Bio-Aesthetics and The Artist as Case History

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A Thesis

in the Department

of

Art History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

October 2012

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CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

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Recent critical reappraisals have undermined the coherence – and validity – of the principles defining modern art and artistic production. Traditional art historical categories, periodizations, sub-periodizations, even the very divisions modernism and postmodernism, while useful, are no longer sufficient to define a history of the artistic object, or artistic identity for the modern age. I propose that a biopolitical perspective, with a shift in focus away from the object and towards the artistic body restores, in part, a coherent narrative to a modern art history. This thesis sketches the contours of an artistic sub-category I have coined "bio-aesthetics" within the framework of biopolitics, drawing on the ideas of Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben and Roberto Esposito. I locate a set of *clinical* mechanisms within the domains of aesthetics, artistic perception, subjectivity and performativity. My primary thesis is that the drive toward embodiment, toward the referent, or perhaps more precisely toward the *real*, expressed in formalism's zeal for medium specificity, and in the modern aesthetic project of grounding artistic experience within the somatic, was set into play by a clinical configuration that emerged from the eighteenth century's laboratories and clinics, expounding a life science of bodies.

The corpus of my dissertation focuses on four significant moments within an archaeological schema spanning the eighteenth to the late twentieth centuries. Each chapter focuses on significant historical materializations of the bio-aesthetic, and together

form a historical progression from a biological corporealisation of the sensate, to the psycho-medical individualization of the artist subject, or perhaps, the clinical performer. My corpus begins with the eighteenth-century formalization of a somatically-based aesthetics, culminating in the aesthetics of Immanuel Kant. By separating the action of aesthetic contemplation from rational *logos*, Kant positioned aesthetic experience and artistic creativity in a place of peculiarity or pathology. I then trace the repercussions of bio-aestheticization both in the emergence of the flat picture plane as an index of the clinicalization of artistic visual consciousness, and in the concurrent psycho-medical conflation of artistic subjectivity with pathology in nineteenth-century texts on degeneracy. I conclude with the development, in the later part of the twentieth century, of a new modality of clinical performativity, taking up the self-identification of artists with a psycho-medical identity, and the embracing of medical themes and ordeals as artistic subjects. This collapse of a metaphoric position of aesthetic difference with an actual medical history and body is explored on two levels: first, in a consideration twentieth-century high-modernist criticism and in an examination of minimalist and performance-based works, including those of Beuys, Wilke, Morris and Gober. The irony that emerges from my study is that coherence is achieved within the heroic modernist pursuit of purity of medium and individual genius by a corresponding a master narrative of illness.

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my parents,

Charles Joseph and Christine O'Brien Gallo

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my very deepest gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Kristina Huneault. This project would not have been possible, or completed, without her unflinching support over the years. I am indebted to her for the rigor of her supervision, a rigor which has helped to make this project a work on my self, a work – Michel Foucault citing Pierre Hadot citing the Greeks -- of "askesis." I also extend my gratitude to the members of my committee, and thank them for the care they invested in their readings, for their critical acumen, to Dr. Genevieve Rail, Dr. Johanne Sloan, Dr. Dominic Hardy and to my external examiner Dr. Mark Cheetham. I would also like to thank Dr. Andrea Mackean for her editorial assistance with all of those details at the *end*. This has been an ordeal in the most positive sense, one that has changed me.

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Introduction

The last forty years have seen significant changes in the ways artistic modernism is understood, as a project, a style, a moment in time. Many core modernist characteristics and presumptions, including the autonomy of art, the emphasis on formal aspects of art, authenticity, genius, good taste, the periodization of artistic movements, and the linear organization of these periods into a progressive developmental scheme, have been criticized by several generations of scholars. Critiques put forward by previous generations of art historians, philosophers, political theorists and others, have effectively taken apart the master-concepts that underwrite our histories. Semiotic theory, feminism, deconstruction, queer theory, and post-colonial studies, all contained within the larger rubric of postmodernism, have questioned and found wanting, modernism's basic assumptions of avant-garde genius, progressive development and formal refinement. Jean-François Lyotard and Fredric Jameson wrote important critiques that equated postmodernism with developments of late capitalism, considered the collapse of master-narratives, and identified the emergence of new artistic practices developing from critique, quotation, paraphrase and pastiche.[1] In questioning originality, something new is born.

In light of these developments, efforts have been made to reset modernism along new aesthetic and historical lines. Gene Swenson, in 1966, suggested a counter-history of

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[1] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990); Brian Wallis, *Art After Modernism* (New York and Cambridge, Mass.: The New Museum of Contemporary Art and MIT Press, 1984); Russell Ferguson and Martha Gever, *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992); Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

artistic modernism focused on imagery and reference. In his landmark exhibition "The Other Tradition" held at the Philadelphia Institute of the Arts. Swensen's genealogical selection, extending from Dada and Surrealism to Pop Art, dispensed with the orthodox formalist narratives of medium-specificity and abstraction propounded by Clement Greenberg and his follower, Michael Fried, and instead, focused on oppositional and idiosyncratic use of imagery and an emphasis on popular-derived content.[2] Almost thirty years later, Rosalind Krauss's *The Optical Unconscious* (1993) drew on psychoanalytic theory to challenge the optical rationalism of the formalist narrative. Krauss's history of modernism was grounded in the unconscious and in psychic drives.[3] That same year, Yves-Alain Bois' *Painting as Model* re-framed the oppositional binaries of form and content, abstraction and representation, plastic and literary that underlay Greenberg's theories. Using structuralist and post-structuralist semiotic analysis, Bois recast modernism's reflexive turns of medium specificity and reductivism, as symptomatic of a general problem of "the referent."[4] Bois did not reject formalism, but showed that modernism consists of a plurality of sometimes competing and antagonistic formalisms. Swenson rejected the reduction of modern art to formalism, while both Krauss and Bois emerged from the Greenbergian tradition, but all three took critical positions and proposed theoretical and historical alternatives to what was, at the time, the dominant way of seeing the modern.

More recently, philosopher Jacques Rancière has challenged the distinction between modernism and post-modernism. He questions the views that posit post-modernism as a radical break from modernism, and argues that, since the eighteenth century, vanguard

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[2] See: Gene Swenson, *The Other Tradition* (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1966).
[3] Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993).
[4] Yves Alain-Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1993).

culture has engaged in a sustained battle over the meaning and value of representation and mimesis. Rancière contends that this struggle is epitomized by a "paradox of the spectator."[5] He argues that the ideal of aesthetic distance and passive spectatorship indicative of modernism has always been grounded by more aesthetically and politically engaged forms of "vital participation"[6] in which the spectator is active, and traditional distinctions between seeing and doing, aesthetic perception and political action are blurred. For Rancière, this paradox has formed the productive core of modern artistic culture, be it in painting, performance, or film, since the mid-eighteenth century, and he draws a genealogy of significant figures from Denis Diderot to Berthold Brecht and Antonin Artaud to support his views.

My project, like those of Swenson, Krauss, Bois, and Rancière, is to propose another way of understanding the aesthetic and intellectual impulses that have underpinned cultural production since the eighteenth century. I do so, not to replace those offered by others, but to add a new archaeological category to modern and contemporary art history. I am motivated by my interest in developments in the field of critical bio-politics, particularly as (re)defined by Michel Foucault in his late work, and by a desire to place crucial developments of modern and more recent artistic culture within a bio-political or bio-aesthetic schema, which I call "bio-aesthetics." It is my central thesis that the historical transformation as proposed by Foucault in *A History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (1980), from an Aristotelian understanding of human life and personal identity, to a biological one beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, is manifested in new forms of artistic subjectivity, aesthetic philosophy, and material practice. According

[5] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliot (London and New York: Verso), 2.
[6] Rancière, *Spectator*, 2.

to Foucault, the intersection of politics and modern biology is indicated by a shift in focus to the biological existence of individuals and populations, in the political mechanisms – legal, medical, military, moral – that organize society. Foucault writes that these mechanisms are "bent on generating forces, making them grow," and are "situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race and the large-scale phenomena of populations."[7] I contend that a distinct bio-aesthetic mentality emerges in the eighteenth century and spreads beyond the biological and medical sciences and into artistic production and critical thought. In the larger cultural domain, this mentality is transposed onto conventional art historical divisions of modernism, post-modernism, and contemporary art. I will define this bio-aesthetic mentality in the broadest sense; however, it is my contention that this mentality is inscribed into artistic theory and practice as a set of decidedly *clinical* methods, methods that evolve around the new forms of analytic and subjective reflexivity Foucault adumbrated in his lectures and writings on bio-politics. My specific effort will be to show how these mechanisms have shaped domains of critical thought, aesthetic perception, and artistic subjectivity, and by doing so, to posit a new category of clinical performativity bridging modernity and post-modernity, and continuing unabated, perhaps even stronger, today.

This is not to say that bio-aesthetics does not adhere to many aspects of traditional accounts of modernism; it does. The philosophy and aesthetics of Immanuel Kant provide an epistemological and historical fulcrum around which bio-aesthetics pivots. Kant's epistemology establishes a set of basic structures and refrains of thought, which are re-interpreted throughout the historical period I examine, and which, I contend, reflect the

[7] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 136, 137.

transformational effect of the emerging life sciences on speculative reasoning and aesthetics in the early years of our bio-political age. While his centrality to philosophical discourse is undisputed, Kant typically emerges in art history as an outdated figure,[8] and his concepts, such as aesthetic disinterestedness have been vilified.[9] Arguing against this marginalization of Kant, I contend that the *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Judgment* are symptomatic of the traumatizing effects the new scientific and mechanistic conceptualization of the individual body as a biological entity, had on speculative thought, thought that was at the same time vitalized by life's propulsive effects. Kant incorporated the new terminologies of somatic and corporeal experience into what had been traditionally understood as the dis-embodied precincts of idealist philosophy.

The *Critiques* progress from the more properly philosophical to the aesthetic.[10] Kant's formulations of the *apriority* of space and time, of sensibility, taste, purposiveness and genius make up a core set of suppositions upon which all modernist aesthetics are based, even those that argue against Kant. These are also key concepts on which bio-aesthetics is developed. As I demonstrate, Kant's drift from philosophy to aesthetics is an encapsulation of a general trend toward the corporeal in art and criticism that continues to the present day. It is this corporealization, this embodiment, of artistic identity and experience that I capture under the rubric of bio-aesthetics. It is my contention that,

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[8] Mark Cheetham, *Kant, Art, and Art History: Moments of Discipline* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) is a rare exception; Cheetham reconsiders Kant's place not only within the larger tradition, and the political and critical value of Kant's understanding of beauty, he also explores the importance of Kant to canonical figures such as Panofsky, and Greenberg, and to post-modern aesthetics and criticism, including Derrida's treatment of the sublime.

[9] See: Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), see also: Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic,* (London: Blackwell, 1990).

[10] See: Rachel Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty and Biology: An Interpretation of the Critique of Judgment,* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Odo Marquand, "Aesthetics and Therapeutics," *The New Schelling*, ed. Judith Norman and Alistair Welchman, trans. Judith Norman (London and New York. Continuum, 2004), 21; Paul Crowther, "Fundamental Ontology and Transcendent Beauty: An Approach to Kant's Aesthetics," in *Art and Embodiment: From Aesthetics to Self-Consciousness,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, 1993).

within this bio-aesthetic schema, we may compose an archaeological picture that stretches from Kantian philosophy and the many eighteenth-century discourses that wrestle with art's relationship to the biological body, through nineteenth-century treatises linking artistic subjectivity to degeneracy, to the flat modernist picture plane, and finally to post-minimalist performance art.

Before I map my journey through this terrain in chapters, and identify my methodological considerations, I will provide an overview of the term *bio-politics*, and review the significant texts from within art history that have examined the impact of modern clinical epistemology on artistic culture.

Intellectual and Art Historical Context

Foucault's concept of bio-politics provides the general context for my study. Foucault was not, however, responsible for the term's coinage. As Roberto Esposito, the theorist of bio-politics, has described, the word appeared initially in the first quarter of the twentieth century in discourses on political science.[11] Rudolph Kjellen's *Outline for a Political System* (1920) was the first text to use the term 'biopolitics' to denote a "discipline which defines human society according to the characteristics of biological life."[12] A number of studies following Kjellen, including Jakob von Uexkull's *Biology of the State* (1920)[13] and Morley Roberts's *Bio-politics: An Essay in the Physiology, Pathology and Politics of the Social and Somatic Organism* (1938)[14] further conflated biological science with politics. In these discourses on bio-politics, an analogic relationship between the social

[11] Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 16.
[12] Esposito, *Bios*, 16.
[13] Jacob von Uexkull, *Staatsbiologie* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 1920).
[14] Robert Morley, *Bio-politics: An Essay in the Physiology, Pathology & Politics of the Social & Somatic Organism* (London: Dent, 1938).

body and a biological one is assumed. Society and biology are collapsed, frequently to emphasize the detrimental impact of 'pathological' processes on the social body, and the theme of 'pathology' assumes the stature of a master concept.[15] In an effort to re-define bio-politics along less biocratic lines, social theorists in the 1960s called for a more humanistic, spiritual and ethical definition of biological life. The establishment of the International Political Science Association for Politics and the Life Sciences in 1973[16] marks the development of bio-politics along 'naturalistic' lines; now, it is grounded in recent developments in genetic science.[17]

Significant inroads have been made by cultural historians to define a trend in post-Enlightenment artistic and literary practices along bio-cultural lines. Decades before Foucault, scholars were concerned with identifying epistemic features common to scientific and cultural fields, in parallel with Foucault's early bio-political thought. An example is found in the work of twentieth-century linguist and historian of Romantic science Alexander Gode-Von Aesch, who introduced his concept of *biotic* in his study *Natural Science in German Romanticism* (1941). He contends that the domains of Romantic literature and science are "epistemologically identical," and "are to be studied, not in terms of the influence which one may have exerted upon the other, but, briefly and boldly, in their physiognomic identity."[18] Using cross-disciplinary readings of Romantic scientific and literary texts, he proposes that both domains be viewed as simultaneously constituted by a concept of life "as a living process."[19] In 1973, Jacob Opper wrote of

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[15] Morley, *Bio-politics*, 17.
[16] Morley, *Bio-politics*, 22.
[17] For a representative socio-biological discourse see: Elliot White, *Genes, Brains, and Politics: Self-Selection and Social Life* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1993).
[18] Alexander God-Von Aesch, *Natural Science in German Romanticism.* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 12.
[19] Aesch, *Natural Science*, 12.

correspondences between the transition in the sciences from eighteenth-century "logico-mathematical cosmology" to nineteenth-century "natural-history biology" and similar transitions in music from the mathematical rationality of classical music to the "biological metaphors" of early German romantic music.[20]

Ideas and writings such as these form the background when, between 1975 and 1978, Foucault introduced a constellation of bio-political concepts in his lectures at the College de France.[21] The lectures focused on the shift from sovereignty to disciplinary power, and provided the theoretical template for his later work, pursued most intensely in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*, in which Foucault lays out a constellation of terms under a bio-political rubric, among them "bio-history,"[22] and "bio-power."[23] The "era of bio-power" he writes begins with the "entry of life into history." This set into play "two poles of development linked together by a whole intermediary cluster of relations." The first pole, which develops in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, he contends,

> Is centered on the body as machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, in its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the disciplines: an *anatamo-politics of the human body.*[24]

The second pole was established in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and exponentially diversified and multiplied this political anatomy into what Foucault coins the *species body*. In the domain of species bodies "the individual becomes the basic

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[20] Jacob Opper, *Science and the Arts: A Study in Relationships from 1600-1900.* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1973), 35.
[21] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008), 243-245, 253-265.
[22] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 143.
[23] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 140.
[24] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 139.

biological unit of a biological-historical process, a unit of propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary."[25] Key to these developments is modern clinical knowledge and its new regulatory principle, the *norm*, which is pursued and defined with particular fervour in the medical laboratories and psychiatric hospitals of the time:

> The discourse of disciplines is about a rule: not a juridical rule derived from sovereignty, but a discourse about a natural rule, or in other words a norm. Disciplines will define not a code of law, but a code of normalization, and they will necessarily refer to a theoretical horizon that is not the edifice of law, but the field of the human sciences. And the jurisprudence of these disciplines will be that of a clinical knowledge. [26]

In the early nineteenth century, doctors and scientists enter into an exchange with judges and "in the name of the modernization of justice"[27] juridical power becomes bound up with clinical expertise and its methodologies, and with the medical paradigm of the *normal* and *abnormal*. Foucault notes that within this medical-juridical schema, new clinical "testing rituals" are devised. These "techniques for producing truth" include the methods of observation and demonstration drawn from the laboratory, and the adoption of religious rituals of confession into the clinical domain.[28] Individualized confession was developed by the Roman Catholic Church and deemed a sacrament, in the early thirteenth century. Foucault contends it acquired its modern value as a mode of self-regulation in the bio-political age, as emerging public health apparatus transformed the mechanisms of religious observation into a clinical tool. Confession was to become crucial to the development of psychiatry and psychoanalysis,[29] and to the new science of sex that

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[25] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 139.
[26] Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976,* 38.
[27] Foucault, *Society*, 39.
[28] Foucault, *Society*, 59.
[29] Foucault, *Society*, 160.

focused on the reproductive functions of individual subjects and transformed "sex into discourse."[30] The modern confessional is not contained within the modalities of clinically-codified self-reflexivity of family, medicine, sexuality, the courts, the schools. Foucault proposes that it is also at work in vanguard culture; "Confession and freedom of expression," he stated in a lecture in 1975, "face each other and complement each other."[31] Oppositional and complementary, the confrontation of self-confession and self-expression exposes the paradox underlying the aesthetic being in the modern age. This clinical-confessional mechanism, as I will show, is at work in the performance and body art practices that incorporate artists' autobiographies, and particularly those performance works that deal with artists' clinical ordeals.

Giorgio Agamben, philosopher, historian of law, and author of a number of books on modern and postmodern aesthetics, has developed Foucault's bio-cultural thesis. While the topic is not explicit in his more recent work *The Open: Man and Animal* (2002), which explores the discursive construction of difference between man and animal in religious, philosophical, literary and scientific texts from the ancients to the moderns, at every turn the study invokes Foucault's concepts of bio-power and bio-politics. Agamben introduces his concept of the "anthropological machine,"[32] as a discursive structure emerging in the nineteenth century, that, while it blurs the biological distinction between animals and humans, simultaneously reasserts the primacy of man and his humanity over and above his biological animal origins. Man, as the measurer of all things, thus becomes the measure. Other animals function as supplements.

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[30] Foucault, *Society*, 61.
[31] Foucault, *Society*, 170.
[32] Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 33.

In his earlier book, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995), Agamben consolidates Foucault's concepts on bio-power, and applies them as an archaeological device, as a bio-cultural zone into which man and animal and man-as-animal enter. For man, the acknowledgement of the dueling, and ostensibly conflicting, definitions of man as biological species and metaphysical being, introduces a profound anthropological-philosophical anxiety – the "problem of problems."[33] For Agamben, the *bestialization of man* as Foucault calls it, is reflected in the erosion of the Aristotelian distinction between man's *zoë*, or 'living being,' and his *bios*, or life as cultivated subject of politics, public life, art and learning. Agamben writes that the "*zoë* expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods), and *bios* … indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group."[34] This distinction, Agamben contends, is at the epistemic foundation of western political rationality up until that historical moment when civilization passed Foucault's "threshold of biological modernity." *Zoë* and *bios*, the unproblematized conception of humans as biological creatures *and* political/cultural beings, enters into a zone of bio-political un-decidability. If the human brain, and with it the human consciousness that measures its difference from other beings, is merely the single-celled organism extended and expanded through evolution in linear time, then the assertion of human difference becomes problematic. "This politicization of bare life as such," Agamben writes, "constitutes the decisive event of our modernity and signals a radical transformation of the political-philosophical categories of classical thought."[35] The horizon of modern bio-politics is blown open by the fusion of

[33] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 1.
[34] Agamden, *Homo Sacer*, 1.
[35] Agamden, *Homo Sacer*, 1.

zoë into *bios* in the eighteenth century, and the repercussions of that implosion continue to be felt today.

I set my concept of the *bio-aesthetic* together with its clinical methods into this set of historical-theoretical concepts established in Foucault's bio-political articulations of bio-force and bio-power. Bio-aesthetics, as the biological, medicalized, circumscribing and curtailment of aesthetic expression and freedom, shares with Foucault's bio-political, the emphasis on the body, measurement against the norm, the reflexive confessing subject, and the ritualized protocols of clinical analysis. Equally, the bio-aesthetic is embedded in the transformation of philosophical epistemology sparked by the subsumption of *bios* by *zoë*, discussed by Agamben. As Foucault and Agamben aimed to situate situating developments in modern social and political life within a biological understanding of *bare life*, I advance bio-aesthetics as a complementary concept functioning as a link between this bio-political episteme and modern forms of artistic subjectivity, perception and practice.

There are precedents for this approach. In the fields of art history, aesthetic theory and cultural studies, a number of texts that address the bio-clinical relationship between the visual arts and the emerging biological sciences have been published in the last several decades. Ludmilla Jordanova's *Sexual Visions, Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (1989), was one of the first studies to explore comprehensively the impact of the clinical sciences on visual culture, and to situate the objects of investigation within a network of Foucauldian discursive operations.[36] Jordanova text, a diverse corpus organized as a series of connected but

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[36] Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions, Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 37.

independent essays, contends that since the eighteenth century, under the auspices of masculine reason, science and medicine have anchored knowledge on the female body, visualized and materialized in a number of ornate, even fantastical figures, including nineteenth-century medical wax models, selections of Mozart's operas, Michelet's historical writings, and late twentieth-century pharmaceutical advertisements.

Anthea Callen's *The Spectacular Body* (1995) examines the ways Edgar Degas's paintings and drawings were shaped by, and come to serve as indexes of, nineteenth-century clinical epistemology. Firmly based in traditional art historical practice with a focus on a single artist, her precise skill and great pleasure in the formal analysis of Degas pictures, Callen's approach is equally interdisciplinary, perhaps in acknowledgment of the interdisciplinarity of Degas' practice. As she moves from artworks to contemporaneous clinical texts, treatises on public health, anthropology, psychopathology and hysteria, Callen organizes her material thematically around a set of key headings. Degas's sculpture and pastel paintings are treated as visualizations of socio-scientific ideas, including clinical binaries of "health and disease, hygiene and dirt."[37] A significant example is Degas' use of glass cases around his wax dancer figures, which, she contends, reflects the use of glass display cases in laboratory and natural history museums.[38] Such display techniques are now a staple of post-modern and contemporary aesthetics.

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[37] Anthea Callen, *The Spectacular Body: Science, Method, and Meaning in the Work of Degas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), ix.
[38] Callen, *Spectacular Body*, ix.

Several scholars in visual studies have focused on topics of clinical perception, specifically Foucault's postulation of the "clinical gaze"[39] in *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (1961). Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (1990) examines the constitutive role of nineteenth-century clinical discourse in the historical construction of modern subjectivity and visual perception.[40] Crary focuses on the development and application of the *camera obscura* to a range of techniques that were developed to harness and refashion the *sensorium*, and visual sensibility, of mid-nineteenth-century urban subjects particularly in the lucrative domains of commerce and leisure. Crary's subsequent work develops this line of inquiry further: *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (1999), is a critical and historical analysis of the emergence, in the nineteenth century, of 'attention' in clinical, physiological, aesthetic, artistic, recreational and psychological discourses.[41] Relevant to my exploration of the relationship between clinical and artistic perception is Crary's interest in *visuality*, which he ties to a larger theme of modern "embodiment" and the "embodied subject,"[42] and from there, to a network of clinical and artistic modalities of empirical perception that take shape starting in the mid-nineteenth century.

A related body of writing explores the impact of clinical discourse on artistic subjectivity. Sander L. Gilman's *Pathology and Difference: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (1985) focuses on pathological stereotypes in a cross disciplinary

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[39] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception,* trans. A.M. Sheridan, (London and New York: Routledge, 2003) 2.

[40] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer, On Vision and Modernity in The Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990.

[41] Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 282.

[42] Crary, 282.

exploration of an array of materials, visual as well as textual, from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like Jordanova, Gilman analyzes pathology as a discourse structured as a binary confrontation of health and sickness, doctor and patient, and explores the paradoxical conjunction of artistic subjectivity and psychopathology in the nineteenth century. According to Gilman, melancholia and genius have been joined concepts in the western understanding of the artist since the ancients, but she shows that, since the nineteenth century, this connection shifted from 'notional' to a scientific 'truism', to borrow Foucault's terminology, with the emergence of clinical psychopathology.[43] Gilman's historicization of truisms such as the 'psychopath as artist' are particularly relevant to my study.[44]

Similarly, David Lomas has examined the conflagration of clinicalized artistic subjectivity and biography. In "Body Languages: Kahlo and Medical Imagery" (1993), Lomas focuses on the medical imagery in Frida Kahlo's paintings. He begins with a critique of the dominant studies of Kahlo's work, which he contends have trivialized her achievements. He is averse to the realist conceits of biographical genre, which assume a naturalist transparency with respect to what is portrayed. For Lomas, the term 'medical imagery' denotes a semiotic category, that encompasses "the depiction of medical(ised) events"[45] together with the use of "an overtly medical or anatomical iconography."[46] Yet Lomas also proposes a new biographical method with regard to Kahlo, one that suspends her art between biographical motivations of physical trauma and the medical and

[43] Gilman, *Difference*, 234.
[44] Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1986) 217.
[45] David Lomas. "Body languages: Kahlo and Medical Imagery," *The Body Imaged: Human Form and Visual Culture Since the Renaissance*, eds. Kathleen Adler and Marcia Pointon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, l993), 2.
[46] Lomas, *Kahlo*, 6.

anatomical illustration that was available for making medical experiences known. Lomas' biographical method is relevant to my examination of the new roles works of art assume with relation to the lives of artists in the bio-political, clinical age. A central thesis of my project is that during this time artists and their works move into a new bio-aesthetic *zone of indiscernability*. In this zone, the 'living being' of artists, their individualized 'bare' or biological lives, enter into new 'biographical' arrangements with their artistic production. At its most developed, bio-aesthetic art takes the form of medical biography, as I intend to show.

Mark A. Cheetham has written a 'narrative of infection' threading through the history of abstract painting. *Abstract Art Against Autonomy: Infection, Resistance, and Cure Since the '60s* (2006)[47] places modernist abstraction's drive toward purity, its formalist effort to attain medium specificity and aesthetic autonomy, within an epidemiological paradigm. According to Cheetham, modern and post-modern abstraction is fashioned within a discourse of bacteriological and viral contagion, radiological exposure, antibodies, antidotes and the treatment protocols of aesthetic *purification*. He points to the 'medical metaphorics' of abstraction, from Robert Rauschenberg's and Yves Klein's 1950s monochromes to AIDS-related multi-media works by the Toronto-based collective General Idea and the post-Chernobyl abstractions of Taras Polataiko. These images and bodies of work are situated within a larger historical framework of 'infectious' abstraction dating back to Kasmir Malevich, who produced a discourse on painting that was "consistently medical", and discussing art "in terms of diagnosis, incubation,

[47] See: Mark A. Cheetham, *Abstract Art Against Autonomy: Infection, Resistance, and Cure since the 60's,* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

inoculation, and resistance."[48] Cheetham's study is a precedent for my efforts to draw the clinical contour on modernism's flat picture plane. More importantly, Cheetham's epidemiological model bolsters my interpretive approach to the critical and theoretical exchange in the mid-1960s between art critic Michael Fried and artists Donald Judd and Robert Morris in the fourth chapter. I treat their exchange as an auto-immune ordeal, in which 'the body' erupts from its formalist skin, and into the theatrical space of performance.

Other recent literature on the topic of medicalization and the biological in art history, cultural studies, critical and aesthetic theory, tend to sideline historical concerns and focus on specific clinical incorporealizations of the body in cultural domains. Foucault gets less mention. For example, Jose van Dijck's *The Transparent Body: A Cultural Analysis of Medical Imaging* (2005) examines the convergence of modern medical and media technologies in popular contemporary visualizations of the body.[49] Claudia Benthien's *Skin: On the Cultural Border Between Self and World* (2002) posits the body's clinicalized surface as a cultural tissue on which a history of modern subjectivity from the eighteenth to early twenty-first centuries is written.[50] Petra Kuppers' *Scar of Visibility: Medical Performances and Contemporary Art* (2007) examines the role of the clinically-identified 'disabled body' in contemporary visual and performance art,[51] while

[48] Cheetham, *Abstract Art*, 7.
[49] Jose van Dijck. *The Transparent Body: A Cultural Analysis of Medical Imaging* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2005)
[50] Claudia Benthein, *Skin: On the Cultural Border Between Self and World*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
[51] Petra Kuppers. *Scar of Visibility: Medical Performances and Contemporary Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

the interpenetrations of bodies and bytes make up a growing literature in the new field of information studies.[52]

Art historical interest in the history of medicine is an indication of a broader cultural fascination with the body, a fascination that, arguably, assumes its most pronounced visual form in performance art. What I am offering is, in some sense, an account of a *corporealization* of the artistic body. RoseLee Goldberg's *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present* (1979)[53] is the first study to formalize an overview of the use of the body in performance art. Goldberg links late-twentieth century body art to earlier Dada performances at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich at the outbreak of World War I, and to Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty* in the 1930s. Since Goldberg's study, a stream of texts treating the topic of performance from a range of perspectives have been published. These include, C. Carr's *On Edge: Performance at the End of the Twentieth Century* (1993),[54] a political history of late-century performance works, which focuses on the vibrant New York club scene from the late 1970s to the 1990s, and places the performances of Lydia Lunch, Linda Montano, Karen Finley, and others within the contentious and volatile context of the American culture wars. Peggy Phelan, a Performance specialist, has published a number of studies from a perspective that combines feminism, Derridean deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Her *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993)[55] confronts, in a theoretically dense and challenging fashion, the problematic, politically charged and undecidable ordeal of

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[52] Robert Mitchel and Phillip Thurtle, eds. *Data Made Flesh: Embodying Information* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
[53] See: RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979).
[54] C. Carr, *On Edge: Performance at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press/University Press of New England, 1993).
[55] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Poliltics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

visibility in performance. Phelan broadens the category of performance to include film, dance, staged plays, and political demonstrations, including anti-abortion rallies. Paul Schimmel's *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object* (1998)[56] situates the performance of Joseph Beuys, Lygia Clark, Chris Burden and others in the context of post-war painting and sculpture, paying particular attention to the material effects generated, such as stage props and implements of performance art.

The concept of embodiment is crucial to my examination of body and performance art. Amelia Jones' *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (1998) set out to define a concept of embodiment in the performance and body art practices taking shape in the aftermath of Abstract Expressionism and continuing to the end of twentieth century. She contends that the work of Jackson Pollock first expresses a drive toward embodiment, a *performative* impulse that gathers from the skins of his large drip paintings and projects onto the inter-subjective field of performers and spectators. Citing the seemingly fortuitous appearance of Hans Namuth's photographs of the artist "theatrically *performing* the act of painting" in *Life Magazine* in 1951,[57] Jones proposes these images, together with critical texts by Harold Rosenberg, Mikel Dufrenne, and others, brought a seemingly subtle, but ultimately subversive notion linking modernism's flat surfaces to action and performance into artistic discourse. She contends that the performative category constructed by this assemblage of paintings, texts, and photographs, which she calls the "Pollockian Performative" [58] coincides with a radical shift in the philosophical understanding of subjectivity associated with post-structuralism. She goes further, proposing this concept

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[56] Paul Schimmel, *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949-1979* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998).

[57] Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (1998), 55.

[58] Jones, *Body Art*, 55.

of a *performed* and relational subjectivity departs drastically from the "normative subjectivity" of the "intentional individual or originary subject" associated with both Kant's genius, and Descartes' *cogito*.[59]

Jones draws theoretical support from twentieth-century phenomenology. Reading Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* through Lacanian psychoanalysis, post-structuralism, feminism, gender studies, semiotics and queer theory, she formulates a concept of artistic embodiment that is personally, politically and artistically *engaged*. She follows these theoretical considerations with a sequence of case studies that trace the "Pollockian Performative" to a series of late 1950s and early 1960s actions including those by Yves Klein and Alan Kaprow, and the events, and performances of the 1960s and early 1970s in artists' bodies are *unveiled* or revealed as sites of ongoing, ever-changing engagements with desire, gender, and sexuality. Lynda Benglis, for example, performs both an homage to and parody of Pollock in re-enactments of his painting-performance that deflate its masculine cultural authority, its "veiled phallus".[60] Two decades after Benglis' *détournement*, Keith Boadwee carried out a queer hyper-parody of Pollock's gesture, making the surface of painting a site on which to perform paint-excretory functions.[61]

Jones's category of the Pollockian Performative provides an important model for my category of artist as case history, which I will examine in the third chapter. There, I take up the topic of the psycho-medicalisation of artistic subjectivity and examine the case of vanguard dramatist and artist Antonin Artaud. Aspects of Jones' account of embodiment, however, depart significantly from my own. She is critical of Kantian aesthetics, which

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[59] Jones, *Body Art*, 55.
[60] Jones, *Body Art*, 72.
[61] Jones, *Body Art*, 94.

she contends suppresses and supplants corporeal life with transcendental "pure creative thought,"[62] and further, proposes Kant's critiques are tethered to seventeenth-century Cartesian rationalism that opposes mind to body and is presided over by its all-seeing *cogito*.[63] I contend that Kant's philosophy and aesthetics comprise a discourse of embodiment. While the body is not specifically represented in the *Critiques*, it pervades Kant's discourse as an ever-encroaching ordeal of signification, a referent, a biological substance or force. The crucial concept of "purposive unity," although Kant brackets it as a heuristic idea, hints at an underlying organic logic. More significantly, the general drift of Kant's critical cycle (we must imagine the tectonic scale of this drift!) is in essence a journey from the seemingly heady domain of reflexive consciousness, into the experiential tissues of the body and sensibility that give it structure. It will be my purpose to thematise the progress of bio-aesthetics as a pulsive, corporeally driven movement from the aesthetics of embodiment – first comprehensively articulated by Kant's *Critique of Judgment* – to a more full-bodied aesthetics, or if you will, of performance, in particular, of *clinical* performance epitomized by the work of the late Hannah Wilke.

My project may be placed alongside the afore-cited art historical writings, which are themselves part of a larger set of discourses that explore, in an interdisciplinary fashion, the role of modern technology and medicine in modern aesthetics and artistic subjectivity.[64] Within this expanded context, art historians have incorporated material that

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[62] Jones, *Body Art*, 81.
[63] Jones, *Body Art*, 81.
[64] This includes a large and growing body of writing in interdisciplinary art history exploring intersections of aesthetics, art history, philosophy, the life sciences, literary theory, technology, film, and media studies often subsumed under the heading of Visual Studies. A cursory inventory of this work would include: Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago, 1984), Barbara Stafford, *Body Criticism: Imagining the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991); Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York, 1991); Kathleen Adler and Marcia Pointon, ed., *The Body Imaged: The Human Form and Visual Culture since the*

was formerly not 'proper' to the discipline, and have embraced new methodological opportunities. In an effort to avoid the nebulous unities of modernist historicism (*zeitgeist* for example) most have shied away from making larger historical claims. For all their methodological diversity, most approaches to the topic of art's relationship to modern life sciences are specific with regards to corpus and limited in their chronological and archaeological outlook.

Chapter Outline and Corpus

I have divided my dissertation into four chapters, each reflecting the clinicalization of artistic experience in the domains of theory, perception, subjectivity and performativity. Chapter One explores the clinicalization of aesthetics. This entails an examination of the terminological exchanges between the burgeoning biological sciences and new forms of critical and theoretical discourses on art that emerge in the eighteenth century. I will treat this as a site of discursive origin, reading significant texts from the domains of medical science and aesthetics by Albrecht von Haller, Julien Offray de La Mettrie, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. My effort will be to elucidate the ways these texts share a set of terms, and how treatises on art adapt the analytical methods made available by the emerging laboratory life sciences. I will examine the ways each of these texts grapples with the bio-corporeal *referent*: that of the sensate, finite biological body as it is posited (enthusiastically in the case of La Mettrie) by the emerging medical and physiological sciences. In the last part of this chapter, I examine

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Renaissance (Cambridge, 1993); Lisa Cartwright, *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture* (Minneapolis, 1995); Mieke Bal, ed. *The Practice of Cultural Analysis: Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretation.* (Stanford, 1999). On the topic of technology and medicine on modern aesthetics and artistic subjectivity, see: Charles G. Salas, ed., *The Life and the Work: Art and Biography* (Los Angeles, 2007); Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York, 2007); Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Subject in Art: Portraiture and the Birth of the Modern* (Durham, 2006); Amelia Jones, *Self/Image: Technology, Representation and the Contemporary Subject* (New York, 2006); Denise Green, *Metonymy in Contemporary Art: A New Paradigm* (Minnesota, 2005).

those concepts of Immanuel Kant that touch directly on my project. As indicated earlier, my purpose is to suggest an understanding of Kant's discourses that opens to the possibility of the bio-aesthetic, and thus reconsider his relevance to art history in the post-modern, perhaps post-aesthetic era. I will examine his first and third critiques, *The Critique of Pure Reason* and *The Critique of Judgment,* with the purpose of elucidating the ways these texts incorporate corporeal and somatic concepts from the emerging life sciences. I will further explore how the overall transition from philosophy to aesthetics in Kant's epistemology is indicative of a larger epistemological shift toward a bio-cultural rationality.

Chapter Two examines the profound similarities between modern clinical and aesthetic perception. My purpose will be to demonstrate the ways medical and artistic modes of perception, with their comparable emphases on the empirical *surface* and the disinterested gaze of an objective observer, are determined by the same epistemic changes. A comparative reading of texts by Michel Foucault, particularly *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception,* and Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoön," and "Modernist Painting," is central to the chapter's organization. Efforts will be made to show how the forms of visual reduction articulated by both authors may be placed within a larger Kantian framework, particularly with regards to Kant's conception of space. The chapter concludes with a review of recent articulations of this intersection of clinical and aesthetic perception, including scholarly studies by cultural historians Rachel McGraith and Lisa Cartwright, and the philosophical-aesthetic manifestos of Gilles Deleuze, and Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

Chapter Three examines the impact of clinical epistemology on artistic subjectivity, and identifies a category of artistic subjectivity I am calling *artist case history*. This will entail first a review of the salient theoretical supports by Foucault, Derrida, Marquand and others, examines the ways an incipient clinical mentality is reflected in certain critical *treatments* of artistic and literary works, and the manner in these treatments often reduce vanguard artistic production psycho-medically, to mental illness or madness. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first traces a genealogy of modern artistic genius from its identification in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, through its nineteenth-century forensic elaboration in the criminology and socio-medical criticism of Cesare Lombroso and Max Nordau, who equate artistic subjectivity with 'degeneracy', and finishing with later psychotherapeutic treatment in Freud's writing. The second part of the chapter examines a specific *case,* the 1922-1923 epistolary exchange between vanguard modernist performer, writer, and visual artist Antonin Artaud and literary critic Jacques Rivière. Their correspondence will be considered for the manner in which Artaud and Rivière assume the positions of patient and doctor, respectively. With this exchange, I contend, Artaud's highly confessional responses to Rivière's clinical assessments of his writings, assume a critical and performative position as artist case history. Such a position is deeply embedded in preexisting understandings of aesthetic genius, which, I argue, are inextricably bound to bio-aesthetic considerations.

The final chapter sets out to identify the emergence of what I will call "clinical performativity" through the examination of a specific artistic caseload. This will involve, first, an examination of the concept of aesthetic embodiment as it relates to performativity, as it is articulated in the critical writing of Amelia Jones. I will place my

own performative category in relation to her concept of the "Pollockian Performative."[65] The onset of this strain of clinical performativity can be traced to those waning years of high modernist formalism in the early to mid-1960s, and so the first case is made up of a seminal critical exchange between Michael Fried, and the minimalist artists-critics Donald Judd and Robert Morris. I seek to show how a series of articles and reviews published mostly in the pages of *Artforum* engage with significant clinical-critical themes found in Artaud's exchanges with Rivière. The writers also become swept up in the logic of an aesthetic-empirical drive as they come into contact with an underlying bio-aesthetic referent; each offers ever more precise articulations of medium specificity, and of the place of "the body" in visual art. In the case of Judd and especially Morris, a drive toward embodiment and performance expresses itself as Fried, in reaction, assumes the position of diagnostician and hopes to maintain the traditional sanitary cordons around the mediums.

The second case is that of American "performalist" artist Hannah Wilke.[66] A synopsis of the artist's career will be relevant as it extends from her association with a group of feminist formalist-based artists of the early 1960s who were immersed in the issues raised by the Fried-Morris-Judd exchanges, to her final works in the late 1980s and early 1990s as she struggled with fatal lymphoma. What is particularly important about Wilke's case to my postulation of bio-aesthetics and its clinical tactics is the manner in which her career biographically recapitulates this particular stretch of postmodern art history, and concludes with a powerful autobiographical display – through photographs, videos, drawings, paintings, prints, sculptural objects, of her final medical ordeal.

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[65] Jones, *Body Art*, 53.
[66] Jones, *Body Art*, 154.

Methodology

For my purposes Foucault's work is eminently significant, not least for its critically *détourned* definition of biopolitics which supplies my historical context, but also for its "genealogical-archeological" methodology. In a brief essay published in 1971 titled *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,* Foucault described the genealogical aspect of his method as one of tactical excavation (which mostly follows chronological conventions). "Genealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary,"[67] he writes, and it avoids "the meta-historical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies (and) opposes itself to the search for origins."[68]

Foucault elaborated on the archaeological component of his approach in his theoretically expansive works on the history of epistemology. He proposes in *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language* (1969) that archaeological analysis is concerned with identifying "statements,"[69] with outlining the "discourses" these statements form, and with the "positions" that individuals come to occupy within these schemes as "subjects."[70] All of these movements and determinations may then be placed within a larger historical framework that Foucault calls the "episteme."[71] For

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[67] Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 76.
[68] Foucault, "Nietzsche," 77.
[69] See: Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972); Foucault devotes the entire work to an explication of his method, making recourse to developments in scientific and philosophical examined in his other works to illustrate his approach. Statements are not linguistic in the strict sense (such as sentences) but encompass a range of formulations, observations, concepts, beliefs, orders, groups of figures, and so forth. According to Foucault, statements always carry out an *enunciation of materiality*. Individual statements are not discipline-specific. A concept or figure which appears in a philosophical or critical text may find its way to a discourse on history or medicine at some historical remove.
[70] Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, 40-87.
[71] Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, 191.

Foucault this concept denotes an underlying “positive unconscious”[72] that structures and orders what is known and experienced. In *The Order of Things* (1966) Foucault posits the “classical” episteme as having the form of a flat ordering table on which each branch of knowledge ordered its objects. In the biopolitical age discourses on natural science as well as those on economics share an epistemic “organic structure,” with a new emphasis on the mobile and time-based structures of evolution and progress.[73]

These archaeological aspects of Foucault’s method are often overlooked, or dismissed as the remnant of a structuralist method of historical analysis that procures simplifying abstract schema, as opposed to the ostensibly verifiable tracking of chronological data carried out by the more rigorous (genealogical) methodologies. Foucault’s emphasis on the constitutive role of discourse in the production of the subject has been especially excoriated as tending toward a species of discursive determinism, or what Judith Butler calls “discursive monism.”[74] Slavoj Žižek dismisses Foucault as a “detached positivist” and his archaeological framework for presenting power as a “neutral tool,” [75] thus circumventing the Marxist problem of ideological struggle. Žižek further contends that the subject of Foucault’s archaeology is an empty schema, a remnant of philosophical idealism, lacking in psychoanalytic and/or Marxist substance. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow have, like Butler, dismissed the archaeology for its emphasis on the linguistic and on “autonomous discourse” which provides diaphanous backdrop and does not penetrate into the actual scenery of historical and institutional events; they further

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[72] Foucault, *The Order of Things, An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. A. M. Sheridan and others. (New York: Vantage Books, 1994), xi.
[73] Foucault, *Order of Things*, 142.
[74] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 8.
[75] Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 174.

contend that the later developments in Foucault's genealogical approach remedied this methodological problem.[76]

There is a significant example within the field of art history, a work of post-modern critique, which makes use of Foucauldean archaeology in an effective way. Douglas Crimp's *On the Museum's Ruins* challenges art history's "historicizing system of thought" and its tendency to "psychologize" and, in Foucauldean parlance, *individualize* historical developments into ostensibly "compatible" sequences of chronologically cohesive developments.[77] Crimp does not propose a general archaeological category, however, he does adopt Foucault's theoretical concept to challenge traditional narrative accounts, and to situate the ostensibly transcendent pursuits of individual artistic "geniuses" as contingent upon a set of heavily enforced discursive operations that involve the museum and its devices of "public relations" and "private property." He cites works by artists who themselves seem to take up an archaeological approach, who dispense with the "romantic point of view" and work out a new form of institutional critique, artists - such as the Belgian installation artist Marcel Broodthaers; these artists focus not on individual works of art themselves, but on the museum that, with its "links to power," constructs and bestows value on individual works and the artists who produced them.[78] Crimp's landmark discourse gave critical and theoretical coherence to an emerging body of post-modern, mostly photograph-based works that, in the spirit of Kantian critique, approached works of art as effects or props of an elaborate institutional mechanism. I will

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[76] See: Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983).
[77] Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 222.
[78] Crimp, *Museum's Ruins*, 226.

return to Crimp's text in the conclusion of this thesis, which will take up more recent examples of clinicalized museum practice.

It must be stated that, while my motivation is archaeological, what I will endeavor does not entail a wholesale application of a ready-made critical system (archaeological or otherwise) upon a corpus. Hence, it is not my purpose to adhere strictly to Foucault's structuralist informed archaeological program (Foucault didn't even do that!). But archaeology, as Foucault has pointed out, is not the unifying inflexible interpretive system his critics have in mind. "Archaeology," he writes, "is a comparative analysis that is not intended to reduce the diversity of discourses, and to outline the unity that must totalize them, but it is intended to divide up their diversity into different figures. Archaeological comparison does not have a unifying, but a diversifying effect."[79] Hence, what I will carry out in the following pages is a strategic, albeit labile, commentary on a succession of very specific texts and artworks within what is a rather expansive and even diffuse historical stretch from the eighteenth to the late twentieth centuries. Under the general archaeological rubric of bio-aesthetics I will be able to locate a set of mechanisms; these mechanisms or methods are *clinical* and may be linked to a great diversity of effects in the artistic domains that are linked to the clinicalization of individuals within a larger bio-clinical historical process. These include new modalities of empirical observation, aesthetic judgment, self-referentiality and medium-specificity (the two are not unconnected I contend), self-portraiture, confessional biography, and an insurgent pulsive artistic drive toward embodiment and performance.

