470; see also p. 465: "This awareness of being enclosed within an ideological system of fictions that places limitations on experience brings with it the pervasive sense of alienation from a more 'genuine' realm of being, a level of experience to which the Expressionists hope to penetrate through the pursuit of what they term 'das Wesen.'"

provisionally or otherwise. Murphy's frame therefore produces and perpetuates a contradictory reading of Expressionism.

Secondly, he claims that by foregrounding the fictionality of the real, the Expressionists challenge the "mechanics of exclusion" inherent in any representation of reality which claims transparency and thereby blocks the production of alternative realities. Hence he claims that the Expressionists valorised all socially marginalised figures -"madmen, prostitutes and other outcasts" - without "any practical goal in mind" but simply to show that there is no legitimate reason for any one representational hierarchy to be employed rather than any other: all are equally contingent and arbitrary. [41] However, far from giving an "insight into alterity itself", this model of representational slippage obscures the ways in which Expressionism reinscribed different kinds of "otherness" in very different ways. As I will go on to show, the reinscription of irrationality was completely different to the way woman was positioned.[42] Like Lyotard's postmodern sublime, then, Murphy's post-structuralist frame blinds him to the specificity and differences within difference.

Thirdly, Murphy's frame makes it impossible for him to provide a sufficient account of the interrelation of Expressionism with its socio-historical context. He is trapped by the epistemological binary he has constructed between accepting the ideology of transparency, on the one hand, or recognising the absolutely contingent and arbitrary nature of reality on the other. Thus he cannot situate the literary movement within its political and social context in any meaningful way, for to do so would imply that the "fictions" constructed by Expressionist texts are not after all entirely contingent and arbitrary. Instead,

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[41] Murphy, p. 468.
[42] Murphy, p. 472.

he not only reduces Expressionism to a general, ahistorical epistemological crisis, but claims that its revolutionary aspect is itself only arbitrarily related to its historical embeddedness and indeed "may be quite unrelated to the concrete conditions prevailing in the social world".[43] In view of the huge amount of scholarship on this interrelation, this is one of the most bizarre of Murphy's conclusions.

Finally, Murphy's claim that the Expressionists "decentre" the subject by destabilising the representational conventions that protect him, is as disingenuous as Lyotard's claim that the postmodern sublime disempowers the subject.[44] Just as the postmodern sublime provides man with a way of capturing "otherness" as lack, in Murphy's account of Expressionism, man is "decentred" only to the extent that he is perpetually recreated via endless reworkings of the world. An infinite play of signifiers continually reinscribes him as the provisional subject not merely of one ideology, but of an endless array of fictions. Indeed, Murphy undermines the stability of the subject only to reinscribe his dominance over the object via the creative autonomy of the signifier. Thus Murphy also reinscribes the privileged position of the Kantian genius-creator who figures so strongly in Romantic texts - and who, as was shown in chapter one, reappears in the guise of Lyotard's philosopher-artist. In Murphy's account, the "revolutionary" Expressionist author remains the genius figure who continually rewrites the real: Expressionist poetry's supposedly arbitrary and "autonomous" signifiers in fact produce a reality and an art "full of anthropomorphosed concepts" which expresses "a more essential personal vision".[45]

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[43] Murphy, p. 471
[44] Murphy, p. 472.
[45] Murphy, p. 471 and p. 469.

Subjects Becoming Objects; Objects Coming to Life

Vietta's reading of Expressionism precisely undermines any such attempt "von einer totalen Subjektivierung und in diesem Sinne Personifizierung der Wirklichkeit zu sprechen".[46] He argues that to reduce Expressionist poetics to a mere subjectification of the world is to overlook the specificity of the images used in Expressionism to express man's increasing sense of alienation and instability. Vietta emphasises that though the *Reihungsstil* of "Weltende" and "Die Dämmerung" does indeed point to the disintegration of perceptual unities, the poems' particular images specifically figure the breakdown of the subject-object relation. Reality becomes unstable as objects take on a life of their own and people become objectified. Hence Vietta draws attention to the way that in "Weltende", the steeplejacks simply break in two like twigs, whilst the wild seas hop onto the land in a kind of cabaret dance. This logic can readily be extended to Lichtenstein's poem, "Die Dämmerung": nature is dynamised - the wind gets caught in a tree, dogs curse and horses trample people - whilst humans become at best the playmates of the natural world (the boy who plays with the pond) but are more often the victims of absurd and violent acts (lines 8, 9), crippled both physically and mentally (lines 4-6). In this way,

> Das Subjekt wird verdinglicht, [...], die Dingwelt aber dynamisiert und 'belebt'. Die Dissoziation greift also die Seinsbestimmungen und damit die Integrität der Wirklichkeit selbst an. Personen sind nicht mehr Personen, Dinge nicht mehr Dinge.[47]

Vietta emphasises the doublesidedness of the perceptual crisis instantiated in these Expressionist texts: as objects take on more power, man becomes

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[46] Vietta, p. 47. "to speak of a total subjectification, and in this sense a personification, of reality."

[47] Vietta, p. 42. "The subject is objectified, [...], but the world of things is dynamised and 'animated'. Hence the conditions of being, and thereby the integrity of reality itself, are attacked by dissociation. Persons are no longer persons, things no longer things."

dehumanised and displaced, as they become active he becomes passive, caught up in power relations which are no longer under his control, and in which he figures as an object himself. In this way, *Ichdissoziation* is figured as an effect of the breakdown of the stable subject–object relation which formerly oriented reality.

Hence for Vietta, the *Reihungsstil* disconnects the fundamental condition of a unified reality by subverting the structure and relation of *both* subject and object together. Early Expressionist poetry explores the dislocation of the subject as a corollary of aggressive "Dynamisierung" of objects: "im Grunde werden aber hier die Kategorien Subjekt und Objekt selbst problematisch."[48] In these poems, the phenomenal materiality of both nature and supposedly inanimate objects has ceased to be passive and orderable, but instead actively engenders the order and disorder of the real: these animated objects thereby refuse the stability that would allow the subject to clearly orient himself in the world. This radical refiguration of the object-world fundamentally dislocates the perceptual subject, who is no longer securely located at the centre of a coherent and causally explicable space-time reality; hence, as Vietta's analysis brings to the fore, this subject can no longer serve as the necessary reference point for the ordering of any such reality:

> Die im expressionistischen Reihungsstil zu Tage tretende Dialektik macht deutlich, daß die vom Subjekt gesetzte, aber ihm entfremdete Wirklichkeit in ihrer Diffusität zersetzend auf das Wahrnehmungsich einwirkt, dieses dissoziiert, um so auch die im Wahrnehmungsakt gegebene Objektwelt zu dissoziieren.[49]

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[48] Vietta, p. 46. "fundamentally, however, the very categories of subject and object become problematic here."

[49] Vietta, p. 39. "The dialectic apparent in the Expressionist *Reihungsstil* makes it clear that in its diffuseness, reality - constructed by a subject, who is, however, alienated from it - subverts and dissociates the perceiving self, and thereby also dissociates the world of objects prodcued in the act of perception."

Vietta therefore argues that these poems are best analysed in terms of "die komplexe Subjekt-Objekt-Dialektik". Their imagery and style show that they are *immanently* concerned with both the inter-dependence of subject and object, and with the ways in which the spatio-temporal organisation of the real is dependent on the constitution of this very relation.[50] Expressionism is thereby read as manifesting an implicit awareness that reality is *neither* merely given *nor* autonomously imposed by either subject or signifying system, but instead is conditioned via the construction of a particular kind of subject–object relation. Hence on Vietta's reading, what is at stake in Expressionism cannot be that reality becomes a fictional projection of the subject, but that the nature of both the "subject" and the "real" is radically transformed as the formerly stable subject–object opposition breaks down.

Vietta supports his reading with another poem written in the *Reihungsstil* by Lichtenstein, "Punkt":

> Die wüsten Straßen fließen lichterloh
> Durch den erloschenen Kopf. Und tun mir weh.
> Ich fühle deutlich, daß ich bald vergeh -
> Dornrosen meines Fleisches, stecht nicht so.
>
> Die Nacht verschimmelt. Giftlaternenschein
> Hat, kriechend, sie mit grünem Dreck beschmiert.
> Das Herz ist wie ein Sack. Das Blut erfriert.
> Die Welt fällt um. Die Augen stürzen ein.[51]

Vietta draws attention to the way in which the city streets act upon the perceiving subject. Far from man actively ordering perceptual reality, the light of the city flows through his head, so that the roles of "subject" and "object" are

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[50] Vietta, p. 39.
[51] Alfred Lichtenstein, *Gesammelte Gedichte*, ed. Klaus Kanzog (Zürich: Arche, 1962), p. 69. "Through the extinguished head goes a blazing flow/ Of desolate streets. Hurting me./ I know I'm not long for this world - /Briarrose of my flesh, don't prick so.//The night is mouldering. Bilious lamplight/ has smeared her with a trail of green filth./ The heart dangles like a sac. The blood freezes to death./ The world falls dead. The eyes cave in."

reversed: "die Rollen sind vertauscht: Grammatisches Subjekt sind die 'wüsten Straßen', ihre 'brennende' Aktivität deformiert das Wahrnehmungssubjekt zum 'ausgebrannten' Objekt."[52] The lights mark out the extinguished centre of the "enlightened" thinking subject, who becomes a burned out receptacle for the thoughts that are the lights of the city. The poem once again points to the interdependence of subject and object in the construction of perceptual reality: as the nature of the object-world changes and the city becomes dynamised, man becomes lifeless and frozen. At the same time, Vietta draws attention to the last lines as indicating that without an active subject, objective reality also collapses. The world falls apart as the subject's eyes fall in and the mechanisms mediating perception cease to function:

> Wenn das Wahrnehmungssubjekt die Wahrnehmungsaktivität nicht mehr aufrecht-erhalten kann, bricht auch die durchs Subjekt vermittelte Objektwelt in sich zusammen. Subjekt und Objekt der Wahrnehmung 'stürzen ein'.[53]

Hence, the poem indicates both that the world was a construction that depended upon the activity of a perceiving subject for its very existence, and at the same time, that there can be no subjective centre of perception if the world ceases to fit within the spatio-temporal limits that would enable this subject to orient himself. The unity of the perceiving subject disappears, together with a unified reality composed of stable external objects. The poem reflects the way that each is not only the condition of the other, but also the condition of the other's undoing: as the object-world becomes "belebt" (instead of containable) and takes on a life of its own, so man is objectified by the flux of the city's life

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52 Vietta, p. 34. "roles are reversed: the 'desolate streets' are the grammatical subject, and their 'burning' activity deforms the perceiving subject into the 'burnt-out' object."
53 Vietta, p. 34. "When the perceiving subject can no longer sustain the activity of perception, the world of objects mediated through the subject also collapses into itself. Both subject and object of perception 'cave in'."

and there is no longer any stable subject left to unify perception into a coherent whole.

Hence this poem does not figure the collapse of a "given" objective reality and its replacement with a subjective projection of the world: instead, as the object-world that had been mediated through the subject dissolves into a stream of artificial light, so the conditions of existence for the stable and individuated subject also disappear. Thus the violent and violating activity of the city-lights cannot be adequately read as the expression of an "intensely personal" inner state, for there is no subjective interiority left to project. Vietta's reading is supported by the middle section of the poem: the metaphysical "ich" is under attack even from its own flesh. Moreover, the dark night in which Romantic genius found the light of inspiration has been smeared green by the poison lantern-light. Here the darkness which once provided the artist with a space for transcendence, and which was lit in return by his sublime visions, has been invaded by creeping materiality: it is almost as if the metaphorical lamp which signified man's inspiration for the Romantics has come to life and, refusing to reflect his genius, has actively embarked upon its own mission of material transformation.[54]

Moreover, in these poems, the autonomy of the subject is not merely displaced by the autonomy of a free-floating play of the signifier, as in Murphy's post-structuralist account. On the contrary, as the subject-object relation disintegrates, so the order of the real becomes dependent on the animate forces of a flowing materiality. These city-lights have their own

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[54] For the lamp as a symbol of the creative mind, see Abrams, especially Chapter III, ("Romantic Analogues of Art and Mind"), pp. 47-69 where Abrams writes: "As in the English Platonists, so in the romantic writers, the favorite analogy for the activity of the perceiving mind is that of a lamp projecting light." (p.60)

dynamic trajectory which shapes and colours the world. Hence, following Vietta, I would argue that the disappearance of the self in these poems indicates not so much that the subject can simply refuse fixity by ironically revelling in the fictionality of the "real", but more that his stable identity has been forcibly taken from him as the materiality of the city has refused to remain passive. Whereas Murphy's post-structuralist version of representation maintains a fundamental subject–object split, Vietta's reading indicates that Expressionism figures the dissolution of any such subject–object relation. Hence even provisional identity is possible only to the extent that the self becomes the objectified effect of an "aufgequollene, dynamisierte Dingwelt" uncontainable by subject–object boundaries.[55]

Thus far from reducing any "non-realistic" image to an arbitrary fictionalisation of the world, Vietta provides an analysis of the particular *kind* of disruption effected by the specific images of early Expressionist poetry. This analysis is partly the result of Vietta's own more subtle understanding of the history of representation, whereby perceptual reality is not determined by the subject's imposition of an ordering frame, but is instead conditioned by a spatio-temporal framework engendering both subject and object together. More importantly, he also locates Expressionism itself within the unfolding of this more complex philosophical tradition. He shows that early Expressionist texts cannot be adequately read as replacing a naive view of objective reality as given and unshakable - a view "dem schon die Erkenntnistheorie Kants den Todesstoß versetzte" - with an equally naive view that the subject constructs the real via wholly personal and anthropomorphic visions.[56] Such analyses remain

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[55] Vietta, p. 44. "swelling, dynamised world of things".
[56] Vietta, p. 46. "to which Kant's epistemology already dealt the death blow".

"hinter den in der Literatur selbst erreichten Reflexionsstand" because they cannot allow for the ways in which Expressionists texts figure a *doublesided* breakdown, where the very nature of the subject is radically undermined and problematised by the refiguration of the object-world.[57]

Hence the Expressionists are more adequately understood as focusing on the specific kind of the subject–object relation that makes a particular kind of experience of reality possible. If reality does not evaporate into mere fictionality, nonetheless the particular mode of reality whose construction depended on a stable subject–object relation disintegrates. However, the collapse of this subject–object relation is itself constructed in such a way as to express a different mode of reality encompassing a very different kind of "self". As the enlightened subject disappears in these poems, so, in Expressionism, a different ordering principle comes into view:

> Die sich darin ausdrückende Verdinglichung hat also zwei Seiten: sie meint zum einen die aggressive Dynamisierung der Umwelt, die sich ins Bewußtsein des Ich, auch gegen dessen Intention, hineinfrißt, zum anderen die Umpolung des Subjekts zum mehr oder weniger passiven Objekt der zum Subjekt gewordenen 'Mitwelt'.[58]

In the above quotation, Vietta is referring in particular to a poem by Alfred Wolfenstein. In it, the subject is "eaten away" by an aggressive environment that permeates not only his private domestic space, but bodily interiority as well. A detail from the poem illustrates this:

> Wieder schon ins Zimmer platzt die Straße
> [. . .]
> Nun von drinnen her
> Quillt, aus dieser Wohnung,
> Mir die Existenz entgegen.

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[57] Vietta, p. 46. "behind the level of reflection reached in the [Expressionist] literature itself".

[58] Vietta, p. 43. "The objectification expressed in it thus has two sides: on the one hand, it means the aggressive dynamisation of the environment, which eats into the self's consciousness, even contrary to the self's intention; on the other, it means the subject is converted into the more or less passive object of the "world around", now the subject."

> Durch die dünne Wand, so dünn wie Haut,
> Zieht sich einer seine Kleider aus,
> Saugt sich Wasser in den Mund,
> Wälzt es tönend darin um,
> Spuckt es aus, wirft sich ins Bett . . . [59]

In this poem where the street bursts into the room, the boundaries between inner and outer space collapse, together with the possibility of delimiting public and private, self and other, mind and body. Far from being the arbiter of order, the subject is invaded by the sights and sounds of the city. The rooms within the teeming buildings no longer provide protective privacy but instead are filled with the noises of other bodies, themselves part of the de-individualised flux of "die Existenz": there are no longer active individuals but individual sounds and actions. Interior space is turned inside-out, determined not by enclosing boundaries but by forces which fill it from outside. Though life flows up against the self, there is no longer any interior identity to be opposed to the exteriority of the city: existence belongs to the flux of the city not to the "entsubstantialisierten Subjekt" ["subject without substance"].[60]

Hence the significance of the metaphor in line 4 above: it is not only that the very walls have becomes permeable, but that they are as "thin as skin". Skin itself, the boundary enclosing the body's inner space as a container for individual consciousness, has become thin and fragile, a porous surface rather than a rigid barrier. [61] At the same time, this image indicates that the construction of a bounded individuality was inherently dependent on the

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[59] Quoted in Vietta, p. 42. "Into the room, again, bursts the street/[...]// Now from inside, out of/ this flat, existence/ Wells up to meet me./ Through the thin walls, thin as skin,/ Someone undresses,/ Sucks water into his mouth,/ Swishes it noisily around,/Spits it out, leaps into bed..."

[60] Vietta, p. 46.

[61] For an account and feminist critique of theoretical models which treat the body as a container, see Christine Battersby, "Her Body/Her Boundaries: Gender and the Metaphysics of Containment", *Journal of Philosophy and the Visual Arts*, IV (1993), 30-39.

construction of static and impenetrable material boundaries. The subject was always already dependent on this other realm of matter: the subject-object relation breaks down as materiality refuses to be schematised as inert and passive, and becomes permeable and animated.

The importance of this image is reinforced as Wolfenstein's reuses it in another poem, "Städter":

> Nah wie Löcher eines Siebes stehn
> Fenster beieinander, drängend fassen
> Häuser sich so dicht an, daß die Straßen
> Grau geschwollen wie Gewürgte sehn.
>
> Ineinander dicht hineingehakt
> Sitzen in den Trams die zwei Fassaden
> Leute, wo die Blicke eng ausladen
> Und Begierde ineinander ragt.
>
> Unsre Wände sind so dünn wie Haut,
> Daß ein jeder teilnimmt, wenn ich weine,
> Flüstern dringt hinüber wie Gegröhle:
>
> Und wie stumm in abgeschloßner Höhle
> Unberührt und ungeschaut
> Steht doch jeder fern und fühlt: alleine.[62]

The ambiguity of the personal pronoun ("unsre") in line nine emphasises that the boundaries of the subject himself are as fragile and vulnerable as his skin. Bodies are inseparably enmeshed: desires surge between them, producing an intensive flow where individual identity is lost. There is no room for individual volition or resistance: the will has been strangled by the very fabric of the city, the pressure of so much life struggling for space. The last lines of "Städter" thus

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[62] *Menschheitsdämmerung*, 45-6. "Close, like holes in a sieve,/ windows stand side by side, a crowd of/ Houses is pressed so close together, that the streets look/ Grey and swollen, as if throttled.// The two façades of/ People, tightly meshed in one another,/ Sit in the trams, where glances spread narrowly/ And desire rises in each other.// Our walls are thin as skin,/ So when I weep, everyone has a share,/ Whispers come over like bawling://And yet how dumb in their lonely caves/ Untouched and unseen/ Everyone stands far away and feels: alone."

express a nostalgic belief in a romantic interiority which has already been
emptied out: no-one is alone and untouched in a city where anyone's tears
become part of the noisy flow of existence, seeping through everyone and
belonging to no-one.

In this way, as Vietta's account emphasises, far from dissolving reality
into a chaos of completely arbitrary fictions, the collapse of the subject-object
distinction itself configures a different kind of reality. Thus Vietta stresses that
the Expressionists' "personification" of objects is not to be understood in a
conventional sense; though streets "see" and windows "grin betrayal", such
images are not projections of subjective (human) states of mind, but ways of
articulating the hitherto concealed vitality of the object-world:

> Wenn die Grenzen zwischen Subjekt und Objekt verfließen, droht das
> durch eine Vielzahl anderer Faktoren labilisierte Subjekt selbst im
> Strudel seiner dynamischen Wirklichkeitssicht unterzugehen [. . .]. Es ist
> wichtig, daß man diese Zusammenhänge mitdenkt, wenn man von der
> 'Personifizierung' der Dinge in der expressionistischen Literatur spricht.
> Personifizierung meint nicht einfach die Versubjektivierung der Welt.
> Wenn Straßen 'sehen', Häuser 'graue Fratzen' sind, Fenster 'Verrat
> grinsen', so wird hier durch die Verfremdung gerade eine versteckte
> Qualität der Objektwelt zur Darstellung gebracht.[63]

As the stable boundaries between self and other dissolve, the subject is
immersed in a flux of dynamised matter, where man is at best an object thrown
up by *Dinge* which have become the dynamised and productive forces shaping
space and time. In this way, the early Expressionist writers do not simply de-
materialise the world into mere fictionality, but instead poetically figure an

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[63] Vietta, p. 49. "When the boundaries between subject and object blur, the subject itself,
weakened by many other factors, threatens to become submerged in the whirlpool of its
dynamic view of reality [...]. It is important to follow these connections when speaking
of the 'personification' of things in Expressionist literature. Personification does not
simply mean that the world is subjectified. When streets 'see', houses are 'grey
grimaces', and windows 'grin betrayal', it is precisely a hidden quality of the world of
objects which this defamiliarisation makes visible."

"*Um*strukturierung der Wahrnehmung" ["*re*structuring of perception"].[64] Their

poetry should be read in the same way as Expressionist art:

> die wichtigste Intention der expressionistischen Maler war es nicht, die
> Welt mit inneren Gesichten und Halluzinationen zu überziehen, sondern
> gerade durch den allerdings stark verfremdeten Blick die latenten und
> das heißt für sie 'eigentlichen' Aspekte der Wirklichkeit bloßzulegen.[65]

Similarly, the Expressionist poets do not merely impose hallucinatory visions on

the world, but strive to refigure reality in ways that reflect the reconfiguration of

bodies, space, time and identity within the speed and vibrancy of the city.

This reading of Expressionism is supported by the following passage

from a talk given in 1917 by Robert Müller:

> Wir gehen zu den elastischen Systemen über. Die klassischen starren
> Systeme sind Grenzfall und befriedigen nur fallweise [. . .] Das Bild des
> Malers schaukelt. Schaukeln Sie mit, geben Sie Ihre Starre auf - das ist
> Expressionismus.[66]

Although Murphy uses this quotation to support his view that the

Expressionists were highlighting the collapse of the real into mere fictionality, I

would argue for a different reading of this injunction to sway and become

elastic as all rigidity - of systems and of selves - is given up. This impassioned

appeal can be more adequately understood as articulating the urgent need for

new representational norms and perceptual structures with which to chart those

"gaps" shaped by the intensity, speed and flux which escape the limited

categories of Newtonian physics as well as the Kantian space-time frame.

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[64] Vietta, p. 35.
[65] Vietta, p. 47. "the Expressionist painters' most important intention was not to cover
the world with inner faces and hallucinations, but precisely to lay bare, through an
intensely defamiliarised vision, the latent (and thus, for them, the 'actual') aspects of
reality."
[66] Quoted by Murphy, p. 472. "We are going over to elastic systems. The classic, rigid
systems are a limit-case, only occasionally satisfactory [...] The painter's image is
swaying. Sway along with it, cast off your rigidity - that is Expressionism."

Hence Vietta notes that George Simmel's description of city life - "'rasche Zusammendrängung wechselnder Bilder, der schroffe Abstand' zwischen ihnen" - could equally well be a description of the *Reihungsstil* itself, whose formal structures "eben jene veränderten Wahrnehmungsbedingungen zur Darstellung bringt, die Simmel phänomenologisch als Erfahrungs- und Wahrnehmungsnorm der Großstadt selbst analysiert."[67] Thus unlike Murphy, whose reading is troubling in its ahistoricity, Vietta provides a complex account of the interrelation of Expressionist poetry and its social, economic and political context. Early Expressionism emerges only in relation to the forces and structures that condition the reality of the modern metropolis, but is not causally determined by them. Rather, both the images in the poems discussed and, above all, the very form of the *Reihungsstil* translate these new perceptual conditions through the material of language to provide adequate imaginative maps of the spatio-temporal conditions that shape life in/of the modern city.

Vietta's analysis also allows for a non-contradictory reading of the Expressionist search for *Wesen*. Vietta himself indicates as much, writing that the Expressionist's self-proclaimed quest for immediacy cannot be understood literally without overlooking the immanent reflective level of the poetry. Instead, such proclamations should be read as a deliberate polemic which exactly indicates the Expressionists' concern with the forms that structure perception:

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[67] Vietta, p. 34-5. "'rapid concentrations of changing images, the stark gulf' between them"; "makes visible just those changed conditions of perception which Simmel analyses phenomenologically as the very norm of experience and perception in/of the city itself." It is in this sense that Vietta describes Expressionist poets as engaging in a form of mimesis: mimesis here refers not to representation as a kind of copying which is always bound to fail, but involves finding ways of mapping the conditions of the city by miming (rather than copying) them in the dynamics, structures and images of their writing. See Vietta, p. 25.

> Von dieser Äußerung, deren Begriff von Unmittelbarkeit und
> Reflexionslosigkeit selbst nicht unvermittelt, sondern eher als
> zielgerichtete Polemik verstanden werden sollte, ist zunächst einmal
> festzuhalten, daß diese Lyrik eine Wahrnehmungsform beschreibt.[68]

In a similar way, then, the Expressionist search for the essential is not a search

for some pre-given immediacy of experience, but for a means of expressing the

spatio-temporal conditions that shape life in/of the city whilst emptying out the

metaphysical subject. Thus the disorienting poems of van Hoddis and

Lichtenstein:

> bringen mit metaphorischer Verfremdung das Aggressive und
> Bedrohliche der städtischen Umwelt gegenüber dem geschwächten und
> entsubstantialisierten Subjekt zur Darstellung. Die sprachliche
> Verfremdung, der von der Norm abweichende Ausdruck haben also die
> Funktion, verdeckte Aspekte der Wirklichkeit selbst sichtbar zu
> machen.[69]

Most importantly, however, this historicised account is central to Vietta's

understanding of the revolutionary aspect of Expressionism. The radicality of

Expressionist poetry is located not in a generalised epistemological crisis, but in

the ways in which it destabilises a particular mode of reality which depended

on a particular construction of subject and object. Hence a more adequate

account of the Expressionist critique of the Enlightenment emerges: whereas

Kant assumed the necessary conditions of both self and reality were "wesentlich

gleichförmig und ahistorisch" ["fundamentally uniform and ahistorical"], the

Expressionists draw attention to those aspects of life in the modern city which

remain hidden and inexpressible within the perceptual framework of the

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[68] Vietta, p. 33. "What must first of all be emphasised about this remark, whose concept of immediacy and lack of reflection itself must be understood not as immediate, but rather as a precisely directed polemic, is that this poetry describes a form of perception."

[69] Vietta, p. 46. "make visible, through metaphorical defamiliarisation, the aggressive and threatening quality of the urban environment with regard to the weakened and desubstantialised subject. Linguistic defamiliarisation and deviant expression thus have the function of revealing concealed aspects of reality itself."

Enlightenment subject.[70] The poetic dissolution of the subject–object relation thus challenges the supposed universality of the norms that structure perceptual experience: "hier [schlägt] die Einsicht in die Geschichtlichkeit der menschlichen Erkenntnisformen durch".[71]

Moreover, their poems simultaneously constitute the attempt to find different modes of representation with which to "realise" those aspects of experience which escape the bounds of Kantian schemata. The modern city is the site of a "geschichtlich neue, unverarbeitete Erfahrung", whose conditions necessitate new forms of perceptual structuring through which this experience can be actualised as reality.[72] In particular, Vietta emphasises that the Expressionists are responding to the "Tempo und Mannigfaltigkeiten" ["speed and manifold diversity"] and the "Intensität" ["intensity"] of city-life in ways that elude the rigid structuring of Kantian spatio-temporal concepts.[73] Their texts can thus be read as constructing a poetic space-time capable of incorporating the intensive manifold of city-life which cannot be contained by the linear, causal temporality or the stable, unifiable geography of the Enlightenment subject. In this way, the Expressionists do not only figure the dissolution of the subject: their images also map out the perceptual forms with which to chart the emergence of a different kind of space-time world.

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[70] Vietta, p. 35.

[71] Vietta, p. 35. "here an insight into the historicity of human forms of knowedge [breaks through]".

[72] Vietta, p. 35. "historically new, unprocessed experience".

[73] Vietta, pp. 37, 48.

The Post-human Life of the Spirit

The double-sided transformation of the structures of perception delineated by Vietta is also identified by Deleuze as the key to Expressionist cinema. Deleuze's analysis of Expressionist film can be seen as extending Vietta's account by showing how the break-down of the subject–object relation produces a particular reworking of the sublime. In the filmic counterparts to the poetry discussed above, light is the key to this breakdown: light is made to "scintillate, to form or dismember stars, multiply reflections, leave brilliant trails [. . .] a potent movement of intensity, intensive movement par excellence."[74] Light in Expressionist film is not the dualistic or dialectical counterpart of darkness such that their reunion would form a greater organic whole. Instead, Deleuze refers to Goethe's theories of colour to describe the way in which "the infinite force of light is opposed to darkness as an equally infinite force without which it would not be able to manifest itself".[75] Hence Expressionist films are full of jagged, zigzagging lines where light is only manifested together with the opaque darkness of shadow.

Deleuze explores the relation between light and darkness by drawing explicitly on Kant's concept of intensive sensation as gradated in relation to a degree-0, the negation or absence of sensation: "Light's role, effectively, is to develop a relationship with black as negation = 0, as a function of which it is defined as intensity, as intensive quantity."[76] Thus the intensity of white light ("degree") is gradated, striated and contrasted with black ("the zero"), the infinity of darkness on which its appearance depends.[77] This fluctuation of

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[74] Deleuze, p. 49.
[75] Deleuze, p. 49.
[76] Deleuze, p. 49.
[77] Deleuze, p. 50.

intensities disrupts the organisation of the world in terms of unified objects and organic wholes constituted by definable parts. Light cannot be so divided: each manifestation is an intensive degree which cannot be broken up into logical part/whole relations and is instead produced only in relation to its own negation. The intensification of light cuts across organic boundaries, and, moreover, always carries with it a potential fall back to zero which erases all boundaries and all limits.

> Thus the cinematic light of Expressionism projects:

> a dark swampy life into which everything plunges, whether chopped up by shadows or plunged into mists. The non-organic life of things, a frightful life, which is oblivious to the wisdom and limits of the organism is the first principle of Expressionism, [. . .], light which has become opaque, *lumen opacatum*.[78]

In terms of this intensive movement "natural substances and artificial creations, candelabra and trees, turbine and sun are no longer any different ... shadows of houses pursue the man running down the street."[79] As in the poetry already examined, in the films too the realm of objects ceases to be a world of containable matter and instead becomes dynamic and productive. Action is no longer the privilege of a being illuminated by a unified consciousness, and the conscious mind can no longer divide the world into inert mechanical matter and animate organisms. Indeed, in the pulsating light of Expressionist cinema, life belongs not to the organic but to:

> the vital as potent pre-organic germinality, common to the animate and the inanimate, to a matter which raises itself to the point of life, and a life which spreads itself through all matter. The animal has lost the organic as much as matter has gained life.[80]

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[78] Deleuze, pp. 50-51.
[79] Deleuze, p. 51.
[80] Deleuze, p. 51.

The intensification of light passes through infinite degrees of black and white, which culminate in a third colour (again in accordance with Goethe's theories), the "pure incandescence or blazing of a terrible light, which burned the world and its creatures".[81] In this burning red, the finite intensity of light recovers "a burst of the infinite which had been the starting point".[82] Deleuze thus aligns this glowing infinity with the formless forces of nature in the dynamic sublime, which exceed all containment and "de/compose organic composition [. . .] by breaking it".[83] Thus intensity ultimately breaks open the very possibility of organic being and carries the subject towards the *supra-organic* life of the spirit which "animates all non-organic life":

> intensity [. . .] is raised to such a power that it dazzles or annihilates our organic being, strikes terror into it, but arouses a thinking faculty by which we feel superior to that which annihilates us, to discover in us a supra-organic spirit which dominates the whole inorganic life of things: then we lose our fear, knowing that our spiritual 'destination' is truly invincible.[84]

In Kant's sublime, the subject transcends phenomenal nature both within (fear of loss of life) and without (overwhelming natural phenomena) via an imaginative leap which confirms his rational potential as an autonomous subject. Deleuze however can be read as using Kant's own emphasis on the transcendental unity of apperception against him. If a transcendental subject can be posited only in relation to transcendental objects, and if all possibility of schematising the world burns up through light's intensity, so too does the possibility of positing a unified point of conscious Being. Nonetheless, this dynamised sublime still involves transcendence and domination, but the subject

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[81] Deleuze, p. 53.
[82] Deleuze, p. 53.
[83] Deleuze, p. 53.
[84] Deleuze, p. 53.

transcends the phenomenal world only by losing his individuated life and becoming part of the fluxing *supra*-organic life of the spirit. Hence the double-sidedness of the subject–object dissolution charted by Vietta re-emerges in this post-human version of the sublime, where the intensive "non-organic life of things" destroys the psychological unity of the subject, until both man and nature are taken up into the supra-sensible light of the spirit:

> *the non-organic life of things* culminates in a fire, which burns us and which burns all of Nature, acting as the spirit of evil or of darkness. But this latter, by the ultimate sacrifice it demands of us, unleashes in our soul *a non-psychological life of the spirit*, which no longer belongs either to nature or to our organic individuality, which is the divine part in us, the spiritual relationship in which we are alone with God as light [. . .]. The blazing has become the supernatural and the suprasensible[85].

This sublime is not Romantic, it leads to no "reconciliation of Nature and Spirit" and indeed keeps the "chaos of man and nature in the background" in much the same way as the poems focus on the manifold forces shaping city-life rather than mourning a lost relation to organic nature.[86] Moreover, though Deleuze also privileges Kant's account of intensity as escaping the limits of Newtonian space-time, unlike Lyotard, he does not identify such intensities with the noumenal understood as the unpresentable. On the contrary, intensity engenders a different mode of cinematic presentation, whereby the dynamic fluctuation of differing degrees of light breaks up the quantitative and organic spatiality which constituted both subject and objects. Thus far from reducing the noumenal to that which lacks presentation, this intensive movement of light leads to "the truly infinite intensification which is extracted from all the degrees", and thus to the noumenal as a supra-sensible infinity beyond all

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[85] Deleuze, p. 54.
[86] Deleuze, p. 54.

human and organic forms.[87] The red light of the noumenal remains *nothing* for man and Nature. Expressionism explores the powerful principle of non-organic life as an intensification which not only engenders "its own abstract forms, its creatures of light", but ultimately burns through the celluloid into the noumenal life of the spirit: "Expressionism keeps on painting the world red on red; the one harking back to the frightful, non-organic life of things, the other to the sublime, non-psychological life of the soul."[88]

Just as Vietta made it possible to account for the Expressionist search for the *wesentlich* understood not as a given essence but as the need to express what was vital to the life of the city, so Deleuze's account makes sense of their search for *Geist*. The *geistig* is understood not as a principle of individual interiority, but as precisely that dynamic life which transcends the organic and individualised. As such, Deleuze notes that this spiritual life is often manifested within the world of human subjectivity and organic nature as a "spirit of evil" bringing about a fall - that fall back to zero which "burns Nature in its entirety".[89] Hence he charts the way in which Expressionist film is "peopled" by vampires and demons, by the "automata, robots and puppets ... somnambulists, zombies or golems who express the intensity of this non-organic life".[90] Again, as Vietta notes, Expressionist poetry also characterises the modern city as *teuflisch* and *diabolisch*, but both Deleuze and Vietta resist reading such devilish and demonic figures as mere personifications of man's inner state.[91] Instead, they are manifestations of intensive forces which break open the boundaries that protected any such interiority, and which plunge life into a flux of animate

[87] Deleuze, p. 54.
[88] Deleuze, p. 54.
[89] Deleuze, p. 53.
[90] Deleuze, p. 51.
[91] Vietta, p. 44.

machines and dead people who are no longer distinguishable in kind but only
as degrees of intensified light or matter.

Monstrous Births and Demonic Life

Whilst Murphy's analysis of Expressionism, like Lyotard's postmodern sublime,
flattens out the differences between diverse sites of "otherness", the framework
provided by Vietta and Deleuze can be usefully extended to provide a cogent
account of the pivotal role of woman within Expressionism. In the final two
sections of this chapter, I will examine the relation of woman to the dissolution
of man which early Expressionism so powerfully figures. "Die Dämonen der
Städte", by Georg Heym, exemplifies the way in which woman is both essential
to and simultaneously excluded from the dynamic of this dissolution.[92]

In this poem, shadowy demons wander through the city-night,
blackened by soot and smog, weaving their way through the sea of houses.
Though at first these demons creep like mist from door to door (stanza 2), they
soon begin to clamber about on the buildings, reaching their hands into a
swarm of humanity "wie Faune, die am Rand/ Der Sümpfe bohren in den

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[92] *Menschheitsdämmerung*, pp. 51-2. For the full version of this long poem, please see
Appendix 2, attached.
Vietta's and Deleuze's frameworks are particularly valuable for reading the poems of
Georg Heym, where the city is perhaps most constantly embodied by destructive
demons and anarchic deities. As Vietta notes, Heym is not particularly formally
innovative and makes constant use of mythological references, characteristics which
mean he is often positioned as one of the most Romantic and least disruptive
Expressionists. Moreover, his demonic figures are often read precisely as a subjective
projection of *Angst*. If, however, they are read through both Deleuze and Vietta, they
become the concentrated expression of the violent collapse of any stable relation
between man and his environment, as the city takes on a diffuse, uncontainable life of
its own. Hence Vietta argues that "traditionelle Mythen werden in der Lyrik Heyms
umfunktioniert" ["in Heym's poetry, the function of traditional myths is altered"]; they
are redeployed to express "die diffusen zerstörerischen Kräfte moderner Zivilisation
und Großstadtwelt in der Plastizität des kompakten Bildes" ["the diffuse, destructive
forces of modern civilisation and the urban world in the vividness of the compact
image"]. These destructive forces are at the same time the latent brutality and
"Zerstörungs-energien" of man himself (Vietta, p. 54).

Schlamm den Arm." (stanza, 6).[93] This image of fauns is doubly disconcerting: firstly, man has been reduced not so much to an object as to a dark, swarming life of "pre-organic germinality". Secondly, the reference to fauns and marshland, together with an earlier description of the demons as "Panspfeifen blasend" ["playing Pan's pipes"] (stanza 3), evokes a natural and mythological space, which might appear to be a way of mapping the city onto a primal organic realm. However, one of these "fauns" stands up and covers the white moon with "eine schwarze Larve" ["a black mask"] so that the night presses down on the city like lead, until a roof bursts open and red fire spills out (stanzas 7 - 8). [94] Hence the fauns are - to use Vietta's phrase - *umfunktioniert*: they disfigure nature, displacing the romantic light of the moon with an unnatural darkness which intensifies until the houses, the city's own "organic" spaces, break open and begin to burn.[95]

The final four stanzas confirm that far from inhabiting a darkness of organic gestation, these demonic forces live off an abortive materiality which refuses organic unity:

> In einer Stube voll von Finsternissen
> Schreit eine Wöchnerin in ihren Wehn.
> Ihr starker Leib ragt riesig aus den Kissen,
> Um den herum die großen Teufel stehn.
>
> Sie hält sich zitternd an der Wehebank.
> Das Zimmer schwankt um sie von ihrem Schrei,
> Da kommt die Frucht. Ihr Schoß klafft rot und lang,
> Und blutend reißt er von der Frucht entzwei.

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[93] "like satyrs/ sticking their arms into the mud at the edge of a swamp." Translation from: Patrick Bridgwater, *Poet of Expressionist Berlin: The Life and Work of Georg Heym* (London: Libris, 1991), pp. 208-9.

[94] These stanzas thereby trace exactly the same transformation of colour as characterises cinematic production of the posthuman sublime for Deleuze: white - black - red.

[95] See Vietta, p. 53: "Andererseits funktioniert Heym die Mythologeme radikal um." ("On the other hand, Heym radically changes the mythologeme's function.")

Der Teufel Hälse wachsen wie Giraffen.
Das Kind hat keinen Kopf. Die Mutter hält
Es vor sich hin. In ihrem Rücken klaffen
Des Schrecks Froschfinger, wenn sie rückwärts fällt.

Doch die Dämonen wachsen riesengroß.
Ihr Schläfenhorn zerreißt den Himmel rot.
Erdbeben donnert durch der Städte Schoß
Um ihren Huf, den Feuer überloht.[96]

These verses identify the woman in terms of her role in physical reproduction -

she is "eine Wöchnerin" ["a woman in labour"] and "die Mutter". However, at

the same time, her body is depersonalised and fragmented: the strength and

power of her reproductive body contrasts sharply with her emotional reaction,

as she cries out and clings shaking to the *Wehebank* ["birthing stool"], whilst at

the moment of birth she is reduced to the bloody womb itself. This birth is

further depersonalised by the use of the generic term "die Frucht" for the child.

However, the organic natural production which this term also suggests is

violently subverted: firstly, instead of depicting the birth as the culmination of a

productive period of growth, the poet emphasises that it involves the

destruction of the mother's flesh which is violently ripped in two. Moreover, the

child has no head: material reproduction not only destroys the organ of birth

but perversely refuses to produce an organically whole body, let alone a body

which could become a rational subject.

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[96] *Menschheitsdämmerung*, p. 52. "In a room full of the powers of evil a woman in labour screams out in pain. Her huge stomach rises massively out of the bed round which the great demons stand.// Shaking, she holds on like grim death. The room rocks around her from her scream, then her fruit comes forth. Her womb gapes red and long and bleeding, is torn open.// The demons' necks grow as long as giraffes'. The child has no head. The mother holds it up. The frost-fingers of horror grasp her from behind as she falls back.// The demons for their part grow ever more gigantic. The horn on their forehead tears the red sky open. An earthquake rumbles through the cities around their hoofs, which are engulfed in flames." Translation from Bridgwater, pp. 208-9.

The city-demons, however, feed on this misbirth, on the bloody body of the mother and that of the headless child. Their necks grow grotesquely long until they become "riesengroß" ["gigantic"] and tear open the sky itself, ripping open the horizon of the world just as the mother's womb was torn apart. Hence what grows and is "born" through this unnatural birth is the inhuman, non-organic life of the demons themselves, whose fiery intensity bursts towards infinity, and hence expresses that demonic life of the spirit which "no longer belongs either to nature or to our organic individuality".[97] At the end of the poem, the demons "dominate the whole inorganic life of things", whilst woman/the mother has simply disappeared.[98]

Woman bears a specific and contradictory relation to the emergence of this energic spiritual life. On the one hand, in so far as she is identified with her reproductive body, woman becomes a privileged site of access to increasingly powerful forces of materiality which displace and ultimately destroy human individuality. Via her own objectification as a reproductive organ, she represents materiality as excessively dynamic, unstable and generative. That such materiality is a force beyond the control of the rational subject is literalised in the figure of the headless child. Moreover, there is a continual tension between the fear and horror of the mother's reactions (lines 5, 10-12 above) and the depersonalised descriptions of her physical body (lines 3, 7/8), which emphasises her own lack of control over and alienation from the productivity of "her" body. Such emotional responses have become a sign of weakness: whereas the demons grow from the grotesque physical productivity of this mother's body, she feels horror, falls backwards and disappears from the

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[97] Deleuze, p. 54.
[98] Deleuze, p. 53.

narrative of the poem. In this way, she also functions as the last remnant of a psychological subjectivity and a disappearing humanity.

Thus whilst the demons of modernity feed off woman's monstrous productions, she herself does not become part of their supra-organic demonic life. Indeed, exactly because woman is identified with a particular configuration of matter, and a capacity for production that is limited by her bodily organisation, she represents the organically unified embodiment that *cannot* become part of the fluxing demonic forces which respect neither boundaries nor limits. Hence the figure of woman in this poem shows that breaking down the organic nature of both man and the world entails breaking up the body of woman herself. She disappears because the very possibility of a "natural" mode of production generating organic wholeness is figuratively destroyed by ripping apart the limits and organs of her maternal body and disfiguring her offspring. Hence woman's embodied identity becomes a site of transition: allied with organic processes, she represents that which is necessarily subverted and destroyed to give birth to the non-organic and unnatural city-womb (*"der Städte Schoß"*). The unlimited generational capacity of the city's seething, fiery materiality surpasses woman's physical limits but nurtures the demons, who grow in strength until their horns rip open the sky itself.

Hence by identifying woman with a sexed and reproductive materiality, Heym privileges her as a transitional site leading into a demonic transcendence of organic and human limits. However, at the same time, he also fixes woman, such that she herself is unable to become part of these powerful fluxing forces. Moreover, it seems that through the violent and grotesque misbirth depicted in this poem, woman also represents man's deepest fears about the city - namely, that it will rob him of his reason and denature his humanity. This multiple and

contradictory positioning is reflected throughout early Expressionist poetry, in which woman's body plays a pivotal role in marking out the crisis of identity facing the rational individualised subject.

A similar pattern can therefore be found in many Expressionist poems, where we find a city-scape occupied by whores who represent both sexual desire and yet, at the same time, disease, decadence and decay. Thus for Wilhelm Klemm, "Die sündigen Weiber" ["sinful women"] - together with huge cities, propellers and the death of art - are one of the signs of the times; all lead the soul to shrink into "winzigen Komplexen" ["tiny complexes"].[99] In August Stramm's "Freudenhaus", the decay of both body and soul seeps from the women's bodies:

> Lichte dirnen aus den Fenstern
> Die Seuche
> Spreitet an der Tür
> Und bietet Weiberstöhnen aus!
> Frauenseelen schämen grelle Lache!
> Mutterschöße gähnen Kindestod!
> Ungeborenes
> Geistet
> Dünstelnd
> Durch die Räume!
> Scheu
> Im Winkel
> Schamzerpört
> Verkriecht sich
> das Geschlecht![100]

The use of three different terms to refer to the women not only suggests that every aspect of their identity is perverted via prostitution, but also indicates implicitly the key elements of the ideal woman, who would have a womanly

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99 Wilhelm Klemm, "Meine Zeit", in *Menschheitsdämmerung*, p. 40.
100 *131 expressionistische Gedichte*, ed. Peter Rühmkorf (Berlin: Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 1976) p. 144 [first published in 1914]. "Lights loll out of the windows like whores/ The plague/ burgeons at the door/ and puts on offer women's groans!/ Female souls shame shrill laughter!/ Mother's wombs yawn children's death!/ The unborn/ spirits/ steaming/ through the rooms!/ Shyly/ in the corner/ torn apart by shame/ crawls away/ the sex!"

soul and be a proper mother. Moreover, this overdetermined body figures a sexual commerce which lays to waste unborn future generations and in which sexuality itself becomes degenerate and finally crawls ashamed into a corner. Thus the prostitute represents not only the degeneration of woman, but more generally the degeneration that potentially inheres in all sexed human beings, for "Geschlecht" itself is the underlying root of this trade.

Another poem, by Armin Wegner, highlights the way in which the whore represents not just sexual degeneration but the destruction of man's moral integrity by the overriding power of capitalism. In "Montmatre", men "Legen den Arm um ein Dirnenmieder/ Glauben, es sei ein Mutterherz [...] stammeln Liebesworte [...] Aber die Dirne schweigt/ Ihr Auge nur küßt heimlich das Geld."[101] The body of the female love object inscribes desire into a libidinal economy which functions merely as an extension of the circulation of capital. Hence in poems such as these, female sexuality represents a fundamental fear that in the metropolis, human nature itself will be absorbed into a seeping and sexed corporeality, whilst man's spiritual destiny will thereafter be dissolved by capital's uncontrollable dissemination of bodies and desire.

Simultaneously, however, this cliché-ridden portrayal of woman as dangerously excessive corporeality is mirrored by an equally conventional "privileging" of woman as a conduit into the depths of man's soul. The (male) subject's fear of losing his identity is matched in early Expressionism by the desire to be freed from the constraining limits of individual being, in ways that are strongly reminiscent of the German Romantics. Thus in Heym's "Deine

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[101] Quoted in Mahlow, p. 105 [poem first published: 1917]. "Lay their arms around a whore's bodice/ Think it is a mother's heart [...] stammer words of love [...] But the whore says nothing/ Only her eye secretly kisses the money."

Wimpern, die Langen", the eyes of the poet's beloved become dark pools through which he desires to dive into "the depths":

> Deine Wimpern, die langen,
> Deiner Augen dunkele Wasser,
> Lass mich tauchen darein,
> Lass mich zur Tiefe gehn.[102]

Female corporeality is here portrayed in a more Romantic and reassuring mode than in the unsettling, dissociative *Reihungsstil* poems discussed above. Indeed, in a later stanza from the same poem, threatening daylight forms are forgotten as the poet buries himself in his beloved's womb or lap ["Schoß"; see stanzas quoted below]. The female sexuality which Heym associated with a violent and unnatural productivity in "Die Dämonen der Städte" is here reinscribed "positively" as providing man with access to a "natural" and eternal realm:

> Sieh, ich steige hinab,
> In deinem Schoß zu vergessen,
> Fern was von oben dröhnt,
> Helle und Qual und Tag.
> . . . .
> Einmal am Ende zu stehen,
> Wo Meer in gelblichen Flecken
> Leise schwimmt schon herein
> Zu der September Bucht.[103]

Thus woman functions both as a fearful paradigm of the threatening and uncontrollable forces of modern city-life, and as an idealisation allowing man to substitute a more reassuring form of self-loss for the violent disorientation and *Ichdissoziation* figured elsewhere.

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[102] *Menschheitsdämmerung*, p. 152. "Your lashes, your long lashes, your eyes' dark waters, let me plunge into them, let me fathom their depths." Translation: Bridgewater, p. 242.

[103] *Menschheitsdämmerung*, p. 153. "So do I descend into you, seeking to forget what can be heard rumbling overhead, the brightness and suffering and daylight.//[...]//One day to stand at the end, where the sun-speckled sea is already quietly entering the September bay." Translation: Bridgewater, p. 242.

Anti-synthesis: Over Woman's Dead Body

The pivotal and complex role of woman in early Expressionism is perhaps most clearly instantiated in the poetry of Gottfried Benn. I will therefore conclude this chapter with an examination of some key poems by Benn in which it becomes clear that the dissolution of man both necessarily requires, and yet simultaneously excludes, woman. Benn's poetry strongly supports Vietta's siting of Expressionism as a post-Kantian crisis of stable subject–object relations. His poem "Synthese" can be read as a direct response to the way in which both subject and object are constructed via the synthesis of the manifold of perception in space and time. Indeed, I will suggest that its three stanzas mark out a process of *anti-synthesis*, undoing both subject and world:

> Schweigende Nacht. Schweigendes Haus.
> Ich aber bin der stillsten Sterne,
> ich treibe auch mein eignes Licht
> noch in die eigne Nacht hinaus.
>
> Ich bin gehirnlich heimgekehrt
> aus Höhlen, Himmeln, Dreck und Vieh.
> Auch was sich noch der Frau gewährt,
> ist dunkle süße Onanie.
>
> Ich wälze Welt. Ich röchle Raub.
> Und nächtens nackte ich im Glück:
> es ringt kein Tod, es stinkt kein Staub
> mich, Ich-Begriff, zur Welt zurück.[104]

In the first stanza, the process of generating a relation between subject and object, which for Kant brings both self and world into being, seems to have come to a standstill. This subject is the stillest star at the centre of silence.

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[104] Gottfried Benn, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Dieter Wellershoff (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1958-61), III: *Gedichte* (1960), p. 57. "Quiet night. Quiet house./ I, though, am of the most silent stars,/ I drive out even my own light/ into my own night.// In my brain I have come home/ From caves, heavens, filth and cattle./ Even what is granted woman/ Is dark, sweet masturbation.// I roll world around. I groan theft./ And at night I am naked and blissful:/ no death drags me, no dust smokes/ me, concept of I, back to the world."

Although this self might seem to be at the centre of a movement of enlightenment connecting inner life to the night outside, the external world has in fact already disappeared: this subject merely drives his own light out into his own night, he is a subject locked in imaginative entropy. The adverb "noch" together with the repetition of "eignes" suggests this is a movement overly repeated to the point of becoming mechanical. It is as if the Kantian subject-object relation has worn out and collapsed, leaving the subject miming a pointless, self-contained movement.

The opening lines of the second stanza more explicitly suggest the self has left the external world behind and returned "home" to an inner core of physical brain-processes. Woman is once again the marker for the extent of this "degeneration": rather than retaining her "otherness" and sexual reciprocity, she is aligned with masturbatory movements. This reinforces the breakdown of any constructive interrelation between self and "other" already suggested in stanza 1. Identity is here reduced to a self-contained physicality, a libidinal flow. Through woman, this "home-coming" is figured dark, sweet and welcoming: it releases man from the tedium of continually regenerating an external reality.

If this circular masturbatory self-relation indicates that objective reality and differentiated identity have together dissolved into flux, the third stanza figures a more active Dionysian destruction of the world: the self tosses the world around, stealing it away with a death rattle. However, Benn's poem could not be more explicit about the double-sidedness of this joyful destruction: this subject's theft releases him from the need to remain in a stable (and stabilising) relation to an external world, and thus the subject himself is also released. Nothing could now drag this self back to the world and to a

relationship with the external (the "not-self") which would allow him to be positied as the very concept of the "I" (the transcendental subject).

In fact, this poem is unusual amongst Benn's early work in that the image of woman might be seen as carrying positive connotations - at least for the poetic subject who seems to glory in his release from any constructive interrelatedness. Nonetheless, the transcendental subject who returns to a physicality that is "*gehirnlich*" is clearly a privileged male self: the intensifier "auch" suggests that this process of degeneration is reflected *even* and *also* by women. Moreover, the form that this "homecoming" takes for woman is that of a return to a specifically *sexual* form of physical self-containment: this implies that her transcendental "self" was dependent not on a general relation to an external world, but only on her sexual relation to man from which she is now freed. Indeed, by figuring the disappearance of any exchange between the sexes, she also frees man from the need for intercourse and contact with his sexual "other". Hence the poem conceals a fundamental dysymmetry: whilst woman remains specifically female flesh turned in on itself, the apparently neutral transcendental subject is wholly dissolved, releasing man (male) into a joyful naked physicality, seemingly unmarked by even sexual difference. Just as woman is a sexual being rather than a proper subject, so her sexuality also excludes her from the equally neutral seeming and *gehirnlich* physicality into which the subject steals away.

This dynamic is repeated throughout Benn's poems, as man spins the world around and steals his own freedom from the constraints of individuality, whilst simultaneously repeating the reduction of woman to an unchanging sexed materiality. The identification of woman not only with the sexed materiality of her body but with a specifically reproductive embodiment could

not be more explicitly figured than in the first three lines of Benn's 1913 poem

"Dirnen":

> Eine entkleidet ihre Hände.
> Die sind weich, weiß, groß,
> wie aus Fleisch von einem Schoß.[105]

In the following section from "Nachtcafé IV", woman is again identified with a

fleshy and sexualised physicality:

> Der Ober rudert mit den Schlummerpünschen.
> Er schwimmt sich frei. Fleischlaub und Hurenherbste,
> ein welker Streif. Fett furcht sich. Gruben röhren:
> das Fleisch ist flüssig; gieß es, wie du willst,
> um dich;
> ein Spalt voll Schreie unser Mund.[106]

This female flesh is autumnal and wilting, its organic form is breaking up as

gaping holes appear in its fatty tissues. Though the whores' bodies are flesh

becoming fluid ["flüssig"] and non-organic, they break down into passive flow,

rather than an active flux. This female liquidity is poured at will by a subject

who, at least for the time being, remains stable enough shape the fluid flesh

around him.

The last line of the extract above shifts from addressing a "you" (who is

invited to pour), to an inclusive "our". It suggests that those positioned as the

subjects who pour out the whore's fatty flesh are nonetheless under threat

themselves: their mouths become screaming crevices. However, as I will show,

whereas woman's body dissolves to become passive fluidity, elsewhere Benn

reappropriates materiality as an *active* principle of becoming, from which

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[105] Benn, *Gedichte*, p. 363. "One uncovers her hands./ They are soft, white, large,/as if made of flesh from a womb."

[106] Benn, *Gedichte*, p. 383. "The waiter rows through with the slumber-punch./ He swims away. Flesh foliage and whore's autumn leaves/ makes a wilted strip. Fat fears itself. Pits roar open:/ Flesh melts away; pour it out for yourself as you wish;/ our mouths are agape and full of cries." Translation from: Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism*, p. 185.

woman's identification with inert, organic and sexed materiality necessarily excludes her. It is this active matter into which the male subject's threatened identity dissolves, as if the self-determination he relinquishes is absorbed by a materiality which is thereby freed from its merely reproductive female form to become a generative flux of forces. If woman's decomposition signals death and decay, man's dissolution is borne along by becomings.

The first section of "Gesänge" exemplifies this dynamic, in which man becomes at most a transitory coagulation in a matter which (in Deleuze's words) "raises itself to the point of life, and to life which spreads itself through all matter":

> O daß wir unsere Ururahnen wären.
> Ein Klümpchen Schleim in einem warmen Moor.
> Leben und Tod, Befruchten und Gebären
> glitte aus unseren stummen Säften vor.
>
> Ein Algenblatt oder ein Dünenhügel,
> vom Wind Geformtes und nach unten schwer.
> Schon ein Libellenkopf, ein Möwenflügel
> wäre zu weit und litte schon zu sehr.[107]

The poem expresses the desire to dissolve the rigidified form of the subject into a more primordial state, a flux of primal forces. "We" are to be plunged into a "dark swampy life" where there are neither subjects nor objects, only passive clumps of slime, thickenings of primordial juices out of which life and death, fruits and birth dumbly slither. Even the organically formed dragonfly or the seagull's wing impose too much form and hence too much suffering. Only the most basic forms of life (the algae) can be tolerated in this "potent pre-organic

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[107] Deleuze, p. 51; Benn, *Gedichte* , p. 25. "Oh that we were our primal ancestors,/ A little lump of slime in tepid swamps./ Our life and death, mating and giving birth/ A gliding forth out of our silent sap.// An alga leaf or hillock on the dunes,/ Shaped by the wind and weighted towards earth./ A dragonfly's small head, a seagull's wing/ Would be too far advanced in suffering." Translation: Michael Hamburger, *Reason and Energy*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1970), p. 338.

germinality" which is "oblivious to the wisdom and limits of the organism".[108]

Like the inert sand-dune moulded by the wind, life is passively shaped by fluid forces, and without obeying any pre-determined need for form. Far from depending on reinforcing the subject's boundaries against the phenomenal world, transcendence in this poem, as in Deleuze's post-human sublime, involves relinquishing the psychological unity of the subject together with the organic form of objects to a non-organic life, dominated by a supraorganic principle of flux. Thus, the poem can be read as another manifestation of the same dark spiritual intensity which took demonic form in Heym's "Die Dämonen der Städte".

The desire for this fluxing "Klümpchen Schleim" can be directly contrasted with the opening lines of "Englisches Cafe". Here the flux of raced - and specifically female - bodies is a menace, a horde of thieves stealing through the night. The poem starts with images of small-shoed robbers - (female) Russians, Jewesses - who creep through the spring night, a threatening manifestation of dead peoples and far off lands:

> Das ganze schmalschuhige Raubpack,
> Russinnen, Jüdinnen, tote Völker, ferne Küsten,
> schleicht durch die Frühjahrsnacht.
>
> Die Geigen grünen. Mai ist um die Harfe.
> Die Palmen röten sich. Im Wüstenwind.
>
> Rahel, die schmale Golduhr am Gelenk:
> Geschlecht behütend und Gehirn bedrohend:
> Feindin! Doch deine Hand ist eine Erde:
> süßbraun, fast ewig, überweht vom Schoß.
>
> Freundlicher Ohrring kommt. In Charme d'Orsay.
> Die hellen Osterblumen sind so schön:
> breitmäulig gelb, mit Wiese an den Füßen.

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[108] Deleuze, p. 51.

O Blond! O Sommer dieses Nackens! *O*
diese jasmindurchseuchte Ellenbeuge!
Oh, ich bin gut zu dir. Ich streichle
dir deine Schultern. Du, wir reisen:

Tyrrhenisches Meer. Ein frevelhaftes Blau.
Die Dorertempel. In Rosenschwangerschaft
die Ebenen. Felder
sterben den Asphodelentod.

Lippen, verschwärmt und tiefgefüllt wie Becher,
als zögerte das Blut des süßen Orts,
rauschen durch eines Mundes ersten Herbst.

O wehe Stirn! Du Kranke, tief im Flor
der dunklen Brauen! Lächle, werde hell:
die Geigen schimmern einen Regenbogen.[109]

The extremely troubling images of race within this poem - the association of the

Jewesses with dead peoples, the contrasting sensuality of the blonde - become

even more so when it is borne in mind that Benn was to become an ardent

supporter of National Socialism in the 1930s. This poem makes it explicit that

not all kinds of flux are equally desirable: materiality that is still shaped by

raced and sexed bodies represents suspect and anachronistic forms of

"otherness". Later in the poem, these threatening female bodies are replaced

with "Freundlicher Ohrring". Benn here reinforces the extremely problematic

use of race in this text: although she is identified - and objectified - via her

fragmented body-parts (her neck, her jasmin-pervaded elbows, her shoulders),

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[109] Benn, *Gedichte*, p. 29-30. "The whole narrow-shoed robber band,/ Russian women, Jewesses, dead people, distant coasts,/ Creeps through the spring night.// The violins blossom. May is around the harp./ The palms turn red. In the desert wind.// Rachel, with the narrow gold wrist-watch:/ Progeny sheltering, brain threatening:/ Foe! Yet your hand is an earth:/ dessert-brown, almost eternal, hung with the scent of your sex.// Friendly earring comes. In Charme d'Orsay./ The bright Easter flowers are so pretty:/ gaping yellow maws, meadow at their feet.// O blonde! O summer of the neck! O/ that elbow, pervaded with jasmin!/ Oh, I am good to you. I'll stroke/ Your shoulders. We'll travel:// Tyrrhenian Sea. A sinful blue./ The Doric temples. The plains/ pregnant with roses. Fields/ Die the death of Asphodeles.//Lips, smitten and full to the brim like goblets,/ as if the blood of the sweet place were hesitating,/ rush through a mouth's first autumn.// O aching brow! Languishing deep in a bevy/ of dark eyebrows! Smile, grow bright:/ the violins shimmer a rainbow."

this friendly and clearly desirable woman is addressed explicitly in terms of her Aryan colouring ("O Blond!"). With this decadent, sensual woman, the poet himself can travel towards an equally sensual Greek sea, which is sinfully blue, and surrounded by plains pregnant with roses. The blonde is connected to an "otherness" which, unlike the foreign lands in the first stanza, seems to be both warmly embraced and welcomed as a living and fertile heritage.