The corpus of my dissertation focuses on four significant manifestations or moments within an archaeological schema that spans the eighteenth through late twentieth

[79] Ibid., 160-161.

centuries. Each chapter sets out to capture what I consider to be significant historical materializations of the bio-aesthetic: the eighteenth-century formalization of a somatically-based aesthetics, the emergence of the flat picture plane as an index (a pervasive one) of the clinicalization of artistic visual consciousness, the psycho-medicalisation of artistic subjectivity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and finally, the development, in the later part of the twentieth century, of a new modality of clinical performativity that takes up the medical ordeals of the artist as its subject. While each of these bio-aesthetic instantiations is quite specific, they do form something of a historical progression from the biological corporealisation of the sensate, to the psycho-medical individualization of the artist subject, as Foucault might say, to the late-twentieth century artist as clinical performer. Each of these bio-aesthetic instantiations shares certain valences with, or recapitulates, previous developments.

With regard to the temporal scope of my thesis: it is structured primarily as a dialogue, of sorts, between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. While I have taken up anthropological and criminological discourses on artistic subjectivity by Cesar Lombroso and Max Nordau in order to better understand later developments in the twentieth century, the nineteenth century has been largely circumnavigated. I have not included discussions of specific artists or works of art from that period, aside from a cursory examination of the late paintings and letters of Paul Cezanne, who I treat as a twentieth-century figure. A bio-aesthetic examination of nineteenth-century art would entail a different set of problems and issues. The legacy of the eighteenth-century certainly played differently for nineteenth -century artists than it did for twentieth-century artists,

and in the macro-historical scheme, bio-aesthetics and its clinical modalities assume a variety of configurations in different historical moments.

Such a study of nineteenth-century bio-aesthetics might examine the relevance and relationship of Claude Bernard's physiological concept of "interior milieu"[80] to the highly individuated and self-reflexive turn of Romantic artistic subjectivity. It might also map out the clinical instrumentalization of visual perception and its influence on realist, impressionist and post-impressionist painting. This would necessitate an examination of developments in nineteenth-century physiology by the great neo-Kantian neuro-physicist von Helmholtz, and his student Wilhelm Wundt, who wrote extensively on the physiology of sense-perception.[81] Such an investigation would not simply focus on the artistic applications of scientific discourses by artists such as Seurat and Signac, but would also underscore the general bio-aesthetic drift toward a body- or aesthetics-based understanding of art. On another register, investigations into the relationships between Gericault and Van Gogh and their psychiatrists would examine the role of clinical discourses, psychiatric and anthropological, on the formation of nineteenth-century artistic subjectivities.

Earlier drafts of this thesis had much to say, for example, about the role of the clinical in Gericault's studies of severed heads and limbs in Paris morgues (ca. 1818), as well as his portraits of asylum residents painted for his friend the alienist and advocate for the humane treatment of psychiatric patients, Dr. Étienne-Jean Georget. Courbet's early self-

[80] Georges Canguilhem, *Writings on Medicine*, trans. Stephanos Geroulanos and Todd Meyers (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 72.
[81] See: Wilhelm Max Wundt, *Outlines of Psychology,* trans. Charles Hubbard Judd (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1902).

portraits have also been considered for the ways they instantiate a clinically inflective artistic self-reflexivity, and a new empirical sense of the *flat* painting surface.

I have elided the nineteenth century and focused on the ties between the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries, and have not been tempted to continue into the new millennium. In ending my dissertation with Hannah Wilke's final performance, coincident with the catastrophic early years of the AIDS epidemic, I have chosen not to continue my study of clinicalized practice and the proliferation of the body in performance and activism in the 1990s and 2000s. My task as I have determined it, is one of mapping an archaeological terrain within which to situate subsequent developments, and establishing an early- or pre-history of what has informed and shaped post-modern and contemporary art's intense interest in "the body." This terrain is daunting for its breadth, and methodologically risky. My approach is analytic and synthetic. My research is not in primary art history, but crosses through disciplines, in order to identify a new epistemic territory for art-history to use, a new archaeological picture, if you will, in which to situate the explosion of corporeality in contemporary art making and writing. While work has been done to situate artistic practices, perceptions, and subjectivities within the larger discursive field of bio-cultural developments, a general archeological category such as the one I propose is new to the discourse.

Chapter One
Clinicality and Aesthetic Theory

I would say that the notion of life is not a scientific concept; it has been an epistemological indicator of which the classifying, delimiting, and other functions had an effect on scientific discussions, and not on what they were talking about.
(Michel Foucault)

(The) biological, with the notion of inevitability it entails, becomes more than an object of spiritual life. It becomes its heart. (Emmanuel Levinas)

It is the purpose of this chapter to trace an emerging clinical mentality in aesthetic and critical discourses of the eighteenth century. This mentality is characterized by a gradual shift away from traditional referencing of beauty as the grounding principle of the fine arts, toward an aesthetics of corporeal and perceptual experience. This mentality is manifested in a ferocious reflexive empirical probity and the formulation of a clinical approach that cuts a distinctive contour and attains discursive coherence in the laboratory notes of experimental physicians, and subsequently migrates to treatises on artistic creation and experience, and the materiality of artistic production. Texts from philosophy, art, physiology and medical materialism form the basis of my study, including those by Swiss physiologist Ablrecht Von Haller and French medical philosopher Jules d'Offray de La Mettrie, and canonical aesthetic and art historical treatises by German neo-classicists, Alexander Baumgarten, Joachim Winckelmann, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, and Johann Gottfried Herder.

Perhaps due to an erosion of the reflexive turn to beauty as the encapsulation of artistic meaning, representations of physical suffering assume a significant place in most of these discourses. The ancient Laocoön group, depicting the agonizing destruction of the priest and his sons is singled out and elevated to exemplary status, in these art historical texts.

While pain in itself is not central to the new clinical-aesthetic mentality, the subject of pain and its representation is significant in these scientific and aesthetic discourses as a point of departure, an object and a limit of investigation. Research physicians expended a great deal of experimental effort to identify the nerve matrix and codify the bodily mechanics of somatic, perceptual and cognitive experience. In natural-science laboratories, pain was produced, observed and measured in live, animal test-subjects. Theoretical, critical and aesthetic writings of Enlightenment critics and aesthetes, particularly German Idealists, responded to these studies of pain. Adapting the clinical-empirical methods of the new laboratory sciences, and adjusting to the latest scientific understanding of sense-based perception, they reformulated the problem of mimesis in the arts, and opened the material specifications of the artistic mediums to critical scrutiny.

Following an examination of these texts, which establish a primary clinico-aesthetic discursive scene, I turn to the significance of Immanuel Kant's philosophy and aesthetics. The new clinical and biological modalities of thinking have a profound impact on Kant's thought. The first critique, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) emphasizes the empirical domain of the sensate, and incorporates the terminology of the new life sciences and aesthetics into a theory, or *metaphysics*, of consciousness. The scientific, clinical method figures in Kant's approach as a ferocious reflexive criticality, that isolates a reasoning capacity within the philosophical subject and then *subjects* it to a thorough clinical examination. *The Critique of Judgment* (1790), the third of Kant's *Critiques*, sets out to establish aesthetics as a distinct domain of knowledge. The philosopher supposes a faculty of judgment as a *natural* component of the aesthetic subject, then situates the experience of artistic and natural beauty within the somatic realm of individual

subjectivity. I will explore Kant's organic tendency as it is manifested in his concept of *purposiveness*, and of the importance of this organicism to the later emergence of vitalism in Romantic philosophy and aesthetics. This entails an examination of the philosophical system of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, which sets out an elaborately *purposive* nature and posits human subjectivity, particularly artistic subjectivity, as nature's self-conscious instantiation. In Schelling, traditional concepts of artistic beauty move beyond the corporeal-aesthetic threshold and into the domain of what might be called biological (or bio-aesthetic) *immanence*.[82]

The Aesthetic Transfiguration of *Ideal Forms* into *Sensate Discourses*

Aristotelian, Neo-Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic medieval aesthetics posited a transcendent realm of beautiful forms distinct from human corporeal existence. Kantian scholar Rachel Zuckert describes this pre-Kantian, pre-subjectivity-based aesthetics as a "metaphysics of perfection" and works of art as "instantiations of perfection"[83] as opposed to "purposive" forms linking human cognition to nature through purposiveness. Medieval thought about art, Joseph Margolis proposes, drawn from St. Augustine, was concerned with the idea of beauty, which itself was understood as reflective of a transcendental order, essentially a Neo-Platonic position.[84] The apprehension of beauty, for Augustine, partakes of an entirely supra-sensible divine realm.[85] Thomas Aquinas blends Aristotelian and Neo-Platonist notions to arrive at a classicizing conception of

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[82] See: Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics, Lectures at the College de France (1978-1979)*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 35; Foucault identifies three modalities of modern 'bio-power' worked out through the disciplinary apparatuses of school, factory, hospital, etc. These are *subjectivisation, making immanent,* and *production.* It is my contention these bio-political modalities come into play in the production of modern artistic subjectivities, and that they are also articulated in the scientific, philosophical and aesthetic discourses which take shape the eighteenth century.
[83] Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 7.
[84] Joseph Margolis, "Medieval Aesthetics," *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes (London/New York: Routledge, 2001), 27.
[85] Margolis, "Medieval Aesthetics," 30.

beauty, with proportion, harmony and clarity functioning as its Trinitarian foundations.[86] In the seventeenth century, as Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf have pointed out, the academic institutionalization initiated a ritualizing of the arts. Each discipline reflected and reproduced the 'epistemology of state reason.' This process affected not only the ways individual works of painting, sculpture, drama, dance or music were theorized and conceived, but also the manner in which these forms functioned as effects or props in large state spectacles. For example, the highly organized, indeed ritualized modalities of spectatorship at the salon and theatre entailed a codified repertory of stock movements and gestures patterned after those of the king and his court.[87] This ritualization involved an elaborately cultivated corporeality; however, this wasn't the *natural* corporeality of life science and sensate discourse, but rather was a highly artificial one. The transition from an aesthetic of idealized, non-corporeal forms to the bio-aesthetic may be mapped as a shift from Platonic ideality, through a realm of ritualized bodies, to an aesthetics of natural life grounded in biological being.

As Charles Taylor proposes, there is a general trend toward the *naturalization* of philosophy and art beginning in the seventeenth century with Descartes, and extending into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During this historical span, the concept of 'nature' was injected into the larger sets of ideas making up philosophical, religious and scientific thought-systems.[88] Taylor cites Leibnitz, Locke, Spinoza and other significant

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[86] See: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* trans. English Dominican Fathers (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1924).

[87] Gunter Gebauer and Christof Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1995), 125.

[88] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity.* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 355-367.

thinkers who attempted to re-write or supplant traditional high-minded discourses with the terminologies of a vigourizing nature.

It is in the work of Alexander Baumgarten (1714-1762) that a vitalized eighteenth-century philosophy takes a distinctly modern turn in the shape of a formulation of aesthetics that bridges corporeal and artistic discourses. It is a crucial indication of the clinical-aesthetic shift toward a perception-based understanding of cultural production, that Baumgarten does not discuss *aesthetics* in terms of beauty. According to Terry Eagleton, Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* (1750) (figure 1.1) used the Greek term in its original form to denote "the whole region of human perception and sensation, in contrast to the more rarified domain of conceptual thought."[89] Some fifteen years before the publication of *Aesthetica*, Baumgarten did use the term *aesthetics* in its modern sense to denote a new cognitive science of the sensate, with artistic-poetic experience providing his point of elaboration. *Philosophical Meditations on some Matters pertaining to Poetry* (1735) was the first text to propose a *science* of aesthetics, to ground poetic and artistic experiences in somatic existence and to explicitly identify poetry, painting and music as "sensate discourses." Baumgarten proposed that aesthetic experience and abstract reasoning are distinct forms of knowledge and conform to different rules and structures. He offers an outline for the new aesthetic discipline made up of a number of domains including analytical and evaluative criticism: "By 'poem' we mean a perfect sensate discourse, by 'poetics' the body of rules to which a poem conforms, by 'philosophical poetics' the

[89] Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 13.

science of poetics, by ‘poetry’ the state of composing a poem, and by ‘poet’ the man who enjoys that state.”[90]

Baumgarten’s writings, according to Eagleton, staged an ideological confrontation between rationalist philosophy, from the side of absolutist sovereign power, and empiricism, from the ‘creaturely life’ of the folk. In this reading, there is in Baumgarten’s text an *insurrection of the senses* from the ‘lower faculties’ of the body into higher more rigid echelons of abstract logic. Empiricism, with its power lodged in experience and sensation, Eagleton suggests, is on the side of democracy and the people. Eagleton contends that Baumgarten takes an ideological-political position, and *Aesthetica* is to some degree a polemic, as indicated in passages of Baumgarten’s treatise such as the following:

> [To] those who may object that the lower faculties, and the flesh, should be combated rather than aroused and strengthened, I respond: (a) [That] the lower faculties require control and not tyranny, (b) that aesthetics, as far as this can be achieved by natural means, in fact leads them towards this condition by the hand, as it were, and (c) that the lower faculties, as long as they are corrupt, should not be aroused or strengthened by aestheticians, but rather directed by them, so that they should not become even further corrupted by inexpert practice, or lest the use of a talent bestowed by God be abolished on the easy pretext of avoiding its misuse.[91]

I concur with Eagleton’s assessments, both on the role that the transformed class system played in the modern discourse of aesthetics, and on the identification of aesthetics’ normative or disciplinary role. However, as with Foucault, Agamben and Esposito, I propose there is a concurrent, comparably radical reformulation of the human subject and the state – a reformulation that is irreducible, in the strict sense, to the more traditional class-based models of historical understanding outlined by Eagleton and Gebauer-Wulf.

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[90] Alexander Baumgarten, “Philosophical Meditations on some Matters pertaining to Poetry,” *Art in Theory, 1648-1815: An Anthology of Changing Ideas, Volume 1,* ed. Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger (London: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 488.
[91] Baumgarten, 491.

Esposito writes, citing Foucault and Agamben, that in the late eighteenth century the biological conception of life "becomes encamped in the center of every political process."[92] This strain of biological thinking has its roots in earlier eighteenth-century bio-medicine, and the dissemination of these biological concepts and percepts throughout the political and cultural domains marks the emergence of bio-politics in its developed state. It is from this discursive-experimental matrix that bio-aesthetics emerges, and it produces the discursive milieu in which Baumgarten pens his discourse. Indeed, it is not too much to state that the term *aesthetics*, prior to and at the time of Baumgarten's usage, was most applicable in the emerging life sciences, particularly in physiology and neurology.

In the first half of the eighteenth-century scientists in these new fields sought to explain the mechanisms of sensation, movement and cognition in the non-metaphysical terminologies of a nascent bio-physics. Even that most paradigmatically eighteenth-century aesthetic concept, *sensibility* was bound to the physical sciences. The idea of sensibility, together with its discursive counterpart *irritability*, was introduced by the Swiss physiologist Albrecht Von Haller (1708-1777) in his *Dissertation on the Sensible and Irritable Parts of Animals* (figure 1.2). The physiologist was also a popular lyric poet, whose verses extolled the natural beauty of the alpine landscape. Haller the physiologist proposed that vitalized nerve and muscle forces were responsible for voluntary and involuntary movements and sensations respectively. He went on to argue, in opposition to anatomical traditions established by Vesalius, that true biological forms could only be apprehended by observing skeletal and organ structures alive, that is to say, not simply in space (anatomically) but also in *time*, animated by these voluntary and

[92] Esposito, 15.

involuntary movements. His text, composed in the 1740s and first published in 1749, became widely available when it was published in Latin in 1752. Over the ensuing decades, its vitalist concepts migrated to political, moral, philosophical and artistic thought.[93] G. J. Barker-Benfield posits the origins of an Enlightenment "culture of sensibility" in discourses like Haller's, as well as in earlier texts by British Empiricists including Locke.[94] Contemporary treatises by medical philosophers and scientists such as La Mettrie, Helvetius and others borrowed heavily from Haller's research, and propounded a *physiological aesthetics* replete with grisly descriptions of live animal experiments, and laboratory scenes of elaborately staged vivisection and dismemberment. To fully comprehend the significance of the emergence of the sensate body into aesthetic philosophy, Baumgarten's thought must be placed in the context of these developments. While Baumgarten was still a rationalist – that is to say he privileged the intellectual or logical faculty over the "sensitive perceptions," and is cited by Kant as a source for his late eighteenth-century critiques, his *aesthetization* of philosophy uses the somatic terminology of sensibility articulated in new science-based "pyschoperceptual systems"[95] such as Haller's physiology.

What follows is a reading of selected scientific, aesthetic and philosophical texts that are part of this larger discursive bio-cultural assemblage. These works, including Baumgarten's treatises, reveal a number of bio-cultural developments crucial to bio-aesthetics. They mark the emergence of Enlightenment medical philosophy and illustrate the ways that the emergence of modern physiology coincides with what Agamben calls

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[93] Anne C. Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 15.

[94] G. J. Barker-Benfield. *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: Univerisity of Chicago Press, 1992).

[95] Barker-Benfield, 3.

the progressive "animalization of man."[96] These texts also examine the migration of scientific developments, particularly Haller's laboratory physiology, into discourses on artistic form and practice, and their application to artistic analysis and interpretation, particularly of representations of physical suffering. The art historical texts I have chosen by Winckelmann and Lessing, reflect the influences of this emerging bio-clinical epistemology on neo-classical critical and artistic discourse. These writings, particularly Lessing's, indicate the epistemic encroachment of Haller's physiological gaze on critical understanding, evidenced by Lessing's ruminations on the experience and representation of physical suffering in the *Laocoön* group. These discourses open onto a primary clinical-aesthetic scene, in which pain faces off against beauty, and which sets into play a clinical-aesthetic mimetic ordeal returned to repeatedly for centuries to come.

Machine Man

Julien Offray de La Mettrie's *Machine Man* (1747), (figure 1.3) which is dedicated to Haller, is exemplary for the ways it applies Hallerian physiology to a bio-medical definition of the human subject; the text perhaps qualifies as the first comprehensive example of modern medical philosophy and, significant to bio-aesthetics, it includes musings on the nature of artistic subjectivity. Despite its relative brevity, the work encompasses a significant number of determinations that make up what we might term a bio-cultural *set*; these include the clearing of an indeterminate life zone of man and animal forms, the accessioning of philosophy by a rising medical authority, and the epistemological ascendance of materialism as a species of modern knowledge. La Mettrie's text is not a discourse on aesthetics in the cultural or artistic sense; it is a medico-philosophic-polemic. This discourse does, however, articulate these tenets from

[96] Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal,* 75.

the emerging biological domain, and renders a biological-materialist description of the subject. Haller's notion of "irritability" is deployed by La Mettrie to challenge Cartesian dualism in favour of a materialist-vitalist definition human life. While this introjection of biological processes into the subject by the emerging bio-medical sciences is central to bio-politics and the emergence of clinical-aesthetics, a still more explicit indication of clinical-aesthetic epistemology is to be found in the way La Mettrie meshes his descriptions of artistic subjectivity with the mechanisms body and disease, specifically in the figure of "genius."

A medical doctor by training, La Mettrie produced texts that may be placed within the constellation of notorious French materialist works, among them those by Denis Diderot and others associated with the French Enlightenment.[97] Significantly La Mettrie's writing stages a bio-cultural polemical confrontation between what he coins "spiritualism" which is epitomized in the philosophy of Descartes, and the "followers of Father Malebranche," in favor of a non-dualistic medical materialism, bolstered by recent developments in English empiricism (he copiously cites Locke) and notably the scientific theories of Haller and his followers.[98] Still, La Mettrie's use of the term "machine" as a descriptor for the human organism is not new, and has a long genealogy in rationalist French thought. Georges Canguilhem contends that the first discourse from the ranks of scientific philosophy to register a significant shift toward a "machinic" or physiological

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[97] See: Claude Adrien Helvétius, *De l'esprit or Essays on The Mind and its Several Faculties,* trans. from the French (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004); Baron D'Holbach, *The System of Nature: On Laws of the Moral and Physical World Vol. 1-2,* trans. H. D. Robinson (New York: G.W. & A.J. Matsell: 1835); George Louis Leclerc, *The Natural History of Animals, Vegetables, and Minerals; with the Theory of the Earth in General (Six Volumes),* trans. L.L.D. and J. Murdoch (Farmington Hills: Gale ECCO, 2010).

[98] Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *Machine Man and Other Writings*, trans. Ann Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3.

conception of the human subject is Rene Descartes' *Treatise of Man* published in 1662.[99] While Descartes' thought style is decidedly rationalist or "innaeist" his description of human corporeality clearly indicates an incipient physiological understanding. Canguilhem has shown that with Descartes' theory of the animal-machine "an anatomical form has been substituted for a dynamic one."[100] Descartes, however, maintained a strict division between the materiality of the body and the immateriality of the soul, between the mechanistic domain of physics and the invisible animating realm of metaphysics. La Mettrie sets out to challenge this dualism with his adventurous new strain of vitalism.[101]

Reflecting on Haller's vitalization of anatomy, La Mettrie goes further to posit in the base materiality of the body an energy-rich corporeal reservoir from which a material soul is constituted; he attributes man's moral and aesthetic sense to the inner movements of a "sensitive substance."[102] Much to Haller's chagrin La Mettrie posited "irritability" as the fundamental vitalist force at work in both muscles and nerves, men and animals, bodies and souls. Haller, by contrast, had privileged "sensibility," which he associated with the nerves, and with higher functions of feeling and abstract thought. In Haller's bio-mechanics this aspect is more developed in humans, and functions as the physiological conduit to the immortal soul, a soul whose non-materiality Haller, a devout Catholic, was intent on demonstrating. This was perhaps the scientific rationalization upon which vivisection was, and continues to be, morally justified. For Haller, who insisted on an all-surveying gaze of clinical detachment, the cries and agonized movements of dogs and cats subjected to live dismemberment were automatic reflexes, and devoid of sensibility.

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[99] see: Rene Descartes, *Treatise of Man,* trans. Thomas Steele Hall, Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2003.
[100] Canguilhem, 230.
[101] La Mettrie, 3.
[102] La Mettrie, 20.

Haller contended that pain for animals lacks complexity, soul, *experience,* La Mettrie's globalization of "irritability" had the effect of demolishing these distinctions, and of pointing more accurately toward the life forces that make up all organisms. Moreover, and this was certainly part of La Mettrie's polemical purpose, by democratizing the irritable force in a coherent bio-philosophical Enlightenment discourse he made a highly plausible case for a materialist, Godless, animal-human soul.

Another important development is concomitant with this new powerful drive to open dead and living bodies and is significant to the emergence of bio-aesthetic percepts. A paradoxical conjunction is at work in this exteriorization of the inside that is carried out in the Hallerian life science laboratories. As bodies are opened and more discourses on physiology and the sensate proliferate, an ambiguous reversibility between inside and outside comes into play. This produces a new kind of visual experience that will be found in certain forms of bio-aesthetic artistic perception. The gaze of the physiologist, the surgeon, and later as we shall see, the painter, penetrates its objects and the visualization of the 'inside' (of the body, of the picture) will take on the form of a highly malleable surface. "(Let) us open up the entrails of men and animals," La Mettrie exclaims with dissectionistic *jouissance*, "how can we know human nature if we have not been enlightened by an accurate comparison of the structure of men and animals!"[103] Of particular interest to the physiologist's gaze is the comparative analysis of animals' brains which, again, under the power of this gaze, take on the appearance of a formally labile surface, particularly as the brains' tissues progressively morph from species to species:

> [Man] has a very large pons varolii and then, decreasing progressively, come the ape and the other animals … while the calf, ox, wolf, sheep, pig etc., in which this part's volume is very small have very big nates and testes … such variety cannot be the

[103] La Mettrie, 9.

> result of nature's meaningless games. They prove at least the need for a good and ample organization, since in the whole animal world the soul becomes firmer together with the body and acquires wisdom as it gains physical strength.[104]

This passage indicates how the concept of *organization* emerges as a physiological one. Later, it migrates into artistic aesthetics. Winckelmann will ascribe the 'soul' with organizing powers, for its capacities to compose beautiful artistic form, and for the *noble grandeur* of the ancient character. Lessing, too, will write of the *significant moment* of artistic form, while Kant's concept of purposiveness in the experience of the beautiful in both nature and works of art, must be understood as originating in this early strain of organicism.[105] The excerpt illustrates how the concept of *zoë*, as Agamben discussed, has merged the categories of man and animal, thus opening a seemingly paradoxical discursive scene composed of shared, variously configured, biological materiality. "From animal to man," La Mettrie deduces from his reflections on others' experiments, "there is no abrupt transition, as true philosophers will agree."[106] However, we also find in La Mettrie the tenet of a modern anthropological discourse (for Agamben, an "apparatus"), that evolutionary rationality that re-asserts man's distinction in an ascendant order of species. La Mettrie elaborates a set of 'qualitative' conclusions concerning the correspondences between the anatomical form of the brains of different life-forms – its volume, surface folds, the softness and consistency of its tissues – and the dispositions and intelligence of the different species' brains he examined, arranged in an anatomically progress. Those beings with smaller brains, he contends, are more ferocious, while those with larger brains are more intelligent at the expense of instinct. Sander Gilman has

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[104] La Mettrie, 10-11.
[105] Rachel Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty and Biology: An Interpretation of the Critique of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6, 36, 81; Purposiveness will be examined later in this chapter.
[106] La Mettrie, 13.

pointed out, this naturalist anatomical schema will be expanded in evolutionary science and superimposed over 'man' in the racist anthropologies of the nineteenth century.[107] More importantly here, this comparative, bio-typographical scheme comes utilized to deduce artistic 'types' and their pathological tendencies.

A crucial aspect of La Mettrie's discourse to bio-aesthetics is the central position accorded to man by medical definitions and, stemming from this, the formulation of a comprehensive medical philosophy. La Mettrie grants considerable authority to medical doctors in the diagnostic and therapeutic treatment of maladies, and in the ontological and philosophical understanding of human beings:

> (Experience) and observation alone should guide us here. They are found in abundance in the annals of physicians who were philosophers. Physicians have explored and thrown light on the labyrinth of man; they alone have revealed the springs hidden under coverings which keep so many marvels from our gaze. They alone, calmly contemplating our soul, have caught it a thousand times unawares, in its misery and its grandeur, without ever despising it in one state or admiring it in the other.[108]

He proposes that pathological medical processes are at work in the machinations of deficient mental and spiritual ones, and that the expressive form of the materialist soul becomes visible as its corporeal base is agitated, diseased, or distressed with pain; this physiological model of the soul affected by pain will find its comparable art historical manifestation in German neo-classical texts. La Mettrie's introjection of the pathological into cognitive processes further asserts the mind's materiality and marks an important turn in biocultural epistemology. He writes with irony, even sarcasm:

> In sickness, sometimes the soul disappears and gives no sign of life and sometimes it is so transported by fury that it appears to be doubled; sometimes imbecility is dissipated and convalescence turns an idiot into a clever man. Sometimes the finest

[107] See: Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 1985).
[108] La Mettrie, 4.

> genius becomes stupid and no longer knows himself; farewell all that splendid knowledge acquired at such cost and with so much effort![109]

In his rumination on the "hereditary" basis of what were considered moral vices La Mettrie argues for a constitutionalist understanding of crime and social transgression, proposing that in light of these hereditary links to lawlessness a new caste of judges be established who are also trained as physicians.[110] This is relevant to Foucault's observations about the new role that medical authorities will assume in biopolitical judicial systems, and to the rise of a new psychiatric class of physicians.[111]

These observations coalesce around the special figure that haunts La Mettrie's text, a figure that occupies an *exemplary* position between nature and culture, more precisely as nature's cultural incarnation: the *artistic genius*. La Mettrie's rumination on this figure marks out the linking of a medical-philosophical aesthetics to artistic subjectivity, and in a more general and clinically explicit fashion (and three years before the appearance of Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*) an early indication of the emergence of bio-aesthetics. Decades before Kant's and Schelling's ascription to artistic genius the status as nature's special subject, La Mettrie calls on genius to perform as nature's primal pedagogue:

> Who was the first to speak? Who was the first tutor of the human race? Who invented the means to make the best use of our organism's aptitude for learning? I do not know [for] the names of those first welcome geniuses have been lost in the mists of time. But art is the child of nature, and nature must have long preceded it….Would it be absurd to believe that those first mortals tried like animals and dumb people (who are another sort of animal), to express their new feelings by movements dictated by the economy of their imagination and then, as a result, by spontaneous sounds particular to each animal; this was a natural expression of their surprise, joy, emotions or needs.

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[109] La Mettrie, 5.
[110] La Mettrie, 21.
[111] See: Foucault: *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France, 1974-1975,* trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador), 96, 137-163.

> For doubtless those whom nature endowed with more refined feelings were also given greater facility to express them.[112]

The figure of the artistic genius, no matter how endowed or naturally refined, assumes an ambiguous, miscreant aspect in La Mettrie's text, and the pathologization of modern artistic subjectivity begins to take on a subtle physiognomic form. La Mettrie deduces from a portrait of "the famous A. Pope" a connection between injury, trauma, physical pain and artistic or literary talent. The choice of Alexander Pope, who is, we are told, "the English Voltaire," to draw out these *natural* threads may seem odd, but students of literature are as aware of the poet's verse as they are of his osteopathic deformity (he was a hunchback). In a footnote, La Mettrie suggests this condition might be "the effect of the mother's imagination or strong emotions on the foetus." The explicit reference to the disfigured physiognomy of genius anticipates the more clinically developed pathological profiles of artists and others elaborated in nineteenth-century criminological tomes. He writes:

> The efforts and nerves of his genius are etched on his physiognomy; it is totally convulsed, his eyes are starting out of their sockets and his eyebrows are lifted by the muscles of his forehead. Why? Because the source of his nerves is in labour and all his body must feel the effects of such a difficult birth. Where would all these phenomena come from if there were no internal string pulling thus on the outer ones?[113]

La Mettrie's *Machine Man* does not, like Baumgarten's treatises, draw from scientific critical method to formulate a science of artistic aesthetics. Rather the text is a work of medical philosophy and posits the operations of intellection, feeling, and the 'soul', in the corporeal materiality and physiological mechanisms of the body. In its articulation of sensate life the treatise blurs the boundaries between man and animal, *zoë* and *bios*, and asserts the authority of medical doctors in the management of this state of affairs.

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[112] La Mettrie, 14.
[113] La Mettrie, 14.

Pathological processes, injury, pain and their physiognomic traumatic traces form what we might call an 'aesthetics of the laboratory'. These same biological processes begin to migrate to artistic subjectivity. La Mettrie weaves the threads of medical biography to those of artistic genius; the artist's own difficult birth is linked to both his deformity and his genius, and then, by a discursive mirror to a much larger birth scene – a bio-aesthetic allegory of artistic creation itself.

Discourses on Beauty and Pain

La Mettrie, who had himself painted and engraved as a second Democritus, laughs on the first time we look at him. Look at him oftener, and he grows from a philosopher into a fool. His laugh becomes a grin. (Lessing)

Having sketched the emergence of the biocultural or biomedical discourses culminating in the special subjectivity of the artistic genius in La Mettrie's *Machine Man*, I would like briefly to examine the first significant art historical discourses that reflect the influence of these developments on the emergence of early clinical-aesthetic form. The texts I have chosen by Winckelmann and Lessing are eighteenth-century neoclassical discourses that entail analyses of pain as depicted in the famous Laocoön group. With these texts, physical suffering asserts its 'facticity' against the 'factitiousness' of artistic representations. Pain assumes the stature of a 'master referent' which no artistic representation can adequately contain or exceed, and which confounds and transfigures art's traditional 'master signifier', transcendental beauty. These discourses set the representation of the body and its sensory extreme as the natural limit for the conception, production and experience of art and literature. This new limit also produces a new awareness of the spatial and temporal properties of the artistic mediums themselves, an awareness likewise derived from the empirical life sciences, and sets into play a bio-

aesthetic discursive and mimetic ordeal which will be returned to by artists and theorists of the ensuing centuries.

Laocoôn, the Rhodian sculpture (figure 1.4) depicts the Trojan priest Laocoön and his sons Antiphantes and Thymbraeus crushed to death by giant sea snakes. The sculpture has been attributed to the artist 'collective' (gleaned by Winckelmann and other historians at the time from a text by Pliny) of Polydorus, Hagesandros and Athenodoros, and has been dated 25 BC. It may be a copy of a much older Greek bronze. It was excavated from a site near the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome in 1506. The statue attracted considerable attention as an object of critical and historical speculation and research in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, all focused on the nature of corporeal suffering and the representation of suffering in the plastic arts. I suggest that this reflects the growing influence of the biological and physiological sciences and the assertion of a biological ontology, and its bio-corporeal referent, the living body itself, and the encroachment of a bio-aesthetic understanding of art.

In his study of "Laocoönean" discourse, Simon Richter proposes that the eighteenth-century neo-classical aesthetics of beauty is actually an aesthetics of pain. He continues, suggesting that neo-classical aesthetic discourses and their 'counter-discourses', notably Haller's physiology, "should no longer be artificially separated," but should be considered as two aspects of an "historically specific understanding of the human body."[114] The distinguished Germanist's study provides an important guide for my own understanding of these discourses and supports my claims for the biocultural intersection of clinical and artistic/critical thought forms. However, Richter's treatment of these

[114] Simon Richter, *Laocoön's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain: Winckelmann, Lessing, Herder, Moritz, Goethe* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 11.

discourses emphasizes their differences and is especially attuned to their linguistic contortions. For Richter, eighteenth-century German neoclassicism comprises a map of disparate discursive channels carved out by biographically entwined writers who at times purposely misread/mistranslate each other (and their primary sources) in order to project their own remarkable personal aesthetic theories onto the work. He also contends that a number of these important thinkers, Winckelmann and Lessing specifically, take on the topic in order to aggressively circumvent, or altogether repress the implications of corporeal suffering to the metaphysics of beauty; each of their discourses "seeks to avoid a direct confrontation with the problem of the representation of pain, and instead attempts to trope pain through one strategy or another."[115] Haller on the other hand confesses, at the opening of his famous dissertation, "I have indeed had to carry out hateful cruelties"[116] which indicates to Richter the forthrightness of what Avital Ronell calls "the experimental disposition."[117] That Haller had, through an elaborately troped and disavowing anthropocentric rationality, formulated a theory of sensation depriving animals of the *actuality* of their pain in order to carry out his lab atrocities is not mentioned in Richter's text.

It is my contention, regardless of the differences, linguistic nuances and strategies of avoidance and one-upmanship at work in these texts, that taken together they reflect the saturation of the cultural and critical field by emerging biomedical science and its sensory-corporeal referent. All these texts bear witness to the gradual bio-aesthetic absorption of modern pain as it was clinically rendered in the new life science laboratories, even if they do so in the manner of avoidance, reversal, or denial. I further

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[115] Richter, 33.
[116] Richter, 98.
[117] Avital Ronell, *The Test Drive* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 25.

contend that the agonistic antinomy of pain and beauty marks out the bio-aesthetic origin of modern artistic and literary formalism. Neo-classical aestheticians took from Haller's laboratory practice the methods of clinical perception including an empirical *disinterestedness* that comes into play in the modern appreciation and analysis of works of art.

Johann Winckelmann's *Reflections on the Initiation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (1755)(figure 1.6) is the first of these discourses to consider the intersection of pain and beauty as represented in the Laocoön sculpture. The father of art history ascribes to the work a "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur"[118] that he contends is characteristic of ancient Greek art in general. "Just as the depths of the sea always remain calm however much the surface may rage," he writes, "so does the expression of the figures of the Greeks reveal a great and composed soul even in the midst of passion."[119] In Winckelmann's account of the Laocoön group there are traces of a vitalistic aesthetics in the description of the ways in which pain travels and is formally articulated in every material particle and spatial turn of the work. Winckelmann's focus on the face, which seems uncannily calm to the great Hellenist, and more specifically on the contorted forms of isolated individual muscle groups, indicates a physiological-clinical turn:

> Such a [noble and grand] soul is reflected in the face of Laocoön – and not in the face alone – despite his violent suffering. The pain is revealed in all the muscles and sinews of the body, and we ourselves can almost feel it as we observe the painful contraction of the abdomen alone without regarding the face and other parts of the body.[120]

[118] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Reflections on the imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture,* trans. Elfriede Heyer, Roger C. Norton, (La Salle: Open Court, 1987), 33.
[119] Winckelmann, *Reflections*, 33.
[120] Winckelmann, *Reflections*, 33.

Winckelmann further contends, that despite such a physiological ordeal, which ultimately leads to the "destruction" of Laocoön and his sons, the priest's paternal dignity remains intact.

> This pain … expresses itself with no sign of rage in his face or in his entire bearing. He emits no terrible screams such as Virgil's Laocoön, for the opening of his mouth does not permit it; it is rather an anxious and troubled sighing … The physical pain and the nobility of soul are distributed with equal strength over the entire body and are, as it were, held in balance with one another. Laocoön suffers, but he suffers like Sophocles' Philoctetes; his pain touches our very souls, but we wish that we could bear misery like this great man.[121]

For Winckelmann, the depiction of pain must not attain simply to a skillful rendering of "suffering alone," and spectacles of "passion and violence" characteristic of religious art must be avoided.[122] The German neo-classicist takes a swipe at the exaggerated emotionalism of baroque art, devotional works, and Italian high mannerism, which he detested. Rather, the eruptive moment of Laocoön's cry is stifled, and systematically folded into the 'noble grandeur' of the entire work. Winckelmann frames the antimony of beauty and pain as a struggle of forces, a physiological-semiotic ordeal of suffering and expression, presided over by a calm and disinterested soul that pacifies and holds the horrible scene together. This I contend is the clinical-aesthetic birth scene of modern formalism, and we will find this scene (re)enacted in Lessing's discourse, and again in the surface gaze of Greenbergian retinalism. The following passage sums this scene up:

> The more tranquil the state of the body the more capable it is of portraying the true character of the soul. In all positions too removed from this tranquility, the soul is not in its most essential condition, but in one that is agitated and forced. A soul is more apparent and distinctive when seen in violent passion, but it is great and noble when seen in a state of unity and calm. The portrayal of suffering alone in Laocoön would have been *parenthyrsos*; therefore the artist, in order to unite the distinctive and noble qualities of the soul, showed him in an action that was closest to a state of tranquility for one in such pain. But in this tranquility the soul must be distinguished by traits that

[121] Winckelmann, *Reflections*, 35.
[122] Winckelmann, *Reflections*, 35.

are uniquely its own and give it a form that is calm and active at the same time, quiet but not indifferent or sluggish.[123]

Winckelmann's wistful rumination asserts the signifying and formative power of beauty over the destructive forces of pain; yet aesthetic form visibly manifests to mortal eyes when the soul responds to painful stimulation, hence the text mirrors both Haller's and La Mettrie's observations of the soul made clinically visible in the agitated states of disease and dismemberment.

Another aspect of Winckelmann's discourse points to the emergence of bio-aesthetics; he contends that the successful treatment of pain and beauty in the overall conception of the *Laocoön* is indicative of the moral and spiritual nobility of the ancient Greek race:

> The expression of such nobility of soul goes far beyond the depiction of beautiful nature. The artist had to feel the strength of this spirit in himself and then impart it on his marble. Greece had artists who were at once philosophers … Wisdom extended its hand to art and imbued its figures with more than common souls.[124]

Winckelmann seems to suggest (which might seem at odds with his formalism, though I would suggest that these discourses, like all discourses, carry the discursive seeds of what might later evolve into competing discourses) an early expressivist model of art, one in which the artist's inner contents, which are the biocultural crystallizations of culture and race, are projected into artistic form. Those cultures, races and/or nations that produce artists who are also philosophers are the most advanced. What begins as a reflection on the beautiful representation of pain in art expands into a bio-political art historical program that links art (specifically beautiful representations of extreme pain), to the biocultural matrix of culture, race, soul and the anthropological staples of character strength, talent, and disposition.

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[123] Winckelmann, *Reflections*, 35.
[124] Winckelmann, *Reflections*, 35.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766) (figure 1.5) takes up with Winckelmann's discourse and develops a lengthy, somewhat prolix, and more programmatic and clinically inflected understanding of the Laocoön group.[125] Lessing's discourse introduces a new form of reflexive empiricism into the calculations of bodies and artistic forms, and problematizes anatomy and art through a novel figuration of space and time into the beauty/pain equation. His analysis of the artistic and literary representation of pain opens onto a compelling attempt to formulate, in Baumgarten's sense, a comprehensive aesthetic system linking the formal and signifying capacities of visual art and poetry to the specifications of the respective mediums themselves. Thus begins one of the significant threads of bio-aesthetics, characterized by a clinical-empirical drive toward medium specialization in the arts. Lessing's text stages a disruptive encounter between the old Horatian doctrine of *poesis et pictura* and a new empirical sense of mediums and forms derived from the methods of observation developed in the clinics, between the old anatomy of Vesalius and the new physiology rendered in sculptural form.

Lessing begins his discourse by first acknowledging that art and literature must face the current pressures of social and scientific developments. Not without a trace of remorse, even resentment, he admits as a modern that while the ancient Greeks focused on the portrayal of beautiful bodies "art has been given a far wider scope in modern times. It is claimed that representation in the arts covers all of visible nature, of which the beautiful is but a small part."[126] He concurs with Winckelmann that pain presents a potentially catastrophic challenge, an un-representable limit, to the visual and literary arts

[125] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry,* trans. Edward Allen McCormick (Indianapolis/New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1962).
[126] Lessing, 19.

as they had been understood. Lessing reverently samples Winckelmann's reflections on the Greeks, though he fundamentally disagrees with the historicist's adherence to ancient Horatian doctrine, and takes aim at Winckelmann's soul-based aesthetics in favour of his reductive-formalist aesthetics which demands of art a rigorous beauty grounded in form:

> The master [of Laocoôn[strove to attain the highest beauty possible under the given condition of physical pain. The demands of beauty could not be reconciled with the pain in all its disfiguring violence, so it had to be reduced. The scream had to be softened to a sigh, not because screaming betrays an ignoble soul, but because it distorts the features in a disgusting manner.[127]

Lessing further contends that "the reasons why the master of the Laocoön was obliged to exercise moderation in expressing physical pain"[128] are inextricably linked to the representational and formal structures "that have been derived from the special nature of the visual arts (themselves), their limitations and their requirements."[129] According to Lessing, explicit representations of suffering in painting and sculpture, although not those in literature or poetry, are excessive and ultimately fail because they overshoot their representational task, producing overwhelming effects that are shocking, grotesque, comic, or combinations thereof. He explains this is so because the formal and material requisites of sculpture and painting, and those of poetry require entirely different formal and material maneuvers. He imagines the mouth of the Laocoön had it been sculpted at the moment of calling out:

> Simply imagine Laocoön's mouth forced wide open, and then judge! Imagine him screaming, and then look! From a form which inspired pity because it possessed beauty and pain at the same time, it has now become an ugly, repulsive figure from which we gladly turn away. For the sigh of pain provokes distress; however, the distress should be transformed, through beauty in the tender feeling of pity.[130]

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[127] Lessing, 17.
[128] Lessing, 23.
[129] Lessing, 17.
[130] Lessing, 17.

Lessing's text is replete with descriptions of physical suffering as well as the affects of disgust, offence, humour, compassion, that these depictions elicit in the spectator. Richter, leveling a familiar post-modern critique at this formalism, contends that Lessing's text weaves an elaborate rhetorical "veiling" of the corporeal suffering represented in the work.[131] This may point to, as Richter suggests, Lessing's conflicted fascination and revulsion with corporeality and its representations; however, it is my contention that this veiling, this discursive suppression, is an indicator of the encroachment of clinical empiricism on aesthetic experience and discourse. It is not simply the artistic representation of mortal physical suffering that is distressing to Lessing, but also, much like a live animal in the life science laboratory, the obtrusion of the actual sculptural thing into the space of the spectator.

Lessing averts his eyes from the signs of pain, but fixes his clinical gaze on distinguishing between the mediums themselves. Key to understanding these distinctions are the specific roles that time and space play in the material and formal specifications of each. The old doctrine of Homeric mimesis held that poetry and painting produced the same effects and resonances in readers and viewers, that poetry and painting formed a single field of artistic coherence. Lessing applies a more precise empirical probity to the analysis of visual and poetic works, treating the two forms as very distinct objects. Like the physiologist he assigns to each a temporal and spatial specificity entirely bound up with the material and signifying capacities of each. Lessing assigns very low aesthetic merit to descriptive or 'landscape poets', contending that landscape is the proper subject of painters, and not poets. Ironically it was this genre of verse that Haller produced and upon which his literary reputation was based. In any case, according to Lessing painting

[131] Richter, 63.

and sculpture are strictly plastic or *spatial* arts, and derive their signifying powers from the 'natural signs' derived from space: colour, line, contour, volume. Literature, drama and poetry are time-based arts, and hence produce aesthetic significance through the temporal structures of sequence, plot, versification, rhythm, analogy, and so forth.