This double positioning of woman - as threatening "otherness" connected to death, and desirable conduit leading to decadent plenitude - is synthesised in the figure of Rahel. This female biblical figure is invoked in a stanza between the opening description of the "Raubpack" and the fragrant blonde; Rahel constitutes a transitional site, mediating symbolically, as well as structurally, between the two versions of woman. In the Bible, Rahel was the barren wife of Jacob, whose womb was eventually "opened" by God; she then gave birth to Joseph and Benjamin, and can thus be positioned as the mother of the Jewish race.[110] Benn's image of Rahel protecting her own sex also implies that she is protecting the race to which she will give birth - *Geschlecht* means both "sex" and "race", or "lineage". However, Benn's use of this Jewish mother-figure preserves the troubling alignment of both the Jew and woman with a threatening "otherness": in protecting her race/sex, Rahel is an enemy who threatens the brain. Benn's image implies that Rahel represents a desire to reproduce one's line/race which overrides reason - a suggestion which is deeply ironic, given Benn's own racist and anti-Semitic prejudices that emerge both in this poem and in his later political views.

However, this threatening Rahel still represents a productive maternal materiality for Benn: her physicality is imbued with the reproductivity of her

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[110] See Genesis 29- 30; especially 30. 22-24; 35. 16-20.

womb, which makes of her an almost eternal earth. Thus in the second half of this stanza, the female and raced "otherness" which was an enemy and threat is transformed into a fertile ground connected to a cyclical reproductive and eternal temporality. The "dead peoples" of the first stanza here become the "sweet-brown" skin of the Jewish mother, Rahel, whose maternal sexuality is also linked to the eternal. Nevertheless, the oppositional structuring of Rahel as "other" remains untouched. She is still positioned in terms of her "otherness" to the poetic subject, even if this "otherness" is differently evaluated in the second half of the stanza. If the raced/sexed bodies of Rahel's sister-figures in stanza one represented a threatening foreignness, it is precisely this same alterity which becomes appealing in stanza two because of its link to an other, more eternal time. Although Rahel's reproductive body threatens the centre of thought, it is precisely the way she is part of a cyclical materiality/maternality which makes her desirable nonetheless. Rahel is re-evaluated not in spite of ("doch"), but because of her "otherness".

This poem therefore reveals the same underlying structure as was identified in "Synthese": woman remains characterised as that which is "other" to the rational subject - she is Erde which is positively threatening to Gehirn - but precisely because she thus represents an opening within the subject's world into a different temporality and materiality, she becomes desirable again. Moreover, whereas Rahel is "naturally" linked to the eternal, the subject actively desires to journey into a more elemental age, one governed by the cyclical patterns of birth and death (see stanza six). Hence whereas Rahel's link to this cyclicality is fixed via her own reproductive materiality, for the subject, who clearly emerges as male in this poem, this alternative world represents a release from the sickness of his own rationality: the poet ends by addressing his own sick brow. In stanza

two, the violins conjured up palmtrees reddening in the desert wind, thereby invoking the unchanging earth of Rahel's body; in the last stanza, however, their music holds open a utopian space for the (male) subject, which releases him from himself. In this way, woman is both unsettling in her sexed/raced materiality, yet is simultaneously a conduit, restoring the subject to health by transporting him to a realm ordered by natural cycles, rather than by the imposition of rational forms.

In "Synthese", woman's (masturbatory) sexuality symbolises man's release from transcendental structures, but leaves her locked in embodied self-containment. Similarly, in "Englisches Cafe", woman's "privileged" relation to matter provides an opening, a passageway between man and matter which allows their relation to be reconfigured, though her identity as specifically reproductive (and raced) materiality remains fixed and unchanged. Woman's identity is thus determined and over-determined by a raced and sexed embodiment which continues to define her as the "other" of the (male, European) subject even as the Western man of reason himself disintegrates.

This positioning of woman is also evident in "Nachtcafe", where band-members are metonomised into their instruments and customers into grotesque and repellent body-parts. The only moment of respite is provided by the entrance of a woman:

Die Tür fließt hin: Ein Weib.
Wüste ausgedörrt. Kanaanitisch braun.
Keusch. Höhlenreich. Ein Duft kommt mit. Kaum Duft.
Es ist nur eine süße Vorwölbung der Luft
gegen mein Gehirn.

Eine Fettleibigkeit trippelt hinterher.[111]

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[111] Benn, *Gedichte*, p. 19; [poem first published: 1917]. "The door dissolves: a woman./ Desert dried out. Canaanite brown./ Chaste. Full of caves. A scent comes with her. Hardly scent./ It's only a sweet leaning forward of the air/ against my brain.// A

This Canaanite-brown, desert-dried woman forms a counterpart to Rahel's earthy fertility in "Englisches Cafe": she embodies the barren Rahel, before her womb was "opened" by God. She carves out a curved stillness which externalises the space of her "hölenreich" body. Though she could not be more explicitly identified as a container or vessel, this woman's body - like Rahel's before she was blessed - is chaste and arid: she brings a stillness into the seething mass of bodies because she is not generative materiality but a barren, dried-up remnant of embodiment. Though the woman provides a momentary hiatus in this noisy, drunken physicality, nonetheless, she cannot enter into the flux of its becomings either. She is immediately followed by a fatty mass of flesh, tripping along as if in shoes too small for her, suggesting perhaps that merely fragmenting the body is not enough to release materiality from the constrictions of the human form.[112] In this poem, then, woman represents the degeneracy of modernity, where the only sanctuary from a perverse parade of objectified bodies are the arid and cavernous spaces held open by a desiccated female form.

In fact, the logic of Benn's position entails not only that woman is identified with a specific configuration of sexed materiality, and thus that she cannot become part of the flux into which man desires to dissolve, but moreover, that her organic embodiment would be actively decomposed by the germinality of the swamp, where organic forms become unbearable and birth no longer depends on a particular organisation of matter but merely flows from "stummen Säften". This is reflected in two poems from Benn's series "Morgue".

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paunched obesity waddles after her." Translation: Michael Hamburger, *German Poetry 1910-1975*, p. 49.

[112] Though feminine noun in the final line does not necessarily designate a female body, the verb "trippeln" certainly suggests a feminine gait.

In the first, "Kleine Aster", a small flower discovered in a dead man's teeth during the autopsy is packed into his chest cavity by the doctor, who bids it to "Ruhe sanft/kleine Aster!".[113] This romantic image of organic nature is ironically embedded in a body and identity which has been reduced to a pile of flesh; hence the breakdown of organic embodiment and psychological unity feeds the regeneration of life which respects no such boundaries.

In the second poem, "Schöne Jugend", a young girl's dead body has become the womb for a nest of rats, who have fed on her organs and blood:

> Der Mund eines Mädchens, das lange im Schilf gelegen hatte,
> sah so angeknabbert aus.
> Als man die Brust aufbrach, war die Speiseröhre so löcherig.
> Schließlich in einer Laube unter dem Zwerchfell
> fand man ein Nest von jungen Ratten.
> Ein kleines Schwesterchen lag tot.
> Die andern lebten von Leber und Niere,
> tranken das kalte Blut und hatten
> hier eine schöne Jugend verlebt.
> Und schön und schnell kam auch ihr Tod:
> Man warf sie allesamt ins Wasser.
> Ach, wie die kleinen Schnauzen quietschten![114]

The girl's body, like that in "Kleine Aster", also figures the decay of metaphysical identity: the body is no longer the vessel for the soul/psyche, but merely a feeding ground for an animal associated with death and disease. However, there are two significant differences which together generate a dyssymmetry between the dead bodies in these two poems. Firstly, the girl's body is identified specifically in terms of its sex: the rats live in her belly,

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[113] Benn, *Gedichte*, p. 7. Benn himself was a doctor who was dispatched to the Western Front during the 1914-18 war.

[114] Benn, *Gedichte*, p. 8. "The mouth of a girl who had long lain among the reeds looked gnawed away./ As the breast was cut open, the gullet showed full of holes./ Finally in a cavity below the diaphragm/ a nest of young rats was discovered./ One little sister lay dead./ The others thrived on liver and kidneys,/ drank the cold blood and / enjoyed a lovely childhood here./ And sweet and swift came their death also:/ They were all thrown into the water together./ Oh, how the little muzzles squeaked!" Translation: Babette Deutsch and A. Yarmolinsky, quoted in Michael Hamburger, *Reason and Energy*, p. 328.

mirroring her own reproductive capacities and turning her into a nest. Secondly, unlike the flower, the rats do not live on: they are all drowned except for one, a "kleines Schwesterschen" to the dead girl found already dead in her body.

Once again, as in "Synthese", the breakdown of metaphysical identity in and of woman is identified with a breakdown of her reproductive function. Whereas the man is transformed through his disintegration into a productive ground of non-human life, the girl only represents the failure of a particular kind of materiality. Whereas man is dissolved into a different kind of matter governed by a life whose pulse transcends that of any individual organism, she represents only the decay of the kind of reproductive materiality which was the necessary "other" to the subject, capable of producing organically whole bodies as containers for individual life.

Hence as in "Die Dämonen der Städte", because she is fixed as a particular organisation of matter, designed for reproduction, woman cannot "become": she cannot enter into the refiguring of either subject or materiality. As matter becomes non-organically productive, dislocating the subject until he becomes part of its generative flux, the reproductive materiality identified with woman, capable only of passive growth according to predetermined forms, comes to seem limited and "angeknabbert" ["gnawed away"]. Whilst Expressionist poets such as Benn and Heym free the subject from his identity into a pulsating life of forces, woman's identity as a necessary "other" is solidified: her body represents the old materiality which is eaten away or ripped

in two. Whereas man's self-destruction releases him into a different kind of life, he reconfigures his relation to materiality over woman's dead entropic body.[115]

Hence, in both "Synthese" and "Schöne Jugend", woman's sexed materiality not only figures the decay of transcendental structures, but organic forms of sexed embodiment are themselves enclosed and entombed within her body. The destruction of her reproductive sexuality frees man himself from the sexual relation and allows him to distance himself from the fixity of sexed difference. In this way, the apparent neutrality of the subject is preserved by the apparent neutrality of a flux of becomings which refuses any form, including that of sexed difference. However, just as the subject in "Synthese" is in fact male, so woman is the necessary ground of this new space-time of flux, which creates a space for itself only by destroying the specificity of woman's sexually differentiated body. The oppositional structuring of "otherness" is maintained, albeit by an inversion: if sexual difference is not constructed by opposing woman's reproductive materiality to the transcendental rational subject, then it seems it cannot be produced at all.

Far from producing an undetermined neutral flow of becomings, Benn's poetic undoing of the subject produces a flux whose only determining factor is that the specificity of sexed or raced materiality cannot emerge. Benn's determination that the subject dissolve into a flux whose becomings are chance effects and in no way fixed denies the possibility that particular becomings

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[115] This phrase, together with the subheading for this section ("Anti-synthesis: Over Woman's Dead Body"), echoes the title of Elisabeth Bronfen's rigorous survey *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992). In this book, Bronfen examines the ways in which Western literature from the 18th to the 20th century functions around the dead body of woman and by allying death and the feminine.

could develop what Moira Gatens has called "resilience" across history.[116]

Hence woman's identification with material limitation as opposed to a male

norm of rational autonomy is not dissolved with this norm, but remains the

symptom of the lifeless system man is rejecting. The spiritual realm of non-

organic life capable of spontaneously generating abstract forms only comes into

being via the death of woman as the bearer of an oppositionally structured

metaphysics.

In this way, woman's sexed difference and embodied identity remain a

trap even when - and especially when - man transforms his relationship to the

material of/as his body. Indeed, woman's identification with a passively

reproductive materiality makes it impossible for her to renegotiate this

relationship. On the contrary, the eternal perversion of the female sex remains

its identification with a particular kind of materiality, against which the male

subject constructs a realm of free metamorphosis. Woman becomes a reminder

of the oppositional divisions between mind and matter, subject and object,

active and passive which structured the Enlightenment subject and which the

Expressionists sought to overcome.

This is reflected in a passage from Benn's epilogue to a 1921 collection of

his poems, where he writes of the impossibility of living in a community:

> Unmöglich, noch in einer Gemeinschaft zu existieren, unmöglich [. . .];
> zu durchsichtig die Wrackigkeit ihrer antithetischen Struktur, zu
> verächtlich dieser ewig koitale Kompromiß embonpointaler Antinomien
> . . . [117]

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[116] Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality*, (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 10: "feminists who propose degendering propose it outside history and often fail to consider the resilience of expressions of sexual difference along with the network of linguistic and other systems of signification that both constitute and perpetuate this difference."

[117] Gottfried Benn, *Epilog und Lyrisches Ich*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, IV: *Autobiographische und vermischte Schriften* (1961), pp. 7-14 (p. 10). "Impossible to go on existing in society, impossible [...]; the nervous wreckage caused by its antithetical structure is too transparent; and too contemptible this eternal coital compromise between fat-bellied antinomies." Translation from: Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism*, p. 185.

Benn's wording makes it explicit that he is not concerned with the collapse of given truth into mere subjectivities, but with the wreckage of a community compromised by its oppositional foundations in antinomy, the very structure which underpins Kant's metaphysics. As I have shown, in Benn's poetry - as in texts by other male Expressionists - the Enlightenment subject does not disintegrate into arbitrary fictions. On the contrary, man's dissolution seems carefully constructed so as to undo the subject-object relation as configured by Kant, and free man into an intensive materiality where he exists only as a contingent nexus thrown up by fluxing forces. However, the sexual relation itself has become the emblem of a mode of oppositional ordering which has become unbearable; it signals the untenability of an entire system of transcendental thought. As woman is consistently identified with sexed embodiment in Benn's poetry, she becomes the eternal symbol of a dead conception of matter which man kills off to free himself from the painful oppositions structuring him as an autonomous subject as well as from his own sexually specific human form. In "Synthese", Benn writes of robbing the world away with a death rattle, and his *Umstrukturierung* of post-human identity is indeed based on a theft. Man steals away the materiality which had been aligned with the female form, and reactivates it as an unbounded flux by destroying the very possibility of sexual specificity and difference. Man is transformed as he is plunged into the seemingly unlimited becomings of a non-organic life: it is not his death-rattle which resounds over these early Expressionist city-scapes, but that of woman.

For Kant, woman's sexed materiality necessarily tied her to her body and made it improper for her to attempt to transcend the conditioned phenomenal world by aspiring to the sublime. Thus though both human and

rational, she could not become a properly autonomous subject, capable of disinterested and universal moral judgement. In Expressionism, the objectification of woman as reproductive materiality, which prevented her from being a proper Kantian subject, in turn entails that she is limited to particular kind of embodiment, and thus cannot enter into the immanent transcendences of a fluxing supra-organic materiality. This seemingly a-historical, de-gendered and sexless world of transformations is founded on a historically situated account of woman, who represents the containment and fixity that man wishes to escape.

Though I have argued that Expressionist poetics cannot be adequately analysed within either Lyotard's or Murphy's theoretical frameworks, what Expressionism and Lyotard's postmodernity have in common, and what they continue to share with Kant, is that woman is positioned as the necessary "other" of the subject. Woman secures man's Enlightenment identity; she dissolves into lack to ensure his postmodern freedom from the fixity of metadiscourse; and she becomes the dead matter representing all he desires to leave behind as he dissolves into a sublime life of the spirit.[118] Thus both the postmodern sublime and the posthumanism of the Expressionists perpetuate

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[118] Hence my analysis also has implications for Deleuze's reworking of Kant. Deleuze writes that the post-human sublime involves an intensification which "break[s] its sensible attachments to the material, the organic and the human, to detach itself from all states of the past and thus to discover the spiritual abstract form of the future." (p. 54) If it were to be assumed that sexed difference *only* belongs with the old sensible and human forms, and thus that it cannot be configured except via an oppositional and organic model of identity, and if therefore the post-human life of the spirit were to be read as implicitly *post-gender*, then the post-human would also perpetuate the myth of neutrality by excluding the possibility of productively re-working sexed difference. I do not propose to trace through the role of woman in Deleuze's thought in this project; however, it is worth noting that though I have emphasised the value of Deleuze's analysis of Expressionism, the way in which the post-human sublime maps so completely onto the Expressionist dissolution of man might suggest that the radicality of the post-human, like that of Expressionism, may not be straightforwardly extended to woman.

the erasure of sexual difference from the history of Western metaphysics. If Lyotard's "war on totality" erases the specificity of woman by identifying her with a lack of all form, the Expressionists' war on the autonomous subject involves the violent decomposition of a specifically female embodiment, whose form is deemed to be excessively limiting. Both these manifestations of post-Kantianism confirm Adorno's observation that in Western civilisation, "Woman is not a being in her own right, a subject".[119]

However, I have also argued that Lyotard's reworking of the sublime is based on a fundamental misrepresentation of Kant's transcendental philosophy, whereas the Expressionists follow Kant in emphasising the centrality of the subject-object relation in the constitution (and dissolution) of reality. As I will go on to show in the second part of this thesis, it is this emphasis on a destabilised subject-object relation which some women writers were able to exploit, finding gaps even within Expressionism where Kant's framework could be subverted and reworked rather than simply dissolved, and where different modes of female selfhood could emerge. However, for the male Expressionists discussed above, woman remains "the embodiment of the biological function, the image of nature, the subjugation of which constituted that [Western] civilization's title to fame".[120] Thus as they dismantled the civilised subject together with his image of Nature, woman became merely a "fossilized survival" of man's own former limitations.[121] In the Expressionists' visions of demonic city-scapes and fluxing post-human life, once again "woman herself, [. . .], gained admission to a male-dominated world, but only in broken form."[122]

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119 Adorno, p. 247.
120 Adorno, p. 248.
121 Adorno, p. 250.
122 Adorno, p. 249.

Interlude

Chapter 3

Interlude:

Another Expressionism

> Was ist natürlich, was unnatürlich? Gab es doch Zeiten, wo Engel und
> Teufel, Himmel und Hölle unanfechtbare Wirklichkeiten waren; ja, die
> meisten geistigen Errungenschaften sind Einbrüche in vermeintliche
> Naturgesetze.[1]

In Hedwig Dohm's polemical dialogue, "Feindliche Schwestern", published in

1914, two imaginary interlocutors, Ilse and Monika, discuss the attitudes of their

contemporaries towards the women's movement. The "hostile sisters" turn out

to be those women who self-destructively oppose their own emancipation. Ilse

remarks that the enemies of the women's movement always appeal to Nature;

in reply, Monika offers the lines quoted above. Through them, Dohm radically

questions the supposed naturalness of the laws and limits governing reality,

and, above all, undermines the seemingly "natural" identification of woman as

a passive, sexual and reproductive being, who develops her intelligence only at

the cost of her "Weibnatur" ["womanly nature"].[2] Her words thus offer a

powerful critique of the very characterisation of woman that permeates

Expressionism, as outlined in the previous chapter.

Dohm was already in her eighties by the time she published this essay,

and had been publishing articles, short stories and novels around the theme of

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[1] Hedwig Dohm, "Feindliche Schwestern", *Die Aktion*, XXX (1914), col. 647-53 (col. 651-
2). "What is natural and what unnatural? After all, there were times when angels and
devils, heaven and hell, were irrefutable realities; in fact, most intellectual achievements
break supposed laws of nature."
[2] Dohm, "Feindliche Schwestern", col. 651.

women's rights since the 1870s.[3] These works are fiercely critical of the typical

debates concerning the "Frauenfrage" around the turn of the century, which

tended to offer a dualistic account of the "nature of woman". As Chris Weedon

notes, women "were said to be emotional and reproductive, while men were

rational and creative".[4] Influenced by J. S. Mill amongst others, Dohm argued

for equal rights for women by

> redefin[ing] the apparently 'natural' laws that restricted women to the
> roles of housewife and mother as 'Männergesetze': laws designed by
> men to serve their own interests. [. . .] In her view the sexual division of
> labour, which led to separate spheres for women and men, was not an
> effect of women's natural physical and mental capacities, but of the
> exercise of male power and male interests.[5]

Weedon goes on to show that as well as critiquing the "dominant definitions of

'Weiblichkeit'" in pamphlets and essays, Dohm's fictional work "explores how

women internalise and live their femininity and why it is so difficult for them to

change."[6] Dohm's writings thus resonate with the work of far more recent

feminist thinkers, both in her emphasis on the constructedness of the "natural"

and in her astute analysis of the madness that results when women live out the

cultural norms defining proper "Weiblichkeit". Her views are all the more

remarkable when read against the context of Expressionism, where women are

identified   with   an   oppositional   and   biologically   reductive

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[3] Dohm was born in 1833 and died in 1919. See Chris Weedon, "The Struggle for Women's Emancipation in the Work of Hedwig Dohm", *German Life and Letters*, n.s. XLVII no. 2 (1994), 182-192. Other key articles by Hedwig Dohm published in Expressionist journals include: "Die Suffragettes", *Die Aktion*, XXVIII (1913), col. 677-85, and "Falsche Madonnen", *Die Aktion*, XIII/XIV (1918), col. 157-61. The first is another dialogue, between a woman and her anti-feminist fiancé, where the former defends her right to higher education and a career with hardhitting arguments tempered with wit and irony. The second article is an equally perceptive critique of the myriad of clichés and contradictions characterising contemporary discussions of motherhood, which Dohm wants both to demythologise and re-evaluate.

[4] Weedon, p. 184.

[5] Weedon, p. 185.

[6] Weedon, p. 186.

demonisation/idealisation of Woman. As Barbara Wright notes, amongst the theorists publishing in Expressionist journals, hers is an isolated voice.[7]

Woman, Expressionism and Women Expressionists

Wright's article draws attention to fact that the "Frauenfrage" was not only a continual preoccupation of the Expressionists, but that their new visions of man "simply cannot be adequately understood without 'woman'."[8] Her discussion of the theoretical texts of Expressionism demonstrates that their portrait of the "New Man" is composed by marking out his superlative qualities against woman's inferior capacities. As in the Expressionist poetry discussed previously, man's "revolutionary" striving for freedom and the regeneration of humanity is defined via his opposition to the limited existence of woman. Thus,

> the woman of the utopian Expressionist future is not to be liberated from identification with her sexual functions; on the contrary, she is to be 'liberated' from everything that prevents her from being *exclusively* identified with sexual functions.[9]

Wright both highlights and explains one of the central paradoxes of Expressionism. Though woman is pivotal in both the poetic and theoretical rebirth of man, the Expressionists show "uniformly little interest" in the new

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[7] Wright, p. 591: "Only Hedwig Dohm disagrees drastically with prevailing opinion, rejecting the entire male/female dualism as 'verstaubte Gemeinsplätze' ['hoary common-places'] and 'geistige Gassenhauer' ['intellectual jingles']" (quoting Dohm, "Feindliche Schwestern"). Though Wright refers to other female writers and essayists who contributed to Expressionist journals, she points out the ways in which their views are ultimately re-inscriptive: either by corroborating the male view of women's "different" nature as feminine and beautiful (Grete Meisel-Hess, p. 591); or by focussing on women's sexual freedom as the most important area of emancipation (Helene Stöcker, p. 593); or by emphasising woman's difference as a mother and valorising her exclusion from certain areas of public life, whilst calling for state reform which would enable her to 'better fulfil' her "womanly" and "motherly" functions (Editha von Münchhausen, a pen-name of Emmy Hennings, the Expressionist poet, pacifist and later dadaist; see below. Hennings appends an intriguing suggestion to her demand that women be given the state support necessary to fulfil their unique role as mothers: every woman should be granted an extra vote for each minor in her care; see Wright, p. 596)
[8] Wright, p. 583.
[9] Wright, p. 597.

possibilities facing women or in most of the issues with which the German women's movement was concerned.[10] Pinthus's list of the key developments characterising modernity referred to in chapter two, for example, nowhere mentions women's emancipation or even suffrage.[11] Wright's analysis suggests that in the theory, as in the poetry, the specificity of women is erased from Expressionism by the centrality of the figure of Woman, who is defined solely in opposition to man as his necessary other.

One of the key modes of "otherness" which Wright discusses is the continuation of the traditional alignment of man with "Geist" ["spirit"] and woman with Nature. In the previous chapter, I argued that in early Expressionism woman's organic reproductive body ultimately barred her from accessing the fluxing forces of the spirit. Though in later Expressionism the search for a "New Man" replaces the breakdown of the subject as the focus of literary and theoretical debate, Wright's article confirms that woman's exclusion remains constant:

> The theoretical discussion of the 'new man' seeks to discover and define the sources of his 'Geist', activate his 'Wille', [. . .] and establish contact with 'das Wesen.' [. . .] Very different assumptions become operative however, when we turn to the theoretical discussions of woman's nature which take place simultaneously. [. . .W]oman's distinguishing characteristic is her identity with the world of nature and natural processes, particularly sexuality and reproduction; and it becomes her special responsibility to maintain this identity.[12]

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[10] See Wright p. 594: "The one area in which Expressionist periodicals do show an interest is in the legal treatment of issues related to sexuality. Thus Expressionist periodicals strongly support decriminalization of abortion, increased availability of contraceptives, and reform of divorce laws[. . .] All such changes are judged by the mostly male authors as more important for women[. . .] than any right to study or vote. Not coincidentally, such changes are also in the interest of males seeking greater sexual freedom."

[11] German women were given the vote in 1919. For an overview of the development of the German women's movement in the early twentieth-century, see Eda Sagarra, "The German Woman Writer 1900-1933: Socio-Political Context and Literary Market", in *German Women Writers: 1900 - 1933*, ed. Brian Keith-Smith, Bristol German Publications, III (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993) pp. 1-22.

[12] Wright, p. 597.

Thus writing in *Der Sturm* in 1911, Richard Fuchs emphasises that genius is endowed upon the male individual via "Geist", whereas women are deemed to have their own form of "genius", which is linked intimately with her sexuality: "Das Geschlecht ist die Genialität des Weibes".[13] The hierarchy between these orders of talent could not be more explicit. Wright notes that whereas man's genius gives him "an exclusive monopoly" on the development of economic and spiritual wealth and fills him with "dynamism and the will to change", woman's lack of proper individuality "isolates her from moral development and renders her being static". By identifying woman in terms of a biological destiny, the (male) Expressionists deny her the individuated will necessary for genius in ways that echo the post-Kantian theories of both Schopenhauer, and in particular, Otto Weiniger.[14] In Weiniger's enormously influential 1903 book, *Sex and Character*, he positions the male genius as striving for utter freedom and complete individuality, whilst women have no ego, no personality, no ability to be free, and no soul.[15] Weiniger thereby synthesised a deeprooted intellectual misogyny which continued to resonate through Expressionism (and beyond).

Within Expressionist theory, moreover, woman is not only considered incapable of occupying the role of creative, ethical and political visionary; she is often perceived as threatening to prevent man from fulfilling this function. Hence another theorist sees the union between the sexes as inherently dangerous for man, "for it signifies a union of the male, 'das Strebend-Unvollkommene' ['the striving and incomplete'], with 'das Fertige' ['the

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[13] Richard Fuchs, "Die Lehrprobe des Mannes", *Der Sturm*, no. 74 (1911), 589-90; quoted in Wright, p. 589. "A woman's genius is her sex".

[14] Wright, p. 589; for an account of Schopenhauer and Weiniger through which these parallels can be all too clearly seen, see Battersby, *Gender and Genius*, chapters 11 and 12 (pp. 148-178).

[15] See Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-siècle Culture* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1986), pp. 218-221.

completed']."[16] Woman's supposedly uncontrollable desire to fulfil her sexual and reproductive urges entails that she is often positioned as a dangerous drain on man's spiritual energies, and hence as a straightforward threat to the proper development of "Geistigkeit".[17] Indeed, some Expressionists carry the logic of this misogynist position to its equally logical conclusion. As Wright notes, Karl Kraus aimed "not merely to master woman in the sex act, but to eliminate her from it altogether", and argued that "'acquired homosexuality (in marked contrast to 'born homosexuality') is the sign and the right of ethically and aesthetically superior men".[18] Several other notable Expressionists championed the rights of male homosexuals whilst explicitly denigrating the women's movement, including the poet Alfred Wolfenstein; however Kraus's position is particularly disturbing, given the way manages to combine his overt misogyny with an underlying homophobia which continues to see the "born" homosexual as monstrous.

Thus in general, like the male poets discussed in chapter two, the Expressionist theorists who seek to replace the rational Enlightenment subject nonetheless maintain the gendered oppositions embedded in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thought. Little has changed since Kant, and if anything, his normative views have considerably hardened. Although, for Kant, woman *should* not transcend the realm of embodied existence because of her duty to the future of the species, for the Expressionists, her sexed materiality makes her *incapable* of such transcendence. This inability entails not only that, as in Kant,

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[16] Wright, p. 589; quoting Paris von Gütersloh, "Zwischen der Liebe", *Die Aktion*, XXVI, (1914), col. 568-78.

[17] This tendency is also strongly reflected in the work of the futurist writer, Marinetti, who sought to free man from his sexual dependency on the opposite sex, a relation which saps man of valuable "Lebensenergien" ["life-energies"]; see Mahlow, pp. 85-7.

[18] Wright, p. 590.

the ethical imperative to find a proper world order remains the responsibility of male individuals, but also, that woman lacks the sublime ability to transcend the phenomenal which makes artistic creativity possible. For the Expressionists, as for Kant, genius is found in the power of the individual who can free himself from the limits governing the perception of phenomenal reality, and imaginatively "restructure experience".[19] In the case of Kantian genius, the imagination "is very mighty" for "it creates, as it were, another nature out of the material that actual nature gives it".[20] The Expressionists continue to privilege the individual whose imagination is capable of re-creating the world - even if, like Schopenhauer and the early German Romantics, they desire to restructure this world to permit the perception of that which eludes the horizons of Kant's spatio-temporal reality. Thus, woman's identification with and "special responsibility" towards her particular embodied (reproductive) form entails that she cannot free herself from a "first" nature sufficiently to be able to aspire to re-creating reality in all-encompassing visions of humanity.

Indeed, Mahlow notes that according to the influential theorists Max Scheler and Georg Simmel, woman's passivity and stabilty can provide a necessary check on man's forceful energies.[21] For these writers, woman is aligned with a state of "geschlossenen Seins" ['en/closed being'] and with the interiority of the domestic sphere.[22] Her very exclusion from the public realm of economic competition and intellectual striving entails that she can exert a good influence on man by reflecting an instinctual and unchanging grasp of propriety: "Das weibliche Wesen besitzt einen angestammten Wahrheitsinstinkt

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[19] Kant, CJ, sect. 49, p. 182 [5:314].
[20] Kant, op. cit.
[21] See Mahlow, pp. 96 - 103.
[22] Mahlow, p. 97, quoting Max Scheler, Vom Umsturz der Werte, 4th edn. (Bern: Francke, 1955 [first published 1923]) p. 207.

ohne logische Bewußtseinshelle, und es hat im Sittlichen jene natürliche Unbefangenheit, die auf ein moralisches Gesetz verzichten kann."[23] Thus other than the reproduction of the species, "das Werk der Frau, [. . .] ist der Mann".[24]

Once again, little has changed since Kant, for whom women's naturally "*beautiful virtue*" entails that they "will avoid the wicked not because it is unright, but because it is ugly; and virtuous actions mean to them such as are morally beautiful. Nothing of duty, nothing of compulsion, nothing of obligation!".[25] Women's philosophy is therefore "not to reason but to sense."[26] Nonetheless, their "*beautiful understanding*" furthers the cultural development of man, preparing the ground on which the more demanding rigours of his noble morality based on respect and reason can emerge:

> Since nature also wanted to instil the more refined feelings that belong to culture - the feelings, namely, of sociability and decorum - it made woman man's ruler through her modesty and her eloquence [. . .] It made her precociously shrewd in claiming gentle and courteous treatment by the male, so that he finds himself [. . .] led by it, if not to morality itself, at least to its clothing, the cultivated propriety that is the preparatory training for morality and its recommendation [27]

Hence women's "great science" is "humankind, and among humanity, men."[28]

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[23] Heidemarie Bennent, *Galanterie und Verachtung. Eine philosophiegeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Stellung der Frau in Gesellschaft und Kultur*, (Frankfurt, New York: Campus, 1985), p. 210; quoted in Mahlow, pp. 100-1. "Womanly nature has an inherited instinct for truth without logical, conscious lucidity, and in moral matters has the kind of naturalness which can do without a moral law."

[24] Georg Simmel, "Zur Philosophie der Geschlechter", in *Philosophische Kultur* (Berlin: 1983 [first published: 1911]), p. 235; quoted by Mahlow, p.100. "a woman's work [...] is man".

[25] Kant, *Observations*, p. 81.

[26] Kant, *Observations*, p. 79.

[27] Kant, *Observations*, p. 78; and *Anthropology*, p. 169 [7: 306]. The views of both Simmel and Scheler also echo Hegel's division between *Moralität* (morality proper; grounded in the individual will and essential to a proper state and public morality) and *Sittlichkeit* (the ethical mores and sense of propriety founded in the familial and social sphere), where woman is associated with the values of the latter. In particular, their version of woman is in many ways a reworking of Hegel's Antigone: as the representative of the social and familial values on which the realm of public and state morality must be grounded, but over which it must then take precedence, Antigone is also associated with a realm of '*geschlossen Seins*'. However, her story epitomises the way in which the inner realm of the private and familial can become the enclosing tomb.

[28] Kant, *Observations*, p. 79.

Woman's identification with the material also entails that the Expressionists explicitly position her alongside the matter to be fashioned into art:

> Der Man schafft - das Weib ist; der Mann beweist sich der Welt durch das Bewußtsein - das Weib wird von der Welt bewiesen. So erhält der Expressionismus eine sinnliche Bezüglichkeit zum Geschlecht.[29]

Woman is positioned with that "first" nature which is to be moulded and remoulded by an artist whose creative activity is defined in opposition to a female passivity: "da der Künstler doch im ewigen Gegensatz zum Stoffe lebt, wird dieser weibliche Stoff des expressionistischen Künstlers ein Urquell seiner erhöhten Männlichkeit."[30] Thus the overt manliness of the Expressionist genius is generated through his eternal opposition to a female matter; his masculinity is increased through this feminised "Stoff". Indeed, the Expressionist artist is still characterised by the feminine qualities of instinct, intuition and sensibility. Although limiting when attached to a female body, they allow man to transcend his individualised existence and provide him with - often painful - insights into the existential condition of humanity. Thus for Pinthus, the male Expressionists "fühlten zeitig, wie der Mensch in die Dämmerung versank", they reveal "das wissenschaftlich nicht Feststellbare im Menschen" which they sense through "gereizten und überempfindlichen Nerven".[31] Their poetry stems from "Leidenschaft" ['passion'] and "reines Gefühl" ['pure feeling'].[32] However, as

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[29] Paul Hatvani, "Versuch über den Expressionismus", Die Aktion, XI/XII (1917), col. 146-50; quoted in Wright, p. 595. "Man does - woman is; man proves himself to the world through consciousness - woman is proved by the world. Hence Expressionism has a sensory relationship to gender."

[30] Paul Hatvani, "Spracherotik", Der Sturm, No. 136/37 (1912), 210; quoted in Wright, p. 595. "as the artist lives out an eternal conflict with his material, this womanly material becomes, for the Expressionist artist, a primary source of his heightened manliness."

[31] Kurt Pinthus, "Zuvor: Berlin, Herbst 1919", in Menschheitsdämmerung, pp. 22-32 (p. 25-6). The Expressionists "sensed early-on how man was sinking into the twilight"; they reveal "what cannot be scientifically established in man" and sense through "agitated and over-sensitive nerves".

[32] Pinthus, "Zuvor", p. 27.

Mahlow notes, according to Alfred Wolfenstein, though women are associated with the emotional and non-rational they are "nicht empfindlich, sondern nur kitzlich".[33] Whereas man's sensitivity might drive him to madness or suicide, women even lack the capacity to be ennobled by insanity: "[sie] sind ohne Möglichkeit, wahnsinnig zu werden. Weil sie *stumpfsinnig* sind."[34]

Thus the Expressionists maintain the dominant gender dissymmetry of the Romantic tradition whereby "the genius was a male - full of 'virile' energy - who *transcended* his biology: if the male genius was 'feminine', this merely proved his cultural superiority".[35] Women lack the qualities deemed appropriate to genius because their femininity is merely the result of their "natural" female form. Woman's biologically determined sensuality, or intuitiveness, or emotional sensitivity are always bad copies of the qualities and powers characterising the feminised psyche of the male creator, for *his* sensitivity - as opposed to her ticklishness - allows him to sublimate his sexual energies and produce transcendent visions.[36] In early Expressionism, this dissymmetry is compounded because the sensitive man of insight rejects the painful suffering that results from too much form; thus as was shown in the previous chapter, he desires to transcend the limits of embodiment itself, as represented by woman. Whereas woman's passivity renders her fixed and fossilised matter, devoid of will and soul, man adopts passivity to become

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[33] Mahlow, p. 107. "not sensitive, but just ticklish".
[34] Alfred Wolfenstein, "Toast auf die Damen", *Die Aktion*, XXXIV (1912), col. 1063-68, col. 1064. Women "have no possibility of losing their minds. Because they are *mindless* [etymologically: of dulled/deadened senses]."
[35] Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius*, p. 4.
[36] See Battersby, *Gender and Genius*, p. 4.

immersed within a formless fluxing life, he *chooses* to be passive to become part of a generative principle that transcends individuality.[37]

Moreover, just as women's organic form becomes a reminder of the fixity (genius) males leave behind, so women's demands for suffrage and emancipation were generally received with much hostility by the male Expressionists: "for young men seeking to escape a career in a typical bourgeois profession, it is simply incomprehensible that women should actually be fighting for access to those same professions".[38] Hence the women's movement was most often seen as a misguided search for the very Enlightenment values which the male Expressionists were in the process of abandoning - though without abandoning the gender dichotomies that underpinned these values. Women's efforts to transcend their identification with a "naturally" passive and mindless materiality were perceived as the expression of a desire for precisely that rational and autonomous individuality which the Expressionists had revealed to be limiting and dehumanising. This proved that women lacked both the sensitivity required to feel the suffering of "der Mensch" under restrictive bourgeois norms, and the spiritual insight to envisage a different mode of being: "it confirms the common prejudice that women lack the 'Geist' and 'Wille' to pursue a 'higher' calling".[39] Expressionist intellectuals argued that emancipation was a sign of cultural decadence, and that it would only alienate women from

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[37] The Expressionists' gendering of passivity closely resemble Schopenhauer's views, described by Battersby as follows: "Woman *is* a passive pawn of nature. The ordinary male is torn between self and nature. The creative genius actively permits himself to be a pawn; but a pawn of cultural and racial evolution. He *freely chooses* to become a passive thing, to become the mouthpiece of all that is divine in man. The male fulfils his potential in cultural production; woman's only potential is reproduction." (*Gender and Genius*, p. 157). As Battersby notes, Schopenhauer's views on women are "not very original": they remain equally uninspired when repeated by Expressionist men.

[38] Wright, p. 594.

[39] Wright, p. 594.

their "true" (i.e. biological) nature; thus they asserted that "disenfranchisement was a privilege, not a privation".[40]

As Wright has noted, these attitudes betray the strong influence of Nietzsche on the (male) Expressionists' attitudes to women's emancipation. For Nietzsche, woman could represent a powerful will to life which contrasted with the decadence of Western culture, but only if she lived out those instinctual forces which constitute her own "will to power", namely, the desire to bear a child. Hence if a woman is educated such that she aspires to cultural production (rather than biological reproduction), she is educated out of her instincts and becomes not only decadent but perverted. Moreover, Nietzsche rejected the politics of democracy and rights as symptomatic of a sick society where the weak strove to control the strong. Women's struggle for emancipation and representation thus becomes doubly perverted, leading her away from her own will to power and functioning as a sign of the general decadence of the times.[41]

Thus women's desire for political and economic independence was regarded as demonstrating their tendency to behave as poor imitations of the males - as mere "Affen des Mannes".[42] For Wolfenstein, woman could only ever

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[40] Wright, p. 595.

[41] See Battersby, *Gender and Genius*, pp. 173-178. It is important to note that the complexity of Nietzsche's philosophy is such that despite his misogyny, women writers and feminists of the early twentieth-century also appropriated his work. See for example Hedwig Dohm who uses Nietzsche in a sophisticated and convincing argument where she claims that women who publicly decry the women's movement are themselves symptomatic of that movement's power and success, for they have left the private domestic sphere and entered public debate. She summarises this argument as follows: "um mich gewählter auszudrucken: ‚Wer sich wandelt, ist mit mir verwandt.' Nietzsche sagt's." "Feindliche Schwestern", col. 649; "to put it more elegantly: 'whoever changes is a kindred spirit of mine.' Nietzsche says so."
For an overview of the adoption of Nietzschean views by German feminists around the turn of the century, see: R. Hinton Thomas, *Nietzsche in German Politics and Society 1890-1918* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), chapter 7: "The Feminist Movement and Nietzsche", pp. 80-93.

[42] Wright, p. 594; original source not given.

be man's distorted "Echo".[43] This is particularly emphasised as regards

women's engagement in cultural and artistic activity. Thus Karl Kraus bemoans

the fact that ink is wasted on women who lack his own depth of sensitivity and

feeling.[44] Thus as in the nineteenth century, so also for the male Expressionists,

"the psychology of woman was used as a foil to genius: to show what merely

apes genius. Biological femaleness mimics the psychological femininity of the

true genius."[45] This is reflected in Kasimir Edschmid's attack on female artists,

which also indicates that their work was associated with the cheapening and

mass dissemination of Expressionist styles and goals:

> O Ihr Jungfrauen von Kotzschenbroda, Ulm und Gnesen, die Ihr statt
> Schlummerrollen und Holzschnitzereien Eure unverstandene deutsche
> Schwermut nun in abstrakten Landschaften und gedreieckten Visionen
> dem erschreckten und ahnungslosen Publikum eurer Heimat vorweist,
> wie sehr habt Ihr (wie die meisten alle) mißverstanden![46]

As Christopher Butler notes, Expressionism on the whole thus persisted

in the belief "that only superior men can produce a revival of humanity, and

that women are inherently inferior, if not primitive".[47] The exclusion of women

from the Expressionist canon noted in the *Introduction* above, can thus be seen as

symptomatic of Expressionism's construction of woman in both its poetic and

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[43] See Alfred Wolfenstein's poem *Dem Frauenkongress in München* [1912], in *Alfred Wolfenstein: Werke*, ed.s Hermann Haarmann and Günter Holtz, 5 vols (Mainz: Hase und Koehler, 1982-93), I *Gedichte* (1982), pp. 40-41.

[44] Karl Kraus, "Brief einer Suffragette an eine Bordellwirtin der Freiheit", *Die Fackel*, No. 347/348 (1912), 45-47; quoted in Wright, p. 594. "Und Tinte braucht so eine, um unflätige Briefe an jene zu schreiben, die, wie ich, von der Tragik eine monströsen Zeit ergriffen sind." ("And a woman like this uses up ink only to write offensive letters to those who are, as I am, moved by the tragedy of a monstrous time.")

[45] Battersby, *Gender and Genius*, p. 4.

[46] Kasimir Edschmid, "Stand des Expressionismus" [1920], quoted in Paul Raabe, *Expressionismus. Der Kampf um eine literarische Bewegung* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1965), p. 174; quoted by Wright, p. 595. "O you virgins of Kotzschenbroda, Ulm and Gnesen, who have cast aside bolsters and woodcarvings to display your misunderstood German melancholy to your startled, ignorant hometown public in abstract landscapes and angular visions, how gravely you (like the vast majority) have misunderstood!"

[47] Butler, p. 277.

theoretical texts: a construction which militates against the possibility of women

artists being perceived as capable of works of genius. The process of exclusion

can be seen to begin with Pinthus's seminal anthology of Expressionism

Menschheitsdämmerung [1920], which is still a key resource for the Expressionist

scholar, and which includes only one female writer, Else Lasker-Schüler.

However, as Michael Stark notes, this logic of exclusion extends to the critical

work on Expressionist texts:

> The scandalous image of woman which is so often perpetuated by
> expressionist [*sic*] literature is, notwithstanding the countercurrents
> which are also to be found there, a good example of that anachronism
> [within Expressionism's intellectual position] and, correspondingly,
> research into Expressionism has not seen fit to describe the part which
> women writers and artists played within that movement.[48]

The Absent Voices of Expressionism

Although several works have appeared in recent years which begin to redress

the balance, there is still remarkably little work on the women writers of the

Expressionist period (with the notable exception of Lasker-Schüler; see below).

Thus Mahlow writing in 1996 still comments on "die dürftige Forschungslage

zur Rolle der Frau im Expressionismus", whilst Brian Keith-Smith questions

"the apparent dearth of German women Expressionists". [49] Women artists who

participated in Expressionism suffer from a similar exclusion from the major

anthologies of Expressionist art; Sulamith Behr's recent - and excellent - volume

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[48] Michael Stark, "'The Murder of Modernism': Some Observations on Research into Expressionism and the Post-Modernism Debate", in *Expressionism in Focus*, ed. Richard Sheppard, Proceedings of the First UEA Symposium on German Studies (Blairgowrie: Lochee, 1987), pp. 27-45 (p. 40).

[49] Mahlow, p. 92; "the meagre condition of research into woman's role in Expressionism"; Mahlow is here referring to a lack of research both on women authors and on the representation of woman within Expressionist texts; Brian Keith-Smith, "Editor's Introduction" in *German Women Writers: 1900 - 1933*, p. vii.

goes some way towards rectifying this.[50] Keith-Smith's edited volume of essays

[1993] is one of the few publications to testify to the fact that the absence of

women from literary Expressionism is also only apparent. Indeed, my own

survey of Raabe's *Index - Expressionismus* has revealed almost 300 women

writers, who published in Expressionist periodicals.[51] Their contributions

include not only poems and prose fiction, but reviews, critical and political

essays, extracts from plays, translations of work by foreign authors, aphorisms,

letters, songs as well as woodcuts and drawings. And this is not to include the

Expressionist women who worked primarily in the fine arts, in sculpture, music,

opera or film.

Moreover, in his bibliography of Expressionism *Die Autoren und Bücher*

des literarischen Expressionismus, Paul Raabe lists nineteen women Expressionists

whose work was individually published between 1910-1922.[52] This list naturally

includes Else Lasker-Schüler (b.1869, d.1945), the only one of the women

Expressionists who has been consistently included in anthologies of

Expressionist writing and related literary criticism.[53] The importance and

originality of Lasker-Schüler's work, perhaps especially her poetry, should not

be underestimated. A considerable body of literature testifies both to her central

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[50] Sulamith Behr, *Women Expressionists* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1988). The book includes a short introductory piece, a select bibliography and reproductions of work by nine female Expressionist painters.

[51] Paul Raabe, *Index - Expressionismus*, I-IV: *Alphabetisches Index*. For a complete list of these women contributors, see Appendix 1.

[52] Paul Raabe with Ingrid Hannich-Bode, *Die Autoren und Bücher des literarischen Expressionismus: Ein bibliographisches Handbuch* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1985).

[53] Lasker-Schüler is included in almost every study of Expressionism; for biographical and bibliographical information, see: *Lexikon deutschsprachiger Schriftstellerinnen 1800-1945*, ed.s Gisela Brinker-Gabler, Karola Ludwig, Angela Wöffen (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986), pp. 182-7; Sigrid Bauschinger, *Else Lasker-Schüler: Ihr Werk und ihre Zeit*, Poesie und Wissenschaft 7 (Heidelberg: Stiehm, 1980); Robert P. Newton, trans. and ed., *Your Diamond Dreams Cut Open My Arteries: Poems by Else Lasker-Schüler*, University of North Carolina Studies in the Germanic Languages and Literatures 100 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

role within the Expressionist movement, and to the literary value of her work, which is noted for its linguistic brilliance and for its complex exploration of her Jewish and gendered identity.[54] However, even Lasker-Schüler was largely forgotten once exiled during the Second World War, and spent her last years in great isolation and poverty in Jerusalem. Nonetheless, in terms of Expressionist scholarship, the very centrality accorded to "die Lasker" has overshadowed other women Expressionists such that, despite her inclusion, Expressionism has continued to seem a movement of male writers, with the exception of one exceptional woman.

Raabe's bibliographical list serves as a starting point for the investigation of the "forgotten contributions" to Expressionism made by other women authors. Keith-Smith's volume includes essays on four of these authors. Sabine Werner-Birkenbach provides a detailed discussion of the 1919 novel *Gefängnis* written by Emmy Hennings (b.1885, d.1948).[55] Hennings has suffered from being defined by (and defining herself by) her relationship to her better-known husband, the dadaist and surrealist Hugo Ball. However, Hennings was a talented actress whose artistic life began with a travelling theatre group, and who went on to perform in the *Berliner Variétés* and the München-based *Simplizissimus* cabaret. Within the Expressionist period, she published two volumes of poetry and an autobiographical work as well as the novel *Gefängnis*,

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[54] Several book-length studies have been devoted solely to Lasker-Schüler, including Sigrid Bauschinger, op. cit; see also Dieter Bänsch, *Else Lasker-Schüler: Zur Kritik eines etablierten Bildes* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1971). For thoughtful examinations of gender in Lasker-Schüler's work, see Mary Elizabeth O'Brien, "'Ich war verkleidet als Poet . . . ich bin Poetin!': The Masquerade of Gender in Else Lasker-Schüler's Work", *German Quarterly*, I (1992), 1-17; and Ursula Hasecke, "Die Kunst Apokryphen zu lesen: Zu einigen Momentaufnahmen 'weiblicher' Imagination in der literarischen Arbeit Else Lasker-Schülers", in *Entwürfe von Frauen in der Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Irmela von der Lühe, Literatur im historischen Prozeß, n.s.V (Berlin: Argument, 1982), 27-63.
[55] Sabine Werner-Birkenbach, "Emmy Hennings: A Woman Writer of Prison Literature", in *German Women Writers: 1900 - 1933*, pp. 167 - 200. Includes a brief chronology of Hennings' life.

and contributed poems to Expressionist and pacifist periodicals.[56] During the 1914-18 war, her politically engaged stance as a pacifist led to exile in Switzerland, where she played an active role in Expressionist evenings and later in the "happenings" organised by *dada*.[57]

Another essay in Keith-Smith's volume discusses poetry by Berta Lask (b. 1878, d.1967). Lask was a novelist, dramatist, pacifist and political activist who, according to Agnes Cardinal, was for a time "at least as controversial a playwright as Bertolt Brecht or Ernst Toller".[58] During the Expressionist period, several plays by Lask were performed though never published; three volumes of her poetry were published however: *Stimmen. Gedichte,* [1919]; *Rufe aus dem Dunkel. Auswahl 1915-1921* [1921]; and *Senta* [1921].[59]

Keith-Smith himself writes of another women poet, Frieda Bettingen (b.1865, d.1924), that at their best, her poems "reflect some of the most effective writing in German literature of their day". He also writes about Bess Brenck-Kalischer (b.1878, d.1933), who he describes as a "remarkable personality whose slender work belongs to the category of forgotten contributions to Expressionism."[60] As well as playing an important role in shaping the voice of

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[56] The volumes of poetry are: *Die Letzte Freude, Der jüngsteTag:* 5 (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1913); and *Helle Nacht* (Berlin: Erich Reiß, 1922); the novel is*Gefängnis* (Berlin: Erich Reiß, 1919); the autobiographical work: *Das Brandmal: Ein Tagebuch* (Berlin: Erich Reiß, 1920).
Hennings also had poems, letters, and fictional and autobiographical prose published in the following journals: *Die Aktion, Die Bücherei Maiandros, Caberet Voltaire, Der Friede, Die Neue Kunst, Pan,* and *Revolution.*

[57] For some of Hennings' own accounts of her involvement in dada, see Emmy Hennings, *Frühe Texte,* ed. Bernhard Merkelbach, *Vergessene Autoren der Moderne:* II (Siegen: Universität-Gesamthochschule Siegen, 1987).

[58] Agnès Cardinal, "A Voice out of Darkness: Berta Lask's Early Poetry", in *German Women Writers: 1900 - 1933,* pp.203-222 (p. 203). Cardinal's article is followed by a list of Lask's major works and a bibliography of criticism (which runs to only seven works).

[59] *Stimmen. Gedichte* (Hanover: Paul Steegemann, 1919); *Rufe aus dem Dunkel. Auswahl 1915-1921* (Berlin: Buchverlag der Arbeiter-Kunst-Ausstellung, 1921); *Senta* (Hanover: Paul Steegemann, 1921).

[60] Brian Keith-Smith, "Frida Bettingen and Bess Brenck-Kalischer", in *German Women Writers: 1900 - 1933,* pp. 225- 253 (p. 225; p. 241). Bettingen had two volumes of poetry

the Dresden-based pacifist periodical *Menschen,* Brenck-Kalischer published

poems and a novel, *Die Mühle,* which was highly experimental both structurally

and stylistically.[61]

Even a brief indication of the literary activities of some of the other

women listed by Raabe gives a sense of the range of their publications and of

their close involvement with the Expressionist avant-garde. Maria Benemann

(b.1887, d.1980) was a poet and short story writer, who for a time was part of

the Worpswede community where the Expressionist painter Paula Modersohn-

Becker had worked.[62] Mechtilde Lichnowsky (b.1879, d.1958), an aristocrat who

married a German diplomat, wrote essays, novels, plays and travel books,

including *Götter, Könige und Tiere in Agypten,* which contributed to the growing

interest in the "Orientalism" of the near and middle East.[63] Nell Walden (b.1887,

d.1975) was a painter and writer who became the second wife of Herwarth

Walden (Lasker-Schüler was the first), the enormously influential proprieter of

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published during the Expressionist period: *Eva und Abel* (Dusseldorf: Bagel, 1919); *Gedichte* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1922).

[61] Bess Brenck-Kalischer, *Dichtung* (Dresden: Dresdner Verlag, 1917); *Die Mühle: Eine Kosmee* (Berlin: Leon Hirsch Verlag, 1922). Brenck-Kalischer wrote the "Manifesto" for the first edition of *Menschen* (1918), and published poems, dramatic scenes, and a review of Lasker-Schüler's play *Die Wupper* in several Expressionist periodicals (*Der Einzige, Menschen, Neue Jugend,* and *Die Schöne Rarität*).

[62] See Maria Benemann, *Wandlungen:Gedichte* (Leipzig: Verlag der Weißen Bücher, 1915); *Die Reise zum Meer: Märchen* (Weimar: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1915); and *Kleine Novellen* (Weimar: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1916). See also Benemann's autobiographical work, *Leih mir noch einmal die leichte Sandale: Erinnerungen und Bewegungen* (Hamburg: Christians, 1978), where she recalls her time at Worpswede and her relationship with Richard Dehmel.

[63] Mechthilde Lichnowsky, *Götter, Könige und Tiere in Agypten* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1913). Her other publications during the Expressionist era are: *Ein Spiel vom Tod. Neun Bilder für Marionetten* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1915); *Der Stimmer,* [poetry] (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1917); *Gott betet,* [poetic prose] (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1917); *Der Kinderfreund,* [drama] (Berlin: Erich Reiß, 1919); and *Geburt,* [novel] (Berlin: Erich Reiß, 1921).
See also Peter Wollen, *Raiding the Icebox: Reflections on twentieth-century Culture* (London: Verso, 1993). In chapter one ("Out of the Past: Fashion/Orientalism/the Body", pp.1-34), Wollen discusses the "phantasmagoric Orient" which fascinated early European modernists. This fantasy was composed from Western projections of an Islamic past of Sultans and *Schéhérazade,* together with Diaghilev's Russian Ballet itself, whose 1910 performance of *Schéhérazade* in Paris galvanised interest in all things "Oriental".

Der Sturm in 1912. Her poetry was published in this periodical, and she was a co-organiser of the art exhibitions staged by the *Sturm* group, which played a key role in shaping German Expressionism and in forging links with other European avant-garde movements.[64]

Henrietta Hardenberg (b.1894, d.1994) is a poet whose work was highly praised by her contemporaries, and who makes especially interesting use of poetic persona, writing many poems in a male voice. In particular, she often adopts the persona of men whose masculinity is undermined by pain, powerlessness or deformity - in her first collection [1918], she writes as the dying soldier, the blind man, the cripple, the deserter and as even as the dead man.[65] She was a *Mitarbeiterin* on the Expressionist periodical *Die Aktion*, and in 1916 married the poet Alfred Wolfenstein.[66]

In this study, I will be concentrating on two further authors who are not discussed in Keith-Smith's volume, though they are included in Raabe's bibliography: Paula Ludwig (b.1900, d.1974) and Claire Goll (b.1890, d.1977). Goll was born Claire Aischmann in 1890 in Nuremberg, the daughter of wealthy Jewish parents. Her childhood was dominated by the sadistic torture inflicted on her and her beloved brother, Alfred, by her mother, whom she never forgave for Alfred's suicide, aged sixteen. Claire continued to be emotionally and physically abused by her mother throughout her adolescence, which was made

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[64] Nell Walden later co-edited(with Lothar Schreyer) a volume about the artists surrounding *Der Sturm*: *Der Sturm, Ein Errinnerungsbuch an Herwarth Walden und die Künstler aus dem Sturmkreis* (Baden-Baden: Woldemar Klein, 1954). She was Norwegian by birth and, as Sulamith Behr notes, maintained her contacts with several Scandanavian women artists who also exhibited through *Der Sturm*.

[65] Henrietta Hardenberg, *Neigungen: Gedichte, Die Neue Reihe*: no. 12 (Munich: Roland Verlag Albert Mundt, 1918).

[66] Between 1913-1920, Hardenberg had some 30 poems and several prose pieces published in the periodicals *Die Aktion, Die Erhebung, Die Flöte, Neue Blätter für Kunst und Dichtung, Die Schöne Rarität*, and *Die Weissen Blätter*.

bearable only by the presence of her teacher Julie Kerschensteiner.[67] In 1911 she married the Swiss law student and later publisher, Heinrich Studer, with whom she moved to Leipzig, where she met many of the leading Expressionists working in both Leipzig and Berlin, including Else Lasker-Schüler, Alfred Wolfenstein and Henrietta Hardenberg. In 1917, she divorced Studer, who was given custody of their daughter Doralies (born in 1912). However, she continued to publish under the name Studer until her marriage to Yvan Goll, in the early 1920s.[68]

After the divorce, Claire moved to Switzerland, where she wrote for pacifist and Expressionist journals and newspapers. Her life during the war has a similar shape to that of Emmy Hennings. Like Hennings, Claire was both politically and culturally active during this time, and like Hennings, she would come to perceive her own activities as second-rate compared to those of her male spouse - a perception which, in the case of both women, literary critics have done little to question. Through her wartime activities in Switzerland, she met Yvan Goll, the Alsatian Jewish poet who was to become her second husband. She returned briefly, but momentously, to Germany in 1918. Here, whilst staying with Henrietta Hardenberg and Alfred Wolfenstein in Munich, Claire met her idol Rilke. She had already sent him her first collection of poems, which he had received with enthusiasm.[69] They had a brief but passionate affair,

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[67] For information on Goll's childhood and adolesence, see her first two volumes of autobiographical writing: *Der gestohlene Himmel*, (Munich: List, 1962); revised edition: ed. and rev. Barbara Glauert-Hesse, afterword by Anna Rheinsberg, (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1988); and *Traumtänzerin. Jahre der Jugend* (Munich: List, 1971).

[68] For ease of reference, I will refer to Claire as Goll throughout, indicating in footnotes when a text was published under the name Studer.

[69] See Rainer Marie Rilke, *Briefe an eine Freundin 1918-1925*, ed. Richard von Mises (New York: Wells College Press, 1944); see also Mahlow, pp. 136 - 141; 171.

Goll's affair with Rilke is well-known, but is often treated dimissively by Rilke scholars, who tend to characterise the affair in terms which belittle Goll's own literary activity. See for example Donald Prater, who despite noting Goll's writing and her political activism, nonetheless presents her as "a beautiful and tempestuous Bavarian"

before she returned to Yvan via Berlin, where she stayed with the actress Elisabeth Bergner. On rejoining Yvan, later in 1919, Claire moved to Paris with him. Here they became the centre of much literary and artistic life throughout the twenties and thirties. The two finally married in 1921, and their marriage became the defining relationship of Goll's later life. Following exile in the USA during the Second World War, the couple returned to Paris in 1947, where Yvan died of leukaemia in 1950. Claire continued to live and work in Paris, writing poetry and autobiographical texts, until her death in 1977.

In later life, Goll positioned herself explicitly as Yvan's muse and partner, particularly after his death, when she devoted herself to publishing and translating his work. This self-adopted role has overshadowed her own critical reception, to the extent that even in Expressionist scholarship concerned with the period before she was married to Yvan, she is generally seen as his lover and future wife. This image of Goll has been compounded by the autobiographical text documenting this early period of political and literary activity, *Ich verzeihe keinem*.[70] For as Margaret Littler has noted, this volume

> is almost entirely devoted to her life with Yvan Goll, whose attention was drawn to her by her pacifist publications. This account of their life

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who has survived a "shotgun mariage" and is "a determined seducer of men, with a particular predilection for the writer or the poet" (*A Ringing Glass: The Life of Rainer Maria Rilke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 295-6). He manages to make Rilke's interest in Goll's writing sound like the necessary politeness shown to a lover's amatuerish attempts, and thus downplays the literary nature of their friendship which - as he himself notes - continued well into the twenties. Rilke dedicated many poems to "Liliane" (his pet name for Goll), both publicly and in their letters; for a shorter account but one which pays more careful attention to such aspects, see Nora Wydenbruck, *Rilke: Man and Poet. A Biographical Study* (London: John Lehman, 1949), especially pp. 287-9, 297, 342.

The link between Rilke and Goll will be returned to in chapter 6, below.

[70] *Ich verzeihe keinem. Eine literarische Chronique scandaleuse unserer Zeit*, (Munich: Scherz, 1978). It should be noted, however, that this volume was composed from recorded interviews with Goll by the journalist Otto Hahn; as Margaret Littler notes, this has not prevented the text being taken up as "part of the Claire Goll myth", usually without question (Littler, p. 155).

together focuses always on Yvan Goll's career, [. . .] whilst her own writing is hardly mentioned.[71]

Littler's text is one of the few to seriously examine Goll's role in literary modernism. The only book-length study to focus on Claire's work is Mahlow's *"Die Liebe die uns immer zur Hemmung wurde"* (see the *Introduction*, above), whilst the contemporary writer Anna Rheinsberg has written a poetic reimagining of Goll's life (see below). These critics draw attention to the discrepancy between Claire Goll's actual role in the Expressionist avant-garde and her own rewriting of this past in *Ich verzeihe keinem*, where she claims that in spite of her "kleinen Erfolge", any poetic skill she had was learnt from her "Meister", Yvan, who is "ein echter Dichter".[72] Yet when she and Yvan met in 1917, *both* were in the early stages of their development as writers. More importantly, Claire had been associated with the German avant-garde since 1912, when she first met Kurt Wolff and Herwarth Walden: as the editors of the journals *Die Aktion* and *Der Sturm* respectively, these were two of the most important and influential figures in Expressionism. By 1917, she was a *Mitarbeiterin* on *Die Aktion*, a contributor to at least nine other Expressionist and/or pacifist periodicals, and knew many of the artists and writers of the Expressionist movement.