Lessing further contends that, although the visual arts are spatial, works of art must function in a complex network of relations that includes the position of the spectator. He instructs us that sculpture and painting must focus or culminate in a singular moment of significant form plucked from a stream of representations and forms:

> If the artist can never make use of more than a single moment in ever-changing nature, and if the painter in particular can use this moment only with reference to a single vantage point, while the works of painter and sculptor are created not merely to be given a glance to be contemplated – contemplated repeatedly and at length – then it is evident that this single moment and the point from which it is viewed cannot be chosen with too great a regard for its effect. [132]

He goes on to tease apart the finer points that distinguish visual from literary arts, and sets forth a semiotics of art that locates the distinctive spatial and temporal domains of their sign systems. "I reason thus," he writes:

> That if it is true that in its imitations painting uses completely different means or signs than does poetry, namely figures and colors in space rather than articulated sounds in time, and if these signs must indisputably bear a suitable relation to the thing signified, then signs existing in space can express only objects whose wholes or parts coexist, while signs that follow one another can express only objects whose wholes or parts are consecutive.
> Objects or parts of objects which exist in space are called bodies. Accordingly, bodies with their visible properties are the true subjects of painting.
> Objects or parts of objects which follow one another are called actions. Accordingly, actions are the true subjects of poetry.[133]

Lessing's adoption of a scientific style of rationalization reveals a deeper epistemological affinity with the emerging bio-physical sciences. In the ontological world of referents, of

[132] Lessing, 78.
[133] Lessing, 78.

natural objects, which the contemporaneous empirical life sciences made an incontestable case for, works of art and literature must be regarded as distinctive and complex objects in themselves. Hence, the temporal-spatial limits Lessing imposes on each of the mediums sets into play a layered and complex matrix made up of three 'bodies', reflective of an incipient clinical methodology: artworks, representations, and spectators. Bodies in space are also bodies in time, and it is the spatial and temporal materiality of the mediums themselves, and the distinctive properties of their means and signs, that determine the spatio-temporal nature of representation they produce. This semiotic understanding is preceded and indeed authorized by the challenges of Hallerian physiology which, we recall, temporalized anatomy:

> Bodies do not exist in space only, but also in time. They persist in time, and in each moment of their duration they may assume a different appearance or stand in a different combination. Each of these momentary appearances and combinations is the result of a preceding one and can be the cause of a subsequent one, which means that it can be, as it were, the center of an action. Consequently, painting too can imitate actions, but only by suggestion through bodies … Painting can use only a single moment of an action in its coexisting compositions and must therefore choose the one which is most suggestive and from which the preceding and succeeding actions are most easily comprehensible.[134]

Again, Richter contends that the lines Lessing draws around the mediums, and the signifying and formal properties proper to each involves a kind of discursive avoidance that suppresses explicit representations of pain in favor of an overall 'aesthetic system'. This approach reflects a particular post-modern outlook of the 1980s and 1990s which insisted on representation *against* late modernist formalisms. While it is true that Lessing's text seems to *skirt* the issue of the representation of pain with a formalist scheme, I contend that Lessing's suppression or deferral of represented pain in favour of an overall temporal and spatial configuration of forms is analogous to, and draws its

[134] Ibid.

approach from, Haller's clinical physiology. Haller's infusion of time into the old fixed anatomical structures pointed to a new biological mechanics that focused on spatial-temporal interactions, processes and structures and his revolutionary concept of organic form was quite literally *drawn* from the living bodies of his test subjects. The following passage from Haller's lab notes, with their brutal description of his laboratory procedure, is in shocking contrast to Lessing's discourse; however, it displays a clinical *aesthetic disinterestedness* that is also in Lessing's text:

> I exposed that part in living animals of several species and various ages that was in question. I waited until the animal was calm and had stopped screaming, and when it was quiet and peaceful I stimulated the exposed part by blowing, by heat, alcohol, with the knife, with corrosive stone … I then observed whether the animal were brought out of its calm and its silence by touching, splitting, cutting, burning or ripping; whether it threw itself back and forth, or drew the limb into itself, and twitched with the wound, whether cramped twitching showed in this limb, or whether nothing of all this occurred. I recorded the repeated results as they happened.[135]

Haller's clinical approach, as Richter points out, bears out what Elaine Scarry describes as "the objectification of the subjective attributes of pain."[136] In this manifestation of the clinical gaze, to quote Foucault, the "empirical contents [are] detached from representations" to reveal the "[physiological] principles of their existence within themselves."[137] It no longer matters that the cat is suffering inexcusably but that its anguished movements signify the forces at life's source. Haller records what he sees as he carries out his procedures in a placid clinical discourse that defers or reduces the actual anguish of his laboratory subjects to an overall scientific formalism; laboratory-induced *live* indications of suffering are abstracted into the empirical components of a larger scientific program, a kind of clinical formalism which emphasizes the appearance

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[135] Richter, 97.

[136] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press: 1985) 51.

[137] Foucault, *The Order of Things,* 317.

of agony (the physical form that pain assumes – twitching, etc.) rather than on its content – or the idea that pain is happening.

Lessing does not reference Haller's physiological studies or his laboratory observations in his essay – though he does dismiss his landscape verse.[138] Still, he adopts an analogous aesthetic distance in his analysis of the Laocoön. At the same time there is, as in Haller's text, an abundance of explicit descriptions of and reflections on the nature of mortal suffering. Despite the effort Lessing makes to soften the signs of pain in the artistic depiction of extreme suffering to the overall purposes of aesthetic form, the "shrieks" of the dying priest, as well as those of Philoctetes, Oedipus, Hercules and Lichas, reverberate throughout the discourse like disruptive, rhythmic textual *stigmata.* While Lessing ruminates on the relative merits of open mouths and contorted furrows in the literary and sculptural formalizations of Laocoön's pain, the suffering father's cries erupt throughout the text as indexes of what Lessing calls "actual performances."[139] These cries scriptively mark the surface of serene discourse as indexes of an unsignifiable *real* worked out in the modern laboratory perhaps, or on the modern battlefields, *actual* performances which exceed, trouble and animate the factitious domain of cultural production.

Lessing's text would indeed instigate further critical efforts to conflate physiological science and a science of the arts; Johann Gottfried Herder, proto-Romantic philosopher and Haller's medical student, developed a more precise theory of medium specificity that linked Haller's and La Mettrie's physiology (though Herder was a fierce Francophobe) to artistic experience. Taking issue with Lessing's space-visual art/time-poetry schema,

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[138] Lessing, 113.
[139] Lessing, 113.

Herder posits music within the sensate temporal dimension of auditory experience, and contends that painting and sculpture must be divided along the lines of the visual and the tactile, respectively. The effect was to further "somatize" the aesthetic, making the various arts "plastic" articulations or appurtenances of the human body and its sensory apparatus .However, Baumgarten's call for a science of "sensate discourse" – a science of sensitive perceptions, of sensibility and aesthetic pleasures and forms, finds its most comprehensive and compelling response in the work of Immanuel Kant. Kant not only fleshes out, if you will, a domain of the aesthetic that is distinct from the domain of metaphysics and abstract reason, he critically refurbished metaphysical speculation with concepts and terminologies derived from the emerging life sciences, and from Baumgartean aesthetics.

The Clinical Epistemology of Kant's Philosophy and Aesthetics

In the following pages I turn to the philosophy and aesthetics of Immanuel Kant, as it is my contention that Kant's cycle of *critiques* functions as a *summa* of the epistemological transformations borne of the biological conception of life, of *zoë* or *bioforce*, and of the aesthetic trends described in this paper. Furthermore, Kant adapts key terminologies from the natural sciences and aesthetics to explain cognitive processes and mental states that until this time had been explained in extra-corporeal terms. He also adopts a decidedly clinical method in his critical approach. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant turns the critical powers of reason in reflexive fashion upon itself in order to empirically deduce its physiological workings. However, before taking up the bio-clinical mentality of Kant's critiques, it will be worthwhile first to place his efforts within the context of the central philosophical *ordeal* of the eighteenth century; like neo-classical art criticism, the old

queen of all sciences had to wrest with the new biological finitude of live bodies, and with clinical protocols of an emerging experimental laboratory life science.

As we have seen in the previous section, the emergence of a biological conception of life radically altered traditional artistic experience; it brought with it a whole new set of conceptual and representational ambiguities, and these entailed the inadequacies of traditional metaphysical concepts to account for this new and unavoidable biological force. We might coin this new problematic scheme the *ordeal of the bio-referent*. The problematising power that life exerted over these discourses was partly bound up with its discursively undecidable status.

Philosopher and aesthetician Giorgio Agamben has written that any "undertaking (of) a genealogical study of the concept of *life* in our culture, one of the first and most instructive observations to be made is that the concept never gets defined as such."[140] Yet, he continues, this *thing* (he indeed refers to it as a thing, as it is inseparable from the body) regardless of how indeterminate it may seem, has been "articulated and divided time and again through a series of caesurae and oppositions that invest it with a decisive strategic function in domains as apparently distant as philosophy, theology, (and) politics."[141] In philosophical terms, what the new biological referent disrupted or skewed was the traditional metaphysical distinction between matter and spirit and its seemingly endless chain of derivatives. As the new biological sciences probed deeper into the dynamic structures of this referent, evolving from an anatomical to physiological understanding of living beings – laying down a great vivisectionist swath as it did, there

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[140] Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford, Stanford University Press: 2002), 13.
[141] Agamben, 13.

emerged a new "zone of indiscernability"[142] in which divisions between mental activity and corporeal existence, man and animal, inside and outside – indeed the bifurcations that make up the divided character of Western rationality – were no longer so clear. The philosophical problem set into play by the emerging biological sciences was to define the interaction of mind and matter within a single human organism.[143] This was precisely the bio-philosophical ordeal at the core of Haller's laboratorial effort, as he struggled to pry apart those processes and bloody structures of living material within the formalized cruelty of the laboratory with the purpose of nailing down the physical site, the nerve, fiber or coil that served as the soul's portal into mortal, physical life.

In the higher precincts of eighteenth-century philosophical thought, this ordeal was expressed as an antagonism between two opposing schools. The first was rationalism grounded in the Classical philosophy of Rene Descartes and whose representative figures included Christian Wolff (one of the most successful academics of his day and affectionately referred to by his university acolytes as *Wolfius*) and Nicolas Malebranche. The rationalists held that the phenomenal world and its empirically observable aspects are ordered by a transcendent set of laws or first principles accessed by reason and the application of logic and mathematics. The rationalists adhered to the Aristotelian protocols of *substance* according to which each thing has unique properties that constitute it. For example, for Aristotle, consciousness is the constitutive or substantive property of the mind, and extension (length, breadth, depth) the essential property of matter.[144] As

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[142] The term is Deleuze's, developed in his text on Francis Bacon, *The Logic of Sensation,* and pursued in his final work, on philosophy and aesthetics, *What is Philosophy?*. The implications of Deleuze's thought will be taken up in the second chapter on perception.
[143] Agamben, 13.
[144] See: Aristotle, *Metaphysics, (Book Zeta)* trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London, Penguin Books: 1998), 165 -229.

Kantian scholar W. T. Jones has pointed out, Descartes exaggerated this distinction in an effort to put the new sciences "on a firm philosophical ground" and "(divided) reality into two distinct substances, matter and mind."[145]

British empiricists took up against the rationalists and contended that reason, not empirical sense, was prone to flux and fanciful flights. David Hume, motivated by a remarkable if unrelenting skepticism, insisted that reason if left to its own devices invariably devolves into solipsistic phantasm or subjectivism. Worse, Hume ascribes to the speculative philosophical drive the germinate zeal of religious, puritanical irrationalism. He famously writes in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748):

> The passion for philosophy, that for religion, seems liable to this inconvenience, that, though it aims at the correction of our manners, and extirpation of our vices, it may only serve, by imprudent management, to foster a predominant inclination, and push the mind, with more determined resolution, towards that side, which already draws too much, by the bias and propensity of the natural temper. It is certain, that, while we aspire to the magnanimous firmness of the philosophic sage, and endeavor to confine our pleasures altogether within our own minds, we may, at last, render our philosopher like that of Epictetus, and other stoics, only a more refined system of selfishness, and reason ourselves out of all virtue, as well as social enjoyment.[146]

The great British empiricist voices a familiar skepticism associated with Enlightenment-era empirical thought, one that will be incorporated into Kant's critical approach to reason and aesthetics. Hence, for Hume the path to knowledge was bound to sound observations made within the strict clinical-empirical limits of *things-in-themselves.*

Kant approached this rationalist-empirical aporetic divide head-on. In retrospect, of course, Kant's critiques must be deemed highly speculative – he was after all a German *idealist*, and his philosophy retains significant aspects of rationalism. Yet, I contend that

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[145] W. T. Jones, *Kant and the Nineteenth Century* (Belmont: Wadsworth Group, 1975), 15.

[146] David Hume, *An Inquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 119.

regardless of this idealist turn, his speculations on the mind's capacity to formulate concepts and representations which correspond to the world reflects an incipient bio-cultural rationale and entails a clinical analytical approach as well as a cautious but comprehensive shift toward aesthetics and the science of corporeal being.

Kant took Hume's skeptical empiricism very seriously and posited a vast domain of inchoate materiality, a space made entirely of Humean *things-in-themselves* that encompasses individual subjects and the epistemological *communis* they occupy. He coins the term *noumenon* or *noumena* for this uncanny material enclosure.[147] The *noumenon*, which might be likened to the Lacanian *real*, is the material substrate from which human consciousness, or for Kant, the "transcendental aesthetic,"[148] pieces together its knowledge of *phenomena*.

Another significant aspect of Kant's philosophical cycle is its clinical methodology. In the first *Critique* Kant introduced a new modality of critical reflexivity, what Avital Ronell calls "a structure of incessant research,"[149] which, in the manner of an arduous thought experiment, turns philosophical probity back upon itself in order to test its own limits, thus establishing for philosophy a new scientific relationship to truth. Kant also conceived of his philosophical endeavors under the general rubric of *critique*; as practice critique – modeled on the testing protocols of scientific method – entails the empirical excision of philosophical concepts from their conventional understandings in order to establish the epistemological basis, the validity, and soundness of these concepts according to their own logic.

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[147] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason (Unified Edition)*, trans. by Werner S. Pluhar, (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1996), 294-315

[148] Ibid., 71-104.

[149] Avital Ronell, *The Test Drive*, (Urbana and Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 2005), 24.

Kant ultimately fixes his analytical gaze on the cognitive apparatus of the philosophical subject itself. In *The Critique of Pure Reason* Kant posits a faculty of reason within the thinking individual and from there, in the manner of a physiologist of the mind, teases apart its structures and limits, and maps out its inner movements. Kant even turns this clinical gaze inward:

> I deal solely with reason itself and its pure thinking and to gain comprehensive acquaintance with my reason I need not search far from myself. For I encounter it within myself, and common logic already provides me with an example (which shows) that all simple acts of reason can be enumerated completely and systematically.[150]

Kant contends the need for this critical reflexivity has been made necessary by the 'flourishing' of the natural sciences and their rapidly-developing methodological rigor. The rigor of the experimental method must also be applied to philosophy and metaphysics. For Kant, reason must enter into a "disagreement with itself" and turn its own capacities for critique upon itself:

> Our age is properly the age of critique, and to critique everything must submit. Religion and legislation commonly seek to exempt themselves from critique, religion through its sanctity and legislation through its majesty. But in doing so they arouse well-deserved suspicion and cannot lay claim to unfeigned respect; such respect is accorded by reason only to what has been able to withstand reason's free and open examination…[151]

He underscores the importance of scientific method in the subjective auto-critique of reason in a later passage:

> [The] task of [this] critique of pure speculative reason consists in the described attempt to transform the procedure previously followed in metaphysics, by subjecting metaphysics to a complete revolution, thus following the example set by the geometricians and investigators of nature.[152]

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[150] Kant, 9.
[151] Kant, 9.
[152] Kant, 26.

We have in Kant's text a most remarkable manifestation of modern clinical self-reflexivity; in this case the 'truth' protocols of the emerging empirical sciences are traced into a new species of philosophical subject. In keeping with the general clinical-aesthetic introjection of reason into the subject, the philosopher pulls cognition and speculation down from the rationalist ether and posits reason within the biological finitude of the individual, thus introducing into his philosophy the modern anthropological conception of 'man' as the subject of his own scientific, philosophical and artistic study.

Another aspect of Kant's aesthetic epistemology articulated in the first critique to carry profound implications vis-à-vis the new bio-clinical outlook is the positing of space and time and as the *a priori* formal structures of human intuition. The philosophical exposition of the apriority of space and time, which is truly a revolutionary challenge to the traditional Aristotelian and Cartesian doctrines of substance, is established in the first pages of the critique:

> [What] are space and time? Are they actual beings? Are they only determinations of things, or for that matter, relations among them? If so, are they at least determinations or relations that would belong to things intrinsically? Or are they determinations and relations that adhere only to the form of intuition and hence to the subjective character of our mind, so that apart from that character these predicates cannot be ascribed to anything at all? For the presentation of space must already lie at the basis in order for certain sensations to be referred to as something outside me … the presentation of space cannot be one that we take from the relations of outer appearance by means of experience: rather, only through the presentation of space is that outer experience possible in the first place.[153]

Kant contends that time, like space, is not discursively or abstractly deduced from the phenomenal world but is a 'subjective condition', an 'internal intuition' which precedes understanding and its objects. Through this extraordinary inversion of traditional philosophical schema., the empirically deducible formal properties of things themselves –

[153] Kant, 77.

space and time – are refigured as the properties of human thought in its most rudimentary form. Again, we find a strange and beautiful turn of physiological thought, in which the older metaphysical anatomy of fixed substances and essences, is supplanted with a receptive subject-based spatio-temporal thinking structure.

Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1792), the third and final installment of his philosophical cycle, approaches the topic of aesthetics as a distinct domain of knowledge and sets out to formalize through, again, a scrupulous clinical methodology, a science of judgment. The work follows the format of his first critique and is divided into two sections, "The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment" and the "Critique of Teleological Judgment." Like his epistemology of reason, Kant's aesthetics is subject-based. He posits a distinct a-priori cognitive faculty of judgment, which functions as the subjective link between the higher capacities of reason and understanding outlined in the first critique.[154]

The first section, "The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment," is concerned with the subjectively grounded somatic experiences of pleasure, of delight, the particulars of gustatory experience, and also with the more nuanced operations of aesthetic judgment in the appreciation and creation of works of art. With this first section Kant introduces a set of concepts that are regarded as staples of modernist aesthetics, including his elaborations on the beautiful and the sublime, and his definitions of artistic culture, taste, quality, artistic genius, and aesthetic form (which is derived through feeling and not deduced through concepts, as in classical aesthetics). The second section, "The Critique of Teleological Judgment," addresses the role of subjective judgment in relation to

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[154] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* trans. James Meredith Creed, ed. Nicholas Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13.

the overall comprehension of natural and biological design, and hence assigns to aesthetic judgment a role in scientific understanding.

The clinical turn is also evident in Kant's aesthetics and not only in its methodological approach to the topic but also in the subtle movement of aesthetic experience itself. Kant introduces a modality of aesthetic intellection, a *reflective* counterpart if you will, to the critical reflexivity posited in the first critique.[155] For Kant, the reflective modality of the aesthetic couples taste with a non-desiring modality of attention he coins "disinterested interest."[156] Aesthetic understanding "necessarily follows the bent of its own nature without ulterior aim" and he further contends that "(one) must not be in the least prepossessed in favour of the existence of the thing, but must preserve complete indifference in this respect, in order to play the part of judge in matters of taste."[157] Such an indifferent perspective - a paradoxically subjective yet extremely detached and areal attitude– I suggest, shares certain features with the observational methods of the previously discussed clinical scientists who assumed empirical indifference in their laboratory procedures. A similar attitude of disinterestedness becomes particularly refined in the early nineteenth century with the advance of the anatomical-clinical methods of the new physicians and surgeons. The new diagnostic procedures, as we will see in the subsequent chapter, entailed a certain instrumentalisation of visual sense, of what Foucault's calls "the medical gaze,"[158] through which the clinician observes the medical subject and the pathological processes as an assemblage of pictorial elements on a flat surface plane.

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[155] *Kant, Critique of Judgment*, 13.
[156] *Kant, Critique of Judgment*, 22.
[157] *Kant, Critique of Judgment*, 37.
[158] Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic,* 9.

It must be pointed out, and this attests to how Kant's conception of the experience of the beautiful radically departs from classical understanding, that a "judgment of taste" is bound up with the subjective and "is entirely independent of the concept of perfection."[159] For Kant, traditional beauty is understood in terms of "determinate" concepts, of ideals, but according to the aesthetic understanding, "there can be no objective rule…by which the beautiful can be defined." For every judgment of taste "is aesthetic (and) its determining ground is the feeling of the subject, and not any concept of an object."[160]

In the third *Critique* Kant introduced the revolutionary notion that both nature and mind appear to make up a structurally interactive assemblage of inner and outer worlds, a kind of 'embodied' thought that suggests certain forms and laws of nature are reflexively compatible with the capacities of human intellection. Kant calls this apparent nature-mind interactivity "purposiveness," and it is the complexity of this idea, perhaps more than any other, that has been lost in more recent art historical assessments of Kant's ostensibly disembodied idealism.[161] Purposiveness-subjectively unites "particular experiences into a connected system of nature."[162] In these subjective experiences of unity in nature, Kant writes, there are revealed "the possible existence of some among the many products of nature that, as if designed with special regard to our power of judgment, are a form particularly adapted to that faculty."[163] These experiences procure in the subject the most pleasurable sense of finality,[164] and formal sufficiency. These linked concepts of

[159] Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* 57.
[160] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 62.
[161] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 51.
[162] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 187.
[163] Kant, *Critique of Judgment, 187*.
[164] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 51.

purposiveness and end pose a fundamental challenge to the Aristotelian notions of mental and material substance, the two concepts that underwrite opposing branches of the rationalist-empiricist philosophical divide. For Kant, purposiveness and objects as ends are threaded together by larger, teleological understanding of design, the analysis of which is taken up in the second part of the critique, "The Critique of Teleological Judgment."

Near the end of the third critique, in a compelling reflection on a tree as its own 'natural end', Kant hints at, although guardedly, a biological basis for purposiveness that segues into a remarkable bio-cultural reflection on "the concept of an end of nature."[165] In this passage, the reciprocal relationship of purposiveness to end is multiplied and expanded into a bio-geographic network that encompasses the entire natural world. The concept of life insinuates into Kant's nature aesthetics as a kind of temporal-spatial extender; the addition of teleological *time* into the natural scheme stretches the ends of natural things into the ends of other natural things, hence in a significant way introducing a hit of life's boundary- bending indeterminacy. If a tree is to be understood as a natural end in itself, he writes, it can only be so relative to the purposiveness and ends of other natural objects; its existence as an "individual" is entirely caught up in a marvelous network of natural-organic means:

> Rivers in their course carry down earth of all kinds that is good for the growth of plants, and this they deposit sometimes inland, sometimes at their mouths. On some coasts the high-tide carries this alluvial mud inland, or deposits not along the sea-shore. Thus the fruitful soil is increased, especially where man helps to hinder the ebb tide carrying the detritus off again, and the vegetable kingdom takes root in the former abode of fish and crustaceans. Nature has in this way itself produced most accretions to the land, and is still, though slowly continuing the process…[166]

[165] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 51.
[166] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 51.

At the apex of purposiveness, Kant places works of fine art. "Fine art," he states, "is an art, so far as it has at the same time the *appearance of being nature*." Works of art, Kant contends, while products of artistic intention "must not have the appearance of being intentional. i.e. we must be able to look upon fine art as nature, although we recognize it to be art."[167]

Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy contend that while Kant struggled to philosophically grasp the emerging biological understanding of life, his philosophical and aesthetic system (and its subject) halt and metaphysically disassociate in those very crucial passages where the concept of life asserts itself most strongly. For instance in the case of purposiveness, Kant seems to suggest a compelling formative link between consciousness and nature, for which works of art provide aesthetic embodiments; however, he critically dampens its implications by making it a heuristic or regulative device, a subjective modality of understanding.

Kant's reflexive critical (clinical) approach, according to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, introduces a "hiatus…at the heart of the subject." This hiatus, according to these authors, sets into play an epistemic motor, which they call "the will to system" [168] and which will be the force driving subsequent 'subject-systems,' from nineteenth-century positivism and pragmatism to late twentieth-century (post)structuralism. The great philosophical system builders (Hegel, Marx) forge ahead in an attempt to abolish, to fill the lack opened by this hiatus. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy also contend that the new relationship between philosophy and aesthetics which Kant's cycle of critiques establishes provides a

[167] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 138.
[168] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), 32.

"passage" to romanticism.[169] Continuing this contention, I suggest, with Zuckert, that Kant's postulation of purposiveness is crucial to developments in subsequent Romantic philosophy and aesthetics, and to the emergence of the organic conception, or vitalism, in philosophy and art.

Schelling and Vitalism

Perhaps the most dramatic example of the bio-philosophical instrumentalisation of Kantian purposiveness in early Romantic theory is the vitalist philosophy of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. While Schelling's work has yet to be as widely examined as his illustrious contemporaries, Hegel, Goethe and Hölderlin, his writings stage a compelling philosophical encounter with, in Foucauldean parlance, "life itself."

In Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1799), Kant's clinical schema of critical self-awareness set forth in the "Transcendental Aesthetic" transmogrifies into the self-producing organic manifestation of nature itself. According to Schelling, Kant's transcendental aesthetic did not go far enough to incorporate the emerging concept of life posited by the new sciences. Schelling's system set out to bring the subject of Kant's transcendental aesthetic into more explicit accordance with the biological *spirit*, with zoë. This would entail, in effect, a bio-emotionally charged (if you will) convergence of the reflexive and reflective subjects of Kant's first and third Critiques. "The highest consummation of natural science would be the complete spiritualizing of all natural laws

[169] Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy provide a remarkable analysis of the "I" of the Kantian transcendental aesthetic, and contend that unlike the "pure intellectual self-consciousness" of the Cartesian "cogito" or the "pure empirical sensibility" of Hume's philosophy, Kant's subject is "empty." They propose that with Kant's aprioritization of time and space, and the positing of the intellectual and the empirical within the sensible, that the Kantian subject becomes a "function of synthesis" and epistemological scaffold or schema deprived of substance (and hence the traditional ground of philosophy) and strangely un-presentable to itself. (p.30-31) However, it is my contention that this move toward indeterminacy and "substancelessness" if you will, is an indicator of the emergence of a biological understanding, of *zoë,* which Kant cautiously traces out in his aesthetics as purposiveness, that, as Zuckert points out, grounds knowledge and subjective experience in *time.*

into laws of intuition and thought ... The completed theory of nature would be that whereby the whole of nature as resolved into an intelligence."[170]

As historian of science Robert J. Richards points out, Schelling dispensed with the heuristic limits that Kant placed around the concepts of purposiveness and of the organic; Richards contends that for Schelling "the ubiquity of organic structures in nature" could be explained by the mind "only if mind, hence the world derived, revealed itself to be organic."[171] The mind, for Schelling, is organically omnipresent and "the still unwitting character of intelligence is already peeping through" even the most inanimate-seeming mineral forms. "Nature's highest goal, to become wholly an object to herself," he writes "is achieved only through the last and highest order of reflection which is none other than man."[172]

Schelling continues along the lines of a trend that *individuates* nature, and the clinical, auto-critical reflexivity of Kant's "mental being," is for Schelling the site of an original act of "becoming"; and each site (or subject) a particular instantiation of the "world system," which, he writes, "is a kind of organization that has structured itself out of a common center." Schelling ascribes to this common center an organizing "intentionality." Hence, with this world system Kant's purposiveness breaks out of its regulative limits to become nature's own self-producing process:

> The continuous steady process of nature toward organization betrays clearly enough an active *drive* that, struggling with raw matter, at times conquers, at times is suppressed, now breaking more open, now into more limited forms. It is the universal mind of nature that gradually structures raw matter. From bits of moss, in which hardly any trace of organization is visible, to the most noble form, which seems to

[170] F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978), 40-41.
[171] Robert J. Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 139.
[172] Schelling, 6.

> have broken the chains of matter, and the same drive governs. This drive operates according to one and the same ideal of purposiveness and presses forward into infinity to express one and the same archetype, namely, the pure form of our mind. [173]

Schelling's *System* moves away from the more discreet clinical-critical probity of Kant's *Critiques* toward a natural philosophy of biological immanence, and an aesthetics of will, of biological will. We recall that in Kant's teleology natural organisms are both ends-in-themselves, and somewhat self-directed, while connected to a network of other ends. However, with Schelling, life forms are manifestations of a powerful singular bioforce that struggles in an infinite number of natural and subjective instantiations to attain self-conscious being. And in this romantic scheme of things "the ideal world of art and the real world of objects are…products of one and the same activity," namely the ongoing process of nature's self-realizing consciousness.[174]

Conclusion

It has been my purpose with this chapter to map the features of an emerging clinical mentality the first traces of which may be found in the discourses of the emerging laboratory life sciences in the first half of the eighteenth century. The writings of the poet and physiologist Albrecht von Haller, and the treatises of materialist physician Jules d"Offary de La Mettrie, reflect a widespread effort at that time to explain the mechanisms of sensation, movement, and cognition in the non-metaphysical terminologies of a hard laboratory science. It is from these developments and their discourses – and the clinical method which the sciences devise to procure truth – that the paradigmatic eighteenth-century program of aesthetic form derives its basic concepts and methods. Alexander Baumgarten is cited as the first cultural theorist to propose a "science" of artistic

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[173] Schelling, 290.
[174] Schelling, 12.

experience, one that would approach the topic in terms of an "aesthetics," or "sensate discourse." However it is with the more formalized art historical and theoretical discourses of Winckelmann and, particularly Lessing, that the analysis of artistic works follows a clinical method; Lessing's *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry,* is simultaneously a semiotic study of the representation of mortal suffering and an early clinical-critical inquiry into the special features of the individual mediums themselves.

The philosophy and aesthetics of Immanuel Kant provides a philosophical compendium of the emergence of this bio-clinical mentality. His critiques adopt concepts and terminologies developed by the new laboratory sciences, and the drift from philosophy to aesthetics reflected in the passage from the first to third critiques, is an index of a more general bio-cultural trend away from the traditional metaphysics of mind to a science of corporeality and the sensate. Kant's hyper-critical approach to the analysis of reason and aesthetic judgment follows the same testing protocols that were being devised in the scientific laboratories at the time, and these protocols are in some ways instantiated in the hyper-reflexive/critical subject of the first critique. The modality of aesthetic intellection posited in the third critique – disinterestedness, shares a certain epistemological regularity with the detached observational techniques of earlier laboratory scientists; while the heuristic device of purposiveness subjectively links the forms of nature to an overall organic pattern or natural framework of reason.

At the end of the eighteenth century, in the post-Kantian philosophical system of Schelling, purposiveness is deployed beyond the regulative encampment Kant confined it

to and the notion of *organism* and its cognates become "foundational concepts"[175] in a new Romantic discourse that is at once philosophical, scientific and aesthetic. Schelling's vitalism took up the organic turn of Kant's aesthetic conception of purposiveness, and assigned to nature a creative will and an evolving stream of artistic motivations: in Schelling's romantic biocentric system art and artists assume central roles in nature's ordeal of bio-aesthetic immanence or self-realization. Schelling's nature philosophy completes the eighteenth-century cycle of aesthetic clinicality I have attempted do draw out, and moves philosophical-aesthetic into the domain of bio-cultural immanence. This general framework of aesthetic clinicality, for which Kant's philosophy supplies essential concepts, will function as a scaffold for the bio-aesthetic articulations of clinicalized perception, subjectivity and performativity taken up in subsequent chapters.

[175] Richards, 138.

Chapter Two
Clinical and Aesthetic Perception

Modern medicine has fixed its own date of birth as being in the last years of the eighteenth century. Reflecting on its situation, it identifies the origin of its positivity with a return – over and above all theory – to the modest but effecting leveling of the perceived. Michel Foucault

Cubism undertook a completely two-dimensional transcription of three-dimensional phenomena…The world was stripped of its surface, of its skin, and the skin was spread flat on the flatness of the picture plane. Clement Greenberg

…it is difficult to say where in fact the material ends and sensation begins; preparation of the canvas, the track of the brush's hair… Deleuze and Guattari

In the previous chapter I examined the effect of eighteenth-century empirical life science on early modern aesthetics, and placed these developments within the framework of an evolving biological-clinical mentality. In this chapter I seek to examine how these eighteenth-century developments have migrated to twentieth-century art and theory specifically as they pertain to the convergence of modern clinical and aesthetic perception, specifically the flat picture plane and its attentive surface gaze. It is my contention that the new empirical awareness of modern painting's flatness is an index of the clinicalization of artistic perception, and of the assertion of what I identified in the previous chapter as the "bio-referent."

Flatness, indeed, makes a strong appearance in nineteenth-century modern painting; the realism of Gustav Courbet, and more profoundly the mature works of Edouard Manet embody a new consciousness of the flat canvas support. The highly activated *retinalism* of Impressionism and Pointillism, as well as the ecstatic assertion of color, pattern and the tactility of the *matière* in the works of the Nabis, Van Gogh, and other Post- and Neo-

Impressionist painters are all produced by a new visual and tactile interaction with painting's flat support.

It is the late work of Paul Cezanne, produced in the early years of the twentieth century, that provides perhaps the most salient example – a first full-blown or index case of this new modality of aesthetic-clinical perception, if you will. While foregrounding facture through a tactile multi-sensory agglomeration of touch and sight, the late paintings together with the artist's own comments about his project, also serve to underline the Kantian dimensions of clinicalized visual experience (figure 2.1). Jonathon Crary contends that the paintings from the middle of the 1890s to the end of his life in 1906 – some appearing "unfinished" with exposed areas of unpainted canvas – comprise an artistic attempt to construct a position of sustained attention in the midst of modern life's continuously accelerating sensory (over)stimulation; Cezanne's assertion of the flat support, he contends, reflects a concerted effort to stabilize the stream of fragmented modern visual experience by grounding it in a new form of pictorial "substance."[176]

I suggest the painterly sensuality of Cezanne methods, and the particular species of artistic subjectivity that Cezanne embodies, must be placed within the larger archaeology of Kantian aesthetics and its clinically inflected modalities of reflective observation which I adumbrated in the previous chapter. Cezanne provided on-going commentary about his work in much discussed correspondences with a number of young painters – notably Joachim Gasquet and Emile Bernard. In these mostly short accessible letters, interspersed with observations about his health and Provence's weather, the aged master

[176] Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 2.

expounds to his admirers on "the truth about painting."[177] He returns repeatedly to a key set of notions that revolve around the topic of sensation, sensibility, and the compatibility of artistic temperament and the phenomenal world of the *motif*. In the following passage to Emile Bernard, Cezanne threads together a number of these significant concepts:

> I progress very slowly, for nature reveals herself to me in very complex ways; and the progress needed is endless. One must look at the model and feel very exactly, and also express oneself distinctly and with force. Taste is the best judge. It is rare. Art addresses itself only to an excessively limited number of individuals. The artist must scorn all judgment that is not based on an intelligent observation of character. He must beware of the literary spirit which so often causes the painter to deviate from his true path – the concrete study of nature – to lose himself too long in intangible speculation. The Louvre is a good book to consult but it must be only an intermediary. The real and immense study to be undertaken is the manifold picture of nature. [178]

Throughout these letters Cezanne emphasizes the role of empirical sensation, the specificity of the medium, the central place of nature, the difference between *seeing* and *reading* (seeing pictures at the Louvre amounts to a form of reading) as well as the sensibility – "the entire personality"[179] of the painter. The letters abound with references to taste, to the "unity of the manifold," as well as the special talents of the artist. Though Kant is not cited, Cezanne seems to have taken many of his ideas directly from the *Critique of Judgment.* Nowhere in these exchanges does Cezanne lapse into what Kant characterized as "beautiful formulas," or a metaphysics of beauty, but remains firmly within the domain of subject-based aesthetics and "in the grip of sense-perceptions."[180] "This is true, without any possible doubt," his letter continues, "I am quite certain – an optical sensation is produced in our visual organs which allows us to classify the planes

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[177] Paul Cezanne, *Letters*, ed. John Rewald, trans. Marguerite Kay (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 317.
[178] Cezanne, *Letters*, 302-303.
[179] Cezanne, *Letters*, 316.
[180] Cezanne, *Letters*, 304.

represented by colour sensations as light, half tone or quarter tone."[181] With this, the mature painter seems to offer Bernard a physiologically instantiated account of artistic visual experience and of the a-priority of space, no doubt influenced by recent developments in optical physiology.

In the following pages, I focus not on the flatness of modernist painting per se, but on a stream of mid- to late-twentieth-century critical and/or theoretical writings notably those by Michel Foucault, Clement Greenberg, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, which identify and reflect upon this new reflexive mode of visual perception. There is a powerful structural relationship in clinical epistemology between observation and theory, and clinical modalities of perception are accompanied by a strong critical and theoretical drive to analyze, describe and explain.[182] While the texts I have chosen for this chapter identify and elaborate on significant manifestations of clinicalized surface perception, each text in its own way has also taken on the clinical zeal to identify and explicate. All of these discourses attempt to theoretically grasp the perceptual phenomena of the surface as it manifests in various clinical and artistic configurations, from the membranous structures of histological anatomy procured on the clinical examination table identified

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[181] Cezanne, *Letters*, 302-303.

[182] For a discussion of Martin Heidegger's critique of the "ocularcentrism" of modern scientific method, and the conflation of *theoria* with observation, see: Martin Jay, "Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and the Search for a New Ontology of Sight," in *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision,* ed. David Michael Levin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 143-185; Jay calls this method "epistemological seeing," which might be likened to my definition of clinicalized vision. With regard to the linking of seeing and theorizing in modernism, Rosalind Krauss suggests modernist painting and modern art history are "double ground(ed)" in opticality. Indeed, modernism and its art historical and critical elaboration form a reflexive and productive discursive knot; see: Rosalind E. Krauss, "The Story of the Eye," *New Literary History* 21: 2 (Winter 1990), 283-298. For Yves-Alain Bois the painting of the last century, particularly painting reflexively engaged with the discernment of its own limits, *is* theoretical. He cites the stream of critical, theoretical and polemical texts produced by modernist artists which take up the "nature" of the medium. See: Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993). The theoretical and critical writing of Malevich and Mondrian, for example, are crucial to the artists' painterly productions. It is my contention that this reflexive relationship may be placed within a larger clinical epistemology.

by Foucault, to the new plasticity that works itself out on the table-like ground of Greenberg's modernist painting.

These writings also engage with central tenants of Kantian philosophy and aesthetics. The reflexive modalities of analysis and critique, the epistemology of purposiveness, and the clinical-aesthetic observational method of disinterestedness, all factor in to the theoretical and critical styles of these authors. My reading of these texts is also intended to underline their recapitulation of the bio-clinical theme – a bio-clinical meta-narrative, if you will – set forth in the previous chapter, which is continuously repeated and reworked throughout the historical terrain that this paper stakes out. Each text articulates a different and evolving strain of clinicalized perception; the representational ordeal of the bio-referent from Haller's laboratory science to Kant's aesthetics, to Schelling's vitalism, is re-figured in the movement from the disinterested clinical-artistic formalism of Foucault and Greenberg, toward a vitalistic and engaged modality bio-aesthetic immanence articulated by Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari.

Michel Foucault: The Operating Table and the Picture Plane

The clinicalization of visual perception in the post-Kantian, medicalized space, and its manifestation as a reflexive exchange between the subject and object of observation in the form of a flat surface gaze, was suggested by Michel Foucault in *Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception* (1963, English trans. 1973). Using the pseudonym of Maurice Florence, Foucault penned his autobiographical entry for a *Dictionary of Philosophers,* positioning himself within the Kantian critical legacy: "If Foucault is indeed at home in the philosophical tradition," he writes, "it is within the *critical* tradition

of Kant, and his undertaking could be called *A Critical History of Thought.*"[183] His doctoral dissertation comprises the massive *History of Madness* together with an extended commentary on Kant's *Anthropology.* Foucault's writings are replete with the reflexive critical mechanisms of Kantian critique and these seem mirrored by their menacing and spectral "other" in the structures of surveillance and subjectivisation that make up his *society of discipline*; these include the new panoptic designs of modern factories, hospitals and prisons. [184]

Foucault has devoted considerable attention to the ways modern writers and artists have introjected the new modality of clinicalized reflexivity into their working processes. His essays on Raymond Roussell and Maurice Blanchot explore the manner in which these modern writers assume positions as witnesses or spectators of their own thought, pushing Kant's transcendental aesthetic and its position of disinterestedness to a limit at which language seems to reflect upon itself. For Foucault extreme forms of self-reflexivity are a hallmark of modern subjectivity.[185]

Foucault offers a description of this reflexivity of a work of art in his remarkable analysis of Velazquez's *Las Meninas* (1656) that comprises the introduction of *The Order of Things* (1966). According to Foucault, the painting carries out the elision of its subject matter – the king and queen – with the purpose of foregrounding the machinery of painterly illusion; more significantly the reflexive device around which the entire illusion pivots is the flat *referential* surface of the painting itself which is alluded to at the center

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[183]Maurice Florence (Michel Foucault), "Michel Foucault, 1926-," *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault,* ed. Gary Cutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 314.

[184] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

[185] Foucault, "Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside," trans. Jeffrey Mehlman and Brian Massumi, in *Foucault/Blanchot* (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 7-58.

of the painting as the depiction of the backside of the canvas on which the artist is working and which we, presumably, are looking at, at a later point in time. Foucault devotes considerable attention to this device as it functions as an extravagantly reflexive foil around which the entire scene pivots. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the device is the manner in which it points to the material conditions of painterly illusion – the flat surface of the painting itself, including the crossbars and supports.

> [We see] its texture, the horizontal and vertical bars of the stretcher, and the obliquely rising foot of the easel. The tall, monotonous rectangle occupying the whole left portion of the real picture and representing the back of the canvas within the picture, reconstitutes in the form of a surface the invisibility in depth of what the artist is observing: that space in which we are, and which we are not.[186]

This labyrinthine play of reflexive visuality, Foucault suggests, is an indication of the demise of the classical *episteme* and its representational systems. *Las Meninas* seems to portend, in Foucault's analysis of it, Kant's a-prioritization of space, his positing of space as a formal property of the thinking subject (or transcendental aesthetic) and a modernist awareness of the mechanics of representation and of the empirical materiality of painting.

In *The Birth of the Clinic* Foucault traced the clinical modalisation or instrumentalisation, of visual perception in the progress from classical to modern clinical diagnostics in the early nineteenth century. According to Foucault's archeology the old bookish diagnostics which matched disease manifestations to their written descriptions in nosologies was supplanted with a new strain of clinical surveillance that focused on visible structures – particularly on organs and tissues. In the opening pages we find that the progress of modern medical consciousness involved a radical new spatialization of the human body. According to Foucault the emerging physiology replaced the traditional

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[186] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Science* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 4.

"Euclidean anatomy"[187] with a temporally dynamic flesh-and-bone assemblage of biological activity. To demonstrate his point Foucault cites Morgagni's *De sedibus et causis morborum per Anatomen Indagatis* (*The Seats and Causes of Diseases Investigated by Anatomy*) (1761), which defined the body as a volume made up of discrete and readily classifiable smaller volumes. While Foucault credits Morgagni with instrumentalizing and refining visual observation for medical laboratory use crucial to the emergence of modern pathology, his gaze was essentially "anatomical." The introduction of time into anatomy by Haller, and the later "vitalist concept" of nature, according to Foucault, subjected this spatial datum to a sequence of folds; the body's volumes reconfigure into a labyrinthine network of exterior and interior *surfaces* "whose spatial requisites are not necessarily those of classical geometry."[188]

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the understanding of disease as a spatio-temporal, bio-physiological *process* was a radical idea. Furthermore, the positing of disease as a biological process *within* the body represents a drastic diagnostic shift that produced a new medical subject while simultaneously lifting the body of this medical subject onto a new plane of visibility. Foucault emphasizes the historical novelty of the "visible body" as site of disease, and underscores this development as the most recent site of illness:

> The space of *configuration* of the disease and the space of *localization* of the illness in the body have been superimposed, in medical experience, for only a relatively short period of time – the period that coincides with nineteenth-century medicine and the privileges accorded to pathological anatomy. This is the period that marks the *suzerainty of the gaze*, since in the same perceptual field, following the same continuities of the same breaks, experience reads at a glance the visible lesions of the organism and the coherence of pathological forms, the illness is articulated exactly on

[187] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic, An Archeology of Medical Perception,* trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 3.
[188] Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 3.

> the body, and its logical distribution is carried out at once in terms of anatomical masses. The glance has simply to exercise its right of origin over truth.[189]

The clinical "glance" procures, again, a new and individualized medical subject. Foucault writes of this new medical subject: "The patient is a geometrically impossible spatial synthesis, but for that very reason unique, central, and irreplaceable; an order that has become density in a set of qualifying modulations." [190]

In the Kantian sense, the positing of the medical subject coincides with the general epistemic shift toward the individuated subject in the first and, more specifically, third critiques. It might also be pointed out that under the suzerainty of the medical gaze this new medical subject is regarded as something of an aesthetic artifact, and the discernments of the doctors entail aesthetic (visually based) judgments:

> Disease, which can be mapped out on the picture, becomes apparent in the body. There it meets a space with a quite different configuration: the concrete space of perception. Its laws define visible forms assumed by disease in a sick organism: the way to which disease is distributed in the organism, manifests its presence there, progresses by altering solids, movements, or functions, causes lesions that become visible under autopsy, triggers off, at one point or another, the interplay of symptoms, causes reactions, and thus moves toward a fatal, and for it a favourable, outcome. We are dealing here with those complex, derived figures by means of which the essence of the disease, with its structure of a picture, is articulated upon the thick, dense volume of the organism and becomes *embodied* within it.[191]

The privilege accorded to optical vision, the ability to discern the coherence of illness 'at a glance' from a host of discreet figures and 'pathological forms', marks a radical break from classical forms of medicine. This new species of clinical perception Foucault calls the "anatomical-clinical method"[192] – and its basic support or "first structure" consists of "the flat surface of perpetual simultaneity. Table and picture."[193] According to Foucault

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[189] Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 3.
[190] Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 15.
[191] Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 16.
[192] Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 16.
[193] Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 5.

the clinical method brought to the surface of the body's immediate visibility (on the operating or dissection table) the individual features (lesions, swelling, pain, the expressive physiognomy of suffering) which make up the visible composition, a *picture* of disease. Foucault continues, pointing out that it is the radical understanding of life, of *zoë*, in the biological sense (of organisms as finite ends) that transforms medical thought:

> The order of disease is simply a 'carbon copy' of the world of life; the same structures govern each, the same forms of division, the same ordering. The rationality of life is identical with the rationally of that which threatens it. Their relationship is not one of nature and counter-nature; but in a natural order common to both, they fit into one another, one superimposed upon the other. In disease, one *recognizes* life because it is on the laws of life that *knowledge* of the disease is also based.[194]

The epistemic shift Foucault discerns in the order of disease can be understood in Kantian terms: the abolition of the nature-counter-nature divide is borne of a new awareness of the *purposive* reciprocity of biological processes, and of the bio-epistemic reciprocity of life and the knowledge derived from it. The aesthetic, and the faculty of the aesthetic as Kant defined it, are crucial to the emergence of the new clinical modality of perception.

The great avatar of anatomical-clinical perception, Foucault contends, was the post-Revolutionary early nineteenth-century surgeon Marie Francois Xavier Bichat (1771-1802). According to Foucault, Bichat challenged the old Euclidean anatomy, "planarizing" the organ structures of the Morgagnian model into a flexible "tissular" field. Bichat dispensed with the concept of organs as strictly discreet objects, and conceived of the interior of the human body as a living surface which has been elaborately folded. This surface forms a variegated flesh textile, a medium through which disease is literally absorbed and diffused. The fundamental discovery of Bichat's *Treatise on Membranes* (1800) (figure 2.2), Foucault writes:

[194] Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 6-7.