In 1918, Claire Goll's first volume of poetry was published, *Mitwelt*, to critical acclaim.[73] A volume of pacifist short stories, *Die Frauen erwachen*, appeared in the same year.[74] These stories focus on women as the victims of war, though as the title suggests, they have the same polemical aim as a series of

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[71] Littler, p. 169.
[72] Goll, *Ich verzeihe keinem*, pp. 146, pp. 108-9.
[73] Claire Studer, *Mitwelt, Der Rote Hahn* nr. 20 (Berlin, Wilmersdorf: Verlag *Die Aktion*, 1918). For the positive reception of this volume, see Mahlow, pp.170-1.
[74] Claire Studer, *Die Frauen erwachen*, (Frauenfeld, Leipzig: Huber, 1918). Republished in Claire Goll, *Der gläserne Garten: Prosa 1917-1939*, ed. Barbara Glauert-Hesse, (Berlin: Argon, 1989).

articles Goll wrote during the war: she aimed to galvanise women, and mothers in particular, out of their passivity by arguing strongly that they had not acted to prevent their sons being taken by the war, and thus had to bear some of the responsibility for the consequences. The most important of these articles are: "Die Frauen und das Reichsjugendwehrgesetz", "Die Stunde der Frauen", "Die neue Idee", "Die Mission der Deutschen Frau", "Die Pflicht der Frauen", and "Wie kühn, mit vorgestrecktem Leib am Rhein".[75] In 1919, the shorter collection of stories *Der Gläserne Garten* appeared and, in 1922, another volume of poetry, *Lyrische Films*.[76] In the meantime, Goll had also established a reputation as a translator: in 1921 she translated and edited *Die neue Welt. Eine Anthologie jüngster amerikanischer Lyrik*.[77]

Thus Claire's later elevation of Yvan to "Meister" belies the importance and originality of Claire's own contributions to the literary avant-garde during this early period. Claire's portrayal of herself as in a different league to Yvan - "Ich bin nie auf die Idee gekommen, mit [Yvan] Goll zu konkurrieren. Ich habe mich immer eine Etage tiefer gefühlt" - also belittles her subsequent literary achievements.[78] In the post-Expressionist period, she continued to publish many volumes of poetry and prose fiction in both German and French, the language of her adopted country. Though some of these texts were co-authored with Yvan,

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[75] "Die Frauen und das Reichsjugendwehrgesetz", *Die Freie Zeitung*, I: no. 18 (1917); "Die Stunde der Frauen", *Zeit-Echo. Ein Kriegstagebuch der Künstler*, III: no. 1/2 (1917), pp. 9-10; "Die Mission der Deutschen Frau", *Die Freie Zeitung*, I: no. 18 (1917); "Die Pflicht der Frauen", *Die Friedenswarte*, XX: no. 7/8 (1918); "Die neue Idee", *Die Aktion*, IX (1919), col. 179-181; "Wie kühn, mit vorgestrecktem Leib am Rhein", *Die Aktion*, IX (1919), col. 489-90.
All are republished in Claire Goll, *Der gläserne Garten: Prosa 1917-1939*.
[76] Claire Studer, *Der gläserne Garten. Zwei Novellen*, (Munich: Roland Verlag Albert Mundt, 1919); republished in Claire Goll, *Der gläserne Garten: Prosa 1917-1939*. Claire Goll, *Lyrische Films*, (Basel, Leipzig: Rhein, 1922).
[77] Claire Goll, ed. and trans., *Die neue Welt. Eine Anthologie jüngster amerikanischer Lyrik* (Berlin: Fischer, 1921).
[78] Goll, *Ich verzeihe keinem*, p. 146. "It never occurred to me to compete with Goll. I always felt a level beneath him".

and others are translations of his work into German, nonetheless, a significant proportion of Claire's later literary output was constituted by her own work.[79]

Her 1926 novel *Der Neger Jupiter raubt Europa* was accorded great critical acclaim, as was *Ein Mensch ertrinkt*, which was translated into English in the same year it appeared in German (1931).[80] In 1952 she was the co-recipient of *Süddeutsche Rundfunk's* prize for the best Novelle with Heinrich Böll, whilst in 1965 a volume of short stories, *Confessions d'un moineau du siècle*, was awarded the Katherine Mansfield Prize.[81]

Several of Goll's novels have recently been reprinted (*Der Neger Jupiter raubt Europa; Ein Mensch ertrinkt; Arsenik*), as has *Der gestohlene Himmel*, the auto-biographical work dealing with her childhood.[82] It is, however, the collection of her early prose fiction and journalistic essays collected in the volume *Der Gläserne Garten* that is of more importance for this study. However, as was noted in the *Introduction* above, the title story of this collection, along with Claire Goll's early poetry (republished by Kraus) has received scant critical attention, even in Mahlow's thoughtful reappraisal of her early fiction.[83] As both Littler and Mahlow indicate, the self-denigratory account of Claire Goll's role within the

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[79] For a bibliography of these later works, see Raabe, *Die Autoren und Bücher des literarischen Expressionismus: Ein bibliographisches* Handbuch, pp. 156-160; for a bibliography of works appearing only in French, see *Claire Goll: Choix de textes, bibliographie, portraits, fac-similés*, ed.s Georges Cattaui and Edmée de la Rochefoucauld (Paris: Pierre Seghers, 1967).

[80] *Der Neger Jupiter raubt Europa* (Zurich: Rhein, 1926), republished, with an afterword by Rita Mielke, (Berlin: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1987); *Ein Mensch ertrinkt* (Vienna: E.P.Tal, 1931), republished, with an afterword by Barbara Glauert Hesse, (Berlin: Argon, 1988).

[81] *Confessions d'un moineau du siècle*, illutrations by Chagall, Clavé, Delauney, Louradour, Masson, Villon (Paris: Emile-Paul, 1963).

[82] Claire Goll, *Arsenik oder Jedes Opfer tötet seinen Mörder*, afterword Bärbel Jäschke (Berlin: Edition der 2, 1977 [first published as *Arsenik* (Vienna: 1933)]). For details of the other republications, see previous individual entries in footnotes.
Der gläserne Garten: Prosa 1917-1939 includes Goll's early journalism and *Die Frauen erwachen*, as well as *Der gläserne Garten. Zwei Novellen.*

[83] *Mitwelt* and *Lyrische Films* were both republished in 1973 (Nendeln: Kraus Reprints).

German avant-garde given in *Ich verzeihe keinem* has been left largely unquestioned by an even less forgiving critical tradition. It is one of the aims of this study to complement the work of Littler and Mahlow in reclaiming the literary heritage of Claire Goll by examining the extraordinary richness and originality of these early texts.

It is symptomatic of the reductive frame through which the contributions of so many women modernists have been read that Paula Ludwig's most famous role in literary history is as the lover of Yvan Goll. As a result of their long-standing affair, which began in 1931 and ended only when the Golls were exiled to America, Claire Goll attempted to commit suicide. Just as Claire's relation to Yvan has overshadowed her own literary output, the painful relationship between Claire and Paula Ludwig centred around the figure of Yvan has continued to dominate the reception of Ludwig. Her own work has been practically erased from the history of German modernism. Her poetry has been republished in the collection *Paula Ludwig: Gedichte*, which includes a short biographical piece, but apart from a few brief essays, and despite winning several literary prizes (see below), her work has received even less critical attention than that of Claire Goll.[84]

Ludwig was born in 1900 in Austria; her father was a carpenter and organ builder, though after her parents' separation Paula spent most of her childhood with her mother in Linz. Following her mother's death in 1914, she returned to her father in Breslau, then in Germany, where she worked in a

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[84] *Paula Ludwig: Gedichte*, ed.s and afterword Christiane Peter and Kristian Wachinger (Munich: Langewiesche-Brandt, 1986). For a list of book reviews, articles and PhD dissertations (2) on Ludwig's work, see *Lexikon deutschsprachiger Schriftstellerinnen 1800-1945*, p. 205-6. The critical essays are: Erika Meyer, "Paula Ludwig", *The Germanic Review*, XVII (1942), 282-287; B.G.Blumenthal, "Paula Ludwig's poetry: themes of love and death", *The German Quarterly*, 44 (1971), 534 - 538; and E. Fitzbauer, "Paula Ludwig: 'Dem dunklen Gott'", *Modern Austrian Literature*, XII no. 3/4 (1979), 437-40.

variety of mundane roles in a school of art. There she became, in her own words, "Atelier-Paula. Stand Modell, kochte Tee, putzte und behütete Wohnung, Bilder, Pinsel und Paletten."[85] She began to write at this time, addressing many of her poems to the artists for whom she worked. She had an affair with a Prussian officer and gave birth to a son, Friedel, in 1917. Shortly after his birth she moved to Munich, where she continued to work as an artists' model; during this period she also began to paint herself. Her artistic activities were extended when she was engaged as a prompt by the *Münchener Kammerspielen*. Here she also took small acting parts, including a role in a production of Hofmannsthal's *Jedermann* directed by Max Reinhardt, whose engagement with avant-garde theatre shaped the development of modernist drama in Germany. She was part of the circle surrounding Stefan Georg to which Else Lasker-Schüler belonged, and, according to the biographical essay in the collected edition of her poems, was sometimes described as Lasker-Schüler's "jüngere Schwester".[86] This essay also stresses how many other Expressionists she met during her time in Munich, though unfortunately without providing any more precise information.

Her first volume of poetry, *Die selige Spur*, was published in 1920, with a foreword by the publisher, Hermann Kasack, which emphasises the importance he accorded Ludwig's work by placing her alongside Lasker-Schüler and Henrietta Hardenberg.[87] In 1923 Ludwig moved to Berlin, where she continued

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[85] Quoted in *Paula Ludwig: Gedichte*, p. 290. "Studio-Paula. Modelled, made tea, cleaned and looked after flat, paintings, brushes and palettes." From an autobiographical piece for the Munich-based newpaper *Der Ararat*, first published in 1921.

[86] See *Paula Ludwig: Gedichte*, p. 291.

[87] See Hermann Kasack, "Vorwort", in *Die Selige Spur*, Paula Ludwig, *Die neue Reihe* no. 22 (Munich: Roland Verlag Albert Mundt, 1920), pp. 6-8. *Die Selige Spur* is reprinted together with Kasack's foreword in *Paula Ludwig: Gedichte* (pp.9-29; pp. 301-3). Kasack's comment also indicates the contemporary perception of Hardenberg as an important writer; see chapter 7 for the problematic gendering of this foreword.

to participate in literary and artistic life. Her second volume of poems, *Der himmlische Spiegel,* was published in 1927.[88] The thirties were marked both by her intense affair with Yvan Goll, and by an equally intense period of literary activity: a cycle of poems, *Dem dunklen Gott,* was published in 1932; *Traumlandschaft* (a collection of poetic prose) appeared in 1935; the auto-biographical *Buch des Lebens* in 1936; and some of her poems were republished in *Das Gedicht: Blätter für die Dichtung* in 1937.[89] Having moved to Austria in 1934, Ludwig left again with the arrival of the Nazis in 1938 and moved to Paris. She fled once again in 1940, and finally emigrated to Brazil in 1941. She spent the next twelve years in Brazil, where she continued writing and painting in near isolation. In 1953 she returned to Austria, a homecoming she described as "fatal".[90] Despite the appearance of a collected edition of her poems (1958) and receiving both the *Georg-Trakl-Preis* (1962) and the *Preis des Österreichischen Schriftsteller-verbandes* (1972), she remained painfully aware that she had been largely forgotten by the literary public.[91] She died in Darmstadt in 1974.

Hermann Kasack later wrote of the immense impression made on him by the manuscript of Ludwig's first book, *Die selige Spur.* He writes that the poems in this collection had an impact on him that would be matched by only one other bundle of unpublished texts: the first manuscripts of Berthold Brecht. [92] For a writer who was once positioned alongside one of the giants of

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[88] *Der himmlische Spiegel* (Berlin: Fischer, 1927); reprinted in *Paula Ludwig: Gedichte* (pp. 37-65).

[89] *Dem Dunklen Gott: Ein Jahresgedicht der Liebe* (Dresden: Wolfgang Jess, 1932); reprinted in *Paula Ludwig: Gedichte* (pp. 77 - 121); *Traumlandschaft,* (Berlin: Waldemar Hoffmann, 1935); *Buch des Lebens,* (Leipzig: Staakmann, 1936); "Gedichte", *Das Gedicht: Blätter für die Dichtung,* III no. 13/14 (Hamburg: Heinrich Ellermann, 1937); reprinted in *Paula Ludwig: Gedichte* (pp. 143).

[90] See *Paula Ludwig: Gedichte,* p. 289.

[91] The 1958 collection is *Gedichte. Eine Auswahl aus der Zeit von 1920-1958* (Munich: Langewiesche Brandt, 1958).

[92] See Hermann Kasack, *Mosaiksteine* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkanp, 1956 [first pub: 1927]), p. 249; quoted in *Paula Ludwig: Gedichte,* p. 292. Kasack writes that Ludwig's

twentieth-century German literature, Ludwig's work has received astonishingly little attention, notwithstanding the fact that her *oeuvre* is considerably more slender than Brecht's. In focusing on *Die selige Spur*, this study aims to show that the extraordinary intensity of Ludwig's early work demands (and repays) the same kind of close textual analysis and serious attention as has been accorded the work of her male contemporaries, the young Brecht included.

As indicated above, the recent collections of work by Goll and Ludwig have made their early work readily available. The work of several other women Expressionists has also been made more easily accessible by republication: Else Lasker-Schüler's complete works is collected in a 3-volume edition; Hardenberg's poems have recently been republished by *Arche*, and selected poetry and prose by Emmy Hennings is gathered together in the volume *Frühe Texte*.[93] The anthology of women poets edited by Gisela Brinker-Gabler and published in 1986 includes poems not only by Lasker-Schüler, but also Claire Goll, Emmy Hennings, Berta Lask and Paula Ludwig.[94] However, despite the few notable exceptions already indicated - and with the usual exception of Lasker-Schüler - these republications have not been followed by significantly increased critical activity.

Nonetheless, Claire Goll and Emmy Hennings have caught the imagination of a contemporary German author, Anna Rheinsberg, whose book

poems "einen so entscheidenden Eindruck hinterließen, wie ich ihn nur noch einmal von ungedruckten Manuskripten empfangen habe: als ich, seinerzeit im Lektorat eines Verlages beschäftigt, [...] Lieder und Balladen eines damals noch ganz unbekannten Autors entdeckte, ein Theaterstück war dabei [...] : die ersten Manuskripte von Bert Brecht."

[93] Else Lasker-Schüler, *Gesammelte Werke*, 3 vols, I and II, ed. Friedhelm Kemp (Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1959-62), III, ed. Werner Kraft (Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1961); Henriette Hardenberg, *Gedichte*, ed. Hartmut Vollmer and Paul Raabe (Arche, 1988); Emmy Hennings, *Frühe Texte* (see note 57 above).

[94] Gisela Brinker-Gabler, ed., *Deutsche Dichterinnen vom 16 Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart: Gedichte und Lebensläufe* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986), pp. 293-98; 307-310; 305; 299-304; 315-20, respectively.

KRIEGS/LÄUFE, interweaves biographical facts, quotations from the women authors, and imaginative interpretation in an almost Irigarayan style.[95] As Sabine Werner-Birkenbach notes, "The poetic language brings Rheinsberg and her subject so close together that they become almost indistinguishable for the reader."[96] Rheinsberg makes the voices of Goll and Hennings resonate with her own: unfortunately, such resonances are missing from the vast majority of critical studies of Expressionism.

This brief sketch of just some of the female authors active within Expressionism is offered to demonstrate that Goll and Ludwig were hardly lone voices. In addition, though the relationships between the Expressionist men are often charted, the complex and overlapping links between the women do not form part of the backdrop to Expressionist scholarship. Though it lies outside the scope of this study, such links require careful and detailed analysis if a different and differentiated contextualisation of Expressionism is to emerge. As well as the connections between Goll and Ludwig that this study touches upon, there are also links between Claire Goll and Henrietta Hardenberg; between Paula Ludwig and Else Lasker-Schüler; between Goll's pacifist and literary activities in Switzerland and those of Emmy Hennings, and many other links between women writers and artists who worked on and contributed to the same Expressionist journals. All these connections need to be explored further before the German avant-garde could be said to be adequately mapped.

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[95] Anna Rheinsberg, "Mutter/Stimme, Krieg. Claire (Studer) Goll 1890-1977", in *KRIEGS/LÄUFE. Namen. Schrift. Über Emmy Ball-Hennings, Claire Goll, Else Rüthel* (Mannheim: Persona Verlag, 1989), pp. 43-70.
[96] Werner-Birkenbach, *German Women Writers, 1900 - 1933* p. 167.

Adjusting the Frame

The fact that scholars have paid so little attention to the women Expressionists becomes increasingly troubling once one takes into account the level of artistic activity amongst women during this period, coupled with the accessibility of their texts through the Kraus reprints of the journals and the republication of work by key individual authors, as indicated above.[97] The grounds for the "correspondence" between Expressionism's own anachronistic view of Woman and the "dearth" of critical material on women authors cannot be satisfactorily located in a historical absence of female Expressionists and/or their texts. Instead, their absence stems from the inherently gendered dynamics of Expressionism itself (what Vietta calls its *Reflexionsstand*), which is repeated throughout Expressionist scholarship.

As I have already shown, the Expressionist poets figure a crisis in the unfolding identity and history of the Western Enlightenment subject. Woman is pivotal within the dynamic of the subject's dissolution and reconstitution (as either a "new Man" or a passive effect of powerful forces). At the same time, her identity remains unchanged and fixed, such that she is ultimately excluded from man's reworkings of his own existence. However, via the construction of wom*an* as the other of the subject, the identity of the subject-in-crisis is constructed/maintained as male: this logic entails that wom*en* writers cannot properly take up the position of this male subject-in-crisis, unless they mime the (male) identity whose radical *Umstrukturierung* is the immanent focus of Expressionism. Moreover, as can be seen from chapter two above, the

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[97] The Kraus Reprints (Nendel, Lichtenstein: Kraus-Thomson Organisation) include the full series of *Die Aktion* and *Der Sturm*, as well as the vast majority of other Expressionist and pacifist journals.

overthrow of the rational autonomous subject is firmly consolidated as Expressionism's defining feature by the critical literature. As I will show, Expressionist scholarship thereby not only maintains, but strengthens the logic of exclusion which militates against women writers being positioned as "proper" Expressionists (that is, as male subjects-in-crisis).

Critics support their definitions of Expressionism as moment of crisis in the history of the metaphysical subject by situating the movement within a genealogy which privileges (variously) Kant, Schopenhauer, Marx, Hegel, Nietzsche, Bergson, and/or the Neo-Kantians. However, by theorising Expressionism as an assault on the universal rational subject - without recognising the genderedness of that subject's philosophical genealogy - critics themselves sustain the myth of the neutrality of the subject whose crisis remains (as for the Expressionists themselves) the defining feature of the movement. The sexed (male) identity of both this subject and Expressionism itself disappears, overwhelmed by the weight of an apparently sexless ancestry. Critics of Expressionism thus not only tend to overlook the gendering inherent in the constitutive structures of Expressionism, but remain blind to the gendered limitations of their own frameworks.

By positioning the Western subject as the norm in relation to which the revolutionary aspects of Expressionism must be understood, critics repeat and perpetuate the underlying gendering of this movement, since only the work of those who write as male subjects(-in-crisis) will fall within their defining framework. Work which does not neatly fit the key categories delineating the collapse of stable and autonomous identity simply disappears from critical debate. In this way, the exclusion of women writers as anything other than mimics of a male norm is continued: women remain the "Affen des Mannes".

Moreover, the logic of this exclusion remains invisible as long as the supposed neutrality of the subject(-in-crisis) remains unquestioned. With a few notable exceptions, Expressionist scholarship implicitly perpetuates the insidious and familiar cultural discourse that if women writers were good enough, nothing would prevent them from making their way into the canon. In fact, women writers disappear, and the reasons for their disappearance are covered over by the theoretical frame that the "historical" scholars bring to bear.

Thus though Vietta gives a rigorous account of Expressionism capable of reflecting the movement's inherent focus on the dissolution of the subject, he fails to see that *Ichdissoziation* itself is a cultural and literary crisis which excludes those who are not positioned as fully constituted individuals within that culture and that literature. Nor does he see that it is not merely woman's positioning within Expressionism which entails that this crisis is not *her* crisis, but that Expressionism itself is embedded in a long history, wherein woman has always been denied full subjecthood, whilst playing a necessary and foundational role via her objectification as man's other. The Expressionist subject-in-crisis is one more twist in the tale of a subject whose normative maleness is consistently affirmed via his constitutive opposition to the figure of Woman, whilst this same opposition simultaneously excludes sexual difference from the realm of proper selfhood, and perpetuates the myth that the human subject is a neutral and universal ideal.

In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Luce Irigaray traces the patrilineal genealogy of this subject whose identity is constructed by excluding difference only to re/contain it as the "Other of the Same".[98] Irigaray weaves her way

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[98] See for example the chapter "Any Theory of the 'Subject' Has Always Been Appropriated by the 'Masculine'", in Irigaray, *Speculum*, pp. 133-46; see also Whitford, *Philosophy in the Feminine*.

through Western philosophy showing how the seemingly universal, genderless category of the human both depends on and erases difference exactly *because* it privileges the sameness of all (male) subjects. The identity of this subject depends both on marking himself off from that which is "other", and on making the "other" a reflection - albeit inverted - of himself, and no more than an "object" in his world. Viewed from such a perspective, woman cannot be added into the category of the subject because sexual difference cannot be seen at all except as interfering with the purity of the universal self-as-same. Her potential for disruption is, therefore, contained by a variety of moves - all of which redefine her differences in the male subject's terms. Woman is lack or excess, monster or matter, *jouissance* or threat, but always that "otherness" against which the boundaries of the masculinised subject are secured. As an object and never a subject, woman is a resource for extending man's knowledge. Indeed, when this male subject, as in Expressionism, gets bored or frustrated by the limits he has set up a little too securely, woman represents a space via which he can transcend his former limits and reconfigure himself again.

Irigaray's disruptive texts mimic Western metaphysics all too well. Like Alice, she passes through the endless play of mirrors where man continually reproduces himself by imposing his reflection on his "other", only to show that woman's "otherness" is never in fact wholly reducible to man's forms.[99] Thus despite and, because of his best efforts, "woman" remains a dangerous multiplicity. Her fluid materiality distorts man's neat projections, refuses the boundaries he sets for her and, above all, disrupts his disjunctive binary logic which insists that no-thing (and no-one) can be both one and two, and in more than one place at any one time.

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[99] See Irigaray, "The Looking Glass, from the Other Side", in *This Sex*, pp. 9-22.

Hence against man's objectification of woman, Irigaray posits a woman who "is indefinitely other in herself."[100] Such a female subject-position is not static, but remains uncontainable in a single figure or form; the singular bodies of particular women remain stubbornly manifold and continually threaten to escape the subject's gaze. Irigaray thus asks what would happen if women refused to be positioned as the other/object of the subject; she asks what would be heard if this "object" started to speak.[101] She suggests that between (male) subject and (female) object - between one and its "other" - there may be space for imagining another mode of selfhood, one that refuses and exceeds the masculine logic of the self-as-same.

Irigaray's own framework indicates the need to remain justifiably wary of those systems which seem to privilege the object/other, but which do so only to re-invent the (male) subject. The texts of the male Expressionists examined in the previous chapter are another example of such deceptive reincarnations. As we have seen, their poetry fits Irigaray's description of a "fantastic, phantasmatic fragmentation. A destru(tura)tion in which the 'subject' is shattered, scuttled, while still claiming surreptitiously that he is the reason for it all."[102] As I have shown, though objects are animate ("belebt"), their otherness becomes the site of a post-human mode of existence into which the subject escapes only by denying the very possibility of lived, embodied and sexed differences. Hence, once again, whilst "the 'subject' plays at multiplying himself, even deforming himself", woman acts as the "other" and *"outside"* against which Expressionism redefines man.[103] She "remains forever a condition

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[100] Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One", in *This Sex*, p. 28.
[101] See Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 135.
[102] Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 135.
[103] Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 136.

making possible the image and the reproduction of the self", even where this

self reproduces himself as "multiple, plural".[104]

However, although Irigaray draws attention to the ways in which

female identity is not straightforwardly containable by an oppositional logic, I

would also agree with Battersby that her work tends to homogenise the history

of Western philosophy. Irigaray represents the history of philosophy, literature

and art from the time of Plato on as "the expression of a seamless masculine

imaginary".[105] Thus she makes it difficult to see the gaps and absences within

that history where woman's otherness could become *productively* disruptive.

Battersby stresses the importance of locating such spaces if woman is not to be

continually repositioned as man's excessive other and outside:

> I do not see the history of the West as homogeneous. There have been
> *singularities* within it. Openings come from the writings of some familiar
> philosophers, such as Nietzsche, Diderot, Kierkegaard, Bergson or
> Foucault. But we need also to look in some unfamiliar places: in texts by
> past *women* writers who register that they must count as abnormal,
> peculiar or singular in terms of the dominant models of the self - and
> then go on to make imaginative or theoretical adjustments.[106]

Battersby emphasises that women writers who "register" the singularity of their

identity in relation to the dominant norms can work with the "radical

transformative potential" of the very difference/s they embody.[107]

In particular, her work on the female sublime draws attention to the way

in which Western modernity traps women's identities between the regulative

power of a male norm and the feminine ideals which regulate their specifically

female difference/s:

> In our society the ideals of autonomy and self-sufficiency that are so
> emphatically inculcated remain masculine ideals, and are in many ways
> at odds with the ideals taught to women. Women learn to value

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[104] Irigaray, *Speculum*, pp. 136, 135.
[105] Battersby, "Her Body/Her Boundaries", p. 37.
[106] Battersby, "Her Body/Her Boundaries", p. 37.
[107] Battersby, "Her Body/Her Boundaries", p. 37.

bondedness to others: both in romantic love and via the processes of rearing and birth.[108]

Thus women "seem caught between masculine ideals of autonomy and feminine ideals of bondedness and collectivity".[109] Such complex tensions produce "a peculiarly female ambivalence towards freedom and selfhood" which can become productive in the work of female artists and writers, allowing them to resist the male subject's oppositional ontology.[110] In particular, she shows how both the eighteenth-century German poet, Karoline von Günderode, and the contemporary artist, Evelyn Williams, employ the antinomies that structure women's identities, together with an "ambivalence and uneasiness about being a self", to generate alternative modes of selfhood.[111] These female selves refuse simple differentiation: they are immersed in collectivity and multiplicity yet retain their singularity; they emerge from the gaps and spaces between the subject and object, sameness and difference, one and another.[112]

I want to argue that although the defining body of Expressionism is constituted by a crisis of male identity, the breakdown of the subject–object relation nonetheless opens a space where identities other than the masculinised subject's can be reworked. For the Expressionist subject, the disintegration of

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[108] Christine Battersby, "Antinomies: the Art of Evelyn Williams", in *Antinomies: Works by Evelyn Williams*, Catalogue of a Mead Gallery Exhibition (The University of Warwick: 1994) pp. 25-37 (p. 30).

[109] Battersby, "Antinomies", p. 30.

[110] Battersby, "Antinomies", p. 29.

[111] Battersby, "Antinomies", p. 30. See also her essay referred to in the *Introduction* above, "Unblocking the Oedipal: Karoline von Günderode and the Female Sublime".

[112] See for example Karoline von Günderrode's poem *Once I Lived a Sweet Life* discussed by Battersby and attached in an Appendix to "Unblocking the Oedipal". For the female subject of this poem, the return to her-self entails leaving lonely separateness behind and becoming immersed in the infinite depths of mother nature; see also Evelyn Williams' images reproduced in "Antinomies", where, as Battersby shows, individuality seems to hold more terrors than its loss in collectivity, and selves only become individuated via patterns of sameness, relationality and repetition. See also the conclusion below, where I will return to Battersby's reworking of the sublime.

subject–object boundaries entails the disintegration of the very possibility of identity into a post-human flux. As objects cease to behave as objects should, so the subject ceases to be a subject. However, the breakdown of stable subject–object boundaries does not *only* produce a fluxing dissolution of the self, where all specificity of form must be abandoned. For those who were never positioned as "proper" human subjects, this breakdown does not figure the end of identity, but, on the contrary, holds open the possibility that identity might be differently configured.

Expressionism thus functions differently for those on the side of the object, for whom the collapse of rigid divisions between subject and object, self and other, can allow a gap to emerge within the patriarchal structures of Western culture, where their "otherness" can be differently schematised. If the male subject's position as the regulatory norm is destabilised, it becomes possible to imagine what it would be like to be a female self and a material "object", without reducing either women or objects to the "other" of man. Such object-selves need no longer be limited by the bounds of the subject's genealogy: far from dissolving into a flux which negates the specificities of difference, their manifold selfhood could allow for the mapping of both difference and embodied singularity.

I want to argue that both Ludwig and Goll explore this space-time of the "object". Their poetic texts utilise woman's historically embedded alignment with the material "other"/"object" to explore the difference/s which can emerge when the subject–object relation breaks down, and female identity can be constituted without being reduced to what Irigaray has called the "Other of the Same". Both of these poets show - each in her own way - how the specificities of female selves, like the "otherness" of objects, can be differently

mapped when woman is no longer determined via her relation to the male subject. Hence in their work, Expressionism becomes a moment in the genealogy of possible schematisations of the real where non-oppositional modes of selfhood can be configured and explored. The object-selves who occupy the imagination of these writers not only disorient the identity of the stable male subject but acrobatically reconfigure a female perspective and potential for self-(trans)formation.

Moreover, whereas for the male Expressionists, the subject–object relation is destroyed by the dynamisation of the *outside* world, for both Goll and Ludwig the very tensions that man's oppositional metaphysics has produced *within* female identity become powerful forces, capable of undoing the limits placed on the object by the masculinised subject. The "I" that emerges in their texts is both self and object, same and other, one and two, generating a non-oppositional logic inclusive of difference and change. As will be shown in more detail in the second half of this thesis, in Goll's and Ludwig's work, the breakdown of the subject–object relation does not lead to the disintegration of identity; nor to the disappearance of all forms of difference in a seamless flux; nor to the fossilisation of Woman within the inert form of a dead and abandoned object. On the contrary, as I will show, in the texts of these singular women writers the dynamisation of material objects lends itself to the schematisation of alternative modes of selfhood, where otherness and difference need not be excluded but are encompassed within the self.

Hence I will argue that Goll and Ludwig explore radically different kinds of spatial and temporal organisation than those which produced the autonomous Kantian subject of modernity, yet without miming the male Expressionists' dissolution of that subject. In the work of these two women

writers, the differentiated bodies of women are no longer obscured by a single idealised/demonised figure which constantly redoubles man's form. As the structures fixing the object in its place are torn out of joint, their poetic texts instead map the possibilities for a female subject, confounding man's oppositional categorisations by exploring what it would be to become *both* a material object *and* an active self.[113] Thus Goll and Ludwig relate to the subject's crisis of identity through what Sigrid Weigel has called a "schielende Blick" ["sideways or squinting glance"].[114] Between their texts and those of their male contemporaries, the disjunction between the idealised/demonised figure of Woman and the specificities of female embodiment and identity can emerge. Ludwig and Goll explore the gaps and spaces within Expressionism for a female imagination that seeks to reconfigure woman's objectified form and produce different modes of selfhood.

The importance of the work of Ludwig and Goll does not only lie in the way in which through them, the object starts to speak, but in the way their voices continue a female genealogy which is not lacking, though it has remained largely hidden and absent. In exploring their texts, I aim to show that their work, like that of Günderode and Williams, constitutes a privileged site in the unfolding of a female self. Thus I would like to position Ludwig and Goll as part of a genealogy of absences: their voices have been missing from Expressionist criticism because they explore the gaps and spaces within an already disruptive genre. The philosophical implications of their texts cannot be seen within a framework that accounts for Expressionism's radicality by

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[113] Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 203.
[114] Sigrid Weigel, "Der schielende Blick: Thesen zur Geschichte weiblicher Schreibpraxis", in *Die verborgene Frau*, ed. Inge Stephan, *Argument-Sonderband*, 96 (1983), pp. 83-137 (p. 105.).

positioning the crisis of the male subject as the movement's only defining norm. As Battersby has observed, "if the emphasis is on generalities (about philosophy, science or 'the West'), *singularities* (and hence, women) can be overlooked: they are merely exceptions to the rule."[115]

As I will show, in their explorations of alternative modes of selfhood which emerge from the breakdown of stable subject–object relations, Goll and Ludwig are exceptions who rewrite the rules. Their "imaginative adjustments" produce and necessitate adjustments in both philosophical and literary theoretical frameworks. Their work is concerned with selfhood, but its focus is not the dissolution of a male norm; the self is reconfigured, but not *against* an oppositional "other", but rather only *with* and *within* a different kind of otherness. These two female poets both *are* yet also are *not* Expressionist: their voices should be heard as part of Expressionism, but without being read through that movement's dominant masculine frame. Their texts demand that their readers reconfigure the boundaries of the historical movement known as Expressionism, at the same time as they re-imagine the limits of a specifically female self.

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[115] Battersby, Her Body/Her Boundaries, p. 37.

Part Two

Manifold Selves

Chapter Four

Claire Aischmann / Studer / Goll:

Acrobatic Space–Time

Bunte Vogel du, der zwischen Welten
Über Abend, Stadt und Staunen schwebt
Schwing dich auf dem Trapez
Über dich selbst durch die Zeit.[1]

Ich kann Frauen nicht ausstehen. Sie sind oberflächlich und
dilettantisch. Pomadisierte und geschminkte Zirkustierchen.[2]

Between the poem "Junge Akrobatin", published in 1918, and her auto-
biography, *Ich verzeihe keinem* (1976), Claire Studer became Claire Goll and her
views on women seem to somersault over themselves, as the passages quoted
above demonstrate: once an acrobat flying through time, woman later becomes
the pet of the circus. Such reversals, or somersaults, continually figure in Goll's
early collections of poetry, *Mitwelt* [1918] and *Lyrische Films* [1922]. Goll, like
her acrobat, faces the continual risk that her complex twists and turns might
simply return her to the reality she wishes to escape, to the oppressive and
specular space of the circus ring which reduces women to superficial and
decorative little animals. However, I will argue that Goll's poems both
thematically privilege an imaginative multiplicity generated via play, and
themselves employ a process of excessive doubling, to open a space of dynamic

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[1] *Mitwelt*, p. 16. "You, brightly coloured bird, that hovers between worlds/ over
evening, city and astonishment/ swing yourself on the trapeze/ over yourself through
time."
[2] *Ich verzeihe keinem*, p. 145. "I cannot stand women. They are superficial and dilettante-
ish. Coiffured and painted little circus animals."

existence as explored through the image of the somersaulting acrobat. At her acrobatic best, her images generate a different spatiality, which resists containing female identity by mapping it onto an earth-bound norm, yet does not reduce women to a merely chaotic materiality.

Mitwelt opens with a poem which clearly belongs to "mainstream" Expressionism in both form and theme. "Der Mensch ist Tot" portrays the death of humanity as the result of man's destruction of the divine, of the old metaphysical limits and certainties binding his world:

> Der Mensch ist tot, nicht baut er aus der Welt
> Milchstrassen, Himmelsleitern mehr zu Gott.
> Fort unsre Hände, die den Horizont zerbrachen,
> Von gläsernen Himmelsscherben aufgeschnitten,
> Und unsre Frühlingssehnsucht, die den Mond
> als blonde Aster in den Gürtel steckte,
> Und unser Herz von tausend Regenpfeilen
> An dieser Erde schwarze Wand genagelt,
> Und unsrer Blicke goldnes Feuerwerk
> Mit der Raketensonne hochgestiegen,
> Die nicht mehr kreiset um die dunkle Welt,
> Weil sie im Meere unsres Bluts erlosch.[3]

In this poem, the use of neologisms and the straining syntax suggest the struggle to create and hold on to meaning: four separate clauses (lines 3-10) depend on the adjective "Fort" (line 3) and a further sub-clause is attached to the last of these (lines 11-12).[4] The splintering glass of the heavens lacerates the hands which destroyed it. Man can no longer build paths to the divine, but

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[3] *Mitwelt*, p. 5. "Man is dead, he no longer builds / Milky Ways, Jacob's ladders from the world up to God./ Gone our hands, which destroyed the horizon,/ Cut open by glassy shards of the heavens,/ And our spring yearnings, which tucked the moon/ into their belt as a pale aster,/ And our heart, nailed by a thousand darts of rain/ To the black wall of this earth,/ And the golden fireworks of our glances/ Risen up with the rocket-sun,/ Which no longer circles round the dark world,/ For it drowned in the sea of our blood."

[4] Both the neologisms and the straining syntax are essential features of many Expressionist poems; that such an excellent example of apocalyptic poetry was never (to my knowledge) included in any of the anthologies of Expressionism, contemporary or otherwise, testifies to the gendering of the movement, and to its inherent blindness to very possibility of women Expressionists.

equally he is incapable of any human action, for with the shattering of the heavens comes the shattering of his own human horizon, of the teleology which once ordered his world.

The horizon was a glass, a fragile window onto an Other world constructed by man and in relation to which he oriented himself. This glass was also a mirror, in which a harmonious relation was constructed between man and Nature: the pale light of the moon once represented human desire. Such familiar reflections of the human are destroyed as the heavens explode into deadly shards which collapse violently inwards. Nature ceases to function as a passive reflector and becomes dangerously active, nailing the human heart to the earth with darts of rain. The brilliance of man's heavenward gaze, which followed the trajectory of the rocket-sun, ceases to bring enlightenment as this sun drowns in the seas of blood produced by man's self-destruction. Goll's image suggests man's search for enlightenment and knowledge is inherently violent and self-destructive: man's golden gaze is not only drawn upwards by the natural light of the sun, but by the trajectory of the rockets of the 1914-18 war. Instead of constructing the horizon of his being, man has produced the weapons of his own destruction. He ceases to be enlightened humanity and becomes immersed in flows of blood.

In this poem, Goll, like the male Expressionists, figures the interdependence of man and nature, subject and object, by portraying their reciprocal collapse. Another poem, "Der Neue Tod", emphasises that this apocalypse signals the end of a particular construction of reality by invoking not only the death of God, but also the loss of a more specific nineteenth-century heritage:

> Nicht mehr flattern um uns Chopins Vögel der Trauer,
> Nicht decken uns weinende Gärten zu
> Und der streichelnde Blick der Geliebten.[5]

Specific Romantic tropes are here marked off as inaccessible to the modern writer. The naming of "Chopins birds of sorrow" demystifies the romantic cultivation of melancholy, undermining the universality once claimed for this finer realm of human sensitivity and revealing its specificity in the work of particular men from a particular, and now lost, time. This demystification makes the subsequent images appear outdated and overly sentimental: the weeping gardens and the tender look of the beloved may be lost but, like Chopin's bird, they are lost clichés of another age. The poem not only suggests the brutality of the new world but mocks the now- inappropriate indulgences of the old. The tone remains ambiguous: nostalgia and loss tempered with irony.

This self-conscious and ironic poetic tone is not in itself a radical departure from Goll's literary heritage; it strongly recalls the work of one of the greatest German Romantics, Heinrich Heine. Indeed, in another of Goll's poems, she knowingly employs a Heine-esque mode of irony to point up the outdatedness of the Romantic tradition to which Heine belongs. In "Pariser Rundfahrt", clichéd Romantic tropes have become names of perfumes ("Styx", "L'amour dans le coeur"), and the poet decides that instead of melodramatically losing "Alles und mich selbst",

> Besser: ich fahre nach Montmartre
> Zu Heines Grab,
> Zu Stendhals Grab
> In dem alten, vom Leben umzäunten Friedhof
> Und leere zum Gesang der samtnen Amseln
> Mein Flakon: ‚Un jour viendra'
> Ueber den Toten.[6]

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[5] *Mitwelt*, p. 13. "No longer do Chopin's birds of sorrow flutter round us,/ We are not covered by weeping gardens/ and the carressing glance of our beloved."

Goll's ironic approach to the past suggests that what is lost cannot be simply recuperated: it belongs to a history and culture to which she cannot return to rediscover herself. Far from calling for a "Neue Mensch", like the later, more politically polarised Expressionists, these poems belong with early Expressionism: they chart the dissolution of a particular kind of human subject, thereby drawing attention to the historical constructedness of such subjectivity. However, in the last two stanzas of "Arme Mädchen Singen", Goll makes it painfully explicit that her femaleness excludes her from this history in the first place:

> Man hat uns aus der Welt gestellt
> Wie Vasen auf den alternden Kommoden,
> Die offnen Munds
> Nach roten Sommern frieren.
>
> Und nimmt uns Einer spät in seine Hand
> Und stößt mit seinem Wort daran,
> Dann brechen wir wie altes Porzellan
> Mit dem Ton vergangenen Jahrhunderts.[7]

The poem begins with a lament by the "arme Mädchen", confined by poorly-paid jobs to attics and backyards, whilst life passes them by. However, their collective voice takes on a wider significance in these final verses. These "poor girls" have been put out of the world: they are gaping vessels, whose open mouths are frozen into emptiness and passive receptivity. It only takes a word from one of those masculine subjects whose voices are active in the world to shatter the fragile form of their mute exile. So sedimented is their

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[6] *Lyrische Films*, p. 15. "I'd better go to Montmartre/ to Heine's grave,/ to Stendhal's grave,/ in the old cemetery fenced round by life,/ and empty my bottle, to the song of the velvet blackbirds: 'Un jour viendra'/ over the dead."

[7] *Mitwelt*, p. 10. "They put us out of the world/ Like vases on aging chests of drawers,/ Which, open-mouthed,/ Freeze after red summers.// And if someone finally takes us into his hand/ and pushes against us with his word,/ Then we break like old porcelain/ With the sound of a past century."

identification as domestic ornament and passive container that these young women cannot engage actively with the world or its subjects. By the time man addresses them, their long muteness prevents them from articulating his language: their only response is a wordless disintegration which resounds with the lost years of their objectification. The poem encapsulates the way in which women can remain dangerously trapped by the historical identification of their female form with passivity and receptivity, in ways that finally render them both outmoded, and too ossified be able to change. Not only is it impossible for these women to become active subjects, but they are finally objectified as the fragmented remainder and final echo of a history in which they never actively participated.

In this way, Goll's poetic inscription of sexual difference complicates her relation to Expressionism. The shattering of woman as the "other" of a male subject opens a space in which Goll begins to explore a different kind of female identity: thus, as I will show, many of her poems chart the emergence of a kind of object-self, rather than the dissolution of the bounds of the (male) subject. In these poems, she can be read as searching for a time different from that offered her within the "real" world, in whose history woman has never been wholly included, nor included as a whole or self.

A Maternal Imagination

Though "Der Mensch Steht Auf" sounds like a typical late Expressionist reinscription of the human, the title is ironic: there is no humanity in the resurrected life described by this poem. It opens with images of an animate, nightmarish city: hospitals cling wildly to the earth, attics beat broken wings

and screams clatter down onto the streets. Nightmarish and bloody tulips break through and threaten the crippled, alienated gardens of the suburbs. Again, these opening lines chart the same breakdown of the subject-object relation as the male Expressionists: in each image "inanimate", man-made or passively "natural" objects, traditionally distinguished from the human subject by the absence of any animating will-power, become violently active and develop forceful trajectories of their own. The centrality of any stable subject is violently undermined: the crippled gardens are not merely the projection of man's experience of alienation, for such psychological states no longer depend on the unity of the subject's mind. Instead, a wild frenzy spreads across the city which has become a psychically and physically animate site:

> Spitäler klammern sich wild an die Erde,
> Mansarden schlagen mit zerbrochenen Flügeln
> Und Schreie fallen klirrend auf die Straßen.
> Jetzt brechen blutige Tulpen drohend auf
> In buckligen, vergrämten Vorstadtgärten.
> Jetzt öffnen Mütter ihren Leib wie Muscheln,
> Draus Sterne fallen an den Strand der Welt:
> Rote Signale einer neuen Zeit.
> Die Sonnenuhr schlägt dreizehn von den Himmeln.[8]

Goll's text figures the disintegration of the binary which fixes man on the side of conscious, willed and (potentially) moral activity, and nature and the inanimate on the side of non-conscious processes, controllable by man. However, the image which most strongly evokes the absence of any human life in this world of animate objects simultaneously evokes the persistence of a specifically female identity: men disappear as mothers birth stars which pulse to

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[8] *Mitwelt*, p. 18. "Hospitals cling ferociously to the ground,/Garrets beat shattered wings/ And screams crash tinkling onto the streets./ Now bloody tulips threateningly open up/ In bitter, hunchbacked suburban gardens./ Now mothers open their bodies like mussels,/ And stars fall out onto the beach of the world:/ Red signals of a new time./ The sundial strikes thirteen from the heavens."

a new time. The female bodies no longer give birth to the human, but instead, stars that act as signals fall from the mothers as they open like mussels. There is no subject controlling the production of the new: the stars are produced through a fluxing muscularity which does not impose form upon them, but allows them to emerge in their difference; the mother gives birth, but birth also happens to her. These glittering objects are not projected into space, but fall from her maternal body into the materiality of the earth. In their redness, these starry offspring remain part of the mother's blood even as they take on their own form: the pulsing of their light, their signal, falls into the sand, so that they are as if embedded in the beachworld to which the mussel's regenerative capacities belong. Thus these red signals belong to the same order as the mother's blood, yet do not simply reproduce her material form: their glowing newness and difference also emerge through her generative body. In this poem, we have left behind the world of the male Expressionist poets in which human subjects are repeatedly placed in an antagonistic relationship to maternality and to the materiality of their birth.

The signalling objects in Goll's poem denote a new time where the capacity for material production, for birthing objects, generates meaning and order through a maternal relationality which both encompasses and produces difference. Falling not up into the heavens where they could be ordered by the teleological gaze of man, but down onto the beach of the earth, these lights burn out their own time with their red light: there is no divine teleology, only an material astronomy of the animate object - a maternal genealogy which flows from a specifically female embodiment. The final image of the poem emphasises that in this non-human space/time, man can no longer be sure of his perspective

on the cosmos. As the sundial strikes thirteen from the heavens, the subject whose universe was structured by Copernican certainties is displaced.

However, for the female matter which was always positioned on the side of animals and plant-life, mussels and objects, the inert and the passive, the collapse of oppositional ordering does not entail the collapse of all activity and the wilful embrace of complete passivity (as in Benn's embrace of the "Klümpfchen Schleim" in the poem "Gesänge", discussed in chapter two). On the contrary, far from being disoriented and dissolved by the breakdown of the subject–object relation, Goll's poem figures female embodiment as coming into a time of its own. Thus the redness of the mothers' offspring is at home with the bloody red of the tulips, which refuse to behave like passive flora should. Within this non-human temporality, birth is *neither* wholly passive *nor* wholly active; instead, a body which can multiply itself allows newness to emerge through relationality and materially embodied differences. In this pulsating object-world, women's bodies are no longer positioned as the necessary ground for the reproduction of man; rather, the productive capacity of a female body becomes the generative process which characterises a dynamic flux. The time of the sundial, the sun-clock ("die Sonnenuhr"), was perhaps all along the inanimate stellar time of shining, burning matter.

In an article of 1917, Goll claims that the concept of the mother has never been properly realised: "Der Begriff: Mutter ist noch niemals wirklich erlebt geworden."[9] Yet in the same article, she demands that woman is to be freed from being defined as "die Geliebte des Mannes" only by becoming "die Geliebte der Menschheit, der Welt [. . .]. Nicht Mutter einiger Menschen, die

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[9] "Die Stunde der Frauen", p. 10. "The concept mother has never yet been truly experienced."

Mutter aller Menschen."[10] Hence as Margaret Littler has shown, Goll's very insistence on female specificity often becomes a trap, leading her to reinscribe the structures positioning woman as a maternal ground capable of giving birth to others but never to herself. This trap is perpetuated in Goll's later autobiography where she vehemently identifies women with their capacity for biological reproduction: "Die Frau ist eine Null, nichts als eine Anhäufung von Eierstöcken, und ich nehme mich nicht aus."[11] Littler reads this as the end result of a strategy for survival, whereby Goll mimics a masculine, oppositional discourse of sexual difference as a way of resisting a feminism of equality which tends to erase the specificity of women. As Littler convincingly shows, this strategy entails that Goll herself often reinscribes male identity as the governing norm and standard.[12]

However, I want to suggest that in "Der Mensch Steht Auf", together with several other early poems, Goll finds a way of articulating female identity without performing such essentialist reductions. These poems suggest a way of reworking the notion of the maternal: they become the imaginative space of a birthing of identity generated between mother and daughter and through the imaginative space of play.

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[10] "Die Stunde der Frauen", p. 10. "man's beloved"; "the beloved of humankind, of the world [...]. Not the mother of particular people, the mother of all people."

[11] *Ich verzeihe keinem*, p. 146."Woman is a zero, nothing but an accumulation of ovaries, and I am no exception." These words disturbingly echo those of Otto Weiniger in *Geschlecht and Character* (1903), a text which was enormously influential on the European writers and thinkers of the early twentieth-century: "Women have no existence and no essence; they are not, they are nothing [...]Woman has no share in ontological reality, no relation to the thing-in-itself, which, in the deepest interpretation, is the absolute, is God. Man, in his highest form, the genius, has such a relation, [...] Woman has no relation to the idea, she neither affirms or denies it [...] mathematically speaking, she has no sign." *Sex and Character*, trans. from 6th German edition (London: Heinemann, 1906), p. 286.

[12] See Littler, pp. 167-173.

"Schlaflied" (dedicated to Dora-Lies) is a lullaby invoking an imaginative play within the dream-space of a sky which no longer signifies a divine world "beyond" that of mother and daughter.[13] Instead, the sky is their world, as mother and child run into the Milky Way to collect stars. The mother attaches one to her child's dress: it offers both protection and light, not through its relation to a higher being, but because it marks entry into a magical domain where the usual restrictions on movement are lifted.

> Komm, wir wollen schnell in die Milchstraße
> Ein paar Sterne holen,
> Ich will Dir einen anstecken
> Für die Nacht.
>
> Komm, will wollen an der gelben Zuckerstange
> Des Mondes lutschen,
> Der Mond schmeckt wie Honig
> Im Mund.
>
> Komm, Du sollst von der Himmelsbrüstung gucken,
> Aber fall nicht herunter,
> Wenn Du mir winkst
> Mit dem roten Tüchlein deines Herzens.
>
> Morgen wollen wir Sonnenaufgang spielen,
> Mit unserem Lächeln,
> Mutter schüttelt den Sonnenbaum,
> Da fallen goldne Blätter in dein Bett.
>
> Aus den Traumbecken hängen noch Flöckchen
> In meines Vögelchens Gefieder.
> Morgen zwitschert es wieder
> Hundert neue smaragdne Lieder.[14]

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[13] *Mitwelt*, p. 17. Mahlow notes that Goll's experience of the maternal relation was made doubly traumatic: firstly by her relation to her own mother, and secondly by losing custody of Dora-Lies (see Mahlow, pp. 167-9). The re-imagining of the maternal in her poetry is all the more poignant and powerful when read in this context.

[14] "Come, let's quickly fetch a few stars/From the Milky Way,/ I want to pin one on you / For the night.// Come, let's suck at the yellow barley-twist/ Of the moon,/ The moon tastes like honey/ In the mouth.// Come, you should look out from the sky's parapet,/ But don't fall down,/ When you wave to me/ With the small red cloth of your heart.// Tomorrow we will play at being the sunrise,/ With our smiles,/ Mother will shake the sun-tree,/ And golden leaves will fall into your bed.// Little flecks from the basin of dreams still hang/ In my little bird's feathers./ Tomorrow will again be twittered/ a hundred new emerald songs."

Mother and daughter play amongst celestial objects as they explore a realm ordered through sensory relations, where the imagination seems unlimited in the comparisons it draws between different sensual experiences: the moon tastes like honey in the mouth. The child waves to her mother from the rim of the sky: she plays on the limits of the everyday world which are no longer limiting. Mother and daughter do not just play with and amongst the stars, they play at being the sun itself. They do not oppose themselves as subjects to objects, but instead enter the realm of the object by playing out material transformations: in a world where the moon is also a lollipop that tastes of honey, mother and child can become the rising sun. Material becomings are here the norm, unlimited by a subjective horizon. The final verse suggests that the remnants of this "dream" topography which can survive in "reality" enable the daughter to sing in a glittering language of colour. Her not-quite-human voice does not articulate the world through a conceptual language of "truth"; instead, meaning is created by the shimmering resonances produced in the multiple and unpredictable reflections of a jewel-like surface.

"Schlaflied" invokes the childhood world of "Sonn- und Vogelwort" which is also recalled in "Die Mutter klagt nach dem Kind". In this poem, Goll uses the image of the sea breaking onto land in a continual ebb and flow to capture the way mother and child define each other through a fluxing and mutual interrelation:

> Ach, warum ließ ich dich aus der Bucht meines Arms,
> Warum aus der Stille von Tausendnächten,
> Da Regenwolken leisen Kniefall taten
> Und das Meer sich übte in Flut und Verzicht,
> Brandend wie mein Wesen an deins.[15]

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[15] *Lyrische Films*, p. 37. "Oh, why did I let you out of the bay of my arm,/Why from the silence of thousand-nights,/ When rain-clouds kneeled softly/ And the sea practised high tide and abandonment,/ Foaming like my being against yours."

Though no clear or permanent boundary can be determined between mother and child, they are not simply dissolved into a dyadic whole, but are shaped together through the play of one another's movements. Identity emerges through a fluid relationality which incorporates otherness as the mother's body once incorporated that of the child.

Another poem, "Gebet aller Mütter", emphasises both the imaginative power of play, and the particular importance of the mother-child relation when this child is a daughter whose female identity is bound up with her mother's. In this poem, a mother wants to help her daughter escape the reality into which she will grow and which she so anxiously dreams about. This "reality" is an illusion which threatens to replace her daughter's rich and imaginative world and to limit her future to "das kleine Frauenschicksal":

> Wehe, wohin rett ich dich, Kind
> Vor dem unabwendbaren Mittag
> Und den ernsten Dohlen der Dämmerung?
>
> Noch sind die Sterne aus rotem Staniol,
> Die Holzgiraffen stoßen an die Himmel,
> Die Welt ist ein Märchen von Grimm . . .
> Aber manchmal schon in deinem Schlaf
> Träumst du die Wirklichkeit,
> Atmest Angst aus und Zweiuhrnacht.
>
> Blondmeise,
> In welch leidlose Gegend rett ich dich hin,
> Wenn du fällst aus den Blüten der Früh,
> Wenn dein Herz der Welt entgegenreift
> Und dem kleinen Frauenschicksal?
> Ich Mutter, wo rett ich dich hin? [16]

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[16] *Lyrische Films*, p. 38. "Alas, child, where will I seek refuge for you/ From the inevitable midday/ and the grave jackdaws of twilight?// The stars are still of red tinfoil,/ The wooden giraffes bang their heads against the sky,/ The world is a fairytale by Grimm.../ But sometimes in your sleep/ You already dream reality,/ Breathing out fear and two-o'clock-night.// Blonde titmouse,/ In what painless region will I seek refuge for you,/ When you fall out of dawn's blossoms,/ When your heart ripens to meet the world/ And the little woman's fate?/ I, your mother, where will I seek refuge for you?"

Once again the daughter's own childhood world has a magical coherence which has not yet entered the limits of the "real". The wooden giraffes that bang their heads on this sky are not a sign of a limited horizon but of a world where proportionality is not yet fixed. Animal-objects can take on magical significances which may appear disproportionate to adult eyes but which change the shape of the child's realm. The world the child inhabits is capable of imaginative transformation: the stars made from red tin-foil are no less the stars in the sky. Like the moon in "Schlaflied", the objects of play can be two things at once; wooden giraffes are also gigantic creatures, paper stars are real constellations. Reflectivity is here not pure, but brightly coloured and multiple: the playful imagination of the child does not reflect a single reality or a single subject-position, but selves capable of moving between objects which can take up several identities at once.

Goll's poetic exploration of "play" can be usefully contrasted with the role of imaginative play in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. According to Kant, in judgements of the beautiful, the imagination plays over the spatio-temporal forms embedded in a particular perception, but without unifying these forms via any particular schema, and hence without mapping the perception as an object (or objects) which could be identified by determinate concepts. Instead, this pre-conceptual, free play of the imagination increases the subject's awareness of the inherent harmony between man and the world. It produces a heightened sense of the way in which the spatio-temporal forms which configure objective reality also map onto the underlying framework which orients the subject's perception. Hence, rather than being determined in accordance with a conceptual rule, judgements of the beautiful are made when an individual subject perceives something which intensifies his sense of the

infinite potential for conceptual ordering made possible by the fundamental harmony between perceiving subject and objective world. In this way, though aesthetic judgements are based on the singular perceptions of individual subjects, each such judgement exemplifies and reflects the harmonious relation which makes knowledge and experience possible for all other subjects.

Thus in Kant's world, imaginative play has a privileged role and reflects the universal necessity of a particular space-time frame - one which permits the construction of a single "objective" reality, together with the permanent identity of the individual "subject". In Goll's poems, however, play is not limited in advance by the forms of a linear time or neatly containable space. Far from reflecting the fixed perspective of a stable individual, play becomes the imaginative capacity to produce multiple worlds and continual transformations between mother and daughter, self and other, subject and object, such that there are no longer any permanent distinctions making it possible to tell once and for all which is which.

This generation of selves which are neither stable nor self-identical, but oriented via a play of (self-)transformative relations, is not without risk: in "Schlaflied", the child's mother warns her not to fall. However, "Gebet aller Mütter" makes it explicit that the greatest danger for her daughter is that if she falls from the magical space/s where her identity is played out without becoming fixed, she may be trapped by the overpowering normativity of the "little woman's fate". Hence the greatest risk of all is that the only way for her daughter to enter the realm of adulthood may be to relinquish this generative space of risk-taking and transformation. These poems constitute an act of defiance whereby Goll refuses the "little fate of woman" for her daughter, and creates an alternative mode of female selfhood: within them, mother and

daughter together take risks in vast imaginative spaces to generate themselves and their world/s through play. Thus in contrast with Kant, who excludes women from the sublime (as was indicated in the *Introduction* above), Goll refuses to allow her daughter's imagination to be limited to a contained and pleasing play of beautiful, feminine forms.

Indeed, Goll confounds the Kantian distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. For Kant, "play" is associated only with the beautiful, with the imaginative play over pleasing spatio-temporal forms which "fit" with man's perceptual frame, as described above. The Kantian sublime, with its inherent link to the respect necessary for moral judgement, is a serious and profound experience, which involves both risking the identity of the self - if only imaginatively - and overcoming the threat posed by the might of external nature. In contrast, Goll protects the possibility of an imaginative "play" which is neither safe nor contained but which takes (productive) risks with the limits of *both* self *and* world. In effect, this symbolic play of mother and daughter is invested with the sublime power to imaginatively recreate reality in ways that both recall and substitute for the creative powers that Kant reserves for the noble (male) genius.[17]

In the poems previously discussed, Goll draws on childhood and the mother-daughter relation as providing access to a time before the limits of the world were fixed and before earth and sky, selves and objects were solidified. In this time shaped by generative play, a daughter's identity was not restricted by the confines of a little (and belittling) "woman's fate". In "Die Erwachsene", Goll again associates the child with a mode of existence shaped by a nonconceptual relationship to the external world:

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[17] See the *Introduction* and *Interlude* above.

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

Und nun höre ich Gott nicht mehr;
Und höre ich in mich hinein,
Ist alles Stein,
Und mein Mund ist jubelleer.
Alle Frühlinge sind alt,
Und - in der einst so viel Freude wohnte -
Landschaft wendet sich bös und kalt,
Die Tiere auch, die mir so innig waren,
O wie verging ich mich an meinen Jahren![18]

As a child, the poet did not grasp the world via conceptual processes of ordering, but instead, the world filled her with a burning, unconceptualised intensity. Though permeated by her environment, this child is not destructively overwhelmed by the violent matter that characterises the poems of the male Expressionists. Rather, the world transforms the child with wonder, and her sense of meaning and order emerges through its plenitude. The life of this child unfolds amongst the lilies and the elder trees. Her growing mouth carries quietly sleeping hymns, whose joyful sound rests softly there, waiting to be awakened within her. She is related to angels, and she takes on their capacity to

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[18] *Lyrische Films* p. 32. "O childhood, when in my face/ two wonders burned/ full of ungrasped [lit. unconceptualised] world./ Hymns slept in a growing mouth,/ I was related to all the angels/ and could hear God in the white song/ of longing lilies./ In the elder trees blue fairytales grew/ and ripened towards the great twilights,/ When it was known for the first time,/ that boy and star were the same,/ There, love, your hoarse middays/ Rushed by with the wind.//And now I no longer hear God;/ And if I listen to myself/ All is stone,/And my mouth is empty of joy./ All spring-times are old,/ And the landscape - in which so much joy once lived - / turns away angry and cold,/ The animals too, which were so intimate to me,/ O how I wasted my years!" .

move freely between heaven and earth, within a realm both material and spiritual. Her ear becomes attuned to the sound of the divine in the white song of longing lilies; in this way, God is brought into the child's world through the lilies' yearning, the divine resounds within their fragrant organic forms. Meaning and order emerges out of matter as "blaue Märchen" grow in the elders. Far from disorienting or dissolving the child's identity, the active growth of the trees unfolds into stories and fables. Their generative materiality produces the imaginative structures which shape the child's world. Indeed, the child's development and the growth of the trees are not opposed as inner and outer realms, but are part of the same unfolding.

Hence this childhood realm cannot simply be equated with a *pre-conceptual lack* of differentiation. Instead, it is a time belonging to a nonconceptual mode of ordering that is produced through an animate materiality, capable also of generating the divine. However, this potential for an identity which does not depend on the exclusion or containment of the objective world is lost by the time the child reaches adulthood. The second stanza opens with the word "and": this loss appears as a continuation of the previous state, emerging out of it in ways that cannot be easily identified. The process of maturation, whereby fairytales ripen as the realisation dawns that "Knabe und Stern dasselbe sei", is therefore deeply ambiguous. On the one hand, the boy is like a star, and thus belongs to the childhood realm in which meaning is generated through animate matter and love remains a force like the wind, passing through objects to link them dynamically together. On the other hand, however, this process of "fruition" ultimately fixes meaning by constructing a particular conceptual code centred on love for a boy/man. The star becomes a metaphor for the boy, around whom both desire and meaning are now

oriented.[19] This identification solidifies the shape of the fairy-tales, and blocks the more fluid growing of order that characterised the nonconceptual world of the child. With the arrival of this love, the growing mouth full of joyful potentiality has become hoarse ("heiser").

Hence in the second stanza, the poet describes listening to herself but no longer being able to hear the divine, for everything is stone, fossilised, frozen, and her mouth is empty of all joy. The landscape excludes her; she has lost the ability to feel the animals as part of her inner world, or to feel herself in and through the natural. However, this lost world is characterised in terms which make it dangerously close to a more traditional Romantic conception of Nature as a realm capable of reflecting human interiority, where the external world becomes "innig" only because the subject's innermost states can be mapped onto it. So strong is this tradition that, in these final lines, it becomes difficult to distinguish the possibility of a nonconceptual existence, where meaning emerges out of a material world rather than being projected onto it by an already existing subject. Indeed, the more cliché-ridden second stanza already suggests this return to a more conventional view of nature. The regular rhyme scheme which is established here (but is absent from the first stanza) also emphasises the solidification of formerly fluid processes of ordering, particularly as it is set up so as to preserve a final couplet which mimes closure.

In this second stanza, Goll's alignment of a female poetic self with a more Romantic view of nature can much more easily become overlaid with the conventional connotations of woman as the symbolic medium and channel,

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[19] From this perspective, love's "heiseren Mittage" become the "unabwendbaren Mittag" of "Gebet aller Mütter" (see above), the fateful turning point where the female child is trapped into the "kleinen Frauenschicksal" as her identity becomes focussed on (a) man.

through which man reunites himself with a nature already interiorised within her. I want to suggest both that Goll's poetic construction of a nonconceptual mode of ordering in the first stanza challenges this Romantic idealisation of both Woman and nature; and that, at the same time, this poem instantiates the dangers involved in writing as a woman. In the first stanza, Goll succeeds in configuring an alternative childhood world, where there is no need for oppositional divisions between self and world, subject and object, spirit and matter. Yet by refusing to occupy the transcendent position of a (male) subject, she also risks reinscribing the more Romantic conventions which overshadow the second stanza. These conventions merely identify woman with nature, rather than reimagining the relation between world and self.

To this extent, Goll's texts can be read as poetically prefiguring the work of Irigaray: Irigaray's privileging of difference in her early texts is continually misread as a biological essentialism, when she is exploring alternative morphologies and schematisations of non-oppositional female identity. Equally, in her later work, Irigaray herself comes perilously close to advocating a "natural" and given relation between woman and materiality as the constitutive site of a female horizon of being. In "Divine Women", Irigaray writes of the way women have been equated "with something other than the human", so that they seem "split between the human and the inhuman (half-woman, half-animal)".[20] According to Irigaray, women require a female divine to be restored to wholeness. They need a horizon marking out the possiblity of "unveiling" themselves to themselves as "body, flesh, as immediate - and geological,

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[20] Luce Irigaray, "Divine Women", in *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 55-72, p. 64. Originally published as *Sexes et parentés* (Paris: Minuit 1987); "Divine Women" first given in Venice, June 8 1984.

genealogical - affects."[21] However, as Goll's poems indicate, a divinity born out of an essential relationship between woman and unadorned matter can lead to transfigurements of the flesh which all too quickly return woman to the forms of the half-human, half-animal. These forms merely serve to reinforce the hierarchical boundaries between human and non-human, "subject" and "object".

A Play of Fluid Relations

Hence in another poem, "Waldmetamorphose" the natural world again becomes "innig" - inner to the self, felt internally - as the poet's female form is overwhelmed by the spirit of the forest and transfigured into animals and plants.[22] In the first of three stanzas, the poet is immersed in the silence of a "männlichen Sonnenuntergangs" ["manly sunset"] which produces a heightened and intense state of awareness. She eagerly anticipates the heavenly light of the stars, becoming filled with love like the flowers at her feet until she is transformed. Then, her red hair becomes moss, her shyness turns into the innocently enchanting dance of the deer, her voice is transformed into the song of a bird in the church of the dusk. As the last stanza makes clear, these metamorphoses do not break down the animal-human, nature-human distinction:

> Gut macht die Stummheit der Bäume,
> Gut machen die keuschen Wiesen,
> Gut macht der starke Mitternachtsstern
> Den unguten Menschen.[23]

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[21] Irigaray, "Divine Women", p. 65.
[22] *Lyrische Films*, p. 39. For the full version of this poem, please see Appendix 2.
[23] *Lyrische Films*, p. 39. "The muteness of the trees makes good,/ The chaste meadows make good,/ the strong midnight-star makes good/ man who is not good."

Woman's ability to merge with nature - becoming half-human, half-animal, half-plant - permits a transference between the human and the natural. The poetic self's becomings are determined by the qualities of the natural world required to complement and complete a human destiny. The values of unsullied silence and innocent strength incarnated in her transformations are both opposed to the "unguten Menschen" and, for this very reason, are capable of restoring mankind to a purer state of being in the world. Thus though the poem begins by describing the oppressive silence of a "männlichen Sonnen-untergangs", this sunset signifies not so much man's decline as the reinscription of a gendered and oppositional metaphysics. Woman's very function as the passageway between man and nature, as well as between the human and the divine, excludes her from the (apparently gender-neutral) humanity which is regenerated through her female capacity to channel restorative and redemptive forces.

Hence at the end of this poem, the sisterly relationality between woman and the materiality of the stars and the forest has again been subordinated to the trajectory of a human history which reduces both materiality and woman to man's necessary "other". However, there are spaces within Goll's poetry which resist such recuperation. The pulsating life of the mothers birthing stars; the imaginative play of mother and daughter; the lilies and elders through which the child's world grows: such re-imaginings of reality justify the risk Goll takes in her insistence on female specificity. Moreover, by reading "Waldmetamorphose" in a non-linear way, a subversive site emerges within even this poem. As I will go on to show, the key image of the second and central verse indicates Goll's capacity to disrupt the oppositional construction of human (male) identity through less obviously gendered and more abstract images than

those already explored. These images indicate a sophisticated awareness that opening a space for a non-oppositional female identity involves re-imagining the space of the object, rather than simply dissolving the subject.

The central stanza of "Waldmetamorphose" describes a moment of transcendence:

> Als das Schweigen zu tannengroß wuchs,
> Sprangen kindliche Quellen aus meinen Augen
> Hinein in den verwandten Abgrund der Wasser,
> Und ich erlitt zugleich die Verlassenen aller Ufer.[24]

The last line points ahead to the final stanza, where, as we have seen, the poetic self's transcendence of her own limits will be recuperated for the good of humanity as she becomes the channel for a universal suffering. However, the mode of transcendence traced out in the previous two lines is more complex than it might appear, involving both relationality and immanence rather than a simple loss of self. The pressure of the silence here becomes too much: the formed metamorphoses of the first verse are themselves transformed into the liquidity of an unformed flow which streams into a watery abyss. However, this ultimate metamorphosis is not a straightforward immersion of the self in an oppositionally defined realm of "otherness" or "not-self". The childlike "Quellen" (sources, springs) of the eyes are *related* to the watery abyss ("verwandt"). Fluidity is already contained within the eyes this self who overflows with her potential for becomings; at the same time, the relatedness of the poet's transfomative fluidity to the liquidity of the abyss suggests the latter, too, is the site of endless potential metamorphoses. Goll's image figures a transference between *like* elements.

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[24] *Lyrische Films*, p. 39. "When the silence grew too pinetree-large,/ Childlike springs leapt from my eyes/ Into the related abyss of water,/and I suffered all at once the forsaken from every shore."

Hence in overcoming her own limits, this female self does not imaginatively reinforce the boundary between herself and an excessive materiality, as does the Kantian subject; nor on the other hand does she dissolve the boundary between self and other, thereby eradicating subjecthood entirely, as do some of the male Expressionists. Instead, the watery abyss is not marked off from the poetic self by any such clear-cut boundary in the first place: rather, by marking their shared similarity, the poet configures a more complex relation between her transformative materiality and the liquid site of the abyss. Although the flow of water is in a single direction, from eyes to abyss, self to "other", the flow of relatedness is not: the springs of the eyes - the fluidity of this poetic self - are inherently defined by their likeness to the liquidity of the abyss, which is no longer a clearly separable site of "otherness". Thus, the eye/I of this poetic subject does not function as a fixed or self-contained point from which the abyss can be projected as an excluded "otherness" *against* which identity is secured.

Moreover, although self and abyss are composed of the same fluidity, the flow between them marks out their differentiated limits: the dark chasm of the abyss is a boundless site of magical metamorphosis (reaching to "*alle* Ufer") in contrast to the limited transformative power of the self. The watery depths of the abyss and the pools of the poet's eyes are related but not the same; they refuse to be clearly demarcated yet remain differentiated sites. In their interrelation, they can encompasss difference within sameness, "not-self" within the self, without identity thereby melting away.

Hence rather than dissolving the relation between self and other, subject and object, this stanza suggests that both might be shaped together through a relationality too complex to be contained by an oppositional metaphysics of

identity. Indeed, the complex relationality of eyes and abyss would be disorienting for any Kantian subject. As Kant continually insists (and as becomes particularly clear in the dynamic sublime), this subject depends on the configuration of a clear division between himself and external nature, between "self" and "not-self", subject and object, to come into being at all. If the boundaries of containment and separation dividing inner and outer, "self" and "not-self", cannot be properly fixed, then no stable, persistant subject can be posited. However, the eyes and the abyss in "Waldmetamorphose" remain part of each other in a fluid relationality capable of encompassing likeness, difference and change, a relationality which produces space/s neither simply unifiable as one, nor clearly distinguishable as two. Thus I would suggest that in refusing the stability of both "subject" and "object", Goll's image opens not into a chaotic dissolution of all order, but into a different order of manifold spatiality within which differented identity can emerge through relatedness.

However, this complex relationality and spatiality of self and other, figured in the second stanza of "Waldmetamorphose", is ultimately recuperated in stanza three. There, as we have seen, the poetic self is returned to hierarchy where nature's "otherness" is opposed to - and thus redeems - the human subject. The poet is torn between the fluidity of an eye/I which no longer orients itself in the world as a stable subject should (stanza 2), and an identity where she remains trapped as the objectified "other", through whom the horizon of man's possiblities is once again projected onto a wholly externalised world. Thus recuperated, woman remains the half-subject who is object enough to mediate a passage through nature to man's limits. However, if the central stanza is read as more than merely a recuperable part of a greater whole, it figures a different, less limiting trajectory, where the identity of the poet's

female self emerges through an object-world no longer opposed to a subject, nor contained by horizons fixed from the outside.

Other poems by Goll also move away from the fixed horizons and bounded identities which delimit the world of the Kantian individual, and towards the possibility of a reflective relationality between objects that depend on no such orientation. In "November Sehnt" the poet has played herself out, gambled herself away and become night:

> Ich hab mit Wolken mich verspielt.
> Schon bin ich Nacht.
> Mondkranke Sehnsucht
> Sehnt -
> Wohin?
> Ein Baum stößt gelbe Seufzer aus,
> Vögel verschluchzt,
> Ein Wild weint wo,
> Novemberrabe sitzt auf meinem Herzen
> Kalt.
> Wir schmerzen alle von derselben Trauer,
> Schon bin ich Nacht
> Und zwischen Steinen
> Allein
> Und werfe nach den Sternen
> Tief im Bach.[25]

Once again, this poem is structured by a transformative play which, as I will show, produces a self which refuses to be contained within a stable boundaries but can occupy seemingly contradictory sites without losing her identity. The grammatical subject of the opening line has gambled herself away with the clouds: this self is as insubstantial as vapour, its form as unfixed. Yet this self has not simply disappeared, but is immediately reinscribed as the night itself. This identification is deceptively simple: its non-metaphorical transparency

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[25] *Lyrische Films*, p. 40. "I have gambled myself away with clouds./ Already I am night./ Moonsick longing/ Longs - / Where to?/ A tree heaves yellow sighs,/ birds sobbed away,/ A wild animal weeps somewhere,/ November-raven sits on my heart/ cold./ We all suffer from the same sadness,/ Already I am night/ and between stones/ Alone/ And casting after the stars/ Deep in the brook."

entails that the strong connotations of darkness and transcendence attached to the notion of night are directly transferred to the poetic self; yet the night is not a space which is easily thought of as bounded and separable from the world it encloses, but is an amorphous vastness, impossible to contain as either object or subject.

This poem is thus particularly reminiscent of Karoline von Günderrode's "Once I Lived a Sweet Life", as explored by Battersby in "Unblocking the Oedipal". The two poems trace journeys of the self which, though not identical, are similar in certain key respects. Battersby describes how the unstable "I" in Günderode's poem "turns back towards a state in which self and other interpenetrate".[26] As I will go on to show, Goll's poetic self also longs to return to a state where self and other are immanently related.

The identification of self and night in Goll's poem already refuses to orient the reader via the clear delineation of either subject or object. The poet questions the direction of a moonsick longing: the self-referentiality of noun ("Sehnsucht") and verb ("sehnt") implies that though this desire may reach out through the night, it does not *belong* to a subject. The poet-night is defined as a space of desire whose directionality is in question (*Wohin?*). The next five lines (ls 6-10) describe a melancholy landscape and end in an image which seems to return the poem to a romantic anthropo-morphisation of nature and thus to an anthropomorphic subject. The raven functions as the representation of a particular melancholic state of mind, and thus the heart on which it perches

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[26] Battersby, "Unblocking the Oedipal", p. 134. Battersby also describes how in Günderode's poem (as in Goll's) "We start up in the heavens. And although there is an 'I' flitting like a cloud [...], this 'I' is bodiless and emphemeral [...] The first playfellows - no more substantial than coloured lights - are scared away by 'the great/hurrying shadow/who followed them,/ to snatch them up'" (Battersby, "Unblocking the Oedipal", p. 134). This shadow is rather like the melancholy darkness which invades everything in *November Sehnt*.

seems to belong not to the poet as night, but to a subject stable enough to project its interiority. This seems to be affirmed in the next line, where this state of mind is projected pantheistically through all nature. If these central lines are privileged, the disorienting images of the first five lines fall out of view in favour of a more familiar frame of reference. The rest of the poem can then be read as implying that this "Trauer" reflects a universal sense of spiritual isolation of being cast out into a world of darkness (the night) and trapped within mute incomprehension (the stones). The final lines would therefore suggest that all that is left to this despairing soul is a misplaced hope in divine transcendence which turns out to be no more than an illusion: the stars are only reflections, fake heavens which will dissolve into ripples.

However, the opening lines have already suggested that in this poem the illusory stability of the heavens is associated with the possiblilties of play and transfomation rather than a purely negative dissolution. The final lines of the poem bear this out in several ways. The poet's reiteration that she is night in line 12 can be seen as an important repetition, re-establishing the playful relationality of the opening lines, which would disorient the stable subject on which any anthropo-morphic relation to nature would depend. These final lines immediately reinstate the identity of the poetic self as one capable of embracing contradictions: this self is the vast night, yet is caught between stones; is limited not by its own boundaries but caught between others. This self is both the immaterial night-sky and embedded within materiality, both all-encompassing darkness, and small and alone.

This antinomical self casts after the stars in the brook. Yet these stars do not merely shimmer on the brook's surface, but are deep within it: the spatial depth which should belong only to the "real" sky is transposed onto these stars,

whose reflectivity does not necessarily reduce them to "mere" copies. Having

taken on a depth which does not belong to surface reflections, they cannot be

straightforwardly mapped according to the original proportions of the sky.

Instead, it becomes impossible to tell whether the star's depth corresponds to

the spatiality of the sky, or whether they have a magical reality of their own,

inhabiting a spatiality deep within the stream. Though the stars in the sky and

those in the brook are certainly objects related by reflection, just as the eyes and

abyss are related via the element of water, this reflectivity is not the

reproduction of one side by the other. The sky is not a "real" space of

transcendence covered over by its imitation; instead Goll's image allows that the

nature of the reflective material itself makes a difference and can produce

different realities.[27] The shimmering patterns in the water are not merely copies

of the stellar constellations but related forms, playfully produced through a

particular conjunction of both likeness (the appearance of the stars in the brook

suggesting those in the sky) and difference (the watery stars have their own

spatial depths).

On this reading, there is no heavenly space of transcendence which is

straightfowardly lost: reflections are a productive play rather than deceptive

illusions. The image is complicated still further because the poet herself has

already been identified with the night sky: this night, in which the stars should

be located, is also down on the ground, and is itself casting after the stars. Thus

the way in which the stars resist being read as mere copies of the real heavens is

confirmed, because this night is not securely positioned up above as the original

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[27] This reading also makes it possible to re-interpret the central section, where the same "Trauer" passes through all nature, without identifying this as a simple process of anthropomorphic projection. "Trauer" could be shared between bird, tree and beast, but would also be transformed by being differently embodied in the different materiality of each.

generating watery imitations. Hence the poem plays with the trope of nature as a reflection of the human only to dismantle this very logic: the night of the poetic self seems to be searching for an enlightening reflection of herself, yet as she is not fixed above the brook, the watery stars in its depths cannot be clearly identified as the projection of her own self-image. Furthermore, this self that might seem to be searching for a space of transcendence is already herself a dark and infinite night. Thus rather than figuring an alienated individual chasing after an illusory transcendent or absolute realm, the poem figures the self as an already limitless darkness which is searching for a lost *relationality*, for the stars that should belong within it.

The melancholy tone of the poem can therefore be read as indicating not the loneliness of the individualised being, but the loneliness of a self of infinite possibility which cannot be explored in isolation and which requires the material life and light of otherness. It is almost as if this dark and lonely self is casting stones at the stars to try and make them move and ripple in the water, to tempt them into play. On this reading the melancholy that passes through the world stems from a lost relatedness, and for the poet in particular, from the loss of her airy playmates (the clouds) of the opening line. Far from invoking an existential longing for some absolute and transcendent meaning with which to establish a secure and bounded individuality, the poet instead uses a complex imagery of doubles and reflections to express her desire for the others with whom identity itself can be risked. This poetic self is sustained only by the relatedness through which manifold possibilities of becoming can be played out.

Thus the "I" of the poem has no outside perspective on the play of animate objects, on the shimmering stars and flitting clouds. Instead, this play is as immanent to the shaping of the poetic self's dark spatiality, and to the

exploration of its potential identities, as stars are to night. This self, too, seems to inhabit a spatiality of objects produced through a reflective relationality without ground or origin. Goll's poetic figuring of this spatiality involves using imagery in non-conventional ways. Thus although Bram Dijkstra has argued that the moon was a standard symbol of passive female reflectivity at the end of the nineteenth century, this is not how it is employed in Goll's poem.[28] Indeed, the logic of the poem relies on the conventional link between the light of the moon and female passivity, but subverts the *fin-de-siècle* conventions, in which

> the moon had come to stand for the essence of everything that was truly feminine in the world. The moon, too, after all, existed only as a 'reflected entity.' It had no light of its own, just as woman, in her proper function, had existence only as the passive reflection of male creativity.[29]

In Goll's poem, the "moonsick longing" does not express a yearning for a fixed reflection of the self in an inert and lifeless "other". On the contrary, in this poem the traditional lunar symbol of a female principle of reflection becomes linked with the desire for an unbounded and active play of inter-stellar reflection, determined by neither self nor "other", but generating singular cosmologies through a glittering and fluid relationality. In this way, the poetic self is returned to the subjectless space of the beginning of the poem: as lines 2-4 suggested, her dark desire cannot be fixed or grounded as the projection of an individual self-as-same, for it is desire neither of nor for a subject, but moves between objects in their becomings. This self occupies the darkness of an imaginative site between heaven and earth, a space-time which is disorienting for any subject who depends on everyone being visible and visible as one; hers is a time of becoming objects, and of objects becoming both self and other.

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[28] Dijkstra, pp. 119-135.
[29] Dijkstra, p. 122.

"November Sehnt" does not straightforwardly create a non-masculine form of identity, but moves through images of reflection, doubling and horizonality, using the inherent (but usually invisible) ambiguities of a specular economy to generate a very different kind of space. Hence as I have shown above, in relation to "Die Erwachsene" and "Waldmetamorphose", in attempting to create a reality where identities emerge from risk, relationality and transformations, Goll herself continually takes the risk that the complex and playful images that characterise her poetry might be recuperated by the powerful familiarity of more oppositional structures. This danger is instantiated by the relation between two versions of the same poem: a reflective economy of the object in "Gebet" (1918) is suppressed when Goll later rewrites the poem as "Anbetung in Lyrische Films" (1922).[30]

The first thirteen lines of "Gebet" describe a mystical encounter with the divine, to which the "I" of the poem genuflects, spreading her arms in homage like the branches of the trees. This self opens with "the bridelike buds", pouring out her voice in angelic jubilation and sobbing upwards with all the springs of the earth. The divine, addressed throughout as "Du", inhabits the soft fall of a meadow and the wild ecstasy of flames, and is all "Rührung" ("emotion"; to be touched, stirred). The divine wafts from the silky reddening of flowers and resounds in the deep well of song. Kneeling before such a God is a sweet gesture of humility. Like the mystic in Irigaray's *Speculum*, this bridelike self seems to be caught between experiencing her own divinity - the divinity of her material being - and representing a holy reunion of the material and the divine.[31]

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[30] *Mitwelt*, p. 15; *Lyrische Films*, p. 41.
[31] Irigaray, *Speculum*, pp. 191-202 ("La Mystérique"). In this text, Irigaray mimics Lacan's infamous portrayal of woman's excessive, ecstatic experience of jouissance/the divine in *Encore* (see above, chapter 1): "if the Word was made flesh in this way, and to this extent, it can only have been to make me (become) God in my jouissance, which can

Although she opens herself to the touch of God, streaming herself upwards and thus emptying herself out to allow the divine to flow through her, she is, at the same time, filled with sensations of divine "Rührung". In this way, the poem is also a hymn to her own capacity for divine passion, and not merely a testament to the divinity of an Other. She kneels and opens herself not simply to receive, but also to be received by the divine: by pouring out her voice and her soul, she fills the heavens with her spirit, and thus the poem celebrates her passage into her own divine ecstasy.

The last lines of the poem describe the night wind wafted over her by "dein überirdischer Atem" ["your heavenly/transcendent [lit. over-earthly] breath"]. The night is here again associated with an extreme experience of transcendence:

> Und wieder in der dunklen Bucht deines Abends
> Knie ich am tiefen Abgrund deiner Stille hin,
> Wenn die rauschenden Sonnen und Sterne
> In der schwarzen Kuppel der Nacht
> Wie unaufhörliche Glocken schwingen. [32]

These lines figure a similar disorientation of the poet as subject to that described in both "Waldmetamorphose" and "November Sehnt" above. The deep abyss is mirrored by the black cupola of the night, yet the limitlessness associated with both spaces (*tief; unaufhörlich*) means that no clear boundary can be drawn between them: night and abyss are merging depths of darkness which resist division into separate realms of blackness, making it impossible to map where

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at last be recognised.[...] I know, now, that both height and depth spawn - and slit - each other in(de)finitely. And that the one is in the other, and the other in me, matters little since it is in me that they are created in rapture. *Outside of all self-as-same."* (p. 200). Irigaray's engagement with Lacanian mysticism is as ambiguous in places as some of Goll's poems; her text seems to hover between subversive critique and the attempt to open a different, female relation to transcendence and the divine, which continually risks recuperation as another version of the Lacanian (M/)Other.

[32] *Mitwelt*, p. 15. "And in the dark bay of your evening again / I kneel down at the deep abyss of your stillness,/ When the rushing suns and stars/ in the black cupola of the night/ swing like incessant bells."

"up" ends and "down" begins in this imaginative site. Nonetheless, the two spaces are distinguished by means of an antinomy: the abyss is a space of stillness, the night characterised by the "rauschenden" suns and stars. This verb suggests a symbiosis of sound and movement, or a movement characterised by sound rather than what can be seen, a murmering wind, for example, or rushing waters. This relation between sound and motion is emphasised in the last image: the stars swing like unceasing bells in a night which remains dark. The stars do not bring light by means of which the poet could distinguish the edge of the abyss from the beginning of night. Hence this imaginative realm of transcendence is structured by an antinomy without a boundary of opposition: the contrast between movement and stillness differentiates zones within a space which also remains the same, a darkness both still and dynamic.

The poet has no fixed perspective on this space. She kneels towards the stillness but is also bound up in the movement of the stars: their bell-like sound echoes the sound of her own voice, described earlier in the poem as falling *"wie [...] aus den Bechern der Glocken"* ("as from the cups of bells"). This ecstatic jubilation is *doubly* mirrored in the "Rausch" of the stars: like the incessant ringing of bells, they are both in perpetual motion and resound continually. In his way, the kneeling poet becomes the rushing stars in the night sky: the movement of the stars is the dynamism of her own jubilation. She is pulled towards both stillness and movement in this dark space that relates to itself as two different zones. She is in two places at once, where neither provides an absolute perspective and neither excludes the existence of the other.

In these final lines, the boundaries securing external and objectified space have collapsed: different spaces are held open not by the specula(risa)tions of the subject, but by a productive tension within and between

the same space which generates different spaces in one. The poet is no longer an active specular subject held in place by the balancing void of the "other" in the way that the autonomy of the Kantian self is protected by the very absence of Isis (Mother Nature). As was seen in chapter one above, for Kant, the "veiling" of Isis/Mother Nature acts as a necessary counterpart to the "I": noumenal darkness and absence provide the subject with an imaginative site of transcendence that allows him to reassert his identity against phenomonal nature's might. Goll's poetic self, however, is immersed within a darkness unlimited by oppositional divisions, such that she does not simply disappear in its abyssal infinity. Instead, her unity is generated by tensions and relations which hold her together across different zones, stretching her between space/s. Goll explores Isis from the other side, from a female perspective of one already positioned as "other" - and thus not *opposed* to the dark space of "otherness" - but capable of locating herself within, between and across a manifold darkness.

The second version of the poem closes down the possibility of any such differential spatiality, however. The first section of the poem has undergone three key changes. Firstly, the poet still pours out her voice; but her jubilation is no longer described as the sound of bells. Secondly, the silky reddening of the flowers has become the "*weiblichen* Erröten der Blumen" ("*feminine* reddening of the flowers"). Paradoxically, this gendering of the image makes it more difficult to read the divine as belonging to the female poetic self: the erotic sensuality which the bridelike self enjoyed in the first version of the poem has been replaced with a feminine reddening that is more suggestive of a modest blushing. Indeed, the image seems to invoke a female matter which responds to the divine with a submissiveness and modesty that would be considered

appropriate in relation to a more conventional and - as we shall see - masculine god.

The third change makes explicit the masculinity of the divine in this version: the gesture of humility has become "*Hingabe an dich, überirdischster Mann*" ("Devotion to you, most heavenly man"). In the first version, the *breath* of the divine is supersensible: blowing the night wind over the poetic self, it transports her into the darkness of a spatiality beyond this world, where her voice can be heard, where she can breathe. In the later version, the space of the supersensible is inhabited by this most superhuman of men. She can praise him, pay homage to him, open herself to him, and be filled by his divine presence; but she cannot enter into the space of the divine.

In the final section, it is this godly man's breath which wafts over her, not the breath of transcendence, as in the previous version of the poem:

> Schon schweigt die Fuge des Tags und dein narzissener Atem
> Weht, leiser Nachtwind über mich hin.
> Und wieder in den dunklen Bucht deines Abends
> Knie ich am Abgrund deiner Stille hin
> Dich neu zu erschaffen aus meiner Liebe[33].

The disorienting image of the stars in the black sky over the mirroring blackness of the abyss has disappeared altogether, and with it the spatiality within which her voice could be heard. There is only the poet leaning towards the stillness of this divine man, "*Dich neu zu erschaffen aus meiner Liebe*". Her love becomes the resource by which he is resurrected, she completes the self-enclosure of his narcissism by reflecting him back at himself in a newer, magnified version of the same. The rewritten poem returns the poet from the disorientation of the subject

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[33] *Lyrische Films*, p. 41. "Already the fugue of the day falls silent and your narcissus-breath/ wafts, gentle night wind away over me./ And again in the dark bay of your evening/ I kneel down at the abyss of your stillness/ To create you anew from my love."

to the limits of an oppositional identity in the most violent way: she is reduced to the "other" in which man sees only himself reborn. The individuality of the poet's voice is silenced: she no longer swings bell-like in space with the stars; she no longer creates a poetic space beyond the metaphysics of man. This poem's rewriting is the most extreme and visible form of the recuperative power of the deeply embedded cultural structures which position woman as man's "other". Nonetheless, to read with Goll always demands doubling back on oneself and refusing linearity: it is both possible and necessary to return from this second version to the first with a heightened sense of the power and complexity of the images employed there to open a space for a different female identity.

Acrobatic space-time

In another poem, "Gedicht", Goll powerfully expresses the need for an imaginative return to a temporality which can encompass the somersaulting doubling of interrelation and play. Simultaneously, she herself opens the possibility of such a time by poetically inscribing an imaginative *Vorgestern*, and by doubling back through her poem, to end by invoking a lost relation to sun, wind and stars:

> Vorgestern spiegelte ich dich,
> Sonne.
> Nachts spielten wir Stern,
> Fingen Wind,
> Nachtigall sang uns näher zu Gott.
> Gestern regnete es schon,
> Aber heut ist es erdkalt.
> Meine Augen frieren zu,
> Oede Weiher,
> Scherben auf dem Grund,
> Rostige Nägel
> Und ein ertrunkenes Herz,
> Zerstoben,
> Stumm.

> Nichts rauscht mehr von dir,
> Sonne,
> Wind,
> Stern.[34]

This poem explicitly links a lost world of play with the loss of a reflective relationality. The opening image suggest a neo-platonic specular ontology: the self reflects the light of the sun, a key symbol of enlightenment and truth in Western philosophy. However, in a playful subversion typical of Goll's poetry, the next lines immediately undermine this ontology. Poet and sun together played at being stars and catching the wind: no longer trapped in oppositional reflection, sun and self are here on the same side of the mirror. Objects playing in space, they are equally mobile and independently active; neither, therefore, can be hierarchically positioned as the stable subject of reflection.

Goll can be read as exploiting a fundamental ambiguity of the Platonic heritage of Western philosophy.[35] Her imagery reminds us of the myth of the cave from Plato's *Republic* in which the sun is the Form of the Good and the True, towards which man can struggle, albeit slowly and painfully, until the philosopher finally recognises its pure and powerful light. Nevertheless, it remains impossible for this philosopher to be sure that his recognition is based on a proper recollection of a lost origin, rather than a projection of the materially embodied forms which have oriented his previous worldly existence. This (male) subject craves an identity reflected in the immaterial sameness of the Forms, yet risks remaining trapped in an endless hall of mirrors; he must

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[34] *Lyrische Films*, p. 33 . "Before yesterday I mirrored you,/ Sun./ At night we would play at stars/ Caught the wind,/ Nightingale sang us closer to God./ Yesterday it was already raining,/ But today it is earth-cold./ My eyes freeze over,/ Desolate pools,/ Shards on the ground,/ Rusty nails/ And a drowned heart,/ Splintered,/ Silent./ No more rush of you,/ Sun / Wind / Star."

[35] Goll's playful imagery in this poem foreshadows Irigaray's subversive exploration of the myth of the cave in the third part of *Speculum*, "Plato's *Hystera*".

constantly mark himself off from the materiality from which his journey of enlightenment always begins, but whose reflections continually threaten to lead him astray.[36] For Goll's poetic subject, in this poem as elsewhere, the fact that reflection is an inherently playful process generated only through materially embodied forms does not entail a loss of identity. On the contrary, in Goll's poems reflection becomes another game played out between sun, self and stars, generating their identities through relations and transformations precisely because no attempt is made to ground its productions in one single origin. Reflection is not limited to any one('s) truth, but is a dynamic process of becomings, a glittering mirroring shared between sparkling objects which take shape together.

Similarly, the image of the nightingale is in itself a traditional romantic anthropomorphisation of Nature: through an appreciation of natural beauty man can perceive a little of the perfection of the cosmos, a little of the divine. However, Goll's poem positions the sun itself - the cosmic representative of the divine, of the Good and the True - as participating in the transformative play of *Vorgestern*. Thus her image suggests not so much that the self is metaphorically transported heavenward, but rather, that *both* self *and* sun are carried upwards by the bird as if in a child's story. In such tales, images like Goll's do not function merely as metaphors for an already familiar reality, but map out alternative worlds, and easily sustain the kind of double logic characteristic of Goll's playful poems: they are no less real for being unreal.

However, this magical world belongs to before-yesterday, a mythical time before the immediate past ("yesterday") where already the sun has been replaced by rain. The present, however, is "erdkalt": frozen solid and without

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[36] See Irigaray, *Speculum*, pp. 243 - 365.

the possibility of moving through space as and with the material of the stars. The "I" of the poem is here trapped in a cold earthiness, in a realm of matter where change and becoming are barred. In this *erdkalt* time, the playful immersion of the self within the external world has been destroyed. The eyes of the self freeze over into desolate ponds: rather than an active process of mutual relationality, reflection has become the passive, senseless state of immobile and inanimate surfaces. In the same way, the shards lying on cold ground do not suggest a dynamic play of refractions; on the contrary, it is as if the world has shattered into a fixed and frozen multiplicity. Together with the deadened eyes, the shards on the ground figure the fragmentation of a once animate materiality into a frozen sea of surfaces. This ground is also littered with rusty nails, suggesting perhaps the crucifixion of the poet's previous life, where self and world were not separated and both were transformed through a play of material relations. This life seems to have been killed off by the Christian tradition which crucifies matter that is animated by spirit, and which reworks a kind of neo-platonism that treats bodies and matter as "dead".

In this frozen world, a heart which no longer even seems to belong to a self has drowned, closed in by the ice, a life silenced and scattered. Slivers of dead glassy matter are all that remain where once there was animate unity. The world of *Vorgestern* has splintered into fragments and shards capable only of icy and mute refractions. In ways that look forward to Irigaray's "Une Mère de Glace", and back to Plotinus whose neo-platonic philosophy is mimed by Irigaray's text, Goll's poem mourns a matter that is dead.[37] By the end of the poem, the "I" can no longer access the ecstatic world of sound and movement once associated with the sun, wind and stars.

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[37] Irigaray, *Speculum*, pp. 168-79.

The poem itself however has become a space through which this "*Vorgestern*" can be accessed. It sets up a time before the freezing wastes of the "Erdkalt". In the present of the poem, this time offers the possibility of a different self, born from a different relationship to matter. The spatiality opened by this time is one where woman is no longer a passage through nature (the material) to the divine (pure form) making transcendence possible for others. Instead, her time is opened through the reflectivity she shares with other objects as she moves through space with them: as sun and self become stars, they create space/s through materially transcending their objective forms in a generative play of becomings.

This imaginative, preconceptual play refuses the contained forms of the beautiful. For Kant, when the imagination is freed from having to match the world to determinate concepts, its play reflects the space-time which must be perceived as embedded in the world if the human subject is to orient himself. The imagination's freedom is thereby limited. Although the productive imagination does, on the one hand, create the space-time world, it is also restricted in that it maps an external spatiality and a linear temporality which allow for the fundamental distinction between "self" and "not-self" on which the Kantian subject depends. Thus, for Kant, the sensible manifold and the material of the senses can always be mapped and "object-ified" by dividing them into bounded and containable spaces; in this way, everything can be clearly identified as occupying one particular place at any one time. Indeed, a thought experiment Kant performs in *Was heißt: Sich im Denken Orientieren?* shows that the Kantian subject's worst nightmare would be to be continually returned to a dark room, where he would constantly have to re-orient himself by imaginatively re-establishing clear distinctions between "self" and "not-self",

"subject" and "object".[38] For Kant, then, the imagination's "play" is confined to reflecting the bounded spatiality and linear time which make it possible for a self-contained, persistent subject to orient the world around himself, a subject who remains unthreatened by the inert "otherness" of a materiality held in place by solid and visible boundaries.

By contrast, Goll's poems refuse to contain the power of imaginative play which no longer reflects a single space-time, but generates a play of spatiality that cannot be grounded in any one subject. Reflection becomes a generative relationality shared between active objects and materially embodied selves, such that like the stars in the night, self and other, subject and object can share the same space at the same time without being simply identical. Thus the space-time of Goll's poetic *oeuvre* does not contain multiplicity, but remains manifold, and capable of incorporating complex relations of doubling. Selves can be found both "up" in the sky and "down" in the abyss without their identity breaking apart. Here selves are held together as difference emerges through sameness; identity is structured through a play of relations that no longer depend on external and impenetrable boundaries, but are instead generated within a fluid darkness. In these shared spaces of play, contradiction can become a powerfully generative tension, rather than a means of separating "subject" from "object".

In Goll's poems, play becomes sublime risk, where limited forms emerge from within limitless and materially embodied relationality. The identity of the self is no longer secured by overcoming material embodiment, whilst simultaneously absenting the infinity of all that is other to the self, so as to

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[38] Immanuel Kant, "Was Heißt: Sich im Denken Orientieren?", in *Werke*, III: *Schriften zur Metaphysik und Logik* (Wiesbaden: Insel-Verlag, 1958) pp. 267-283 [A304-29].

ensure that the subject who transcends his phenomenal limits does not lose a sense of his own individuality. On the contrary, in Goll's poetic imagination, identities are generated through a play with otherness that is and remains immanent to the self. Just as stars are embedded within night, so self and other intertwine, and transcendence and immanence are intermingled. In this way, "otherness" is always embedded within these object-selves, that continually transcend their own limits through an ever-unfolding play of reflection, relation and change.

The strength of these identities lies in the way they remain unstable and full of risk. Refusing the limits of a feminine imagination which would beautifully mirror the world so as to please the active (male) subject and reassure him of his own centrality, Goll's poetry explores the possibility of object-selves that are no longer opposed to a stable subject, but instead define and change each other through active material relations. In strong contradistinction to the male Expressionists, Goll positions herself in her poetry as a mother who seeks to preserve a space where she and her daughter can play out their identities together, without being continually reduced to the "kleines Frauenschicksal". Hence the temporality of "Gedicht" inscribes an opening into another history: a *Vorgestern* of the imagination made possible by a different kind of spatiality, a space-time prior to and uncontainable by the oppositional structures of man/woman, human/animal, subject/object, mother-matter/father-spirit.

This *Vorgestern* makes it possible to think (again) a time of female selves generated by the movement of material becomings. For Goll, the radical breakdown of stable subject–object relations does not lead to a preoccupation with the dissolution of a subject into flux. Instead, she seeks to recapture a

fluidity of movement in her images where identity might be differently produced, and where mother and daughter can position themselves as and amongst objects which are not simply unformed matter, but have a coherence shared between themselves. This time is reflected in the dynamic movements of the female acrobat in another poem from *Mitwelt,* "Die Akrobatin". The *Akrobatin* somersaults through identity as well as through time, flying "über dich selbst durch die Zeit". Like this acrobat, Goll poetically generates both her own history, and the different temporality of another possible world.

The *Akrobatin* hovers between two worlds, trapped neither by the materiality of the ground nor by the absolute limits of a human - or divine - horizon:

> Bunter Vogel du, der zwischen Welten
> Über Abend, Stadt und Staunen schwebt
> Schwing dich auf dem Trapez
> Über dich selbst durch die Zeit.
> Deine Schenkel flattern zittern von Zweig zu Zweig
> Und dein Herz von Mensch zu Mensch.
> Goldne Flitterlibelle, deine schwebende Sehnsucht
> Fällt nie durch die gierigen Augen ins Herz.
> Armer Stern, der allnächtlich aufgehn muß
> am kleinen bezahlten Himmel der Gaukler.
> Der jeden Abend abstürzt in die Arme roher Athleten,
> In den giftigen grauen Zigeunerwagen,
> Der dich gefangen durch das unendliche Leben fährt.[39]

The *Akrobatin* flies between worlds: her freedom of movement depends on her ability to move through a space between the oppositional relation of heaven and earth. She is a flitting shimmer of colour, a golden sparkle which is not quite

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[39] *Mitwelt,* p. 16. "You, brightly coloured bird, that hovers between worlds/ over evening, city and astonishment/ Swing yourself on the trapeze/ Over yourself though time./ Your thighs flutter tremble from branch to branch/ And your heart from person to person./ Golden sequin-dragonfly, your hovering longing/ will never fall through greedy eyes into the heart./ Poor star, that nightly must rise / into the little, paid-for sky of the illusionist;/ that every evening falls back down into the arms of raw athletes,/ In the poisonous grey caravans,/ Which carry you trapped through unending life."

translucent, but not wholly solid or fixed. Like Goll, she exploits a certain ambiguity in woman's relation to both matter and *Geist* which has always left open a space where the two can coexist, and hence where *both* are transformed. Thus the *Akrobatin* does not occupy a space of indeterminacy or *différance*, which merely allows a perpetual movement of slippage between still oppositional realms. Instead, she changes both by becoming both together: the gaps between worlds, between heaven and earth, matter and spirit, open out into a space where she generates her own temporal patterns of rhythm and movement.

Goll's *Akrobatin* is a hybrid creature, a "Goldne Flitterlibelle", who is part heavenly and part tinselly and who moves between different spaces and times. She is an incongruent unity of animal matter, divine light and sparkling movement. Her somersaults embody a dynamic of becoming through animate materiality which seems always under threat, fluttering and trembling, even as it produces its own temporality of and in change. Nonetheless, at the beginning of the poem the female acrobat moves freely. She cannot be determined from outside by a subject with a fixed perspective, for she turns herself over and over herself, allowing movement to emerge out of movement, generating patterns of sameness and difference between each further acrobatic turn. She is shaped not by clear boundaries, but from within the spaces that flow from one somersault into the next, yet without any of her movements being wholly identical. Her fluid rotations never close into a circle of self-containment nor into the larger spheres of natural cycles: her sequined body sparkles with machinically produced light. Between man's division of space and time into bounded worldly forms and immaterial transcendences, yet without collapsing both into a flux which could bear no form at all, the acrobat's flowing movements

generate her space/s together with the time of an identity shaped by material becomings.

In this way, the hovering longings of the *Akrobatin* have a trajectory of their own which cannot be captured by the greedy eyes of the spectator. However, the effort required to produce and protect this space where difference emerges through both repetition and change cannot easily be sustained. The abruptness of the break within the poem (line 9) figures the *Akrobatin's* fall back, into the heart of a specular desire which seeks to fix her in its gaze, as she falls into the arms of the athletes. She is reduced from a glitter of sequins to a star, a single pinpoint of light on which the eye can focus and which is stabilised by fixing it on a trajectory of nightly appearances. The space of the sky is thus radically limited, because everything must be fixed enough to be calculable: it and she can be bought and sold. Her fluidity is trapped in a never-ending life of staged ascendences and real descent, as every evening she is caught in the athletes' waiting arms and returned to an economy of heterosexual desire. For her, the rough flesh of the athletes is a form of materiality as limiting as the small horizon of the circus-ring. Theirs is an earthbound flesh which is debasing compared to her animate and flowing physicality. By the end of the poem, she is returned to the time of "erdkalt": she does not move through this time, but is endlessly captured in it and driven through it.

Thus the poem itself turns a somersault half-way through, which returns the poet's self to earth. The reader of Goll's poems must constantly somersault through them, resisting their linear development which often results in such a fall. Instead, the poems must be turned over themselves, read through those sections which generate the movement of a self which is no longer a (male) subject defined in opposition to inert and bounded objects. Animate matter,

Goll's *Akrobatin*-selves generate a space-time of becomings between material objects unrestrained by the limited horizon of the subject. In her poetry, Kant's linear concepts of neatly divisible space-time are replaced by realities imagined through sparkling emerald resonances. She refigures the contained forms of both Kantian subject and object to generate selves produced by a play of reflective relationality. Instead of reinscribing the familiar appearance of the "new" man of Expressionism, Goll continually takes poetic risks to explore the manifold identities played out between mother and daughter, and the somersaulting materialities shared between stars and selves. Instead of remaining fixed by cold earth, she maps the dancing movements of a sequined dragonfly; instead of orienting a stable subject, her poems realise a space-time shaped by a fluid acrobatics.

Chapter Five

The Glass Garden:

Mosaic Mirrorings

> So now the beloved is in love, but with what he cannot tell. He does not know and cannot explain what has happened to him; he is like a man who has caught an eye-infection from another and cannot account for it; he does not realise that he is seeing himself in his lover as in a glass.[1]

> Du konntest dich in mir wie in einem Spiegel sehen, der dein Bild von früher unverändert zurückwarf. Aber ich verhängte diesen Spiegel sorgfältig, um dich nicht zu erschrecken [. . .] So ließ ich dich stückweise und in Zwischen-räumen einsehen in mich, damit du dich langsam wieder aufbauen konntest wie ein Mosaik, aus dem ein Sturm einige Steinchen gebrochen hat.[2]

Like all the best neoplatonic love stories, Claire Goll's *Der Gläserne Garten* is

about self-discovery. Like many of the German Romantics of the nineteenth-

century, Goll fuses elements of Kantianism and Platonism in this short semi-

poetic text (first published in 1919). However, the female self which is

discovered/constructed through this story does more than give a twist to the

Platonic model of love, where the lover accesses the beautiful truth of the

eternal Forms via their reflection in the truly beautiful object of his love. Goll

reinscribes lover and beloved as two women, Venera and Ylone. She thereby

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[1] Plato, *Phaedrus*, ed. Walter Hamilton (London; Penguin, 1973), p. 64 [255].

[2] Claire Studer, *Der Gläserne Garten*, in Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten: Prosa 1917-1939*, pp.215-30 (pp. 229-30). "You could see yourself in me as in a mirror that reflected your earlier image unchanged. But I hung this mirror carefully so as not to shock you [...] In this way, I let you see into me bit by bit and in interstices/gaps,* so that you could slowly piece yourself together again, like a mosaic, from which a storm has broken some small tiles."

*The word *Zwischenräume* denotes both gaps in space and intervals in time.

disrupts the Romantic revision of the Platonic myth, in which Plato's ideal male-male couple has been transformed to become a heterosexual male-female pair.[3] Goll's story reflects the original structure of the lover-beloved dyad as a same-sex couple. However, I will argue that far from leading to another identity based on mirrored sameness and the exclusion of the other, Goll's transposition of this structure to a female-female relation shatters the frozen surface of the mirror, and creates the space for a different kind of self.

This chapter will be centred on a poem incorporated into the heart of Goll's story. The poem seems to position woman as a subject with her own potentialities and singularity, and not an inert, reproductive "object", or a conduit for the male to attain his own transcendence. However, this poem is embedded within a "sapphic" love story; thus I will also trace key images from the story surrounding the poem that develop Goll's exploration of a female identity which remains immersed in both relationality and corporeality. As we will see in the next chapter, it is the "Orphic" elements of the story that will be particularly useful for understanding the specificity and radicality of Goll's female voice, through which the songs of Eurydice can be heard. However, in this chapter, I will focus on the ways in which the poem itself returns to the Greeks, by invoking images from the Demeter rites as well as the Adonia. Moreover, as I will show, Goll's story self-consciously reworks and subverts the neoplatonism that seeps into Expressionism via the German Romantics. Hence in this chapter, I will both analyse the poem, and situate it within an

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[3] For an account of Neoplatonism which situates it within the philosophical, legal, political, medical and theological debates about the nature of woman in the European Renaissance, see Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (Cambridge; C.U.P., 1980); and Maclean, *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature 1610-1652* (Oxford: 1977), especially Chapter 4: "The Question of Marriage", and Chapter 6: "Feminism in Imaginative Literature".

exploration of the neoplatonic elements of the love story within which it is set. Thus I will begin by providing some necessary background for Plato's account of love, the self and writing from the *Phaedrus*.

The mode of selfhood explored in *Der Gläserne Garten* emerges from a complex relationality whose subversive power can most clearly be appreciated when read against the account of love Plato gives in this text. I will show how the fluid and non-oppositional self-other relation, through which the identities of the two female protagonists emerge, radically reworks Plato's specular economy of desire, which was used by the Romantics to suggest that the lover comes to know only *himself* in his beloved. Nonetheless, I will also indicate how the self-other relation developed through Goll's neoplatonic play with mirrors instantiates the same kind of disorientation of the Kantian subject (as well as the Kantian sublime) as was discussed in the previous chapter. In doing so, I do not intend to map Plato onto Kant, except to the extent that both belong to a history of metaphysics which, despite the differences within it, has continued to privilege a male self-as-same, whilst remaining unable to theorise difference.

Plato's *Phaedrus* is a philosophical text which maps the proper relation to knowledge, truth and philosophy itself onto the relation between lover and beloved. Socrates is induced to give his views on the subject of love, which he presents as a kind of madness but one which, like divine inspiration, can have positive results if it is properly disciplined. For the man whose love is focused purely on the beauty of his beloved, the latter serves as a medium through which he is able to recall the "absolute beauty" of the Forms.[4] However, those who indulge more material lusts are unable to transcend their material embodiment in this way. Those who feel only sensual and physical love remain

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4 Plato, *Phaedrus*, p. 62 [254].

earthbound, whilst those "reminded by the sight of beauty on earth of the true beauty" are filled with powerful feelings that begin to regenerate the wings of the soul which were lost at the time of birth, when the soul fell to earth and into a human body.[5] Such love swiftens the soul's recollection and ultimate return to the ideal and eternal reality of the Forms.

To illustrate his argument Socrates compares the soul of the lover to the charioteer who must learn to control the two horses pulling his chariot, the dark and ugly horse of passion and appetite, and the noble white steed who willingly accepts restraint as an intrinsic part of honour and virtue.[6] Those who pursue wisdom learn to tame the dark horse and to approach the beloved with a proper sense of awe for the way his beauty recalls the true beauty of the Forms. Such self-restraint brings true self-knowledge: wise men journey through love to become "masters of themselves".[7]

However, Socrates' discussion of love, replete with powerful metaphors and poetic images, leads into the second half of this dialogue, concerning the nature of rhetoric and proper philosophy. There has been much debate as to the interrelation of these two parts, but for the purposes of this chapter, I would like to suggest that Socrates' account of the proper relation of lover and beloved serves as a template for the proper relation of the philosopher to the knowledge he desires. For the latter to ascend to the truth, he must not use rhetoric which serves worldly needs or indulges temporary desires; on the contrary, his language must reflect the timeless truth of the Forms in the same way that the beloved reflects their true beauty.

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[5] Plato, *Phaedrus*, p. 56 [249].
[6] See Plato, *Phaedrus*, pp. 51-53 [246-8], and especially PP. 61-65 [253-6].
[7] Plato, *Phaedrus*, p. 65 [256].

Above all, Plato stresses that the Form of the Good towards which the philosopher apsires cannot be reflected by the materiality of writing, but can only live in the immediacy of speech. [8] Truth and knowledge are contaminated by writing in much the same way that love is contaminated if the relation between lover and beloved becomes one of bodily desire. In both cases, materiality interferes with the proper reflection of the Forms, and hence impedes the process of recollection which would constitute man's proper relation to and mastery of himself.

This journey back though Plato is suggested by Goll's story, which also traces the relationship of lover and beloved as a journey of self-discovery. However, *Der Gläserne Garten* also challenges Plato's philosophical topography. For Plato, both lover and beloved are in turn entranced by the same reflection of the Forms mirrored for each in his other. Moreover, the route to (self-)knowledge necessitates a separation from the material: only those who overcome their bodily desires will learn to see the eternal Forms reflected in the beauty of an other mortal being. In this chapter, I will journey through Goll's story to explore the ways in which she re-figures the relation between Ylone and Venera, paying particular attention to her complex images of glass, mirrors and reflection. As we will see, in Goll's text the two women lovers are not positioned as both mirroring pre-existent and eternal Forms. Instead, Ylone comes to see herself in Venera as in a fluid mirror, which allows for difference through relationality and for (self-)knowledge in an other who cannot be seen as a reflection of an unchanging and timeless "reality".

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[8] See Plato, *Phaedrus*, pp. 95-102 [274-8], concerning "the question of the propriety and im-propriety of writing", p. 95 [274].

Moreover, Goll's text simultaneously refigures the relation of materiality, writing, knowledge and the soul. Not only do her female protagonists remain embedded in a sensuous materiality through and across which their spiritual journey is manifested, but, in addition, writing itself is explicitly thematised within the text as a generative and sensuous material. Writing is positioned as a productive process that materialises truths and realities through its own forms. As such, textuality is figured as inherently unsuited to passively copying a fixed, immaterial truth. Thus Goll is freed from the double bind which traps Plato, who can aspire to the immateriality of the eternal Forms only through powerful and sensuous images. In *Der Gläserne Garten*, Goll is not seeking eternal, immaterial truth, but truths powerfully embodied in sensuous female forms.

Inky Monsters; Troubling Topographies

Der Gläserne Garten is a short, densely poetic account of the love between two women, told in nine sections. This episodic structure, combined with a highly imagistic style, makes Goll's narrative both elusive yet intensely expressive. The story opens as Venera and Ylone spend a last, mystical night together before Ylone leaves to begin a new life with Claudio, a former lover of Venera. Venera mourns the loss of her friend (¶2), but celebrates when a letter arrives from Ylone (¶3). The two women are together again in section four, though Ylone is still Claudio's partner, and Claudio's mother visits her with devastating results. Venera implores Ylone to recognise that women can never know themselves through men, but only through other women, and reminds her of a "sapphic

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ode" she once wrote, which is then given in full (¶5). As Ylone realises she is losing herself by fulfilling Claudio's every whim, Ylone and Claudio's relationship painfully disintegrates (¶6 and ¶7). Venera herself meets for a last time with Claudio, a meeting which is part test, part revenge and partly a recognition that she cannot stop caring for Claudio as readily as she would like. She takes her leave of him and returns to Ylone (¶8). Ylone finally rediscovers herself though Venera, and the two women celebrate their reunion (¶9).

Venera opens the tale and her voice, written in the first person, runs through the text and concludes the narrative, though it is impossible to tell whether the final lines (see below) belong to Venera or Ylone - or both. The intervening sections are partially narrated by Venera, but also include letters by Ylone, Venera and Claudio. One section (¶4) centres on a poem by Ylone, and another (¶5) contains large segments of direct speech belonging to Claudio's mother. The text thus has a mosaic-like quality which disturbs the notion of a contained, linear narrative related by a single, omnipotent narrator.

The very first lines introduce the reader to a tale whose temporality is not linear but already doubled: "Nun ist wieder Glas zwischen uns, Geliebte, wie damals. Damals, als du schon stärker in mir warst als jeder Mann."[9] The time of narration is like another time, to which the reader has no immediate access. In these two lines, the key image and theme of the text are introduced. This is a story which recollects a time centred on a relation constructed by glass between two lovers, both women; yet the glass does not prevent the beloved being more strongly part of her lover's life than any man.

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[9] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 215. "Now there is glass between us again, beloved, just like then. Then, when already you were stronger in me than any man."

The contradictory and complex properties of glass are simply but immediately invoked: glass seems to separate the two women as a barrier, yet one is within the other and they thus share the same space. This recalls both the capacity of glass to act as a mirror generating relations of likeness, and its transparency, whereby it is no barrier at all. The multiple properties of glass are refigured throughout the text, until its function and material nature are finally transformed, as is the relation between the two women. These first lines already point ahead to another time, when the identity of the two women will be more bound up with each other, and less dependent on a relationship to (a) man.

The writer-narrator goes on to express her surprise that she can put these thoughts into words: "denn die Worte sind hart und grob, und die Dinge der Seele stoßen sich schmerzlich an ihnen, wie deine Brüste an den Wänden deiner Kleider."[10] This image works both within and against the traditional metaphysical dualities soul-body, words-objects, material-immaterial. Rather than overtly opposing soul and body, Goll's image initially seems to draw attention to the ways in which both are treated as *tabula rasa* within the West: both must be represented through systems of codification - language and clothes/fashion - and both remain painfully alien to the very codes which express their identity. However, by foregrounding this parallel, Goll creates a surprising equation, disrupting the opposition between the spiritual and the physical. The matters of the soul are here analogous with the materiality of not only of the body, but of a specifically female and sexually differentiated embodiment (the things of the soul are like the breasts). The space of the body -

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[10] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 215. "for words are hard and coarse, and the things of the soul bang painfully against them, like your breasts on the walls of your clothes."

and in particular the sexed body of a woman - becomes the site for spiritual matters.

Nonetheless, this alignment produces a tension within the images: the emphasis on the "hart" and "grob" nature of words as opposed to the abstract things of the soul suggests that words' *materiality* makes them inherently inadequate to express the spiritual. Yet the physicality of words, emphasised by the way they are paralleled with clothes, also aligns them with the materiality of the female body. Hence Goll sets up connections which work across and through the binaries to undermine them. Meaning is expressed through the "hart" and "grob" materiality of clothes/codes which belong to the *same* realm of physicality as the life of the female body to be expressed, whilst this life in turn parallels that of the soul. Goll's image both creates and simultaneously disrupts an opposition between inner life, both physical and spiritual, and the materials through which it is disclosed. On the one hand, this image suggests a deep mistrust of the codes through which female life in particular is figured; on the other, it suggests a potential realignment, where meaning shares its sites with a body which is in some ways more like a spirit.

Thus, this complex image can simultaneously be read in several related but non-congruent ways. Though Goll realigns materiality with meaning via metaphor, the complexity of the strategy this necessitates suggests that her female writer-narrator is right to be anxious about language. For her image also contains another possible reading: the very materiality of the female body can be used to position it as a symbol of the potentially constraining coarseness of the written word. Goll's image can be read as reflecting the cultural paradigm which entails that even if a woman writer succeeds in writing herself as meaningful materiality, her sex can be used to realign her with the inadaquacies

of the written word - an alignment which, as I have shown in chapter three, was commonly reinforced by Expressionism.

Nevertheless, the image as a whole undermines the binaries between body/soul, matter/meaning on which Western culture has depended, and instead suggests that the meaning of lived experience and thought might belong to the same realm as the material of self-expression. The complex relations between the different elements of the image refuse to permit a clear separation between the matter/s to be represented, and the mode and means of their representation. Moreover, Goll's own image suggests how meaning might be generated without simply imposing deadening matter on animate souls, or restrictive codes on inert physicality. In these lines meaning is generated via a complex relationality, whereby the different possible connections between the four key terms produce multiple, yet specific and sometimes contradictory, meanings. Different conceptions of soul, body, words and clothes emerge as the relations between them are differently mapped, whilst the paralleling of words with both clothes and the body emphasises that relations can be figured not only through the material of language, but through bodies and objects too.

Thus a tale which later disrupts the (neo-)Platonic myth of love as a path to wisdom opens with a powerful subversion of Plato's view of language. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato describes writing as a kind of image or shadow of the animate speech of a man who has knowledge: writing resembles his spoken words, but contains no knowledge, for it cannot answer any questions asked of it. The material inscription of the word in ink is dead compared to spoken word, "the kind that is written on the soul of the hearer together with understanding, that knows how to defend itself and can distinguish between those it should address

and those in whose presence it should be silent."[11] Writing is not only inanimate but is equated with a troublingly fluid matter, like water or ink. It cannot properly contain the kind of understanding that belongs to the living and that should be secured within a "suitable soul".[12] There the truth can be planted as a seed and properly cared for and propagated, protected from any attack which might prevent it from re-establishing itself as perfectly as before, reproducing the word of the master as good as new.[13] This will give rise to a succession of legitimate sons, securing immortality for both the truth "about the right, the beautiful and the good" and for each man who possesses this truth and transplants it into new generations.[14]

By implying that the written word is "sterile", despite its inky fluidity, Plato attempts to erase his fear that any written text will allow knowledge to propagate without proper control. His own written words indicate his anxiety that meaning, knowledge and even form may reproduce themselves and grow within a mobile materiality. The position of the soul as the keeper of wisdom would thus be undermined: the shadows would start to move and give birth to others, spawning offspring that would no longer copy the original blueprint of a soul, or mirror the ultimate Forms of truth. Lovers would no longer fill their lives with meaning by perusing their beloved's beauty for reminders of a single self-same ideal. Their bodies would intervene to create their own shadowy truths, perhaps to give birth to magical creatures whose meaning overwhelms the rational man, "a host of Gorgons and Pegasuses and other such monsters, whose number create no less a problem than their grotesqueness."[15]

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[11] Plato, *Phaedrus*, p. 98 [276].
[12] Plato, *Phaedrus*, p. 99 [276].
[13] Plato, *Phaedrus*, pp.98-9 [276-7].
[14] Plato, *Phaedrus*, p. 101 [277-8].
[15] Plato, *Phaedrus*, p. 24-5 [229].

Goll's text instantiates Plato's worst fear: the inky shadows of her words refuse to be oriented and contained by a single truth, but instead hold together a host of related yet contradictory meanings. At the same time, her words specifically suggest that writing is only one mode of productive materiality, whose fluid aesthetic power could also be embodied by the female matter whose specificity and difference has always appeared monstrous from the perspective of (a) man who wanted to deny his own corporeality. Goll's disorienting, disruptive imagery suggests that opaque materiality can generate its own fluid forms. Her words open a space both for female creativity, and for selves and words shaped as living bodies, that might defy man's limitations and fly through the air like Pegasus, without recourse to a wholly immaterial soul.

The opening section of Goll's story continues to employ seemingly oppositional structures to disrupt and explore the relation of the material and female to the spiritual and, in particular, to transcendence. Venera and Ylone are standing by a window looking out into a snowy landscape. In an excessive antinomy, the snow's coldness is not just opposed to the heat of their room, but is doubly cold. Redoubling what is already an inversion should return the latter to its original; here it produces another, more intense zone of sensation:

> Weißt du noch, Ylone, doppelt kalt empfanden wir den Schnee, der am Fenster vorbeifiel, weil unser Zimmer in den Flammen einer innigen Entzückung stand. Nur das Glas war zwischen uns und dem Winter wie Sehnsucht zwischen unsern Herzen, die sich in äußerster Vermählung berührten.[16]

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[16] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, pp. 215-6. "Do you still remember, Ylone, the snow falling past the window felt doubly cold to us because our room was engulfed in the flames of an inner rapture. Only the glass was between us and the winter like longing between our hearts, which touched in an extreme marriage."

The flames heating the room are those of an inner conflagration, the word "innig" suggesting the responsive interiority of the soul. The boundaries between "inner", spiritual space and "outer" material space are dissolved: the soul's heat spreads through the material world. In a similar way, the use of the word "innig" complicates the way in which this "room" is read: though it is introduced as a relatively simple image within a spatial topography (inside and out of the snow), nonetheless it also stands for the dwelling place of the soul. The room seems to belong equally to both material and spiritual realms and to both literal and metaphorical levels of interpretation. The metaphorical house of the soul inhabited by Venera and Ylone's "inner" selves is to be read as a space of sensous reality.

This image also extends the disruptive spatiality set up in the opening lines. Ylone and Venera now seem to exist on the same side of the mirror: glass separates them from winter, it acts as a barrier protecting their space. Yet immediately such clear-cut distinctions are complicated: the glass is also like the longing that lies between their hearts, separating them in a touch which is, nonetheless, the most extreme marriage. Indeed, it would seem that it is because they also exist separately within the shared space of their mutual desire that their togetherness can be so intense. Ylone and Venera are different and yet occupy the same room, take up different spaces but are intensely one with another. This is the self / these are the selves that the text will go on to explore.

Spatial boundaries are yet further confounded in the images that follw. Ylone looks across the "burning room", and also inward, to where Venera has touched her and the two dissolve into the limitless: "Du schautest nach innen, wo ich dich angerührt hatte, und wir vergingen Hand in Hand im

Grenzenlosen."[17] The limitless is accessed through an inner space, which is also touchable and thus sensible. Nevertheless, this touch is like the glance shared between Plato's lover and beloved: it leads Ylone and Venera upwards, beyond their individual embodiment and towards the eternal and immaterial. Yet Ylone, unlike Plato's lover, does not welcome this transcendence and tries to call Venera back into a temporal, earthly existence:

> Aus Angst vor Steigerung und mit der Scheu gegenüber dem Ausgesprochenen versuchtest du, mich aus überirdischer Stille ins Zimmer zurückzuzwingen und sagtest: „Fühlst du, wie wir hinauswachsen aus Raum und Zeit, Venera?"[18]

As I will show, however, Goll goes on to complicate the notion that such a transcendence could ever lead to knowledge what is "real" for the two women. Hence, despite the fact that Ylone's fear at first seems to indicate that she has a weak (feminine) soul, and is so trapped by her body that she resists the journey upwards, as we will see, she cannot in fact be paralleled with those who cannot overcome their bodily desires and thus never master themselves either physically, or spiritually, through the knowledge that proper love brings.