> Is a principle of deciphering corporal space that is at once intra-organic, inter-organic, and trans-organic. The anatomical element (a body defined by its organ volumes) has ceased to define the fundamental form of spatialization and to command, by a relation of proximity, the ways of physiological or pathological communication; it is now no more than a secondary form of primary space, which, by a process of winding round, superposition, and thickening, constitutes it. This fundamental space is entirely defined by the *thinness* of tissue. [195]

Foucault elaborates Bichat's re-spatialization of the body, emphasizing its canvas-like elasticity; he also distinguishes it from the Morgagnian models in a manner that, I argue, could easily be applied to the transformation that takes place from classical to modern forms of painting, from classical painting modeled on Poussin's volumetric compositions to the more flatly stated planes and figures of Manet, or indeed, of Cezanne:

> Morgagni wished to perceive beneath the corporal surface the densities of organs whose varied forms specified the disease; Bichat wished to reduce the organic volumes to great, homogenous, tissual surfaces, to areas of identity in which secondary modifications would find their fundamental kinships … Bichat is strictly an analyst …[reducing] organic *volume* to tissular space … Bichat's eye is a clinician's eye, because he gives an absolute epistemological privilege to the *surface gaze*.[196]

The privilege that Bichat assigns, according to Foucault, to the immediate visibility of tissues:

> Thanks to Bichat, superficiality now becomes embodied in the real surfaces of membranes. Tissual expanses form the perceptual correlative of the surface gaze that defined the clinic. By a realistic shift in which medical positivism was to find its origin, surface, hitherto a structure of the onlooker had become a figure of the one observed.[197]

Foucault draws out an epistemological distinction between this new species of clinical perception and the older diagnostic techniques, a difference Bichat describes as one between the (new) "historical" and (older) "philosophical" methods which Foucault likens to the difference between *seeing* and *reading*:

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[195] Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 127.
[196] Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 128-129.
[197] Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 129.

> A case that can be *seen*, a symptom that is gradually discovered, a principle that can be deciphered from its root do not belong to the order of 'philosophical' knowledge, but to a 'very simple knowledge,' which 'must precede all others' and which situates the original form of medical experience.[198]

The historical method "embraces whatever, *de facto* or *de jure,* sooner or later, directly or indirectly, may be offered to the gaze"[199] and constructs disease as a picture-like 'event' of which the symptoms are not the causes but the visible signs. It is the task of the clinician, rather like that of the modern visual artist – one recalls Cezanne's decidedly laboratorial methods – to survey the "free field" and assemble from the array of "presentations" the visible *composition* of disease. The historical method is, Foucault writes, "directed upon that which is visible in the disease…and as it moves forward, the gaze is really retreating, since it reaches of the truth of disease only by allowing it to win the struggle to fulfill, in all its phenomena, its true nature."[200] The new diagnostic *gestalt* of the clinic is a species of aesthetic formalism in which redness, tumor, heat and pain are arranged like elements of a modernist collage on a "mute" flat surface:

> It is a question of defining a sort of fundamental area in which perspectives are leveled off, and in which shifts of levels are aligned: an effect has the same status as its cause, the antecedent coincides with what follows it. In this homogenous space series are broken and time abolished: a local inflammation is merely the ideal juxtaposition of its historical elements (redness, tumor, heat, pain) … Disease is perceived fundamentally in a space of projection without depth, of coincidence without development. There is only one plane and one moment. The form in which truth is originally shown is the surface in which relief is both manifested and abolished …[201]

We have, with Foucault's account of the modern clinic, a precise modality of medical perception that coalesces around a referent comprised of the flat examination or operating table together with the diseased body of the medical subject. This planar absorption of

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[198] Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 6.
[199] Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 6.
[200] Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 9.
[201] Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 9.

figure into ground defines the clinic in all of its aspects – from diseased subjects and symptoms to the examination tables and rooms into which they merge, to the vast histological surface which configures diseased (and healthy) organisms throughout the larger social *tissue*.

It is significant Foucault locates the first manifestations of this modality of clinical perception in a brief stretch of modern medical history that predates the planarization of the modernist picture surface; of an analogous surface perception in the visual arts, the first traces may be detected in the realist paintings of Gustav Courbet, but more explicitly in the work of Edouard Manet and, of course, Cezanne. This serves to underscore my underlying hypothesis that new clinical modalities of perception precede and migrate to artistic ones. What is further significant is the historical context of Foucault's study; the publication of *Birth of the Clinic* in 1963 coincides with significant developments in artistic formalism which emphasized a similar surface gaze. In the early to mid-1950s developments in American modernist painting – notably Abstract Expressionist painting – emphasized painterly facture and the inherent flatness of the picture supports. The American art critic Clement Greenberg, avatar of modern pictorial flatness, offered his most concise and summary accounts of a modernist *surface gaze* in his essays "Modernist Painting" and "After Abstract Expressionism" which were published shortly before Foucault's *Birth of the Clinic*, in 1960 and 1962 respectively. Hence, in the following pages I turn to a reading of these and other significant Greenberg essays.

Clement Greenberg: the Clinical Specificity of the Modernist Picture Plane

The American modernist art critic Clement Greenberg, who came to prominence in the post-World War II, New York art world, is noted for his positing of and insistence on an

empirical mode of artistic perception linking visual perception to a flattened picture plane. His early career was devoted, as a member of the *Partisan Review* editorial team, to a critical-historical approach associated with Marxist theory. Despite his being a Marxist, eighteenth-century reverberations of Kant's Critiques run through Greenberg's *oeuvre*, as do the truth-protocols of the scientific method he suggests migrated to artistic and literary practices beginning in the nineteenth century. For example, in "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939), Greenberg writes that advanced art evinces:

> A superior consciousness of history – more precisely the appearance of a new kind of criticism of society, and historical criticism – [which has] made [the avant-garde] possible … This criticism has not confronted our present society with timeless utopias, but has soberly examined in the terms of history and of cause and effect, the antecedents, justifications, and functions of the forms that lie at the heart of every society. Thus our present bourgeois social order has shown to be, not an eternal, 'natural' condition of life, but simply the latest term in a succession of social orders. New perspectives of this kind, becoming a part of the advanced intellectual conscience of the fifth and sixth decades of the nineteenth century, soon were absorbed by artists and poets, even if unconsciously for the most part. It was no accident, therefore, that the birth of the avant-garde coincided chronologically and geographically too – with the first bold development of scientific revolutionary thought in Europe.[202]

In another early essay, "Towards a Newer Laocoön" (1940), Greenberg put forward a program for mid-twentieth-century vanguard painting that recapitulates the essential aesthetic, philosophical, and scientific developments that have challenged the plastic arts since the eighteenth century. The breadth of Greenberg's historical reasoning, together with his remarkable rhetorical abilities, allows the critic to redress "the theoretical confusion of the arts" posed by Lessing – notably the parasitical relationship between the visual and literary arts which, we recall, so troubled the German neo-classical dramatist and critic. Greenberg bases his claims for painting's autonomy on the empirical assertion of the actual surface of painting and the inherent material properties of paint interacting

[202] Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), vol.1, 6-7.

with the visual-perceptual capacities of the viewing subject. The modernist critic agrees with Lessing's early argument for *medium specificity*, and contends, particularly in his criticism of certain forms of Surrealist art, that when visual artists submit themselves to the illustration of text, the text ultimately overpowers the plastic medium. Greenberg restates the old philosophical and aesthetic ordeal of artistic embodiment articulated by Kant in the third critique, in terms of a battle in the visual arts between subject matter and form, and by Lessing as an ordeal set into play by a reflexive clinical empiricism that probingly grasps the material/formal specifications of the mediums as it simultaneously suppresses the encroachment of the corporeal referent (the body in pain). "Subject matter (is) distinguished from content…in the sense that every work must have content, but that subject matter is something the artist does or does not have in mind when he is actually at work."[203]

Central to Greenberg's articulation of aesthetic content free of subject matter is the notion of indifference raised to the level of free aesthetic reflection in Kant's third critique, where the experience of the aesthetic is linked to the areal attitude of "disinterested interest" or disinterestedness. For Greenberg disinterestedness is crucial to modern artistic experience and the specificity of the mediums, for it entails, he writes:

> A new and greater emphasis upon form, and it also involved the assertion of the arts as independent vocations, disciplines, and crafts, absolutely autonomous, and entitled to respect for their own sakes, and not merely as vessels of communication. It was the signal for a revolt against the dominance of literature, which was subject matter at is most oppressive.[204]

[203] Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoön," vol.1, 29.
[204] Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoön," vol.1, 29.

Again, Greenberg links the ostensible freedom of the aesthetic to the freedom of the visual sense from the literary, and to nineteenth-century emancipatory modern politics, and further states that under the "totalitarianism of literature,"

> Everything [in painting] depends on the anecdote or the message. The painted picture occurs in blank, indeterminate space; it just happens to be on a square of canvas and inside a frame. It mighty just as well have been breathed on air or formed out of plasma…it tries to be something you imagine rather than see – or else a bas-relief or a statue. Everything contributes to the denial of the medium, as if the artist were ashamed to admit that he had actually painted his picture instead of dreaming it forth.[205]

This reduction of painting to its material surface (which functions as a *referent*) requires that all efforts be made to free painting from mimetic, imitative, or naturalist illusion. According to Greenberg modernist painting must break out of its "subservient" role to the other arts (such as literature) so that it would no longer be "susceptible to the temptation to emulate the effects …of illusion, (and) of other arts."[206] Hence, it is through this vehicle of a critical, clinically disinterested perception that the essential, in Kantian terms *a-priori*, elements of painting reveal themselves. The agent of this formal emancipation, Greenberg proposes, is the modern painter – who, like the modern scientist, has access to an immediate, empirical, concrete visual experience. The avatar of this new science of painting, according to Greenberg, is Gustav Courbet :

> Nineteenth century painting made its first break with literature (or metaphysics) in the person of the Communard Courbet, it fled from *spirit* to *matter*…Courbet was the first real avant-garde painter [for he] tried to reduce his art to immediate sense data by painting only what the eye could see as a machine unaided by the mind…Impressionism, reasoning beyond Courbet in its materialist objectivity…sought to emulate the detachment of science, imagining that thereby it would get at the very essence of painting as well as of visual experience.[207]

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[205] Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoön," vol.1, 28.
[206] Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoön," vol.1, 24.
[207] Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoön," vol.1, 29.

Greenberg's uncanny empirical apparatus, "a machine unaided by the mind," could only be conceived within, and reflects I believe, Kant's initial (clinical) relocation of the sensate observer from the domain of purely rational concepts to the aesthetic and its "disinterested" mode of attentive observation and its "new attention to every inch of the canvas, regardless of its relation to the 'centers of interest.'"[208] This reference to "centers of interest" plays also on the bourgeois investment in framed naturalist painting, while the influence of positivist science and its determination of vision as a vehicle of unmediated visual data situates modern painting upon a "more stable basis than the crumbling bourgeois oecumene."[209]

Greenberg's more developed thinking on the relevance of Kant's philosophy to an understanding of modern art, as well as his insistence on the primacy of the flat picture plane are found later, in the late essays "Modernist Painting" and "After Abstract Expressionism" of 1960 and 1962 respectively. With these discourses Greenberg explicitly links Kant's method of philosophical critique to medium-specificity, and the flattened surface of modern art:

> I identify Modernism with the intensification, almost the exacerbation, of (a) self-critical tendency that began with the philosopher Kant. Because he was the first to criticize the means itself of criticism, I conceive of Kant as the first real Modernist. The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence.[210]

According to Greenberg, Kant's *Critiques* set out to clarify the procedures that were "proper" to philosophy and hence he carried out his critical reductions of reason not to subvert but to clarify it. "(While) Kant withdrew much from its old jurisdiction, logic was

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[208] Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoön," vol.1, 29.
[209] Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoön," vol.1, 29.
[210] Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," vol.4, 85.

left all the more secure in what there remained of it."[211] For Greenberg the effects of Kant's reflexive critique through the course of the nineteenth century would exceed the discourse of philosophy to foster an attitude of immanent auto-critique that extends to the visual arts. "Each art," he writes, "had to perform this demonstration on its own account. What had to be exhibited was not only that which was unique and irreducible in art in general, but also that which was unique and irreducible in each particular art."[212]

Of course, the painterly device to which this critical and clinical mode of aesthetic perception affixes itself is the flat picture plane. "Flatness alone," Greenberg writes, "was unique and exclusive to (painting)…Flatness, two-dimensionality, was the only condition painting shared with no other art, and so modernist painting oriented itself to flatness as it did to nothing else."[213] For Greenberg this flatness, in the Kantian sense, becomes painting's primary regulative principle. "The limitations that constitute the medium of painting," Greenberg continues, are "the flat surface, the shape of the support, the properties of the pigment, (which) were treated by the Old Masters as negative factors that could be acknowledge only implicitly or indirectly."[214]

Greenberg describes the mutation of painting's representational regime from classical to modern further: "The motto of the Renaissance artist, *Ars est artem celare*, is exchanged for."[215] Renaissance art, Greenberg contends, in order to procure its illusion, masked or concealed the very means through which it produced its illusions; modern art on the other hand progresses through the maximization and demonstration of its means. Again, Renaissance art, bound to illusion and illustration, is replaced by a *demonstrative*

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[211] Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," vol.4, 85.
[212] Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," vol.4, 86.
[213] Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," vol.4, 86.
[214] Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," vol.4, 86.
[215] Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," vol.4, 86.

mode that flatly affirms the shadowless two-dimensional materiality of its support, the canvas. For Greenberg, the *retinalization* of painting comprises "the instinctive accommodation to the medium." The picture plane "grows shallower and shallower, flattening out and pressing together the fictive planes of depth until they meet as on and upon the real and material plane which is the actual surface of the canvas, where they lie side by side or interlocked or transparently imposed upon each other."[216] Under these new conditions "brush strokes are often defined for their own sake."[217]

Greenberg leaves is in no doubt: the transition was an *ordeal*. We find in the following passage from Greenberg a description of painterly space that is identical to the planar space wrested from the old pictorial which entails a certain *clinical* violence:

> Where the painter still tries to indicate real objects their shapes flatten and spread in the dense, two-dimensional atmosphere. A vibrating tension is set up as the objects struggle to maintain their volume against the tendency of the real picture plane to re-assert its material flatness and crush them to silhouettes.[218]

As formal developments of Modern painting progress, from Cezanne to Cubism, Mondrian, and beyond, Greenberg writes, "realistic space cracks and splinters into flat planes which come forward, parallel to the plane surface."[219] Recognizable or naturalistic fragments of representation recombine with graphic elements "destroy(ing) the partial illusion of depth by slamming the various planes together." The effect of this slamming "emphasizes further the impenetrability of the plane surface"[220] Again, it is at this impenetrable surface that the referent asserts itself, and that the reflexive ordeal of – the

[216] Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," vol.4, 35.
[217] Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," vol.4, 35.
[218] Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," vol.4, 35.
[219] Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," vol.4, 35.
[220] Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," vol.4, 35.

drive toward -- modernist medium specificity manifests itself most explicitly in Greenberg's aesthetics.

Modernism begins for Greenberg, at that moment when the illusion of painting ends, and its material limits empirically determined. Greenberg's discourse captures this mode of perception, and provides an extraordinary recapitulation of the central challenges posed by eighteenth century theorists. Thus, with Greenberg's most advanced essays of the early and mid-1960s we have the basic questions posed by Baumgarten and Lessing, and the philosophical and aesthetic doctrines of Kant, refigured through the flat screen – Greenberg refers to it at one point as a "skin"[221] – of the latest modernist painting.

Blood Quadrant

Taking a cue from Foucault, Lisa Cartwright studied the emergence of modern microscopic gaze, and suggested another compelling link to modernist aesthetics. She contends that microscopy, particularly as it fused with the latest developments in early twentieth-century photography, set its gaze to the surveillance of the ubiquitous living animal-human particulate that is organ *and* tissue – hence, corpuscle – namely blood.[222] She sites the work of the early twentieth-century New York physician Robert Lincoln Watkins, who created a device – the "micromotoscope" that combined microscopic technology with cinematic photography, and fixed this technique on the discernment, in Watkins own words, of the tiniest "premonitory symptoms…the pre-symptom or the symptom of the symptom" of incipient disease.[223]

[221] Greenberg, "On the Role of Nature in Modernist Painting," *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 172.
[222] Lisa Cartwright, *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 88.
[223] Cartwright, *Screening the Body*, 88.

This techno-medical sensory apparatus, as Cartwright points out, emerges in a direct line from Bichat's "surface gaze." However, with modern photo-microscopy the bright flat visibility of the examination or operating table has been absorbed into a new technological configuration – that of tissue transparently splayed out over the flat brightly lit microscope glass slide (figures 2.3 and 2.4). Blood also becomes, according to Cartwright, "a broader metaphor for the object of medical perception."[224] This is indicative of both the manner and degree to which medical perception, by the beginning of the twentieth century, has come to saturate the social field; while its objects have become quite miniscule its field has indeed become large and elastic. According to Cartwright:

> Sight (has) become more like blood: fluid, pervasive, and unfixed from a locale. The researcher's sense of sight is thus subject to all manner of technological augmentation, displacement, and verification: its authority is dispersed across instruments like the kymograph, the cinematograph, and the microscope. Perception becomes unhinged from the sensory body and is activated across an increasingly complex battery of institutional techniques and instruments.[225]

Hence, according to Cartwright, by the early twentieth century the medical gaze assumes the fluid unfixed status of its object as it grasps its smallest corpuscular substrate; this double movement is a metaphor for the biomedical administration of human subjects in the new biopolitical sphere where, as Agamben and Foucault have pointed out, the concept of life or *zoë* becomes the central organizing-disciplinary concept of political life. Blood cells – which, in humans, lack central processing organelles known as "nuclei" and move throughout the circulatory system rather like zombies, that is to say both dead and alive – become, under the suzerainty of this microscopic gaze, metaphors for the modern *bio-hordes*. These corpuscular "grains" become, at the same time, tiny

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[224] Cartwright, *Screening the Body*, 82.
[225] Cartwright, *Screening the Body*, 82.

indexical bio-fragments, or micro-gradients, of the pathological status of individual medical subjects themselves. As Cartwright points out, in fields such as chemical pathology and hematology,

> The body is segmented, drained, sliced, and otherwise fragmented, the microscope rendering its minute fragments largely unidentifiable except to the specialized viewer. Placing a specimen on the instrument's stage and closing one eye to peer through the viewfinder the miscroscopist sees the body in a manner that effectively distances the observer from the subjective experience of the body imaged. Excised from the body, stained, blown up, resolved, pierced by a penetrating light and perceived by a single squinting eye, the microscopic specimen is apparently stripped of its corporeality, its function, and its history even as it serves as a final proof of the health, pathology, or sexuality of the subject whose body it represents.[226]

The topic of a medicalized modern subjectivity and more specifically a psychopathological configuration of the subject (which for Cartwright the microscopic blood sample functions as the analog or encapsulation) and specifically the artistic subject will be taken up in the next chapter. In any case, Cartwright associates the flat spectralization of visual experience by the microscopic gaze with the advancements of vanguard painting, and indeed its specialized viewers; she cites the cubist paintings of Georges Braque. This "penchant for flatness" she contends "was symptomatic of a more pervasive cultural disavowal of the physical body as phantasm, as nightmarishly visceral and disorderly – a denial rationalized by a modernist demand for order, simplicity, particularity and clarity."[227] While this notion of a disavowed corporeality I find untenable – indeed, I contend that this flatness is indeed a manifestation of the bio-aesthetic referent, of the modern clinical-aesthetic ordeal to represent the body – Cartwright's analysis captures a significant historical moment in the genealogical

[226] Cartwright, *Screening the Body*, 82.
[227] Cartwright, *Screening the Body*, 91.

progress of Bichat's surface gaze as it morphs or blends coherently with modern artistic experience in the early twentieth century.

Cartwright offers a useful supplement to the Greenbergian history of avant-garde painting – like the fate of blood tissues smeared into the transparent plane of the microscope slide, the evolution of modern painting consists of a "progressive surrender to the resistance of its medium." Just as blood surrenders its naturalist semantics (as bright red liquid signifying injury, life, birth, death, etc.) to the flat bright field of microscopic abstraction, painting concedes to the "picture plane's denial of (any effort) to 'hole through' it for realistic perspective space."[228]

Cartwright's observations on the links between the "microscopic gaze," the bright red surface of blood tissues and Greenberg's picture plane, provide a useful bridge between my discussions of Foucault and Greenberg, and the philosophical and aesthetic writings of Gilles Deleuze, and Deleuze's collaborations with Italian psychiatrist Felix Guattari..

Deleuze, Deleuze & Guattari, and the Clinical Aesthetics of *Percepts* and *Affects*

Schelling's romantic vitalism, the drift of philosophy into aesthetics, the interpenetration of clinical and artistic epistemologies and modalities of perception, the animalization of man, and the shared bio-aesthetic resonances set into play by *zoë* – all of these find compelling articulations in the philosophy, critical theory and aesthetics of Gilles Deleuze, and in his collaborative writings with Felix Guattari. Again, a salient feature of Deleuze's (and Deleuze and Guattari's) writings is the flat surface of clinical perception.

Deleuze's oeuvre may be separated into three streams or modalities. The first comprises a series of philosophical texts that treat (often as clinical *cases*) individual

[228] Greenberg, "Toward a Newer Laocoön," vol.1, 34.

philosophers, writers or artists. His collaborative writings with Guattari form a second body of writing and may be understood as a somewhat more polemical project, as very often the two set out to critique political, philosophical, and psychoanalytic institutions. Deleuze's later reflections deal more explicitly with artistic and literary topics, very often under the rubric of the "clinical-critical." These works, mostly essays and occasional interviews, touch upon a wide range of topics including Kant's a-prioritization of time, the fragmentary nature of Walt Whitman's verse, and the aesthetics of "exhaustion" in the texts of Samuel Beckett. [229]

Crucially, Deleuze is among the first theorists to address a modern constitutive link between the clinical and the aesthetic. Deleuze takes up this theme in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* published in 1962, and cites Friedrich Nietzsche as the first thinker to propose the philosophical personae of "cultural physician" in Nietzsche's unpublished text *The Philosopher as Cultural Physician,* written in 1873.[230] In his study of Sacher-Masoch *Coldness and Cruelty*[231] first published in 1967 Deleuze further elaborated on Nietzschean symptomatology as a form of cultural practice; the central thesis of the work is that medical diagnostics is a *literary-artistic* practice. As we shall see in a subsequent chapter on the clinicalization of artistic subjectivity, there is also precedence for cultural diagnostics in the late-nineteenth-century discourses on degeneracy propounded by the

[229] See: Gilles Deleuze, *Essays: Critical and Clinical,* trans. Michael W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

[230] Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Philosopher as Cultural Physician," *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870s,* trans. Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands, N. J.: Humanities International Press, 1975), 175. There is an extensive bibliography on the topic of biological and medical metaphors in Nietzsche's writings, as well as texts which link Nietzsche's philological investigations into the connections between medicine and philosophy in the pre-Socratic thinkers to the philosopher's own experience with illness and its effects on his philosophical outlook. Notable examples include: Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity*, trans. Charles F. Wallraff and Frederieck J. Schmitz (South Bend, Ind.: RegneryGateway, 1979); Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche,* vol. 4, *Nihilism,* ed. David F. Krell, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982).

[231] Deleuze, and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty & Venus in Furs,* trans. Jean McNeil and Aude Willm (New York, N.Y.: Zone Books, 1991).

criminal anthropologists Cesare Lombroso and Max Nordau. In an effort to suggest a positive and affirming concept of the clinical – that is to say, a clinicality unlinked from the pathological – Deleuze identifies certain devices shared by doctors and creative artists, and the flat plane of clinical perception is crucial. He writes:

> There is always a great deal of art involved in the grouping of symptoms, in the organization of a *table* where a particular symptom is dissociated from another, juxtaposed to a third, and forms the new figure of a disorder or illness. Clinicians who are able to renew a symptomatological picture produce a work of art; conversely, artists are clinicians, not with respect to their own case, or even with respect to a case in general; rather, they are clinicians of civilization.[232]

Deleuze's description of the *figure* of disease as a coalescence of symptoms into a new picture on a flat plane is resonant with the structure of clinical perception articulated by Foucault, and the flat modernist surface posited by Greenberg. Deleuze addresses the clinical-aesthetic modalities of painterly facture and the flat modernist picture surface in two important later works. The first, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1981) is an extended reflection on the paintings of Francis Bacon; it is also a more formalized aesthetics of painting. The second, a collaboration with Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (1992), is a reflection, in Kantian fashion, on the constitutive principles that distinguish philosophy, science, and art, but with the polemical purpose of exploring the "zones of indiscernibility"[233] that stretch between them, and to demonstrate the ways in which aesthetics ties them together.

In *The Logic of Sensation,* Deleuze grapples with the *corporealization* of representation and with the sensate specificities of modernist material facture, in a manner that at times seems to push beyond the more circumspect clinical

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[232] Deleuze, *Essays: Critical and Clinical*, xvii.
[233] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 19.

disinterestedness of both Foucault and Greenberg, toward the performative. There is, *pace* Greenberg, a concerted effort to unlink painting from the traditional "*figurative, illustrative,* and *narrative*"[234] (in Greenbergian parlance, *naturalist*) uses of artistic representation and an insistence on the empirical. However, Deleuze contends that modernist "allover" abstract art is but one articulation of clinicalized aesthetics. He posits the persistence in Bacon's work of the "figure," which must not be confused with the "figurative." Deleuze contends:

> Painting has neither a model to represent nor a story to narrate. It thus has two possible ways of escaping the figurative: toward pure form, through abstraction; or toward the purely *figural*, through extraction or isolation. If the painter keeps to the figure, if he or she opts for the second path, it will be to oppose the 'figural' to the 'figurative.'[235]

According to Deleuze the "figural"[236] is captured at the physiological nexus of sensation and gesture for which the picture surface functions as conduit; the figural is expressed most clearly in the swept, spattered, drawn, blurred masses of animal-human forms which merge with the bright colour fields of Bacon's most developed works. Again, the flat painterly surface is crucial to all of this, and has "a structuring and spatializing function."[237] Deleuze describes the coterminous function these fields hold with Bacon's figures when he writes that "(they) are not beneath, behind, or beyond the Figure, but are strictly to the side of it, or rather, all around it, and are thus grasped in a close view, a tactile or 'haptic' view."[238] He further asserts that "when one moves from the Figure to the fields of color, there is no relation of depth or distance, no incertitude of

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[234] Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 6.
[235] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 6.
[236] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, xiii.
[237] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, xiii.
[238] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, xiii.

light and shadow." Figure and field represent "the correlation of two sectors on a single plane, equally close."[239]

Deleuze describes Bacon's efforts as a figural *ordeal*, one in which moments of violence and extreme physical anguish (anathema to classical art, and so troubling to Lessing) – "the violence of a hiccup, of a need to vomit, but also of a hysterical, involuntary smile," are quite literally *rendered* from the painting field. And Deleuze's text strives in a similar fashion to conflate corporeal and painterly referents, making unclear, quite purposefully, where bodies end and the surfaces of paintings begin:

> Bacon's bodies, heads, Figures are of flesh, and what fascinates him are the invisible forces that model flesh or shake it. This is not the relationship of form and matter, but of materials and forces; to make these forces visible through their effects on the flesh. There is before anything else, a force of inertia that is of flesh itself: with Bacon, flesh, however firm descends from bones; it falls or tends to fall away from them (hence those flattened sleepers who keep one arm raised or thighs lifted from the flesh seems to cascade). What fascinates Bacon is not the moment, but its effect on an immobile body: heads whipped by wind, deformed by aspiration – but also all the interior forces that climb through the flesh. To make spasm visible. The entire body becomes plexus. If there is feeling in Bacon, it is not a taste for horror; it is pity, an intense pity: pity for flesh, including the flesh of dead animals.[240]

We are a long way from Kenneth Clark's *study in ideal forms,* or Lessing's *Laocoön*, but also from the Greenbergian plane which, regardless of the swarms of indexical gestures that call it forth, is by comparison profoundly serene. Indeed, in stretches such as these the "figure" seems to wrest itself from its support and clinical perception opens onto the arena of clinical performance – a topic to be taken up in the fourth chapter.

Deleuze does not consider the clinical accoutrements, such as examination tables, hospital bathroom fixtures, laboratory vitrines, and the like, which function as scaffolds or supports for the figures populating Bacon's paintings (figure 2.5). What he does pay

[239] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, xiii.
[240] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, xxix.

attention to are the references to Foucault's avatar of medical perception. Deleuze cites Bichat's clinical tissues, and discerns in Bacon's figurative agglomeration of brushwork scattered with "involuntary free marks" indexes of animality, meat, feces, vomit, blood, and even spirit. But spirit must not be understood in its traditional metaphysical sense. In the logic of bio-clinical sensation, it is tied to "bodily form, a corporeal and vital breath, an animal spirit...the animal spirit of man: a pig-spirit, a buffalo-spirit, a dog spirit, a bat-spirit."[241] Bacon accomplishes this blurring of animal and human spirits not through a LaBrunian transposition, or in contemporary parlance "morphing," of likenesses, of animal features over human ones, or vice versa, but through the actual material effacement through the modified *colourfield*, in the most extreme sense, techniques of flinging, scrubbing and/or sweeping away any signifying features.[242]

Deleuze's final collaboration with Guattari *What is Philosophy?* (1994) published posthumously, can be placed firmly within the Kantian archeology. In the opening pages, the authors write of the "sovereign freedom" of Titian, Turner and Monet, and more significantly of the *Critique of Judgment,* which they contend "is an unrestrained work of old age, which (Kant's) successors have still not caught up with: all the mind's faculties overcome their limits, the very limits that Kant had so carefully laid down in the work of his prime."[243] Indeed, the authors recapitulate the Kantian cycle of development, propounding on the differences between philosophical, scientific, and artistic experience, but emphasizing the shared constitutive role of the aesthetic in each, all the while addressing (more precisely – redressing) the complex and even dangerous status that the

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[241] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 19.
[242] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 19.
[243] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 2.

concept of life (or *zoë*) assumes. Against the clinical cruelty of Bacon's work and the *Logic of Sense*, this last collaboration is imbued with the warmth and light of Vuillard, (figure 2.6) and late Bonnard, whose works they elaborate so effectively and pleasurably upon. The authors take great liberties, and the names of philosophers, poets and artists, as well as philosophical concepts and artistic affects, are deployed freely and interchangeably throughout the text, following, in more free-wheeling fashion, the Kantian *drift* from the first to third critiques, from philosophy to aesthetics.

The text is separated into three sections that approach the domains of knowledge – philosophy, science, art – separately. Deleuze and Guattari style their conception of the Kantian a-prioritization of space, positing a philosophical "plane of immanence"[244] which resembles both the clinicalized operating table and the modernist picture plane (the visual art of Henri Michaux is often cited). Philosophical speculation transpires over a conceptual tableau that resembles modernist collage or assemblage:

> Philosophical concepts are fragmentary wholes that are not aligned with one another so that they fit together, because their edges do not match up. They are not pieces of a jigsaw puzzle but rather the outcome of throws of the dice. They resonate nonetheless, and the philosophy that creates them always introduces a powerful Whole that, while remaining open, is not fragmented … it is a table, a plateau, or a slice; it is a plane of consistency or, more accurately, the plane of immanence of concepts, the planomenon.[245]

This "planomenon" re-surfaces in artistic experience, and, like the operating table and picture plane of Foucault's and Greenberg's surface gaze, it comprises a flat material plane that is coterminous with aesthetic "sensations themselves …to the point of being part of them or indiscernible from them."[246] For Deleuze and Guattari aesthetic perceptions and affections form a conglomeration with this plane, and bio-manifest (if

[244] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 35.
[245] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 35.
[246] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 166.

you will) as autonomous “blocs of sensation.”[247] Still, they articulate something like a theory of medium specificity, and attach specific blocs of sensation to specific methods and materials:

> As percepts, sensations are not perceptions referring to an object (reference): if they resemble something it is with a resemblance produced with their own methods; and the smile on the canvas is made solely with colors, lines, shadow, and light…The material is so varied in each case (canvas support, paintbrush or equivalent agent, color in the tube) and it is difficult to say where in fact the material ends and sensation begins; preparation of the canvas, the track of the brush’s hair, and many other things besides are obviously part of the sensation…(and) however short the time it lasts, this time is considered as a duration….By means of the material, the aim of art is to wrest the percept from perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject, to wrest the affect from affections as the transition from one state to another: to extract a bloc of sensations, a pure being of sensations.[248]

While Deleuze and Guattari describe their aesthetics and these blocs of sensation as “vitalistic” and invoke many of vitalism’s biologically inflected terminologies. Indeed these blocs are made up of the forces that precede or set into play the interactions that make biological life possible. Hence, color, line, plane, texture, refrain, sonority, are the “imperceptible forces” that art “makes perceptible” and that “populate the world, affect us, and make us become.”[249] There is an emphatic, polemic aspect to this aesthetics, and *What is Philosophy?* breaks into stretches resembling modernist manifesto; the Futurist and Vorticist manifestos of Marinetti and Lewis come to mind, and the text shares with these (and La Mettrie’s) discourses an aesthetic zeal for machines, for mechanistic assemblages, and for the uncanny impersonal expressionism of the gothic.

Perhaps the most zealous and inventive aspect of Deleuze and Guattari’s aesthetics is their effort to dismantle Agamben’s “anthropological machine,”[250] the man-building

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[247] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 166.
[248] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 166, 167.
[249] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 182.
[250] Agamben, *The Open,* 33.

discursive device which posits the concept of the "animal" and "animality" as an easily debased and abused supplement to the "human" and "humanity," and this is where their species of aesthetic vitalism departs quite drastically from the anthropocentric vitalism of Schelling: "Perhaps art begins with the animal," they write, "at least with the animal that carves out a territory and constructs a house." Deleuze and Guattari cite a particular case:

> Every morning the *Scenopoetes dentirostrist*, a bird of the Australian rainforests, cuts leaves, makes them fall to the ground, and turns them over so that the paler, internal side contrasts with the earth. In this way it constructs a stage for itself like a ready-made; and directly above, on a creeper or a branch, while fluffing out the feathers beneath its beak to reveal their yellow roots, it sings a complex song made up from its own notes, and, at intervals, those of other birds that it imitates: it is a complete artist.[251]

In effect, we have with Deleuze's writings, and with his collaborations with Guattari, a clinicalized aesthetics, and a modality of artistic perception that begins with a flat field of visuality; this surface plane, like the Kantian manifold assumes any number of forms including the *planomenon* of diagnostics, the philosophical "plane of immanence," and the empty *l'aplat* of a painted field in a scene by Vuillard. However, for Deleuze and Guattari this surface, and the artistic experience of percepts and affects it channels and supports is not limited to the so-called human; indeed, the philosopher and his collaborator seem to have vitalistically instrumentalized Kant's notion of "purposiveness," and rather than treat it as a regulative idea proper to the domain of the aesthetic human subject, they have extended into the domain of the non-human, the "animal," even the mineral; they have even suggested, in the case of *Scenopoetes dentirostrist* or Australian Stagemaker Bowerbird, that artistic subjectivity, indeed artistic genius, is not limited to any single species.

Conclusion

[251] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 183, 184.

In this chapter I have attempted to locate a modality of clinical-aesthetic perception, one that first affixes to or is constituted by the flat field of the modern clinic. Michel Foucault's archaeology of medical perception located the first instantiations of this modality of perception in the early nineteenth-century post-revolutionary clinics of physiologist Marie Francois Xavier Bichat whose anatomical-clinical method instrumentalized visual perception over the old text-based nosological diagnostics, and recombined human anatomy along the histological protocols of a flat surface coterminous with the examination or dissection table. The critical writings of Clement Greenberg, significant examples contemporaneous with Foucault's, offer an analogous surface gaze, one in which visual clinical probity empirically absorbs and foregrounds the flat material support as the singular and integral subject matter of painting. Late twentieth-century texts by Gilles Deleuze, and Deleuze and Felix Guattari, were examined for the ways in which the flat plane of clinical-aesthetic perception re-figures as Baconian *figure*, the diagnostic *planomenon,* and the sometimes dazzling, sometimes matte grey *l'aplat* of post-impressionist painting. All of these manifestations of clinical aesthetic perception I have attempted to place within a Kantian framework, in the context of the a-prioritization of space, touching upon Kant's critical and aesthetic instruments of reflexivity, disinterestedness, and purposiveness, which in the previous chapter I grounded in the clinical advancements of earlier eighteenth-century life science.

The chapter that follows takes up with the impact of the clinical gaze as it bears down on artists themselves, the first inclinations of which were detected in my first chapter readings of La Mettrie. Once again, however, Kant provides a general framework for the

clinicalization of artistic subjectivity, and the unique figure of the artistic genius elaborated upon in the third critique will provide a crucial point of departure.

Chapter Three
The Clinicalization of Artistic Subjectivity: The Artist as Case History

If only there were moral doctors, who, like the physical ones, would concentrate more on individuals, and would publish reports on their methods of healing for the general good! (Karl Philipp Moritz)

… Anguish which medicine does not know. Anguish which your doctor does not understand … (Antonin Artaud)

The pedagogues are doctors who need to reproduce indefinitely the disabilities with the purpose to heal … the importance of the disabled is to get healed. (Jacques Ranciere)

The work, which once had the duty of providing immortality, now possesses the right to kill, to be its author's murderer …" (Michel Foucault)

In previous chapters, I examined the effects of an encroaching bio-clinical mentality on aesthetic theory and perception. In this chapter, I explore the impact of this clinicality on artistic subjectivity, and of a new clinical category of artistic *embodiment*, that of the artist case history. My *exemplary case* is the 1923-24 epistolatory exchange between a young Antonin Artaud, perhaps the first interdisciplinary *performance* artist of the twentieth century, and Jacques Rivière, editor of the prestigious *La Nouvelle Revue Française.* More than any other modern literary exchange – one thinks of Kafka's heartbreaking and unanswered *Letter to His Father,* or, years later, the correspondence between the psychiatrically incarcerated Ezra Pound and poet, Charles Olson – the letters between Artaud and Rivière provides a remarkable example of the mutualism, the "enigmatic conjunction"[252] that Jacques Derrida describes in his commentary on Artaud, and that works itself out between the domains of clinical and artistic, literary and critical production during the modern period.

[252] Jacques Derrida, "La parole Soufflee", *Writing and Difference,* trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 169.

It will be my purpose to demonstrate, through a reading of Artaud's exchange of letters with Jacques Rivière, how Artaud comes to embody a clinicalized artistic subjectivity as *case history*, with Riviére taking the role of the doctor, and how he radicalizes this form of clinical-critical confinement into a new position of artistic agency. Hence, a review of the theoretical groundwork for my concept of case history is in order.

The term 'case history' originates in mid-eighteenth-century medicine and psychiatry and denotes a biographical-medical description of a patient by a clinician or medical expert for the purposes of diagnosing and treating illness. The case history may also take the form of 'anamnesis' in which the patient offers his own account of medical events. Either form of the 'case' may be cited in medical research as exemplification of a particular diagnosis, and in critical commentary as representative of a certain artistic or literary outlook, movement or period.[253]

Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida are the first to comment on the development of artistic or literary 'exemplarity' or 'case' in parallel with the growing influence of medical and psychiatric discourses. Both Foucault and Derrida examined the convergence of clinical, critical and artistic discursive forms – each references the case of Artaud – and located a tendency in modern critical discourses to claim authority over the works and lives of artists through the language of clinical discourse. Each has noted a tendency to establish a conjunction "between madness and the work,"[254] or to explain vanguard works of art in terms of psychic pathology or mental illness. As we shall see,

[253] For an account of the emergence and historical progress of the modern textual "case history" see: Carol Berkenkotter, *Patient Tales: Case Histories and the Uses of Narrative in Psychiatry* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008).
[254] Derrida, 160.

the critical and biographical commentaries on the work and life of Artaud follow this pattern.

Foucault probed the genealogy of psychiatry through the anthropological sciences of the nineteenth century, specifically criminal anthropology, jurisprudence, physiognomy and anthropometry.[255] Although his earliest foray into the human sciences was as a clinician under the supervision of the existentialist psychoanalyst Ludwig Binswanger, Foucault grew to be highly critical of psychoanalysis. In a review of Jean Laplanche's psychoanalytic commentary on the poet Friedrich Hölderlin, he examined the discursive maneuvers psychoanalytic thought makes as it conflates or reduces poetic and artistic endeavours to psychological formations. Foucault contends, reflecting his Structuralist methodology of the time (1966), that "poetic forms and psychological structures"[256] assume a paradoxical *structuring* relationship to each other in the modern age. The clinical and the poetic define two ends of a discursive field within which the anthropological figure of the 'mad poet' is shaped according to a psycho-pathological profile. Foucault contends the lives and works of artists and poets, from Hölderlin to Nerval and Artaud, have furnished examples of poetry's alleged links to psychology. Psychoanalysis uses poetic and artistic cases to establish its autonomy *and* authority within the cultural domain, and invokes these cases to support its theories and practices. On the other side, literary and cultural criticism's adoption of clinical discourse and authority serves to elevate cultural commentary to the more powerful level of 'truth

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[255] See: Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France, 1974-1975*, eds. Valerio Marchetti and Antonella Salomoni, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2004).
[256] Michel Foucault, "Le 'non' du pere", *Critique* (1962): 207-208.

discourse', that is to say, discourse "with a scientific status or discourses expressed exclusively by qualified people within scientific (or cultural) institutions."[257]

Derrida discerns a discursive 'violence' in the relationship between clinical and critical thought, going further than Foucault to implicate not only psychoanalytic thought in this violence but also the critical discourses of philosophers and literary commentators. In his essay on Artaud, *La parole soufflé,* Derrida contends, in a manner that elucidates and critiques Foucault's position, "that if clinical commentary and critical commentary everywhere demand their own autonomy and wish to be acknowledged and respected by one another [as Foucault proposes], they are no less complicit – by virtue of a unity which refers, through as yet un-conceived mediations … to the same abstraction, the same misinterpretation, and the same violence."[258] While Derrida concurs with Foucault that critical and clinical discourses emerge from a 'shared horizon', he insists that when critical discourse attempts to rescue artistic or literary production *from* the clinical (as Foucault's does) it facilitates the same violence of *exemplification*. Thus, Foucault commits the same discursive violence he critiques in Laplanche.

> At the moment when criticism (be it aesthetic, literary, philosophical, etc.) allegedly protects the meaning of a thought or the value of a work against psychomedical reductions, it comes to the same result … *it creates an example.* That is to say, *a case.* A work or an adventure of thought … is made to bear witness, as example or martyr to a structure whose essential permanence (as a transcendental structure) becomes the prime preoccupation of the commentary.[259]

The case of Antonin Artaud would seem to demonstrate Derrida's critical observations. More than any other modern example, Artaud's case has been called upon to support an infinite array of critical and clinical claims. His exchange with Rivière has provided a

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[257] Foucault, *Abnormal,* 6.
[258] Derrida. 170.
[259] Derrida, 170.

primary text from which many of these claims are built, and this might seem entirely appropriate, given Artaud presents himself to the *littérateur* as, in his own words, a "sick person" and a "mental case".[260] Rivière is prompted by the exchange, and by Artaud's forthrightness, to assume a complementary role, pronouncing "like a doctor" his various "cures."[261]

Before examining the relevance of this exchange to my postulate of the clinicalization of artistic subjectivity, it is necessary to draw a broader historical and genealogical profile of the artist as case history. Hence, the chapter is divided into two parts. The first traces an historical trajectory from early formulations of the artist as case history in Enlightenment philosophy, to its later formalization in early Modern criminology, anthropology and psychotherapy. The philosophy and aesthetics of Immanuel Kant is of central importance, for it is Kant who differentiates the artist from the rest of humanity. Kant's definition of 'artistic genius' in the *Critique of Judgment* situates the artist in an exemplary position between nature and culture, a special agent of nature's rules. As special as this figure is, Kant registered misgivings; certain aspects of genius are undecidable, particularly the manner by which genius elicits and is to be discerned from its *imitators.* The examination of Kant's genius will be followed by an analysis of key nineteenth-century discourses on degeneracy in which artistic and literary talent is conflated with moral and mental pathology. This will entail a genealogy of texts, specifically those by criminal anthropologists Cesar Lombroso and Max Nordau, and the psychoanalist Sigmund Freud, texts wherein artists and their works are treated as objects of a clinical-cultural forensics.

[260] Artaud, *Selected Writings,* 34.
[261] Artaud, 38, 39.

The second part of the chapter will turn attention to the case of Artaud. I will first examine the biographical and critical material the case has generated, with the purpose of demonstrating a clinical bias. I follow with a reading of Artaud's exchange with Rivière. My purpose will be to show how Artaud shapes a new modality of artistic agency in these letters, simultaneously embracing the confines of clinical pathologization as case history and subverting clinical power through creative *non-compliance.*

Part One: Genius and Degeneracy

In the following pages, I trace a discursive arc of the *clinicalization* of artistic subjectivity from Morel, to Lombroso and Nordau, and finally Freud. Through the historical progress of this clinicalization, artistic subjectivity becomes the object of an intense cultural forensics, and artistic experience assumes the clinical status of a pathological process. I will establish the origins of this medicalized artistic subjectivity in the figure of the artist-genius articulated by Kant in *Critique of Judgment*. Kant identifies individuals with exceptional artistic talent as genius, but, as my reading suggests, this status is ambiguous and undecidable. Kant's aesthetics, while it establishes a privileged relationship between artistic genius and nature, nevertheless proscribes this relationship through a regulatory mechanism of reason – that of 'taste'. In the nineteenth century, the concept of degeneracy is developed and given an epistemological status as a link between the disciplines of evolutionary science and heredity, alienism, criminology, social science and aesthetics. A. N. Morel's *Treatise on Degeneracy* (figure 3.1) develops a concept of degeneration as a bio-social schema, tracing the subject's progress from the 'lowest'

biological determinations as an organism to its 'higher' civilized status as a moral and 'proper' aesthetic agent, in Kantian terms. The ensuing medical problematization of artistic genius of Lombroso and Nordau linked the concept of degeneracy to the artistic subject or artistic genius. In Nordau's *Degeneracy*, Charles Baudelaire is characterised as an exemplary figure of the cultural sociopath. In this discursive trajectory, I will show a genealogical development of the artist from the slightly suspicious Kantian misfit to the pathological, *fin de siècle* monstrosity. Psychoanalysis folded the techniques of clinical perception into those of literary hermeneutics, a convergence effectively completed and closed by Freud.[262] In Freud's writing, we find the psychoanalytic syndromes of the ages extrapolated from and explicated by the *Oedipus* tragedy. Art and literature become instruments of cultural diagnostics, and the artistic genius a gifted neurotic whose works have restorative powers.[263]

Kant's *Ingenium*

In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant defines genius as an "innate mental aptitude [*ingenium*] through which nature gives the rule to art",[264] and which operates according to four rules. I cite the passage in which Kant establishes the parameters of his genius at length, as it is here Kant establishes a pattern of themes and conventions for genius on which the clinicalized artist case history is built:

> (1) (Genius) is a *talent* for producing that for which no definite rule can be given: and not an aptitude in the way of cleverness for what can be learned according to some rule; and that consequently *originality* must be its primary property. (2) Since there may also be original nonsense, its products must at the same time be models, i.e. be

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[262] Foucault, *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalfa, trans. Jonathan Murphy (New York: Routledge, 2006), 484.