When Ylone calls out to Venera, a distant voice answers her, singing from Gluck's Opera *Orfee* and evoking memories of past times spent together. In the next chapter, I will explore the ways in which this reference to Orpheus plays a key role in the disruptiveness not only of the images in this particular section, but throughout the text. However, for the moment, I will focus on the way Goll's images disrupt a Platonic topography of love and ascendence. The singing voice makes Venera look back, interrupting her flight into the infinite

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[17] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 216. "You looked inwards towards where I had touched you and we melted away hand in hand into the limitless."

[18] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 216. "Fearing intensification [lit: heightening] and shrinking back from what had been said, you tried to force me back from heavenly stillness into the room, and said 'Can you feel how we are outgrowing space and time, Venera?'"

with the recollection of another time when Ylone was "überirdisch". This

memory belongs to a time when Venera left her own chaste night to enter

Ylone's morning, and was filled with summer and love in Ylone's burning

room:

> „Jetzt bist du überirdisch wie damals, als ich aus meiner keuschen
> Nacht in euren Morgen trat. Euer Zimmer brannte. Sommer und Liebe
> schlugen mir entgegen. Das Zimmer hing reif in den Garten, aber ich
> sah nicht mehr, wo es aufhörte und der Garten begann; denn das
> Fenster war groß."[19]

The window in Ylone's remembered "room" is so large it cannot be clearly

divided from the garden, within which it hangs like a ripe fruit. Ylone's space is

both self-contained and opens into the garden's fecundity: Venera can no longer

tell where one space begins and the other ends. This window is open, or the

nature of its glass has been transformed.

Yet although the window-pane is no longer a barrier visibly separating

interiority from nature, Ylone's space is not entirely submerged within the

garden. Ylone both occupies a particular space that retains its individuality -

hanging like a ripe fruit - whilst simultaneously becoming part of another,

larger realm. In this image, Ylone's interiority is not simply dissolved into a

limitless chaos of animate nature, where identity would become impossible.

Rather, the world of natural material processes is already part of her inner

space, which seems to have matured and ripened within the garden. Hence, far

from overcoming individual embodied existence to experience the boundless

like Plato's "wise" lover, in this image, Ylone's space - that of the soul/room -

seems to have grown as a specific site within a boundless realm of material

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[19] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 216. "Now you are heavenly [lit.: above the earth] like
you were then, when I entered your morning from my chaste night. Your room was
burning. Summer and love greeted me. The room hung ripely in the garden, but I
could no longer see where it ended and the garden began; for the window was large."

becomings. This remembered experience of encountering the limitless does not involve ascending towards a static and eternal realm of being, beyond the unfolding specificity of embodied, material life. On the contrary, Venera recalls a different mode of earthly existence - rather than an existence beyond the earth - in which transcendence remains immanent to the material, as singular spaces emerge through and remain immersed within a boundless fecundity.

Venera's memory indicates that Ylone's fear of the limitlessness beyond space and time is not a sign of weakness. Rather, it suggests that Ylone draws back from this more conventional form of Platonic ascendance becase she does not want to become cut off from that other time, the time she makes Venera remember, where encountering the boundless did not mean leaving corporeality and specificity behind. In the un-bounded space of the garden, the singular and the shared, the particular and the limitless were sustained together.

Thus, once she is caught up in this memory, Venera, like Ylone, cannot hold on to the unconstrainedness of her journey into the boundless beyond space and time:

> Ich verlor die Geste der Unbefangenheit, die ich über meinen Schmerz gebreitet hatte, und in der Verwirrung sagte die, die ins Zimmer getreten war - nicht ich - : „Komm, Ylone, es ist Morgen, der Zug fährt zurück in die Stadt." Denn ich fühlte, du wußtest nicht mehr, was Morgen war.[20]

In the confusion generated by her intense memory, it is not Venera herself who returns to the room: *Venera* does not exist in this bounded space either. Her earthly existence does seem to be an entrapping illusion after all. However,

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[20] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 216. "I lost the gesture of uninhibitedness that I had spread over my pain, and in the confusion she who had entered the room - not I - said: 'Come, Ylone, it is morning, the train is going back to the city.' For I felt that you no longer knew what morning was."

Venera's memory of Ylone's room in the garden, together with her resulting failure to maintain the journey into the limitless, suggest that this illusion is not to be dispelled by finding her "true reality" in an eternal and disembodied realm. Rather, she and Ylone seem to be at home *neither* in disembodied infinity, *nor* within the limits of their "everyday" embodiment. Instead, the way to their reality seems to lie in the memory of a realm which disrupts the alignment of the body with limitation and neither opposes the material to the spiritual, nor positions the corporeal as prohibiting transcendence. Indeed, as the rest of the story will show, Venera and Ylone are not at home on Claudio's masculine earth precisely because of the way this reality is structured by subordinating both (female) matter to the journey of the (male) soul/spirit, and manifold becomings to the sameness of being.

Although Venera, like the Platonic lover, recalls a past through her beloved which seems to bring some knowledge about her real existence, this recollection takes her back to a time which thoroughly disrupts Plato's metaphysics: here, transcendence remains immersed within the material as well as within a temporality of growth and becomings. Moreover, this process of recollection is generated by an excessive series of doubles and inversions which begin to undo the very notion of a fixed topography of origin: the women are on the same and different sides of the glass, within and without, material and spiritual; they occupy distinct yet inseparable spaces. Collecting together what Plato would separate, Venera's memory works towards a space and time beyond the limits of the world, yet without simply inverting its material forms in a timeless, spaceless void beyond the body.

Thus when Venera reminds Ylone it is morning, she uses a voice which does not belong to her to recall a world no less alien to her than an infinity

beyond all space and time, and hence outside all relationality and embodiment. With this voice, she reminds herself and Ylone of the time within which they live, whose schedule is centred on a man: Ylone must leave to meet Claudio. Nonetheless, Venera's words draw Ylone "langsam zwischen den Welten auf mich zu."[21] To return to earth, Ylone passes *through* other worlds but also comes from a space *between* worlds, confirming the possibility of a reality that lies somewhere between the opposing realms of limiting containment and disembodied infinity.

Manifold Matter/s

After the first section ends with Venera sending Ylone (her female beloved) to Claudio (her male lover) in a double gesture of sacrifice, the second section is abruptly introduced as a "welke Blatt" ["faded leaf (i.e. of paper)"]. Addressed to Ylone by Venera, after Ylone has left, Venera writes of living from the last dark piece of their last night together which she has held onto, and without which she would die:

> Davon lebe ich. Wenn es zu Ende ist und ich gänzlich erwache, werde ich sterben müssen; denn du fehlst, du erster Stern all meiner Abende. Stärker als alle andern durchbrachst du den Horizont. O, daß du am Himmel eines Mannes aufgehn mußtest, Ylone! Eines Tages wirst du abstürzen und deine goldenen Zacken zerbrechen, und ich habe dich nicht beschützen können![22]

In Venera's night, Ylone broke through the horizon, lighting up Venera's skies by opening out the limits of containment and separation. In contrast, Ylone now has to rise into a *man's* heaven, which remains in place and provides the

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[21] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 216. "slowly through/between worlds towards me."

[22] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 217. "I live off that. When it ends and I wake up completely, I will have to die; for you will be missing, you, the first star of all my evenings. Stronger than all the others, you broke through the horizon. O, that you should have to rise in a man's sky, Ylone! One day you will fall and smash your golden points, and I have not been able to protect you!"

backdrop for her appearance. The verb "aufgehn" recalls the circus performance of Goll's *Akrobatin*.[23] Just as the acrobat's own sense of movement is violently contrasted with her performance as viewed through greedy male eyes, so Ylone's golden light is reduced to a starry spectacle when seen in a universe ordered by and for man. Moreover, this image of rising into - and falling from - the heavens has strong Platonic overtones, recalling the soul's journey between heaven and earth. As was suggested in the previous section, however, Ylone will be unable to find herself through a heavenly transcendence which belongs to a masculine metaphysics. Indeed, Venera reinscribes the myth of the fall for Ylone: one day she will fall and smash her golden "Zacken" - the points of her star - to pieces. Far from being either a fall from an original state of being or a failure to re-ascend to the Forms, Ylone's destruction is inevitable exactly because she does *not* belong in man's sky. [24]

Venera's letter goes on tell how she runs through the house, beside herself with anxiety at the silence and stillness: "Der zärtliche Flügel tönt nicht mehr, er ist tot. Er rauscht nicht mehr wie ein fremdländische Vogel durch den Wald deines nächtlichen Haares."[25] This image links movement and flight with sound via a pun on "Flügel": without Ylone, the grand-piano stays silent. Music no longer takes wing through a nightly space not of the soul, but of Ylone's body. As was seen in several of Goll's poems, she often employs the verb "rauschen" to evoke a state of spiritual and bodily intoxication, manifested in both sound and in rushing motion. Here too the image is used to link Ylone

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[23] See line 9 of the poem (given in full in chapter 3): "Armer Stern, der allnächtlich aufgehn muß".

[24] The image of "Zacken", the jagged points of the star, also recalls the serrated edges of a feathered wing: Ylone can perhaps be read as an angel who has fallen to earth and lost her ability to pass between both matter and spirit.

[25] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 217. "The tender piano/wing no longer sounds, it is dead. It no longer rushes like a bird from a strange land through the wood of your hair at night."

with music's ability to affect the listener emotionally or spiritually, without

divorcing this affective power from its richly physical manifestation. For Plato,

as noted above, proper love can open the channels through which the wings of

the soul can grow, ultimately permitting the lover to fly back towards the

eternal, immaterial Forms. Goll's image suggests that Venera's love was carried

on wings which led her neither out of the body nor towards the same,

unchanging truths; on the contrary, this *fremdländische* flight is missed because

it brought movement and change, intoxication and strangeness through her

beloved's corporeal opacity.

This section closes with a complex set of imagery centred on mirroring

and transformation. In the first of three groups of images, Venera looks into a

mirror:

> Der große Spiegel gegenüber, der dich so viele Male empfing wie ein
> Fest, lächelt sein kristallenes Lächeln. Er spürt dich noch. Er strahlt dich
> zurück. Er ist angefüllt von den Variationen des einen Themas: Ylone.
> Er glänzt noch von damals, als du das Märchen von der kleinen
> Seejungfrau tanztest und am Ende zu Schaum vergingst.[26]

The mirror's crystalline smile belies its animate nature. It feels and reflects

Ylone not as a single image, or even a collection of static images. It glitters with

the fluid movements of her dance of a fairytale: in this tale she is a mermaid, a

magical creature who belongs to two worlds. She finally dissolves into foam: a

material neither quite solid nor wholly transparent, whose evanescence reflects

light like the multiple surfaces of crystals. Ylone is not only shifting images in

the glass: she is also the back of the mirror become liquid crystal or mercury

which actively generates multiple refractions. The mirror which has captured

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[26] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 217. "The large mirror opposite, which received you so
many times as in celebration, smiles its crystalline smile. It senses you still. It
reflects/beams you back. It is full of variations on the one theme: Ylone. It still gleams
from the time when you danced the tale of the little mermaid and melted away into
foam at the end."

her embodies a fluid materiality which refuses to copy a single set of fixed forms, and instead produces magical figures. Ylone's glittering reflection is the incarnation of the spirit of writing which so troubled Plato.

From the manifold, foamy surface of the sea, Ylone transforms again; in the second group of images, she is described as hidden by seven seas like seven veils:

> Sieben Meere lagen wie sieben Schleier über dir. Der große Sockel aus karrarischem Marmor wurde zur Säule des Königschlosses. - Was wird nicht zum Schloß, wenn du dich daran lehnst![27]

This Ylone remains out of sight. She is a power to transform, turning marble plinths into the pillars of castles fit for a king - though this regal figure seems to have limited authority compared to Ylone's genius for invention. This second group of images recalls not only the eroticism of Salomé, but also Kant's reference to Isis as the veiled figure of noumenal Nature.[28] Goll's excessive image of the seven seas which lie over Ylone emphasises that, like Isis, she cannot be simply unveiled. However, rather than being presented as an absolute absence, beyond an intuitable and orderable realm, the veils that are seas each have their own oceanic depths, their own currents and mysteries. Ylone's absence is protected by a manifold layering already infinitely complex, a veiling whose fluidity would refuse to be contained by clear-cut boundaries, such that it would be difficult to tell where one sea ended and another began. Beneath the seven seas there cannot be *the* depths - only another sea.

Nature as the sensible matter of appearance, and Nature as a supersensible ground are no longer opposed in this image: Ylone's absence is

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[27] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, pp. 217-8. "Seven seas lay over you like seven veils. The great pedestal made from carratic marble became the pillar of a king's castle. - What does not become a castle, if you lean on it!"

[28] See Kant, *C J*, sect. 49, p. 185 [5:316]; see also chapter one above.

safeguarded by a manifold materiality whose fluidity can incorporate a multitude of absences and hidden depths. Thus Ylone is protected not because of her singular power as absence, but as one absence within many. Her transformative power does not lie beyond the materiality of phenomenal appearances, but instead she leans against pillars to transform them. Her powerful absence lies in immanent proximity to its magical manifestations; both are folded within a fluxing oceanic spatiality. Hence in this image, the power to produce the new does not require genius to transcend the limits of phenomenal nature by re-schematising its passive, pliable matter. Instead, Ylone's magical and generative energy is folded into a fluid, manifold materiality through which her transformative power works.

In the third and final image, Ylone's transformative power burns up the surface of the mirror, her heat liquifies its mercurial silvering into another powerful Egyptian figure:

> Sogar der kalte Spiegel fängt an zu glühen. Der Tanz der Sphinx steigt wieder aus ihm auf, in dem du mich mit dem ägyptischen Kuß der Jahrtausende versuchtest.[29]

The Sphinx is a sister to Isis, a powerful female sexuality which refuses to give up its secrets easily. Ylone seeks out Venera in the dance of this mythical creature from a near mythical time, a lost past. This dance emerges from the mirror into the "real" world of Venera. The coldness of the glass melts away, as Ylone burns through its icy surface to manifest herself enticingly beyond the mirror's frame. A cold mirror would freeze the reflections of her material forms, framing and containing them whilst hiding its own silvered activity. Ylone's heat dissolves this icy framing of materiality, releasing the fluid

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[29] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 218. "Even the cold mirror begins to glow. The dance of the Sphinx emerges from it again, the dance in which you tempted me with the age-old kiss of the Egyptians."

generative power of the back of the mirror, the hidden ground of the mirror's work. Through Ylone and through the mirror - for it is no longer clear where one begins and the other ends - a female transformative power emerges through and into a sensuous materiality.

This silvery dance of material becomings cannot be contained by solid boundaries against which a subject could securely orient himself. It is as if the frames of Kant's space-time had melted away. Ylone's multiple mirror-selves take shape in a temporality of change, in which the limitless no longer functions as an absent end towards which the self constantly strives. Instead, she emerges as a self through endless possibilities for (self-)transformation. Indeed, it seems as if Ylone is like the female acrobat discussed in the previous chapter. She transforms herself acrobatically through a manifold space which also incorporates her as absence. Hence she is never wholly determined as/by any single form, but retains a dark fluidity shaped by the gaps, as she moves between different material manifestations.

It is not only Kant's subject who would be lost in this myriad world: Plato's lover would be completely disoriented. Venera's beloved does not reflect a single, unchanging ideal of beauty or even an stable, well-proportioned form. She mirrors neither the unchanging beauty of an eternal truth, nor the harmonious reality of the Forms. Most of all, the heat which she generates does not allow the re-growth of those mysterious wings which, though clearly embodied in a material image, are somehow capable of transporting the soul to an immaterial and static realm. Instead, Ylone's "heat" perversely brings life to a reflective matter which refuses to copy forms imposed from outside, and instead becomes a generative power, producing its own formations through dancing, transitive rhythms. Ylone's beloved body refuses to disappear behind

the transparent reflections that would allow Plato's lover to recall the eternal reality of his soul, which is always the same, despite any changes to his material embodiment. Instead, with Ylone, the mirror becomes an opaque fluidity, capable of inscribing its own realities, through a matter which incorporates both difference and change.

Indeed, the next section of the story reflects on writing as just such an embodied, material productivity. Venera has received a letter from Ylone. Reading is here a matter of sensual enjoyment: "Leise streichle ich die Worte ihres Briefes, zwischen denen so viel Ahnung steht."[30] This conventional, Platonic split between the inert materiality of the written word, and the active meaning which lives in the insubstantial spaces between their forms, is undermined by another complex series of images. By stroking the letters, Venera makes them run into one another, they become a "Filigranarbeit" over the paper: words are a complex construction, producing patterns laid over matter.[31] This seems to invert the previous hierarchy: matter is now *actively shaped* by an overlay of words. Yet in the very next image, the words are described as "Kleine Hecken mit Vögeln dazwischen": words have now become structures *between which* movement takes place.[32] The relation of ink and paper ultimately creates creatures of flight: the white spaces flit through the ink to form the living material of the text. The shadowy spaces of ink, and the white gaps between, together form a complex patterning of dark and bright absences, through which meaning can emerge.

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[30] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 218. "Gently I stroke the words of her letter, between which so much intuition lies."

[31] The French term *filigrane*, which the francophone Goll may well have known, normally translates as 'watermark'; this suggests a pattern discernible *within* the fibres of a sheet of paper (rather than simply laid over the top), thereby intensifying the suggestion of the materiality of writing.

[32] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 218. "Little hedges with birds in between."

Hence in the next image meaning and matter are blended: "Ich sehe die Gotik ihres Leibes wieder."[33] Ylone's body is analogous to an architectural calligraphy, a site of the material production of form. She does not bear significance upon her flesh; rather, the configuration of her body is a formulation of shape and order. The invocation of the gothic privileges an excessive production of meaning which cannot be unified into a single truth. The gothic inhabits the dark spaces not fully visible from a single perspective: it belongs to monstrous creations, where Gorgons and Pegasuses take flight through granite and sandstone, through sedimented and mineral matter. Goll's excessive doubling and her non-linear multiplication of meaning would be at home with these magical and dangerous creatures, as would the manifold world of Ylone's silvery transformations. The image culminates in a gothic excess, in the cliché of woman's sex as the ultimate mystery and key to (her) truth: "die Pfeiler in den Kreuzgängen ihrer Schenkel, mit dem mystischen Schlußstein des Schoßes."[34] Yet in this text, finding a different and less clichéd way of figuring woman's sex, in both its specificity and its materiality, becomes the key to a different conception of writing, and to a differently sexed mode of selfhood.

The final paragraph of this section begins with "Aber" ("But"), indicating that yet another twist in the imagery is to follow. Between the gothic letters "träumen die blauen Monde ihrer Augen, um die die seidenen Strahlen der Wimpern stehn."[35] The dreaming eyes take Ylone beyond her gothic body: they dream of other places. She is thus invested with the capacity for "Ahnung"

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[33] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 218. "I see her gothic body again."

[34] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 218. "the pillars in the cloisters of her thighs, with her womb as the mystical keystone."

[35] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 218. "the blue moons of her eyes dream, framed by the silky rays of her lashes."

- intuition, both premonitions and ideas - referred to in the first paragraph of this section. Yet such thoughts were there descibed as emerging in the spaces constructed by and between words, whose shadowy forms have since been equated with those of Ylone's own body. Hence any straightforward interpretation of these luminous eyes as reflecting the activity of a purely immaterial soul is undermined. Like the silky lashes which surround them, these blue moons remain stubbornly sensous: they are lunar sites of thought that emerge through, and remain part of, the architecture of Ylone's body.

This exploration of the complex, generative materiality of writing contrasts sharply with the maternal matter evoked in the very next section. Ylone is here confronted by Claudio's mother, who explains that although she at first saw Ylone as a threat, she now thinks her daughter-in-law is having a good effect on Claudio:

> Er war hart und spröde gewesen, aber Sie reiften ihn zur weichen Frucht. Er war noch in sich gefangen, und Sie brachten ihm die Erlösung, die nicht von der Mutter kommen konnte. Er war ein verstreuter Sucher, aber Sie haben ihn gesammelt und gestillt.[36]

Claudio's mother accepts Ylone by positioning her as an extension of herself. Ylone is here seen as a kind of second mother who births Claudio into emotional maturity, liberating him from his first self and the limitations of his first physical birth. Ylone provides a necessary focal point; she gathers Claudio together and releases him from fragmentary desires into spiritual unity and centredness. In this way, Claudio's mother positions Ylone as performing the (neo-)Platonic role of the beloved who reminds her lover of the more harmonious forms of his true aspirations, softening him so that the wings of his

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[36] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 219. "He had been hard and unyielding, but you ripened him into soft fruit. He was still trapped in himself, and you brought him the deliverance that cannot come from a mother. He was scattered by his searching, but you gathered him together and stilled him."

soul can begin to grow again. She neutralises Ylone as "the enemy" by identifying her as another m/other whose being is defined entirely by the son she (re-) creates. Thus reconciled, Claudio's mother purports to live through both Ylone and Claudio: "Ich lebte von ferne mit Ihnen beiden; denn das Glück einer Mutter beruht darin, das Leben der andern zu leben."[37] Yet the Ylone she purports to love has now also been reduced to living the life of another: she has become another ground of Claudio's existence.

In ways that will later be undermined by the "sapphic poem", this section concludes by apparently allowing Ylone to be absorbed into this dangerous motherly love, in which the daughter's growth is relocated within the mother. Furthermore, as mother and daughter become inextricably bound together, their existence seems centred wholly on a male subject:

> 'Irgendwo in mir begannen Sie zu wachsen, schlugen aus wie ein junger Baum und umblühten mich mit allen Zweigen. Da mußte ich zu Ihnen. Lassen Sie mich die Urne sein, in der Sie beide beschlossen und beschüzt liegen.'[38]

The mother positions herself as an urn protecting and surrounding Ylone and Claudio. As Ylone blooms around the mother, she contains and continues the first mother-son relationship via her own fertility. Thus each of the women contains the other and both contain Claudio. Ylone's material productivity has been reduced to re-producing and protecting Claudio's existence. Claudio's mother claims that both she and Ylone love Claudio "am innigsten", but this interiority is not disrupted like the inner space of the room/soul in the first

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[37] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 219. "From a distance I lived with you both; for the happiness of a mother lies in living the life of others."

[38] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 219. "'Somewhere in me you began to grow, burgeoning like a young tree, all your blooming branches surrounding me. Then I had to come to you. Let me be the urn, in which you lie both contained and protected.'"

section (see above). Instead, mother and daughter-in-law are like a series of Chinese boxes which ultimately collapse into one container.

Goll here employs an image of musical unity, which powerfully encapsulates the difference between this model of m/otherly love, and Venera's love for Ylone. Whereas Venera's love allowed her to see complexity and difference within her beloved, Claudio's mother hopes that she and Ylone will be united by their common love into a single, indistinguishable version of the same theme - Claudio. Whereas Venera was entranced by a mirror overflowing with "Variationen" of Ylone's form/s, Claudio's mother believes "daß zwei Menschen, in deren Leben ein Thema singt, verschmelzen sollen zu einem Gesang, daß sie sich ineinander schütten müssen zu einer Liebe."[39]

At the end of this speech, Ylone is shattered: "Ylone aber lehnte erschüttert an ihrer andern Welt. Ihr Körper war ganz vornüber gesunken zu einer stummen Verbeugung vor dieser Mutter."[40] Her body has been drained of vitality and has caved in: she bows mutely before this maternal power. She is propped up only by her other world, the world of transformation, multiplicity and difference/s which she shares with Venera, but from which she has been violently alienated. The mother's words have reduced Ylone to another version of m/otherly matter, set up to continually reproduce the same male offspring. The passage also reaffirms previous images which have positioned words as materially effective, but presents this power in its negative aspect. Claudio's mother's words have waged war by re-writing Ylone's body. The devastated

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[39] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 219. "that two people, whose lives resound to one theme, should melt into one song, that they must pour themselves into each other to form one love."

[40] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, pp. 219-20. "But Ylone leant shattered against her other world. Her body had completely slumped forwards into a mute bow before this mother."

shell of her vibrant physicality appears within the m/other's world to be bowing before a maternal force in a gesture of humiliation.

This maternality is far from the productive interrelation of mother and daughter explored in Goll's poems and discussed in the last chapter. In contrast, Claudio's mother is vampiric in her vehement desire to continue living through her son, and at the end of this section, Ylone becomes a victim of a powerful but self-destructive economy of mothering. Exhausted and defeated, her heart finally leans towards Claudio's mother's, around whose head there hovers "ein goldenes Schluchzen, wie bei allen großen Müttern, die Gott gezeichnet hat und denen ein Wunder gelang."[41] This order of divine mothers is ordained by the God of Western Christian iconography. Their suffering is sanctioned in the closed circle of the halo. This may be the holy sign of a wondrous birth (*ein Wunder*), the mother's chance to serve the Father in the Son. It also signifies a death: for Ylone it is also a wound (*eine Wunde*), a gaping hole that engulfs and erases her.

The Sisterly Laughter of Mothers and Daughters

Venera opens the next section with a justification:

> Ich brachte in dein Dasein den Mann, Ylone, weil ich glaubte, dich dem Leben nicht vorenthalten zu dürfen. Auch ich war ja einmal durch ihn hindurch-gegangen, bevor du meine Wohnung wurdest, Geliebte.[42]

"Life" is here Claudio's world, but Venera is far from asserting that this is the only reality possible. Instead, she neatly subverts both the conception of woman as the m/otherly ground that eternally provides man with a passage into being;

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[41] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 220. "a golden sobbing, as with all great mothers, who God has marked out and to whom something wondrous has happened."

[42] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 220. "I brought the man into your existence, Ylone, because I thought I should not keep you from life. And I too passed through him once, before you became my home, beloved."

and the neo-platonic image of the female beloved as the mirror whose reflections carry man towards greater (self-) knowledge. For the two women, it is Claudio who serves as a passageway; Venera's affair with him was a transitory and transformative process, which led her to her proper spiritual home in Ylone.

Moreover, this journey does not simply reunite Venera with the origin of her own soul. Ylone and Venera are not returned to the Platonic world where the lover sees only himself *in/on* an other from whom he remains separated. Venera lives *with/in* an other, whose female form she already shares. The two women do not occupy opposing and exclusionary spaces, but encounter and know themselves through each other's depths. Thus Venera continues her address to Ylone:

> Einzig wir Frauen wissen tiefer von einander. Der Mann sieht in uns nur sich selbst. Fremde sind wir ihm immer. Wir müssen ihn überwinden, auswandern aus dem irdischen Erlebnis, einziehen in das göttliche, das ohne Körper ist.[43]

Man is like the Platonic lover who sees only himself in woman. In his eyes, she remains his "other", his inversion and his double, and thus her real differences remain unknown to him. Venera and Ylone recognise each other's difference/s because they share each other's depths. However, in sharp contrast to earlier sections which privileged Ylone's inky, intoxicating and shimmering corporeality, this passage seems to suggest that to escape man, women must seek out an unearthly zone beyond the body. For a moment, Goll's text seems to re-inscribe a more traditional (neo-)Platonic and Romantic transcendence, in which the body is something to be overcome *en route* to the divine. However,

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[43] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 220. "Only we women know one another more deeply. Man sees in us only himself. We are always strangers [others] to him. We must overcome him, escape from earthly experience, move into the divine, that is without bodies."

Venera's words immediately follow the destructive identification of Ylone with the m/otherly body whose only role is the reproduction of man. Thus this surprising image of transcendence can be read as suggesting that, in particular, Venera is rejecting the specific version of woman's corporeality instantiated in the male world of Claudio and his mother, where the female body is seen as a container for the son. This interpretation of Venera's claim as a strategy for rejecting a particular construction of female embodiment is supported by the poem which closes this section.

As we will see, in this poem Goll rejects not only the male Expressionists' positioning of woman as a privileged passageway to *male* transcendence, but also their tendency to identity woman with a brute reproductive materialism, incapable of transformation or differentiation. The poem, on the contrary, calls for a female identity which would allow the specificity and singularity of women to emerge without surrendering either sensuality or materiality. Thus having reminded Ylone that women see each other as more than man's "other", Venera also reminds her beloved of a "sapphische Klage" which she, Ylone, once wrote. Its richly sensual imagery subverts any simple rejection of the physical or material:

> Betrunkene Gärten weckten mich zur Nacht.
> Wer ist es, der so weinend lacht?
> Wie Weiden, die zu tief an wilden Wassern lehnen,
> Steh ich in meinen uferlosen Tränen.
> Des abtrünnigen Schlafs Dämonen
> Kommen schon mich zu bewohnen:
> Aus männlicher Nacht will ich mich schrein,
> Schwester, zu dir, aus allem Dunkelsein,
> Du mich entführendes Narzissental!
> In dir sind alle Schwestern, frühlingsschmal,
> Die von den jungen Inseln nach sich rufen.
> Knie mit mir auf antiken Tempelstufen
> Um jenes Schicksal, das sie retten kann:

Gib allen Einzahl, löse sie vom Mann! [44]

Together with its description as a sapphic lament, the invocation to kneel on "antiken Tempelstufen" clearly implies that the poet is returning to ancient Greece to imagine a potential site of female rebellion. Read within this context, the opening lines take on an interesting significance. The drunken gardens which wake the poetess at night recall the gardens of Adonis. These were the key element of the Adonia, an informal women's rite in ancient Greece described by John Winkler as "nocturnal festivities on the rooftops in honor of Adonis, Aphrodite's unfortunate young lover".[45] To symbolise the untimely death of the goddess's youthful lover, small gardens of lettuce-like plants were force-grown by women in eight days in the heat of summer, before being killed off and "carried to a spring or to the sea" and drowned in "a mock funeral, imitating that of Adonis".[46]

The classic structuralist interpretation of these rites by Detienne suggests that the pleasurable festivities of the Adonia should be opposed to the more serious Thesmophoria, the celebration of fertility which belonged to the female rites of Demeter.[47] The latter are a celebration of the "proper eight-month

[44] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 220. "Drunken gardens woke me to the night./ Who is it, who so tearfully laughs?/ Like meadows, which lean too deeply against wild waters,/ I stand in my boundless tears./ The renegade demons of sleep /Are already coming to inhabit me:/ I want to scream myself out of manly night,/ Sister, to you, out of all being-as-darkness,/ You, narcissus-valley that leads me astray!/ In you are all sisters, spring-slender,/ Calling out to each other from the young islands./ Kneel with me on ancient temple steps/ For the sake of that fate which can save her/them [which she can save]: /Give to all their singularity, save her/them from man!"

[45] John J. Winkler, "The Laughter of the Oppressed: Demeter and the Gardens of Adonis", in *The Constraints of Desire: an Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 188-209 (p. 189).

[46] Winkler, p. 192. Adonis is a beautiful young man who Aphrodite loves and protects, but who goes hunting one day against her advice and is gored to death by a boar; Aphrodite lies him to rest in a bed of lettuce, though accounts differ as to whether she tries to hide him from the boar or places his body there only once he is dead. See Winkler, pp. 202-4.

[47] See Marcel Detienne, *The Gardens of Adonis: Spices in Greek Mythology*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1977).

growth of fruitful grain in Mother Earth", on which the prosperity of the (male-run) *polis* depends, as opposed to the short and unproductive "sprout-and-[48] However, Detienne identifies the Thesmophoria as a rite during which lawful wives honour the fertility necessary for the crop-producing activities of their husbands "who are taken to be the managers of legitimate agriculture". Detienne associates the Adonia, on the other hand, with courtesans celebrating "short-lived pleasure" and "non-productive sex".[49] In his perceptive and witty article, Winkler critiques this account, noting that:

> Something is wrong here. The notion that women gathered for both festivals in order to express the excellence of male farmers and the tawdriness of pleasure-bent females seems counter-intuitive. [. . .] To interpret ancient female rites of fertility in terms of good male agriculture as opposed to bad female sexiness is surely a patriarchal appropriation. There is a blind spot in Detienne's masculinist vision, which has caused him to overlook some evidence and misread crucial texts.[50]

Winkler shows how Detienne's account imposes a "masculinist grid" and thus distorts the evidence available, which does not support the claim that the Adonia were specifically associated with courtesans.[51] Winkler offers another interpretation, which makes more sense of both rites, as well as of their interrelation, and fits intriguingly with Goll's/Ylone's poem. He draws on a background of ancient tales about men loved by goddesses, where, once the goddess has enjoyed them, the men are "put away [. . .] somewhere in her house or in that part of nature which is her territory - a mountain cave or a garden."[52] He reads Adonis, hidden in a lettuce bed by Aphrodite, as an

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[48] Winkler, p. 199; p. 205.
[49] Winkler, p. 199; p. 198.
[50] Winkler, p. 199.
[51] Winkler, p. 201.
[52] Winkler, p. 204.

exemplary case of such a beloved who "ceases to be a phallic man, [and] enters

instead a state of permanent detumescence."[53] In this context, the shortlived

"sprout-and-fizzle" of the Adonis festival can be seen as a kind of indulgent,

faintly misandric "sexual joke of the sort for which other women's festivals

were a primary location". According to Winkler, this female joke is "about

men's sexuality as a thing which disappears so suddenly: 'O woe for Adonis!'

Poor little thing, he just had no staying power."[54]

Winkler thus provides the basis of a different account of the relation

between the Adonia and the rites of Demeter, one which makes more sense of

women's central participation in both. The eight-month labour celebrated at the

Demeter festival is the work both of Mother Earth in producing the crops, and

of human mothers generating their offspring, whereas the Adonia draw

attention to the male's limited role in both processes: they merely "plow and

plant the seed". Winkler concludes that:

> What the gardens with their quickly rising and quickly wilting sprouts
> symbolise is the marginal or subordinate role that men play in both
> agriculture (vis-à-vis the earth) and human generation (vis-à-vis wives
> and mothers).[55]

Winkler's comments on "poor Adonis" strongly recall Venera's positioning of

Claudio as a temporary transition in the development of a more permanent

relation between the two women. Thus a possible interpretation of these

mysterious first lines suggests itself. The poet is woken from her fearful sleep by

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[53] Winkler, p. 204.

[54] Winkler, pp. 205-6; the line "O woe for Adonis" is a ritual refrain which Sappho herself is known to have incorporated into her work; see Winkler, p. 205.

[55] Winkler, p. 205. Anne Baring and Jules Cashford give an account of the myth which supports Winkler's analysis. They identify the boar with "the male aspect of the great mother", the goddess of fertility, and thus situate Adonis's story within "the familiar drama of zoe and bios, in which the son-lover must accept death - as the image of incarnate being that falls back, like the seed, to the source - while the goddess, here the continuous principle of life, endures to bring forth new forms from the inexhaustible store." p. 363 in *The Myth of the Goddess: The Evolution of an Image*, Anne Baring and Jules Cashford (London: Viking Arkana, 1991).

a memory that permeates her tears: the drunken gardens recall the laughter that accompanies the drowning of the gardens in the Adonia, a watery reminder of a subversive gathering of women whose knowing mockery might allow the poet to escape the masculine demons that haunt her.

The idea that Goll's/Ylone's poem is invoking ancient female rites is reinforced a few lines later. To escape from the demons which possess her within a male construction of her darkness, Ylone appeals to her "sister", who she addresses as an "entführendes Narzissental!" (line 9). This recalls the figure of Persephone, who was abducted whilst collecting flowers with her girlfriends; she is enticed by a beautiful narcissus, but as she bends to pick it, the earth opens and she is carried away to Hades.[56] However, in what seems to be a paradoxical inversion, Ylone invokes the abducted Persephone to help her *escape* from darkness. This makes sense once the reference to Persephone is read as invoking not just the moment of abduction, but the entire Demeter myth. Persephone is saved by the powerful love of her mother, the goddess Demeter, who withholds her fertility and condemns the earth to barrenness until she is reunited with her daughter. As Persephone has eaten the fruit of Hades, she cannot be wholly returned to the earth, but Demeter forces a compromise: Persephone will be returned to her mother for two thirds of the year, and though she must go back to Hades for the remaining part, she will return, again and again, to her mother's side.

As retold in the *Hymn to Demeter*, this story lies at the heart of the Demeter rites which celebrate female generative power; the reference to Persephone through the image of the narcissus thus connects to the parallel

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[56] See Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p. 370-2. For a detailed analysis of the myth which includes information on the Thesmophoria and the Eleusinian mysteries, see Baring and Cashford, pp. 364-90. See also Winkler, pp. 193-9.

rites of the Adonia.[57] By extending Winkler's interpretative frame, the Demeter

rites and myth can be read as a celebration of a maternality which overcomes a

(failed) male attempt at abduction and transforms man's attempt to *take* life into

part of a generative pattern shared between women, and centred on the power

of the mother.[58] Read in this way, the poet escapes man's darkness by referring

to a myth in which one woman's powerful love for another transforms a

deathly darkness into a period of gestation, through which mothers and

daughters will continue life in a process men cannot control.[59]

Adriana Cavarero has powerfully shown how the Demeter myth can all

too easily be recuperated to ground a cyclical maternity, which can be

contained and exploited by a patriarchal social order. She suggests that the

enforced separation and, above all, the sanctioned reunion of Demeter and

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[57] In fact, Persephone also figures in an earlier phase of Adonis myth, where Adonis is shared as a beautiful boy between Persephone and Aphrodite; see Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p. 362.

[58] Intriguingly, there are certain strong parallels between the myths surrounding the fertile powers of the goddess Demeter, and those of the earlier Egyptian goddess, Isis. These are explored by Baring and Cashford in *The Myth of the Goddess*; see for example p. 372: "Plutarch held Isis and Demeter to be two versions of the same goddess, as he took Osiris and Dionysos to be two versions of the same god, [...] but it is much more likely that elements of the Mystery cult at Eleusis originated from Egypt, as did much of Greek philosophy, including Plato, Pythagoras and Orpheus".

[59] Indeed, the *Hymn to Demeter* contains references to several other key women: Hecate brings Demeter the news of her daughter's abduction; and the young daughters of King Celeus find Demeter (who has transformed herself into an old woman, past child-bearing years) by a well, and take her in as a nurse. However, the most important of these women is Baubo, herself an old woman, who makes Demeter laugh even as she is mourning the loss of her daughter, by raising her skirts and revealing phallic symbols drawn on her own genitals. Read with Winkler's analysis of ancient women's subversive laughter, this gesture evokes the ribaldry of the Adonia. Baubo can be read as mocking the relative lack of staying power of the male sex in comparison to the strength of Demeter's own power as the goddess of fertility, and thus as implying that she will suceed in winning back her daughter. I would suggest that this interpretation fits more readily with a myth so closely bound up with the rites celebrating the (female) generative power of Mother Earth, than Sarah Kofman's suggestion that Baubo reminds Demeter of a *Dionysian* (male) power of eternal return. See Kofman, "Baubo: Theological Perversion and Fetishism", in *Nietzsche's New Seas*, ed. Michael Gillespie and Tracey B. Strong (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 175-202 (cf esp. pp. 196-7).

Persephone in the form of a "periodical return" violently reduces the power of maternity. The latter:

> becomes inscribed within the regular rhythms of seasons, namely in a "natural" mechanism that gives the appearance of necessity. This mechanism seems to be in harmony with the female experience of menstrual cycles. Nevertheless it tends to represent the cycle itself not as the structural *condition* of a reproductive choice, but rather as a norm that requires and prescribes reproduction.[60]

Thus the Demeter myth can be used to reduce women's bodies to "reproductive shells", in ways that suit the purposes (material and symbolic) of a patriarchal order which seeks to transform "the maternal power to generate life" into "a transitional site on the way to a life generated by fathers".[61]

Using Irigaray's re-writing of the myth, Cavarero reminds us that before Persephone's abduction and "in the original situation, which represents the reciprocal gaze of mother and daughter, the mother *has in fact already generated*".[62] She goes on to argue for the need to rework a notion of birth founded on this reciprocal relation between mother and daughter. In this relationship, women do not have to regenerate to preserve the power of maternity, for every daughter can be held close to a mother:

> Demeter does not represent a continuous and rhythmically uninterrupted birthing. Rather, she represents the link between human birth from woman and the gendered regeneration of everything in nature. Demeter has a daughter; she was born of her and is of the same sex. In the natural/natal order this is sufficient for everything to continue regenerating in various forms. [. . .] Demeter does not *have to* regenerate. Rather it is because Demeter generated a daughter, whom she kept close to her, that all of nature continues to flourish in its own rhythms.[63]

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[60] Adriana Cavarero, *In Spite of Plato: A Feminist Rewriting of Ancient Philosophy*, foreword Rosi Braidotti, trans. Serena Anderlini-D'Onofrio and Aine O'Healy (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), p. 67. This book was first published in Italian as *Nonostante Platone: Figure femminili nella filosofia antica*, (Editori Riuniti, 1990).

[61] Cavarero, p. 70; p. 72.

[62] Cavarero, p. 61; my italics.

[63] Cavarero, p. 61.

I would like to suggest that despite the fact that Ylone's poem invokes Persephone's abduction, nonetheless, it does not idealise the more containable, cyclical forms of female regeneration. Instead, the Demeter myth is ultimately recalled to summon up a powerful female reciprocity of the kind Cavarero privileges, and which can give birth to a sexed and non-patriarchal mode of existence. Two key factors help to make this possible. Firstly, the relation between Persephone and Demeter is invoked alongside the reference to the Adonia. The opening lines provide a mocking laughter that echos through the invocation of more serious female rites, to emphasise that Persephone recalls a female relationality and power which makes men's sense of their own importance seem ludicrously overblown.

Secondly, none of the images in the poem specifically foreground women's fertility. Instead of being predominantly linked with the natural cycles of the seasons, the reference to Persephone is embedded in images of female sisterhood: she is not only addressed as the poet's sister, but through her, all her Sapphic sisters from the islands are also called up. In this context, though their slender springlike forms embody a female power to generate life anew, their description as "frühlingsschmal" also evokes the desirability of these female figures, these tempting ("entführende") Sapphic sisters, for the female poet. The Demeter myth is thus invoked as a way of recalling a powerful female relationality, a maternal genealogy shared between women who love each other's female form, rather than a fertility which serves to reproduce man.

Indeed, the poem can be seen playing on way the mythical figures of Demeter, Persephone and Kore cannot be simply separated, and as suggesting that their singular plurality does not consititute a perplexing problem to be

clarified by Detienne's masculinist grid![64] Instead, Goll/Ylone should be read as invoking a female relationality whose strength lies in the way it refuses simple divisions between one woman and another. Though line 10 of the poem suggests the figure of Persephone contains all sisters and is thus the model on which all female identity is based, without difference, the next line describes these sisters as calling from the young islands "*nach sich*". This reflexivity is ambiguous: "sich" can be both singular and plural, mutual or reflexive. Thus the sisters can be read *both* as calling to each other, *and* as each calling after their own selves; both possiblities are held together in the figure of Persephone, the sister who embodies their shared sisterly identity, yet who also incorporates them in their plurality.

This blurring of the singular and plural, the individual and the shared, is deliberately emphasised by the last lines. The poet seems to continue to address her sister, Persephone, imploring her to kneel on ancient temple steps for the sake of the only fate which can save the sisters: they must all be given their singularity if they are to be rescued from man. But the poet is here playing with the inherent ambiguity of the personal pronoun "sie" in German: the "*sie*" who is released in the final two lines may be read as both singular and plural ("she" or "them"). It is impossible to tell for certain whether it is "they" - the sisters - who will be rescued, or whether the poet is issuing her demand to kneel for the sake of Persephone herself, so that is is "she" who will be saved from the man who snatched her into his darkness. Indeed, "sie" in the penultimate line could even be read as the grammatical subject, suggesting that

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[64] See Baring and Cashford, p. 608: "Persephone is often called simply Kore, which means 'maiden', and is also the feminine form of *koros*, 'sprout'. Both mother and maiden are referred to as 'the two goddesses', or as the *Demetres*, as though Kore, the sprout, were the new form of the plant, the mother."

it is Persephone herself - "she" - who can save women/herself from their/her fate.

The poem thus encapsulates the complex logic of relational identity which Goll explores throughout the text. On the one hand, women must be given their singularity; indeed, literally, Goll's final line means that all women must be positioned as grammatical subjects, as subjects of their own texts. Yet her own grammatical play reaffirms that these female subjects refuse simple separation from each other: "she" remains together with and embedded in "them"; as the sisters are saved, so too Persephone is freed. Giving each woman her singularity entails not separation, but holding each together with the specificity of her female sisters, rather than in relation to a *male* subject. Hence, in this poem, Persephone can save women from a fate determined by man because through her invocation, a powerful and complex female relationality is recalled. The poem proffers a reciprocity imbued with laughter and with the strength to displace man, freeing both Persephone from Hades, and Ylone from Claudio, and giving to each her singularity as a female subject by holding them together as sisters.

Finally, it is worth adding that the poem can also be read specifically as a joke against Plato, whose account of love is so powerfully subverted throughout this text. One of the few direct references to the Adonia comes at the heart of the discussion of writing in the *Phaedrus*. Plato compares the short-lived growth of the gardens of Adonis to the improper propagation of knowledge through writing. Moreover, he contrasts such pleasurable but wasteful indulgences with the productive, cyclical re-generation celebrated in the rites of Demeter. In what must surely be one of the most startling re-appropriations of this maternal figure, Demeter's rites are used by Plato as a metaphor for the

proper dissemination of knowledge through the pure *immateriality* of the philosopher's spoken words.[65] Ylone's poem can be read as turning this comparison back against Plato. It serves as a reminder that by being aligned with Demeter, the "proper" creativity and generative power of the philosopher is already associated with a female relationality and corporeality. Moreover, this poem can be read as reminding Plato of that which he has more or less willingly misheard: the Adonia are a joke on his own limitations.

Female Reflections: Seeing Through Man

Ylone's sapphic ode lies at the centre of the story, and can be seen as a poetic map of the whole: the two women displace (a) man from the centre of their lives, such that their love for Claudio becomes a "transitional site" within the development of their relationship with one another. Though the next section returns abruptly to Ylone's life with Claudio, this merely proves to Venera "wie wenig ein Mann von uns weiß".[66]

Venera charts the destruction of Ylone's identity once Claudio becomes the focus of her life. Her powerful critique delineates the way Western phallocentric culture reduces woman to man's Other, and startlingly prefigures Irigaray's work in *Speculum*. Goll outlines the trap within which Ylone is caught with painful clarity. As Claudio starts to take her for granted and to treat her "wie eine Gewohnheit, wie den Alltag", Ylone's whole being becomes ever more intensely focussed on regaining his attention.[67] She exhausts herself by waiting anxiously for his return home in the evening, and then, as soon as

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[65] Plato, *Phaedrus*, p. 98 [276]; see also Detienne, pp. 102-110. Plato's use of Demeter is a stunning example of the "founding rite of matricide" which Cavarero has traced in other texts by philosophy's most famous father-figure (*In Spite of Plato*, p. 9).
[66] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 220. "how little a man knows of us."
[67] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 221. "like a habit, like the everyday."

Claudio looks at her, she struggles even more anxiously to please him. She hysterically alternates between frozen inertia, and a straining hyper-sensitivity towards Claudio's gaze which takes the form of a feverish mimicry:

> Du warst künstlich bis zur Entwertung. Du warst kaum mehr Du vor Angst. Deine Augen waren die einer Fiebernden, sie waren ganz weit weg, da, wo er dich morgen vielleicht schon zurücklassen würde. Aber ihr wußtet beide nichts von der Verzweiflung, mit der du um einen Aufschub kämpftest. Besinnungslos steigerst du dich, deine Gesten, deine Worte, formtest um und schufst neu. Stürztest aus einem Lächeln, das geliehen war, in die Pose einer Fremden, hattest hundert Gesichte in der Minute, entblößtest alle Menschen, die in dir waren, warst naive Verständnislosigkeit und greisenhaftes Erkennen.[68]

Ylone's transformative art is here emptied out into an artificiality which devalues her: she almost loses herself as she uncontrollably mimics Claudio's desires. Passively modelling and remodelling herself on what he needs, in the blink of his eye ("im Augenblick") Ylone becomes the return on the gaze he momentarily invests in her. She is gripped by the terrible and terrifying knowledge of the necessity of being the seemingly unknowing back of the mirror.

If Claudio is to recognize her presence, she must try to become the pure reflectivity of the Platonic beloved. She mindlessly heightens and exaggerates her appearance, metamorphosing through gestures and poses which do not belong to her. Mimicking all the others he might like to see, she is alienated from her excessive appearances. Under Claudio's gaze, she separates out and exposes one by one the complex potentialities which had been held together by her manifold form in Venera's mirror (¶2). She momentarily objectifies her

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[68] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 221. "You were so artificial that you devalued yourself. You were almost too frightened to be you any more. Your eyes were those of a fever victim, they were miles away, where he would perhaps leave you the very next day. But neither of you knew anything about the desperation with which you fought for a delay. Insensibly you worked yourself up, your gestures, your words, reshaping and creating anew. Falling out of a borrowed smile into a stranger's pose, having a hundred faces per minute, laying bare all the people inside you, naïvely blank and knowing beyond your years."

potential selves into unified visions towards which his gaze can be drawn. In this way, Ylone is not only divided from herself/selves, but also from what she could become. The object of Claudio's desire is always projected into the future, it/she must always be "eine andere [. . .], die Neue, die er noch nicht kannte."[69] She must provide the unknown, the supplement, the excess which he as yet lacks. Thus each of her instantiations negates its very purpose and further alienates Ylone from the squandered resources of her potential becomings. She cannot strive to fulfil his desire but only for its eternal postponement.

Ylone's eyes are never focussed during this time with Claudio: she stares like a madwoman at some undetermined point in the future where he will have left her behind, at the void which her excessive forms threaten to become. Ylone would not be able to rediscover herself in such a void: far from escaping Claudio's gaze, this space is a darkness circumscribed by the limits of his vision, a resource he may or may not draw upon again. Thus Ylone's double alienation - from both the over-determination of each of her specific instantiations, and from any form that could be called her own - does not in itself open a space beyond Claudio's gaze where she could live. It merely completes her entrapment as the blind spot at both the centre and edge of his world.

Ylone finally rejects not just each new form, not just the struggle to temporarily elude the void to which his gaze may condemn her, but the systematic wasting of herself between the two, which come down to one after all. To win this game would be to complete her identification with its terms, it

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[69] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 221. "an other, the new one, that he didn't know." In the same way, Derrida's notion of deferral or *différance* provides no space in which Ylone could live out a female identity which does anything other than supplement an insecure male self, who constantly needs to reinvent himself through woman.

would complete her loss. Thus at the very moment that she regains Claudio's

desire, she withdraws: "als du seine neue Sehnsucht erfühltest, nahmst du dich

vorsichtig zurück und batest um Einsamkeit."[70] Like Penelope in Cavarero's *In*

Spite of Plato, who carefully withdraws from public life into a room full of

women where she ceaselessly unweaves to weave her own time, Ylone carefully

takes herself back. Her first defence is also to retreat into "her quiet time of self-

belonging, taking this time from men's tempo, which is greedy for events."[71]

This Ylone is not simply another double of Claudio. Escaping his eyes, she is

neither subject nor object of the gaze. Instead, Ylone takes herself back to make

room for another self who was lost in Claudio's world: her transformative,

manifold self, the self loved by Venera, the self which refused to generate

passive and stable reflections, but generated spaces through which she danced

with another.

Claudio hears Ylone's rejection as only a temporary deferal: "Du strichst

seine heißen Blicke aus deinem Herzen und sagtest etwas, das wie: auf Morgen!

für ihn klang, aber ich hörte schon die Abschied schluchzende Nachtigall."[72]

Venera knows that by freeing herself from the power of his gaze, Ylone is

engaged in a more definitive retreat. Goll here allows her female protagonist to

express herself in an excessive mimicry of the tropes of Romantic love;

however, far from identifying herself in these terms, Venera refers to the

sobbing nightingale from a distanced and critical perspective. Her words are a

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[70] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 221. "when you sensed his new longing, you took yourself carefully back and asked to be left alone."

[71] Cavarero, *In Spite of Plato*, chapter 1 "Penelope", p. 14.

[72] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 221. "You struck his hot glances from your heart, and said something that sounded like 'Until tomorrow!' to him, but I could already hear the nightingale sobbing goodbye."

knowing parody which belongs with the mocking and perhaps slightly indulgent laughter of the women at the Adonia.

Ylone's retreat leaves her alone and with Venera: "Dann war das Zimmer mit uns allein".[73] The space where Ylone finds herself is a space where two are together. Here Ylone can stop acting: she seizes up, her smile dies, she falls stiffly into a chair, her hands fall to her sides "verblüht und welk wie erfrorene Blumen herab."[74] She is far from the richness of the "entführendes Narzissental": frozen and limp, her vitality has bled (Blut - verblüht) away. She sees without seeing: "Du sahst mich, ohne zu sehen. Deine Blicke waren wie das Flügelschlagen eines Vogels, der Festes sucht."[75] Like a panicked bird she searches for something which could support her. Permanent flight with nowhere to land is as disabling as being frozen: each is the inversion of the other, and both were necessary for the preservation of Claudio's equilibrium. The ground she seeks cannot be provided by the solidity of Claudio's "Alltag": the only certainty his world offered her was the fixity of a series of poses, each designed to augment his position. Her desperate gaze finally settles on Venera, and in her blindness she begins to see differently. For unlike Plato's lover, who comes to know only *himself* in his beloved, Ylone recognises that the way to enlightenment lies in seeing herself both *within* and *together with* Venera, who describes how "Dein Blick wurde fester, [. . .] sah mich und dich in mir und wußte."[76]

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73 Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 221. "Then the room was left alone with us."
74 Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 222. "faded and withered like flowers killed off by frost."
75 Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 222. "You saw me without seeing. Your glances were like the beating wings of a bird searching for solid ground."
76 Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 222. "Your gaze steadied, [...] saw me and you in me and knew."

In this image, gaze and reflective surface together contribute to the identity of *both* she who looks (and is seen) and she who is looked into (and who appears within herself). Neither is clearly distinguishable as subject or object of the gaze. In seeing herself not only in, but also with, Venera, Ylone recognises a forgotten form of herself, but without being simply identifiable with her beloved. In this disorienting topography, both Ylone and Venera are doubled: they share the same space, yet neither can be mapped entirely onto the other. Ylone does not simply project herself upon Venera, obliterating her beloved's own form, for both remain visible; nor is she wholly absorbed into Venera, but she herself remains both within and without.

Reflection is here a shared and relational process, where identity emerges between one and two, without reducing either to the other. Neither woman can be seen all at once, yet Ylone's identity is still held together, through a process of reflection that does not demand sameness, but can incorporate difference/s. Hence though this reciprocal gaze takes Ylone back to her self by returning her to an other, this is not because both she and Venera are simply manifestations of an identical form. Instead, in ways that implicitly refuse Plato's account of the Forms, love and the self, reflection returns Ylone to a lost relationality where one only becomes visible together with an other, such that otherness remains incorporated within the production of a differentiated self. Ylone therefore recollects herself not through a static reflection, but by remembering a fluid mirroring, which generates both difference and likeness - and identities that maintain both together. Hence to rediscover herself, Ylone searches for a path to Venera, who already expects Ylone ("den Weg zu mir, die dich erwartete"), for she has held open a site where one emerges with and

through otherness.[77] Ylone's journey back to/with Venera will account for the life that fell out of Claudio's gaze, and bring it into a shared female vision. In the next chapter, we will also see how Goll is herself both reflecting and complicating/subverting the mythic accounts of the Orpheus/Eurydice relationship in these moves.

Ylone tries to explain what her journey back to Venera might mean in a letter to Claudio. The letter confirms Venera's analysis of how, during her time with Claudio, Ylone became his projection and felt her own life slipping away: "Ahntest du nie, daß ich neben mir saß mit frierendem Herzen und uns zusah und wartete; denn ich selber ging langsam vorbei."[78] She would rather he had seen through her than over-looked her as he did. Seen through, either her mirroring transparency would become real - and she would become invisible and disappear from his world - or she would be caught out, her faked appearances recognized as a charade, forcing the recognition that there is more to her than meets his eye. Claudio could only see in her what could be taken in at a glance. He has no eye for a complexity that cannot be seen all at once, and thus through the hundreth version of herself, she deceived him about all the others within her, waiting to be heard. His love could bear only one at a time, whereas Venera loves Ylone's complex singularity without insisting she divide herself up into containable appearances. Thus when Ylone asks forgiveness for having shown Claudio only one part of herself, she is also asking forgiveness for having deceived him as to *the very nature of her self*:

> Verzeih mir, daß ich dich mit mir betrog von dem Augenblick an, als ich mich selbst für jene andere verleugnete, die du gemeint hattest. Als ich

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[77] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 222. "the way to me, who was expecting you."

[78] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 223. "Didn't you ever suspect that I sat next to myself with freezing heart, and watched us and waited; for I myself was passing slowly by."

tausendmal mein Ich für dich verlor, verlor ich das Beste an mir: die Treue an mich selbst.[79]

In exchanging her manifold possibilities for his conceptions of individualised unity, Ylone has not kept faith with herself. However, she also writes that she has to leave before all Claudio is for her is the image she has made of him. Her words suggest a rejection of a world where the other is made unrecognizable by being reduced to a reflection constructed for and by the viewer. They imply that the further one enters into man's world, the more a flattening and homogenising optics - in which vision forever reproduces the Platonic Forms - obscures other possible worlds, which disappear into darkness.

The contrast between Claudio's love for Ylone, and Ylone as she is loved by Venera, is signalled by the reappearance of a key image in this section, that of the veil. Ylone explains to Claudio that he reduced her to a game, a beautiful and undemanding play of appearances. To play along, Ylone smiled Claudio's smile "wie einen Schleier vor meine schmerzende Dunkelheit", thereby covering over "meinen Ernst, den ich liebe".[80] The smile is a veil, which acts as a barrier separating serious depths from superficial appearance, respect from enjoyment, sublimely deep understanding from feminine virtue, keeping Ylone in her place. The role of the veil is here re-written to fit the oppositional logic of Claudio's world: to please him, Ylone wears the veil as a device of separation and containment, whereas in the earlier image (¶2), the seven veils multiply

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[79] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 223. "Forgive me for deceiving you with myself from the moment that I disowned myself for that other, who you had meant. As I lost my self a thousand times for you, I lost the best thing about me: loyalty to myself."

[80] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 222. "like a veil over my painful darkness [...] my seriousness, that I love."

layers of depth, creating a manifold spatiality held within their folds, as in the currents and waves of many oceans.

Thus what is at stake is not that Ylone is positioned as beautiful rather than as deeply, sublimely serious, for to try and position herself on the other, "serious" side of the veil would merely implicate her in another painful attempt to mirror man. Rather, by holding in place the system of opposition between man/woman, sublime/beautiful, seriousness/play, the veil enforces a more fundamental repression: it effects the erasure of a different way of thinking depth, one which does not oppose it to flat surfaces. What Ylone loses is her own, differently configured darkness.

This image instantiates the way in which by articulating the structures that trapped her within Claudio's world, Ylone also begins to create a space for another kind of self. Her specular reduction by Claudio casts the different dimensions of her relationship with Venera into a stronger relief. Thus Ylone confirms that Claudio plays a subordinate and transitional role in her search for identity: "Ich glaube, daß ich durch dich hindurchmußte, um mehr von mir zu wissen."[81] This sentence contains a double recognition: firstly, that Ylone cannot create herself out of nothing but that her identity must be established through relationality. Secondly, however, it also implies that having passed herself through the confining structures which organise Claudio's (male) world, she must leave them behind if she is to find another self that is configured by the possibilities of her (female) specificity. Thus Ylone tentatively affirms that she

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[81] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 223. "I believe I had to pass through you to know more about myself."

has not been waiting for Claudio to notice/rescue/love her; rather, "vielleicht habe ich all diese Jahre nur *auf mich* gewartet."[82]

Above all, her time with Claudio has enabled Ylone to recognise where

> da [. . .] wo es einzig möglich ist: bei Venera. Hier wird einer im anderen so stark werden, daß man nebeneinander stehen kann. Ich will heimfinden aus meiner Abtrünnigkeit, und wenn ich auch sieben Jahre um mich dienen müßte, um jene wiederzufinden, die ich vor dir war.[83]

As already indicated, the Orphic resonances here will be considered further in the next chapter. However, it should already be clear that it is no longer man's demons which haunt Ylone, but her own disloyalty/exile, from which she wants to find a way home. This home lies with Venera, with whom she can find herself again. The Platonic account of love, in which the lover recollects his true origin in the Forms via his beloved, is once again invoked here, but is also immediately subverted. Plato's lover and beloved relate as pre-existing selves. The Platonic lover sees a nobler version of himself reflected in the object of his love, a reflection which projects him outwards and upwards, back towards the true Form/s of his reality. This appropriately focussed love in turn brings the beloved into potential maturity by making him see his own beauty reflected in the lover "as in a glass", such that he too is led towards a vision of the beauty of the Forms.

For Plato, lover and beloved never come into contact with each other, only with their own reflections. Thus when the beloved's "stream of longing sets in full flood towards the lover" some of it enters him, but

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[82] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 223; my italics. "perhaps I waited all these years simply *for me.*"

[83] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 224. "the only place where it is possible: with Venera. Here one will become so strong in the other that each can stand side by side. I want to find my way home from my disloyalty, even if I had to serve seven years for myself, to rediscover the person I was before you."

when his heart is full the rest brims over, and as a wind or an echo rebounds from a smooth and solid surface and is carried back to its point of origin, so the stream of beauty returns once more to its source in the beauty of the beloved.[84]

In their ideal meeting, then, Plato's lover and beloved never meet: the longing that is passed into the body of the lover is sealed off there as by the glassy surface of a mirror, which reflects any excess back towards its source. The potentiality of each to reflect upon the same pure and unmixed beauty of the Forms is thus untainted.

However, in Goll's image, Venera and Ylone become strong enough in one another for their selves to emerge for the first time: they become strong enough to stand next to each other. Theirs is not a relationality of pre-existing selves. Instead, by becoming strong in one another, they take on an individuality which does not oppose them, but allows them to remain in proximity, side by side, one self touching an other within the same space. Their relationship is not oppositional but sideways, as if standing on the same side of a glass where both can be seen as alike and different. Hence neither functions as the mirror in which the other sees *only herself*, neither is the "smooth and solid surface" against which the excluded gaze of the other can rebound towards her already fixed truth.

Thus for Ylone and Venera, the proper relation of lover and beloved does not depend on the form of each being already secured by fixed boundaries or by solid limits that can double as mirrors. Ylone's lost identity is not re-established by reflecting her self-contained form against an equally self-contained other. Instead, as each takes shape in an other, differentiated identity grows through sites of relation which do not belong to wholly to any one self,

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[84] Plato, *Phaedrus*, p. 64 [255].

and which neither reflect nor produce self-contained subjects. As Venera and Ylone emerge through each other, it is impossible to determine for sure which space belongs to whom. Yet the strength of their likeness is such that it allows their differences and differentiation to emerge, through a relationality that does not demand that each be opposed to the other as a mirror-image of the same.

In this way, Goll radicalises the Platonic relation of lover and beloved. Indeed, Ylone's attempt to recall her lost self opens into a productive encounter through which the identities of both women are generated, and in which *neither* self *nor* other provides a stable starting point; thus this lost self has no single origin.[85] Ylone's journey towards herself opens into a non-oppositional way of configuring both spatiality and identity. Here transformative relations generate selves together with others and difference, and hence never originate in any one self-identical form. Ylone re-discovers a space for herself not because it already exists, fixed and unchanging, but because it emerges from a different possible unfolding of past potentialities, and thus activates a different possible future.