[263] See: Richard Wollheim, "Neurosis and the Artist", *TLS* (March 1, 1974): 203-204); Wollheim argues the notion of artist as creative neurotic is a misreading of Freud propounded by 'amateur' Freudians such as mid-twentieth–century essayist and critic Edmund Wilson. He contends that while Freud associated certain talents with neurosis, it was not Freud's purpose to cast all creative activity as psychic pathology, but to place creative works within the autobiographical dimension of artists' individual lives.

[264] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

> *exemplary*; and, consequently, though not themselves derived from imitation they must serve that purpose for others, i.e. as a standard or rule of estimating. (3) It cannot indicate scientifically how it brings about its product, but rather gives the rule as *nature.* Hence, where an author owes a product to his genius, he does not himself know how the ideas for it have entered into his head, nor has he it in his power to invent the like at pleasure, or methodically, and communicate the same to others in such products. (Hence, presumably, our word *genie* is derived from *genius*, as the peculiar guardian and guiding spirit given to man at his birth, by the inspiration of which those original ideas were obtained.) (4) Nature prescribes the rule through genius not to science but to art and this only in so far as it is fine art.[265]

Originality, exemplarity, unconscious artistic facility, and an almost symbiotic relationship with nature, are necessary attributes of artistic genius. Kant also suggests that artistic genius issues directly from nature at birth. I contend, however, that by placing the genius in such close proximity to nature, and by setting him about his artistic activities in a manner that would suggest very little in the way of prior understanding, Kant bestows this character with a slippery, outlaw, even aberrant quality. As philosopher Avital Ronell has written, Kant's genius "is a troubled and troubling figure" who "bears the mark of monstrosity" and "uneasily straddles between the sheer simplicity and the excess (of) an unaccountable natural force".[266] According to Ronell. Kant's genius is a special case of "stupidity" and "while regularly sponsored and celebrated, is often depicted…as suspect, puerile, hopelessly out of it".[267]

The specter of monstrosity hovers around Kant's genius. The philosopher asserts his lofty status "must be regarded as but a rare phenomenon,"[268] yet simultaneously warns of the dangers posed to those who think of imitating him. While the genius's "natural endowment for art must furnish the rule," the rule is elusive and unknowable, for the artist is nature's *savant*. He has no concept, no methodological way of nailing down or

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[265] Kant, *Critique*, 168.
[266] Avital Ronell, *Stupidity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 287.
[267] Ronell, *Stupidity*, 287.
[268] Kant, *Critique*, 168.

formalizing his rule, for if the rule is logically defined and consciously applied, the genius ceases to be ruled by nature and therefore is not a genius. That defining rule, Kant instructs, can only be "gathered from the performance, i.e. from the product, which others may use to put their own talent to the test, so as to let it serve as a model, not for *imitation,* but for *following.*"[269] Genius is; it cannot be learned or taught.[270]

Kant's distinction between artist and imitator, registered at an epistemic and characterological level, echoes the troublesome relationship between authenticity and representation, between nature and culture, that has haunted Western philosophy since the ancients. In the *Republic*, Plato elaborates a cautionary theory of mimesis that places artists and poets in the low rank of making imitations that have only a distant or distorted relationship to truth.[271] Kant extends this Platonic skepticism to suggest something approaching a cultural *epidemiology*. While Kant's genius is directed by nature, whose excess always poses a threat, an equal, perhaps more significant threat is posed by the misaligned excess of *culture* incited by the genius, who acts as a force of nature within culture, and who might initiate a flood of copies produced by slavish, 'aping', imitators:

> (Imitation) becomes aping when the pupil copies everything down to the deformities which the genius only of necessity suffered to remain, because they could hardly be removed without loss of force to the idea … many a deviation from the common rule becomes him well, but in *no sense is it a thing worthy of imitation*. On the contrary it remains all through intrinsically a blemish, which one is bound to try to remove, but for which the genius is, as it were, allowed to plead a privilege, on the ground that a scrupulous carefulness would spoil what is inimitable in the impetuous ardor of his soul.[272]

While geniuses are the disseminators of nature's rules, force and ideas, they are, at the same time, potentially, the purveyors of its monstrosities and deformaties. These become

[269] Kant, *Critique*, 168.
[270] Kant, *Critique*, 168.
[271] See: Plato, *Republic, Book X,* trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992) 264-290.
[272] Kant, *Critique*, 181.

dangerous when imitators copy only the appearance and not the unknowable substance of natural genius. In the hands of imitators and copyists these 'blemishes' and 'deformities' threaten to go *viral.* We might say the genius is a healthy carrier of culturally virulent or pathogenic material.

The genius artist poses another threat that makes his status more ambiguous in Kant's aesthetic economy, and that arises in the form of imitation Kant identifies as 'mannerism'. I cite the following passage at length, for the ideas Kant raises here have had remarkable tenacity, continued and amplified by generations of subsequent philosophical, anthropological and psychiatric treatments of artistic subjectivity. Kant wrote:

> Mannerism is another kind of aping – an aping of peculiarity [originality] in general, for the sake of removing oneself as far as possible from imitators, while the talent requisite to enable one to be at the same time *exemplary* is absent. There are in fact, two modes in general of arranging one's thoughts for utterance. The one is called a *manner* (modus aestheticus), the other a *method* (modus logicus). The distinction between them is this: the former possesses no standard other than the *feeling* of unity in the presentation, whereas the latter here follows definite principles. As a consequence the former is alone admissible for fine art. It is only, however, where the manner of carrying the idea into execution in a product of art is aimed at singularity instead of being made appropriate to the idea, that mannerism is properly ascribed. The ostentatious [it is interesting to note that Kant deploys the French *precieux*], forced, affected styles, intended to mark one out from the common herd (though soul is wanting), resemble the behavior of a man who, as we say, hears himself talk, or who stands and moves about as if he were on a stage to be gaped at – action which invariably betrays a tyro.[273]

The residue of this fear of purposeful or forced artistic production, and therefore the perception of its threat, emerges in Artaud and Rivière's letters, for instance, in Rivière's suspicion that Artaud is overstating or *affecting* his position as a troubled young poet in order to gain attention.

[273] Kant, *Critique*, 182

In this rich and crucial passage, Kant posits the double-bound concept of manner and method as a way of differentiating between an aesthetic and naturally driven action, and a logical, purposeful and therefore false action. This passage is important for the way this differentiation indicates the suspicion Kant, in general, reserves for the genius and particularly for identifying the danger posed by his influence beyond the prescribed domain of the fine arts. Feeling and peculiarity are proper when they are the means of creativity of the fine arts, but when pursued as ends in themselves, for the purposes of appearing exceptional, or in contemporary parlance, for 'self-styling', they are ostentations and mannered. In effect, they become symptoms of a moral and characterological flaw, indicated by the awkward self-awareness of Kant's 'tyro', whose aping behaviors resemble those of the fool.

With his definition of mannerism, I contend Kant subtly but purposefully blurs the distinction between the genius and his imitators, gathering them into an unruly cohort. He does this to set into play an anxiety about the 'undecidable' identity of the genius, which in turn serves to preserve, despite the privilege Kant accorded the relationship between art and nature, the moral stability and superior status of philosophy and science. This will be further expressed in the program Kant's sets down to *discipline* geniuses and their coterie. Artists and tyros share an ardour that makes them susceptible to "lawless freedom."[274] The problem for both is imagination, which, "in spite of all its wealth, produces nothing but nonsense". Kant proposes a mode of *disinterested* taste, functioning through the faculty of judgment, to bring imagination into line with understanding.

> Taste, like judgment in general, is the discipline or corrective of genius … It introduces clearness and order into the plenitude of thought, and in so doing gives

[274] Kant, *Critique*, 182.

> stability to the ideas, and qualifies them at once for permanent and universal approval, for being followed by others, and for a continually progressive culture.[275]

Through taste, the aesthetic arm of reason, the prerogatives of judgment supersede artistic agency. Works of art, Kant concludes, are not simply the products of excessive talent but "the combination of taste *and* genius",[276] and thus worthy to hold their place in the moral economy of culture. The genius, while nature's special agent, must be subject to reason if he is not to be mistaken for an amateur, imitator, faggot, or fool.

In a move to proscribe the exemplary status of the artist, Kant distinguishes between the artistic genius and the 'great scientist'. Kant is clear that, unlike scientists who are necessary to the continuation of society, and despite their exceptionality, artists are supplements to nature and culture. "The talent for science is formed for the continued advances of greater perfection in knowledge, with all its dependant practical advantages, as also for imparting the same to others".[277] Hence, Kant concludes, "scientists can boast a ground of considerable superiority over those who merit the honor of being called geniuses, since genius reaches a point at which art must make a halt, as there is a limit imposed upon it which cannot transcend".[278]

The genius is a minor figure in Kant's aesthetic system, a figure whose entire purpose is to deduce the presence of a faculty of judgment underlying all forms of corporeal and somatic experience. While Kant's aesthetics has been fundamental to modernism, and aspects of his theory of genius have inspired several generations of philosophers and artists, my reading has emphasized its directive and normalizing aspects. Kant's genius stands at an unsurpassable limit at which art halts, a subjective analogue of the sublime.

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[275] Kant, *Critique*, 183
[276] Kant, *Critique*, 182
[277] Kant, *Critique*, 170.
[278] Kant, *Critique*, 170.

As Terry Eagleton has written, the *Critique of Judgment* is a paradoxical text. On one hand, it theorizes a sphere of corporeal and cognitive freedom, a "generous community of ends, finding in the freedom and autonomy of the aesthetic a prototype of human possibility … at odds with feudal absolutism and possessive individualism".[279] On the other hand, Eagleton suggests that in the *Critique*, Kant establishes an aesthetic program based on the individual subject that could "escalate uncontrollably beyond this function [of aesthetic autonomy] to undercut the very foundations of rationality and moral duty".[280] Kant's insertion of rational judgment through the faculty of taste resolves the threat posed by this paradox, but taste exerts control only after the fact, on the products of innate, unfettered aesthetic creativity. In this structure, judgment can only be coercive.

The *Critique of Judgment* is a decidedly normative discourse of an emerging European middle class, at once emancipating and self-regulating. In the nineteenth century, this middle class, linked to an emergent political rationality of 'bio-power', will work hard and effectively, as Foucault has shown, to define, incite, and *regulate* its natural and bio-social resources, including its most talented offspring. While the target populations of bio-power were primarily individuals and populations of the lower classes, the workers of factories, hospitals, military forces, and prisons but including those in universities and academies, I contend that the artistic genius becomes another discursive site where this fascination with defining a normative bio-social limit attains the epistemological status of a regulatory idea in the bio-physiological sciences.[281] In the following section, I focus on these social-science and medical discourses in which the seeds of Kant's suspicions of

[279] Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (London: Blackwell, 1990), 100.
[280] Kant, *Critique*, 103
[281] See: Claude Bernard, *An Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine*, trans. Henry Copley Green (New York: Dover, 1957)

the exceptional creative genius, grow and mutate into a bio-cultural panic about the monstrous.

The Artist as Degenerate

The hinge fastening the natural, biological, messy animal to the orderly and polished subject of reason was the clinical-moral concept of *degeneracy*. This concept, which assumes epistemological consistency by the middle of the nineteenth century, marked a new bio-medical schema of the subject that could be traced from the 'lowest' biological determinations of the organism, to its 'higher' determinations as a moral agent. As we shall see, in the second half of the nineteenth century, theories of degeneracy had also come to encompass artistic subjectivity and practice. In the following pages, I offer an overview of those discourses that facilitated this bio-discursive fusion.

Again, it is a text by Immanuel Kant that connects the classically conceived medical treatments of the self, with the modern, bio-political and bio-social branches of anthropological human science. His *Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798), written in a popular style and published eight years after the *Critique of Judgment,* follows traditional philosophical texts of self-care and ethics traceable back to the pre-Socratics. Where Kant differs from his predecessors, is in the attention he pays to the role of geography, meteorology, the environment, natural 'aptitudes', and interpersonal factors on the development and constitution of human subjects. The text ruminates on the effects on the physical and cognitive activity of individuals of various factors, including relations between the sexes, physiognomy – crucial to criminologists and profilers of the nineteenth century – diet, digestive problems, hypochondria, dreams, the role of climate, geography, and even the nervous system, a relatively new branch of

science that was supplanting theories of humours. The breadth of these concerns indicate the emergence of a bio-social or bio-cultural epistemology.[282]

As Foucault pointed out in his commentary on this text, Kant's *Anthropology* must be placed within an archaeology of 'moral medicine' that links health to character, and disease with the improper exercise of individual freedom. According to Foucault, this genre of medical writing evinces a "huge anthropological drive to adapt the observation of illnesses to a metaphysics of evil, and to discover by which shared gravitational pull the collapse into pathological mechanism overlaps with freedom's fall into sin."[283] It might seem that as belief in science supplanted religious belief, the determination of a new vocabulary for the old discourses of individual sin fell on the shoulders of medicine. Hence we have with these emerging medical discourses an underlying moral discourse.

When Kant was writing his *Anthropology*, a formalized bio-medical discourse linking artistic talent and psychopathology, together with its clinical experts, was taking shape. This branch of social psychiatry focused on artists, poets, philosophers and scientists, and concluded that the occupational stresses of these individuals made them susceptible to psychiatric disorders. Philippe Pinel, in *Treatise on Insanity* (1798), published the same year as Kant's *Anthropology*, writes: "certain professions conduce more than others to insanity, which are chiefly those in which the imagination is increasingly or ardently engaged". Those most susceptible to vocation-related derangement were "priests and monks, as well as country people, terrified into the condition by the anticipation of hell

[282] Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View,* ed. Robert B. Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 186.
[283] Michel Foucault, *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology*, trans. Robert Nigro and Kate Briggs (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 45.

torments, (and) many artists, painters, sculptors, and musicians",[284] Pinel, who shared Kant's moral panic over the unrestrained imagination, deduced a link between work and mental disorder from the registers of the asylum at Bicêtre where he worked.

By the mid- nineteenth century, the belief in a work-related susceptibility to insanity was subsumed by a constitutionalist or congenital model of 'mental deformity'.[285] The descriptive classifications of artist-madmen was further elaborated as the causal logic of developments in organic pathology was applied to mental disorders. Artists, together with criminals, prostitutes, racial minorities, and other potential nuisances to middle-class order, become part of the new pathological cohort of the *deviant*.[286]

Bénédict-Augustin Morel's *Treatise on Degeneracy* (1857) is the first text to formally posit a concept of degeneration as an all-encompassing theoretical category. Morel did not single out artists as special cases, but offered a general theory of *dégénérescence*. Crime, developmental disability, cretinism and other social and physical conditions were conceived by Morel as "phenotypic reversions" to primitive sub-human states, and his treatise linked these regressions to a range of factors from alcoholism to geology.[287] Such concerns with degeneracy intersect with, as Canguilhem, Gilman, Foucault, and others have shown, a concurrent interest in the mentality of children[288] and fascination with 'primitive' or non-European societies, which had been gathering momentum since the mid-eighteenth century. Morel linked childhood masturbation, an 'inherited disease of

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[284]Phillipe Pinel, *Treatise on Insanity: Principles of a New and More Practical Nosology of Maniacal Disorders,* trans. D.D. Davis (Sheffield: W. Todd, 1806), 113-114.
[285] Cesar Lombroso, *The Man of Genius,* ed. Havelock Ellis (London and New York: Walter Scott and Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), v.
[286] Michel Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Berkley: University of California, 1987), 10.
[287] Thomas E. Jordon, *The Degeneracy Crisis and Victorian Youth* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 19.
[288] Georges Canguilhem, *A Vital Rationalist: Selected Writings of Georges Canguilhem*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 359.

cretins', to moral pathology, and thus identified it as an indicator of the 'primitive' sub-human origins of his culture. Morel characterized childhood as a wilder stage of human development, and thus determined certain behaviors had to be tamed by the pedagogical instruments of a proper, middle-class, up-bringing.[289]

Cesare Lombroso's *The Man of Genius* (1889) is the first comprehensive source book of artist-disorders of the nineteenth century. In it, Lombroso applies Morel's concept of degeneracy to an analysis of the exceptional creative talent, which he classifies as a beneficial aptitude resulting from underlying 'birth defects'. Lombroso is regarded as a leading figure of nineteenth-century criminology. His popularity, no doubt, had to do, in part, with the effectiveness of his writing, which, like the earlier anthropologies, discussed a variety of topics in a witty and engaging manner. While his text casts a profound bio-social suspicion over the biological and moral constitution of artists and writers, it is likely he was motivated, as was Freud, by literary ambitions. His literary finesse, coupled with a brute, empirical 'will to truth', is evident in the opening paragraphs of *The Man of Genius*:

> It is a sad mission to cut through and destroy with the scissors of analysis the delicate and iridescent veils with which our proud mediocrity clothes itself. Very terrible is the religion of truth. The physiologist is not afraid to reduce love to a play of stamens and pistils, and thought to a molecular movement. Even genius, the one human power before which we may bow the knee without shame, has been classed … as on the confines of criminality; one of the teratologic [birth defect] forms of the human mind, a variety of insanity.[290]

[289]* The concepts of the primitive and the child were sites of contest; for example, many vanguard artists and poets found in the concept of the child a valuable alternative subjectivity, one Hugo linked to genius, and Baudelaire to the non-utilitarian, counter-bourgeois aesthetics of dreaming. In Rousseau's writings the idea of the primitive points to a state of natural or "authentic" humanity.

[290] Lombroso, 2.

Lombroso continues, that this "impious profanation is not…altogether the work of doctors, nor is it the fruit of modern skepticism"[291] but is rooted in ancient philosophy. He cites the writings of Plato, Aristotle and Democritus, which link the works of versifiers and rhapsodists to mania, melancholia, 'congestion of the head', and similar experiences of illness. Yet, the bilious, sanguine, or choleric passions of the philosophers seem quaint in comparison with the congenital pathologies afflicting artists and other creative types identified by Lombroso.

Lombroso was instrumental in formalizing the field of nineteenth-century criminal physiognomy. For Lombroso the "paradox that confounds genius with neurosis" is grounded in empirically observable physical deformities, particularly those of the brain and skull. In *Man of Genius*, craniological morphologies support his thesis that "lesions of the head and brain are frequent among men of genius."[292] It is ironic that Kant's skull (figure 3.2) was among those he used to support this claim. Kant, Lombroso observed, "presented an abnormal development of the left parietal bone", a feature shared by the skulls of Dante and the surgeon, Bichat.[293]

Much of Lombroso's treatise is devoted to identifying the physical and psychic characteristics of artistic 'mattoids', a nineteenth-century term for a mad or eccentric person. Three subsequent sections examine the causes of deviance, including disquisitions on the effects of meteorology, race, disease and civilization; the art of the insane; and the etiology of degenerative psychosis in exceptional talents. The short chapter in this final section, "Sane Men of Genius" examines "unperceived defects" of Michelangelo and Darwin, thus casting moral suspicion on those few geniuses who seem

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[291] Lombroso, 2.
[292] Lombroso, 208.
[293] Lombroso, 208.

"to have completed their intellectual orbit without aberration, neither depressed by misfortune nor thrown out of their course by madness."[294] The attention Lombroso paid to what is now referred to as 'outsider' art, is crucial to the clinicalization of artistic subjectivity. He was perhaps the first clinician *or* critic to examine the artistic and literary works of mental patients, observing that "individuals who previously had not the remotest idea of art are impelled by disease to paint".[295] He also noted the greatest number of artistically-inclined "psychopaths" tended toward painting, followed by poetry and then architecture.[296]. Lombroso elaborates a compelling theory of artistic facture and mental illness, and contends that picture writing or *scriptophilia*, including ideographs, written script and language fragments in drawings are common attributes of 'psychiatric art'. Works that blur the boundaries between writing and drawing, for instance, or which developed the visual and haptic pleasures of painterly facture, were especially interesting.[297] Following Lombroso, commentators and theorists of anthropology, culture and the fine arts would refer to similar formal approaches to picture making that defy the 'proper' boundaries between writing and drawing, as degenerate regressions or scriptophilic relapses. The mixing of drawing and writing would of course become an important even highly formalized technique used by Surrealists, Dadaists, and Artaud.

Thus, the subjects and sequence of Lombroso's study establish a path of evolutionary and clinical connections from artist to art works to mental illness, and from mental illness

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[294] Lombroso, 353: Lombroso deduces from Michelangelo's compositions that the sculptor and painter never drew "the living female model, though he made use of corpses," and that his "Bacchante is a virago with masculine muscles," and none of his sonnets are "addressed to real women." (The specter of necrophilia and art will also pervade the later writings of Max Nordau, while same sex desire also presides over Freud's psychoanalytic treatments of artists, notably Leonardo). Darwin, on the other hand, was merely a "neuropath" and insomniac.
[295] Lombroso, 182.
[296] Lombroso, 179.

to an ‘atavistic’ past. From this, Lombroso develops a comprehensive theory of the artist as clinical case, one that encompasses a broad anthropological program and establishes a constitutive relation between psychology and physiology through the bio-social theme of degeneracy.

Lombroso’s treatise linking Morel’s theory of degeneracy with artistic genius or talent is not the last word on the topic. At the end of the nineteenth century, Max Nordau’s *Degeneration* (1892) set out to summarize, broaden and deepen the branch of cultural forensics opened by Morel and Lombroso.“ The notion of degeneracy,” Nordau writes in the opening dedication to Lombroso, “first introduced into science by Morel, and developed with so much genius by yourself [Lombroso], has in your hands already shown itself extremely fertile in the most diverse directions”.[298] He cites psychiatry, criminal law, politics, and sociology as the significant threads from which this new science of degeneracy is woven, and credits Lombroso with shedding “a veritable flood of light”[299] on the subject of genius and its biological ties to degeneracy. He then claims for himself the role of discerning the specific ways degeneracy coalesces in art and literature. He shares Lombroso’s assessment of artistic talent’s causal connection to pathology; however, he is more severe in his assessment of art’s value to society. According to Nordau, every artist harbours an inner degenerate and there is no literary or artistic product of the current age that is *not* culturally pathological and dangerous. He writes with polemical verve:

> Degenerates are not always criminals, prostitutes, anarchists, and pronounced lunatics; they are often authors and artists. These, however, manifest the same mental characteristics, and for the most part the same somatic features, as the members of the above-mentioned anthropological family, who satisfy their unhealthy impulses with

[298] Max Nordau, *Degeneration,* trans. from second edition (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1895), vii.
[299] Nordau, vii.

> the knife of the assassin or the bomb of the dynamiter, instead of with pen and pencil.[300]

Nordau's text sets forth a concept of degeneracy as an all-encompassing descriptor of the modern bio-cultural historical milieu. He draws lavishly from discourses on hereditary decrepitude, references novel neurological-scientific notions, and provides demographic and statistical data in the manner of the British empirical social scientists at the time. Despite all this positivism and scientific grounding, the impact of *Degeneracy* is felt in its literary effect, its pathologic-literary evocation, its "dusk of nations" mood.[301] Nordau devotes a third of his work to formulating a definition of the term *fin de siècle*, contending that while the phrase was popular and broadly applied in the fashion, lifestyle and arts at the time, its meaning was vague. For Nordau, the term connotes a larger cultural decline:

> In the civilized world, there obviously prevails a twilight mood which finds expression, amongst other ways, in all sorts of odd aesthetic fashions. All these new tendencies, realist, or naturalism, 'decadentism,' neo-mysticism, are manifestations of a degeneration and hysteria, and identical with the mental stigmata which the observations of clinicists have unquestionably established as belonging to these. But both degeneration and hysteria are the consequences of the excessive organic wear and tear suffered by the nations through the immense demands on their activity and through the rank growth of large towns.[302]

In a similar manner, the more empirically disciplined, and more scientifically sound, social scientists in Britain established causal links between the physical degeneration of the working class and the dire conditions in which they lived and worked, Nordau, who lacked their scientific rigor and was motivated by a fierce, anti-modernist agenda, infers a causal relationship between the degeneracy of artistic modernism and the enervations and chaos of modern urban life.

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[300] Nordau, vii.
[301] Nordau, 2.
[302] Nordau, 56.

Artistic deviancy, or modernism, is the cultural malaise of the modern age. It manifests in artists as 'ego-mania' and originates in the over-stimulated and unregulated regions of biological nature itself:

> Badly-conducting sensory nerves, obtuse perceptive centres in the brain, weakness of will with its resulting incapacity of attention, morbidly irregular and violent vital processes in the cells, are … the organic basis on which (artistic) ego-mania develops.[303]

Degenerate artists are distinguished from common criminals by a lack of vigour; they dream and write while the criminal "has the resolution and strength to act".[304] Nordau's perverted ego-maniac artists, writers and philosophers are only "malefactors in the *platonic* sense" in that they dream rather than acting; this platonic ideality does not mitigate the underlying pathology nor the threats posed, for the enthusiasms that artistic works incite spawn more "manifestations….of moral insanity, imbecility, and dementia".[305] For Nordau, writing, painting and philosophy are the means by which personal depravities are celebrated, rationalized as systems, reproduced and spread through society. In Nordau's discourse, Kant's genius and Lombroso's *mattoid* have evolved into a considerably more dangerous and monstrous figure, while it also reveals, underlying the platonic suspicion of imitation and copies, an incipient antagonism toward the 'feminine', associated with dreaming, artifice, reproduction and representation.

Nordau singles out Charles Baudelaire for particular attention, as one of his 'index cases'. Following an extensive reading of the poet's verse, prose, and critical writings (impressive if only for its breadth), Nordau concludes with something like an autopsy report:

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[303] Nordau, 257.
[304] Nordau, 260.
[305] Nordau, x.

> He died of general paralysis after he had wallowed for months in the lowest depths of insanity … Baudelaire showed all the mental stigmata of degeneration during the whole of his life. He was at once a mystic and an erotomaniac, an eater of hashish and opium; he felt himself attracted in characteristic fashion by other degenerate minds, mad or depraved.[306]

The ambiguous, paradoxical relationship of nature and culture present in Kant's aesthetic discourse, are exaggerated and joined into a picture of Baudelaire as a co-morbid, double-diagnostic mess. For Nordau, the poet-critic's degeneracy is pathological, grounded in his faulty biology, and expressed through the un-natural excesses of cultural artificiality, immoral sexuality and drug use. Again, clinical and characteriological discourse assumes the shrill pitch of moral condemnation:

> Baudelaire has the 'cult of self': he abhors nature, movement and life; he dreams of an ideal immobility, of eternal silence, of symmetry and artificiality; he loves disease, ugliness and crime; all his inclinations, in profound aberration, are opposed to those of sane beings; what charms his sense of smells is the odour of corruption; his eye, the sight of carrion, suppurating wounds and the pain of others; he feels happy in muddy, cloudy, autumn weather; his senses are excited by unnatural pleasures only … the only thing which can distract or interest him is badness – murder, blood, lewdness and falsehood. He addresses his prayers to Satan, and aspires to hell...[307]

The text is laden with such ornate and sensuous assertions that it is itself a *fin de siècle* discursive monstrosity.

Nordau's monstrous artist resurrects another aspect of Kant's troublesome *ingenium*, the biosocial hazard it poses, which assumes comparable *fin de siècle* grotesqueness. The epidemiology of degeneracy, its infectiousness or *communicability* is clearly linked to *writing*. The exceptional talent of *Degeneracy* is no longer Kant's healthy carrier of

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[306] Nordau, 286.

[307] Nordau, Comparisons must be drawn to Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886) which identifies alternative, often arcane sexual practices according to a psycho-pathological taxonomy, and to which Nordau makes continuous reference. Both texts hint at an affinity or identification with the objects of analysis: in Krafft-Ebing, his political affinity shows itself in his unpopular naturalization of same-sex desire, and in Nordau's discourse it is evident in his stretches of denunciation, which have an erotic ardor. One cannot help but sense these vituperations against Baudelaire and the others are manifestations of Nordau's own un-avowable sense of insufficiency and rivalry with these talents.

potentially dangerous influences, nor is he Lombroso's crippled producer of potentially beneficial works. In Nordau, he has become a zombie sovereign, cannibalized by his army of devoted epigones. This is announced in the following remarkable passage:

> As on the death of Alexander the Great his generals fell on the conqueror's empire, and each one seized a portion of land so did the imitators that Baudelaire numbered among his contemporaries and the generation following – many even without waiting for his madness and death – take possession of some one of his peculiarities for literary exploitation. The school of Baudelaire reflects the character of its master, strangely distorted … (and refracts) his predilection for disease, death and purification (necrophilia) …[308]

Nordau invokes the figure not of a madman, but of a great emperor in order to characterize the poetic and moral monstrosity of Baudelaire. This theme deserves further reflection, for the profound discursive link it forges between the figures of sovereign and artistic monstrosity in the modern period.

Nordau's Baudelaire and the other etiological caricatures of Huysmans, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Wilde and even Ruskin, who populate his text, exemplify a strain of modern artistic agency that, Nordau contends, lacks "altruism" and is free of any ties to the *social pact*.[309] Their moral-aesthetic disinterestedness – Nordau's twist of Kant's definition of aesthetic experience – is articulated by the 'art for art sake' mentality expressed by aesthetes such as Oscar Wilde, whose trial commenced the year of *Degeneracy*'s publication, but is equally applicable to the a-morality of the French *poète maudit*. Nordau decries these aestheticisms as aspects of *ego-mania*, the character pathology linking the artist to the "born criminal".[310] Baudelaire is compelled, like a monstrous king, by his inherent unnatural nature (the definition of monster) to act freely with regards to his literary productions. Yet he is also a member of a cohort composed of

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[308] Nordau.
[309] Nordau.
[310] Nordau.

cultural outlaws and nomadic figures. Nordau's Baudelaire translates, transmits and comments on the works of Poe and DeQuincey with the purpose of establishing a 'satanic' legacy, *and* assembles a covey of followers who perpetuate his 'artistic perversity', and *they* do so by aping Baudelaire.[311]

The turn of Nordau's discourse around origins, particularly in its concluding chapters, is noteworthy. Alongside a program linking strains of cultural, organic and psychic degeneracy to Parnassian, Diabolist and Symbolist literature and art, Nordau proposes a novel diagnostic field comprised of *syndromes* which can be deciphered in specific individuals. From readings of Henrick Ibsen's plays and a psychological profile gleaned from biographical accounts of the author's life, Nordau assembles a set of symptoms he coins 'Ibsenism' which for the most part coalesce around the dangerous sexual hysterias of Ibsen's female characters.[312] There is also 'Tolstoi-ism'.[313] Presumably, these character cases could be used to diagnose pathology in an artist with an analogous biography and artistic production.

Such maneuvers, slipping from individual imagination to social pathology, are worthy of extended reflection, and would reveal the encroachment of a tendency to treat all aspects of culture as bio-medical problems. For my purposes, with regards to the evolving category of artist case history, the discursive collapse of artistic subjectivity and degeneracy into a doubled monstrosity reaches its watershed in Nordau's caricature of Charles Baudelaire.

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[311] Nordau.
[312] Nordau, 338.
[313] Nordau, 144.

In his final section, “The Twentieth Century”, which comprised two chapters, “Prognosis” and “Therapeutics,” Nordau begins his final assessments with a line so thick with atmosphere and abandonment it could have been written by Baudelaire:

> Our long and sorrowful wandering through the hospital – for as such we have recognized, if not all civilized humanity, at all events the upper stratum of the population of large towns to be –is ended. We have observed the various embodiments which degeneration and hysteria have assumed in the art, poetry, and philosophy of our times.[314]

He suggests that a decadent culture needs a *critical police* made up of psychiatrists who will “speak to the masses … through general publications”.[315] In a chilling fashion, he explains the need for such a police would not last long. Deviant culture will die in due course as a result of its own disabilities. In light of this, it is not surprising that some of Nordau’s central themes, degenerate art for example, were taken up by the National Socialists in Germany a few decades later, as clinical-cultural support for their antipathy to modernist art, and for their efforts to eradicate the “degeneracy” of the Weimar Republic. Ironically, Nordau, like Lombroso, was Jewish and a strong advocate of Zionism.

Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis posed the first challenge to degeneracy-based theorizations of the psychological subject, and subsequently of the artist genius monstrosity. Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud’s *Studies in Hysteria* (1895), was critical of the constitutionalist theories of psychological disorder such as Lombroso’s and Nordau’s. Freud and Breuer took specific aim at the work of Jean-Martin Charcot, with whom Freud studied in 1886-87, and whose papers Freud translated into German. In part, Charcot’s project applied

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[314] Nordau, 536.
[315] Nordau, 560.

Lombroso's techniques of physiognomic profiling to the analysis and codification of hysteria in female patients. Charcot staged his encounters with hypnotized hysterics in the amphitheater of Salpêtrière Hospital, which housed nearly four-thousand indigent women, and where he was medical director. He performed these scenarios in front of rapt audiences of male clinicians who came from around Europe and the United States to attend (figure 3.3).

Charcot's attempts to trace an etiology of hysteria are notorious and well-documented. He amassed an enormous archive of photographic images that documente the *attitudes passionelles* of delirious residents (figure 3.4 – 3.7). The performative aspect of this project, the way it manifests a clinical complicity between doctors and patients,[316] is relevant to the exchange between Artaud and Rivière. In the pictures of Artaud – press photos, film stills, self portraits, and late photographs taken at the asylums – there is a suggestion of a staging, and of a performative spectacle that resembles Charcot's iconographic program. These pictures show an Artaud who is clearly *working* with and through his images (figure 3.8 – 3.10).

Against such understandings of hysteria as the result of congenital weakness, Freud and Breuer proposed that the "hysteric suffers mostly from reminiscences".[317] They argued hysteria could be understood only by tracing its symptoms to traumatic experiences, particularly those connected with early sexual traumas. Freud's "renovation of psychiatry"[318] entailed a shift from the constitutional understanding of the psyche to

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[316] The complicity between doctors and patients has been exhaustively interrogated by Georges Didi-Huberman; see: Georges Didi-Huberman, *Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*, trans. Alisa Hartz (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).

[317] Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies in Hysteria,* trans. by A.A. Brill (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 4.

[318] Paul Ricouer, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation,* trans. Dennis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 34.

what Paul Ricouer has called a *narrative topography*.[319] While degeneracy-based psychiatry treats symptoms as physiological manifestations of over-stimulated, congenitally-defective neurons, psychoanalysis treats symptoms *hermeneutically*, as a form of biographical or autobiographical literature. This radical shift in psychiatric diagnostics entailed a radical modification in the doctor-patient relationship. Psychoanalysis shifted the therapeutic exchange from Charcot's staged scenarios to dreams, obsessions, desires and life events recounted and deciphered in the doctor's office.

Freud psychoanalytic program is organized along two axes: one devoted to the diagnosis and therapeutic treatment of psychically disturbed patients, and the other to an encompassing theory of culture, derived from Sophocles's Oedipal narrative of incest and patricide. These two aspects cross at the literary level, in Freud's carefully crafted case histories, which drew broadly from clinical and literary sources, particularly classical German, sources. As Ricouer, Ronell and others have shown, Freud was motivated as much by a desire to have an impact on our literary as well as our psychiatric understanding. Although his style is highly rationalist and impressive for its clinical empiricism, his texts allude to an 'undecidable' status, an indecision as to whether his project was scientific and/or literary.[320]

While Freud shifted the emphasis from a bio-inheritance model to a symbolic reading of psychic troubles, he maintained a view of artistic talent as having its origins in psychopathology. Freud's artist is no longer Nordau's dissipated monster; now, he is an exceptional *neurotic*, whose motivation to produce works of art is rooted in a hidden

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[319] Ricouer, 89.
[320] Avital Ronell, *Dictations: On Haunted Writing,* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1993).

pathogenic conflict, more often than not involving repressed sexual or homosexual desire. Freud's salient case is, of course, found in his essay *Leonardo da Vinci and a memory of his childhood* (1910), similar to Lombroso's treatment of Michelangelo, discerns an inadequacy beneath the Renaissance master's ostensible artistic and scientific perfection. Freud signals his awareness that the psychoanalysis of artists may "blacken the radiant [talents]", but he does not back down from his clinical task. Psychiatric research, he writes, "cannot help finding worthy of understanding everything that can be recognized in those illustrious models, and it believes there is no one so great as to be disgraced by being subject to the laws which govern both normal and pathological activity with equal cogency".[321] The characteristics of Freud's neurotic artist intersect with the Kantian aesthetic and anthropological programs, including speculations on the physiognomic indications of Leonardo's genius, and reflections on the artist's turn from painting to science which, for Freud, distinguishes Leonardo's genius from being merely artistic.

Freud spends the greater part of his essay interpreting a childhood memory recounted in Leonardo's notebooks, of having been struck repeatedly in the mouth by a bird of prey. Freud treats the memory as a fantasy or reflective displacement of the trauma of homosexual desire. While Freud focuses on Leonardo's personal sexual life, as the key to understanding his oeuvre, he contends this paragon of the Renaissance was sexually abstinent. [322] Again, what weighs in favour of Leonardo's genius, according to Freud, is a subliminatory regulating system – Freud writes of Leonardo's hesitation in finishing paintings – akin to the operation of good taste in Kant's aesthetic system, which clips the

[321] Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a memory of his childhood,* trans. A.A. Brill (New York: Barnes and Noble., 2003), 8.
[322] Freud, *Leonardo*, 8.

wings of speculation and desire, and re-invests an un-resolvable desire into the noble compensation of artistic mastery.

The Freudian case history, as a link between narrative creation and psychological life, represents an advance for literary and clinical enterprises. In his prefatory remarks to *Dora*, he states the demonstration of "the intimate structure of a disorder and the determination of its symptoms" requires more than the empirical skill of clinical observation. The analyst had to "face the incompleteness of analytic results" and continue "where the authentic parts end" with literary construction.[323] Alluding to German art historical discourses, notably Winckelmann and Lessing, Freud writes of his fragmentary, archeological approach:

> [Everything] that has to do with the clearing-up of a particular symptom merges piecemeal, woven into various contexts, and distributed over widely separate periods of time … had no choice (in dealing with the finer structure of neurosis) but to follow the example of those discoverers whose good fortune it is to bring to light of day after their long burial the priceless thought-mutilated relics of antiquity.[324]

In effect, this approach to therapy allows Freud to distinguish himself, to make a break with strict clinical empiricism and pursue his literary desire. Freud's method of weaving objective observation with literary elaborations in his cases reflects his autobiographical or auto-fictional efforts to secure his literary stature.

In this section, I have defined the category of the artist case history as discursively fashioned through a complicity between clinical and critical modalities; and traced its migration from clinical medicine to artistic subjectivity through the emerging scientific fields of cultural forensics and psychoanalysis. Kant's *ingenium* was cited as a precursor, more precisely a marker of the shift toward a subjectivity-based aesthetics. It was also, as

[323] Sigmund Freud, *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963) 27.
[324] Freud, *Dora*, 27.

I have shown, the site where suspicions of individual artistic activity were embedded, suspicions that, during the nineteenth century, became so amplified and distorted, as to constitute from this artist-position, a pathological menace.

Part Two: The Exemplary Case

By defining the artist case history as discursively fashioned, I do not suggest a strictly deterministic device imposed from the outside by orthodox literature, criticism, psychoanalysis or psychiatry to confine or manage modern artistic subjectivity (although this true). Instead, in this section, the questions I address are directed towards artists, who are confined by but also complicit in the formation of these discursive fields. What do artists make of these developments? How do artists radicalize a confining pathologization, and turn it into a productive one? I contend that Antonin Artaud presents an exemplary case. As the subject of psychiatric *and* critical treatments, he was also an artist who fashioned from these ordeals a radically critical and aesthetic position. Indeed, I argue, he made it performance.

Artaud was not the first to make something of his case. There are important index cases in the eighteenth century that give rise to a new genre of autobiographical or confessional literature, and indicate the emergence of decidedly modern species of self-reflexive psychological literary subject. These texts, contemporaneous with Kant's reflexive critiques, include confessional memoires and what German literati called *bildungsromane*, which are told in the first person or perfect tense. Goethe's epistolary *Sorrows of Young Werther* and *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1787 and 1796

respectively) are often cited as representative examples of the new psychological autobiography. Other pertinent examples abound, among them works that offer scrupulously detailed, self-analytical explorations of the authors' emotional and intellectual lives. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (1770) recounts in great detail, events in the philosopher's life from childhood to middle-age, in order to glean insights into his character and, by extension, human nature in general.[325]

Karl Philipp Moritz's *Anton Reiser* is another example of autobiography in which the subject is treated to a new form of psychological self-reflection. Moritz was a leading exponent in the new field of experiential psychology and was the founder and editor of a journal which published essays on the topic. His youthful narrative, published in four volumes between 1785 and 1790, represents a concerted effort to formalize a genre of narrative writing that would address the challenges of psychological self-analysis. Moritz offers an account of his melancholia told through his young protagonist Anton Reiser. The piecemeal structure of the novel reflects the fragmentary subjectivity and associative inclinations of the protagonist-author's thought process.

While Artaud never grounded his performative position as a case in autobiography in the psychologically reflective sense – indeed, he was averse and even morally opposed to any forms of psychological or psychoanalytic self-understanding – the Rousseau and Moritz-Reiser cases are antecedents to Artaud's presentation of himself. In his letters to Rivière, Artaud's mental case is *strategically* purposeful and hyperbolic, much like

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[325]* This modern confessional narrative of course has its most notable antecedent in the fourth-century text by St. Augustine. A previous generation of Post-Reformation mystical writings are more immediate precursors. These entailed descriptions of rigorous ascetic self-interrogation which culminate in *enthusiastic* states of religious rapture. The writings of the Spanish abbess Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) and the French mystic Madame Guyon (1648-1717) are classics of the genre. Rousseau's confessions, though decidedly psychological, must be placed within a genealogy that reaches back to these forms of Post-Reformation devotional autobiographies.

Moritz's Reiser. I propose that while the exchange is discursively prescribed, it also marks out the space of a new form of interaction, one in which artistic and critical wills, in the Nietzschean sense, contend for position and autonomy within a context saturated at all levels by medical power. As we will see, while Artaud *embodies* or acts out the role of artist case history, at the same time he resists the clinical-critical restraints imposed by Rivière, by taking a position of creative non-compliance. This becomes evident at those moments in the exchange in which Artaud shows a hyper-reflexive critical awareness of the discursive clinical machinations at work in the correspondence. At times, Rivière seems embarrassed by his own psychotherapeutic presumptions.

The Case.

To demonstrate my claim that Artaud crafted a psycho-therapeutic identity he could perform, a brief examination of some of the significant *biographemes* or biographical writings that make up a life chart of Antonin Artaud is in order. My purpose will be not be to call into question the medical and psychiatric ordeals that Artaud endured, nor to test the veracity or truth claims of the principal themes running through the biographies. It will be to draw out several common and recurring themes that may or may not touch upon the actuality of Artaud's ordeals, and to show how these themes are embedded in the historical narrative of clinicalized artistic subjectivity. My purpose is also to glean from these accounts a sense of the significant real life eventsncluding clinical and critical subjections, that had a direct impact on Artaud's thought and practice.

Three significant crises mark Artaud's case: a severe childhood illness; his first significant psychiatric breakdown, coincident with the outbreak of World War I; and his second major crisis, in the early months of 1938 when Germany defied the Treaty of

Versailles and unified with Austria (the *Anschluss*). We know Artaud, in spite of his psychosis, engaged artistically with these events. His drawing-text *Spell for Hitler*, pitted with cigarette burns, was mailed from Ireland to the Reichstag in September of 1939, at roughly the time of the Munich Agreement. This last period of crisis precipitated a sequence of embarkations, first to Mexico, then Ireland, and finally his grueling deportation back to France. Upon return, Artaud was confined to the sprawling Rodez asylum where he remained during the violent years of World War II until his death in 1947.

Childhood & Adolescence

The case of Artaud invariably starts with early-childhood encephalitis at age four. All the biographical accounts of his life characterize his childhood and adolescence as a succession of emotional and psychiatric episodes, including the manifestation of a speech pathology that would continue into adult life. In the shadow of this medical introduction, the biographies describe Artaud's childhood creativity as an auto-therapeutic release from familial, especially maternal, chaos. With the onset of psychotic episodes in his adult years, his artistic production is linked to illness and insanity.