Ylone concludes her farewell letter by describing her life with Claudio as a seductive dream, a reversal which confirms that her own reality lies elsewhere. She writes from a doubled perspective, capable of seeing both the beauty of this dream from within, whilst simultaneously recognising that the very things that make it so compelling are what make it an impossible world for her to inhabit:

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[85] A more traditional journey back to his origins belongs to Claudio. Ylone tells him he should "zurückkehren zu dir, wie man heimkehrt zu seiner Mutter nach langer Reise durch seine Jünglings- und Manneszeit und seine Kindheit unverändert und unberührt wiederfindet" [go back to yourself, as men go home to their mothers after a long journey through their youth and manhood and find their childhood unchanged and untouched] (Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 224). For Claudio, the maternal figure of woman is frozen in time, defined only and eternally as the origin of man; she is a reflecting mirror, containing and preserving the life of her son, but never living (as) herself.

> Tanz war die Berührung deiner Hände. Nie fühlte ich das Gitter des Regens und eigener Gefangenschaft. Da waren nicht zwei Lächeln, nicht zwei Küsse, die einander ähnlich waren. Laß mich ein letztes Mal in sie und auf die Insel deines Herzens flüchten.[86]

Though the dance of Claudio's hands was an erotic play, the next image suggests this play was a form of power all the more effectively exerted by taking the form of pleasure: she never felt the bars of her own imprisonment, transparent as rain. There is no room for similarity in Claudio's love, only for ceaselessly changing gestures that lead back always to the island of his heart. Though the image of taking flight to this island retains its romantic allure, it also emphasises the solipsistic nature of this love in contrast to that shared between Ylone and Venera, which empowered them to stand "nebeneinander", together as two.

As a final stage in the journey of both women through Claudio's world, Venera takes revenge for his treatment of Ylone. She does so in a kind of symbolic mimicry of the way his love refused to recognise Ylone and alienated her from herself: Venera spends the night with Claudio, but sets him out in the cold, refusing any emotional or physical contact. During this night, she dreams Claudio "wie du nicht bist", imagining an ecstatic union with him.[87] This dream recalls the reductive model of m/otherly love encountered in section four: Claudio is a lost fledgling who has fallen out of the nest. Venera becomes another m/otherly container in which he finds sanctuary, enclosing him in "einem smaragdenen Schloß von unendlicher Zärtlichkeit".[88]

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[86] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 224. "The touch of your hands was a dance. Never did I feel the bars of the rain, and my own captivity. No two smiles, no two kisses were alike there. Let me into it one last time, to take refuge in the island of your heart."

[87] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 226. "as you are not."

[88] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 227. "an emerald castle of infinite tenderness."

However, their final union is a disembodied uniting of souls who merge into one: "Wie zwei körperlose Harfen sind wir auf den ewigen Ton gestimmt; vor der Macht unserer Liebe stürzt alles ein [. . .] Zwischen deinem Vor-Lächeln und deinem Nach-Kuß liegt die Ewigkeit."[89] Claudio's male sexuality and love encloses Ylone in a moment of complete identity, an eternity which transcends all embodied differences. This love is centred on a collapse of all into oneness, whereby Claudio finds the secure identity he is looking for, once and for all, and forever. By erasing Venera's female form, along with his own corporeality, his love culminates in a denial both of his own mortality and of the female generative power which birthed his embodied life; both are exchanged for a deathly eternity.[90]

Even at the heart of her own dream of a love that would erase her specificity, Venera maintains an ironic distance which allows her to retain the possibility of a different time. She thanks Claudio for this moment of eternal love, which will hang fragrantly in the air even when the moment itself is gone, for, as she notes, "auch diese Stunde eine Dämmerung haben wird - denn kurz und vergänglich ist jede Ewigkeit".[91] These words mock a romantic tradition in which love transports man to eternity, by insisting on the transitoriness of every such union. Her words bring Claudio back down to earth, reminding him that his eternity is an illusion which has to overlook the temporality of embodied existence. Thus when she reminds him that her body cannot enter into this "heiligen Nacht" ["holy night"] in case its "Schwere" ["weight"] hinders their

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[89] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 227. "Like two bodiless harps, we are tuned to the eternal tone; everything caves in before the might of our love [...] Between your smile before and your kiss after lies eternity."

[90] For a compelling account of the way Western metaphysics (paradoxically) priviliges death to cover over the dying that results from being born, both from and into a specific and unique embodiment, see Cavarero, *In Spite of Plato*.

[91] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 227. "even this moment will have a twilight - for every eternity is brief and transient."

disembodied union, she is not only indicating that her female corporeality is withheld from Claudio and remains with Ylone, even in dream.[92] Claudio has neo-platonic pretensions to ascending into an eternity of being which is, however, shown to be illusory and which fades to leave both lover and beloved "wieder in der Kälte des Weltalls einsam schweben[d]".[93] By contrast, the earthbound weight of Venera's female body seems to offer the ground for a different time, one linked to corporeality, growth, relationality and becomings. Though Claudio remains trapped in his lonely dreams of an eternity of oneness, Venera's knowing mockery suggests that she sees through the limitations of this "eternal" love and will not remain trapped in this disembodied illusion forever. She steals herself away, takes herself back and returns to Ylone.

The way in which both women take their leave of Claudio via dreams of their life with him constitutes a key stage in their journey of self-discovery. Both Ylone and Venera not only acknowledge the power and seductiveness of Claudio's model of love, for all its reductiveness; their dreams also suggest both are willing to try and re-imagine this heterosexual relation as pleasurable and productive. Yet at the same time, each retains a doubled perspective enabling them to see that they will not be able to find their own identities with Claudio, in whose eyes they will remain the m/other who complements or completes his identity. This doubleness allows them to effect a key inversion: Claudio's world is now positioned as an illusion, whilst their real female identities can only be found by returning to each other. Though their dreams leave open the possibility that heterosexual desire may one day be reworked, both women recognise that as long as their identity is based on their relation to (a) man, they

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[92] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 227.
[93] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 228. "floating alone again in the cold of the cosmos."

will continue to be positioned as what Irigaray would term the oppositional "Other of the Same". Only through finding a mode of identity based on their female - female interrelation will they be able to live out a reality where they are no longer reduced to being man's m/other, but where they embody a female selfhood, capable of incorporating both difference and likeness.

Mosaic Mirrorings

The mode of selfhood towards which the text works is most powerfully evoked in the last section of the story, through a final disruptive image of a mirror which, once again, refuses Plato's specular metaphysics. Venera has been tending Ylone, whose journey has led her not upwards towards the immateriality of an eternal soul, but down onto the earth:

> Ich war leise mit dir wie mit einer Kranken nach diesem, Ylone. [. . .]
> Du, die niemals die Erde berührt hatte, gingst nun schwer und unruhig
> auf ihr umher, um dich wieder zu finden.[94]

Goll emphasises that Ylone will not merely use materiality as a ground from which to project herself back up into the heavens, but will remain in touch with its tangible physicality.

On the final momentous evening of this tale, Ylone stands by a window overlooking a feverish city: "Die Stadt fieberte und lag in den schäumenden Delirien der krankhaften Dunkelheit."[95] This is the delirious darkness of the animated city whose demonic life is mapped out by Heym, Wegner and Lichtenstein. Lights pierce the room, and the city is immersed in a fluxing longing, which seeps through its windows and is gulped up by the well of desire the masses have become: "Lichter durchstachen den Raum [. . .] Die Luft

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[94] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 228. "I was quiet with you, as with an invalid, after this, Ylone. [...] You who had never touched the earth were now walking around on it, heavy and restless, to find yourself again."

[95] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 228. "The city lay feverish, in the foaming delirium of diseased darkness."

vibrierte von Sehnsucht, die aus tausend Fenstern lehnte, daß man

aufschluchzte wie ein Brunnen."[96] However, this vibrant metropolis is also

filled with the heavily perfumed "Atem der Gärten", fore-shadowing a return

to the complex spatiality remembered by Venera at the beginning of the tale,

where Ylone's room was immersed in a garden without ceasing to be a separate

space.

Venera describes Ylone's response to this city-night in an intense

sequence which, as I will show, passes through several different modes of

sublime experience:

> Ich sah dich erschauern vor der gewaltigen Melodie dieses Abends. Sah,
> wie du den Rhythmus deiner weißen Arme zerbrachst, die du an die
> blühende Luft geschmiegt hattest, und dein weinendes Gesicht
> hineinwarfst. Und aus Furcht vor der riesigen Nacht, die das Gefühl der
> Verlassenheit erhöhte, flohst du zurück in die Begrenzung des Zimmers.
> In diesem Augenblick spürtest du mich im Raum. Dein suchender Blick
> fiel mir gerade in die Augen.[97]

For a moment, Ylone too dissolves into this animate city, breaking off the

movement of her arms, which had matched its feverish rhythms, only to throw

her face completely into its forceful melody. She briefly embraces the

Expressionist dynamic traced in Chapter Two, where individual identity is

dissolved into post-human flux. However, in the very next sentence, she

withdraws from this heightened sense of abandonment; like man's intensified

feeling of physical vulnerability in the Kantian sublime, it leads her to retreat to

a bounded space and to re-secure herself against an overwhelming outside

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[96] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 229. "Lights pierced the room [...] A yearning leaned out of a thousand windows, making the air vibrate, so that people sobbed convulsively like a fountain."

[97] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 229. "I saw you tremble before the powerful melody of that evening. Saw you shatter the rhythm of your white arms which you had nestled into the blossoming air, and throw in your weeping face. And fearing the immense night, which heightened the feeling of desertedness, you fled back into the boundedness of your room. At that moment you sensed me in the room. Your searching gaze leapt straight to my eyes."

world. Yet though this momentary mimicking of an equally male but more Kantian sublime protects Ylone from dissolution, it too is immediately subverted. For as she withdraws, she returns not to a reinforced sense of her own individual and autonomous identity, but to a room shared with an other - and to a space in which both self and other are immersed, without simply being dissolved.

With Venera, Ylone finally rediscovers her self. Venera describes how she is able to return Ylone's feelings, smiles, dreams and thoughts to her, for she had gathered them within herself to protect and preserve them:

> Ich hatte dich so aufbewahrt und gesammelt in mir, daß ich dich dir ganz zurückgeben konnte. Jeder Augenblick deines Gefühls hatte Flügel bekommen und flatterte dir entgegen. Jedes deiner Lächeln suchte dich, und deine ungeträumten Träume warteten darauf, von dir geträumt zu werden. Deine Gedanken hatten noch ihre weißen Gewänder an und neigten sich dir zart wie präraffaelitische Engel.[98]

Whereas Claudio's eyes fragmented and froze Ylone into a hundred disjointed reflections, Venera returns Ylone to herself completely, and to a living, animated self that is whole. Nonetheless, this wholeness has been preserved within another who is not merely a passive receptacle or cave like Claudio's mother. Neither Ylone nor Venera could function as the m/otherly ground from which the other separates to attain her own identity, for, as key images throughout the text have emphasised, each takes shape only through the strength of her relation to the other. Their singular difference/s grow out of a shared likeness, such that their identities remain embedded in each other's.

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[98] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 229. "I had stored you up and collected you up in me in such a way that I could give you back to yourself whole. Every instant of your feeling had grown wings and was fluttering towards you. Every one of your smiles was seeking you, and your undreamt dreams were waiting to be dreamed by you. Your thoughts still had on their white robes, and leaned tenderly towards you like Pre-Raphaelite angels."

Hence Venera has sustained Ylone's identity not because she is the m/other in whom Ylone finds her own true essence, but because Venera's own identity is inherently dependent upon their foundational interrelation. Thus in section three, she not only mourns the loss of her friend, but emphasises that she too would die without the memory of her time *with* Ylone. Ylone can rediscover herself in her sisterly beloved because Venera has maintained her own sense of identity through memories of being incorporated within Ylone's manifold and dancing fluidity (¶2); she has sustained her own female form by imaginatively reconfiguring the sensous architecture of Ylone's embodiment (¶3).

Venera returns Ylone to the wholeness of a manifold identity that incorporates otherness in the interrelations through which it is formed. This complex wholeness is inscribed in a final image of mirroring. Venera claims that Ylone "konntest dich in mir wie in einem Spiegel sehen, der dein Bild von früher unverändert zurückwarf".[99] However, Venera does not thereby become the Platonic beloved, whose otherness disappears beneath the reflection of an original but forgotten form. Though she is a mirror that must be positioned "sorgfältig, um dich nicht zu erschrecken",[100] this is not because she reflects Ylone's lost self as a true and eternal reality, whose sudden recollection might prove to be blinding. For, as the next image shows, Ylone's recovery is not a matter of suddenly seeing *a* different world but of learning to *see differently*. If Ylone is to re-discover herself, Venera must become a subversive mirror, into which her beloved can see only bit by bit, and in the gaps: "So ließ ich dich stückweise und in Zwischenräumen einsehen in mich, damit du dich wieder

[99] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 229. "could see yourself in me, as in a mirror which reflected your earlier image unchanged."
[100] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 229. "carefully, so as not to frighten you."

aufbauen konntest, wie ein Mosaik, aus dem ein Sturm einige Steinchen gebrochen hat."[101]

Ylone rebuilds herself through multiple and partial configurations generated in interstices, intervals in time and space which could be shared between both herself and Venera, as well as between different parts of her manifold self, whose memory was always kept within a liquid silvering. No single one of these interrelations contains her essence. Instead, her lost self is found in the gaps shared between two women who "never separate simply", and whose reflections would have to be voiced with an Irigarayan fluency: "between our lips, yours and mine, several voices, several ways of speaking resound endlessly, back and forth. One is never separable from the other".[102] Together with and in Venera, Ylone becomes herself. Her identity is re-established without needing the oppositional exclusion of the other, yet without dissolving into indeterminate ambiguity because otherness has been brought within the self. For Ylone is like a mosaic, whose pattern is shaped by the interstices determining the relations of each piece to those around it; Ylone's self is shaped *with* otherness in a productive and reciprocal relationality.

Ylone's female identity, whose strength was forged only with and through another's sisterly love, cannot be rediscovered as a self-contained unity, eternally frozen, waiting to be seen. Rather, Ylone can only return to her self by regenerating the formative inter-relations through which her own differentiated identity can properly grow. To do this she must remember how to see within gaps belonging to neither one nor another, but shared between

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[101] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 230. "In this way, I let you see into me bit by bit and in interstices/gaps, so that you could slowly piece yourself together again, like a mosaic, from which a storm has broken some small tiles."

[102] Irigaray, "When Our Lips Speak Together", in *This Sex*, p. 209.

selves in a fluid mirroring; she must reorient herself within spaces and interstices governed by no individual form, but produced by - and producing - at least two together. Thus what Venera returns to Ylone, whole and unchanged, is that magical and transformative reflectivity whose silvering generates manifold female identities, where likeness and difference take shape together, *nebeneinander* as well as *in Zwischenräumen*. Hence in the final line of the text, the glass between Venera and Ylone, lover and beloved, explodes: "Da zersprang das Glas unsrer Herzen, Geliebte . . ."[103] The cold hardness and solidity of mirroring surfaces has been transformed into the fluidity of productive interrelation.

Despite the apparent open-endedness of Goll's text, which ends in suspension points, the adverb "da" reminds the reader that this story has been told in the past tense, and that in the narrative present established at the start, the two women are once again separated by glass. The text between becomes itself an interstice, holding open an imaginative site where female identity can be re-imagined. Like Venera and Ylone, Goll's text also refuses to reflect the dominant masculine metaphysics of identity. Instead, through a textual acrobatics of doubling and inversions, Goll generates gaps and spaces in the imaginative mapping of reality, wherein the patterning of female selves can emerge.

Such selves no longer depend on specular processes of separation and/or unification. For Ylone and Venera, what matters is not that one is always visible to the other *as* other *or* as self-same, but that each moves *with* an other to generate relations between them, through which both can take shape,

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[103] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 230. "Then the glass of our hearts shattered, beloved..."

without becoming one. Ylone's self-knowledge results neither from mastering her self, nor her relation to Venera; instead, her wisdom emerges with and through an other, in a generative, materially embodied reciprocity, under no-one's individual control. The identities of Ylone and Venera emerge through shared spaces which incorporate differences; in this way, they do not contain each other's potential, but remain manifold mosaic-selves. Their fluid interstices are sites of becoming, where each can be folded into further relational patternings. In this text, writing itself is figured as only one possible mode of materialising such patterns of female spatiality and selfhood. Thus I would like to suggest that Goll's textual somersaults need not remain on the page, and should not be read as merely linguistic fantasies; for their shadowy fluidity can be translated into imaginative maps, patterns which could be embodied by specifically female subjects.

Chapter 6

Bodies of Resonance:

Eurydice, Music and Darkness

Wir Modernen [. . .] wissen, wer, anstatt vor sich in die Zukunft zu blicken, zurücksieht, vom Schicksal der Euridice ereilt wird. Er bleibt im Schatten-reich - unten. Die neuen Frauen aber, im feierlich frohen Wissen von der Macht des Lichts, suchen die hellen Pfade, hinauf, wo Höhenluft weht und Sonne ist.[1]

At the end of her polemical essay "Feindliche Schwestern" [1914], Hedwig Dohm invokes the figure of Eurydice as a warning: women must not look back to the past, or the fate of Eurydice will befall them and they too will be trapped in a deathly darkness. She implores women to move forwards into the future, to escape from the shadow-world under the ground and emerge into the light, airy spaces under the sun. The subversiveness of the image derives from the way it positions women not only as Orpheus, but as Orpheuses who will have the strength *not* to look back and condemn themselves to darkness. These female rescuers will succeed where their male forerunner failed: they are blessed with a happy knowledge of the power of the light and will return themselves to the realm of the living.

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[1] Dohm, "Feindliche Schwestern", col. 653. "We moderns [...] know who, instead of looking in front into the future, looks back and is overtaken by Eurydice's fate. He remains in the realm of shadows - below. But the new women, festively, joyously aware of the power of light, seek the bright paths leading up to mountain air and sun."

Dohm's association of light and knowledge draws attention to the way in which Orpheus's journey parallels Plato's myth of the cave: the enlightenment of women is associated with a movement upwards, out of an insubstantial world composed only of shadows and into the reality revealed by the sun. However, the Orpheus myth opposes the realm of shades to that of the living, such that the sun in Dohm's image stands not so much for the Ideality of the Forms, as for a desire to live in the real, material world. Nonetheless, in becoming Orpheus, these women attain their new life by positioning themselves as male subjects, subjects of power that derives from the light. Despite the strength of Dohm's subversive image of female Orpheuses bringing about their own liberation, a question remains: what of Eurydice, left behind in her darkness?

In this chapter, I will turn back through Goll's text, *Der Gläserne Garten*, to argue that it can be read as exploring the darkness of Eurydice, in a poetic reimagining of female selfhood structured through musical images of relationality, resonance and touch. As I have indicated, and will now explore in more detail, Goll explicitly invokes the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in *Der Gläserne Garten*, and goes on to position Ylone as a Eurydice who desires to live without merely following in (a) man's footsteps. Indeed, as I will show, Goll's subversive rewriting of this myth disrupts her own positioning as "Eurydice" in relation to her two male lovers, Yvan Goll and Rainer Maria Rilke. In addition to poems by Rilke, Yvan Goll, and another female modernist, H.D., I will use work by Adriana Cavarero and Maurice Blanchot to contextualise Goll's reworking of the figure of Eurydice such that its radical subversiveness can emerge. I will suggest that Goll's images not only displace Orpheus, but that by invoking a female operatic tradition, as well as through other musical

imagery, she allows Eurydice's voice to be heard. Goll's Eurydice will thus be linked not to the deathly darkness of Hades, but to the darkness of Isis as absence, the powerful Isis that I appropriated from Kant and that was privileged in chapter one of this thesis.

Just as, in the previous chapter, I returned to Plato as he was filtered through the neoplatonism of the Romantics, in this chapter, I am not directly concerned with the Greek Orpheus, but - as is already implied by the authors referred to above - with the Orpheus of modernity.[2] Indeed, we begin with an opera by Gluck written on the very cusp of philosophical modernity (in 1762), and rewritten by Berlioz during the nineteenth-century. The Orpheus who became central to the European literary imagination during Romanticism was the poet who journeyed into darkness to confront death itself, and who, on failing to rescue Eurydice, carried her dark shadow back with him in his songs and laments. Indeed, in his study on Orpheus within modern literature, Walter Strauss emphasises that:

> the decisive factor in appraising the nature of the modern Orphic is not so much in the magical mission of the poet, but in the account and interpretation of his experience as reflected in his poetry - the nature of his Orphic journey, that quest for a dark but "pure" center'.[3]

For many male Romantic and modernist writers, this Orpheus became the emblematic figure of poetry itself. He comes to stand for the transformation of experience and the transcendence sought through literature, for the process of writing as a journey into dark depths, and for the possibility (and impossiblity) of transforming such darkness into art. It is this Orpheus - whose Eurydice has

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[2] See Walter Strauss, *Descent and Return: The Orphic Theme in Modern Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971). Strauss outlines three phases of the myth: the classical Greek Orpheus, the Renaissance Orpheus - who becomes especially linked to opera - and the Orpheus of modernity; see pp. 1-19.

[3] Strauss, p. 10.

almost entirely disappeared to become the "dark and 'pure' centre" of his poetry - whose journey is disrupted and rewritten by Goll's text.

Che farò senza Euridice?

Goll refers to Orpheus in the first section of *Der Gläserne Garten*. More particularly, she invokes Christoph Gluck's opera, *Orfeo ed Euridice [Orpheus und Eurydike]* of 1762.[4] The voice which recalls Venera from the limitless and makes her turn back, as described in the previous chapter, is a voice singing from this opera. Venera hears "eine schwermütige Klage" ["a melancholy lament"], a voice which calls up Eurydice, the shade, with the words of Orpheus's arias:

> Eine Stimme weinte aus der Ferne, sie sang aus dem Orpheus von Gluck und rief den Schatten. Da mußte ich mich umsehn nach ihm und der Vergangenheit.[5]

Read with this operatic reference in mind, in turning back to recollect the darkness of the past, Venera seems to be positioned as Orpheus, who could not resist turning back to look at Eurydice as he led her out of the underworld and so lost her forever. In this text, as we have seen, Venera's memory interrupts her journey upwards and prevents her from transcending all space and time with Ylone. Instead, the two women are returned to a time where they will be painfully separated. However, the Orpheus myth and Goll's image do not map

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[4] *Orfeo ed Euridice* was first performed in Vienna in 1762. The title of this section, *Che farò senza Euridice*, is taken from its most famous aria, sung by Orpheus in Act III; see pp. 149-153, in C.W. Gluck, *Orfeo ed Euridice/Orpheus und Eurydike*, eds Anna Abert and Ludwig Finscher (Basel, London: Bärenreiter, 1963 [based on the 1762 edition]). Gluck's opera has undergone many transformations and transcriptions, some of which will be explored below. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to it throughout by the abbreviated from of its first Italian title, *Orfeo*, as used by Wendy Bashant in the essay quoted below.
[5] Claire Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 216. "From a distance came a weeping voice, singing from Gluck's *Orpheus* and calling the shade. I had to look around for it and the past."

onto one another as easily as this might suggest; as I will show, Goll subverts the topography of the myth in several key ways.

Firstly, Orpheus again becomes a woman here, as in Dohm's image. In fact, Goll's reference to Gluck's text is knowing: written for a castrato, the role was rewritten in the nineteenth century for alto voice, and thus became a role for women. The notion of one woman singing Gluck's passionate arias to another immediately disrupts the heterosexual logic of opposition underpinning the original myth, in which a passive Eurydice is left in a darkness that her male lover transcends both in life and in art. In her discussion of Gluck's *Orfeo* as "one of the queerest operas I know", Wendy Bashant describes the intense debate that has raged about Orpheus's sex since Berlioz transcribed the part for contralto in 1859 - itself an act of love, as Berlioz was persuaded to do so by a famous contralto with whom he was enamoured, Pauline Garcia-Viardot.[6]

Bashant explores the complex gendering and regendering of *Orfeo*, noting that in the original version

> the castrato's natural unnaturalness, his voice that proclaims heterosexual desires and yet is not bound by copulating bodies, moves beyond the mundane world of production and reproduction.[7]

Whilst agreeing that the loving songs of this original castrato Orpheus would transcend the messy world of reproductive female bodies, I would suggest that Gluck's hero is not thereby removed from *all* production. Rather, he perfectly embodies the feminised male who, though he may not be man enough for

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6 Wendy Bashant, "Singing in Greek Drag: Gluck, Berlioz, George Eliot", in *En Travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera*, eds Corinne Blackmer and Patricia Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 216 - 241 (p.216). As the title suggests, Bashant goes on to discuss the effect Berlioz's contralto transcription of the Orpheus role had on George Eliot, who made the opera central to her poetic drama, *Armgart*: "'Armgart' [...] allows for intrasexual love in a world that was becoming more and more rigidly heterosexual. Significantly, she [Eliot] chooses an opera - *Orfeo* - which also allows her to write of desire between and among genders in a way that she was no longer able to do in the context of the provincial towns of England." (p. 225).

7 Bashant, p. 220.

reproductive sex with a real woman, is thereby free to concentrate his energies on the creation of songs and laments, a body of work which he apparently produces all on his own. Such a man replaces copulation and physical labour with inspiration and artistic work; nonetheless, an idealised, dematerialised woman remains the hidden ground of this Orpheus's productions. I would suggest that this logic only heightens the disruptive effect of a female Orpheus, who not only turns the archetypal male poet into a woman, but also invests this mythic role with a specifically female body, capable of other kinds of creativity. As Bashant remarks: "a female Orfeo in drag is like her male counterpart: she too can produce song. Her body, however, is even more productive than his. She also can reproduce children."[8] By the late nineteenth century, *Orfeo* was routinely performed not just with a female Orpheus, but with an all-female cast. This is the paradoxical musical history of a tale which seems to focus on a man, descending into Hades to "obtain the 'object' that is considered rightfully his", to "reinscribe sexual difference, and reinstate a heterosexual world".[9] In fact, as Bashant notes, "*Orfeo* becomes a work that excessively reinscribes the patriarchy and yet denies the order it exaggerates."[10]

When read with this female history in mind, *Orfeo* is clearly the perfect opera for Goll's text, which similarly reinscribes the power of a male gaze only to double and subvert that gaze, replacing it with a mocking glance shared between women. Venera's positioning as Orpheus at the beginning of *Der Gläserne Garten* foreshadows both the displacement of Claudio as the desiring subject, and the text's investment in a female relationality which will not in fact lend itself as easily to the absolute divisions separating Orpheus from Eurydice.

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[8] Bashant, p. 220.
[9] Bashant, p. 218.
[10] Bashant, p. 221.

However, another peculiarity of Gluck's version must be mentioned here: his score, specially commisioned from the Italian librettist Calzabigi, deviates from the myth's norm in one fundamental respect: at the end of the opera, Amor decides that Orpheus has suffered enough on her behalf, and releases Eurydice from Hades. Gluck thus transgresses the most basic element of the myth: he reunites the lovers, and provides an almost unthinkable happy ending.

In her recent work on the Orpheus myth, Adriana Cavarero points up the improbability of such an ending within the imagination of the West. She argues that Orpheus's story, as normally told, sets up the triad of love/poetry/death on which Western literature so often functions: the power of Orpheus's song derives from his great love for a woman he has not only lost, but whose (second) death finally makes their reunion absolutely impossible.[11] Hence Cavarero shows that despite the differences between Plato (whose gaze reaches ever upwards towards the heavenly Forms), and Orpheus (blinded by turning back into darkness), both are symptomatic of the way the West is focussed on death. This might be the death of the material/maternal and its replacement by an eternal and immaterial "reality", or the death of a female "other", whose absence is filled by men's laments. Cavarero suggests that had Orpheus not turned around, he would have had to turn to Eurydice later, alive, and relate his story *to* her, instead of being able to sing *of* her, drawing his inspiration from her death.[12] Hence his story is symptomatic of a cultural and literary logic of deathly disconnection, of *irrelazione*, of the ideal separateness of

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[11] Adriana Cavarero, *Tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti* (Milan: Elementi/Feltrinelli, 1997), chapter 2: "Orfeo il poeta", pp. 121-31; see esp. p. 131. I am extremely grateful to Adrian Armstrong for translating the relevant sections of this text and patiently working through them with me.

[12] Cavarero, *Tu che mi guardi*, p. 131: "Traendo da Euridice ormai morta la sua ispirazione, Orfeo canta appunto di lei ma non *a* lei."

one and another, narrator and narrated, artist and his subject-matter; of the absence of any relation between the one whose story is told, and the teller of the tale, between the woman who is dead, and Orpheus, whose voice is immortalised in his own words.[13]

Gluck breaks with this logic by providing the ending which returns the two lovers to relatedness and to "un amore banalmente felice, un amore alla portata di tutti, un amore dei giorni di festa."[14] Goll's invocation of this operatic version of the myth again foreshadows the ending of her own tale, where the two lovers are reunited. However, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, their love is far from everyday. By combining Gluck's story of reunited lovers with the historical gendering of Orfeo as an opera played out by female protagonists, Der Gläserne Garten becomes a story not of separation, but of a love shared between two women which enables both to live. In Ylone and Venera, both lover and beloved are returned to a relational ground of identity which refuses their separation into opposing realms of being. Moreover, though this tale is told by Venera when the two women are once again apart, it is not an inspired lament telling the world of the deathly absence of her beloved. On the contrary, Venera addresses her words directly to Ylone, thereby sustaining the very interrelatedness that the tale goes on to reconfigure. Its inspiration lies in recalling a relationality which sustains not just Ylone, but the existence of both women, for, as Venera reminds us, without this time with her beloved, she too would die.

In Goll's tale a heterosexual myth based on the separation of lover and beloved is transformed into a foundational tale for a female identity which

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[13] See Cavarero, Tu che mi guardi, pp. 128-132.

[14] Cavarero, Tu che mi guardi, p. 131: "a banally happy love, a love within everyone's reach, a love for feast-days."

emerges through relationality. A story which secured the transcendent words of a male poet through the death of a woman becomes the unfolding of life shared between two female lovers, written in the dark materiality of the beloved's body. Thus as I will go on to show, by radically rewriting the Orpheus myth Goll disrupts the imaginative scene of the West. The logic of *irrelazione* grounded on the darkness that contains the death of the other is transformed by Goll: she makes darkness a resonating space of relation, where identities are sustained by difference/s that no longer disappear into deathly silence.

However, the logic of deathly disconnection which Cavarero identifies at the heart of the Orpheus myth is reflected in Goll's own position within the literary history of Western Europe. Indeed, as I have already hinted, Goll herself becomes the absent woman, the beloved muse to two male poets, both of whom wrote poems invoking the Orpheus myth. In 1923, Claire's husband Ywan Goll wrote "Der neue Orpheus", explicitly dedicated to Claire.[15] In this ironic and playful modernisation of the myth, Orpheus is a bar-room singer, a star performer whose music lifts the masses from their miserable lives in the cities. Such is his initial success that his music is immortalised by modern technology - "Grammophone/Pianolas/Dampforgeln" - and he goes on tour, working his magic far and wide: "Orpheus wird zum Genie: Er reist von Land zu Land".[16] The facelessness of the original Eurydice who disappears into darkness is reinforced and literalised in this poem, where she becomes the faceless masses that Orpheus seeks to redeem through song: "Eurydike: /Das Weib das unverstandene Leben",

[15] "Der neue Orpheus", in Yvan Goll, *Dichtungen: Lyrik, Prosa, Drama*, ed. Claire Goll (Darmstadt: Herman Luchterhand, 1960), pp. 189-192.
[16] "Der neue Orpheus", p. 191; p. 192. "gramophones, pianolas, steam organs [...] Orpheus becomes a genius: He travels from country to country."

>Musiklos
>Seelenarm
>Eurydike: die unerlöste Menschheit![17]

Orpheus's attempt to turn and embrace this Eurydice, as embodied in the figure of an ordinary, slightly over made-up girl, is a failure: Eurydice won't listen to his music any more, the thronging masses ignore him and return of their own accord to the *Unterwelt* of the city.

Ywan's Orpheus does not find his art saves him from this loss: he sits alone in a railway waiting-room, and shoots himself. Though this gesture is clearly intended to suggest the death of an idealised view of art as capable of ennobling humanity, in fact the poem maintains a very traditional and traditionally gendered value-system. Whereas Eurydice becomes the blindly suffering masses, Orpheus represents man as a creative and sensitive individual, who suffers *because* of the blind meaninglessness of city-life: "Jeder ist Orpheus".[18] The bathos of his suicide does not displace the individualised genius as the focus of this poetic tale: on the contrary, this remains the story of a male poet, whose tragedy lies in the loss not of his beloved, but of the power of art itself as a transcendent and healing magic. This poetic reflection on the role of the artist that is addressed to Claire in fact doubly displaces her. For Ywan's beloved is a female poet, who must have found it difficult to recognise herself in his dumb Eurydice, both *unverstanden* and *musiklos*, and yet hardly fits the description of Orpheus:

>Orpheus: wer kennt ihn nicht:
>1 m 78 gros
>68 Kilo
>Augen braun
>Stirn schmal
>Steifer Hut

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[17] "Der neue Orpheus", p. 189; p.192. "Eurydice: / Woman, misunderstood life [...] Musicless, / Poor in spirit, / Eurydice: unredeemed humanity!"
[18] "Der neue Orpheus", p. 189. "Every man is Orpheus."

Geburtschein in der Rocktasche
Katholisch
Sentimental
Für die Demokratie
Und von Beruf ein Musikant[19]

This Orpheus is somewhat on the slight side and rather feminine, but clearly a man, and indeed, not unlike certain photographs of Ywan; a fairly typical male genius, then, and not so new after all!

The other key male figure in this early part of Claire Goll's life was Rilke, who, in addition to his famous collection *Die Sonette an Orpheus* [1923], also wrote the single poem "Orpheus. Eurydike. Hermes", first published in 1907.[20] It is this poem which I will examine here, for, as Adriana Cavarero has noted, this is a rare text in that it seems to give Eurydice a voice. Thus it stands in an intriguing relation to the later re-working of the same myth by Rilke's own beloved "Liliane" (his pet-name for Claire Goll), with whom he would exchange letters and poems; amongst these, Rilke would send her a signed copy of *Die Sonette an Orpheus*, dedicated "für Liliane".[21]

Rilke's own poetic retelling of the original myth includes a third figure, the messenger God, Hermes, who leads Eurydice by the hand along the path behind Orpheus. As Cavarero shows, though Rilke's reimagining of the tale seems at last to allow Eurydice to voice her own perspective on events, in fact, the single word she speaks seals her into the logic of *irrelazione* more irreversibly

[19] "Der neue Orpheus", pp. 189-90. "Orpheus: who doesn't know him? / 1 metre 78 tall / 68 kilos / Brown eyes / Narrow forehead / Wears a homburg / Birth certificate in his jacket pocket / Catholic / Sentimental / In favour of democracy / And musician by profession."

[20] "Orpheus. Eurydike. Hermes", in Rilke, *Sämtliche Werke*, 6 vols, ed. Ernst Zinn (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1955-66), I: pp. 542-45. The poem was composed in 1904 and first published in *Neue Gedichte*, 1907.

[21] Rilke, *Die Sonette an Orpheus*, in Rilke, *Sämtliche Werke*, (q.v.), I; first published 1923.

than ever.[22] As Orpheus turns around, Hermes is pained and disappointed, but Eurydice does not understand who he is so upset about:

> Und als plötzlich jäh
> der Gott sie anhielt und mit Schmerz im Ausruf
> die Worte sprach: Er hat sich umgewendet -,
> begriff sie nichts und sagte leise: *Wer*?[23]

Cavarero explores how, in this one word, Eurydice reveals that she has no active part in this story, despite being at its centre. For she has no memory of Orpheus, no sense of the history or context which would allow her to understand what is happening to her, indeed, no sense that anything is happening at all. Instead, she is dragged uselessly up the path, until the fateful moment when Hermes turns, without answering her question, and merely leads her back down again.

Hence as Cavarero emphasises, Hermes' silence confirms that Eurydice's role is to embody the eternal present of death as *absolute irrelazione*, without context or history, past or future: "Lei, così amata, sta ora infatti nella sua assoluta solitudine senza alcune relazione all'altro, senza memoria e senza storia."[24] Though her question appears to give her voice a place in this myth, in fact, it "ne denuncia [...] la cruciale estraneità."[25] For Orpheus, who at the end of the poem is left gazing after Eurydice's disappearing form, will remain rooted precisely in the lack which her double death constitutes for him; but Eurydice remains a closed flower, sealed off in the mute fullness of her own death, without relation to any other:

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[22] See Cavarero, *Tu che mi guardi*, chapter 3: "La voce di Euridice", pp. 132-39.

[23] "Orpheus. Eurydike. Hermes", p. 545. "And when abruptly, / the god had halted her and, with an anguished / outcry, outspoke the words: He has turned round: — / She took in nothing, and said softly: Who?" (Rilke, *Selected Poems*, trans. J. B. Leishman (London: Penguin, 1964), p. 41)

[24] Cavarero, *Tu che mi guardi*, p. 133: "Indeed, she, the *So-geliebte*, is now in her absolute solitude without any relation to the other, without memory and without (hi)story."

[25] Cavarero, *Tu che mi guardi*, p. 134: "betrays [...] her crucial extraneousness to it."

Sie war in sich. Und ihr Gestorbensein
erfüllte sie wie Fülle.
Wie eine Frucht von Süßigkeit und Dunkel,
so war sie voll von ihrem großen Tode,
der also neu war, daß sie nichts begriff.

Sie war in einem neuen Mädchentum
und unberührbar; ihr Geschlecht war zu
wie eine junge Blume gegen Abend
[. . .].[26]

Rilke's Eurydice remains the archetype of the poet's absent muse, the beloved woman whose "otherness" seals her up into inaccessibility as surely as if she were dead; whose "otherness" must be sealed up, to become the dark matter which man can transform and transcend through his songs. I would like to suggest that "Liliane"'s later literary encounter with the Orpheus myth in *Der Gläserne Garten* takes up the space opened, however tenuously, by Eurydice's simple question in Rilke's poem, expanding this single word into a much more powerful voice. Thus in what follows, I will explore how Goll refuses both the disconnection which inspired the male poet, and the chaste containment of Eurydice: instead, she unseals the darkness, releasing a flow of female inter-relations which can produce songs of their own. However, it is Rilke's poetic vision of Eurydice which encapsulates a powerful cultural norm, as an examination of Maurice Blanchot's essay "Orpheus's Gaze" will affirm.

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[26] "Orpheus. Eurydike. Hermes", p. 545. "Wrapt in herself she wandered. And her deadness / was filling her like fullness. / Full as a fruit with sweetness and with darkness / was she with her great death, which was so new / that for the time she could take nothing in. // She had attained a new virginity / and was intangible; her sex had closed / like a young flower at the approach of evening / [...]" (Rilke, *Selected Poems*, trans. Leishman, p. 41)

Blanchot's Eurydice: the Inessential Essence of the Work

Blanchot himself positions "Orpheus's Gaze" as the key to his 1955 study, *The Space of Literature*, in which he explores what makes space for writing to take place.[27] His answer confirms Cavarero's astute analysis of the West's preoccupation with death, and above all with the death of (a) woman in whose absence man writes poetry. Blanchot's short examination of the Orpheus myth follows a much longer essay on Rilke and death, and his Eurydice is also the closed flower that inhabits the underworld in Rilke's poem: she is "intact", "sealed" and "enclosed".[28] However, Rilke's Eurydice has a kind of strength in her self-containment; her unknowing patience remains inviolate, even and especially in the moment when Orpheus turns back. In Blanchot's retelling, Orpheus's descent becomes a penetration, a violation: his entry into Hades is made possible because his art is powerful enough to make its darkness open up to him.[29] Above all, Blanchot stresses that Orpheus turns, because he

> does not want Eurydice in her daytime truth and everyday appeal, but wants her in her nocturnal obscurity, in her distance, with her closed body and sealed face - wants to see her not when she is visible, but when she is invisible [. . .]wants, not to make her live, but to have living in her the plenitude of her death.[30]

Blanchot's rewriting of Rilke's imagery (the closed body, sealed face, the fullness of death) draws attention to the foundational violence perpetrated against Eurydice. However, far from leading to a critique of conceptions of

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[27] Maurice Blanchot, "Orpheus's Gaze", in *The Space of Literature*, trans. and intro. Ann Smock (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), pp. 171-176. Originally published as "Le regard d'Orphée", in *L'Espace littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), pp. 179-184.

[28] See "The Work and Death's Space", in *The Space of Literature*. The descriptions of Eurydice are given in "Orpheus's Gaze", pp. 172; 174.

[29] The violence of this entry into Hades is more noticable in the original French: "l'art est la puissance par laquelle s'ouvre la nuit. La nuit, par la force de l'art l'accueille, devient l'intimité accueillante"; "Le regard d'Orphée", p. 179.

[30] Blanchot, "Orpheus's Gaze", p. 172.

literature in the imagination of the West, this violation is instead inscribed ever more firmly as the necessary heart of all artistic work.

Punning on "l'oeuvre", which can refer both to a task or to a literary work, Blanchot retraces Orpheus's footsteps to show how the moment when he looks back both sabotages his task, and makes his work properly possible for the first time. When he turns round, Orpheus sees nothing: Eurydice disappears into the night, she is the imperceptible shade within a more familiar darkness, she is the *other* night ("*l'autre* nuit") and the night that is "other". Eurydice becomes the essence of night's darkness because she does *not appear* in the night: in her "the essence of night is revealed as the inessential."[31] In looking back, Orpheus forgets himself and his work, sacrificing everything to this impatient glance in which "he loses Eurydice because he desires her beyond the measured limits of the song".[32]

Yet only through this imprudent desire is his work eternally ruptured by that which cannot be measured, by the "other" night which cannot be contained in the metre of song and made visible or audible. Orpheus's improper movement and the loss of Eurydice "are necessary to the song", for only in this way is his work properly opened onto infinite otherness, onto the measureless absence that Eurydice becomes.[33] Thus his "forbidden movement is precisely what Orpheus must accomplish in order to carry the work beyond what assures it."[34] In his glance, he surpasses the limits of the work and allows the work to surpass itself, to find its origin in the "unapproachable profundity" of

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31 Blanchot, "Orpheus's Gaze", p. 172.
32 Blanchot, "Orpheus's Gaze", p. 173.
33 Blanchot, "Orpheus's Gaze", p. 173.
34 Blanchot, "Orpheus's Gaze", p. 174.

Eurydice's dark absence within the night, an impossible origin which makes writing possible.[35]

Thus the gaze of Orpheus "is the movement of desire that shatters the song's destiny, that disrupts concern for it, and in this inspired and careless decision reaches the origin, consecrates the song."[36] And though from now on it is true that "only in the song does Orpheus have power over Eurydice", and that "in the song too Eurydice is already lost", her loss makes the work possible, for in her absence, "writing begins".[37] Hence Orpheus's disobedience obeys the "deep demand" of the work.[38] It is not that in looking back Orpheus betrays Eurydice, but rather, that in *not* looking back he would betray both himself and the work, for he can only complete his task by making the work essentially incomplete. The art of Blanchot's Orpheus always gives onto the measureless dark presence of Eurydice's absence.

For Blanchot, Eurydice is not merely removed from Orpheus because she is dead. On the contrary, she simultaneously remains incessantly present in the work: she is the pure presence of the "other" which remains always at an impossible remove. She is not merely absence, but one whose presence is hidden and lacking, and who remains visible as that lack, as absent presence. She is enclosed forever "in her shadowy absence, in that veiled presence which did not hide her absence, which was the presence of her infinite absence."[39] Thus Blanchot's Eurydice is a sister figure to Isis as Lyotard would have seen her: not absence, but someone lost in her own presence beneath the veil. This Eurydice becomes another figure of Lyotard's postmodern sublime: in the invisibility of

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35 Blanchot, "Orpheus's Gaze", p. 175.
36 Blanchot, "Orpheus's Gaze", p. 176.
37 Blanchot, "Orpheus's Gaze", p. 173; 176.
38 Blanchot, "Orpheus's Gaze", p. 173.
39 Blanchot, "Orpheus's Gaze", p. 172.

her second death, which takes place when she is already in the dark night of the underworld, she becomes the unpresentable "otherness" that can only be represented as lacking within the work. As embodied by Eurydice, "Woman" becomes the measureless absence contained in the work as that which it cannot contain; she is the essence of "otherness" as essentially, irredeemably lacking.

Like Lyotard's postmodern re-vision of noumenal absence, Blanchot's Eurydice becomes defined only as that which is lacking from the gaze of a male subject. Moreover, just as Lyotard reduces all material difference/s to immaterial lack, so, for Blanchot, what matters is Eurydice's extraneousness to Orpheus's work - a superfluity that makes Eurydice herself inessential. Both philosophers remove any space wherein the specificity of her female perspective could be imagined differently. Blanchot's essentialising gaze blinds him to the fact that merely recognising the violent movement at the heart of a literary tradition is not enough to disrupt the logic of Orpheus's founding gaze.

Indeed, as Winkler writes of Detienne's masculinising grid, that frames his account of the Adonia, "something is wrong here".[40] For although Blanchot stresses that it is essential that Eurydice be left in the darkness, in his retelling of the tale it is ultimately *the work* which is forgotten and "lost absolutely" when Orpheus looks back. As he puts it: "the work is sacrificed [. . .] the work is betrayed in favor of Eurydice, in favor of the shade."[41] This counter-intuitive account overlooks the way in which it is Eurydice who must be betrayed and sacrificed in favour of the poet's work, Eurydice who must become a shade so that the Orphic arts can be established in the gap she leaves behind. Blanchot weaves a complicated and lyrical web focussed on the way life is breathed into

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[40] See previous chapter.
[41] Blanchot, "Orpheus's Gaze", p. 174; 175.

the poet's word. However, this obscures from view a more simple narrative event: it is Eurydice who dies.

Subversive Shadow-Play

Blanchot so firmly imposes the perspective of Orpheus that, in his version, Eurydice does not even ask her one-word question, *"Wer?"*. All trace of her different voice necessarily vanishes, as a masculine history of the literary imagination is confirmed and strengthened. The archetypal male poetic voice is once again established by his capacity for transcending dead female matter, replacing her dark otherness with the brilliance of his inspired words. Hence the importance of the way in which Goll disrupts the Orpheus myth by explicitly invoking its more fluidly gendered operatic heritage in *Der Gläserne Garten*. If Venera were Orpheus, she would not wholly transcend the female subject-matter of her laments, even when her Eurydice was finally left behind. If Venera were Orpheus, Eurydice would no longer be defined simply as (a) man's "other"; rather, she and this female Orpheus would share the same sex. An Orpheus embodied as a woman would thus carry Eurydice's female form with her, back into life; Orpheus's lost beloved would resonate within a still living female body, through which she could emerge into poetry and song. Hence, read in relation to Gluck's *Orfeo*, Goll's text constructs not only a different model of manifold female selfhood, but a model of literature different from the Western norm reinscribed by Blanchot. If Orpheus were to become a woman, inspiration would be derived from embodied relatedness to the beloved, rather than an essential separation; indeed, poetic genius could be shaped within

living female bodies, instead of depending on a male gaze which turns to woman only as a dead object, and makes her different perspective disappear.

It is this perspective which Goll's story recovers: she disorients the Orpheus myth to reorient it around Eurydice. This process begins with her first invocation of Orpheus. Despite the general structural similarity pointed out above - Venera and Ylone seem to be on a path to eternal union, until Venera looks back and returns them both to a period of separation - from the very outset this is the Orpheus myth as seen in a looking-glass. Although Ylone and Venera begin by journeying into a limitless realm beyond space and time (as was seen in chapter five), a realm which the Orpheus myth associates with the eternal deathliness of Hades, the two women are moving upwards, instead of down into darkness. Moreover, though Venera's glance backwards in response to the singing voice interrupts her journey and returns her to the light of day, she does not return alone. On the contrary, the two women are separated *because* they are both returned to this earth: it is in Claudio's "reality" - in the mundane world of timetables and trains - that Ylone and Venera will be painfully divided.

And then there is the voice, singing from Orpheus and calling up the shadow of Eurydice. Although Venera occupies the narrative position of Orpheus, if his turning back is taken to be the defining moment of his character, it is not Venera but this distant voice which calls up the shade. Far from being the means by which Venera charms her way through the darkness and leads the shade upwards, this music forces Venera to look back at the shadow of the past. However, it is precisely this most well-known and defining moment of the myth which is here most disrupted and unfamiliar. The haunting voice that makes Venera turn back sings from far off, from elsewhere ("aus der Ferne"),

suggesting there is somewhere even more distant than the limitlessness into which the two women have been drawn. However, Venera does not turn back to see her beloved disappear into this limitless realm, becoming that other, more extreme distance, that shadowy darkness, the "outside" concealed within the night. Nor is it the case that Ylone becomes an absent presence, visible only as lack in Venera's eyes. For although Venera looks back into the past, far from seeing her beloved vanish down into dark depths, she recalls another time when Ylone was "*überirdisch*".

In the shadows of Venera's memory, another inversion of the myth takes place; but this topographical disruption does not merely produce another double of night, a lack within darkness. I would like to return here to an image in *Der Gläserne Garten* discussed in the previous chapter, one which now takes on new resonances; for when Venera turns back, she recollects another time, in which she left her own chaste night to enter into the light of day that belongs to Ylone:

> „Jetzt bist du überirdisch wie damals, als ich aus meiner keuschen Nacht in euren Morgen trat. Euer Zimmer brannte. Sommer und Liebe schlugen mir entgegen. Das Zimmer hing reif in den Garten, aber ich sah nicht mehr, wo es aufhörte und der Garten begann; denn das Fenster war groß."[42]

It is Ylone who here seems to occupy the position of Orpheus, returned to warmth and light in the land of the living, over rather than under the earth (*überirdisch*). Nonetheless, it is Venera who turns back to the past, to see herself then, leaving behind the darkness in which, like Rilke's Eurydice, she was chastely self-contained, and entering into a realm rich with the ripeness of

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[42] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 216."Now you are heavenly like you were then, when I entered your morning from my chaste night. Your room was burning. Summer and love greeted me. The room hung ripely in the garden, but I could no longer see where it ended and the garden began; for the window was large." Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 216.

summer which she shares with her female beloved. Venera turns back not to see Eurydice disappear, but to become Eurydice in the dark night; moreover, instead of condemning Eurydice to death, she releases her back into life. The key moment of the Orpheus myth is transformed: in Venera, Eurydice is no longer a figure lost in *absolute irrelazione* and filled only with the eternal presence of death, but she is returned to a life overflowing with living material growth, where she is encompassed by the love of an other.

In this way, Venera does not, after all, fulfil the role of Orpheus. She does not look back to see her beloved become a deathly absence that surpasses even the unlimited (*grenzenlos, démesuré*) space within which they journey together. Though her turn is part of a pattern of inversions, it does not establish a logic of oppositional doubling: Ylone does not become the "other" or the "outside" of an unlimited realm which is itself already opposed to the timetabled regularity of daylight. As I will show, and as was indicated in the previous chapter, Ylone does not become the lack at the heart of the limitless because Venera turns to see her beloved at a time where the very notion of limits is differently configured.

As Blanchot reminds us, when Orpheus turns to see Eurydice, she becomes *l'autre nuit*, a shadow in the already dark underworld: her absent presence is contained as if by a veil, by a specular boundary which merely redoubles the already existing border between night and day, life and death. However, when Venera turns back, she sees Ylone's room immersed within a garden without thereby completely dissolving and disappearing into it. Instead, the space that Ylone inhabits hangs in the garden like a ripe fruit. She is positioned as occupying a specific site that has grown out of the plenitude of a fecund world, a world that can encompass different and singular products

within itself, without everything simply becoming one organism. Yet nonetheless, Ylone's room remains part of the garden and cannot be clearly separated from it. As we saw in the previous chapter, it is impossible to see where one begins and the other ends. No specular boundaries can be established in this world, and none are needed: the world into which Venera/Eurydice emerges is not organised according to visible boundaries; instead, as we saw in chapter five, particularity and difference grow out of - and remain immersed within - an infinitely productive materiality.

In this way, Goll not only disrupts but re-imagines the topography of the original Orpheus myth. When Venera/Orpheus turns back, far from completing her beloved's incarceration as an eternally lost and extraneous "other", she releases both herself and Ylone into a living realm, one in which individual identity emerges within, and is sustained through, an infinitely productive otherness. Both women become Eurydice, in a world where self and other are held in relation by a shared growth, produced by a generative female matter that is no longer trapped in cold earth - but is instead both animate and warm.

In the previous chapter, I explored the ways in which Venera's memory of the room in the garden disrupts a Platonic topography of transcendence. However, to pick up the Kantian theme that is never far away in Expressionist texts, in reconfiguring the encounter with the boundless, Venera's memory can also be read as producing an unusual anti-Kantian twist to the sublime. The *überirdische* experience that Venera recollects cannot be mapped onto the Kantian experience, in which the male subject encounters a potentially overwhelming "otherness", but ultimately reinforces his boundaries against a threatening infinity of nature by imaginatively asserting his ability to transcend that natural world. Ylone, on the contrary, inhabits a space which is not

threatened by the infinite material productiveness of the garden, but has grown within and out of its fecundity; its specificity depends not on the construction of boundaries of separation, but on a permeable relation to otherness. In this remembered spatiality, material "otherness" is not excluded, but constitutes the generative site of Ylone's own space: her transcendence remains bonded to immanence and also to nature and an unfolding, animate materiality.

The experiences of the more traditional male Orpheus of Blanchot and Rilke, however, exemplify the male sublime, where transcendence is structured by boundaries of opposition. For these two male authors - as for so many male modernist poets and writers - Orpheus's journey is a sublime one which establishes the model of the artist as a magical and transcendent figure.[43] Thus, although they position Orpheus as turning back to encounter the infinite darkness of Hades and the absolute absence of Eurydice, he is lost only for a moment, and returns to life, still holding within his laments the memory of an overwhelming and infinite void. By condemning Eurydice to the underworld, the root of Orpheus's genius is established. He becomes the man who confronts the overwhelming nothingness of death that lies beyond the scope of any human gaze, and yet is not destroyed, but instead finds the strength to transcend this dark abyss by containing and reproducing it continually in song. In this way, the backwards glance of Orpheus links him eternally to death, and makes him a sublime figure capable of bridging the finite and the infinite.

Thus, despite his lamentations, Orpheus's failure does not in fact make his journey incomplete; rather, as Blanchot has shown, these songs reveal the necessity of Eurydice's loss for the completion of the myth from the Orphic

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[43] See Strauss, especially chapters 5 ("Rilke: Orpheus and the Double Realm") and 6 ("After Rilke: Orpheus, Paradigm or Paradox?").

perspective. The power of music and poetry first enabled Orpheus to pass safely through Hades and charm Pluto into relinquishing Euridice: his song provided his dead lover with a potential passage back to the land of the living. Through Eurydice's second death, his lamentations take on their full Orphic meaning, attributing to this singular man a power of passing between life and death. However, this power is ultimately transposed onto the story of Orpheus's own death, as Walter Strauss's summary of the third stage of the Orpheus myth reveals.

Orpheus is set upon by the Maenads. As Strauss indicates, accounts of this event differ: either Orpheus is attacked directly on leaving Hades, or he is killed later, because of the way he rejects all women after Eurydice's death and prefers the company of boys. This aspect of the myth indicates a potential site for disruptive reading within the different versions of the story - despite the dominant valorisation of Orpheus as the archetypal poet in both Romanticism and modernity. If the versions of the myth in which Orpheus is treated as an enemy by the revelling women are privileged, this suggests that his botched attempt to rescue Eurydice need not simply be regarded as the source of his tragic genius, but can instead be read as an act for which he must be held accountable. Nonetheless, this perspective seems to be covered over by the final part of the Orpheus myth, for though Orpheus is dismembered by the Maenads, he does not die; instead

> his head, floating down the river Hebros continued to sing and prophesy, and his lyre continued to sound, until both were finally washed ashore on the isles of Lesbos, subsequently the site of an oracle of Orpheus.[44]

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[44] Strauss, pp. 5-6.

In the end, Orpheus does not need his lost beloved to link him to the infinite darkness beyond life. Instead, his disembodied voice transcends death and fragmentation as it springs to life all on its own, passing continuously between the two realms, between the bounded and the unbounded, singular existence and its dissolution. In this way, even Eurydice's foundational role as a dead body is erased from the myth. Whilst Orpheus's sublime voice is immortalised in his songs, Eurydice disappears into darkness for a third and final time. In the end, it is not only the topography of the myth, but the space of literature and myth itself that belongs to Orpheus.

Hence the radicality of Goll's disruptive invocation of this myth. Though Venera turns back, hers cannot be an Orphic turn bridging life and death, the finite and the eternal. As we have seen, Venera and Ylone are at home neither in the limitless infinity beyond space and time, which so frightens Ylone, nor in the bounded everyday world, to which Venera returns no longer herself. On the contrary, in turning back Venera recovers another time, freeing herself and Ylone from the unlimited realm beyond all spatio-temporal existence, as well as from the deathly separation of *irrelazione* which awaits them in Claudio's world. Yet in refusing the topography which structures Orpheus's sublime journey, Venera also refuses to be contained by the impassive darkness to which Orpheus consigns Eurydice, whom he will see only as lacking. Instead, when she turns back, Venera transforms the female space of Eurydice from the dark and self-contained realm of death, into a fertile abundance uncontainable by the boundaries that delimit Orpheus's gaze.

Far from returning her to the defining moment of the myth as seen from Orpheus's perspective, Venera's "turn" constitutes a refusal of a topography structured by boundaries separating one from another, and transforming (a)

woman into lack. She releases the female beloved from a chaste and self-enclosed night, and returns Eurydice to a lived relationality. Here gaps are not deathly voids carefully circumscribed by the limits of vision, but instead become sites of productive permeability, like the window which allows Ylone's room to be immersed in the garden. Whereas for Blanchot and Rilke, Orpheus is rooted in lack, and Eurydice in *irrelazione*, Venera's identity as a storyteller does not depend on a sublime ability to recapture in song the infinite absence and separateness of her beloved's female form. Instead, Goll's tale recalls a mode of selfhood where one is rooted within otherness, in a growth shared between them which would allow both to take shape, to ripen and to be sung together.

The Darkness Unseen by Orpheus

The shadowy past remembered by Venera is irrecuperable both by the logic of the original Orpheus myth and by the framework of Blanchot's re-writing. Ylone is embodied within a space that is not structured by boundaries delimiting her female form as the dark essence of lack or as sterile self-containment. The female relationality to which Eurydice is returned through Venera and Ylone constitutes a different mythic past, one which opens up future possibilities whose potential is no longer determined by the limitations of a male gaze. Blanchot, like Orpheus, remains blind to Eurydice except as an essential "outside" and "other". Both are like Claudio, who as Venera notes, murders Ylone not just with the demands he makes on her appearance/s, but above all because he remains unaware of the real sacrifice Ylone is making: "Er mordete dich langsam mit seiner Ahnungslosigkeit, die dich nicht schützte vor

dir selber und deine Demütiging annahm, weil sie nichts von ihr wußte."[45] As was shown in the previous chapter, the manifold life with Venera that Ylone has lost cannot even be recognised within Claudio's reductive gaze. Similarly, Blanchot and Orpheus cannot see that the real sacrifice, the real loss, is of Eurydice's potential to live differently, to live as a woman and not just to die as Orpheus's "other".

Thus, in another image, it is Claudio who Ylone angrily positions as Orpheus:

> Es gab kaum ein Gefühl, in dem ich dich allein ließ, und ich habe mich bemüht, dir nachzuwerden. Aber du kamst niemals dahin, wo ich mir selbst am dunkelsten war. Ich bin immer allein geblieben mit meinem Gefühl, das du aussetztest in die Welt und dessen Sehnsucht nach Erhörung schrie hinweg über die Zeit.[46]

Claudio is the demanding male Orpheus who expects his Eurydice to follow his every footstep, to take part unquestioningly in his story, to model herself on him. Her feelings, on the other hand, are exiled, here into the world rather than into the night, but into a realm alienated from life nonetheless: they scream away through time, endlessly longing to be heard. Ylone's words are those of an angry Eurydice, more like the furious woman given a voice of her own in H.D.'s powerful poem "Eurydice", than Rilke's or Blanchot's impassive flower of the night.

Goll's text resonates strongly with this poem, written by another woman at around the same time (during the 1914-18 war); both texts are filled with the

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[45] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 221. "He was slowly killing you with his ignorance, which didn't protect you from yourself and which accepted your humiliation because it knew nothing about it."

[46] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 223. "There was hardly a single feeling in which I left you alone, and I made every effort to follow you/become like you. But you never came to the place where I was darkest to myself. I have always remained alone with my feelings, which you cast out into the world and whose longing to be heard cried across time." Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 223.

same passionate desire to tell it from Eurydice's perspective. Claudio, with his greedy, possessing gaze, is as arrogant and ruthless as Orpheus, who is so obsessed with his own life that he is prepared to try and reclaim Eurydice from Hades, whatever the cost to her:

> so for your arrogance
> and your ruthlessness
> I am swept back
> where dead lichens drip
> dead cinders upon moss of ash;

> [...]

> why did you turn back,
> that hell should be reinhabited
> of myself thus
> swept into nothingness?[47]

At the end of this poem, Eurydice reasserts her own self-presence, turning Rilke's closed self-containment into the strength of self-relation. Cavarero has argued that H.D.'s Eurydice turns her anger into a kind of autonomy, rewriting her own story to create a space where she loves not Orpheus but herself:

> At least I have the flowers of myself,
> and my thoughts, no god
> can take that;
> I have the fervour of myself for a presence
> and my own spirit for light; [48]

However, Cavarero also suggests that this Eurydice still lacks a productive relation to an other.[49]

From this perspective, it is crucial that Ylone's charge against Claudio is not that he has failed to turn towards her as a dark realm of self-presence, or that he has failed to grasp or uncover the essence of her being. Rather, it is that despite Ylone's continual efforts to follow him, he never made any effort to turn

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[47] H.D., "Eurydice", in *H.D. Collected Poems, 1912-1944*, ed. Louis L. Martz (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1984), pp. 51-55 (p. 51); from "The God" (1913-1917).
[48] H.D., "Eurydice", p. 55.
[49] See Cavarero, *Tu che mi guardi*, pp. 138-9.

towards those spaces where she was darkest to herself. He failed to enter into a relation with Ylone that would have allowed her to explore the dark otherness within her; in this way she would have been able to establish her own identity by relating to herself, instead of merely becoming his mimicking copy. Only with Venera does she find a mode of loving inter-relation which finally allows these dark spaces to be explored.

Thus in this image, Ylone/Eurydice is not merely condemned to eternal night, but desires to embrace a darkness within as a space where she relates to herself, rather than to Claudio. Goll turns the focus of the myth back onto what should remain invisible: her Eurydice does not simply disappear, but demands that the darkness which belongs to her should be explored as a site within which she lives and will go on living as more than man's absented "other". Ylone's words demand that her shadow is no longer merely thought of as lack, but as a site of selfhood, within which her own identity will emerge only as it becomes possible to relate her-self to an already incorporated otherness.

Such a self is explored in Goll's later image of the mosaic, where the gaps between the pieces, the dark interstices shared between one and another, become sites of interrelation producing the patterns of both self and other together. However, it is in a musical image that Goll most powerfully re-imagines Eurydice's dark absence, transforming it from deathly lack into a resonating space of becoming. Reclaiming the art associated with Orpheus, she produces an image which uses music to disrupt both the topography of bounded identity and the oppositional self-other relations organised by the (male) gaze; at the same time, as I will show, her image suggests an alternative mode of female selfhood based in a more fluid relationality.

A Resonating Darkness of Becoming

As was discussed in the previous chapter, when Ylone finally leaves Claudio and returns to Venera, she finds the home she is looking for in a space shared with her female beloved, where each grows in strength through the other. However, she has been left blind to herself by the time spent with Claudio; thus on first leaving him, she sees without seeing: "Du sahst mich, ohne zu sehen."[50] Her panicked gaze finally settles on Venera. At this point, we can return to an image discussed in the previous chapter as disrupting the dynamics of neo-platonism by refiguring the glance shared between lover and beloved. Given here in full, this image takes on further connotations when read in the light of the Orpheus/Eurydice theme. The moment when Ylone's glance comes to rest in/on Venera - the moment when Ylone begins to see differently - is encapsulated by Venera in a musical image: "Dein Blick wurde fester, hielt auf mir aus wie eine Fermate, sah mich und dich in mir und wußte."[51]

The moment when Ylone sees both herself and Venera *in* Venera constitutes a moment of suspended self-recognition, in which Ylone's gaze rests on Venera like a musical pause - a *Fermate*. The *Fermate* is the holding of a note or notes beyond their notational worth. The *Brockhaus-Wahrig Deutsches Wörterbuch* defines the *Fermate* as a "Verlangerungs-, Aushaltezeichen über einer Note oder Pause, deren Wert dadurch auf unbestimmte Zeit verlängert wird."[52] The *Fermate* is thus an undetermined expansion of time which nonetheless will come to have its own determinate shape. It can be marked over notes or a rest,

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[50] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 222. "You saw me without seeing."

[51] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 222. "Your gaze became steadier, dwelt on me like a *fermate*, saw me and you in me and knew."

[52] "Sign denoting a lengthening or pause, placed over a note or rest, whose value is thus extended for an indeterminate time"; *Brockhaus-Wahrig Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 6 vols. (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus; Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1980-84), II (1981), 711.

forming a musical space that can incorporate both sound and silence. The pause cannot be strictly separated from the initial playing of the notes whose sound is suspended, still reverberating, but whose time does not simply stop: even in silence, sound resonates, time deepens, as tonalities are allowed to expand beyond a regular beat. Within the suspension of the *Fermate*, sound moves not in a linear progression, but in a vibration across its own dimensions. These dimensions give shape not only to the time of the pause itself, but resonate across and through the music. In effect, the suspended notes emphasise certain harmonies, but also take on certain resonances according to how they connect to the piece as a whole. The *Fermate* is not closed in irretrievable and absolute unity: its sound shapes, and is shaped by, a continuum of change from and into which it seeps.

Thus, when Ylone's eyes come to rest as in a pause, she does not only see herself in Venera but also sees Venera. As was seen in chapter five, Venera's doubleness indicates that she is not simply a reflective surface in which Ylone sees only *herself* more clearly. There is no single site of Venera's identity onto which Ylone can be completely mapped. Rather, Ylone sees herself in an other together with this other: self and other co-exist without merging into one. Ylone's recognition that the way to rediscovering her lost identity lies in seeing herself both *within* and *together with* Venera, functions not only as another disruption of the oppositional gaze that divided Plato's lover from his beloved. It also radically disrupts the gaze of Orpheus, who sees the suspension of time only as the deathly darkness of Eurydice's self-containment, from which she must be rescued; for Ylone and Venera, on the contrary, temporal suspension is not deathly, but filled with potentialities that grow through relationality.

Thus, in a dark suspension shared with Venera, Ylone finds a space which is not structured by boundaries closing off the "other", a spatiality where the "other" is neither reduced to a flat surface of reflection, nor to an endlessly sealed passivity. Rather, Venera opens a space structured by the shape of her relation with Ylone, both as her "other" and as part of herself. Neither Ylone nor Venera singly determine what can be seen of them: what can be seen is the shared space of their relationality. Ylone's singular, different identity can be found only through a fluid spatiality in which the two women are gathered together. Venera is thus more like the concave eye of the inky *Fermate*, the curved sign which signifies a musical pause. She gathers together a space between herself and Ylone where each can be identified more clearly as their harmonic inter-relations are suspended and given space to re/sound. Like the space between one moment of music and the next, Venera provides a resting place where the movement of relationality is temporarily stilled. Within her dark span, the resonances between one self and an other can be more fully perceived, their depths explored before they move on again in a multiplicity of possible harmonies, where they will sound differently because certain tones and timbres have been emphasised, drawn out, thickened. Containment dissolves into a manifold of harmonic intervals, within which both difference and differentiation can be produced.

In this image, Goll turns to music to radically reimagine the gaze that links one to another. For Claudio and Orpheus, self-definition depends on a gaze that establishes their identity in opposition to a female "other", from whom they are separated as by the solidity of a dark and impenetrable glass. However, for Ylone and Venera, as for Eurydice, identity cannot be found in self-containment: securing their boundaries against their male "other" only fixes

the women as inverted copies of his form, as dark and deathly shadows of his ruthless self-assertion. Instead, for these female lovers, self-relation emerges only through a fluid and shared gaze which passes between them like resonating harmonics. Each comes into view through a space suspended between them, whose very absence of pre-determined form entails that spatio-temporal boundaries are not fixed in advance. In the *Fermate*, vibrations shape spaces in time that can incorporate both sound and silence - both presence and absence - which are no longer divided into separate realms but enmeshed within one another. The female selves which unfold in the dark eye of the *Fermate* are seen with the ear. Their forms emerge like the resonances that reverberate in a musical pause, where there is room both for jarring discords and for chance harmonies, for likeness and difference, sounds whose potentialities take shape together.

Neither Ylone nor Venera can be identified as the subject or object of this gaze which holds them together like music. Instead, both are shaped through a darkness filled with a resonating relationality, such that each always incorporates the other. Within this musical space-time, Eurydice's darkness is no longer lack; she is no longer the unpresentable, inessential sister of Lyotard's Isis. Instead, the dark suspension of the *Fermate* is protected by that other Isis, the powerful Isis who remains, from the perspective of the male subject, an absolute absence. It is this darkness shared between two women in self-relation that cannot be seen by Claudio or Orpheus. Like the darkness of Kant's veiled Mother Nature, this absence cannot be contained by reducing it to the elusive "something" which lacks the spatio-temporal forms that would allow it to be seen by the male subject. This is not Blanchot's "other night", or Lyotard's "unpresentable within presentation". On the contrary, it is as if the darkness of

Isis beyond man's space-time frame has been filled with the resonances of a different and manifold space-time. This darkness is an absence shaped by a relationality which does not need to construct oppositions between "self" and "not-self" - or even "presence and "absence" - for identity to emerge. In this darkness, selves emerge together as their singularity unfolds from shared becomings.

Hence Venera swears revenge on Claudio both for his blindness, and for having reduced herself and Ylone to a single object specularised by his gaze: "Ich hatte ja nicht nur seine Blindheit zu rächen, nein, vor allem, daß er dich genommen und uns beide gemeint hatte."[53] Claudio's crime in seeing the two women as one is not that of failing to properly distinguish two individual unities; rather, he is blind to the way in which his female beloved might not fit into any model of self-contained identity. Like Orpheus, he sees his beloved only as his shadowy "other", and thus any female object of his gaze is mapped onto the same dark space, filled with all that is "external" to his living form. His deathly specularity makes it impossible for him to see that the limits of his beloved's existence might not coincide with the limits of his vision: Ylone's self is inherently manifold, she contains otherness *within*.

Goll uses a contrasting musical image to suggest the reductive relationality on which Claudio's love is based. Ylone writes that when she was with Claudio, her love "umspannt dich [. . .] von Kopf zu Füßen wie eine Oktave."[54] Her love is here reduced to an encompassing unity, to the musical relation which emphasises sameness and the power of the tonic, such that

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[53] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 225. "I had to take revenge not just for his blindness, no; above all, that he had taken you and meant us both."
[54] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 224."My love encompasses you [...] from head to toe like an octave."

though two notes are played they sound as one, each reinforcing and repeating itself in the other. For Claudio, as for Orpheus, the beloved disappears to become only a dark reflection of himself, like the darkness of two different notes on the stave which are nonetheless the same. Ylone and Venera, however, are animated by the "rauschende" flight of the piano-music which sweeps through the wood of Ylone's dark hair ("deines nächtlichen Haares") like a strange bird ("ein fremdländischer Vogel").[55] As noted in the previous chapter, this music allows otherness and change to resonate through the darkness of female materiality; its sound is uncontainable and inexpressible within Claudio's reductive harmonies. Instead, Ylone and Venera's music will open out until it resounds with the manifold space-time of the *Fermate*.

So strong are the identities which develop in this living darkness, that Ylone is able to take her leave of Claudio's world with a final gesture of generosity. She wishes him on his way with a blessing:

> Den Weg, den du gehst, sollen Sonnen- und Mondblumen säumen, und paradiesische Schmetterlinge sollen vor dir Frühling tanzen. Ich werde dir viele Jahre nachsehen auf diesem Wege, den du ohne mich weitergehst, und wenn du dich einmal umsiehst, weil es dunkel wird, wird dir mein Lächeln wie ein Licht entgegenleuchten.[56]

Ylone is here the source of an overflowing life and light. The trajectory of the myth is reversed: it is Claudio/Orpheus who is left alone on a path which leads into the dark and his life which has a confrontation with death as its trajectory. When Claudio looks back - like Orpheus, just once - it will be to look away from the approaching darkness and back towards a time shared with another.

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[55] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 217.
[56] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 224. "May the path that you travel be lined with sun- and moon-flowers and may heavenly butterflies dance out the spring for you. I will watch after you for many years on this path, on which you will continue alone, and when one day you look round, because it is getting dark, my smile will shine towards you like a light."

Although she will not travel on with him, remaining instead with Venera, Ylone will watch after him and rescue him in his moment of fear. Her smile will light his way; it is as if through her own journey of self-discovery with Venera, Ylone rediscovers enough joyful vitality to allow some to spill over into Claudio's world.

Towards the end of the text, just after Ylone has finally rediscovered herself through the mosaic-mirroring, Goll introduces a final image of music. Venera describes how, once the two women are reunited, music flows from Ylone's hands and her voice breaks forth like a song: "Da floß ein leiser Wind aus den Fächern deiner Händen: Musik [. . .]. Und einmal brach deine Stimme zwischen den Tasten auf wie ein Lied."[57] The voice recalls the distant singing from Orpheus which opened the tale, but this lamenting voice has now been transformed. The image can be read as a musical translation of the mosaic-mirroring, in which pattern and order emerge as if through the gaps between the pieces of a mosaic in a productive relationality. For Ylone's voice resounds between the "Tasten". The German word for keys also denotes the touch by which they are played: as a verb, "tasten" suggests feeling one's way towards something. Ylone's is a syncopated voice which emerges between other notes, between the touches through which music flows from her hands. Sounding *between*, her voice takes shape as one note touches on another: her song emerges through a resonant material relationality, it is composed within - and between - other patterns of sound which stream from her fingers and hands.

I have already suggested that a female Orpheus would radically subvert the conception of poetic genius which became associated with Orpheus in the

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[57] Goll, *Der Gläserne Garten*, p. 230. "Then a light wind flowed from the hollows of your hands: music [...] And once your voice broke forth between the [piano-]keys like a song."

nineteenth century, and which continued to be linked to him throughout modernity - as the texts by Rilke, Yvan Goll and Blanchot readily indicate. In Goll's model of a female artist, music is produced through an animate materiality capable of generating harmonious aesthetic forms. In this image, the Kantian model of transcendent genius which so influenced the Romantics, is thoroughly undermined. For Kant, as was indicated in chapter three, genius is an imaginative power to re-schematise nature to represent concepts and ideas through a materiality considered inert and incapable of shaping itself. The productions of Kant's genius cannot be determined in advance, but involve re-imagining the potential ordering of this matter so as to communicate ideas or concepts aesthetically. Genius is a talent for capturing and expressing those aspects of human existence which cannot be directly perceived, but which nonetheless form a necessary part of man's perception of himself. A work of genius reflects ideas of the ineffable and the divine, or gives voice to those experiences which seem to transcend any individual instantiation - love, hope, or even death.

Kant's genius was transmuted by the Romantics and their heirs into a male Orpheus.[58] Eurydice not only stands as a metaphor for the passive/dead female matter the artist reworks at will; she is also the archetypal manifestation of that necessary absence which is never directly perceivable and which can, therefore, be endlessly refigured through the art-work. This Romantic model of artistic creativity still fits with Kant's insistence that the work of genius can

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[58] This link seems to emerge at about the same time as Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. See for example (Anon.), *Orpheus in the Underworld*, c.1800, and Pierre-Narcisse Guerin, *Orpheus at the Tomb of Eurydice* (1817). In both cases, Orpheus is represented as an androgynous male, or, in other words, as a male who has transcended the normal male subject-position. See Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: a Crisis in Representation* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997).

never be determined in advance - Eurydice's role in the Romantic and modern male imagination is to hold open a space for the new and hitherto unimagined. Thus, although for the Romantics as for Kant, genius involves imaginatively transcending the limits of previous schematisations or representations of the world, a certain framework of production nevertheless remains in place - though it also remains unseen. For Kant, works of genius not only express the ideas and concepts shaping the existence of the human (male) subject, but the creative capacity to re-structure the world depends upon a fixed conception of matter as passively malleable. Above all, the Kantian model of genius, adopted and linked to the figure of Orpheus by the Romantics, exemplifies man's capacity to transcend the limiting materiality associated both with nature and with female bodies, by reworking their passive forms until they reflect his own thoughts and ideas.

Ylone's music, on the contrary, is not restricted by the deadening construction of matter as inert or inanimate. Her creativity becomes a power to re-schematise in ways which remain embedded in a resonating materiality: her song emerges through a living, animate and self-shaping touch. This music crystallises in the space of the *Fermate*, where vibrations of sound are neither fixed in advance nor designed to be passively containable. Rather, this music is held within a temporality that allows patterns to emerge and unfold, producing a resonating sensory manifold of harmonic relations. In Goll's text, aesthetic creativity becomes a power immersed within the darkness of a female matter, a power whereby both the female "other" and the material "object" reschematise themselves through their animate and productive materiality.

Thus, through her own poetic exploration of a transformative journey shared between two women, Goll not only rewrites the Orpheus myth in ways

that open Eurydice's darkness into the space-time of a relational female selfhood which refuses to be contained by any oppositional metaphysics. She also rewrites one of the foundational myths of the Western literary imagination to produce a different - and differently gendered - model of creativity. In this way, she releases Eurydice's female voice into a living darkness, a darkness that is no longer the "dead matter" or the "dark and 'pure' centre" to be transformed by a masculine subject. On the contrary, in Goll's subversive text, the singularity of Eurydice's song can be heard as it emerges through an opaque and fluid relationality embedded in a manifold female materiality. In the next chapter, we will see that Goll's reimagining of female matter and selfhood, of creativity and of the spaces between one self and an other, is echoed throughout the poetry of another woman Expressionist whose voice has disappeared into the shadows. Like the sisters in Ylone's sapphic poem in chapter five, the singularity and specificity of the poetic voices of both Claire Goll and Paula Ludwig emerge even more strongly when their texts are placed together and read side by side.

Chapter 7

Transformative Touch:

The Poetry of Paula Ludwig

In the early 1930s, Paula Ludwig and Claire Goll would come to be linked

through the figure of Ywan. Ludwig becomes Ywan's lover in a love-triangle

with an all too conventional pattern: she is around ten years Claire's junior, and

it is Ywan who seems to gain most from an affair which was to cause both

women a great deal of emotional and psychological anguish. Ywan maintained

homes with both Ludwig and Claire throughout the thirties, and he seems to

have found a second muse in Ludwig: the two exchanged love poems which

culminated in Ludwig's collection *Dem dunklen Gott. Jahresgedicht der Liebe* [1932]

and Ywan's *Malaiischen Liebesliedern* [1932-1935].

In a gesture which could only have intensified Claire's feelings of

rejection, Ywan sent her a copy of *Dem dunklen Gott*. Ywan's comments in the

accompanying letter are deeply revealing. He writes that he is sending Claire:

> ein Buch, das nicht ich schrieb, sondern das an mich geschrieben ist. Ein
> Buch, das nicht ich fühlte, aber das durch mich gefühlt wurde. Ein Buch
> also, an dem ich großen Anteil habe, und das doch ganz unabhängig
> von meinem Willen ward.[1]

These remarks arrogantly belittle Ludwig's literary achievements by suggesting

that her new poems were only made possible because she felt the world though

him. Ywan reduces her work to a mere reflection of his own capacity to inspire

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[1] Quoted in *Paula Ludwig: Gedichte*, ed. Christiane Peter and Kristian Wachinger, p. 294.
"A book, that was not written by me, but that was written to me. A book, that I did not
feel, but that was felt through me. A book, then, in which I have played a large part,
and yet that was quite independent of my will."

poetry - even when he is not actively trying. At the same time, his letter ruthlessly emphasises Claire's displacement not only as his beloved, but as his muse and as a writer capable of sharing in his literary life. By insisting on his positive effect on Ludwig's creativity, Ywan's words force Claire to recognise that Paula now fulfils this privileged role.

It is perhaps unsurprising that under this pressure, and as Ludwig and Ywan's affair progressed, Claire attempted suicide in what she herself would later describe as a desparate cry for help. In the end, Ywan returned to Claire, leaving for America with her in 1939. Though force of circumstance was no doubt a contributing factor, nonetheless, Ywan did not make contact with Paula Ludwig again. Their relationship ends during one of the most difficult periods of Paula's life, when she too was fleeing the Nazis, escaping finally to Brazil. In their brief biography of her life, Christiane Peter and Kristian Wachinger note that together with her homesickness, finally losing Ywan made her years in exile some of her loneliest and most unhappy.[2]

The most painfully ironic aspect of this tale is that these two women writers are linked so very differently - and so positively - by their early work. Ludwig's 1920 collection *Die selige Spur* resonates powerfully with the texts by Goll already examined. In these poems, Ludwig undermines the notion of the persistent (male) subject, constructed via boundaries of opposition, which is so central to the Kantian metaphysics of modernity. Like Goll, however, Ludwig displaces this (male) subject by exploring a different mode of selfhood, founded in a fluid relationality. Thus in her poems, selves emerge through transformative encounters with otherness.

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[2] See the afterword in *Paula Ludwig: Gedichte*, ed. Christiane Peter and Kristian Wachinger; p. 296.

In this chapter, I will examine the ways in which Ludwig's poems privilege surfaces and liminal sites which no longer function as impermeable boundaries. Yet her poetry does not figure the collapse of all limits, together with the very possibility of selfhood, as do the poems by male Expressionists examined in chapter two above. Though Ludwig's poems subvert any oppositional differentiation of inner/outer, active/passive, containing/ contained, she also replaces these structures, exploring different modes of shaping identity through music and touch. As I will show, whereas Goll's texts tend to emphasise a reciprocal relationality, Ludwig's poems often figure more complex and unequal power relations. However, like Goll, she takes risks that sometimes return her poems to an imagery which reinscribes troublingly conventional models of female identity. Whilst recognising this, I will argue that her work can nonetheless be positioned alongside Goll's as radically re-imagining both selfhood and creativity in ways that allow female selves and voices to emerge.

Hence this chapter will conclude with a close reading of a poem by Ludwig which embodies the shared poetic concerns of both writers. In *Die Ferne steht*, Ludwig uses the image of a distantly vibrating harp to re-write the structuring of space, time and selfhood. Between the strings of this lyre, she creates an imaginative site that resonates with an animate darkness, a darkness wherein Goll's female subjects - Ylone, Venera, and Eurydice - would also feel quite at home.

Transformative Touch

Despite Hermann Kasack's later favorable comparison of Ludwig's early work to that of Berthold Brecht, in his introduction to the first edition of *Die selige Spur*, he outlines a gendered account of literary genius which privileges Ludwig precisely because she lacks any active artistic capacity:

> Obgleich es selbstverständlich scheint [. . .], daß hier die naive Natur der Frau, [. . .] sich ausdrückt, sei doch in einer Parenthese [. . .] gesagt: Die Dichterin Paula Ludwig war ohne Kenntnis einer etwa vorbildlichen Literatur. [. . .] in ihr wieder auferstanden spricht die einfache Stimme des Volkes, unberührt von fremden Dingen, allein verschwistert dem Wort.[3]

Ludwig's supposed lack of training contributes to making her the archetypal woman writer for Kasack; she is a passive vehicle for "the people's" unmediated simplicity, and will not interfere with their voice through any literary inventiveness of her own. She is reduced to a channel for the "Blut der Unendlichkeit: Vox humana".[4]

Kasack's sentimental vision is fundamentally misplaced on at least two levels. Firstly, though *Die selige Spur* was published when Ludwig was only twenty, by this time she was a single mother supporting herself by working in artists studios in Munich, and was also part of the artistic circle surrounding Stefan George, which included her most famous female contemporary, Else Lasker-Schüler. She can hardly be positioned as the naive innocent, either artistically or existentially.

Secondly, Kasack constructs Ludwig's female nature as unformed receptive matter, through which an eternal genealogy of humanity can be

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[3] Hermann Kasack, in *Die selige Spur*, p. 8. "Although it seems obvious[...], that here the naive nature of woman [...] is revealed, yet it still might be worth adding as an aside[...]: the poetess Paula Ludwig had no knowledge of any exemplary literature.[...] in her is risen again the simple voice of the people, which speaks untouched by foreign things, united only with the word."

[4] Hermann Kasack, in *Die selige Spur*, p. 8. "Blood of eternity: Vox humana".

propogated. She is the instrument through which the pure voice of the "human" spirit can resound without (her) interference. However, her mute passivity as the material through which this voice is transmitted excludes her from being properly part of its active, vocal and incorporeal identity. As Irigaray has shown, this structure whereby female matter acts as the necessary (and necessarily excluded) ground of a "universal" humanity has underpinned Western metaphysics from Plato on - Kasack is certainly not alone. However, as I will show, Ludwig's poems themselves work to destabilise both the construction of matter and receptivity as passive, formless inertia, and the notion of a single and unified "human" voice.

Ludwig's poems explore the dynamic shaping of selfhood through a succession of intense and transformative encounters with otherness. In many of her poems, these encounters are figured through and across an animate materiality, yet the stretchy and fluid corporeality figured in her poems is importantly different from the aggressively animated matter which dominates the work of her male contemporaries. As was shown in chapter two, the latter figure a crisis of (male) subjectivity as man loses the ability to regulate the world around him, and, above all, to secure stable subject-object boundaries; man becomes the victim of chaotic forces which erase the very structures of his identity. Invaded by these forces, he becomes no more than a passive effect of their active flux, a passivity in which he takes an almost masochistic delight (cf. Heym), or which he embraces as an escape from a suffocating rationality (Benn).

As I will show, Ludwig's poetry is not pervaded by the same sense of crisis or loss, because she is not seeking to escape from a bounded self whose enduring identity depends on being constructed *against* an excluded other. In her poems, the limits of the self are no longer constituted by boundaries

separating self and other, inside and outside - limits that are presupposed and then broken down by Expressionists such as Heym and Benn. For Ludwig, on the contrary, the limits of identity are determined by the extent to which a self can stretch, change and incorporate otherness.

Thus Ludwig figures the contact on and between boundaries which no longer behave like boundaries should. In her poem "Es gehen Schritte", the very walls of her room become living membranes transferring the sound of the street to her, as this extract shows:

> Es gehen Schritte durch die braune Nacht,
> und meines Hauses Mauer fängt
> und übergibt sie mir.
> Es lacht nicht ohne Grund ein Schrei durch mein Gehirn.
> Es gehen viele, die ich niemals höre,
> Nur diese höre ich.
> Es rührt kein Haar sich mehr auf meinem Scheitel,
> und draußen fällt kein Tropfen, den ich nicht empfände.[5]

Sounds from "outside" are here transferred to "inside", but their very transference disrupts such clear-cut distinctions: the street and the room of the poet are not mutually exclusive. Nonetheless, this transgression of spatial boundaries does not figure the aggressive invasion of domestic and interior space so powerfully protrayed by Wolfenstein. In his poems, as was discussed in chapter two, walls cease to function as effective barriers, they are unable to hold anything out but are constantly ruptured by the sights and sounds of the city. The subject loses his individuality as his interiority is absorbed into a depersonalised flux; his identity is emptied out into non-organic exteriority.

In Ludwig's poem, however, the walls are not simply broken through; they do not fail to function as effective barriers. Instead, they become absorbtive

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[5] *Die selige Spur*, p. 15. "Steps go through the brown night,/ and the wall of my house catches them /and hands them over to me./ A cry laughs, not without reason, through my brain./ Many go, who I never hear,/Only these do I hear./ Not a hair moves any longer on my head,/ and outside not a drop falls that I would not feel."

membranes which do not just "let in" any sound, but actively capture the footsteps and transfer them to the poetic subject. In this way, the walls become sites of an active transmission, leading not to a loss of identity but to a state of heightened awareness: the poetic self here incorporates the sounds passed over to her from the night, which produce an intensification of feeling.

Moreover, this poetic self is not open to any and all sounds, but seems to receive only those to which it is already attuned (lines 5-6). Though self and world are no longer positioned as mutually exclusive realms, identity is not thereby dissolved into a senseless shriek. There are still reasons - "grounds" - for this poetic subject's pain (line 4): this is a self who actively awaits a particular encounter, rather than being overwhelmed by any and every external noise. In this poem, then, the walls which might once have functioned as boundaries have not simply disappeared; on the contrary, they have become resonating sites, across which a self is actively shaped through specific encounter/s with otherness.

As was shown in chapter two, in Wolfenstein's poems, the breakdown of the subject–object relation is figured by a dangerous thinness of the skin. As bodily unity is threatened, so too is a metaphysical conception of identity as securely "contained" within an impenetrable body. For Ludwig, bodily surfaces act as neither boundaries nor barriers protecting an unchanging identity. Instead, as can be seen in her poem "Karli Sohn", her texts explore an embodied idneity that is not constructed via fixed limits but is always in flux, seeking the touch of an otherness which may come via the hands or the skin or via a word - which for Ludwig is no less material or intense than the touch of a finger:

Ich fühle noch immer die Stelle,
wo die scheuen Flächen deiner Hände
mich berührten.
Deine Worte fallen so selten
wie Gesang schwermütiger Vögel
tropfenweise übers Land.

Gräser sind meine Haare
und fangen die Tropfen für meine wachsende Stirne.
Um dein stilles Gesicht
möchte ich meinen ruhlosen Gram legen,
und immer will ich
deiner kindhaften Hände gedenken,
wenn die Sonne sich wendet.[6]

The poem is affectionately addressed to an other who is positioned as a child

and son. This is not only made explicit in the title, but by the invocation of the

childlike hands and still face in the second stanza, whose peaceful embodiment

is contrasted with the poetic self's restless grief.

In the first stanza, this poetic subject "still feels the place" where she was

touched by this child's hands: this was a gentle, tentative touch, not an

aggressive violation, and its memory is retained in the flesh. Through her body,

the poet recalls the words of the other, which fell intermittently over the land

like the song of a melancholy bird. However, in stanza two, it becomes apparent

that it is this poetic subject's own body which has become the landscape over

and onto which these droplets of song fell. Her hair collects the fluid sounds for

her forehead, whose growth seems to feed off the volume of words it receives.

The image of the growing forehead suggests not the swelling of a

container which internalises the droplets, but a gradual spreading outwards,

pool-like, of the brow. As it gathers up the words, this brow permits the

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[6] *Die selige Spur*, p. 25. "I can still feel the place/ where the shy surfaces of your hands/ touched me./ Your words fall so rarely/ like the song of melancholy birds/ drop by drop over the land.// My hair is grasses/ which catch the drops for my growing brow./ Around your calm face/ I would like to lay my restless sorrow/ and I want always/ to remember your childlike hands/when the sun turns around."

embodied identity the poetic "I" to expand in a growth which depends neither on wholly appropriating the child's words, nor on being transformed from the outside by its song. The collecting droplets of song and the growth of the forehead cannot be separated, yet they do not simply merge into one; instead, they become bound together in a growth through which both the words and the listening body that receives them are transformed. The brow provides a site where the child's words can collect and coalesce into a more coherent whole, in a growth which simultaneously nourishes the poetic subject, whose embodied identity develops alongside and with the growing pool of song.

Hence this forehead is neither a wall of containment excluding the other, nor a site through which words are passively transfered to an inner realm of consciousness and understanding. Rather, its bodily surface opens out, becoming a site where both words and body, both the child's voice and the identity of the poetic self, are shaped together through a fluid morphology of mutually responsive growth. In this poem, the touch shared between the poetic "I" and its childlike other is not destructive but restorative; it allows the poetic self to be returned to a mode of embodiment where identity grows through transformation and change which is not incessantly restless, but gradual and productive.

Ludwig's poem is particularly disruptive when read against the traditional Romantic alignment of the brow with artistic genius. In Romantic portraiture in particular, the forehead of the male genius was often depicted as reflecting light.[7] Such images can be read as representing both the light of inspiration which fires the artistic imagination, and the light thrown back onto

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[7] See Christine Battersby, "Genius and Portraiture", National Portrait Gallery Lecture, 1989 (unpublished).

the world through works of genius. In Ludwig's poem, however, the brow no longer functions as a metaphor for a creativity which belongs to an *inner* realm of the imagination. Instead, language is a song which is gathered into a coherent unity by the brow itself, which functions as a material site capable of both incorporating and shaping otherness through a mutual growth. This forehead neither contains nor reflects the creative activity of a transcendent, individualised subject who reworks inert materials through his art. Rather, the the child's song allows the brow itself to grow and take shape, whilst the specificity of the child's voice only coalesces through the brow's (self-) transformative potential.

Thus, though the child's words are active - falling like birdsong - they cannot be identified with the inspired immateriality of the *logos*, inscribed on the forehead as on an inert *tabula rasa*. Just as Ylone's song was composed between the touches of the keys, this child is held in relation to an embodied other through a fluid touch, wherein the forehead's receptivity becomes an active shaping of both self and other. Thus as in Goll's *Der Gläserne Garten*, in Ludwig's poem, order is created by and through active matter: the child's differentiated voice emerges through an animate, (self-)shaping materiality.

By privileging the growing brow as the site of this materially embodied creativity, which shapes both identities and song, Ludwig can be read as returning - albeit subversively - to the origins of the link between the forehead and genius. Ludwig's depiction of creative forces working through the forehead points back to the early Romans, who, as Battersby notes, "seem to have inhabited a pre-dualistic universe, in which the spiritual was an aspect of the (male) body, instead of being merely temporarily housed (Christian-fashion) in

human flesh."[8] Specifically, the early Romans connect genius to the forehead: "It was his forehead, not his genital organs, that a Roman male touched whilst honouring his *genius*."[9]

Battersby indicates that this link between genius and "male sexuality in its most noble form" (the forehead rather than the genitals) already pre-figures later conceptions of genius as a purely spiritual talent that remains no less male for being (ostensibly) disembodied.[10] Ludwig, on the contrary, returns to the connection between the forehead and genius to rework those later more dualistic conceptions of aesthetic capacity, in an image which insists on the material embodiment of the power to create. She disrupts the Western metaphysical tradition of associating matter with passive reproduction and inert objects; like Goll, she re-locates creativity within a generative maternal matter with the capacity to shape both aesthetic wholes (the singing voice of the child) and coherent selves (the poetic subject and the child).

Magical Matter; Resonating Potentialities

The forehead is re-appropriated in this way by Ludwig in several poems, including "Erwin Kalser", which incorporates several of the themes discussed thus far:

> Wie ein Meer bist du über wühlenden Wassern.
> Ich taste über deinen Strand
> und sammle die Körner des Sandes.
>
> Deine Stimme ist durch den Mond gegangen
> und über viele Steppen,
> ehe noch dein Mund war.
> Deine Hände aber sind immer schon
> bei deiner Stimme gewesen.

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8 Battersby, *Gender and Genius*, p. 81.
9 Battersby, *Gender and Genius*, p. 81.
10 Battersby, *Gender and Genius*, p. 81.

> Wo du gehst, stehst, wo dein Gang verhallt,
> springt nicht heimliche Flut aus der Tiefe?
> Ein Strahl wird zu blauem Stahl,
> und eine Glocke, die klingt -
>
> Und ich weiß
> wenn ihr Ton anrührt meine Stirne,
> werde ich traurig sein.[11]

The poem opens with a disruptive image of depth: the addressee - in this case, presumably Erwin Kalser - is a sea over raging waters. This recalls Goll's image of the seven veils like seven seas; Ludwig's opening line also refuses a topography oriented around a stable or hidden ground, and instead multiplies fluid depths.

I would like to draw particular attention to several aspects of this poem which connect to the key themes of touch and materiality. In the second stanza, the poet gives a kind of poetic genealogy of the voice and identity of the other she is addressing. These lines describe how the other's voice passed through the moon and across many steppes, before his mouth came into being. At first, these images seem to invoke the spiritual journey of a disembodied self which resides in the breath like the Platonic soul, and which is only attached later to a body. However, such a reading is immediately subverted: this self's voice was always accompanied by his hands. The voice which undertakes spiritual journeys of mythic proportions thus seems to require the support of the body-parts most closely associated with the activities of shaping and forming - as well as writing.

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[11] *Die selige Spur*, p. 17. "You are like a sea over churning waters./ I feel over your beach/ and gather the grains of sand.// Your voice has gone through the moon/ and over many steppes,/ even before your mouth existed./But you hands have always/ been with your voice.//Where you go, stand, where your steps die away,/ does a secret flood not leap out of the depths?/ A ray of light becomes blue steel./ and a bell that rings - //and I know/ when its tone touches on my brow,/ I will be sad."

Hence in this poem, the development of a voice is again aligned with an animate materiality. Moreover, Ludwig's image also avoids essentialising identity by merely inverting traditional metaphysical oppositions: this voice is not simply determined by a pre-given biological body, but instead, hands and voice journey and develop together. They are shaped by their encounters with the moon and the steppes, a powerful mythological landscape evoking a temporality embedded not in eternal and immaterial Forms, but within the complexity of geological and stratified matter.

Once again, transformative capacities here reside in a materially embodied self: in stanza three, the other is not portrayed as consciously calling up the secret floods from the deep, but, on the contrary, they spring forth unbidden from where he stands, from where his foot falls. This is a magical capacity for transformations which work through matter in alchemical fashion, a magic manifested in the words of the poem itself. In the third line of this stanza, a playful, punning metamorphosis effects a transformation of sense; words again become inky monsters, which seem to generate their own meanings by changing their material composition. As the letter "r" disappears, "Ein Strahl" is turned into "Stahl": a ray of light metamorphoses into a blade of blue steel.

Throughout this poem touch is again the privileged sense. Not only is the journeying voice accompanied by the hands but, in the first stanza, the poetic "I" *feels* her way across the beach which edges the waters of the other. As the poetic "I" collects grains of sand from this beach, she seems to be gently gathering some of this otherness for herself. This activity is *not* a damaging appropriation; instead, as the image of the grains of sand suggests, this other is composed of a vast multiplicity, and can easily allow himself to spill over into

someone else's hands. In this way, Ludwig's image again stages a contact between one self and an other on a liminal site which is no longer a boundary or barrier, but which allows for a *transformative touch shared between two*.

Such a touch is encapsulated in the final lines of the poem. The magical power explored in stanza three has conjoured up a bell, whose resonating tone is also a touch. This sound seems to communicate the absence of the other not by moving an inner soul, but via the forehead: the poetic "I" will feel sad when the bell's sound touches her brow. Once again, the poetic self is shaped by the forehead, a sensitive skin, receptive to the vibrations of otherness. Such receptivity is not passivity: though this musical touch profoundly affects the poetic subject, equally, the brow transforms the resonances of a bell into those of emotion.

By privileging the forehead as the permeable site through which selfhood is moulded, Ludwig displaces oppositional distinctions between inner and outer, between what belongs to the self and what to external spatiality. It is not that the sound of the bell is indistinguishable from the affective vibrations into which it is transformed; rather, the sound is a touch which moves between a materially embodied self and the space around it, inhabiting both and inhabiting each *differently*. Moreover, as sound and emotion are transferred through the materiality of this resonant touch, Ludwig's image also implies that the poetic self does not "know" the bell's tone will bring sadness because of a conscious mental premonition. Instead, as in "Karli Sohn" where memory is embedded in the body, this poetic subject's knowing awareness would seem to stem from an embodied, corporeal knowledge of the effect of particular timbres and tones.

Thus, in this poem, as in the two texts already discussed, Ludwig's poetic selves emerge through transformative encounters with otherness - with the grains of sand, the moon and the steppes, the resonating bell. These encounters are shaped by a touch which is not simply the activity of one on another, but a mode of inter-action that depends on a fluid receptivity to alterity. Such receptivity is more than passivity, for it involves a potential not only to be transformed but to productively transform the touch of an other. In Ludwig's poems, the boundaries between poetic self and "otherness" are not and could never be fixed; instead, selves are shaped across resonating sites of active mediation, such as the brow. Hence the permeability of inside and outside, of one and an other, far from being threatening, is a condition of the very emergence of selfhood. .

In Ludwig's poems, therefore, touch is not figured as appropriative, grasping or penetrative: in "Karli Sohn", its fluidity allows for both the pool of song and the poetic self's forehead to grow together without simply becoming one - they remain side by side. In "Erwin Kalser", as in several other poems, Ludwig uses the prefix "an-" (line 14) to suggest this mode of relation between one and another where each remains alongside the other in a touch where neither is wholly active or passive. As the tone touches on the forehead, both sound and brow participate in a touch wherein both are transformed yet neither wholly absorbs or appropriates the other. What becomes part of the poetic self as vibrations of sadness can simultaneously belong to another space as vibrations of sound; tone and timbre are shaped differently in each site according to the specific material conditions through which they resonate.

Throughout her poetry, Ludwig constantly emphasises this capacity of sound to transform that which it touches, whilst simultaneously being

transformed by the material conditions through which it passes. Her images explore the ability of musical sound to communicate through vibration and resonance, which do not respect supposed distinctions between inner and outer but pass through and across bodies, as well as through seemingly empty space. Hence, as in "Erwin Kalser", Ludwig often uses the touch of sound to disrupt traditional metaphysical distinctions between the "immaterial" soul/self and the inert passivity of bodily matter: as the forehead resonates, sound seeps and flows through a self moved to grief by the materiality of musical vibrations.

In this way, the limits of these selves shaped by touch are not determined by fixed and impenetrable boundaries, but by the extent of their capacity to absorb, transform, receive, change, respond to and incorporate sound and "otherness". In Ludwig's poems, musical sound becomes the archetype of a mode of touching which does not *impose* form, but which passes between one and another, between different material sites, awakening their potential for transformation and change. This is reflected in "Daniela", where the poet invokes a figure reminiscent of Kore:

> Wo die Nebel brüten im Tal,
> unterm Herbstlaub,
> schwermütig lag ich -
>
> Dein Antlitz ist ein Kornfeld,
> auf dem die Sonne liegt
> und die Ähren schwer sind.
> Wo dein Fuß über die Erde sprang,
> holen die Lerchen ihren Jubel.
> Dein Blut ist wie Wein von fernen Inseln,
> die ruhlos wandern in blauen Wellen.
> Wie der Frühling
> geht deine Stimme über die Hügel,
> rührend an schlafenden Klängen.
>
> Hoch schlägt es aus Tälern!
> Ich möchte dir eine Blume schenken,
> die immer duftet.

The self which speaks in the first stanza of this poem lies under autumn leaves and wisps of fog; her melancholy repose suggests she may be dead, like the leaves that cover her. [12] I would like to suggest that the second stanza, separated by a dash, is a response to this death, a kind of elegy for the self of the first stanza - who I read as Daniela - in which the poet re-imagines this self as living.

In the second stanza, the dead self is resurrected from under the damp autumn leaves, and becomes a field of ripened corn. Like Kore, she is returned from under the earth to a fecund living realm, full of birdsong. She is animated by an intoxicating blood, born of the harvest like wine, a blood which links her to the islands that wander in blue seas. This image particularly recalls the poem at the centre of *Der Gläserne Garten*, where, as we saw, Goll also invoked the Demeter myth - as well as sapphic sisters from the islands - to explore a female selfhood.

The self portrayed in the second stanza of Ludwig's poem has a magical capacity to produce sound through the materiality of her touch. The larks draw their joy from where her foot falls; the springing rhythm of her step transform into their joyful song. As the melancholy autumnal landscape which embodied the self in the first stanza becomes the fertile world of spring, this self's voice passes over the hills, touching on their sleeping tones. This self does not simply impose order in an adamic naming; neither does its voice autonomously magic a world into being. Instead, this voice shapes itself around the hills by brushing over the sounds whose potential lies already dormant within them; its touch is a

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[12] *Die selige Spur*, p. 36. "Where the mists brew in the valley,/under the autumn leaves,/ I lay melancholy - / Your visage is a cornfield,/ on which the sun lies/ and the ears are heavy./ Where your foot leapt over the earth,/ the larks get their jubilation./ Your blood is like wine from far-off islands,/ which wander restlessly in blue waves./ Like spring/ your voice goes over the hills,/ touching on sleeping sounds.//The hour strikes high from the valleys!/ I'd like to give you a flower /which always smells."

gentle awakening of the sounds of the earth which could bring the world to life *for* this self. Indeed, by the end of the poem, this world seems to have woken from autumn melancholy into jubilant song.

"Daniela" recalls the child-like self in Goll's poem "Die Erwachsene", whose world is shaped by a living and generative materiality. Ludwig's poetic selves, like Goll's, are not constituted by oppositional relations, but instead their fluid potentialities unfold together with those of the world as through a musical, material touch.

Not only does Ludwig figure a mode of selfhood which is not secured by impermeable boundaries separating self and other, but in many of her poems she breaks up the organic unity of the body by attaching unexpected activities or attributes to specific sense-organs or body-parts. In this poetic synesthesia, the forehead receives song ("Karli Sohn"; "Erwin Kalser") and a foot produces sound ("Daniela"), whilst in other poems eyes are burdened with silence, a hand gives out light, eyelashes resonate.[13] Such images disrupt a conception of bodily unity which depends on particular organs being limited to particular functions.

As I have already shown, for male Expressionists like Benn and Heym, rejecting organic unity was a way of dissolving the self-contained (male) subject into unformed flux. However, Ludwig's poems break up the organic body to imagine selves which resonate across a more fluid materiality, whose potential becomings are not determined in advance by conceptions of their end or purpose. Hence her images do not so much reject as re-work poetic and conceptual conventions: she often draws on the established connotations of

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[13] These images appear respectively in "An einen Schauspieler" [*Die selige Spur*, p. 30], "Du kamst gleich einem Stern" [*Die selige Spur*, p. 16], and "Die Ferne steht" [*Die selige Spur*, p. 11]; the last of these will be discussed in detail below.

particular body parts and/or sensory experiences to produce unexpected connections, linking, for example, the creativity associated with the forehead to the power of sound to resonate through matter. In this way, her poetry does not focus on the destruction of the (male) subject, but instead explores the resonating topography of a self whose identity grows with and through the world's materiality.

Sleeping One Within Another

As I have shown, Ludwig's re-imagining of selfhood transforms bodily surfaces from boundaries of exclusion into sites of productive encounter. In so doing, her poems not only disrupt the very possibility of opposing an "inner" self to a wholly "external" world; they also subvert any metaphysics based on the model of the body as a passive vessel or container for an immaterial soul/self. Such a metaphysics is radically undermined by "Wo bist du hergekommen?", another poem in which the forehead becomes a privileged site:

> Wo bist du hergekommen,
> du,
> mit deiner unscheinbaren Gestalt?
> Deines Schöpfers Hände haben zu lange
> auf deiner Stirne gelegen.
> Gib,
> o gib mir diese Stirne mit auf meinen Weg,
> und dieses deines Leibes Wohltat
> begleite mich in meine Nächte.
> Aber deine Gedanken lasse ferne gehen von uns,
> da mir die andere Welt sonst wertlos würde.
>
> Es hat sich mir aus deiner schmerzlichen Einsamkeit
> eine Schale geöffnet,
> in die ich mich nun bergen möchte
> mit der ganzen Musik meines Herzens.
> Wenn ich bei dir bin,
> verlassen mich die spöttischen Dinge des Lebens,
> und deine Ruhe ist so groß,
> daß ich in dir liege
> wie in meinem Schlaf.

In the first stanza, the poetic self asks to be given the forehead of the other to accompany her on her way, a forehead already identified as sensitive and receptive to creative forces in lines 4-5.[14] However, she also demands that the *thoughts* of this other be left far behind: they would ruin the other world towards which she is reaching. Hence for her, this brow is not to serve an inner realm of the intellect, but is to take part in a journey sustained by a bodily strength (lines 8-9).

This suggests a possible interpretation of the previous remark that the creator's hands rested on this forehead for too long: the brow's receptivity can be made worthless if it is reduced to a conductor passively transmitting thoughts from an external deity to an inner self. This creator's touch is damaging: it has made the other a nearly invisible figure and has produced an insubstantial world of thought. Thus the poetic subject can be read as trying to bring a different kind of world into being by linking the receptivity of this forehead to an embodied journey, rather than to a journey of the mind. This self strives not only to transform the world for herself: she is also journeying to restore the other to a life where the spirituality represented by the forehead is no longer separated from a state of physical well-being.

In the second stanza, this mutually transformative and embodied relationality is extended further in ways that radically disrupt Western Christian metaphysics, where an active but immaterial spirit is housed in an

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[14] *Die selige Spur*, p. 19. "Where have you come from,/ you/ with your inconspicuous figure?/ Your creator's hands have lain/ far too long on your brow./ Give/ O, give me this brow for my journey,/ and may this favour of your body/ go with me into my nights./ But let your thoughts go far from us,/ as the other world would otherwise become worthless to me.//Out of your painful loneliness/ a shell opened up to me,/ into which I'd now like to hide/ with all the music of my heart./ When I am with you/ the mocking things of life leave me,/ and your peace is so great/ that I lie in you/ as in my sleep."

essentially passive body. In Ludwig's poem, the loneliness of the other opens out like a shell within which the poet hides herself. Yet she does not merely transform his pain by filling him with all the music of her heart, for she lies within him as in sleep: she is in turn filled with his peacefulness, which is strong enough to spread through her, allowing the "spöttischen Dinge des Lebens" to fall away.

Thus it becomes impossible to say for sure who fills who here, or where one self begins and the other ends. Containment is precisely not *self-containment*, but the mutual growth of selves wrapped around one another without becoming simply identical. In Ludwig's image, the poetic self seems to inhabit an outer shell which protects it, yet this shell is made of loneliness and peace which in turn inhabit the self. The "outer" world is no longer an inert materiality, but permeates and transforms the "inner" realm of the subject. Oppositional distinctions between an "inner" realm of the spirit and an "outer" world of (inert) materiality collapse. However, this does not produce chaos, but a shaping of spirit through its embodiment, a mutual shaping of selves with the otherness nestled within them.

In this poem, Ludwig powerfully subverts deeply embedded metaphysical traditions which, as we have seen at various junctures throughout this thesis, solidified in the work of Kant and the Romantics. This oppositional metaphysics positions the receptivity of both materiality and the body as subservient passivity, whilst creative activity is attributed only to the will or imagination of subjects capable of transcending their material embodiment. In "Wo bist du hergekommen", as in the other poems already examined, the risks Ludwig takes with images of the body, spirituality, materiality and touch allow her to generate modes of selfhood that exceed the reductive gaze of the

disembodied (male) subject. However, like Goll, she does not always succeed in displacing the weight of a long metaphysical history which tends to see female matter as a mute vessel for man's soul.

Thus "Bist du der Mensch" invokes a saint-like figure whose capacity to draw the animals close to him suggests the innocent purity of his own embodiment:

> Bist du der Mensch,
> den die Tiere streicheln,
> und vor dem das Licht erlischt,
> einsinkend in sein Antlitz?
> Bist du die Kraft,
> an der anklammernd hangen
> die verfallenden Leiber der Gottlosen?[15]

Light itself sinks into this saintly face, but this is no transformative touch: rather, light fades before features which are as if already illuminated by the purity they embody. This man stroked by the animals inhabits a body transfigured by a divine spirit: the difference between this saviour-figure and the fallen bodies which cling to him is that they are without God (line 7). The poem thus perpetuates the Christian and neoplatonic division between a debased and debasing corporeality and the redemptive force of a divine spirit.

This dualism is also reflected in "Abendwanderung". The poem describes a poetic self ecstatically hearing the voice of another in imagery that is strongly reminiscent of the Annunciation:

> Du sprichst, du sprichst zu mir!
>
> Ich höre und demütig senkt
> meine Schulter sich neben der deinen.
>
> Du schreitest schlicht durch die Dämmerung
> ohne den Glutglanz deines Lebens.

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[15] *Die selige Spur*, p. 20. "Are you the person,/ the animals stroke,/ and before whom the light goes out,/ sinking into his visage?/ Are you the power/ to which cling/ the declining bodies of the godless?"

An deiner Seite steht mein Herz offen,
und Schalen sind meine Hände.

Ich gehe behutsam neben dir,
daß ich nicht trete auf deinen Schatten.[16]

Though the poetic self sinks alongside this ghostly speaker, their relation is structured by a troublingly familiar hierarchy. The poetic "I" does not answer this voice, but mutely opens up to it; as hands become a bowl, this self becomes a physical container that humbly and passively waits to receive the active voice of the other. It is hard not to read this self who patiently and passively follows another as a woman. The living body that here becomes a receptacle for the active word of a deathly other seems to exemplify the reductive conception of female matter in Western metaphysics from Plato onwards. As Cavarero and Irigaray have differently shown, women's generative bodies are reduced to temporary vessels for forms that apparently originate in a disembodied and eternal realm, but which in fact eternally reflect a male subject who sees woman only as his m/other.

Another poem by Ludwig makes explicit the gendering of this divine relation between a powerful voice and the body that desires to contain it, as this extract indicates:

Zeige mir den Weg
zu den schwerschreitenden Frauen,
zu den Männern, leeren Gesichtes,
zu den großblickenden Kindern.
Verleih meinem Antlitz deine Züge,
daß sie mir glauben, wenn ich rede zu ihnen:
Der Freund hat meinen Mund nicht gewollt,
und das Liebreiche meiner Hände nicht angenommen.
Aus der Last seiner Stunde schickte er mich fort,
daß ich erzähle von der Arbeit seines Lebens - [17]

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[16] *Die selige Spur*, p. 22. "You speak, you speak to me!// I hear, and humbly my shoulder/ sinks next to yours.// You stride plainly through the twilight/ without the fiery gleam of your life.// By your side my heart stands open/ and my hands are bowls// I go carefully beside you./ so I don't tread on your shadow."

The poetic self here not only wants to be a disciple for "Der Freund", but desires to take on his male features so that her words will be believable. Moreover, it is precisely the rejection of her own body in all its sensuality by this male lover which makes her a worthy vessel to tell of his work. It is by replacing her mouth with his, and by maintaining the chaste modesty of her body that she can become a channel for him and reach out to the suffering masses.

The poem again strongly invokes a Christian tradition whereby the eternal life of the holy spirit is housed in a materiality that never speaks for itself, and that is aligned with a woman's body only when she remains passively pure and chaste. Ludwig's poem recalls the female mystics of the Middle Ages. However, rather than reminding the reader of the cultural and political activity of a nun like Hildegard of Bingen - who wrote, composed, and corresponded with the religious leaders of Europe - it instead brings to mind the frozen features of the marble statue of Teresa of Avila, transfixed in an ecstatic trance-like state. For Lacan, this female body overcome by the ecstatic reception of divine spirit becomes the archetype of a *jouissance* that makes woman forget herself completely and for ever.[18] This is the mystic critiqued by Irigaray in the central section of *Speculum*: "La Mystérique", a mystic who empties herself out and denies the life of her own body to become a bodily host for the living spirit of a male divinity. Ludwig's female poetic persona in the extract quoted above seems similarly humbled by the fact that "He has chosen *her* body to inscribe His will, even is she is less able to read the inscription, poorer in language,

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[17] *Die selige Spur*, p. 21. "Show me the way/ to the women with heavy tread,/ to the men, empty faces,/ to the wide-eyed children/ Lend your features to my visage,/ so that they believe me when I tell them:/ The (boy-)friend did not want my mouth/ and the lovingness of my hands he did not take./ From the burden of his hours he sent me away,/ so that I would tell of his life's work -"
[18] See Lacan, *Le Seminaire Livre XX: Encore, 1972-3*.

'crazier' in her speech, burdened with matter(s) that history has laid on her".[19]

Though it is possible people may not believe her unless she can speak purely as/of Him, this is a woman who "has been redeemed in all her purity within this absence of all representations of her that now obtains".[20] In this poem, even the chaste female body filled with words that speak for a godlike man is itself covered over by his ascetic features.

The final poem of the collection seems to capitulate to this Christian tradition:

> Ich habe noch niemals nachgedacht,
> was die Priester lehren,
> aber ich fühle an diesem Abend
> noch viele verlassene Dinge
> bereit stehen für mich,
> damit ich sie fände und prüfe.[21]

Such poems are painfully disapppointing when read with others, like "Wo bist du hergekommen". As I have show, the latter offers a sophisticated response to just such Christian traditions, refusing any simplistic metaphysics of containment, and transforming a weakened and asceticised body into the health of a living materiality. Hence Ludwig's more problematic texts need to be situated within a collection that dares to rework notions of selfhood by re-imagining the receptivity which is essential to productive relationality, but which has long been identified in the West with a self-sacrificing female matteriality and passivity. Ludwig cannot always escape this history - but the poems already discussed indicate that she often succeeds not only in disrupting

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[19] Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 198.
[20] Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 199.
[21] *Die selige Spur*, p. 43. I have never reflected/ on what the priests teach,/ but I feel on this evening/ many deserted things still / stand ready for me,/ so that I could find and look at them."

an oppositional metaphysics, but in opening an imaginative site for a different mode of selfhood.

Thus, in another poem, "Es kommen viele Fremde", Ludwig re-aligns a seemingly subservient role with a fecundity which transforms a containing

Es kommen viele Fremde,
und ich fülle ihre Gefäße,
auf daß sie froh seien mit irgendeiner Last.
Aber vergebens suche ich bei dir
die rufende Scholle.
Ich habe für dich die Demut meines Leibes bewahrt,
und die Mannigfaltigkeit meines Mundes
ist einfach geworden an dir.
Warum läßt du mich allein,
wo meine Tage fallende Früchte bedeuten?
O, hätten meine hohlen Hände
deinen Schlummer mitgenommen,
daß du ihn entbehren müßtest
solange,
bis du wieder in mir entschläfst.[22]

Far from being a passive vessel, this poetic self generously replenishes the cups of others. The ambiguous grammar of the second line suggests both that she fills them with happiness in contrast to other burdens they may bear, and that these strangers *need* to be filled, need to carry something with them ("irgendeiner Last"), if they are to be contented. Happiness here seems to depend on receiving otherness from an overflowing self, and carrying it within.

This is confirmed by the following lines. The poetic self appeals to another, whose lack of receptivity she resents. She has looked in vain for the moment when this other might call out to be filled with her fecundity. This

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[22] *Die selige Spur*, p. 26. "Many strangers come,/ and I fill their vessels/ so they may be happy with some burden./ But in vain do I seek in you/ the crying earth./ I have kept the humility of my body for you,/ and my manifold mouth/ has become simple against you./ Why do you leave me alone/ when my days mean falling fruits?/ O, had my hollow hands/ taken your slumber with them,/ so that you had to do without it/ until/ you fall back asleep in me."

other's silence has banished her from the relationality which would make her fecundity a productive gift: her fruits are left rotting on the ground instead of being taken up by a welcoming earth. The intervening lines form a complaint against this other for whom she has given up so much: for him she preserved her body humbly, chastely, and her manifold mouth became simple when held alongside him. The particular poetic self of this text, who embodies a fecund materiality, can thus be read as voicing the anger of a female identity whose complexity has been reduced across history to a simple essence which suits the needs and the form of a (male) subject. She resents the sacrifices she has made for this other, for whose sake she has been transformed, reduced, simplified, essentialised; for it is this very subject who now withdraws from the receptivity through which *she* lives, in which one remains open to an other in a fecund relationality.

In the final lines, this poetic self threateningly wishes she had exerted her power to insist on relationality in a way that recalls the mythical figure of Demeter. Whereas Demeter withdrew fertility from the living until her daughter was returned from the dead, restoring a maternal genealogy, this self wishes she had deprived her ungrateful other of all sleep, until such time as he would be forced to fall asleep within her again. "Entschlafen" means both to fall asleep and to pass away; this sleep may be the death of the separate, self-contained subject, but as he sleeps himself into her, he is returned to a relationality where he is immersed within another.

Thus the fecund receptivity of this poetic self does not make her a passive container for another's life; rather, it lies within the power of this self to shape life on her own terms. She could force the other back from his wilful separation through a punishment from which he would only be released by

s(l)eeping into her encompassing embrace. In this way, she has the power to demand the recognition that he is protected only by remaining in contact with her fluid fecundity, only by returning to a relationality where one is held safely within another without loss.

This power links Ludwig's poetic self not only to Demeter, but to the "containing goddesses" in the Greek stories discussed by Winkler, which were referred to in chapter five above. After enjoying their (male) lovers, these goddesses put them away "in an enclosed space" where they are "forever powerless, quiescent either in perfect sleep or in perfect senescence."[23] Similarly, Ludwig's poetic self could have put her lover to sleep and set him aside safely within her domain; she too is invested with a power that testifies to the relatively short-lived strength of male subjects in comparison to a generative female fecundity. In this poem, the reductive Christian and neoplatonic view of female matter is replaced by a powerful and fecund materiality connected to a different history, one manifold enough to include those Greek goddesses who, as Winkler notes, have tended to slip through the masculinist gaze of the West.

The Productive Asymmetries of Power

In "Es kommen viele Fremde", power is relocated from an essentialising self-contained subject to a self who demands relationality and reciprocity. This reflects an important aspect of Ludwig's texts: the contact between self and other figured in her poems is often portrayed not as an exchange between equals, but as involving more complex and non-symmetrical power-relations. As I have shown, these sometimes revert to a traditional hierarchy where the

[23] Winkler, p. 203.

spirit dominates fleshy matter. However, by refiguring receptivity (especially of the body) as a transformative power rather than as inert passivity, her poems often focus on encounters between one and another over which neither has total control. Hence her poems tend to shift the emphasis away from the conscious exertion of power by autonomous subjects, and onto the formation of power relations which emerge between different and embodied selves.

This process is reflected in "Wo bist du hergekommen". As was shown above, the poetic self implores the other for the gift of his forehead: the success of her own journey depends on receiving this sensitised brow, together with the living goodness of the body to which it belongs. Yet at the same time, this gift will enable her to transform the other by returning him to a healthy embodiment and releasing him from a lonely and insubstantial world of thought.

Thus in this poem, each is differently dependent on the other - one begs for a gift, the other may be transformed without even asking - but nonetheless, they are linked in ways that are hard to unravel and separate. This web of interdependencies is encapsulated in the second stanza, where, as was discussed above, each fills the other differently: the poetic subject is filled with peace that seeps into her from an other whom she fills with music. In this encounter, neither self nor other dominates, but each needs the other differently. As each grows within and through the other, that which is given from one to another is neither aggressively appropriated nor imposed on an unwilling recipient, for the boundaries between them are inherently fluid.

The notion that identity is shaped through a process of conscious and autonomous decision-making is further undermined in several other poems. In the last four lines of "Wenn deine strahlenden Lider sich heben", the poetic self

waits not simply to receive the word and the touch of the other, but in order

that *his* mouth will not remain unrounded:

> Warten will ich in jeder Stunde,
> daß dein Mund nicht ohne Rundung bleibe,
> und deine Hände über meine Wangen
> wieder ziehen ihre selige Spur.[24]

These lines not only evoke a self who patiently waits so that the other's hands

can once again trace their blessed markings on her cheeks; they also suggest that

the other's mouth will only be shaped into speech if it is held in constant

relation to the poetic self who ceaselessly awaits its roundings.[25]

In many poems, the other whose touch or voice or footfall transforms the

world of the poetic subject seems unaware of this magical power - as was

discussed above, such metamorphoses are often represented as alchemical

conversions which are not attributed to an intentional subject (see for example

"Erwin Kalser"). This transformative power is not consciously exerted but

seems more dependent on the responsiveness of the poetic self, who often

implores an other to give of itself, or who responds to a chance touch in ways

that could not have been foreseen by the giver. Indeed, often the other in these

poems seems unaware of the value of what has been given. In "Viele Vögel", the

poetic subject describes waiting at breaking point for the other to call, until

eventually a word falls abruptly into the room:

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[24] *Die selige Spur*, p. 23. "I want to wait through the hours,/ so that your mouth does not remain without rounding,/ and your hands can trace again/ their blessed trace over my cheeks."

[25] "Rundung" means a curve or rounding but also has a technical sense in phonetics, where it means labialisation ("Labialisierung"); see *Brockhaus-Wahrig Deutsches Wörterbuch*, V (1983), p. 450.

Viele Vögel flattern auf,
verzückt im Flügelschlag -

Ich habe gewartet,
meine maßlosen Sinne zerbrechend,
und saß viele ungesuchte Stunden, gebeugt
über das Ausgestreckte meiner Hände.
Aber du riefst nicht.

Bis an diesem Abend
sich dein Wort warf
in mein horchendes Zimmer,
jäh, wie ein fallender Stern.

Nun jagen über die Grenzen des Himmels
die Schreie meiner Freude,
und der Weg zu dir
wandelt sich zum Choral,
wiedergebend die Melodie meiner Füße.

Eine Welt lag in schweren Gewändern,
bis deine Stimme,
lächelnde Allmacht,
die Schwere nahm.[26]

The walls of the listening room in stanza three are alertly sensitive: they are like the walls which captured sounds and passed them over to the subject in "Es gehen Schritte" (see above). Though the poetic subject has waited for the other to call out to it, the word when it arrives seems to fall into the room as if by chance, like a shooting star, unexpected and dazzling.

This arrival is a catalyst: the listening subject transforms this shooting-star word into cries of joy that race over the edge of the sky. This sudden upsurge of movement is powerfully suggested through the repeated *v/f* sounds in the alliterative image of birds taking flight in the opening lines. In the fourth

[26] *Die selige Spur*, p. 18. "Many birds flutter up,/enraptured in the beating of their wings -// I have waited,/shattering my boundless senses,/ and sat for many unsought-for hours, bent/ over the outstretched of my hands./ But you didn't call.//Until this evening/ your word threw itself / into my hearkening room,/ suddenly, like a falling star.// Now over the boundaries of the sky/ the cries of my joy race,/ and the way to you/ changes into a choral,/ performing the melody of my feet.// A world lay in heavy robes,/ until your voice,/ smiling omnipotence,/ took the heaviness."

stanza, the relation of the self to its other is transformed: the strain of endless waiting is released into a joyous choral. However, this music is not the result of a deliberate process of composition, whereby the poetic subject consciously turns the word of the other into a resounding chorus; rather, the choral takes up and performs the melody of the feet.