The accounts, even recent ones, invoke familiar and culturally pervasive tropes of psycho-biographical narrative. A biographical note by Ronald Hayman in the catalog published in 1996 to accompany the Museum of Modern Art exhibition of Artaud's works on paper, associates the medical and psychological difficulties of his childhood to dire Oedipal triangulations. Hayman contends, these alternate between love-hate torments of stereotypically borderline women in a matriarchy of sometimes abject mothers,

including his mother, grandmother, aunts, and sisters; and terror of an austere, distant and isolated father. There is, also, a hint of incest. Hayman writes:

> (As) a child he had difficulties in expressing himself. His stammering may have originated in his troubled relationship with his mother. A Levantine Greek married to her cousin, a shipping agent, Euphrasie Artaud bore nine children, but only three survived infancy and at four Antonin was ill with what may have been meningitis … His powders were sometimes mixed with jam, and he couldn't always distinguish between pain inflicted to punish him and pain caused by sickness. Nor could he always tell whether the source was internal or external … Nothing in his childhood was stable; reassurance was tentative and temporary. Stammering and terrifying contractions in the facial nerves and tongue alternated with periods of tranquility.[326]

Artaud biographer Bettina Knapp admits there is little material on the artist's childhood, but describes Artaud's childhood as, initially, a time of maternal plenitude:

> Not much is known about Artaud's early years, and he himself spoke little of them. It would seem, however, that he had a very special affinity for his grandmother; her warmth and understanding, that particular wisdom and gentleness which comes with old age, made him feel for her what he had never experienced nor would perhaps ever again: a closeness and a calmness, a sense of belonging and inner joy. He used to sit and watch her by the hour kneading the dough with her strong and sturdy fingers, for what would be delicious cakes dipped in honey.[327]

Knapp suggests Artaud's nearly fatal meningitis set his psychic world on a course of continuous lifetime disorder. The psycho-biographical matrix that folds together familiar discourses on family pathology, childhood disease, and creativity, so striking in Hayman, is toned down in Knapp's account, but is present. She informs us that upon his return from his visits to his grandmother in Smyrna:

> (He) was under constant medication and unblinking supervision … and again plunged into the tense atmosphere created by an over-solicitous mother and anxious father … [His mother] was forever concerned about her son's health. She gave him no freedom to develop, instead created, inadvertently of course, in the highly sensitive youth a tremendous sense of dependency and guilt at having been the cause of so much of his

[326] Ronald Hayman, "Antonin Artaud," *Antonin Artaud: Works on Paper*, ed. Margit Rowell (New York: Museum of Modern Art & Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 17.
[327] Bettina Liebowitz Knapp, Antonin *Artaud: Man of Vision* (Athens: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 1993), 7.

> mother's suffering. Though feelings of extreme tenderness were directed toward his mother, he began to rebel at such a crippling situation as he grew older…[328]

In Knapp's account, Artaud spent his adolescence developing his interest in the arts as a way of escaping familial conflict and the overbearing presence of his mother. His creative self-absorption and quietism were disrupted by outbursts or mixed episodes directed at his mother:

> His altered attitude manifested itself rather in the increasingly important role his inner world played in his life. Only in this realm, he reasoned, could he roam entirely free. But sometimes his feelings of anger were uncontrollable and retorts which hurt his mother deeply burst forth. Minutes later, however, the young Artaud would be pounding on his mother's door, begging for forgiveness.[329]

Artaud's own descriptions of these childhood disturbances and physical ordeals, unlike the biographic elaborations, are recounted without psychoanalytic reflection. Throughout his life, Artaud's auto-pathography, expressed in a constant stream of letters, drawings, and other texts, is characterized by a sustained *refusal* of the symbolic.[330] While he does, on many occasions, reference the Freudian family romance and its triangulation of Mommy-Daddy-Baby, he does so to contest it. Instead, he describes his psychic and physical sufferings in exquisitely physiological terms.

We might compare Hayman's description of young Artaud's facial twitching and stammering, to the letter Artaud wrote to George Soulie de Morant, which likely is Hayman's source. Artaud describes the onset of the facial contortions often experienced by pronounced stutterers:

> I have noted from my earliest childhood, between the ages of six and eight, these periods of stuttering and of a horrible physical contraction of the nerves and the tongue, following periods of calm and perfect facility … There is a certain sensation

[328] Knapp, 8.
[329] Knapp, 8.
[330] Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 50.

> of emptiness in the facial nerve, but an active emptiness, so to speak, which physically took the form of a kind of vertiginous magnetization in the front of the face.[331]

Artaud frequently uses the face as what theorist and disabilities-studies scholar, Petra Kuppers has described as a semiotic site of "embodied schizophrenic experience" in his writings, drawings and performance. [332] Kuppers contends that all Artaud's writing and drawing indicates a "physiological turn of mind".[333] To take this point further, I suggest his insistence on conveying an embodied experience of his diagnoses – his experience of emptiness is an "*active* emptiness" – is often expressed in the re-figured language of clinical anatomy. This physiological consciousness, together with his aversion to psychoanalytic reduction, is evident in Artaud's effort to articulate his experience in his early exchange with Rivière. As Derrida pointed out, Artaud "never writes *about* his drawings and paintings, but rather *in* them".[334] This drive toward artistic immanence or immediacy is worked out at all levels of Artaud's project; in the letters to Rivière, it is expressed as an ordeal and confrontation with what we might call the 'rationality of literature'. He continues to explore the possibilities of the simultaneous play of rendered figures and text in his later writings and drawings. In his performances, Artaud sought a visceral immediacy by eliminating scripts, directions, traditional narrative content, and the like.

From the biographical accounts, we are able to glean an accurate chronology of young Artaud's many psychiatric hospitalizations. He spent most of his late adolescence in clinical residential programs. Physically, he was healthy enough to be conscripted to

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[331] Artaud, *Selected Writings*, 288-289.

[332] Petra Kuppers, *The Scar of Visibility: Medical Performances and Contemporary Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 17.

[333] Kuppers, 17.

[334] Derrida, "The Theatre of cruelty and the closure of representation…", *Antonin Artaud: A Critical Reader,* ed. Edward Scheer (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), 43.

military service in 1916. After nine months, his stay of duty was terminated due to an unspecified sleeping disorder (some accounts claim he feigned sleep walking) and his family sent him on a series of 'cures' at residential clinics, including Saint-Dizier in Lyons, Lafoux-les-Bains, Dvonne-les-Bains, and Bagneres-de-Bigorre. An extended stay, from 1918-1920, at Le Chanet, the sanatorium run by Dr. Dardel in Neuchatel, Switzerland, provided a period of relative stability. During this cure, Artaud's life-long friend and noted biographer, Paule Thevenin, tells us that Artaud truly developed an interest in painting, drawing and engraving, a time she refers to as his Swiss Period.[335] At the time of the Rivière exchange, Artaud's primary focus was on painting and drawing. Thevenin produces a tender and informal biographical portrait of the young artist. She describes his paintings and drawings created at Le Chanet as "small in size, show[ing] sensitivity, taste, and a certain feeling for color".[336] She suggests Artaud had been "deeply moved by the anxious landscapes of Edvard Munch",[337] and his landscape and still life paintings certainly demonstrate Artaud's interest in contemporary painting, and the influence of the post-Impressionists, Fauves, and Symbolists.

Following his stay at Dr. Dardel's sanatorium, Artaud spent a brief time in Marseilles before arriving in Paris in 1920. Shortly after he experienced another unspecified psychiatric crisis, and his parents placed him under the care of Dr. Edouard Toulouse, the medical director of the psychiatric asylum at Villejuif. Toulouse occupies a significant position at the intersection of the clinical and cultural domains at the time. He was respected psychologist whose treatment of psychiatric disorders followed the most recent

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[335] Jacques Derrida and Paule Thevenin, *The Secret Art of Antonin Artaud*, trans. Mary Ann Caws (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 4.
[336] Derrida and Thevenin, 4.
[337] Derrida and Thevenin, 4.

medical developments, including the therapeutic uses of painting, literature, and drama. In conjunction with his clinical practice, Toulouse was founder and editor of the cultural review *Demain*, in which many of Artaud's early poems, articles, art and theatre reviews were published. Toulouse introduced Artaud to the noted director of *le Theatre de l'Oeuvre*, Aurelien-Marie Lugne-Poe, who was associated with the Symbolist poets in whom Artaud had a great interest. This introduction led to his first dramatic role in a play by the noted French Symbolist writer Henri de Regnier. Lugne-Poe later wrote of Artaud's performance: "his make up, his behavior, were of a painter lost in the midst of actors".[338] Due to Artaud's difficulties with stammering and his lack of formal professional training as an actor, he was re-directed to set and costume design. Lugne-Poe's description is notable considering Artaud's later insistence on the primacy of images in the *Theatre of Cruelty* (1932). During this time Artaud developed an addiction to opium. Some contend he became addicted under the supervision of Toulouse, who treated him for chronic pain. We might also consider Artaud's addiction in the context of modern European literary practice, where opium use traces back through Baudelaire and Coleridge, as excoriated by Nordau. Equally, many artists and writers, notably Cocteau, took up its use in the traumatic years during and immediately following the war. Some commentators contend, Hayman among them, that Artaud's argumentative, effusive, boastful style in his letters to Rivière, stems from the effects of the opiate.

Toulouse, Artaud's doctor and cultural mentor, was also a prominent advocate of eugenics, and founder of the *Société de Biotypologie*, which called for mandatory psycho-physiological testing of students and factory workers. Toulouse's larger ambition as a

[338] Cited in: Frantisek Deak, "Antonin Artaud and Charles Dullin: Artaud's Apprenticeship in Theatre," *Educational Theatre Journal,* Vol. 29, No. 3 (oct., 1977) 345-353.

clinician, Thevenin informs us, "was to isolate and study the mechanisms of genius, and … [he] had for that purpose chosen a number of highly intelligent persons of his time".[339] These included Zola, Poincare, Mallarmé, Dadet and many others. Toulouse's practice was something of a bio-clinical amalgamation of psychoanalytic and constitutionalist psychiatry, and hereditary theory, akin with his predecessors, Freud and Lombroso.

The Correspondence

Early in 1923, Artaud submitted a small selection of his poems to Jacques Rivière, editor of the *Nouvelle Revue Française,* to whom he had been introduced by Toulouse. In a short but friendly letter, dated May 1, 1923, the editor rejects Artaud's poems, but invites his to visit the *Revue*.[340] There is no record of what transpired in the office of the *Revue,* but Artaud's first letter, responding to their engagement, on June 5, adopts from the start the hyperbolic rhetoric of performance. First, he insists on the "absolute acceptability," and of the "existence"[341] of the poems as literature, then launches into a discourse on the incommensurate distance between words and thoughts, representations and lived experiences. He admits to Rivière his failed attempts at poetry, but suggests it is not simply a personal problem. It is, he contends, the fundamental problem of all European, specifically *literary* writing. Words cannot carry the weight of a body's experience.

Another element of bio-aesthetics arising in these letters, and appurtenant to Artaud's reflexive turn, is a novel, *empirical* understanding of language. In them he treats language as what we might call a semiotic *substance*, indicating the early stirrings of his resistance to the symbolic levels of language, a resistance that develops into an avant-gardist revolt in subsequent texts. He also takes issue with the use of language as representation and

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[339] Thevenin, 4-5.
[340] Artaud, 31.
[341] Artaud, 31.

description. This might seem a Platonic suspicion of imitation, were it not for his later use of glossolalia, word fragments, word-salads, spells and incantations, and his insistence on the voice, on the materiality of the text, to assume the force and mass of an unsignifiable embodied or somatic experience.

Derrida has demonstrated that Artaud's gripe with language is not that of Platonic idealism, that its lowly status is a failed reflection of a higher ideality, but rather is with modern European poetry's metaphysical over-determination, its exile of language to the outskirts of corporeal life. For Artaud, his experience as a thinking subject is the effect of a violent *effraction* of language into and through his corporeal existence. He continually returns to this notion of a language that issues and 'falls away' from corporeal experience. For Artaud, the problem of writing is precisely the metaphysical demands placed on it. It strays from the body and is put to work by a 'spirit' which constructs its domain outside the living organism.[342] This crucial point, that writing emerges from a place outside the body, seems entirely lost on Rivière. Still, in the most exquisitely crafted and lucidly *written* exchange, Artaud embraces the position of a mental patient and rhetorically transforms text into the ailing body of the mind. "I suffer from a horrible sickness of mind," he writes:

> My thought abandons me at every level. From the simple fact of thought to the external fact of its materialization in words. Words, shapes of sentences, internal directions of thought, simple reactions of the mind – I am in constant pursuit of intellectual being. Thus as soon as *I can grasp a form* however imperfect, I pin it down, for fear of losing the whole thought. I lower myself, I know, and suffer from it, but I consent to it for fear of dying all together.[343]

In spite of this failure, Artaud suggests the emergence of a new set of linguistic figures from his failed poems, and particularly from those awkward expressions for which

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[342] Derrida, 43.
[343] Artaud, 31.

Rivière reproaches him. He says he embraces these "figures of speech," yet they introduce into his thought a "profound uncertainty", and point to a general metaphysical "insufficiency" not only of his personal mental condition, but of literature's current relationship to meaning. Still, he implores Rivière to understand that "out of the central feeling which dictates [his] poems" and for the strong images or figures "which [he] has been able to find, in spite of everything, [he] proposes these poems for existence". Artaud discerns, for the first time, a literal substance in the figures haphazardly emerging from his poems. He seems to suggest the novelty of such *literality* might restore corporeal immediacy to writing or speech, and thus, its mental health and cohesion.

This corporealized textual practice is a radical departure from traditional artistic and literary approaches. In subsequent texts, Artaud will define all forms of textual or literary production as *waste* expelled by a signifying body. Julia Kristeva, writing from both psychoanalytic and literary camps, proposes that in the Rivière letters, Artaud begins to formulate a textual practice that rejects the symbolic function of language, and "dissolves the linguistic sign and its system [word, syntax]" which are the "the earliest and most solid [guarantees] of the unified subject".[344] With this early effort to establish a practice *in language* that resists the symbolic, Artaud is painfully aware he is making himself susceptible to clinical-critical reduction. He warns: "All this, which is very badly expressed, threatens to introduce a dangerous ambiguity into your judgment of me."[345] He is quick to retrace himself, sometimes taking on an obsequious tone, as if sensing that what he writes will be conflated with his experience as a psychiatric patient, and hence dismissed as the fragmentary products of insanity.

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[344] Kristeva, "The Subject in Process", ed. Patrick French and Roland-Francois Lack (London: Routledge, 1998), 134.
[345] Artaud, 32.

Judgment is a significant theme threading through these letters. Artaud seems to play on its reverberations in Kantian aesthetics, and on its role as an instrument of moral, literary, and indeed clinical expertise. His letters reflect his conflicted situation with respect to his desire for the esteem of those in positions of cultural authority. For example, in one letter, he writes: "I have to cure myself of the judgment of others",[346] but later, his closing reads: "I surrender myself to your judgment".[347] It is as if judgment is the disease he rejects, but it is also, possibly, its cure. This coincidence of opposing desires is not without irony but is also, likely, a true reflection of his desire to be understood for all his paradoxical complexity.

Rivière's response to Artaud's first letter indicates a degree of suspicion, a suspicion that again carries both aesthetic and psychoanalytic undertones: "I was so touched that you chose to confide to me. There are in your poems, as I told you from the beginning, awkwardnesses and above all oddities which are disconcerting. But, they seem to me to correspond to a certain studied effort on your part than to a lack of control over your ideas".[348] In psychoanalytic literature, a studied effort may be associated with a host of problems arising around fantasy or avoidance. Freud would approach the studied efforts of his patients in analysis as significant and worthy of further investigation, while a psychiatrist following a standard method would treat instances of studied "narrative truth" as indicative of a "characterological" or "borderline disorder".[349] We recall that for Kant's *ingenium*, any studied effort in conceiving or producing a work of creative genius moves into the shady area of mannerism, or, a logically considered aesthetic creation.

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[346] Artaud, 34.
[347] Artaud, 40.
[348] Artaud, 43.
[349] See: *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR),* (Washington DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2000) 346.

The ‘aping of peculiarity’ produced by imitators of the creative genius is merely ostentatious rubbish, the products of the tyro.[350] Hence, this suspicion Rivière announces early in their epistolary relationship carries a host of implications for the young poet, the least of which is his status as an inexperienced tyro. But Rivière’s articulation of his suspicion suggests that he senses a performative aspect in their exchange, and that he is aware to some extent that Artaud is *acting out* for the purposes of demonstrating a set of poetic concepts or ideas.

Six months passes after this initial exchange. Their correspondence resumes in late January, 1924, when Artaud responds:

> It was last May that I made you a little mental confession, I would like to finish that confession today, to go on with it, to go to the very end of myself. .I do not seek to justify myself in your eyes, it is a matter of indifference to me whether I seem to exist in the eyes of anyone ... I flattered myself that I was bringing you a case, a distinctive mental case, and curious as I thought you were about all mental distortions … I thought thereby to draw your attention to the *real* value, the initial value of my thought, and of the productions of my thought.[351]

This letter declares the self-flattering performance of his exemplary status as both mental case and literary talent. In doing so, Artaud casts Rivière in the role of clinician-critic. Later in this letter, Artaud describes the “defects of form” Rivière had identified, as a consequence of his “sagging” thought and “central collapse of the soul.” He insists this enervation is a natural consequence of the physiological ordeal of thought as he navigates the metaphysical system imposed from a kind of epistemological outside. His mind's energies dissipate at “each of the terminal stratifications ... [as it passes] through all the stages, all the bifurcations of thought and of form”.[352] Language and experience may co-

[350] Kant, *Critique*, 182.
[351] Artaud, 34.
[352] Artaud, 35.

exist in the same space, but that space is hopelessly, beautifully, fractured, and they do not join together.

The letters are also used by Artaud to continue to refine his materialist theory of mind. He describes consciousness as an entity that is finely grained and composed of a subtle physical substance identical to that of language, but not language: “You are familiar, are you not, with the subtlety, the fragility of the mind? Haven't I told you enough about it to prove to you that I have a mind which exists *literally* as T. exists, or E., or S., or M.? “[353] In a (feigned) tone of supplication, he implores Rivière, his physician-critic, to “restore to my mind the concentration of its forces, the cohesion that it lacks, the constancy of its tension, the consistency of its own substance”.[354]

Rivière will respond two months later, and once again express his bafflement and suspicion at the “precision” of Artaud's “self-diagnosis”,[355] which he contrasts with the “vagueness” and “formlessness” of his creative work.[356] However, he pronounces his therapeutic impotence with regards to his case. “I acted like those doctors,” he writes, “who think they can cure their patients by refusing to believe them, by denying the strangeness of their case, by forcing them back into the normal. It is a bad method. I regret it”.[357] Rivière notes the tormented quality of Artaud's handwriting, which seems to attest to his illness, but he is struck by the clarity and lucidity with which the young poet describes his mental erosion. He elaborates a prognosis, and in so doing, firmly situates his position within what we might call normative orthodox literature. He recommends Paul Valery's *Evening with Monseiur Teste,* to posit “the fragile autonomy of the mind”;

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[353] Artaud, 35.
[354] Artaud, 35.
[355] Artaud, 38.
[356] Artaud, 38.
[357] Artaud, 38-39.

Artaud's insists to the contrary, on its subtle corporeality, and then declares his belief that the imagination must be clipped and curtailed, a position resembling Kant's with regards to unbridled imagination. Cancer and bodily infection are the metaphors Rivière uses to express his ideas:

> That the mind has its own existence, that it has a tendency to live on its own substance, that it grows over the personality with a kind of egoism and with no concern for keeping the personality in harmony with the world … Regarded in itself, the mind is a kind of canker; it reproduces, it advances constantly in all directions … there is no escape from pure thought but death.[358]

Rivière equates the formlessness of Artaud's poems to the lack of obstacles the author confronts, and to the allowances made to chance. Recalling Nordau's artistic monstrosity, Rivière refers to contemporary Dada poetry as the product of "[the] direct expression of that monster which every man carries within him but which he usually seeks instinctively to chain with the bonds of facts and experience".[359]

From monstrosity, Rivière's prognosis moves to the theme of excess, noting Artaud's "fragility of mind" might be "another sickness which comes from an *excess* of force, an overflow of power". Excess, which in Kant is attached to nature and unfettered ornament, and which is monstrously conflated with degeneracy in Nordau, becomes an illness for Rivière. Artaud's failure as a poet, he suggests, his "affliction" is "the result of the excessive freedom" he allows his talent. "To be taut, the mind needs a boundary and it needs to come up against the blessed opacity of experience. The only cure for madness is the innocence of facts".[360] Rivière goes on to deride the Surrealists for their conjuring of "assailing phantoms" from a "poetic fourth-dimension"; Artaud was one of the first members of this movement.

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[358] Artaud, 39.
[359] Artaud, 40.
[360] Artaud, 40.

Within Rivière's clinicalization of artistic subjectivity is a dire economy. Taking an almost Nordauean moral stance against artistic freedom, he links "pure thought" and artistic "egoism" to cancer, madness and death, advocating instead for a coherent and normative aesthetic. The true but undisciplined artist will spawn its imitators, and judgment will follow: "the punishment for this flight is close at hand," he warns, "the captured phantom (referring to Surrealism) finds to avenge him twenty internal phantoms which paralyze us, which devour our spiritual substance".[361] Rivière argues, following an idea posited by Kant and amplified in nineteenth-century discourses on degeneracy, that the creative *ingenium* is a wild force that needs discipline in order to address the needs of a normative society, and comport with the greater good:

> As long as you [he refers to Artaud's 'case'] let your intellectual force pour out into the absolute it is tormented by eddies, riddled with helplessness, exposed to predatory winds that disorganize it; but as soon as, driven back by anguish to your own mind, you direct it at this immediate and enigmatic object, it condenses, intensifies, becomes useful and penetrating and brings you benefits; that is, truths expressed with all the three-dimensionality that can make them communicable, accessible to others, in short. Something which transcends your suffering, your very existence, something which enlarges and consolidates you, which gives you the only reality that man can reasonably hope to conquer by his own forces, the reality of others.[362]

He ends the letter imploring Artaud to "send me everything you write".

Written from a position of sufficiency, and from the safest possible clinical distance, his office at the *Revue*, Rivière's dire prognostications incite Artaud to even more prolix stretches. Artaud must explain himself, and does so with precise, performative force, grounded in acute analytical thinking. Artaud seems to preside over the entire exchange with a profoundly serene awareness, a critical prescience that turns the clinical gaze upon itself, and belies his alternately pliant and polemical tone. Artaud writes:

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[361] Ibid.
[362] Ibid., 41.

> A man possesses himself in flashes, and even when he possesses himself, he does not reach himself completely … Nevertheless, *this man exists*, I mean to say that he has a distinct reality which redeems him. Should he be condemned to oblivion simply because he can give only fragments of himself?[363]

The self-scrutiny of this performative turn, is an important feature of self-reflexive clinicalized artistic experience. Maurice Blanchot, in his essay on the exchange, sums up the situation. He gives Rivière considerable credit, though underscores the editor's inability to sufficiently grasp the significance of Artaud's creative-critical effort:

> Jacques Rivière is impeccably understanding, attentive and sensitive. But, in their dialogue there is a clear degree of misunderstanding which nonetheless remains difficult to define … Artaud keeps a constant watch over this misunderstanding. He sees that his correspondent is seeking to reassure him by promising that the future will bring coherence which he lacks, or else by showing him that the mind's frailty is necessary to it.[364]

The misunderstanding revolves around Rivière's belief in Artaud's confused status as failed poet and/or mental patient. Artaud, with a certain humor, expresses his position close to the end of their exchange. He dispatches to Rivière a note that is "clear at the expense of being well-written … literature properly speaking interests me rather little."[365] As Blanchot points out, Artaud is "not concerned with thinking clearly, seeing clearly, with having coherent, appropriate, well-expressed thoughts, all of which aptitudes he knows he possesses."[366]

The implications of Artaud's hyper-critical/clinical turn, are not entirely lost on Rivière, and it is precisely on the order of a *case* that Rivière proposes to formalize and reel in their exchange: "An idea has occurred to me," he writes Artaud, in reference to the publication of their exchange of letters:

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[363] Artaud, 34.

[364] Maurice Blanchot, "Artaud," *The Blanchot Reader,* ed. Michael Holland (Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995) 130.

[365] Artaud, 45.

[366] Blanchot, 130.

> I mean that we would give the addressee and the writer fictitious names. Perhaps I could draft a reply based on the one that I sent you, but more developed and less personal … The whole would make up a little epistolary novel which would be rather unusual.[367]

What Rivière proposes for Artaud's ventured, fragmentary works, products "of a mind which is not yet in possession of itself" is a clinical-critical treatment. The adaptation raises many questions, among them the difficult issue of attribution and more specifically who or what is served in this case by *not* sticking strictly to the 'referential pact' of authorship. The history of psychoanalysis is plagued by this problem; one recalls a host of cases from modern critical/clinical literature: Friedrich/Elisabeth Nietzsche, Freud/Schreber, Lacan/Pantaine. However, Artaud resists the clinical confidentiality Rivière hopes to bestow on the letters, one that would imbue the exchange with the sense that it had been created for the purposes of demonstrating a set of literary notions from a specifically clinical point of view. Rivière would, of course, be given a more developed and less personal, clinical advantage. Artaud agreed to publication "but only provided that we give the reader the impression that he is not involved with something fabricated. I do not insist on signing the letters with my name," he concedes, "but it is absolutely necessary for the reader to feel that he has in his hands the elements of a true story … the reader must be given all the elements of the discussion."[368]While the exchange, as it was published, retains its clinical confessional aspect, Artaud's insistence on maintaining the link between his authorship and his life, between madness and the work, writing and the body, affirms his position not simply as a mental patient, but more importantly, as a distinctive literary *case*.

[367] Artaud, 43
[368] Artaud, 44.

It may be, as Blanchot suggests, that Artaud's performative drive toward an embodied aesthetics may open him to the critical complaint that he is "the victim … of the illusion of the immediate". However, each letter entails scrupulous ruminations on the ways "in which he is banished from the immediate which he calls 'life'; this comes about through a rupture so conspicuous as to introduce into his very core the affirmation of a perpetual deviation which become what is most distinctly his own."[369] I go further, and assert that the forces which deprive Artaud of the 'immediate' of his living experience and of his poetry and art, are the normalizing and complicit apparatuses of the clinical and critical which have set down the discursive framework for Artaud's ordeal as a case-history, his "perpetual deviation" as Blanchot would have it. Throughout the exchange of letters, Artaud performs something remarkable. He resists many of the alienating critical/clinical reductions of his editor/doctor, and vigorously rescues his madness from that "space of indecision" in which literature and the clinic had confined and silenced it. In his last letter, he restates his position: "My particular weakness and my absurdity consist in wishing at all costs to write and to express myself. I am a man who has endured great mental suffering and as such, I have the *right* to speak."[370]

Conclusion

In this chapter I have traced the modern clinicalization of artistic subjectivity, and defined a particular instantiation of this clinicalized subjectivity in the figure of the artist as case history. I began with the theoretical basis for this particular case, citing the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. For Foucault, clinical power exercises its authority over the cultural domain by linking artistic and poetic works to psychological structures,

[369] Blanchot, 130.
[370] Artaud, 41.

and artists and poets to a psycho-pathological typology. For Derrida, modern critical and clinical thought emerge simultaneously and commit the same discursive violence by appropriating the lives and works of artists and poets and restructuring them as critical and/or clinical cases. This was followed by an examination of the special talent of the Kantian *ingenium*. It is my contention that the exemplarity of Kant's genius is defined as much by its special relationship to nature and to the works of art it produces, as it is by the undecidable, subjective status it holds in comparison to its counterpart, the scientist. I then examined the extension of Kant's aesthetic in nineteenth-century discourses from the field of criminal anthropology, notably those by Cesar Lombroso and Max Nordau, and Freudian psychoanalysis, in which artistic talent is conflated with psychopathology. Finally, I discussed the exemplary case of Antonin Artaud, whose life-long medical and psychiatric setbacks and subjections were, in effect, inseparable from his career as a poet, critic, polemicist, vanguard dramatist, actor and visual artist. With the Artaud case, the two divergent genealogical sprouts of Kant's genius, the valorized creative subject, and nature's Lombrosian deformity, are brought, simultaneously, into play. Between these extremes, Artaud wrestles with his critical and clinical subjections and, in Foucauldean parlance "is led to observe himself, analyze himself, recognize himself … and experience himself in a game of truth."[371] It was also my purpose to discern in this exchange how Artaud, in effect, hyperbolically acted out his position as case history and, sometimes in the form of extended bouts of painful self-reflexivity, interrogated the ways psycho-clinical rationality had infiltrated critical discourse. Artaud's *détournement* of his clinical

[371] Maurice Florence (Michel Foucault), "Michel Foucault, 1926-", *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Cutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 314.

and critical confinement points to a new modality of artistic performativity – that of *clinical* performativity, which will be taken up in the next chapter.

Chapter Four
Artistic Embodiment and Clinical Performativity

Art is a distraction. So is life. (Hannah Wilke)

In January 1974, Joseph Beuys lived for a week in the Rene Block Gallery in Manhattan. What resulted was his performance, *I like America and America likes me*. For the duration of the performance, the gallery had been refurbished, or perhaps defurbished, into a *bare-life* confinement chamber. Beuys stayed in this cage – a kennel of sorts – with a coyote, living in an elaborately staged 'shamanic' encounter with the animal. Each day, gallery attendants brought food and bundles of *The Wall Street Journal*, used by Beuys and the coyote as bedding, waste-disposal materials for excretions, and perhaps reading material, at least for Beuys. The accumulation of the papers became, as the days past, a solidified,stratified, time line. Throughout the *action* (Beuys preferred the Fluxus-inflected terminologies linking art to *life-as-zoë*) artist and coyote were photographed by Nicole Koupsack in their many well-planned "interactions," which have since assumed iconic stature post-World War II art. These images show Beuys in his 'shamanic' garb, wrapped in felt blanket and holding a shepherd's staff, attempting to engage the coyote who is photographed stalking anxiously about the chain-link cage, and sometimes tugging at the shaman's robe. (While there is a tradition of animals performing in carnivals and circuses, and there is, no doubt, a conscious carnival-esque quality to Beuys's action, the coyote's participation can only be thought of as unfortunate).

The crucial aspect of this action is the manner in which it started. Once Beuys disembarked, wrapped in his signature felt, from the airplane that brought him from Berlin to New York, Beuys was strapped onto a hospital gurney and transported by

ambulance accompanied from John F. Kennedy Airport in Queens to the Manhattan East Broadway gallery (figure 4.1). At the end of his performance, Beuys was returned to the airport in the same manner, on a hosital gurney and in an ambulance. The action, rich was staged as a therapeutic encounter with nature, a medical intervention.

This action, clearly and self-consciously positions the artist, Beuys, as a bridge between *bios* and *zoë*, and the sequencing of individual incidents and encounters, the framing devices, the isolation unit, all convey a sense of emergency or emergence. Beuys' *oeuvre* is well situated in the rubric of bio-aesthetics. The artist's assumption of the shamanic role – in Deleuzean parlance, a clinician of civilization - which he performed with a certain irony, is also quite seriously grounded in traumatic aspects of Beuys' autobiography. Born in Krefeld in 1921, Beuys served in World War II as a soldier-pilot in the Nazi Luftwaffe and was captured and imprisoned at Cuxhaven, England from 1945-46. In 1944, Beuys had been shot down by Russian forces over the Crimean Mountains and, according the artist, was rescued by the local Tatars who nursed him using pre-modern treatments. Beuys reported he had been wrapped in fat and felt, to warm and heal his bruised limbs. These became Beuys' signature materials.

Beuys' case carries direct genealogical links to bio-aesthetics' cultural antecedents, particularly German idealism, Romanticism and the Kantian legacy. He purposefully chose unrefined, un-aesthetic materials: piles of fat, yards of felt, lead plates, drawings done with iron rust, or the artist's blood. It is not by accident that one of my copies of *The Critique of Judgment* features a collage of a fern leaf pressed by Beuys.[372] The artist discussed his ties to German Idealism, to the philosophy and aesthetics of Kant and

[372] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. James Meredith Creed (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), cover.

Schelling,[373] as well as to naturalists, geologists, vitalist nature philosophers and medical doctors of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He stated in an interview, "(In) my activity, art as I practice it means the natural sciences as I wanted to practice it."[374] While he embraced the modern sciences he was averse to "the extreme specialization of fields"[375] and to rarified methods of analysis, particularly the detached optical modalities of clinical observation discussed in Chapter Two.

Beuys openly resisted the modernist instrumentalization of the optical, to the surface gaze. "We're trained," he stated in an interview, "to think only in terms of physical reality, surface appearances, in terms of the retinal image … that picks up everything like a camera," a somewhat ironic comment in light of the role of photography in documenting his performances. Beuys equates the 'retinal' with clinical 'coolness', suggesting "one must do something with the eye so that it can somehow grasp the warmth process."[376] Beuys' discourse on the eye and its warmth, reverberates with post-Baumgartian and post-Lessing notions linking individual senses to specific artistic media, and with their synesthesic interpenetrations. Moreover, Beuys offers a vitalist-inflected counterpoint to Greenberg's retinalism:

> If one leaves the eye as it is, it will, let's say from the contemporary cultural perspective, tend rather to cool down and differentiate things, divide and analyze them like a camera, separating things out from each other in a crystalline way. That is particularly the case with the eye. Hearing is somewhat different. That's why it's important to hear images and sculptures with the ear as well. For this, one has to set in motion much more inward, deep-seated machinery, which creates this warmth, this

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[373] Theodora Vischer, "Beuys and Romanticism," *Joseph Beuys: The Reader,* ed. and trans. Claudia Mesch and Viola Michelly (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007), 154.
[374] Vischer, "Beuys and Romanticism," 157.
[375] Vischer, "Beuys and Romanticism," 157.
[376] Joseph Beuys and Volker Harlan, *What is Art?: Conversation with Joseph Beuys*, trans. Matthew Barton and Shelly Sacks (Forest Row: Clairview Books, 2004), 18.

> evolutionary warmth, which enables us to become beings capable of carrying evolution forward – in my view this is important.[377]

Beuys' discourses, this included, are rich with bio-clinical topoi linking natural, biological, evolutionary and geological processes to history and culture. Beuys' reflections linking sensory experience, and biological, evolutionary, and geological processes often cycle back to his own biographical corporeality. When, for example, Volker Harlan suggests to Beuys, in all sincerity, that he might "have different organs" for the reception of stimuli (re-casting in a positive light Lombroso's secret anatomy), Beuys retorts that aesthetics should broaden its scope to consider "the constellation of forces present," and for him this entails "something I have to pursue back into my childhood experiences, where I had an inkling of something wholly different." He goes on to speak of "form" and "inner impulses" citing "the different interrelationships of forces" that occur in crystal as opposed to bone. The personal aesthetic experience of warmth, Beuys suggests, changes over time as the body's materiality and articulations age in the course of a life, and as bodies move and change across scans of historical and evolutionary time. These reflections resonate with passages in Critique of Judgment where Kant describes the interlocking forms of natural ends.

Beuys produced a large body sculptural works in the 1960s and 1970s that share the reductive affinities of American minimalist art and Italian *arte povera*. These sculptures often doubled as performance props and make references to the laboratory, and to the biopolitical conflagrations of biology, aesthetics, Agamben's notion of "bare life," and genocide. An inventory of his sculpture materials includes canisters corroded by caustic chemicals, cans of vintage industrial oil paints, laboratory bottles, glass vitrines, and bio-

[377] Beuys and Harlan, *What is Art*?, 18.

degradable materials such as gelatin, honey, wax, and blood. His medical motives are evident in his ubiquitous use of the International Red Cross affiche, painting, stamping, drawing, and sewing the organization's signature red cross into works and action fragments, while also employing military- issue flashlights and blankets, & so forth, which he used in an ever-changing exhibition and performance contexts.

Beuys' career as artist/natural scientist, autobiographer, traumatized veteran (or case history) and shamanic Red Cross performer, occupies a significant place in the historical progress of post-World War II bio-aesthetics. The artist's efforts encapsulate the ordeal of embodiment that has been installed at the core of bio-aesthetics since the eighteenth-century as it progresses to late twentieth-century performance. Beuys's case points to the emergence of a new strain of late twentieth-century performativity, as his 1974 *I like America* … instantiates, that is biographically linked to the artist's own medical experience. It is the purpose of this chapter to identify this new performativity, which I call *clinical performativity*. Specifically, my focus will be on the acute manifestation of this clinical performativity emerging from the formalist theoretical and critical fevers of the vanguard 1960s and 1970s New York art world. I will focus on a caseload of late-twentieth-century critical discourses and performance works with the purpose of highlighting what I consider to be a significant turning point in the ongoing engagement of clinical epistemology and artistic theory and practice, and in the unfolding bio-aesthetic progress of artistic embodiment toward full-blown *clinical* performance. The first case consists of a famous exchange of critical articles on the topic of minimalism published in the pages of *Artforum* between three highly visible figures in the post-Greenbergian mid-1960s New York art world – sculptors/critics Donald Judd and Robert

Morris, and critic/art historian Michael Fried. The exchange highlights the difficulty in containing or accounting for the encroachments of the body into Minimalism's expanding aesthetic field of the mid-1960s. As Judd and Morris push the material logic of formalism further into the field of embodied performance, Fried asserts the Lessing-Greenberg doctrine of medium specificity and produces a discourse that is decidedly *immunological* in its response. The second case, the work of Hannah Wilke, commences as a feminist critique of Minimalist forms, which eventually includes theatrical incorporations of her own body into her exhibitions. Of special interest are a powerful series of late multi-media and performance works, from the 1980s and early 1990s, which take up the artist's medical struggles with metastatic lymphoma. Focusing on these two cases, which are historically contiguous, I will follow the passage of the body from the laboratory aesthetics of post Greenbergian and minimalist aesthetics to its appearance in the feminist-inspired, autobiographically charged modality of clinical performativity.

The Judd-Morris-Fried and Wilke cases taken together offer us a sort of bio-aesthetic assay of the essential features and clinical mechanisms at work in the artistic drive toward artistic embodiment and performance. Through the archaeological schema of bio-aesthetics these clinical mechanisms, as we have seen, have been at work at the center of aesthetic discourse and artistic practice since the eighteenth century. The clinical mechanism at work in Lessing's aesthetics, which empirically observes and identifies the material and formal specifications of artistic mediums as it suppresses explicit assertions of the corporeal referent (the body in pain), has migrated to late twentieth century Greenbergian and minimalist discourse. Yet, we might say that "the body" continues its passage through these discourses and confronts first diagnostic, then immunological

resistances. With Wilke's case, this body in the late twentieth century finally forces itself into visibility as a new performative strategy, that of clinical performativity.

Any mention of performativity (clinical or otherwise) requires some mention of the work of feminist philosopher Judith Butler, as hers is the most influential discourse on the topic to date. Butler's argument in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, and its follow-up *Bodies that Matter: On The Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* is that gender is performative and teases normative gender from its essentialist moorings in naturalized sex anatomy. Butler's theory incorporates central concepts from Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, Althusserian 'interpellation,' and Monique Wittig's concept of a de-polarized, de-sexed 'gender.' Gender arrives to subjects from the outside and is transposed onto or interpolated into bodies, as (and through) language. It is a normative, subject-structuring system, a system that encompasses "both the regulation of sexuality and its psychic articulations."[378] Butler's concept of performativity pushes beyond the normative categories of "true sex, discrete gender, and specific sexuality"[379] toward a new understanding of gender agency. Butler's gender theories have been instrumental to an evolving queer understanding of sexuality and gender which undoes a "causal or structural link between them."[380] She proposes that drag performance challenges "naturalized knowledge" and re-figures gender as a creative opportunity to revise our understanding of the 'real.' This understanding moved gender away from clinical anatomy (in Foucault's sense) and into the domain of self-styling and invention. "Performativity," she writes, "describes this relation of being implicated in that which

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[378] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York & London: Routledge, 1993) 182.
[379] Butler, 127.
[380] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York & London: Routledge, 1990) xiii.

one opposes, the turning of power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a 'pure' opposition, a 'transcendence' of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labor of forging a future from resources inevitably impure."[381] My own category of clinical performativity follows a similar turn; the clinic, or clinical mechanism, functions as a set of anatomical, medical and psychiatric protocols imposed on the subject and on perception and experience. Artaud, as we have seen, transformed his painful ordeals with psychiatric and critical powers into new and alternative forms of artistic, literary, theatrical and theoretical resistance, subjections into a new form of artistic resistance. In Wilke's case, as we will see, the clinic – which Wilke was at first hesitant to subject herself to – subjects her to its own painful, hopefully restorative, treatment regimes; like a drag artist, Wilke devises performative strategies which in sometimes parodic fashion call attention to, or exaggerate, its impact on her body.

A Disorder of *Specific Objects*

The constellation of critical writings I am about examine may be placed under the rubric of post-, perhaps more precisely, para-Greenbergian thought prevalent among a New York-based group of artists and critics associated with "post painterly" and more specifically Minimalist and installation sculpture at that time. The theoretical-polemical texts, Donald Judd's "Specific Objects" (1965), Robert Morris' "Notes on Sculpture" (1966), and Michael Fried's "Art and Objecthood" (1967), all published within the pages of *Artforum*, form a symptomatic knot as they perseverate around a fulcrum of Greenbergian notions, particularly those pertaining to the empirical-positivist assertion of

[381] Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 241.

medium specificity, the place and function of the beholder, and ineluctable and ever shifting drive toward embodiment.

The texts form a tangle of rivalry with Greenberg's discourse and with each other; Fried clearly opposes Judd and Morris for the Greenberg "title." Yet each text is caught within the same corporeal-discursive bind, and preserves and recapitulates the clinico-empirical logic of Greenberg's analysis as it seeks at the same time to master and surpass it. Fried's writing ostensibly works to extend the Greenbergian program to account for and critique (and ultimately, to dismiss) an emerging category of three-dimensional works by Judd and Morris. Both artists were working with variously shaped surfaces and sculpted or manufactured objects, assembled within an exhibition space that has been extended and refurbished to function as something of a theater or laboratory (figure 4.2). Morris began to incorporate performance into his practice, as he did in *Arizona* (1963), a dance piece produced with the Judson Dance Theatre, and in the performance *Site* (1964), produced in collaboration with artist Carolee Schneeman (figure 4.3). There is little doubt Morris was aware of the implications of what Jones calls the "Pollockian performative," that is to say the performative aspect of Jackson Pollock's floor-based approach and the significance of Hans Namuth's photographs to the work's reception. Morris's performative practice began in dance. His work with the Judson Dance Troupe introduced concepts of 'real time' and 'real space', or as I see them, laboratory time and space, into the formalized choreographic schema. What all of the critical texts were and are troubled by is of an underlying *disordering* – the disordering of a referent, and of a disruptive continuously shifting *materiality*, which emerges in these performances. Each text lingers on this troublesome materiality as it haunts, optically hovers about, projects

or erupts into the expanding aesthetic field. Each of the writers adopts the bloodless style of clinical or laboratory writing – this is especially true of Morris' notational formatting; yet all this writing veers closer to the discourse of "embodiment" and portends or provides the critical pretext for the various formal, performative, theatrical and/or obstreperous intrusions of actual bodies into artistic practice for which the publication of Fried's seminal "Art and Objecthood" functions as fulcrum.

Robert Morris and Donald Judd were highly influential artists, and produced some of the most lucid and engaged art criticism at the time. Like most of their generation, and like Fried, they were influenced by Greenberg's ideas, and took up the key tenets of Greenberg's thought. Their art and their criticism follows a logical progression from"Modernist Painting", from the optical experience of colour in painting, which Greenberg coined "the illusion of modalities," to the *tactile* domain of sculpture, of artistic objects in what both Judd and Morris contend is *literal* space. Their effort was to resist what they considered Greenberg's too restrictive *planarization* of visual art and, of course, his emphasis on painting. Like Fried, they had metabolized Greenberg's impeccable style and empirical drive, and while they dispensed with his overall qualitative assessments, they followed through on Greenberg's fierce analytic effort to pin down the material-base structures of art, to further ground these base structures in the phenomenology/physiology of biological being, and to place these developments within a larger historical framework. They were also driven by a desire to push or extend aspects of Greenberg's modernist program beyond the domain of pictures, and even beyond the parameters of sculpture as it is traditionally understood.

In "Specific Objects" published in *Artforum* in 1965, Judd defines a new category of three-dimensional art which is "neither painting nor sculpture"[382] and incorporates aspects of two-dimensional painting into the traditional specifications of modernist sculpture. He cites Duchamp's Readymades as well as Robert Rauschenberg's recent combines and Jasper John's collages. Judd evinces clearly a post-modern understanding of the discursive conditions and underpinnings of art, and contends that late modernist painting and sculpture have become "more defined … and more proscribed" within modernist conventions, critical mediations, and exhibition spaces. For Judd, "the main thing wrong" with modernist painting "is that it is a rectangular plane placed against the wall."[383] Greenberg's planarization of painting had been historically necessary, Judd suggests, but it too forcefully "establish(ed) the rectangle as a definite form" and lost its flexible creative value as "a neutral limit."[384] Modernist sculpture is too "composed," the materials have become too fixed (colourless wood and metal), and the "hierarchies of clarity and strength" prevail. The more *lifelike* disruptions by Duchamp's Readymades and the relief and assemblage works of Johns and Rauschenberg suggest new, different "beginnings." Judd further contends that this work pushes further into three-dimensionality as "real space," and by doing so manages to dispense with "the problem of illusionism," and concludes that "actual space is intrinsically more powerful and specific than paint on a flat surface."[385] We find that Greenberg's insistence on the referent has, in Judd's discourse, shifted from the flat surface of the picture plane to quotidian three-dimensional space and to Minimalism's "shaped objects." Again, while

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[382] Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," in *Art in Theory (1900-1990), An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), 806.
[383] Judd, "Specific Objects," 810.
[384] Judd, "Specific Objects," 810.
[385] Judd, "Specific Objects," 813.

the young artist takes up against the older established critic in an effort to expand the parameters of artistic practice, he posits "specific objects" within the suzerainty of a modified Greenbergian gaze.