The path between self and other is transformed on the basis of a corporeal response to the other's word: the waiting self was an embodied self, frozen in supplication, hands outstretched (stanza 2); however, this self waits not for the other to directly free it from stasis, but to receive something from the other which it can translate bodily into patterns of movement. It is from these dancing melodies of the feet that the choral emerges; as their corporeal patterns are transposed into musical figures, the relation between the poetic subject and its world is transformed.

Thus the final description of the other's voice as a "lächelnde Allmacht" sits awkwardly with these central verses, where it becomes clear that neither the poetic self nor the other have complete control over this encounter. The power of the other's voice is bestowed upon it *by* the listening self, whose sensitivity to the potential of a single chance word multiplies its sound into joyous melody and song. Moreover, these metamorphoses do not result from a power deliberately exerted over the word by the poetic subject; rather, as a sudden word becomes cries of joy, which become a jigging melody that turns into a choral, transformations are produced through a process of embodied transpositions and repetitions.

This final stanza points up the unequal power relations inherent in the transformative encounters Ludwig explores. Though the other cannot justifiably be positioned as an omnipotent power, nonetheless, the description of this voice

as all-powerful does reflect the way in which the poetic self is dependent on an otherness over which she does not have control. Yet at the same time, it is this self's world which is stretched into new dimensions by the encounter with the other's word: there is no indication that this joyful transformation is reciprocated, or indeed that it has any effect on the other. Hence, though the world of the self is re-made through the incorporation of an other's voice, the fluid dynamics of their inter-relation allow that this other can also remain elsewhere and absent. The identity of the other is not compromised, even as its word becomes differently embodied by the poetic subject. Thus in this text, as in other poems already explored, the unlikeness and unequalness of self and other is maintained, even when one takes shape through the other's transformative touch.

Hence the mode of selfhood that Ludwig's poetry constantly explores is not without risk. However, her poetic selves are not like the Kantian subject, whose identity is endangered by the "otherness" of a dynamic materiality - by storms, volcanoes and eventually, through the male Expressionists, by the cities - which threatens to penetrate his boundaries and dissolve him. On the contrary, Ludwig privileges selves who are not structured via boundaries of exclusion and opposition, but who grow only through and with an embodied otherness. As we have seen, in her texts liminal sites do not function as solid barriers but, like the forehead, become resonating surfaces across which identities emerge. Hence the dangers inherent to this mode of selfhood result neither from a failure to exclude otherness, nor from the dynamisation of matter. Instead, for these selves that materialise through encounter, the risk lies in not being able to incorporate otherness productively - either because the other withdraws from

contact (as in "Es kommen viele Fremde"), or because the self cannot change

fluidly enough to sustain a transformative encounter.

Fire on Fire: the Touching of Difference/s

The latter danger is powerfully invoked in "Ich wachte und schlief nicht". This

poem encapsulates the mode of selfhood which has emerged from close

readings of Ludwig's poetry throughout this chapter. The identity of this poetic

self is shaped through a non-oppositional relationality embodied in living,

animate flesh:

> Ich wachte und schlief nicht.
> Durch mein Leben springen die Stürme.
> Du bist der Föhn
> und warfst die Fackel in mein lebendiges Fleisch.
> Ich wache und schlafe nicht.
> Ich höre die Flammen heulen
> tief durch mein Blut.
> Du hast meine Finger gelähmt
> und Ohnmacht gesenkt in mein Atmen.
> Wenn deine Wangen in meinen Händen liegen,
> erschrecken meine Sinne
> und mein Glück wird schmerzhaft.
> Ich muß durch die Erde gehen
> und ihre Gluten einlassen in mein Herz,
> daß ich nicht werde wie der Tod,
> wenn du mich anrührst.[27]

This poetic self is inflamed by an other who has thrown a torch into her flesh;

she hears the flames roaring deep through her blood. Their burning heat is not

merely the outward symptom of some "inner" passion: this flesh is living and

animate ("lebendig"). It is the site of an intense encounter between desiring

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[27] *Die selige Spur*, p. 14. "I lay awake and did not sleep./ Storms rage through my life./ You are the foehn/ and threw the torch into my living flesh./ I lie awake and do not sleep./ I hear the flames howling/ deep through my blood./ You have crippled my fingers/ and sunk powerlessness into my breath./ When your cheeks lie in my hands/ my senses start in fear/ and my happiness becomes painful./ I must go through the earth/ and let its glowing embers into my heart,/ so that I do not become like death,/ when you touch (on) me."

selves who - instead of touching across a resonating surface - interpenetrate through flesh and bloody fluids.

However, the poetic "I" retreats from this encounter, whose intensity is potentially dangerous: it not only takes the breath away but cripples the fingers. Without wishing to simply identify Ludwig with the "I" of her poems, in this case, the invocation of the fear being unable to use one's fingers image suggests that such an all-consuming passion holds special fears for the (female) poet: the overpowering desire for/of an other can make it impossible to write, can destroy the possibility of living as a poet, as well as a lover. This burning desire produces a sublime encounter, where pleasure becomes painful in its overwhelming intensity. However, the most interesting aspect of this poem lies in the poetic self's response to this antinomical state, where she reaches the limits of her senses as she becomes immersed in limitless fires within.

If she is to prevent herself becoming like death, if she is not to lose herself completely in the other's touch, she must travel through the earth. However, this journey is not a search for forms of antithetical resistance that would allow her to exclude the other and the fire he brings. On the contrary, she engages in a homeopathic journey, building her resistance not only by passing through more fire, but by absorbing its glowing heat so as to heighten her tolerance to the flames of desire. Her aim is thus not to exclude the other, but to be able to engage more fully in their transformative encounter without thereby losing all sense of herself. She passes though fire to prevent the intensity of their touch paralysing her and becoming deathly. Withstanding the flames means not protecting herself against them but finding a way of touching them without simply being annihilated, without being dissolved into a burning fluidity which would erase the specificity of her "lebendiges Fleisch".

Hence this is a self who does not protect her identity from a potentially overwhelming encounter by strengthening her boundaries *against* otherness, in the manner of a Kantian subject. Rather, this self finds her strength in being able to immerse herself in flames of desire, by increasing her potential receptivity to the intense and transformative touch of otherness such that she can live through it. The limits of this self are not constituted by firm boundaries, but by the extent of her capacity to incorporate otherness in productive becomings. Thus it is essential that she does not plunge herself too quickly into the intensity of an encounter which greatly surpasses her own potential to change. Rather, she changes herself, stretching the potential of the body through which she lives until it can sustain these intense forces within.

Thus this poetic self is not like the dissolving subjects in the poetry by male Expressionists: this self does not welcome the searing intensity of the desire seeping through her as a release from the pain of bounded identity. On the contrary, hers is an embodied identity animated by intense encounters with another's touch; thus it is vital that this touch does not simply burn her away. This self neither desires to exclude the fiery touch of the other, nor feels a nihilistic lust to be absorbed into the other's flames until she loses the limits of her own embodiment in a supra-organic flux. The self in this poem - and the poet whose fingers were agile enough to write her - offer another relation to otherness which is more akin to that which Margret Bäurle and Luzia Braun have ascribed to certain German medieval mystics:

> Sie ist die Meisterin des verbindenden Gegensatzes. Eines Gegensatzes aber, der keine Relation des Ausschlusses ist, doch ebensowenig in höherer Einheit aufgehoben wird. Kein Gegenteil und keine Ergänzung, weder dualistisch noch dialektisch, sondern die Bewahrung des Ungleichen in der Berührung des Differenten.[28]

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[28] Margret Bäule and Luzia Braun, "'Ich bin heiser in der Kehle meiner Keuschheit'": Über das Schreiben der Mystikerinnen", in *Schreibende Frauen vom Mittelalter bis zur*

Hence the self in this poem connects Ludwig back to the female mystics again - but not to the passive, self-denying saints. Instead, via this poem, her work is linked to the writings of those who, like Mechthild von Magdeburg, insisted that spirit and flesh could interpenetrate without simply becoming one. In such a touch, spirit and matter become intertwined in a productive tension which preserves their difference/s. Similarly, Ludwig's poem figures a self who responds to a sublime encounter with otherness by neither excluding nor wholly embracing its excessive intensity. Instead, though she responds to this painfully sweet touch by keeping her distance, she does so only to allow herself to become more alike without simply being merged into an undifferentiated conflagration. By incorporating more fire, she increases her tolerance until she can immerse herself in the blazing touch of desire with an intensity that will no longer burn her up but will animate her as "lebendiges Fleisch".

Thus this self strives to find a way of living within the most intense touch of otherness. In this poem, as throughout her early work, Ludwig explores a relationality making possible a non-oppositional mode of identity: her poems become imaginative sites of transformative encounters which preserve the unlike in the touching of differences through which selves emerge.

The risk faced by the self in "Ich wachte" is thus not that she may not be able to protect herself against the other, but that she may not be able to encounter its touch in ways that allow her to grow and transform. She has to find a way between the explosion of too sudden a meeting and the barrenness of

Gegenwart, ed.s Hiltrud Gnüg and Renate Möhrmann (Stuttgart: Suhrkamp, 1985), pp. 1-15 (p. 13). "She is the mistress of the connective antithesis. An antithesis which is not a relation of exclusion, yet neither is it resolved in a higher unity. Neither an opposite nor a completion, neither dualistic nor dialectic, but the preservation of the unlike in the touching of difference/s."

a self locked in isolation. Though the power of the other/lover's touch may remain dangerously unequal to her power to be transformed, this is not a power the other simply wields over her. Rather, the effect of this intense touch on either self or other is dependent upon their differing levels of receptivity and tolerance, their differing capacities for becoming and change. This non-equatability of self and other not only generates the burning tension between them in the first place, but their unequal strengths are maintained throughout their encounter, because of the differing potential of each to respond productively to the intensity of their touch. Thus self and other do not simply merge into one, but retain differences which will allow for new movement and change, for further transformative encounters.

In Ludwig's poems, as we have seen, intensity resides in the lightest touch of music on the forehead, as well as in the burning touch of desire. This intensity however, does not simply resist or escape the space-time of the self: the touch of otherness on the skin does not open out into a gaping lack, as it does for Lyotard. Neither, however, does the intensity of this touch destroy all organic limits of both the body and the differentiated self, as it would for Deleuze and the male Expressionists. Instead, as I have shown, a different mode of embodied selfhood emerges through the transformative intensity of the touch. In Ludwig's poetry, selfhood does not depend on boundaries which enclose identity within sameness. Instead, identity depends on a receptive openness to difference/s which are not received in mute passivity, but incorporated through resonating bodily surfaces and living flesh, until selves are shaped through transformative becomings.

Ludwig's poem "Du kanntest ihre Gestalt" can be read as a commentary on this transformative relationality, as well as on the role of poetry itself for

Ludwig. This poem is strikingly reminiscent of Goll's positioning of Claudio as a passageway to a female relationality in *Der Gläserne Garten*. For the self in this poem, the intense relation to an other is a mode of exploring own self intensely: through her lover/other, she seeks a lost female muse who can turn her own sobbing depths into song, into resonating melodies with a tonality of their own:

> Du kanntest ihre Gestalt
> und warest ihr nah,
> die alles Leid wandelte in Gesänge.
>
> Viele verworfene Melodien fand
> sie in meinen schluchzenden Gründen,
> und mit Händen, die waren
> wie weiße Wolken,
> hob sie empor meinen Ton
> unter die Sonne.
>
> Nun suche ich nach ihrer Spur
> in den Wiesen des Frühlings,
> die vorüberging wie ein Strahl,
> und in zerfallenes Licht
> trage ich meine sehnsüchtige Trauer.
>
> O, laß mich verweilen bei dir
> solange nur,
> um zu finden einen Hauch, einen Traum,
> der vielleicht entsprang
> einst den Falten ihres Gewandes.[29]

In this poem, the poetic self lingers in exploration of another only to search for a trace of a female muse, whose breath emerges from the folds of her cloaks. Similarly, through her poems, Ludwig herself lingers with otherness as she strives to find a voice which springs from the folds, a voice capable of transforming the spaces between one and another into melodic or fiery

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[29] *Die selige Spur*, p. 31. "You know her face/ and were near to her,/ who turned all pain into songs./ She found many depraved melodies/ in my sobbing grounds/ and with hands which were/ like white clouds,/ she raised up my tone/ under the sun.// Now in the meadow of spring/ I seek her trace/ which went past like a ray of light,/ and into crumbling light/ I bear my yearning grief// O, let me linger with you/ just long enough/ to find a breath, a dream,/ which perhaps once sprang/ from the folds of her gown."

becomings. When this powerful voice resonates through her texts, Ludwig herself generates imaginative sites no longer constricted by limiting masculine models of identity. Through her deft touch, it becomes possible to hear the timbre and tone of selves who emerge through the incorporation of difference/s.

The Lyre of Eurydice

As we have seen, in Ludwig's poetry, the spaces between, where one self becomes folded within an other's touch, do not constitute gaps outside the space-time of identity; instead, these are the resonating sites across and through which selfhood is generated. This poetic voice from the folds does not lead out of all space and time, but produces a different space-time of selfhood. Thus I would like to finish this chapter with a reading of Ludwig's "Die Ferne steht", in which she uses a musical image to re-imagine the world by reworking the very constitution of the space-time frame.

In this poem, the self seems to emerge from between the strings of a harp in ways that recall the resonating darkness of the *Fermate* shared between Ylone and Venera. I would like to read this harp both with Goll and with the other poems by Ludwig explored above, and against both Kant and Orpheus, whose space-time allows only male individuals of genius to live through their work. Ludwig's poem can be read as refusing the literary tradition founded in the deadly lyre of Orpheus, and instead, as making space for a different sound: Ludwig's poem allows the lyre of Eurydice to be heard.

> Die Ferne steht, eine blaue Harfe,
> in die deine schlafenden Sinne greifen.
> Mond verweilt zwischen den Saiten,
> den tönenden Wimpern deiner Augen.

Grau ist die Stadt und Regen
hängt über den Häusern.
Keine Spur zeugt von der Nähe der Sonne,
und keine Hand hebt mir ihr Leuchten.

Aber die Ferne steht, eine blaue Harfe.
Durch den blaßen Tag tönt es mich an
und füllt meine Seele. [30]

In the first stanza of this poem, the other who is addressed is positioned as both playing the strings of the harp, the figure of distance, and as being the harp: her eyelashes are the resonating strings. The image of the strings of the harp contributes to the tension produced in the very first line: its blueness confirms a notion of distance evoking the wide spaces of the horizon, the sky or even the sea. However, this "wide blue yonder" is curiously static - "es steht"; it stands - and the harp itself suggests a spatiality divided between the lines of the strings: the blue distance seems here to be already divided up as if by a grid. When the strings later become the eyelashes of the sleeping other addressed by the poet, they form a kind of grid framing her dreaming eyes; the resonating gaze held *within* the strings/lashes is thus spatially differentiated from her other sleeping senses, which play the strings as if from *outside* or *above*. The notion of a framework organising spatiality, together with a self that is structurally split between the framed gaze and the unknowing senses, strongly recalls Kant's transcendental subject, whose faculties are divided between intuitions of manifold matter and the schematisations which organise the latter in space and time.

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[30] *Die selige Spur*, p. 11."The distance stands, a blue harp,/which your sleeping senses play./ Moon lingers between the strings,/the resonating lashes of your eyes.// Grey is the town and rain/hangs over the houses./No trace shows the nearness of the sun,/and no hand lifts its light towards me.//But the distance stands, a blue harp./Through the pale day sounds reach me/ and fill my soul."

As I will show, the specificity of Ludwig's disruptive images, particularly that of the resonating strings or lashes, can most productively be read within this Kantian context. It may thus be useful at this point to briefly restate the key elements of Kant's philosophy of the subject, as they were outlined in the *Introduction* above. For Kant, the subject only comes into being as a persistent self by being positioned in relation to objects and as the correlative of external reality, of the "not-self". The imagination must therefore map or schematise the manifold of sensory intuition in ways that allow for the configuration of objects that persist through time, against which an enduring subject can be posited. Subject and object are thus interdependent and constructed simultaneously though a complex spatio-temporal grid. However, as has been noted throughout this thesis, Kant's space-time grid is restricted to the linear temporality and external spatiality that make it possible to construct the foundational - and oppositional - distinction between "self" and "not-self". Moreover, in the Kantian world, the sensory/sensible manifold must be considered as inherently inert and incpable of shaping itself; otherwise there would be no guarantee that matter could only be shaped through the space-time grid that suits the needs of the Kantian subject.

Ludwig's image plays out this complex structure in a subversive way. For Kant, the forms of space and time and the imagination's templates form the *invisible* conditions of sensory perception. In the poem, though both space and the gaze of the subject are framed, far from remaining invisible, this frame has been projected into space where it is played *by* the senses. Thus far from being invisibly *determined* by a grid organising perception, the senses here *play* the strings, making the framing lashes resonate. Ludwig cannot be read here as simply reasserting the primacy of an immediate sensory encounter with nature.

In this image, perception is still mediated and constructed. The senses interact with the spaces between the frame - with the world of nature represented by the moon - only *through* the frame. Nonetheless, the particular ways in which the strings frame space, the specific forms this framework generates, depends on how the senses play them, on how the strings vibrate, at what frequencies and for how long. Moreover, if they are to resonate at all, the strings must be able to move: the spaces around the strings must be fluid enough to let them vibrate and receptive enough for the vibrations to be transferred into them as sound.

This musical frame depends not only upon its own elasticity but also on the fluidity and reciprocity of the spaces between the strings. Hence these sensory, intensive space/s where sound resonates are not positioned as bounded, inert, or passive. The shaping of the spaces of the sensible world *through* the frequencies of the strings is simultaneously the shaping *of* the strings into specific vibrations. The movement of the strings cannot be identified completely separately from the patterned fluctuation of the spaces between, for each is generated by shared resonances which flow through one to the other. Thus neither the frame nor the world constructed through it are stable, fixed or permanent. The frame of the strings does not work to contain the sensory manifold within fixed boundaries as clearly mappable "objects". On the contrary, its soundings depend on the fluid capacity of the spaces between not just to respond to its vibrations, but to embody them in ways that allow their resonances to take shape. Thus in turn, without persistent or bounded objects, no subject can here be positioned as a stable and enduring focal point.

As the senses play the harp in their sleep, they do not knowingly determine how the strings move: the exact form this frame takes is not given in advance. Rather, the strings form a sensitive surface of mediation. Their

vibrations are generated by an ongoing process of relationality between the senses, which "play" the strings, and the sensible world between the strings, a world within which the senses simultaneously remain embedded. The strings constitute relations though resonance, and these resonances become their own temporary form/s. They are a site across which vibrations are transferred, vibrations which leave neither the spaces between the strings nor the strings themselves intact or untouched. Finally, as the strings are also resonating lashes shaping perception, the self which perceives is also here imaged and imagined *as* such a resonating surface constituted through the interrelation of senses and world. This self is neither permanent, nor a bounded unity, but is not therefore formless. Its shape is spread across a set of vibrating strings and is constituted in the manifold fluxing relations between them, temporary patterns of harmony or dissonance.

Ludwig thus radicalises Kant's transcendental insight that human perception is conditioned by undermining the idea that these conditions are universally determined a priori. In Ludwig's image, how you see is generated immanently along with what you see. Her image can be read as constructing a sensible transcendental, not because the senses simply determine what this poetic self sees/touches, but because the grid determining perception is embedded in and generated by patterns of relation shaped between the sensible self and the sensible world. For Ludwig, the self is not projected via this transcendental frame as a permanent formal unity, as for Kant. Rather, the self has become a mediating surface whose form is constantly generated through the sensory perception it, in turn, conditions. This self emerges as a particular site with and within the objective, sensory world, as a particular set of related harmonics.

To turn briefly to the final two stanzas of the poem, Ludwig sharply contrasts this dream logic with a grey and dreary reality, lacking the light brought by touch, the moonlight which before was shared between self and strings - "keine Hand hebt mir ihr Leuchten" [stanza 2]. Yet in the final stanza, her soul is filled with another kind of touch: vibrations of sound reach through her day from the distance, the blue harp. More usual conceptions of spiritual life are here subverted, for the traditional immaterial, amorphous soul is not so much suited to being a container for touch, as to being contained by the body.

At the same time, the movement of sound through the dreary city emphasises those qualities of music employed in the first verse: music relies exactly not on containment, but on the possibilities of transference through matter as resonance. Being filled with sound is not so much a matter of becoming a container as becoming permeated with sound, vibrating through and through. The soul itself seems here to becomes another kind of resonating, manifold surface, transformed by tonalities which are themselves transformed by the nature of the material through which they move. For if the soul becomes vibrantly materialised in sound, frequencies and vibrations have become the site of an animate identity. The harp seems to hold open another possibility of being, another kind of life. Exactly because this other world is built on the model of sound and not sight, the poet is never entirely excluded from this other mode of existing: it can permeate her everyday world.

Hence in this poem, the self is constructed via productive relations which neither exclude otherness nor construct the objective sensory world as passive and containable in order that the self can be clearly set apart. However, *because* the self is not constructed by means of boundaries of exclusion, it does not run the risk of losing its identity and dissolving into either indeterminacy or

chaos via contact with animate otherness and vibrant sensory materiality. The self is shaped within gaps that are not nothing, but instead function as fluid sites of mediation, transference and permeability. Though them, the self becomes the embodiment of particular and complex patterns of resonance. Ludwig's synaesthesic image of resonating lashes reclaims that part of the body most associated with an identity constructed via the gaze, and reinscribes it into a mode of manifold selfhood based on sound. Moreover, if the images in "Die Ferne steht" cannot be mentally mapped onto the familiar structures of the modern subject, neither can they be read as composing a unified image-scape, for the self addressed both plays the harp and is the strings thereby set in motion. In this way, both Ludwig's images and the self constructed though them are complex, metamorphosing and manifold.

The immanent transcendental generated in this poem through a play of vibration and resonance itself resonates with the model of selfhood explored in Goll's work. For both writers, selfhood emerges from gaps and absences, from darkness and from spaces in the sky, where there is room enough for the vibrant relations which shape identities together with otherness. For both writers, such selves are most richly embodied by the fluid materiality of music, which refuses a topography of visible boundaries and instead creates space and time through patterns of timbre, tempo, vibration, and harmonic relations. Their imaginative texts rescue Eurydice but without returning her to a dreary everyday existence as man's other. Instead, they make her darkness sing, transforming it into a manifold site of female self-relation, which resonates with an infinity of potential shared becomings.

In the original Orpheus myth, as Walter Strauss reminds us, Orpheus sings not just to Pluto but to Persephone as well when he enters the underworld

to rescue Eurydice.[31] Within this foundational tale of male literary genius, Persephone and Eurydice are positioned as the partners of Pluto and Orpheus respectively, separated from each other by the masculine trajectory of the myth. The resonating spatiality of fluid relations explored by both Ludwig and Goll would allow these two women of the underworld to hear one other across the darkness, enabling each to relate to her own female form in and through her like other. Placing Ludwig and Goll together makes it possible to imagine what might be heard were Eurydice and Persephone to turn to one another in this way. Their texts become bodies of resonance, inky interstices reverberating with the manifold possibilities that emerge when female objects do not merely start to speak, but begin to talk, to touch, to move, to sing and to live between themselves.

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[31] Strauss, p. 5.

Conclusion

From Postmodern Patchworks
to a Mosaics of the Self

In her essay "Der schielende Blick", Sigrid Weigel describes the slanting, sideways, crafty gaze women need to adopt to live and to write in a patriarchal culture where they are predominantly positioned as man's "other". This positioning produces a paradoxical mode of being for women, for when they search for their own identity, they find only the distorted images of Woman filling a mirror positioned by man, a mirror that reflects the world only from his perspective. According to Weigel, women need to find ways of articulating the contradictions this specularisation generates; only then can they live with/in patriarchal culture without being destroyed or driven mad, but instead refusing the reduction of women to man's "other", whilst keeping one eye firmly on the future:

> Wie die befreite Frau aussehen wird, das ist heute mit Sicherheit und Vollkommenheit nicht vorstellbar, lebbar schon gar nicht. Um in diesem Zwischenraum, im 'nicht mehr' und im 'noch nicht' zu überleben, ohne verrückt oder toll zu werden, muß die Frau den schielenden Blick erlernen, d.h. die Widersprüche zum Sprechen bringen, sie sehen, begreifen und in ihnen, mit ihnen leben - und Kraft schöpfen aus der Rebellion gegen das Gestern und aus der Antizipation des Morgen.[1]

For Weigel, the interstitial space which women must occupy is a temporary, strategic necessity, caught between rebellion and a different possible future.

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[1] Weigel, p. 105. "How the liberated woman will appear cannot be imagined today, let alone experienced, with certainty or completeness. To survive in this interstice, in the 'no longer' and the 'not yet', without going mad or crazy, woman must learn to squint - in other words, to make the contradictions speak, to see them, grasp them and live in them, with them - and to draw strength from rebellion against yesterday and in anticipation of tomorrow."

Women's slanting gaze will one day become unnecessary, when she finds an existence releasing her from a mirror framed for a male gaze.

I would like to conclude by suggesting that in the texts by Claire Goll and Paula Ludwig examined in this study, the gaps and spaces between - the *Zwischenräume* - function not just strategically, but as sites within which female modes of selfhood can emerge. Hence in Goll's poetry, far from being dependent on an oppositional relation which fixes the self - like the Kantian subject - against an immobile, inert world of objects, self and world are produced by a relational play of material becomings. Neither mother nor daughter, stars nor selves are permanently oriented by each other, for their space-time is generated by the movement between them, by a flowing relationality where one object-self is shaped only with an other, in an incongruent acrobatics of shimmering, animate matter.

This relational production of identity is further explored in Goll's short story, *Der Gläserne Garten*, where the space/s between one and an other become the interstices in a mosaic. As was shown in chapter five, in this text, the patterns of both self and other emerge through the dark gaps of a fluid mirroring, through an inter-relation which allows each woman to grow in her specificity and frees her from being overshadowed by man. For Weigel, when one wipes the glass of the mirror which has shaped woman as man's "other", one finds it is empty, and even its destruction leads only "ins Nichts".[2] However, Goll finds a way of transforming the cold glass into a mercurial fluidity, where selves and otherness are shaped together within a resonating, manifold darkness. This is the space-time of the *Fermate*, which only looks like nothing to a male gaze that still insists on separating everything out into clearly

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[2] Weigel, p. 105.

bounded forms. Goll's text powerfully illuminates the limits of those male metaphysicians who in their arrogance - like Orpheus - cannot see that Eurydice's female darkness is not the deathly shadow cast by their own work, but opens into another mode of living and of selfhood.

Such selves may fall through the frame that structures a male gaze, but they do not thereby disappear. Instead, they inhabit the gaps between the strings of the harp, dark spaces that do not require form to be imposed upon them, but whose manifold resonances shape a framework through which they can reverberate. Hence in Ludwig's work, selves emerge through a transformative touch which passes between one and another like the vibrations of music. The hand, the forehead, the flesh itself belong neither to a passively mediating and containable matter, nor to a violently destructive material flux. Rather, identities are actively generated through a receptive materiality, whose capacity to incorporate otherness in its unlikeness allows selves to grow through a productive touching of difference/s.

Thus in the work of both Ludwig and Goll, the *Zwischenräume* do not constitute a temporary dwelling place, where the gaze is still half-focussed in rebellion against a male subject, making it difficult to imagine that eagerly anticipated future undetermined by a male gaze. On the contrary, in the texts of both these writers, the *Zwischenräume* themselves become the site of alternative modes of identity and relationality: the manifold potentialities of female selfhood unfold in spaces between, in gaps and resonating darknesses. Hence their work creates an opening - an interstice - within the literary and philosophical history of the West, a "Vorgestern" which makes it possible to imagine a different future, because their texts provide a differently figured past.

Hence the radicality of Ludwig's and Goll's work emerges most clearly by situating it within Expressionism. Whereas many of the male writers of this movement were primarily concerned with a crisis of the (male) subject, in the work of Ludwig and Goll, the disorientation of this subject is not of key importance but is instead merely a corollary of their explorations of alternative modes of selfhood. For the male writers, the breakdown of oppositional subject-object relations dissolves man into an undifferentiated flux; Ludwig and Goll, however, explore identities shaped with and within an animate object-world, through a materially embodied relationality that allows both difference/s and likeness to emerge side by side.

By placing texts by Ludwig and Goll next to each other, this study has aimed to allow their shared concerns with relationality and selfhood to resonate more strongly, without homogenising the originality of their work. Through this juxtaposition, it becomes increasingly apparent that their texts cannot be dismissed because they do not fit the dominant frameworks for reading and theorising Expressionism. On the contrary, their work demands that the frames through which the literary past is read are adjusted, making it possible to see that their texts constitute a different imaginative site within the unfolding of modernity, a site which cannot be accounted for whilst the male subject continues to be taken as the norm.

Hence I have argued that Ludwig and Goll offer an alternative response to the Kantian subject of modernity than that normally taken to be characteristic of Expressionism. Instead of dissolving Kant's transcendental structures, these female writers radicalise the Kantian insight that self and world are relationally generated to produce different modes of selfhood. Moreover, as the selves poetically configured in their texts are generated in the *Zwischenräume*,

emerging through gaps and within resonating darkness, these selves stand in a privileged relation to the Kantian sublime, where the imagination encounters the dark noumenal absence of Isis. However, theirs is not a posthuman sublime, as is found in the Expressionism of Heym or Benn, where the very possibility of identity is transcended by a supraorganic flux. Instead, these selves emerge through an immanent transcendence within which they remain embedded; their differentiated identities take shape with both otherness and matter in relationally generated, acrobatic becomings.

Thus as well as generating a different perspective on modernity, the detailed analysis of texts by Ludwig and Goll offered in this study has a bearing for debates surrounding the sublime in contemporary feminist aesthetics. The mode of selfhood delineated throughout Part Two of this thesis contrasts strongly with the positioning of woman in those feminist aesthetics that limit the female experience of the sublime to a copy or inversion of a male norm. I would argue that the manifold selves which inhabit the darkness in both Goll's and Ludwig's literary imagination are more radical than the female identity offered by recent psychoanalytic reworkings of the sublime. In an article which explores the potential for reworking the sublime by mapping it onto an Oedipal model, Patricia Yaeger discusses four different modes of the sublime open to women writers.[3] Yaeger herself refers explicitly to two of these as "revisions of a 'masculine' sublime": these are the "failed sublime", where transcendence is blocked, and the "sublime of nearness", where a female subject refuses to dominate the other with which she is confronted.[4] The fourth possiblity, a

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[3] Patricia Yaeger, "Toward a Female Sublime", in *Gender and Theory*, ed. Linda Kaufman (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 191-212.
[4] Yaeger, p. 204; p. 201; p. 195.

female sublime of violence, still clearly tropes on the dynamics of domination

which allows the male subject to transcend his natural limits.

Yeager suggests that the most radical aesthetic revision open to women

lies in a pre-oedipal sublime. Here the reinforcing of the self via overcoming a

powerful natural realm is rejected in favour of remaining in proximity to

nature's otherness:

> Here the agon typical of the Romantic sublime is retained [. . .] but this
> oedipal conflict is rewritten so that the pre-oedipal desire for closeness or
> nearness with the other that the conventional sublime tries to repress,
> remains visible and viable.[5]

Yaeger argues that whereas the masculine sublime involves repressing the

desire for bondedness with the mother's body - a state represented by "the

chaos and blissful heterodoxy of the cosmos" - in the feminine sublime, "these

libidinal elements are not repressed; they break into consciousness and are

welcomed as a primary, healthful part of the writer's experience".[6] Hence, this

feminine sublime is characterised by the desire to remain within the "chaos and

blissful heterogeny" of pre-individuated bondedness.

The problem with this reworking of the sublime is that it leaves in place,

and indeed positions itself as a varient upon, the structures securing the identity

of the autonomous (male) individual. In Yaeger's pre-oedipal model, woman

refuses the separation from nature that characterises the sublime for the male

self, but in so doing, she also bars herself from taking up the position of a fully

individuated subject. At the same time, this subject remains the norm against

which the feminine sublime is defined: women remain connected to an

undifferentiated state understood as precisely that bondedness which male

subjects repress to assert their autonomy. In this way, Yaeger's reworking

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[5] Yaeger, p. 204.
[6] Yaeger, p. 205.

reinscribes the very dynamics which bar women from the sublime experience of transcendence because they are not 'proper', that is, individuated, subjects.

Moreover, Yaeger normatises women's exclusion from the transcendence produced by the masculine sublime. By privileging the refusal of the separation from nature that would affirm autonomous identity, women authors aid a literary and political culture that Yaeger positions as attempting to "move away from our Western allegiance to an imperial, Cartesian, Adamic self who is supposed to act as its own triumvirate and tribunal".[7] Yet this "moving away" does not move *towards* a different model of selfhood: far from exploring a female mode of the sublime which is not rooted in a bounded, self-contained identity, Yaeger's feminine sublime merely modifies a traditional and fundamentally masculine aesthetics grounded in a male subject. Her sublime does not involve an imaginative transcendence of nature but immersing oneself in nature's heterogeneity. Such an immersion does not involve the risk of losing oneself which characterises the male sublime; on the contrary, this feminine sublime is open to those who - like women - do not fully separate themselves from the m/other and so have no individuated identity to lose. Hence this "sublime" experience looks like a second-rate aesthetics for second-rate selves, a rather peculiar "sublime", if it can still be so called, involving no transcendence and no risk, but only the mother's "inundation and comfort".[8]

In strong contrast to such a reworking of the sublime, both Goll and Ludwig figure selves no longer constructed in relation to a norm of bounded, self-contained autonomy. In different ways, both writers explore selves who do not lose themselves in otherness, but whose identities only emerge through a

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[7] Yaeger, p. 205.
[8] Yaeger, p. 204.

relationality which incorporates otherness within the self. Thus the poetic self who desires to return to childhood in Goll's poem "Die Erwachsene" does not longing to be immersed in a pre-individuated natural chaos, but to rediscover a time when identities emerged only *through* and *within* an animate object-world. The selves in Goll's poems do not return to a repressed bondedness with the m/other, but instead grow through a play of becomings shared between mother and daughter. Similarly, in Ludwig's poems the limits of identity are neither tested nor eroded but *generated* through the transformative touch of another. In all these texts, selves are shaped by a continual process of extending, changing, transforming themselves together with otherness, in acrobatic movements which still involve risk. Indeed, the poetic texts of both Ludwig and Goll are not restricted by the comforting aesthetics of the beautiful. Instead, they chart a sublime generation of selfhood. In their work, the risks of falling from the sky or burning up into nothing are inherently necessary to the intense dynamics of a fluid relationality, which creates female identities by patterning the self together with otherness.

This mode of the sublime, where otherness remains immanent to the self without simply dissolving identity into an undifferentiated chaos, is closer to the female sublime explored by Battersby. I have already indicated (in chapter four) the ways in which Goll's poems echo the immanent transcendence Battersby has traced in Karoline von Günderrode's poem "Once I Lived a Sweet Life". Battersby's discussion of this text brings out the ways in which Günderröde's sublime involves a subversion of bounded models of autonomous selfhood which are far more than mere modifications. Indeed, her reading emphasises the ways in which the poem positions individuated selfhood as a fleeting illusion which is rejected as the poetic "I" "turns back towards a state in

whcih self and other interpenetrate".[9] Hence this poetic self's "desire for melting

her identity into that of otherness" is not a desire for a union *prior* to identity.[10]

Rather, as she turns from lonely emphemerality of the heavns and permeates

back through the flowers into the generative lap of the earth, this self longs for a

different mode of identity where "bodies and identities are not fixed" such that

"she becomes both self and (m)other [. . .] is permeated and also penetrates".[11]

Thus as Battersby shows, Günderode's poem does not rework a sublime

that remains blocked in a pre-oedipal state which remains defined against the

"proper" identity of separate selves. Instead, her poem opens a space for an

mode of identity which priviliges becoming, and which

> cannot resolve itself into agonistic or oedipal power struggles, because it
> involves an ontology in which boundaries are unclear. Identity does not
> disappear, but is maintained only by flowing excess.[12]

I would like to situate the poetic selves generated by both Goll and Ludwig

within this fluid ontology. In their work too, identity is generated within a

darkness where self and other interpenetrate, and sustained by the patterns of

It is this rejection of bounded autonomy for a patterning of identity

shared between self and otherness which links Goll and Ludwig to the

contemporary artist, Evelyn Williams. Battersby has explored the ways in which

Williams' paintings are structured by a desire for collectivity and an

ambivalence towards individuality, between the reassurance of losing one's

identity in an unlimited collective, and the risk of greater pain and suffering

which seems to be attached to limited, individuated bodies. Thus in Evelyn

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9   Battersby, "Unblocking the Oedipal", p. 134.
10   Battersby, "Unblocking the Oedipal", p. 135.
11   Battersby, "Unblocking the Oedipal", p. 135.
12   Battersby, "Unblocking the Oedipal", p. 138.

Williams' art, "there is no final reassurance that the self is prime, stable or certain. Instead we move into a world in which what seems reassuring is the loss of the illusion of individuality."[13] This reassuring sense of loss is echoed in *Der Gläserne Garten*, where Venera and Ylone reject Claudio's alienating world of specular boundaries to return to a relationality where one remains immersed within a fecund otherness. However, Ludwig's poetic selves also long to be released from the barren stasis of self-containment; they call out demandingly for the touch of an other which would bear them into a living flow of transformative becoming/s.

In Williams' images, the singularity of particular embodied selves emerges only through and with the others in relation to whom they are positioned. Individuality grows out of patterns of sameness and repetition, which take a crystalline form in "Out of the Garden", or are played out in tumbling patterns, as in "Around and Around". The latter image in particular resonates strongly with Goll's mosaic-selves, whose identities emerge through the *Zwischenräume*.[14] In Williams' painting, bodies seem to emerge into particularity through the shapings of the darkness between them, just as in Goll's story, the patternings of both self and other are generated through dark interstices.

This (self-)shaping darkness producing singularity though manifold resonances can also be found in Goll's image of the *Fermate*, as well as in the spaces between the strings in Ludwig's poem. In conclusion, I would like to link this darkness not only to contemporary versions of the sublime via the work of Battersby and Williams, but to the sublime's philosophical past, via Kant. Goll

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[13] Battersby "Antinomies", p. 30.
[14] See Appendix 3.

and Ludwig not only produce alternative modes of selfhood through complex subversions and reworkings of the Kantian model of identity, as traced throughout this study; but in addition, these re-workings stand in a privileged relation to Kant's Isis, as the figure of dark noumenal absence.

At the end of chapter one, I argued that the figure of Isis occupies a privilged relation to difference if she is read as Kant's radical noumenal absence, rather than as Lyotrard's unpresentable lack. This "inhuman" Isis cannot be determined by the oppositional relationality that produces the spatio-temporal mappings necessary to secure a self-identical, persistent subject against the inconstancies of passive matter; she protects a space where the gaps in the manifold need no longer be seen as formless chaos which must be contained to protect *the subject's* boundaries. Instead, in her darkness, the diversity of sensory materiality - the nuance and timbre, the grain of skin, the touch of flesh - can resonate differently, actualising spatio-temporal forms without requiring "composition" by man. Such resonating (self-)shaping matter is found in Ylone's voice emerging through touches, or the child's song whose nuances coalesce across the growing forehead. Hence I would like to conclude by suggesting that both Goll and Ludwig explore the darkness protected by Isis, finding modes of manifold selfhood through gaps and absences which are only "nothing" in the eyes of the (male) subject.

In a space-time that absents itself from the limits of a bounded subject, Goll figures shimmering selves, shaped by their play with the stars, and female subjects generated by a fluid mirroring, whilst Ludwig's voice from the folds sings of a transformative touch. Together, they fill the darkness of Isis with the folding and refolding of the *Mannigfaltigkeit* of matter, whose "instability" has

become an active process, generating particular spatio-temporal relations through which selves and others emerge with/in one another. Within their texts, in ways unforeseen by the hylomorphic gaze of the subject, the "unstable evanescence" of the manifold becomes a productive materiality: identities emerge from the spatio-temporal patternings woven by a many-folded corporeality. As these material figures unfold, they generate their own space and time as from within the flowing leaps and turns of an acrobat who shapes and is shaped by the space around her. Theirs is a singular identity born of relationalities, moulded through the acrobatics of flesh turning over itself in space and in time, ingrained via the resonances of timbre which chart a self as a patterned movement of related harmonics.

In this way, the poetic imagination of Goll and Ludwig not only unfolds within the absence from the subject protected by Kant's Isis, but opens a space where dark gaps and absences are built into the very heart of the self. If identity is formed as patterns emerge from generative material *relationalities*, then such relationally produced selves e/merge only through and within a space/time shared with otherness.[15] This space/time is nothing in itself but the dark gaps - the *Zwischenräume* - where relationality takes on shape and form, patterning both self and other together. Thus otherness is built into these object-selves such that no one self simply defines the terms in which any other is identified: each is

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[15] Whilst Luce Irigaray's work opens the way for imagining non-oppositional modes of identity, my thoughts on this inter-relational model of identity, where selfhood is mutually generated and shared between self and other, have been greatly influenced by the recent work of Christine Battersby. In particular, I have found her imaginative use of Kierkegaard in her forthcoming book, *The Phenomenal Woman*, especially inspiring. Her discussion of Kierkegaard's image of the wind flowing over the alien landscape, each shaping the contours of the other, powerfully evokes the emergence of identity from shared patternings of repetition and change (See Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman: Feminist Metaphysics and the Patterns of Identity*, (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998); chapters 8 and 9).

constituted by a productive relationality that belongs to neither one nor an other, but which becomes the spaces between them. Such sites of relation remain fluidly shared, a liquid potential for generating future forms, a dark absence of identity from within which identities flow.

Thus in the texts discussed in this study, identity materialises from beyond any one-self, as selves emerge through shadowy and transformable sites shared with otherness. Transcendence of their differentiated form/s is built into the very relationality that generates such singular identities in the first place. Far from transcendence involving *overcoming* the limits of material existence, transcendence of individuality lies at the centre of a relational production of materially embodied limits that shape the individual self. Isis thus reworked in the texts of Ludwig and Goll becomes the site of an immanent transcendence, where self and other merge without loss precisely because this fluid immersion of self in otherness is that which generates form, and shapes identity.

In this way, a sublime relation to otherness and to absence of identity becomes the generative principle of a mode of becoming a self, a self neither contained in the boundaries of its own being nor merely dissolved into a boundless flux. The darkness of Isis becomes the gaps between the pieces of the mirror-mosaic, the dark interstices where Ylone's identity is generated with and within otherness, rather than as a reflection of the same. The absence of Isis becomes the spaces between the strings of Ludwig's bluely-distant harp, where a musical touch generates a spatiality of harmonic relations, and a tempo animated by shared becomings.

In chapter one, I argued that Lyotard reduces both noumenal absence and the gaps within the Kantian manifold to an undifferentiated and immaterial

figure of lack. In the work of Goll and Ludwig, however, intensities of timbre and touch that refuse to be neatly contained cannot be defined merely as that which is lacking from the world of the persistent, bounded Kantian subject. On the contrary, the transformations that flow from a sound or a touch remain absent from this subject's gaze precisely because they generate a different space-time, where selves are not separately bounded, but take shape in the *Zwischenräume*. These manifold selves are irreducible to man's lacking "other", and are instead generated in a darkness which remains radically absent from the subject's reductive gaze.

Hence through the work of Ludwig and Goll, it becomes possible to see the ways in which Kant's philosophy can be productive for feminism. If the gaps and absences within his system are not reduced to lack, they can be explored and exploited as sites through which different modes of selfhood - and selves that can incorporate difference - can unfold. Between them, Ludwig and Goll open a gap which belongs neither to the Kantian subject of modernity, nor to the postmodernity which closes all difference/s into lack. In their texts, the darkness of Isis, far from lacking, is transfomed into the resonating *fermate*, a fluid shadow-space of relationality where selves emerge together with otherness in an acrobatic play of shades.

Thus, finally, the absence of Isis becomes the darkness within which Eurydice can be heard, not lamenting, but singing with a voice whose identity no longer depends on deathly separation from an other. This music animates a shared touch; timbre and tone are shaped as they flow between selves, holding both in a vibrant relation though which the singularity of each can emerge more strongly. In a similar way, by exploring the resonances which flow between the

texts of Ludwig and Goll, it becomes possible to appreciate the originality and imagination with which each refigures *selfhood* and relationality. The different Expressionism found in their work was never simply lacking; rather, they constitute an absence within literary history which needs to be heard on its own terms. Moreover, as I hope to have shown, theirs is an absence replete with potential for the philosophical and feminist thinking of the present. The voices of Ludwig and Goll are powerful enough to unpick the seams of lack that bind together Lyotard's postmodern patchwork; instead, they make space for the darkness of the *Zwischenräume*, where sublime modes of relationality shape self and other together, generating their pattern and hue, the timbre and nuance of their world/s. Thus with Ludwig and Goll, I would like to transform the bounded forms of Kantian objects into fluid identities patterned by manifold difference/s, and to replace Lyotard's postmodern patchwork with a resonating mosaics of the self.

Appendix 1

Women writers and artists whose work
appeared in Expressionist journals, 1910-25

Andreas-Salome, Lou

Arnim, Anita

Asch, Schalom

Asenijeff, Elsa

Arnauld, Celine

d'Arezzo, Maria

Balabanoff/Balabanowa, Angelika

Ball, Charlotte

Bamberger, Minnie

Bauer, Therese

Bautzmann, Zita

Beaulieu, Heloise von

Beaulieu, Hortense von

Becker, Else

Behl, Ellida

Benemann, Maria

Berger, Lessy

Berges, Grete

Berliner, Margot

Bernhard, Trude

Bettingen, Frida

Bloch-Mahler, Franziska

Bois-Reymond, Lili du

Bommersheim, Ellie

Borgstede, Emmy von

Brandis, Lilli von

Brenck-Kalischer, Bess

Brodnitz, Käte

Brühnn/Brünn, Jenny

Bud, Elsa Maria

Buffet, Gabrielle

Bührer, Gretel

Butte, Mara

Chauvelon, Emilie

Dauthendey, Elisabeth

Dehmel, Ida

Deipser, Elise

Durieux, Tilla

Ebel, Lilo

Eberz, Gertrud

Ehler, Grete(l)

Epstein, Elisabeth

Ernst, Hedwig

Eysoldt, Gertrud

Fischer, Lotte

Fischer, Ruth

Flachs-Forschaneanu, Luise

Flake, Hedwig

Forstreuter, Hedwig

Frank, Milli

Franzos, Marie

Freund, Margarete

Freidemann, Käte

Frost, Lucia Dora

Früth, Ernestine von

Fuhrmann, Elisabeth

Geerling, Henriette

Gerstel, Alice

Gert, Helen

Geyer, Ellen

Glass-Jentzsch, Martha

Godwin, Catherina

Goebeler, Dorothea

Goll, Claire

Granitsch, Helene

Greitsch, Elisabeth

Gronenberg, Margarete

Guhrauer, Ilse

Haecker, Irene

Hanke, Wanda

Harden, Sylvia von

Hardenberg, Henriette

Harttrompf, Elisabeth

Haydunck, Alexandra

Heesch, Aenne

Hellmann, Hanna

Hennings, Emmy

Hertrerich, Hedwig

Herzfeld, Ilse

Herzfelder, Henriette

Hess-Wyneken, Susanne

Hoechstetter, Sophie

Holzer, Maria/Marie

Huberman(n), Angela

Huch, Ricarda

Ichak, Frida

Immermann, Rosa

Jacob, Alice

Jacob, Annemarie

Jacobi, Lucy von

Jacoby, Ursel Ellen

Janssen, Magda

Janstein, Elisabeth

Jaquemar, Annekathrein

Joest, Elisabeth

Jone, Hildegard

Just, Käte

Kahler, Antoinette

Kaus, Gina

Kerp, Else

Kiel, Hanna

Kieschke, Erna

Klein, Charlotte

Knacke, Mathilde Emma

Kolb, Annette

Kolliner, Else

Korschelt, Mimi

Kongsbak, Käte

Kramer, Hilde

Kröner, Erna

Krukenberg, Elsbeth

Krupskaja-Lenin, Nadeschda K.

Kruse, Julie

Kubicka, Margarete

Kühn, Maria

Kurz, Isolde

Lacour-Torrup, Ingeborg

Landau, Lola

Lange, Hilde

Langer, Angela

Lask, Berta

Lasker-Schüler, Else

Lau, E[va]

Lazar, Maria

Lazard, Lulu Albert

Lederer, Sophie

Leer, Sophie van

Leffler, Elisabeth

Le Fort, Gertrud von

Lichnowsky, Mechtild(e)

Liebenthal, Ite

Liedtke, Charlotte

Linden, Else

Lissauer, Margarete

Loris, Elisabeth

Lübcke, Else

Ludwig, Paula

Luxemburg, Rosa

Magnus, Annelise

Marik, Marijan

Marlind, Harriet

Martin, Maria

Marx, Friedel Louise

Marx, Magdeleine

Matthaei, Louise E.

Mayer, Elisabeth

Mayr, Hetta

Mayreder, Rosa

Meinhard, Elsabeth

Mendel(s)sohn, Anja [von]

Mendelsohn, Lotte

Mesch, Hildegard

Metz, Erika

Meyer-Franck, Helene

Meyerhof-Hildeck, Leonie

Meyserbug, Melvida von

Michel, Luise

Mischkönig, Nellie

Modersohn-Becker, Paula

Mohl, Doris von

Morax, Mimi

Morgenroth, Mia

Moscardelli, Nicola

Müller, Alexandra

Münchhausen, Editha von

Nachlinger, Maria

Naj, Nina

Nedorost, Editha

Neuhof von Hadeln, Elsa

Neumann, Elisabeth

Neumann, Josefine

Nevinny, Lilly

Nicolai, Julie Erika

Norden, Sara

Nordström, Clara

Oehring, Cläre

Oester(r)eicher, Lisa

Oldershausen, Liselotte von

Otto, Cläre

d'Ouckh, Jesa (pseud. of Imogen von

Bernus)

Paalen, Diane

Pankhurst, Sylvia

Paz-Marx, Magdeleine

Perin, Cecile

Pfemfert, Alexandra

Popper, Grete

Pukl, Marie

Ramm, Alexandra

Ramm, Maria

Ramm, Stera

Ranzell, Irmgard

Reclus, Elisee

Redenbacher, Hildegard

Reichert, Margarete

Reichold, Clotilde

Reiner, Grete

Reinhold, Maria

Reissner, Larissa

Remy, Caroline

Renyi, Edith

Reschke, Hedwig

Reuter, Gabriele

Rheinsch, Erika

Riem, Ilse

Ring, Gertrud

Rittershaus, Emmy

Roland-Holst, Henriette

Rosen, Ella

Rosenstrauch, Henny

Rösler, Paula

Rossetti, Christiana

Rotten, Elisabeth

Rubiner, Frida

Rühle, Alice

Sacco, Nicola

Sachse, Margarete

Sachs, Mary

Sacks, Beatrice

Saint-Point, Valentine de

Saumoneau, Louise

Schalk, Hertha

Schallert, Charlotte

Schapire, Rosa

Scheidweiler, Paula

Schiff, Martha

Schlier, Paula

Schneider, Olga

Schneider-Braillard, Mary

Schneider-Schwann, Rosa

Schott, Clara

Schultz, Franziska

Schürmann, Marguerite

Schwarz, Marga

Seeger, Hildegard

Seelig, Gertrud

Seidel, Ina

Sertorius, Lili

Siemsen, Anna

Silberer, Rose

Skoda, Herma von

Smith, Amy

Soffel, Else

Starke, Margot

Stegmann, Margarete

Steinitz, Martha

Steppuhn, Lily

Stickel, Elisabeth

Stieler, Hilde

Stock, Henny

Stöckel, Cilly

Stöcker, Helene

Stoecklin, Franziska

Straschnow, Grete

Susman, Margarete

Szanto, Elisabeth

Szanto, Maria

Szasz, Hannah

Tarnowski, Gertrud

Thierbach, Helge

Tischendorf, Katharine

Tischer, Irma

Triepel, Hertha

Tucher, Celestina

Ullmann, Elise H.

Ullmann, Regina

Unger, Ilka Maria

Urbanitzky, Grete von

Valeska, Gert

Van de Velde, Nele

Wagner, Minna

Waldeck, Marie

Wandel, Erna

Wasbutzki, Berta

Webb, Beatrice

Wechselmann, Klara

Weidemann, Maria Luise

Weil, Ria

Weissmann, Maria Luise

Well, Anna

Wentscher, Dora

Wenzig, Else

Werner, Anita

Wertheim, Gertrud

Wertheim, Hilde

Wied, Martina

Wigger-Gött, Anna

Wigman, Mary

Zehder-Segantini, Bianca

Zetkin, Clara/Klara

Ziegler, Hermine

Zippert, Henny

Zschocher, Hanna

Zuckerkandl, Berta

Zur Mühlen, Hermynia von

Appendix 2

1. Georg Heym: "Die Dämonen der Städte"

Sie wandern durch die Nacht der Städte hin,
Die schwarz sich ducken unter ihrem Fuß.
Wie Schifferbärte stehen um ihr Kinn
Die Wolken schwarz vom Rauch und Kohlenruß.

Ihr langer Schatten schwankt im Häusermeer
Und löscht der Straßen Lichterreihen aus.
Er kriecht wie Nebel auf dem Pflaster schwer
Und tastet langsam vorwärts Haus für Haus.

Den einem Fuß auf einen Platz gestellt,
Den anderen gekniet auf einen Turm,
Ragen sie auf, wo schwarz der Regen fällt,
Panspfeifen blasend in den Wolkensturm.

Um ihre Füße kreist das Ritornell
Des Städtemeers mit trauriger Musik,
Ein großes Sterbelied. Bald dumpf, bald grell
Wechselt der Ton, der in das Dunkel stieg.

Sie wandern an dem Strom, der schwarz und breit
Wie ein Reptil, den Rücken gelb gefleckt
Von den Laternen, in die Dunkelheit
Sich traurig wälzt, die schwarz den Himmel deckt.

Sie lehnen schwer auf einer Brückenwand
Und stecken ihre Hände in den Schwarm
Der Menschen aus, wie Faune, die am Rand
Der Sümpfe bohren in den Schlamm den Arm.

Einer steht auf. Dem weißen Monde hängt
Er eine schwarze Larve vor. Die Nacht,
Die sich wie Blei vom finstern Himmel senkt,
Drückt tief die Häuser in des Dunkels Schlacht.

Der Städte Schultern knacken. Und es birst
Ein Dach, daraus ein rotes Feuer schwemmt.
Breitbeinig sitzen sie auf seinem First
Und schrein wie Katzen auf zum Firmament.

In einer Stube voll von Finsternissen
Schreit eine Wöchnerin in ihren Wehn.
Ihr starker Leib ragt riesig aus den Kissen,
Um den herum die großen Teufel stehn.

Sie hält sich zitternd an der Wehebank.
Das Zimmer schwankt um sie von ihrem Schrei,
Da kommt die Frucht. Ihr Schoß klafft rot und lang,
Und blutend reißt er von der Frucht entzwei.

Der Teufel Hälse wachsen wie Giraffen.
Das Kind hat keinen Kopf. Die Mutter hält
Es vor sich hin. In ihrem Rücken klaffen
Des Schrecks Froschfinger, wenn sie rückwärts fällt.

Doch die Dämonen wachsen riesengroß.
Ihr Schläfenhorn zerreißt den Himmel rot.
Erdbeben donnert durch der Städte Schoß
Um ihren Huf, den Feuer überloht

from: *Menschheitsdämmerung*, p. 52.

"The demons of the cities"

They prowl through the night of cities cringing beneath their feet. Black palls of smoke and soot surround their chins like so many seamen's beards.

Their long shadows stagger through the sea of houses and extinguish the rows of street lights. On the pavements they creep forward like fog, feeling their way slowly forward, house by house.

One leg planted in a public square, the other kneeling on a tower, they tower up into the sky from which black rain is falling, playing their Pan's pipes into the darkening storm.

Round their feet revolves the massed cities' ritornello with its sad music, one great song for the dying. The tones rising up into darkness keep changing, are now dull, now shrill.

They roam beside the river which, black and broad as a reptile, its back flecked with yellow from the streetlamps, stretches sadly into the darkness which shrouds the sky in black.

They lean heavily against the side of a bridge and stick their hands into the crowd of people, like satyrs sticking their arms into the mud at the edge of a swamp.

One stands up. He hangs a black mask in front of the moon's whiteness. Night, falling like lead from the louring sky, presses the houses down into the shaft of darkness.

The cities' shoulders sap; a roof bursts open, red fire pouring out of it. They sit astride the ridge of the roof, yowling heavenward like cats.

In a room full of the powers of evil a woman in labour screams out in pain. Her huge stomach rises massively out of the bed round which the great demons stand.

Shaking, she holds on like grim death. The room rocks around her from her scream, then her fruit comes forth. Her womb gapes red and long and bleeding, is torn open.

The demons' necks grow as long as giraffes'. The child has no head. The mother holds it up. The frost-fingers of horror grasp her from behind as she falls back.

The demons for their part grow ever more gigantic. The horn on their forehead tears the red sky open. An earthquake rumbles through the cities around their hoofs, which are engulfed in flames.

translation: Patrick Bridgwater, *Poet of Expressionist Berlin: The Life and Work of Georg Heym* (London: Libris, 1991), pp. 208-9.

2. Claire Goll: "Waldmetamorphose"

Als das Schweigen zu gewaltig wurde
Männlichen Sonnenuntergangs
Und das Vorgefühl der Sterne zu laut,
Schluchzte ich auf vor so viel Abendgüte.
Kleine Blumen umringten mich,
Ihre schüchtern-blaue Schwester.
Ich duftete wie sie nach Liebe.
Mein rotes Haar wurde zu Moos,
Meine Scheu zu Reh, braungeschminkte Tänzerin,
Großäugig den Wald verführend.
Meine violinene Stimme zum Vogel
Der kirchlichen Dämmerung.

Als das Schweigen zu tannengroß wuchs,
Sprangen kindliche Quellen aus meinen Augen
Hinein in den verwandten Abgrund der Wasser,
Und ich erlitt zugleich die Verlassenen aller Ufer.

Gut macht die Stummheit der Bäume,
Gut machen die keuschen Wiesen,
Gut macht der starke Mitternachtsstern
Den unguten Menschen

from: *Lyrische Films*, p. 39.

"Forest-metamorphosis"

When the silence of a manly sunset
became too powerful
And the anticipation of the stars too loud,
I sobbed convulsively with so much evening-goodness.
Little flowers surrounded me,
Their shy-blue sister.
I smelt like them of love.
My red hair became moss,
My shyness a deer, brown-painted dancer,
Wide-eyed, tempting the forest.
My violin voice became a bird
In the church of the dusk.

When the silence grew too pinetree-large,
Childlike springs leapt from my eyes
Into the related abyss of water,
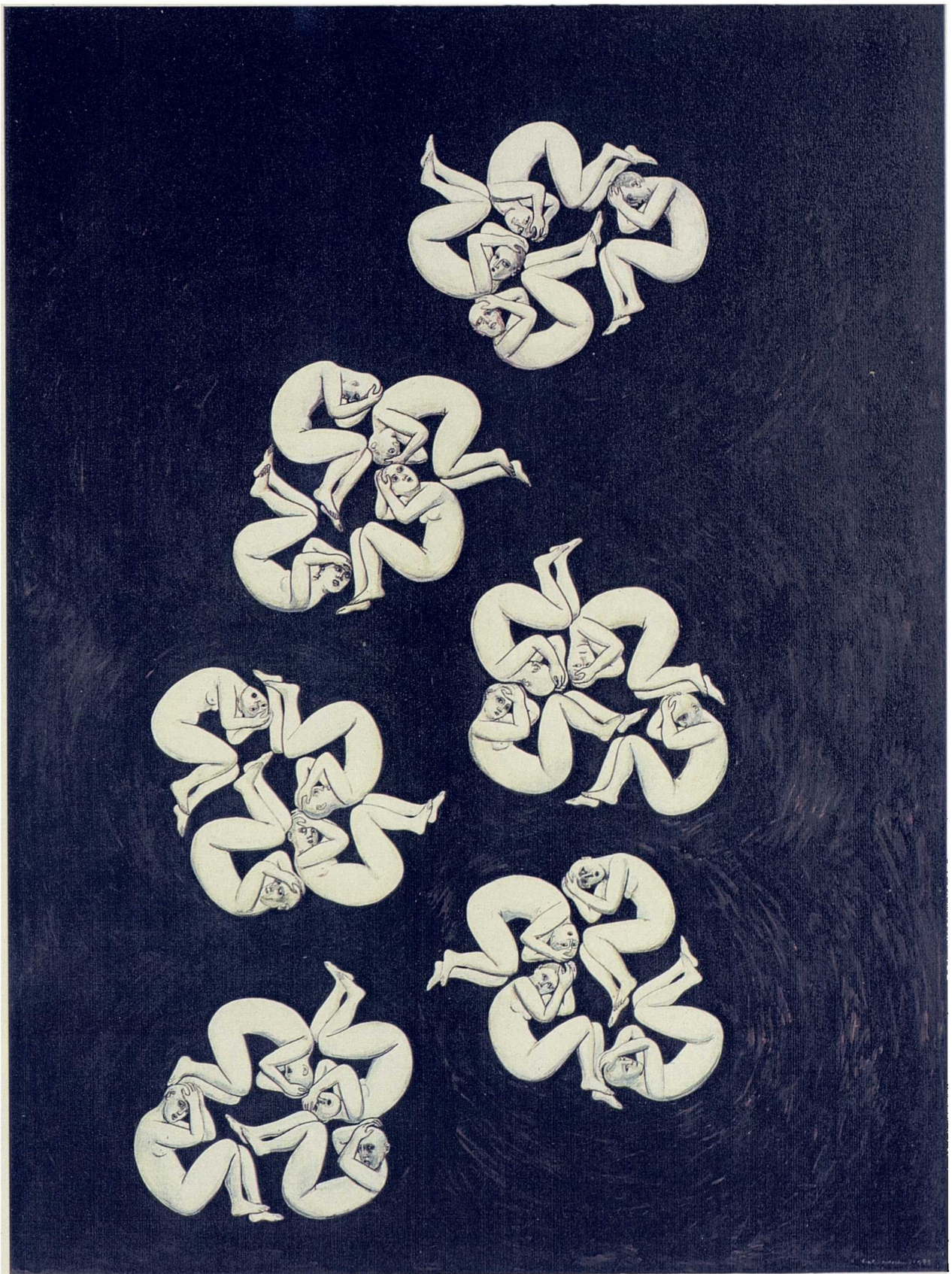and I suffered all at once the forsaken from every shore.

The muteness of the trees makes good,
The chaste meadows make good,
the strong midnight-star makes good
man who is not good.

Appendix 3

Evelyn Williams: "Around and Around" [1988]

Reproduced from *Antinomies: Works by Evelyn Williams*

Catalogue of a Mead Gallery Exhibition
(The University of Warwick: 1994)

Around and Around 1988

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