Morris's "Notes on Sculpture" published in *Artforum* between 1966 and 1967 conforms to the central logic of the Lessing-Greenberg discourse, but by making the position of a corporeal *beholder* explicit, pushes this logic further towards a discourse of embodiment. Morris first asserts, indeed with greater rhetorical vehemence than either Lessing or Greenberg, the doctrine of medium-specificity, and in particular the medium-specificity of sculpture:

> In the interest of differences, it seems time that some of the distinctions sculpture has managed for itself be articulated. To begin in the broadest possible way it should be stated that the concerns of sculpture have been for some time not only distinct from but hostile to those of painting. The clearer the nature of the values of sculpture becomes the stronger the opposition appears. Certainly the continuing realization of its nature has had nothing to do with any dialectical concerns with which advanced painting has been occupied for about half a century.[386]

Morris's texts that together comprise "Notes", assume an air of empirical truth-telling, adopting that authoritative stance of clinical and scientific discourse that is now so familiar as a mode in which critical and theoretical discourse asserts its credibility. Morris's account of the specificity of sculptural forms also asserts a natural-historical progress of these forms, the historical model of development that follows the logic of the natural sciences, a trace of Matthew Arnold's "master current,"[387] and which is a central guiding feature of Greenberg's criticism. Morris (like Judd) writes in an elaborately inflected scientistic style of critical ponderance (also a characteristic of his artistic practice, as we shall see), a style geared to appeal to the highly specialized *Artforum*

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[386] Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," in *Art in Theory (1900-1990), An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), 814.
[387] Matthew Arnold, *The Works of Matthew Arnold: Essays in Criticism,* vol. 3, (London: Macmillan, 1903), 170.

readership. Morris expends considerable empirical effort, following the analytical-critical protocols of Greenberg, on the distinctions between painting and sculpture, and how the material authority of minimalist sculpture dispels the spectre of representation, illusion and the figural that still haunts painting. Morris is, ostensibly, taking issue with Greenbergian aesthetics, yet he replicates its logical formulation and clinical-empirical mechanics. I cite the following passage at length:

> Certainly the continuing realization of (sculpture's) nature has had nothing to do with any dialectical evolution that painting has enunciated for itself. The primary problematic concerns with which advanced painting has been occupied for about half a century have been structural. The structural element has been gradually revealed to be located within the nature of the literal qualities of the support. It has been a long dialogue with a limit. Sculpture on the other hand, never having been involved with illusionism could not possibly have based the efforts of fifty years upon the rather pious, if somewhat contradictory, act of giving up this illusionism and approaching the object. Save for replication, which is not to be confused with illusionism, the sculptural facts of space, light, and materials have always functioned concretely and literally. Its allusions or references have not been commensurate with the indicating sensibilities of painting. If painting has sought to approach the object, it has sought equally hard to dematerialize itself on the way. Clearer distinctions between sculpture's essentially tactile nature and the optical sensibilities involved in painting need to be made.[388]

Once he establishes the purity of sculpture's self-referentiality, Morris launches into more precise declensions of sculpture's three-dimensional relational space, and the special role of the beholder in all of this. He cites Tatlin, Gabo, Rodchenko, and the Russian Modernists, whose early-modernist works incorporated constructed objects, painted surfaces, bold typography, photographs and film imagery, and following their protocols of *faktura*, he argues for the use of modern industrial materials and techniques. He also elaborates on Mondrian, Cubism, and Neolithic metalwork. At the same time, the text recapitulates the central issues and problems of the Lessing-Greenberg discourse, and, by linking sculpture to the tactile, harkens back to the critico-physiological-sensory, post-

[388] Morris, "Notes on Sculpture", 814.

Laocoön discourse of Herder. Herder had, we recall, identified the concepts of *Plastik* and *Kraft*, which he assigned to their respective senses of sight and touch: sight to painting, tactility or touch to sculpture.

In Morris's polemic drive to demonstrate analytical mastery over the Lessing-Greenberg discourse, his notes become more firmly entrenched in the terminology of the *actual*. Morris's writings recapitulate the productive and problematic issues at the core of bio-aesthetics. Modernism's struggle with the 'structural,' the critical-empirical drive toward "the literal qualities of the support," the seemingly paradoxical presentation (to the sense) of a 'disembodied' opticality, and this "long dialogue with the limit" (whose *degree zero* I contend is the unsignifiable biological body itself), these are all articulations of the central themes, the central Foucauldean "statements", which are repeated, reasserted and reworked within the framework of a bio-aesthetic episteme. Morris's hyper-empirical assertions of the *actuality* of sculpture, and the "sculptural *facts* of space," mixed with snippets of gestalt theory and neuroscience, writing of colour, texture, shape, and flatness as "strong gestalt sensations" and grounding the experience of space in the "kinesthetic clues, memory traces, and physiological factors … of parallax vision and the structure of the retina and brain"[389] are all indications of his struggle to articulate the modernist problem with the bio-aesthetic, the problem of pure self-referentiality when confronted with the body of the spectator. Kant's a-prioritization of space takes a decidedly laboratorial turn and is grounded in the physiological structures of the brain and its sensory bio-apparatus.

For Judd and Morris (and Fried, as we will see) the figure assumes an important, yet somewhat unstable, unfixed place within the matrix of the *actual*. If the early Russian

[389] Morris, "Notes on Sculpture", 815.

Modernists provide a historical touchstone for the aesthetics of the actual, of "specific objects," more recent late-modernist examples of sculpture by David Smith and Anthony Caro have, for both Judd and Morris, retreated to a more aesthetically conservative compositional or *additive* approach. The trouble, for Judd and Morris, with such sculpture is the manner in which the works maintain an affiliation with 'naturalism.' In essence, a large free-standing sculpture by David Smith retains the old compositional logic of figural sculpture: "a beam thrusts; a piece of iron follows a gesture; together they form a naturalistic and *anthropomorphic* image. The space corresponds."[390] Judd's problem with the traces of an animated body is, essentially, a reformulation of Lessing's ordeal of sculptural forms, of the old representational and compositional uses or habits of naturalism traced into actual shapes in space. It is, once again, the bio-aesthetic ordeal of representation as it confronts the multifaceted corporeal referent. For both artists the resolution to this problem resides in the more forceful assertion, indeed the hyper-Greenbergian assertion, of the specific materiality of sculptures as objects-in-themselves. It is also important to note the seemingly paradoxical place of the figural, more specifically the *anthropomorphic* in this. Tthe figure returns or remains, not only in the incipient anthropomorphism of Caro's and Smith's work, but in the flat declamatory manner in which modernist paintings assert themselves, and even, as Fried will contend, in the non-art *theatricality* of objects and their beholders. For Judd and Morris, the project of specific objects, the empirical space opened by minimalism, put a new emphasis on the place of the beholder. "The better new work," Morris writes:

> Takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision. The object is but one of the terms in the new aesthetic. It is in some way more reflexive because one's awareness of oneself existing in the same

[390] Morris, cited in Fried, "*Art and Objecthood*," 150.

> space as the work is stronger than in previous work, with its many internal relationships. One is more aware than before that he himself is establishing relationships as he apprehends the object from various positions and under varying conditions of light and spatial context.[391]

Morris continues, elucidating the ways in which the movements of the viewer, interacting with the sculptural object, with shape in real space, constitute the fundamental relational structure of minimalist, and also performative, art. Embodiment assumes this relational "actuality," which of course Fried will contest as a species of *dangerous* theater.

Michael Fried's important essay "Art and Objecthood" was published in *Artforum* in June 1967 as a riposte to Judd and Morris, and represents the third, crucial point in an acutely triangulated rivalry over Greenberg's legacy. The historical significance of this text to the other cases taken up in this chapter must be underscored. "Art and Objecthood" was perhaps the most widely read post-Greenbergian work of criticism of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and some of the most significant performance and body-based art practice directly engaged with it. The text is often regarded as the last important work of late modernist criticism (though Douglas Crimp's 1981 *The End of Painting* might also hold that position[392]), maintaining as it does an essentially Greenbergian outlook, and it is viewed as something of a period piece today. Still, it set a rigorous new standard for the extended critical-theoretical essay. One thinks of its relevance to the writings of Rosalind Krauss, Annette Michelson, Douglas Crimp, Yves-Alain Bois and

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[391] Morris, "Notes on Sculpture", 818.

[392] The question as to what the *identity* of painting is surely one of the fundamental themes of modernist culture. It has been my thesis that this question, which germinates in Lessing, is tied to the empirical, critical, and corporeal drive toward the (bio)referent set into play by the modern clinical sciences. The question is raised once again, and perhaps for the last (most recent) time, in Douglas Crimp's 1981 essay "The End of Painting," which takes up the Kantian injunction to critique and expands it to take on what makes painting, in the larger discursive sense, understandable as such, and the implicit ideological nature of the aesthetic enterprise.

others who filled the pages of *Artforum* and *October* and dominated theoretical and critical discourse well into the 1980s and early 1990s.

Again, the text evinces a clinically emphatic turn on Greenberg's approach and I would suggest shares the medical suzerainty of Rivière, as it adapts Greenberg's distinctively *evaluative* stance in an extended *diagnostic* assessment of Judd's and Morris's works and writings. Yet, "Art and Objecthood" is also a *symptomatic* text. Despite its high-minded tone and its empirical-clinical semblance, the text is marked up, at times even disfigured, by a profound perseverance of the underlying yet not yet named problem of 'embodiedness,' and the human figure returns to haunt the text in many different (and sometimes differing) guises. "Art and Objecthood" takes on the heterogeneity of (bio)aesthetic stimuli with the familiar set of clinical-critical tools; however, certain phrases, concepts, linguistic fixations so to speak, circulate but never alight upon the underlying disorder, which is the troublesome bio-aesthetic sense of the body/referent as it erupts into the field of artistic manifestations and signifiers.

The text opens as a challenge to the nomenclature, to the common consent that had accrued to the term "minimalism." Fried, in the manner of a diagnostician, offers what he considers to be a more apposite label to "(the) enterprise known variously as Minimal Art, ABC Art, Primary Structures and Specific Objects … I prefer to call it, literalist art."[393] As we shall see, the incipient medical logic of Fried's position will become more clear in his conscious use of medical and diagnostic terms which place "literalist art" within a schema of health and disorder. This medical logic is granted additional authority when Fried tacks it onto a Kantian framework which opposes "taste" – which we recall in the *Critique of Judgment* is something like the paradoxical aesthetic antinomy and analog

[393] Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148.

of reason – to "sensibility" which is that aspect of the sensory apparatus that empirically apprehends "things themselves" prior to their understanding as concepts.

"From its inception,' Fried writes, "literalist art has amounted to something more than an episode in the history of taste. It belongs rather to the history – almost the natural history – of sensibility, and it is not an isolated episode but the expression of a general and pervasive condition." With the damning words *almost natural history*, Fried announces the failure of minimalist art. The art of Judd and Morris does not attain the stature of taste, but remains in that rather dull purely empirical domain of things themselves and this points to a general artistic malaise, a malaise of sensibility. "What is at stake," Fried writes, "… is whether the paintings or objects in question are experienced as paintings or as objects and what decides their identity as *painting* is their confronting of the demand that they hold as shapes."[394] Fried further contends that unlike recent literalist art, "the most important painting of the last several years" (by Noland, Olitski and Stella) has dealt with the "conflict" that has "gradually emerged between shape as a fundamental property of objects"[395] without forsaking the 'medium of painting'. That is to say, Noland et al. managed to produce paintings that simultaneously account for painting's "objecthood" without ever producing works that would be mistaken for mere objects. Fried, perhaps unconsciously, evokes Kant's purposiveness without purpose. Hence, these painters have secured for their works lasting positions within the history of taste, and they have done so by taking up the historical injunction to critically and empirically account for the materiality of shape without ever, as the literalist artists do, allowing their paintings to slip over into that domain of pure sensibility, of mere things-

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[394] Fried, 148-149.
[395] Fried, 149.

in-themselves whose apprehension to sense is determined entirely upon their shapes. "Otherwise," Fried cautions us, if paintings are pushed too far toward and beyond that empirical limit "they are experienced as nothing more than objects." [396]

It is within this paradoxical logic, expressed succinctly within the afore-cited passages, that Fried's diagnostic discourse seems to describe a process by which the modernist critical-empirical drive which continuously brings to the fore art's own corporeality, its supports, the tooth of the canvas, the manual maneuvers of brushwork, clay, steel, as well as the material *specifications* of the space of the *beholder*, turns like an immunological disorder to undermine art's bodily coherence:

> Modernist painting has come to find it imperative that it defeat or suspend its own objecthood, and… the crucial factor in this undertaking is shape, but shape that must belong to *painting* (author's italics) – it must be pictorial, not, or not merely, literal. Whereas literalist art stakes everything on shape as a given property of objects, if not indeed as a kind of object in its own right. It appears not to defeat or suspend its own objecthood, but on the contrary to discover and project objecthood as such.[397]

If, for Fried, paintings or sculptures are to continue to maintain bodily coherence as such, part of painting and sculpture's corporeality – its objecthood – has to be immunologically countered with its *pictorial* or *sculptural* function. Iterating Greenberg's declension of the quadrilateral canvas, the critic also asserts the importance of this shape as painting's body-limit; if shape tumescently extrudes into the space of the beholder it assumes a disorderly and even monstrous comportment.[398] Fried goes on to offer his assessment of this "condition of non-art" in the following passage:

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[396] Fried, 151.
[397] Fried, 151.
[398]* A number of artists at this time played with this border, pushing the corporeal quality of painting beyond a certain comportment, frame or body-limit; one thinks of course of Eva Hesse's *histological* use of latex, rubber and wax-soaked sheets of theatrical gauze that hung in rows from the gallery ceiling, suggesting scans of skin. Her remarkable *Hang-up* (1966) would seem a more appurtenant target of Fried's proscription of painterly shape than works by Judd or Morris; it consists of a large latex rope-like shape that extends from two edges of a large empty "minimalist" frame.

> There is, in any case, a sharp contrast between the literalist espousal of objecthood – almost, it seems, as an art in it own right – and modernist painting's self imposed imperative that it defeat or suspend its own objecthood through the medium of shape. In fact from the perspective of recent modernist painting, the literalist position evinces a sensibility not simply alien but antithetical to its own: as though, from that perspective, the demands of art and the conditions of objecthood were in direct conflict.
> Here the question arises: What is it about objecthood as projected and hypostatized by the literalists that makes it, if only from the perspective of recent modernist painting, antithetical to art?[399]

We find in the aforementioned passage a paradoxical bracketing of modernism's empirical assertion of medium specificity, Fried seems to reverse its direction, and suggests that somehow it must turn on itself, and suspend the referent in order to maintain art's signifying semblance. Indeed, there are large doses of formalist antibody coursing through the veins of Fried's diagnostic text. As it sets out to contain and protect painting from the contagion of objecthood, Fried's writing becomes symptomatically fraught, finding object's problems at every microcosmically small level. Again, the blind knot around the impossibility of directly, concretely representing modern physical anguish found in Lessing's text, and the manner in which Lessing's treatise does not fully distinguish between painterly and sculptural properties as such, comes to muddle Fried's text. When Fried compares "specific objects" to "recent modernist painting," one might expect this slip would not have eluded the rigour of Fried's critical probity. But, I contend, such messied-missing-the-point, captures in essence the immunological ordeal of Fried's discourse, in which are embodied a number of internal disorders. Firstly, it manifests tensions of undecidable definitions of medium specificity arising from modernist painting's rivalry with the emergent (non) sculpture. Secondly, Fried's text reflects or manifests his critical rivalry with the new theory and his efforts to secure his

[399] Fried, 152-153.

place within and with the support of the Greenbergian legacy. Thirdly, and most importantly, "Art and Objecthood" manifests a more general anguish of critical and aesthetic discourse that, since the eighteenth century, had feverishly grasped at the zoë-like referent threatening to re-figure/dis-figure art, and which Fried equates with a paradoxical conception of the "theatrical", where reduction to a purely self-referential work of art either becomes an elaborate spectacle, playing itself to its audience's expectations as a kind of high-art kitsch, or enacts itself in its audience, thus referencing the audience's bodies, and so becoming, literally, embodied.

The "literalist espousal of objecthood," he writes "amounts to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theater, and theater is now the negation of art." Fried associates Minimalism's empirical assertion of actual space with the theater primarily because it includes the spectator, and he calls Morris's work out on this: "Literalist sensibility is theatrical because, to begin with, it is concerned with the actual circumstances in which the beholder encounters literalist work. Morris makes this explicit … the experience of literalist art is of an object in a *situation* – one that, virtually by definition, *includes the beholder …*"[400]

Fried's text continues in its analyses and diagnosis of the theater of objecthood and produces a sometimes difficult to follow play of shifting figures. Yet, this dire state of literalist affairs, this death-drive to objecthood, also produces, Fried tells us, "a theatrical effect or quality – a kind of *stage* presence."[401] This presence assumes the stature of a demiurge and harbours a menacing "obtrusiveness," and "aggressiveness" which "extorts

[400] Fried, 153.
[401] Fried, 155.

from the beholder" a "special complicity."[402] Fried contends that Morris's literalist art "demands that the beholder take it into account, that he take it seriously" and that the "fulfillment of that demand consists simply in being aware of the work … in acting accordingly." For Fried, it would seem that Minimalist art's assertion of the actual (which is paradoxically also the theatrical) has the effect of undermining the autonomy of the beholder, making the beholder, literally, the subject. That modernist painting also imposes its protocols of "awareness" on the beholder, and so demands that it be taken seriously seems lost on Fried. In evaluative fashion, the critic simply seems to *prefer* modernist seriousness to minimalist or literalist seriousness. But there is something in the indeterminate scattering of objects and spectators disparately about the arena that troubles and repels Fried. The "experience of being distanced," he contends, seems to be a crucial component of minimalist art, and this *experienced* distance places the beholder in a vulnerable place: "(The) beholder knows himself to stand in an indeterminate, open-ended – and unexacting – relation as subject to the impassive object on the wall or floor." I cannot help but recall Artaud's experience of emptiness as an 'active' emptiness. Yet for Fried even in this desolating de-personalizing space, Morris's objects, his draped or hung felts and precariously balanced steel plates and beams, transform into unsettling anthropomorphic figures through their engagement of an imminent sense of temporality. "In fact," he writes, "being distanced by such objects is not, I suggest entirely unlike being distanced, or crowded, by the silent presence of another *person*; the experience of coming upon literalist objects unexpectedly – for example, in somewhat darkened rooms – can be strongly, if momentarily disquieting in just this way."[403] Hence, Judd's and

[402] Fried, 155.
[403] Fried, 155.

Morris's argument against the (additive or composed) appearance of the figure in welded steel modern sculptures by Anthony Caro and David Smith is in obverse fashion articulated by Fried who argues that a literalist work by the other Smith, Tony, titled "Black Cube" is "something like a surrogate person – that is, a kind of statue." Fried supports his claim citing the function of the pedestal (a support made of wood two by fours) that bolsters the artist's "Black Box" (1963-65). But for Fried, Tony Smith's and Morris's works manifest or embody the "unitary" and "holistic" forms of "other persons" not only through the traditional sculptural means of pedestals and statuary, but through the "predilection for symmetry" and for their use of "pneumatic" or *hollow* structures:

> (The) apparent hollowness of most literalist work – the quality of having an *inside* – is almost blatantly anthropomorphic. It is … as though the work in question has an inner, even secret life – an effect that is perhaps made most explicit in Morris's *Untitled* (1965), a large ringlike form in two halves with fluorescent light glowing from within at the narrow gap between the two.[404]

Fried cites Tony Smith's interest in pneumatic structures and biomorphic forms, and then reclaims and redirects the modernist injunction against naturalism: "I am suggesting, then," he writes, "that a kind of latent hidden naturalism, indeed anthropomorphism, lies at the core of literalist theory and practice." In Fried's text, this latency suggests a kind of incipient disease process lurking within the zombie-like body of literalist art:

> The latency or hiddenness of the anthropomorphism has been such that the literalists themselves, as we have seen, have felt free to characterize the modernist art they *oppose*, for example of David Smith and Anthony Caro, as anthropomorphic – a characterization whose teeth, imaginary to begin with, have just been pulled. By the same token however, what is wrong with literalist work is not that it is anthropomorphic but that the meaning and, equally the hiddenness of its anthropomorphism are incurably theatrical … *the crucial distinction that I am proposing is between work that is fundamentally theatrical and work that is not* [author's italics].[405]

[404] Fried, 156.
[405] Fried, 157.

From here Fried's text takes on more polemical and diagnostic vehemence in contesting the theatrical and "theater's profound hostility to the arts" and what he contends is, in actuality, "the absence of the object in … the theatricality of objecthood."[406] The origin of literalist art's reflexive insistence on its own objecthood is modernist, and the "risk, even the possibility of seeing works of art as nothing more than objects did not exist … (but) began to present itself around 1960 (and) was largely the result of developments within modernist painting."[407] Once again, the familiar paradoxical complicities of taste and idea, sensate and conceptual, judgment and reason, empirical and rational, surface in the simultaneous auto-critical assertion of art's objecthood, and its simultaneous auto-aesthetic/auto-immune suppression.

> Roughly, the more nearly assimilable to objects certain advanced painting had come to seem, the more the entire history of painting since Manet could be understood – delusively, I believe – as consisting in the progressive (though ultimately inadequate) revelation of its essential objecthood, and the more urgent became the need for modernist painting to make explicit its conventional – specifically, its *pictorial* – essence by defeating or suspending its own objecthood through the medium of shape.[408]

At root is the *infectious* influence of the theatrical on the objecthood of painting. While the literalist sensibility is "a response to the same developments that have largely compelled modernist painting" both to assert and "undo its objecthood," it is "corrupted or perverted by the theater." Again, Fried invokes an immunological model to describe the disorder that modernist painting manages to fight off, and yet which afflicts the literalist sensibility:

> [What] has compelled modernist painting to defeat or suspend its own objecthood is not just developments internal to itself, but the same general, enveloping infectious theatricality that corrupted literalist sensibility in the first place and in the grip of which the developments in question – and modernist painting in general – are seen as

[406] Fried, 160.
[407] Fried, 160.
[408] Fried, 160.

> nothing more than an uncompelling and presenceless kind of theater. It was the need to break the fingers of that grip that made objecthood an issue for modernist painting.[409]

Interestingly, Fried offers an obverse version of Artaud's polemic, which sought out the negation of art (and the traditional understanding the theatrical) through a "theater of cruelty" which would eliminate the playwright (who produces texts) *and* break down the boundaries of the stage to include spectators/beholders with the actors, thus asserting their collective, lived bio-aesthetic experience against the contrived theatrical 'double' of an extraneous text and witnessed scene. Fried cites the case of Artaud, with that of Brecht, when he identifies the threat, as he sees it, theatricality poses to all the arts, including the theatre:

> *The success, even the survival, of the arts has come increasingly to depend on their ability to defeat theater.* This is perhaps nowhere more evident than within theater itself, where the need to defeat what I have been calling theater has chiefly made itself felt as the need to establish a drastically different relationship to its audience.[410]

We have in this set of critical and theoretical writings by Judd, Morris and Fried, a triangulated, shifting and reversible set of shared terms. Each discourse takes up the Greenbergian-Kantian injunction to critique, engaging this directive as differently-nuanced instrumentalizations of the empirically-oriented bio-aesthetic drive. Each uses the same terms of medium specificity, the figure, the anthropomorphic, the space of the *actual*, shape, the beholder, naturalism, and the strange manifold of space, to structure a supporting skeleton of concepts for determining sculptural identity. While Judd and Morris push the boundaries of which materials are included within the category of sculptural medium beyond bronze, stone, and *gestural* welded steel, so as to include the specificity of the readymade and early Russian Constructivism, Fried contests this species

[409] Fried, 161.
[410] Fried, 163.

of ‘objecthood’ as a theatrical perversion that threatens art’s survival. In contrast to these sculpturally-perverse objects, Fried holds up recent developments in modernist painting, such as the curved canvases of Frank Stella, which he contends simultaneously account for their own status as shaped objects yet never succumb to theatricality and hence maintain their identity as paintings. Fried’s text assumes a diagnostic approach, at times adopting familiar medical terminologies. In many ways Fried’s position toward Judd and Morris echoes that of Riviere in his letters to Artaud, and expounds on a higher-order of aesthetic value against the enervated literalism of “specific objects.” Yet Fried has perhaps inadvertently taken a hit of the infectious ‘actual.’ His text is fraught with the disorder of ‘specific objects’ which I have likened to an immunological ordeal. In “Art and Objecthood” shapes, figures, beholders, hollow replicants, foreign bodies, menacing anthropomorphic surrogates, and so forth, all take up against each other in a life-and-death struggle for art’s (bodily) survival. But this textual immunological ordeal is also a symptomatic recapitulation of the *disordering* impact of the corporeal referent on artistic experience that I contend forms the productive core of Western aesthetics—née bio-aesthetics – since the eighteenth century.

The new domain of sensibility, of unmediated and yet-to-be signified sensate experience which Kant identified as the empirical base from which understanding and knowledge is built, is both the ontological-biological basis of cultivated rarified “taste,” and the corporeal-empirical referent (in Friedean parlance, the “theater of objecthood”) which threatens to rise up in all of its materiality to overcome the signifying coherence of art, and the aesthetic subject. In is interesting to note, on the topic of taste, Kant’s two-tiered definition of it; it is at once highly personal, subjective, and associated to what

each finds agreeable (food, sex), the principle of which that each individual is in possession of his own.[411] Yet Kant associates with this strain of taste "a faculty of desire" and the delight that it derives "pathologically conditioned" by stimuli from coming into direct contact with nature. Kant delineates a purer strain[412] which does come too close to "the existence" of its object but is associated with the *contemplative* appreciation of beauty in works of art,[413] and which Jones' has quite persuasively linked to a repressive masculinist apparatus.[414] Again, the proliferation of discursive paradoxes inscribed into single terminologies, embedded within larger discourses would seem to bear then, according to my reading, the clinical logic of contagion and immunological suppression that informs aesthetics since the eighteenth century. I would also suggest that this immunological suppression is targeted at the emerging body itself, a body which will comes into full visibility in performance-based practices, and particularly in the new forms of clinical performativity that this chapter sets out to identify.

In the early 1960s Morris produced several works that preceded or accompanied his theoretical writings and performance-based works, and that underscored the empirical referentiality of his materials while they functioned as surfaces marked by his corporeal trace. Morris was inspired by Jasper Johns' 1955 encaustic assemblage-painting, *Target with Plaster Casts*. From the mid 1950s, John's work, like that of his colleague and companion at the time Robert Rauschenberg, blurred high modernist margins of medium specificity by incorporating flatly painted surfaces, readily identified emblematic images referencing flat or abstract objects, such as maps, flags, targets and numbers; found

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[411] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 44.
[412] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 55.
[413] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 41
[414] Jones, *Performing the Subject*, 75.

objects; and plaster casts of various body parts – nose, hand, genitals, mouth, ear, foot, and so forth. The key overall feature of these earlier works being a skin-like sheath of encaustic enhanced oil paint applied in deliberate, tactile brushstrokes. Johns has worked consistently with a modern semiotic matrix of objects and signs. The use of encaustic wax and its body-signifying properties has a long artistic history dating to the Egyptians, and to ancient Coptic portraiture; the use of wax by sculptor Medardo Rosso in the early twentieth century comes to mind; more apposite is perhaps the early nineteenth-century use of wax in medical manikins, as Jordanova has shown, and in the late-nineteenth-century production of *moulages* in the medical laboratory studios of Jules Emile Pean, who produced an exhibition of diseased body parts.[415]

Morris produced a series of *Imprints* and *Body Casts* (1963-64) which use body traces in ways that recall Johns' work; however, Morris purposely removed any sense of touch (and the personal or subjective qualities that accrue to touch) from the trace and produced objects that, while they do not draw up portraits of disease in the manner of Jules Emile Pean, do resemble the impersonal remnants of test sites or laboratory armatures from physiological endurance experiments. *Untitled (Footprints and Rulers)* (figure 4.4)*,* a cast lead 'relief' from 1964, features two lead planks marked bearing Morris's footprints; the planks are affixed at the top with two cast rulers; another work from the same sequence *Untitled (Hand and Toe Holds),* features two lead planks bolted to the wall five feet apart; they are marked where hands and feet (top and bottom, respectively) have gripped each element. A certain "scientific propriety"[416] holds in check any subjective implication

[415] See: Mary Hunter, "'Effoyable realism'": Wax, Femininity, and the Madness of Realist Fantasies," *RACAR, Revue d'art canadienne/ Canadian Art Review* 33: 1-2 (2008), 43-56.
[416]Annette Michelson, "Frameworks", *Robert Morris: The Mind Body Problem* (New York: Solomon R. Guggentheim Museum, 1994), 54.

of the corporeal mark; in fact Morris's laboratory approach seems designed quite precisely to empirically contain and reduce the body's material interactions to mass and force, and its trace to mere data.[417]

Morris further explored the body index in works which clearly manifest the procedures and aesthetics of the laboratory, and treats himself as test subject. The medical rendering of the subject, and the bio-aesthetic transformation of the artist as case, are evident in works such as *Self Portrait (EEG)* of 1963 which features the artist's electroencephalogram in a metal and glass frame with lead labels. The index of Morris's brain's voltage fluctuations functions also as a cultural index of his own identity as artist, as self-portraiture. In a subsequent related work *Memory Drawings* (1963) Morris further followed the methodological protocols of research and experiment; comprised of a sequence of handwritten and signed pages, Morris's work sets out to summarize the "physiological basis of memory," and reviews the latest developments in neuroscience, the physiological structures of the visual cortex, the uses of the latest medical indexical/scanning devices, and the significance of all this to memory and artistic production. However, the piece is also a sequence, or series, in which the artist attempts to re-write the precise words from the previous page. The progress of memory's 'body' is marked as a manually repeated text arranged in sequence. Morris quite literally draws up the "minute distinctions" that accrue over time in memory's physical/physiological labor to retain and recount knowledge, and this suggests the constitutive role that repetition and

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[417]* Morris takes a somewhat humourless approach to Duchamp's work, which also employed laboratorial or research approaches. Duchamp's *Female Fig Leaf*, (1950) which is made from an imprint of the female sex is a send-up of both scientific and artistic *proprieties*. I must point out I am not interested in the difference between the personally supple vs. empirically reductive stylizations of the corporeal referent; I contend to some extend with Fried that these are ideological differences, and my purpose is to suggest how they are both produced by a general assertion of the bio-aesthetic referent.

difference plays in the bio-material construction of larger cultural meaning. Cultural memory he writes, is produced "either spatially through preservations of models, pictures, maps, etc., or temporally through sequential records in print, audial (sic) recordings, and more recently electronic means."[418]

Morris's bodily forays into works which entail, in Friedian parlance its "theatrical" overextension, are numerous and varied. Some of these works involve endurances or bodily "tasks" staged within a consistent laboratorial gauntlet of structures such as mirrors, screens, frames etc. Some of his performances entail the recitation, or lip-sync, of texts, and of course dance (Judson). One performance work is worth calling particular attention to, for it provides a kind of allegorical coda to the set of issues that circulate around Greenbergian aesthetics, and the empirical-critical assertion of the materiality of the flat picture plane. The work was performed as part of a dance program which included works choreographed and performed by Lucinda Childs and Yvonne Rainer, and sets by Robert Rauschenberg. *Site* (1964) was performed in collaboration with artist Carolee Schneemann, who posed as Manet's *Olympia* behind a large white rectangular plywood panel. Amidst the sound of an offstage jackhammer, Morris, wearing a mask cast from his own face by Jasper Johns, appears on stage to slide the white panel to another side of the stage revealing Schneeman who maintained her recumbent Olympian pose throughout the performance. Morris engaged in a number of beautifully choreographed, quite athletic maneuvers with the board – spinning it on its corners, lifting it above his shoulders, flipping it from side to side, exerting pressure so that the plane arcs or twists, and so forth – all actions carried out to demonstrate, and make felt, the plane's flat materiality in *theatrical* space. Schneeman's 'pictorial' performance

[418] Kimberly Paice, "Catalogue," *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem,* 149.

provided a fixed counterpoint or compliment. The work served as an empirical explication, *à la* Greenberg, of the material three-dimensionality of the two-dimensional picture plane. The performance concludes with Morris sliding the plane into its original position in front of and concealing Schneeman as reclining Olympia.

Amelia Jones maintains a somewhat disparaging critical demeanor toward the work of Morris, and senses something of an implicit "misogyny" that characterizes the "performative masculinity (of) male body art" in general, which she further contends "often continues to work under the assumption of a bipolar, heterosexist gender model."[419] Morris's position in *Site* as clothed, active, artist-subject viz. Schneeman's "objectification" as naked display model, would act out the traditional dis-symmetrical gender relations that Jones contends have privileged male artistic subjectivity. We find these same roles reinforced in Klein's earlier 1950s paint actions and in the later, more aggressive assertions of "hypermasculine" normative, albeit masochistic, heterosexual desire in Vito Acconci's later work in the 1970s. The arrangement might also be said to mirror the traditional relationship of the early nineteenth-century clinicians to their medical subjects. Of course one of Jones' primary goals is to elucidate and critique the gender apparatus which, according to her narrative of body art, seeks to maintain and formally suppress under the masculinist suzerainty of aesthetic disinterestedness (which, we recall, she associates with ahedonia, and the repression of the corporeal) any stirrings of "feminine theatricality." Jones however, does not elaborate on any of Morris's performance works, nor his personal and professional partnership with Lynda Benglis, one of the avatars of feminist artistic practice she highlights; however she does site his notorious parodist (and queerly inflected) 1974 image in S&M garb for an exhibition at

[419] Jones, *Performing the Subject.* 145.

Castelli-Sonnabend Gallery in New York, which she contends "simultaneously challenge(s) and reinforce(s) dominant codes of masculinity."[420] In *Site* we might concur with Jones that Morris who takes up a demonstrative position against Schneeman's place mark for Manet's recumbent courtesan maintains his "place as the hyperbolic *self* to the feminine's *other*."[421] That having been said, Morris was an important figure in the emerging performance/body practices in the early sixties, and produced dance and performance works with Yvonne Rainer and Lucinda Childs many of which entailed the naked display of his own body.[422]

The Fried, Judd, and Morris *ensemble*, form a singular if rivalrous interplay of discourses and practices, indeed a case, which manifests the progress of the clinical-empirical drive as it works itself out on "embodied existence," or engages with the underlying bio-aesthetic referent. If Fried's text dismisses the immanent "theatricalisation" by the literalists as they bring the bodies of beholders, artworks, and themselves into close proximity to each other, "Art and Objecthood" also makes a symptomatic display of the paradoxical structure of embodiment and its myriad effects. More significantly, these texts and practices mark out the expansion of Greenberg's surface gaze; following its clinico-empirical logic Greenberg's flat operating table opens onto a gallery *test site*, and in Morris's works the aesthetics of the operating table are expanded and developed into the aesthetics of the laboratory. With Morris's early *Imprints* and *Body Casts* the artist subjects his own body to a number of physiological procedures and produced objects which document the indexical interaction of the body

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[420] Jones, 114.
[421] Jones, 114.
[422] See: Jill Johnston, "Dance: Pain, Pleasure, Process," *The Village Voice*, February 27, 1964, 9,15; "Judson 1964: End of an Era," *Ballet Review*, 1: 6 (1967), 7-14.

and artistic materiel in the manner of clinical or laboratory demonstrations. Morris's use of medical indexing devices – the EEG for example – to produce explicitly medical self-portraits, and the eventual insertion of his own body (clothed and unclothed) into the performative *site* traces out a direct arc of development from Greenberg's flat examination table to the theatrical examination room where the artist becomes or acts out his or her status as test subject or case-history.

Morris's works from this period tend to work under the auspices of a strict empiricism and treat or reduce the bio-graphical in *literalist* fashion to its various indexical modulations. However, the biographical does emerge in the performative works of other artists at this time, and does so in a fashion that suggests new links between artistic production and personal medical history – or, *autopathography* – in ways Artaud would not have imagined. In the following case, a new form of clinical performativity emergences amidst the dry laboratory domain of specific objects and mediums, one that entails an artist's concerted effort to make a case for *herself* as the object of both contemplative and non-contemplative appreciation, and the subject of her own medical biography and artist-witness to her own corporeal demise.

The Artist as Medical Subject: Hannah Wilke's Autopathography

On my thirtieth birthday, in 1970, my mother had a mastectomy. (Hannah Wilke).

Earlier, I briefly discussed Jones' category of performative agency, the Pollockian Performative, comprised of an aggregate of photographs and film clips by Hans Namuth and others showing the artist at work on a large drip painting, and disseminated in both the art and popular media in the early 1950s. Jones' contends this performative assemblage shifted aesthetic attention – via the non-intentional art and popular press –

from the Greenbergian fixity of wall-bound abstract paintings to the unfixed field of action and performance and set the stage, so to speak, for the body and performance practices that followed. The clinicalization of artistic subjectivity which I discussed in the previous chapter in relation to Antonin Artaud may also be reconfigured as the index of a new performative artistic agency. I would suggest that Artaud's case, decades before Pollock's, is also accompanied by an assemblage of performative affects which include stock depictions of Artaud in his film and stage performances, photographs of him as asylum resident, as well as many drawn and painted self portraits created in his rooms at the clinic Ivry-sur-Seine. Groupings of these images often accompany published editions of Artaud's writings, as well as texts and catalogues about his work, including an English edition of *The Theater and its Double* published in 1958 in New York by the formidable Grove Press. Artaud's performativity, like Pollock's, also eludes the traditional category of intentional subjectivity, yet unlike Pollock's it is presided over by a hyper-lucid critical awareness of *what is happening*. Indeed, as the Artaud-Rivière exchange veered into a discourse of patient and doctor (more precisely that of mental patient and psychiatrist) Artaud was aware of its clinical turn and evinced a powerful critical-reflexivity over the interlocution. It is this inflection of critical agency and self-awareness that distinguishes Artaud's case from Pollock's, and suggests a new modality of clinical performativity that I will examine in the following pages.

Hannah Wilke was an important figure in the second-wave feminist art movement in New York in the mid-1960s and early 1970s. Immersed in the formal problems of Minimalist (or literalist) and post-Minimalist sculpture, installation, and performance, Wilke began, in the early to mid 1960s, to produce her signature terra cotta "pinched"

sculptures based on vaginal forms. Executed years prior to Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* (1974-76), these works may be placed within a larger constellation of feminist art which took on modernist and minimalist formalism; Barbara Zucker, Mariam Schapiro, Joan Semmel, Harmony Hammond, Eva Hesse, and others, all incorporated variously stylized versions of the female anatomical sex, and feminine-coded materials into the familiar masculinist framework of minimalist and post-minimalist sculpture and its industrial-based medium-specificities.[423] Wilke's earliest *Box* and *Excremental* sculptures, ca. 1960-1963, are fired unglazed brown terra cotta 'pinch-pot' structures that incorporate the haptic traces of her fingers and thumbs into vulva, sphincter, and O'Keefe-like floral forms. *Scharlatt Rousse* (1965) features four small terra cotta vaginal and/or anus-like reliefs in dark bronze-like glaze. While they make clever allusions to Morris's more scientistic indexical slabs, they are imbued with a sense of sensual pleasure, touch, warmth, all descriptors coding the "feminine." It must be pointed out that Wilke's genital imagery also resonates with nineteenth-century racist gyno-physiologies found in Cuvier, Lombroso and others, which contrasted the genitalia of Hottentot women to those of European whites. These illustrations, as Sander Gilman points out, were drawn with the purpose of 'empirically' demonstrating the inherent differences between the races of women. The nineteenth century perceived the Hottentot woman as "the epitome of … sexual lasciviousness" and her "primitive sexual appetite" was inscribed into the corporeal forms of her 'primitive' genitalia as malformations and biological errors. The violence of this discursive construction moved in many directions, and projected 'concupiscence' onto the genital features of any number of social undesirables including

[423] See: Harmony Hammond, *Wrappings,* New York: TSL Press, 1984; Amelia Jones, ed., *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader,* New York and London: Routledge, 2003; Lucy Lippard, *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art,* New York: Dutton, 1976;

homosexuals and prostitutes.[424] Wilke's echoing of this physiological-physiognomic might be understood as a redress to these anatomies.

Into the early 1970s Wilke's sculpture incorporated more developed Post-Minimal forms. Her *One-Fold Gestural Sculptures* (1973-74) comprises one hundred seventy-six folded terra cotta forms coated in a layer of smooth pink latex arranged in a rectangular field on the gallery floor; the individual pieces resemble genitalia, of course, but also make critical and aesthetic reference to floor arrangements of bricks and tile by Carl Andre. (Harmony Hammond's contemporaneous, and stunning, braided rag rug sculptures performed a similar feminist deconstruction.) Wilke also produced, *pace* Lynda Benglis' *Contraband* (1968) and Jones' Pollockian Performative, a body of floor-poured latex pieces which were then re-configured into hanging wall pieces; *Of Radishes and Flowers* (1972) features a baroque drapery of shiny pink latex veils, and calls to mind Morris's early hung felt pieces, but also contemporaneous works by other women artists, notably Eva Hesse, Rosemary Mayer, and Barbara Zucker, which treated or teased the novel rubber based material into smooth textured folded forms redolent with *histological* associations. Due to the highly perishable nature of these organic based substances, many of Wilke's latex pieces (like those of Hesse and the others) were lost. An important 1972 latex piece purchased by Abstract Expressionist painter Willem de Kooning *Chocolate Pancakes* crumbled to pieces shortly after he bought it.[425]

Wilke continued to produce ceramic and latex pieces well into the late 1980s and early 1990s until just before her death, but in 1973 and 1974, her engagement with sculptural

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[424] Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 84, 85, 90.
[425] Tracy Fitzpatrick, *Hannah Wilke: Gestures* (Purchase: Neuberger Museum of Art, SUNY Purchase, 2009), 19.

materials that embodied haptic material specificity took a new turn, and performance began to figure in her work. The first step in this transition may be traced to a large series of small, gnocchi-like or vaginal forms made of gray kneaded erasers that Wilke arranged on a variety of surfaces including vintage postcards, as well as in grid-like clusters on large white panels or museum boards. Responding to what critic Edit deAk called the "anonymous grayness" of these pieces, Wilke began using masticated chewing gum, a material more intimately connected with her own body – a body she now began to incorporate into her imagery. In a series of 28 photographs made with fashion photographer Les Wollman, titled *S.O.S. Starification Object Series, An Adult Game of Mastication* (1974-1975) (figure 4.5) Wilke – a profoundly beautiful woman – applied little chewed whorls of bubble-gum to her body and assumed a familiar sequence of fashion poses, topless or mostly nude, with nuanced references to art and film (clear antecedents to Cindy Sherman's work). As Nancy Princenthal has pointed out, the bits of chewed gum produce sometimes paradoxical corporeal associations (consider a busy city sidewalk!), from the erotic to the abject: "In some poses looking like jewels, in others like blemishes, or sores, the gum is, always, a beckoning license to touch. A work shaped by both mouth and hand, these tender buttons, scattered all over Wilke's body, suggest themselves as a means for operating the body they adorn – a very sticky form of connection between viewer and subject."[426] The theatricalization of sculptural practice, the performative impulse to register the corporeal referent which in Wilke's work is also expressed in an erotic gesture that includes, even seduces, the beholder, these are new inflections of the same bio-aesthetic determinations –shot through with different gender ideologies and political purposes – that we found in formalist aesthetics.

[426] Nancy Princenthal, *Hannah Wilke* (Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2010), 51.

Indeed, Wilke's "starification" performances exemplify – like Morris and Judd's 'specific objects' – what Foucault called, "the constitutive character of corporeal spatiality" in the bio-aesthetic clinicalization of modern and contemporary artistic experience. Wilke's "starification" series also engages the "return to finitude" that is set into play by the ontological assertion of biological being; as Foucault has suggested, modern medical experience establishes in "the beautiful enclosed form of individuality"[427] an ever-present insistent relationship to mortality which the clinical sciences since the early nineteenth century have associated with the indeterminable network of temporal processes set into play by *zoë.* Foucault cites literary figures, Hölderlin and Nerval, to underscore the "lyrical" aspect of this transformation. Wilke, as Princenthal points out, evinces a profound awareness of the relationship of beautiful *star*-ified individuality to the theme of mortality in her *S.O.S.* series. In a 1975 panel discussion, she stated: "One strength of American art right now is that we're involved with a culture that's about destructiveness. Some of the best art has a planned obsolescence. I alternate between the idea of some of my works disintegrating, because it's hard to admit that you're going to die yourself."[428] Wilke's poured and folded latex pieces, like those of Eva Hesse, succumbed to their own processes of bio-chemical finitude. In any case, Wilke links the fragile nature of her materials to her mortal body, and while this calls up the great vitalist transformation process of biological becoming and change, it also carries the ontological inscriptions of *individual* finite biological beings.

[427] Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic.* 198.
[428] Cited in Princenthal, 50.

According to her journals, Wilke's career took a decisive turn in 1970 on her thirtieth birthday, on the day her mother, Selma Butter, underwent breast cancer surgery. Wilke began the series of photographs that would follow her mother's grueling ten-year experience with the disease and its treatment. These photographs, which document the physical transformations of the surgery and subsequent chemo and radiation therapies is a performative *tour de force* on the parts of both Wilke and Butter. Butter, the daughter of early twentieth-century immigrant Polish Jews, subjects herself to her daughter's photographic gaze and makes a powerful display of how mortal disease and its treatment mark the surface of the living body. *Portrait of the Artist with her Mother, Selma Butter,* (1978-81) (figure 4.6), perhaps the most famous of the images, is comprised of two photographic portraits, one of Wilke and the other of her mother, placed side by side. Wilke's young, beautiful figure, portrayed nude from mid-waist up, is adorned with starifications (trinkets, talisman, charms). Wilke directs her gaze at the viewer in a fashion that evinces both seductiveness and strength. Selma Butter's face is turned away from the camera in a gesture that seems to register the angered knowledge of her own abject appearance, her post-mastectomy scarred and radiation blistered chest in full view. Selma's scarifications carry out a moving exchange with the curative elements that adorn her daughter's lovely breasts.

The photographs documenting Selma's physical demise were eventually gathered in the exhibition *In Memoriam, Selma Butter (Mommy)* (1979-83), that featured three large framed arrangements of photographs (figure 4.7). Each composition featured six photographs of Butter documenting her appearance at different stages of decline. Beneath each grid of photographs is a sequence of three abstract collages composed from the

flattened spaces around Selma's figure, and beneath each of these compositions Wilke placed type-face captions comprised of single words in the following sequences: Form, Cause, Make / Support, Foundation, Comfort / Bond, Intimate, Part. Wilke extends *Memoriam* into the space of the beholder in the form of three arrangements of her signature vulva forms, arranged in twos, painted in primary colors blue, red, and yellow, placed on small plinths on the floor in front of the images (figure 4.7). The shapes are larger than those deployed in other works, and have attained a certain cocoon or sarcophagus-like aspect. Princenthal likens them to wombs.[429]

Wilke's work recapitulates the central issues of embodiment that have installed themselves at the center of clinically aestheticised experiences and forms. The artist *treats* her mother's images to any number of familiar formal maneuvers: the grid formats, the modernist abstract re-compositions of the negative spaces around Selma's figure which suggest (pace Russian modernism) illustrations or plans for three dimensional sculptures, the relationship of discursive forms to visual ones, the introduction of primary colors, and the incorporation of sculptural elements, all of these, taken together map the *theatrical* progress of specific objects as they are mobilized by the artistic drive toward plastic embodiment. This entire ensemble, of course, is set in motion around a cycle of photographs an artist has taken of her dying mother, and which maps the visible changes born of her fatal disease; hence the representation of malady that points so decisively to the biological finitude of "man" in the biopolitical age and that so troubled the German idealist aestheticians makes its appearance; and it is quite precisely bound to the *biography* of the artist.

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[429] Princenthal, 100.

Intra-Venus (1991-1993) is perhaps the most noted among Wilke's last works. The work consists of a series of photographs and video clips many taken by her partner the artist and photographer Donald Goddard. The images alternate between the extremes of parody and brutal clinical documentation (figure 4.10 and 4.11). It was initially the artist's intention to title the entire cycle of works *Cure*, however the pieces were not exhibited until after her death in 1994. The title was chosen by Goddard from a group of 'performalist' self portraits that feature explicit post-treatment images of the artist with intravenous needles and attachments fixed to various 'ports' in her hands, breasts and groin, where chemotherapies and other infusions were delivered into her bloodstream. In these pictures, which recall her *Portrait of the Artist with her Mother* as they are presented as double or triple self portraits, Wilke strikes poses reminiscent of her earlier works; for example *Intra-Venus Series # 4, July 26 and February 19, 1992*, seems to offer the obverse "diseased" versions of two images from her *Starification* series. In another set, *Intra-Venus Triptych ["Marilyn Monroe"]*, 1992-93*,* Wilke assumes poses derived Marilyn Monroe's famous pin-ups featured in the first, 1955 issue of *Playboy Magazine,* with hospital bandages on her back and sides, hair thinning from the chemo treatments. (These pictures may be read as, perhaps, richly inflected medical counterpoints to Warhol's *Marilyns*). Wilke makes many poignant, sometimes cunning art historical allusions that call up or excavate the lyrical conjunction or integration of "death into medical thought,"[430] and the further introjection of this structure into modern and contemporary artistic subjectivity and practice. One post-chemotherapy self-portrait of Wilke wrapped in a blue hospital blanket seems to suggest the beatific agony of the *mater dolorosa* in Grunewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece*; another features the artist in a pose

[430] Foucault, Ibid.

that could be derived from racist illustrations, of the “Hottentot Venus” from Cuvier and Lombroso. And yet another portrays the artist with her eyes closed, and mouth open in what looks to be a camp send-up of that expressive corporeal moment of mortal anguish which Lessing’s aesthetics acknowledged but would, we recall, according to Richter, only allow into artistic representation in the form of elaborate formal maneuvers and tropes. One especially riveting self-portrait portrays the artist lieing her back naked in a partially filled bathtub, her legs spread and vagina fully exposed as running water pours over her face. There is a clear allusion to the *realist* Courbet’s famous *The Origin of the World* (1866), and to Duchamp’s *Étant Donn*é (which she had made reference to in numerous earlier works), to Bonnard’s recumbent bathtub figures, and also to Wilke’s own earlier painted latex, ceramic and chewing gum works.

Wilke also produced a great number of other works – drawings, paintings, mixed media assemblages, which called up the progress of modernist, literalist and post modernist ‘specific objects’ yet channeled through her hospital experiences. *Why Not Sneeze…*(1992) features a wire mesh bird cage which has been made the artful receptacle of Wilke’s empty prescription bottles and syringes (figure 4.8), and makes reference, of course, to Duchamp’s *Why not sneeze, Rrose Selavy* (1921); a sequence of *Brushstrokes* drawings were made from strands of hair that fell out during chemotherapy treatments and were collected from the artist’s hairbrush and affixed to sheets of paper (figure 4.9); another set of lovely poignant watercolors made on hospital pillowcases depicts vases of flowers the artist received during her hospital stays. There are a number of late watercolor self-portraits that bear striking similarities to those produced by Artaud during his final months (figures 4.12 and 4.13).

Tamar Tembeck, who has written compellingly of "autopathographic" nature of Wilke's last works, points out that the links between artistic representation and illness reach back to antiquity as "objects invested with restorative powers … as amulets and talismans."[431] Citing the critical contributions of Gilman and Susan Sontag, she points to their role in codifying abjection and cites nineteenth-century anthropological and medical images of syphilitic and the mentally ill. Hence, for Tembeck, representations of illness pose this double stature as instruments of both therapeutic power, and medical exclusion and stigmatization. And while she does not specifically cite Jacques Derrida's critical and philosophical ruminations on the topic of the "pharmakon,"[432] she does cite 'pathographic' representation's function as such and states that "art can enable finding a cure within a poison, which here [in the pathographic image] takes the form of creativity within disease."[433] Tambeck's analysis of Wilke's later work, including the Selma Butter series, emphasizes this therapeutic aspect, which she links to an ancient performative aspect of the creative act itself.

What distinguishes Wilke's clinical performativity from Artaud's is, of course, that after some procrastination (which may have contributed to her demise), that she voluntarily subjected herself to the clinical gaze in the hope that she would be healed. Indeed, the therapeutic and restorative intention of Wilke's work, particularly the work she produced in response to her mother's illness, is evident. And surely, auto/pathographic representations, and the creative response to the *pharmakon* are as old

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[431] Tamar Tembeck, "Exposed Wounds: The Photographic Autopathographies of Hannah Wilke and Jo Spence," *Revue d'art canadienne/ Canadian Art Review* 33:1-2, 87.

[432] See: Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: Continuum Press: 2004), 67-158; Derrida examines translations of the word "pharmakon" as it appears in Plato's *Phaedrus,* and points out the term embodies a paradoxical meaning, indeed "'two opposing values," as both "remedy" and "poison." (p. 100).

[433] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy", 100.

and as various as the experience of illness itself. But the clinicalization of illness produces new structures and new experiences. In Artaud's case the clinic in its psychiatric and critical manifestations, much like the conventions of the European theatre which he continuously inveighed against, imposed itself as restrictive and even life threatening. Ambivalence, and her loathing and horror at the brutal impact of clinical subjection, are certainly captured in Wilke's late self portraits; however, we sense that she has resigned herself to her fate, and through a remarkable feat of clinical performativity – and Artaudian *cruelty* -- incorporated, like a *pharmakon*, the clinical gaze itself into her diseased and medicalized body and turned it back upon the space of clinical and critical subjection, her doctors, and her critics.

Conclusion

In the previous pages, I have described the ordeal of artistic embodiment and clinical performativity as an ongoing reflexive struggle between artistic conventions – painting, sculpture, theater – and an emerging biological referent of the body, or the bio-referent. This bio-referent (or *zoë*), despite the ferocious empirical probity of the laboratory sciences and its artistic analog the reductive modernist drive toward medium specificity, remains true to its life-like capacity of eluding or exceeding signification. The Fried, Judd, Morris "case" presents this ordeal in a mixture of analytical, experimental, and formal procedures inflected with diagnostic, formalist and theatrical associations. This exchange highlights the de-stabilizing effect of artists' bodies as they intrude further and further into the surfaces of formalism's ostensibly disembodied field of vision.[434] My reading advances that there is an *immunitary* logic at work in these writings; while Judd and Morris promote the *zoë*-like proliferation of figures, shapes, and eventually the

[434] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy", 76.

bodies of artist-performers into the aesthetic field, Fried sets out to counter this 'theatricalisation' with a reformulated Greenbergian immunological schema of medium specificities. My purpose was not to contest Jones' assertion of the *disembodied-ness* of male-gendered formalist aesthetics but to suggest that this male-gendered disembodied-ness may be understood as an immunological response within material logic of formalism itself. Indeed, my reading has staged this exchange as an auto-immunological ordeal, through which Greenbergian formalism quite literally *breaks out* of its own skin and into the space of performance.

The work of Hannah Wilke has provided an apposite counter-case. As a member of the second-wave American feminist art movement, Wilke's earliest sculptural works reassigned minimalism's seemingly neutral gender and empiricist assertions incorporating anatomical renderings of the female sex into ceramic and latex relief, floor, and pedestal sculptures. In the late 1960s and early 1970s in the aftermath of the heady Judd-Morris-Fried exchange, further bolstered by the feminist injunction to politicize (in this case, *aestheticize*) the personal,[435] she produced an ambitious stream of multi-media works that incorporated her body and biography. These include a powerful photographic essay that juxtaposes topless fashion-quality photographic self portraits against stark depictions of her mother following breast cancer treatments. Her final multi-media works of the late 1980s and early 1990s comprises an extended "autopathography"; "Intra-Venus" consists of a stream of photographs, sculptures, watercolors, videos that document the artist's own struggle with metastatic lymphoma and its treatment,

[435] For an recently revised critical-historical analysis of the evolution of feminist epistemology from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s see: Liz Stanley and Sue Wise, *Breaking Out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology (Revised Edition)* (Abington: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1993).

producing for herself a new position of agency amidst the dreaded space of clinical subjection.

Taken together, the Judd-Morris-Fried and Wilke cases recapitulate the productive tension installed at the center of aesthetic discourse since the eighteenth century. The clinical mechanism which is at work in Lessing's aesthetics, which empirically observes and identifies the material and formal specifications of artistic mediums as it suppresses explicit assertions of the corporeal referent (the body in pain), has migrated to late twentieth century Greenbergian and minimalist discourse. Yet, we might say that "the body" continues its passage through these discourses and confronts first diagnostic, then immunological resistances. With Wilke's case this body in the late twentieth century finally forces itself into visibility as a new performative strategy, that of clinical performativity.

Conclusion: Artists, Curators, Clinicians

Doctors say I'm the illest cause I'm sufferin from realness.
(Kanye West & Jay-Z)

According to Roberto Esposito, from the moment in 1984 when Michel Foucault offered us a new understanding of biopolitics as a concept separable from its daily experience, in *The History of Sexuality*, "the entire frame of political philosophy emerged as profoundly modified."[436] This does not mean, however, that our "classical categories" of political understanding (law, sovereignty, democracy) "suddenly left the scene – they continue to organize current political discourse." Esposito contends, rather, "that their effective meaning(s)" have lost their interpretive capacities, and that the machinations and ordeals of current times must be re-framed within a larger category of biological life*,* or *zoë* in Agamben's sense, the forces of which have been systematically located and released by a multi-faceted biopolitical apparatus which has been in the works at least since the early to mid-eighteenth century.

I suggest, our tidy periodizations and sub-periodizations into art historical and critical categories, our parsing and declension of modernism and postmodernism, while useful, are no longer sufficient. A new historical interpretive approach might be fashioned out of critical bio-politics. The overall goal of this project has been to sketch, within the framework of bio-politics, some contours describing an artistic sub-category, I coin "bio-aesthetics." I have done this by locating a set of *clinical* mechanisms at work within the individual domains of aesthetics, artistic perception, subjectivity and performativity. It has been my contention that the drive toward embodiment, toward the referent, or perhaps more precisely toward the *real*, expressed in formalism's zeal for medium

[436] Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy,* 13.

specificity, and in the modernist drive to ground artistic experience within the somatic, was set into play by a unique clinical configuration, a "discourse of truth"[437] emerging from laboratories and clinics in the eighteenth century. These discourses expounded a science of "bodies and life processes."[438] The emergence of a "science of the subject" with its emphasis on the confessional, on philosophical and critical reflexivity, on "introspection, lived experience" and a "never-ending demand for truth"[439] produced conditions that compelled artists to insert their lives and bodies into their works.

Though the historical sweep of what I have attempted is broad, extending beyond the parameters of what we understand as modernism and post-modernism, my archaeology of a discourse of bio-aesthetics adheres to a chronological scheme. My historical trajectory extends from Kant and his milieu including texts by Baumgarten, Lessing, La Mettrie and van Haller, through to the twentieth-century modernist criticism and theory of Foucault, Greenberg, Deleuze and Guattari, and ending with the post-modern performance-based practices of Hannah Wilke at the end of the century. Wilke's work has provided something of a summation (perhaps a somation), after Artaud, of the clinical determinations this thesis set out to locate and plot across the map of modernism. I might have drawn on any number of examples, including those that connected performance to medical experience: Bob Flanagan, Kim Jones, or Jo Spence, who produced a similar stream of performance and photographic works which mapped her experiences with cancer, similar to those by Wilke. Wilke's case is significant in light of its historical relation to the symptomatic display of embodiment in the Morris, Judd, and Fried exchange; as a member of the 1960s second-wave feminist art movement in New York,

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[437] Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume One: An Introduction*, 64.
[438] Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 64.
[439] Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 77.

Wilke re-figured and eventually inserted her own body into the formalist-minimalist repertory of serial forms, grids, installation formats, and "specific shapes" which were the topic of such contention in the critical exchange. Her late work occupies a crucial historical juncture at which the reflexive modalities of clinicalized aesthetics and perception converge with those of the clinicalized subject in a very specific fashion.

The clinical mechanisms I have identified continue to shape developments in contemporary art, as well as, I might add, the world of contemporary mass culture including television and pop music. Clinical performance has been absorbed into the artistic and popular culture mainstream, fueled no doubt by the gargantuan growth of a parvenu collector culture and its global market system. Some of today's most widely discussed and exhibited visual and performance artists – among them Tracy Emin, Matthew Barney, Orlan, Damien Hirst, Rebecca Beecroft and a recently refurbished, *Cher*-ified Marina Abramovic – deploy the imagery and aesthetics of modern medical experience, the endurance techniques of the laboratory, and "reality-style" autobiography and/or autopathography, in what are often highly produced, media savvy multimedia museum and gallery spectacles. An examination of these more recent developments would comprise a different study, and one that no doubt would have to consider the impact of the burgeoning global art market system and the accession of the post-postmodern museum by a much larger arts and entertainment industry. This thesis has set out to establish an early- or pre-history of these developments, one that situates a set of key art historical developments from the mid-eighteenth to late-twentieth century within a clinico-aesthetic archaeological framework.

My secondary purpose has been to re-position the philosophy and aesthetics of Immanuel Kant with regards to art and art history. While Kant's writings have had a considerable influence on certain figures within the field of art history his overall reception has been – Jones' excoriation is an exception – rather tepid. What I have drawn out are some of the traces of an archaeology that links Kant's thought to the ordeal of artistic embodiment and to the great profusion of bodies in postmodern and contemporary art. Baumgarten's treatises, informed by the emerging life sciences, were the first writings to sketch a "sensate discourse" linking art to a corporeal aesthetics. However, it was the philosophy of Immanuel Kant that incorporated both the reflexive testing protocols of the laboratory and the experiential body of the clinical test subject into a comprehensive doctrine of aesthetics. While the body is not specifically represented in Kant's discourse, it ingeminates throughout his sprawling and exquisitely detailed epistemology as a constantly evolving set of corporeal terminologies. We might even describe the body with regards to Kant's writings as an inverted teleology, the *genie*-like flicker of the ultimately un-signifiable *zoë*, which guides the critiques from within their discursive machinery as they drift from a discourse on reason to a discourse on subjectivity and aesthetics. It is this same inverted teleology, or something like it, that I suggest is at work beneath the clinical permutations of artistic experience in each of the domains I have examined.

What I have not emphasized enough, perhaps, is the critical aspect of Kant's project; indeed, accompanying 'the body' in its journey from philosophy to aesthetics is a species of what might be called *embodied reason*. This dense but interactive critical self-attentiveness is bound to the actual, to space and time, and to the reality of biological

being to which it seems to bear witness. For Kant this reflexivity was also linked to critique, and to the moral agency of the modern subject. In his famous essay "What is Enlightenment?" first published in late 1784 in a monthly Berlin journal, Kant issued something of tacit injunction to critique that links "enlightenment" to "man's release from his self-incurred tutelage." In the oft-cited passage Kant writes that "Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another."[440]

I have situated Kant's subject-bound critical reflexivity within the larger schema of clinical epistemology. Indeed, the cases that make up my study evince a certain troubled relationship to embodiment; I've focused on those sites or instantiations in which bodies and clinical-critical discourses are caught within a kind of crucible, and the clinicalization of artistic experience across theoretical and experiential domains comprises a set of what I often refer to as reflexive clinical *ordeals.* In light of this bio-aesthetics and its clinical procedures and styles may seem to cast a rather menacing deterministic shadow over significant art historical developments. This is to some extent prefigured in my theoretical sources; according to Foucault biopolitics sets into play fierce mechanisms of disciplinary power, and Agamben's further elaboration of an omnivorous anthropological apparatus, which reduces human and animal subjects to the condition of *bestialized* biological 'bare life,' casts bio-politics negatively, as a politics and economy not of life – or zoë – but of death. With respect to the ordeals and subjectivisations endured within my clinical archaeology Kant's philosophy is something of a Derridean *pharmakon*. His

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[440] Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?," *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Moral and, What is Enlightenment?,* trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbot (New York: Macmillan/Library of Liberal Arts, 1990), 83.

critiques provide epistemological encapsulation of clinicalization, yet the drift from philosophy to aesthetics is also life-affirming, and clinical probity may be turned back upon the mechanisms of subjectivisation to free subjects from the (self-incurred) interpolations of the clinic.

It was also my purpose to draw out the ways that even in those extreme experiences of medical and psychiatric subjection compelling forms of resistant, *non-compliant,* even transcendent artistic agency were fashioned. Artaud insisted on the artistic, critical and personal validity of his own position, and configured a new critical approach that manifested in the letters with Rivière as a hyper-critical awareness of, and resistance to, the clinical machinations at work in their exchange. In a similar manner, Wilke's ordeals of embodiment, from her earliest feminist resistances to the seemingly implacable masculine materialism of minimalist sculptures, to her final passage through cancer and the clinic, evinced the resolution and courage of Kant's *enlightened subject.*

The performative outbreak of 'the body' that, in my account, culminates with Wilke's artistic autopathography, again, is not meant to mark the full development and closure of clinical performativity, or bio-aesthetics. Indeed, the chronological cut-off of my dissertation is significant. While Wilke produced her final works, bio-aesthetics was passing through something of a fissional threshold and a period of dramatic bio-political dissemination. Tthe AIDS epidemic was in its early stages and presented new impetus for artists to confront and capture the experiences of the disease, as well as to artistically confront the machinations of clinicalization, racism, homophobia and other forms of subjectivization and exclusion set into play around it. The work of David Wojnarowicz, Mark Morrisroe, the blood-spectacle performances of Ron Athey, as well as the artist

collaborative efforts of Group Material, Gran Fury, General Idea, and so many other collectives made up of artists and non-artists alike – Queer Nation and Act-Up, for which artist Ken Moffett produced enormously effective and widely disseminated printed matter, pushed performative practice into new modalities of artistic activism.

Other important artistic and critical developments in the mid- to late-1970s wedded Kantian disinterestedness to Kantian critique in new and productive ways. In 1977 critic Douglas Crimp, who would later play a crucial role in AIDS activism, organized a show at Artists Space in New York titled "Pictures" which included works by an emerging group of artists - among them Troy Brantuch, Louise Lawler, Richard Prince, Sherrie Levine, and Jack Goldstein, many of whom had studied at the California Institute of the Arts (or CalArts) in Los Angeles with postmodern photographer John Baldesarri. These artists had dispensed with the notion of embodiment per se and turned a disinterested clinical eye on the art apparatus itself. They produced mostly photo-based works that focused on the ways that museums create and sustain artistic value and meaning. Crimp, we recall, cited Foucault's archaeology in his 1980 essay *On the Museum's Ruins* and approached the museum as a space of subjectivisation, and confinement and identified these artists with a new form of photography-based institutional critique.[441]

Two examples of recent works by artists that take up the problem of clinicalized artistic subjectivity will function as a brief coda. Both are curatorial treatments of other artists' works by contemporary artists whose parallel careers – both were included in the 1991 Whitney Biennial – are situated at the historical nexus of AIDS activism, the performative outbreak of the body in late twentieth-century art, and institutional critique theoretically articulated by Crimp. The two projects, by sculptor Robert Gober (b. 1954)

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[441] Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 14.

and installation and performance artist Nayland Blake (b. 1960) are separated by twenty years, 2012 and 1989 respectively. While Gober and Blake approach their artist subjects in similar fashion (I would contend that Gober has drawn heavily from Blake's earlier work) mixing up artworks, texts, biographical and medical material, further blurring – in bio-aesthetic fashion - the distinction between the lives of artists and their works, they produce very different kinds of cases.

Robert Gober's recent exhibition of the work of mid-twentieth century American abstract painter Forrest Bess (1911-1977) provided a slightly off-center, second-floor side gallery centerpiece for the 2012 Biennial. Bess is known for small idiosyncratic paintings, often painted on found scraps of wood and framed in makeshift weathered wood slat frames. The paintings feature simple, formally compelling compositions of circles, triangles, stars, ladders, and hieroglyph-like designs on landscape-like backdrops, or carefully textured fields of colour. Bess elaborated upon the meaning of his imagery in letters and typed codices that cite modernist painters, as well as 1940s and 1950s discourses on anthropology, yoga, sexuality and psychoanalysis. The artist studied architecture at Texas A&M University and the University of Texas in the 1940s, and produced most of his works in the oily heyday of Abstract Expressionism and Greenbergian Color-Field painting. He also maintained a number of fascinating correspondences with notable cultural figures including Carl Jung and art historian Meyer Schapiro (figure 5.1 and 5.2). His correspondence with Shapiro is extensive; he engaged the receptive art historian in Jungian explanations of his work citing current articles on

sexology and cultural anthropology expounding on such topics as androgyny, hermaphroditism, and a "new form of homosexuality."[442]

In the early 1950s Bess began to seek the advice of doctors and psychiatrists on the possibility of attaining gender-reassignment surgery. The topic had begun to enter into wider public discourse in 1952 when Christine Jorgensen (1927-1989) who was among the first individuals to undergo surgical gender-reassignment, became a highly visible public figure and passionate advocate for transsexual people.[443] Lacking Jorgensen's resources, Bess would eventually go so far as to perform genital/gender altering surgeries on himself, and he documented these alterations in notebook drawings and photographs. In any case, Schapiro was a sympathetic champion of the artist's work, and a supportive friend. Bess's paintings were exhibited regularly in solo and group shows at the legendary Betty Parsons Gallery in the 1950s and 1960s alongside works by Clyfford Still, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and others. Aside from occasional trips to New York, the artist spent his working years as a bait fisherman in his home town Bay City, Texas, and lived in a small cabin which he assembled from scratch. In his declining years Bess lived on a small stipend which Schapiro helped him procure through the Mark Rothko Foundation, and was cared for by a younger Bay City gay couple Harry Burkhart and James Wilford, who amassed a large collection of his works (recently auctioned at Christie's). Bess died in a nursing home in 1977, at which time there was little or no interest in his work.

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[442] Cited in an undated letter to Meyer Shapiro, reproduced in *"My painting is tomorrow's painting. Watch and see." Forrest Bess, Including works from the Harry Burkhart Collection,* exhibition catalogue (New York: Christie's, 2012), 31.
[443] See: Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002). 1-97.

Early reviews of Bess's exhibitions portrayed him as a "character" or primitive.[444] However, in the late 1970s interest in Bess's work grew among a young generation of New York abstract painters: Thomas Nowskowski, Elizabeth Murray, Mary Heilman, and younger Andrew Masullo and Chris Martin –found in Bess's unique style an aesthetically compelling alternative to Abstract Expressionism, Color-Field, Minimalist and other strains of formalist painting that dominated abstract painting at the time.[445] In 1981 a posthumous small retrospective exhibition of Bess' work was organized by the Whitney Museum; it was at this time that curatorial treatments of his work took a decidedly *clinical* turn.

In an introductory brochure to his Whitney show, curator Barbara Haskell described the artist (not unlike traditional descriptions of his New York contemporaries who patronized the Cedar Bar in the 1950s) as alternating between "the roughneck son of an itinerant oil laborer," a "rugged liquor-drinking fisherman," and a "sensitive, gentle painter." [446] But the short essay also includes an account of Bess's "self-surgery" extrapolated from his notes: "During the fifties," she writes, "he became fanatical about disseminating his theory of immortality: he advocated uniting male and female by means of a surgically produced fistula into the male urethra, which made possible urethral orgasm."[447] Bess's last years are cast in dire clinico-biographical tones: "He became increasingly eccentric in the early seventies [after his last show with Parsons], during the time when his rhinoplyma, a nodular swelling of the nose, was becoming more

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[444] *"My Painting is tomorrow's painting...,"* Ibid.

[445] See: Andrew Masullo, "Notes on Forrest Bess,' *Forrest Bess: 100 Years; Paintings by Forrest and his friends Chris Martin, Andrew Masullo and Chuck Webster,* exhibition catalogue (Dallas: Kirk Hopper Fine Art, 2011).

[446] Barbara Haskell, *Forrest Bess,* exhibition brochure, Whitney Museum of American Art, 1981.

[447] Haskell, *Forrest Bess*.

pronounced; after a brief period in a mental hospital, he was admitted to a nursing home."[448] Articles and critical reviews since the Whitney show invariably cite the clinically salient aspects of the "case" sketched out by Haskell.[449]

Gober's curatorial installation includes eleven paintings, together with an assortment of the artist's notes, scrapbooks, codices and letters. The exhibition also includes a black and white photograph taken by the artist of his altered genitalia which features a large vagina-like hole between the base of the penis and scrotum (figure 5.3). The snapshot functioned as something of an unsettling Barthesian "punctum,"[450] (though it was not an "accident" in Barthes' sense, but rather carefully placed by the curator to produce such an effect), literally a wound around which the entire exhibition produced its *subject.* Gober assembled these materials in table vitrines arranged at intervals along gallery walls between the sparse installations of paintings; selections of the artist's writings were deployed as wall texts, without any further curatorial commentary. The entire exhibition was bathed in warm low-intensity light (similar to that used in museum displays of Gober's sculptural works) and pooled around the vitrines and paintings. This highlighted the rich textural and tonal aspects of Bess's paintings, some of which incorporate areas of rich impasto which the artist – like his contemporary Alfred Jensen – squeezed directly from tubes (figure 5.4). The distinctive lighting accentuated the "archival" qualities of the yellowing documents and letters.

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[448] Haskell, *Forrest Bess*.

[449] See: Michael Brenson, *Forrest Bess: Desire Ruled his Vision,* New York Times, May 1, 1988; John Yau, *Forrest Bess,* exhibition catalog, Hirschl and Adler Modern, New York, 1988; Roberta Smith, *A New Vision of a Visionary Fisherman,* New York Times, March 22, 2012.

[450] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography,* trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981), 26-27: A punctum, Barthes writes, is a "sting, speck, cut, little hole is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)." p. 27.

As effective as the presentation was, Gober stuck closely to what Carol Berkencotter calls "the formal features of the clinical case history."[451] Indeed, I suggest the seamless ambiance of the exhibition, the way it captured the *truth* of Bess's ordeals, compellingly linking together his life and his art through an aesthetically elegant and casually staged ensemble of paintings, personal notes, and the significant inclusion of the photograph of the artist's self mutilation, was in fact the discursive effect of the clinical mechanisms identified in this thesis. Even the use of Bess's own words in wall texts, a gesture that for all intents and purposes was intended to release the artist's *true meanings,* functioned, in this case (it didn't have to as we shall see) as a form of anamnesis which further fleshed out the artist as *case history*. The Whitney contends, in a printed brochure that accompanies the show, and on its website, that "Bess wanted to show his medical theories alongside his paintings" and that Gober's installation "realizes this." [452]

Twenty-three years to the month before Gober's Bess opened, in March 1989, Nayland Blake, then a San Francisco-based recent graduate of CalArts (where he studied with John Baldessari) was asked by curator Lawrence Strider to organize an exhibition of his work at the University of California, Berkeley Museum of Art MATRIX Program. For the work, titled *The Schreber Suite* (figure 5.5 – 5.9) Blake consulted a famous nineteenth-century text by one of Freud's famous *Three Case Histories*, Daniel Paul Schreber, *Memoir of my Nervous Illness*. The case of Daniel Paul Schreber is, of course, a cornerstone of the psychoanalytic movement; Freud appropriated Schreber's memoir– he never treated or met Schreber – to support his theory linking psychotic paranoia to

[451] Berkencotter, *Case Histories and the Uses of Narrative in Psychiatry*, 7.
[452] "Forrest Bess (By Robert Gober)." *Whitney Museum of American Art.* Web. 13 Aug. 2012.

homosexuality.[453] Ten years earlier Carl Jung had mentioned the case in 1906 the year of its publication in Germany. And Jacques Lacan, in his mid-twentieth century renovation of Freudian psychoanalysis, made recourse to the "subjectivity of Schreber's delusion" in his structuralist theory of psychosis.[454] There have been, since the mid-1960s a number of psychoanalytic, sociological and cultural treatments of Schreber's case.[455]

Daniel-Paul Schreber was a respected nineteenth-century jurist when in 1893, having been appointed to Germany's highest Supreme Court of Appeals, he suffered a nervous breakdown and was committed to a public asylum at which time he commenced an elaborate account of his experience which he completed in 1902. The memoir recounts in elaborate detail the physiological, sensory, emotional, and sexual and gender transformations he endured over the course of his nervous illness, as he becomes God's mistress and is impregnated by the rays of the sun with a race of new humans. Schreber submitted the text as part of his formal petition for release from the asylum, which was eventually granted.

With this memoir Schreber displays, like Artaud in his correspondence with Rivière, a clinical prescience over the remarkable narrative and, like Artaud, is unsparing in his criticism of his psychiatrist, Professor Fliechsig of Leipzig. He is also convinced of the *truth* of his experience, and insists that while his hallucinations and delusions may be explained in psychiatric terms, they must also be understood as metaphysical experiences

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[453] See: Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes Upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides) (1911)," *Three Case Histories: The "Wolf Man," The "Rat Man," and The Psychotic Doctor Schreber,* ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier Books, Macmillan, 1963), 103-183.

[454] Jacques Lacan, "On the possible treatment of psychosis," *Ecrits: A Selection,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and London: Norton & Company, 1977), 199.

[455] See: Morton Schatzman, *Soul Murder: Persecution in the Family,* New York: Random House, 1973; Zvi Lothane, *In Defense of Schreber: Soul Murder and Psychiatry*, Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press, 1992; Eric L. Santner, *My Own Private Germany: Daniel Paul Schreber's Secret History of Modernity,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.

quite independent of clinical significance; “I started this work,” Schreber begins his text, “without having publication in mind ... Yet I believe that expert examination from my body and observation of my personal fate during my lifetime would be of value both for science and the knowledge of religious truths.”[456] As with Artaud’s exchange with Rivière, we have a multiplication of clinical reflexivity working out in Schreber’s text; he strives for scrupulous empirical accuracy in his description of his fantastic experiences, yet his descriptions also demonstrate an uncanny understanding that what he has experienced is of clinical value in the study of both mental illness and religious experience.

Blake consulted the psychiatric and biographical literature on the case; however, he approached Schreber’s memoirs as a modernist work, a Surrealist novel, *art*. He also used the text as a source-book or manual, deriving from it the conceptual basis for his installation and for the production of a *suite* of sculptural objects. These include a number of free-standing assemblages and wall hangings which he calls *Work Stations* constructed from medical equipment and S&M fetish accoutrement. These “stations” look rather like sculptural realizations of drawing illustrations in medical books by Daniel-Paul Schreber’s father, Daniel Gottlob Moritz Schreber. The father Schreber was a very influential nineteenth-century orthopedic doctor renowned for the development of “orthopedic appliances” – elaborate constraining devices that were intended to correct physical deformities in children.[457] A number of these “work station” sculptures were

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[456] Daniel Paul Schreber, *Memoir of my Nervous Illness,* trans. Ida Macalpine and Richard A. Hunter (New York: New York Review Books, 2000), 3. It is from these opening words that Freud derives justification for his investigation. It must be pointed out that Freud’s study of the text is subtle and rich

[457] For and extensive analysis of the correspondence between the delusional sufferings of Daniel-Paul and Moritz Schreber’s orthopedic practice and medical ideology see: William Niederland, *The Schreber Case: Psychoanalytic Profile of a Paranoid Personality* (Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press, 1984).

included in the 1991 Whitney Biennial which also included, appropriately enough, Robert Gober's floor sculpture *Untitled,* 1991 which features a sack or pillow case-like shape with male and female anatomy fashioned from beeswax and human hair.

Blake used descriptions of the anatomical gender-altering violence Schreber alleges he endured – the narrative details how organs were removed or moved to other parts of his body – as curatorial cues for a corresponding set of *détournements* performed on the body of the museum. For example, Blake altered the normative gender coding of the museum's restrooms, and had facsimiles of the mirrors made with Schreber's descriptions of his gender alterations printed on them. Blake exhibited these mirrors both in the restrooms and as sculptures in the formal gallery space. He also plundered works hidden the museum's permanent collection, focusing on pieces that were produced at or around the time of Schreber's writing by often forgotten or unknown artists and arranged these as something of an alternative history of early modernism; he also used selections of Schreber's texts as curatorial commentary for the works.

Perhaps the most beautiful work in the exhibition is the large wall-piece *Diagram of the Heavens* (1989), which calls up Duchamp's *Large Glass* and also takes a cue from minimalist aesthetics. Blake selected passages of Schreber's memoir that describe the "miraculous" effects of the sun's rays on Schreber's nerves, and etched these stretches of writing onto transparent glass shelves which were arranged in tiers on a large expanse of gallery wall. The text streamed down from sheds of sunlight through a gallery skylight onto the walls and floors beneath and produced the effect that one had come into contact with Schreber's ideas, indeed with artistic or poetic ideas, quite free of the clinical baggage of symptoms, pathology, paranoia, and nervous illness.

In his essay "What is an author?" Foucault describes what he calls "the author function" which, he contends, is a relatively recent "moment of *individualisation* in the history of ideas."[458] The author function serves to bring together after an individual has died what are often quite disparate and incompatible personal (not all of them written) affects under the rubric of the "work" and a proper name. "When Sade was not considered an author," Foucault asks, "what was the status of his papers? Were they simply rolls of paper onto which he ceaselessly uncoiled his fantasies during his imprisonment?"[459] How is it possible, he asks further, "(to) define a work amid the millions of traces left by someone after his death?"[460]

We may pose Foucault's *author question* to the *Bess* and *Schreber* cases. To Gober's *Forrest Bess* we might ponder the status of these paintings, papers and photographs when the artist was alive and spent the greater part of his days like so many others in Bay City at the time, fishing for a living on the Gulf Coast's West Matagorda Bay. Without any critical sense, it seems, Gober's exhibition has dissolved Bess's "artist function" (and even his "fisherman function") into the clinical function of the artist case history. Gober has enjoyed considerable institutional and critical support over the years, not least of all from the Whitney Museum; the artist-curator has in effect institutionally confined Bess and completed the clinical profile of Bess that was begun by the museum thirty-one years ago.

The Schreber Suite provided Gober with an artistic-curatorial precedent; however its impact was quite different. Indeed, Blake seems very aware of the "author function" and

[458] Foucault, "What is an Author?", *Aesthetics, Methods, and Epistemology.* Ed. James Faubion (New York; The New Press, 1994), 205.
[459] Foucault, "What is an Author?", 207.
[460] Foucault, "What is an Author?", 207.

perhaps consulted Foucault's text which speculates on "a form of culture...in which fiction would not be limited by the figure of the author ... and would develop without passing through something like a necessary or constraining figure."[461] *The Schreber Suite* approached Schreber's *Memoir* archaeologically, as a text which reflects a set of historically interconnected ideas about sexuality, the body, fetishism, gender, artistic subjectivity, and pathology.[462] Blake also approached the memoir as work of modernist literature drawing from its aleatory and creative potential to produce a suite of objects and interventions that were in the Kantian sense both critical and aesthetic. *The Schreber Suite* multiplied and scrambled the clinical gaze to plunder the creative potential of the text outside the clinic. Blake produced what might be called a critique of clinical-aesthetic reason, and released Schreber's autobiography from the constraining figure of the artist case history.

[461] Foucault, "What is an Author?", 119.
[462] BAMFA. "Artist and Curator Conversations: Nayland Blake and Lawrence Rinder." *YouTube*. Web. March, 17, 2009.

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AESTHETICA

SCRIPSIT

ALEXAND. GOTTLIEB

BAVMGARTEN

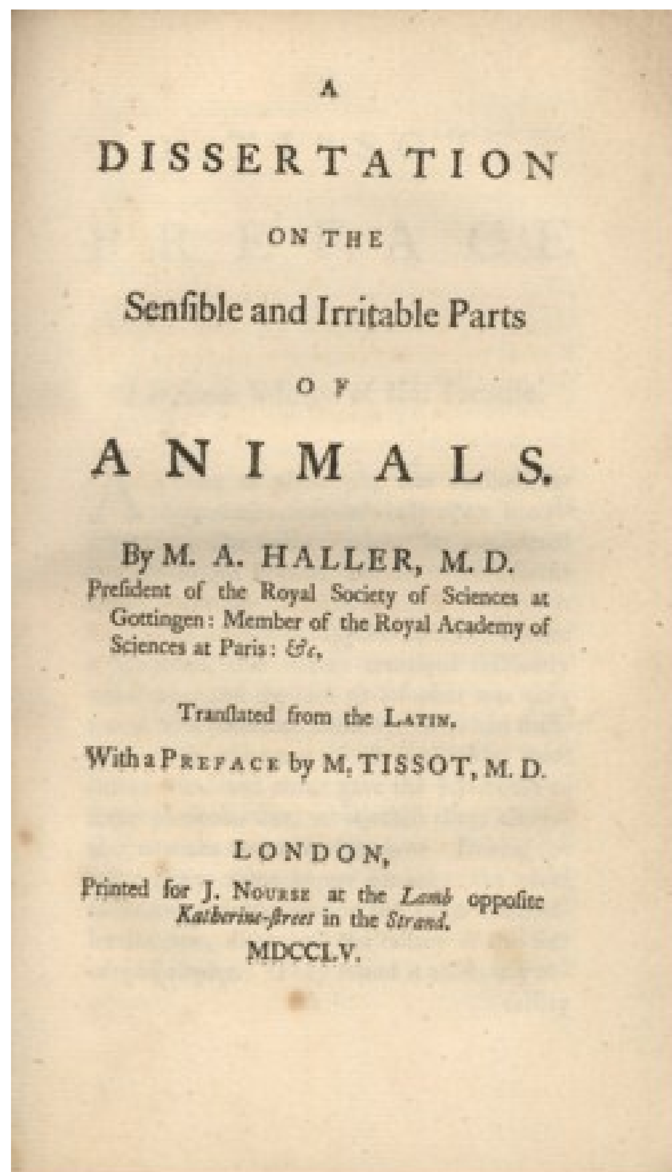
PROF. PHILOSOPHIAE.

TRAIECTI CIS VIADRVM

IMPENS. IOANNIS CHRISTIANI KLEYB

CIƆIƆCCL.

Figure 1.1. Alexander Baumgarten. *Aesthetica Scripsit*.
Title-page. 1750. From *Aesthetica Scripsit*.
Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1961.



A

DISSERTATION

ON THE

Senſible and Irritable Parts

OF

ANIMALS.

By M. A. HALLER, M. D.

Preſident of the Royal Society of Sciences at Gottingen: Member of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris: *&c.*

Tranſlated from the LATIN.

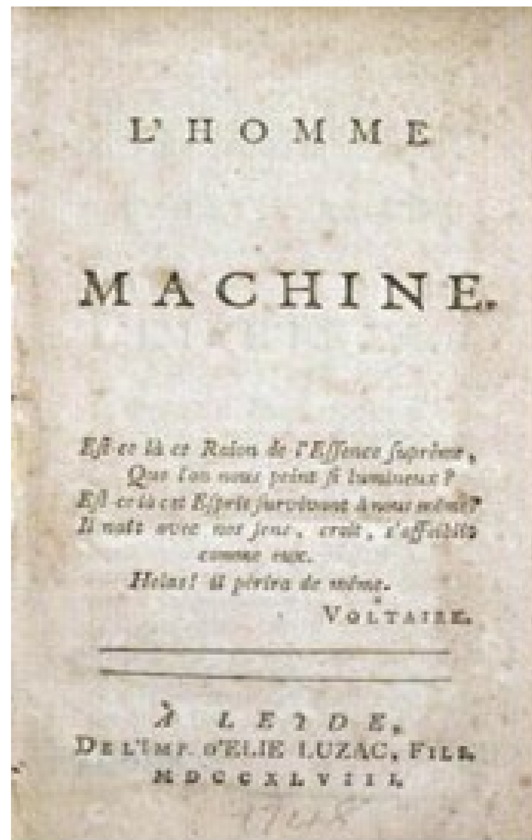
With a PREFACE by M. TISSOT, M. D.

LONDON,

Printed for J. NOURSE at the *Lamb* oppoſite *Katherine-ſtreet* in the *Strand.*

MDCCLV.

Figure 1.2. Albrecht von Haller. *A Dissertation On The Sensible and Irritable Parts of Animals*. Title-page. 1755. Sydney.



L'HOMME

MACHINE.

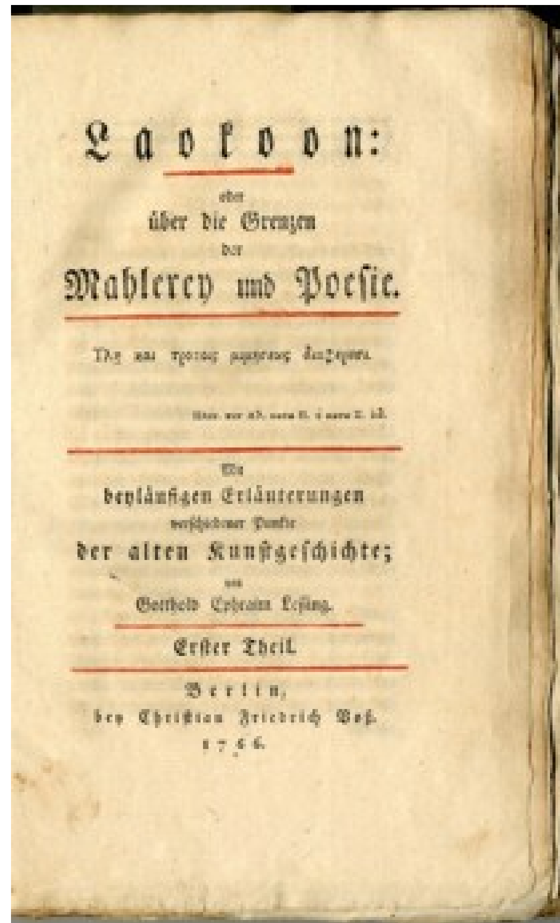
Est-ce là ce Raion de l'Essence suprême,
Que l'on nous peint si lumineux?
Est-ce là cet Esprit survivant à nous même?
Il naît avec nos sens, croît, s'affoiblit comme eux.
Helas! il périra de même.

VOLTAIRE.

À LEYDE,
DE L'IMP. D'ELIE LUZAC, FILS.
MDCCXLVIII.

Figure 1.3. Julien Offray de la Mettrie. *L'Homme Machine*. Title-page. 1748.

Figure 1.4. Agesander, Athenodoros and Polydorus (attributed). *Laocoön Group* or *Laocoön and His Sons*. c. 25 BCE. Marble. Vatican Museums, Rome.



Laokoon:
oder
über die Grenzen
der
Mahlerey und Poesie.

[illegible]

[illegible]

Mit
beyläufigen Erläuterungen
verschiedener Punkte
der alten Kunstgeschichte;
von
Gotthold Ephraim Lessing.

Erster Theil.

Berlin,
bey Christian Friedrich Voß.
1766.

Figure 1.5. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. *Laokoön oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie (Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry)*. Title-page. 1766. Berkeley, CA.

Gedancken
über die
Nachahmung der Griechischen
Wercke
in der
Mahlerey und Bildhauer-Kunst.

Vos exemplaria Græca
Nocturna versate manu, versate diurna.
HORAT. ART. POET.

1755.

Figure 1.6. Johann Joachim Winkcelmann. *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke (Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works)*. Title-page. 1755. Dresden.

Figure 2.1. Paul Cézanne. *Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves*. 1901-1906. Pencil and watercolor on paper, 48cm x 31com. Private collection.

Figure 2.2. Marie Francois Xavier Bichat. *Traite Des Membranes en General et de Diverses Membranes en Particuliar*. Title-page. 1800. Paris.

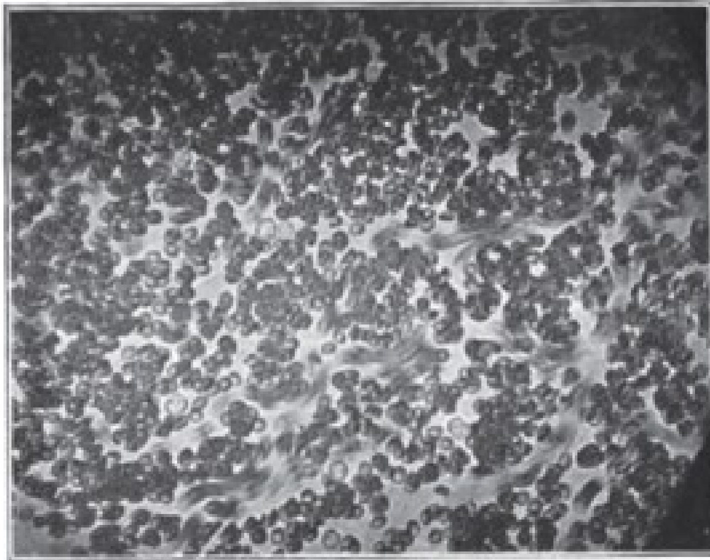
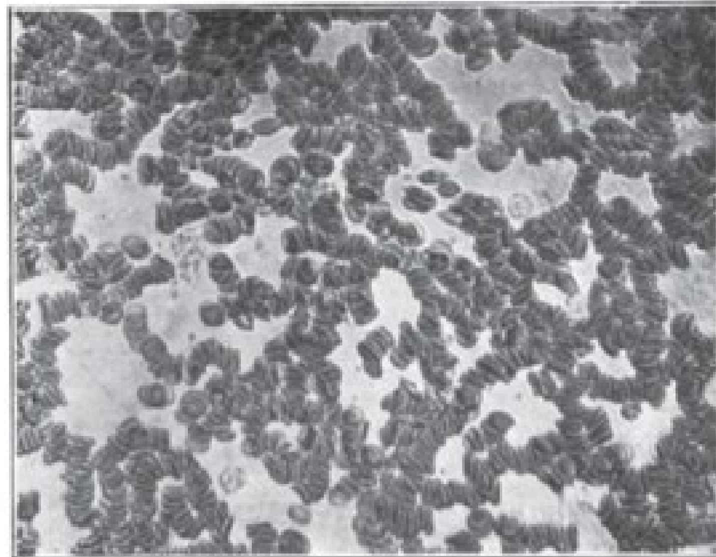


FIG. 1.—Healthy blood moving under the microscope.



Blood cells of Fig. 1 at rest.

39

Figure 2.3. Lincoln Watkins. "Healthy Blood moving…." *Diagnosis By Means Of The Blood*. New York and London: Physicians Book Publishing, 1902, 39. Photograph.

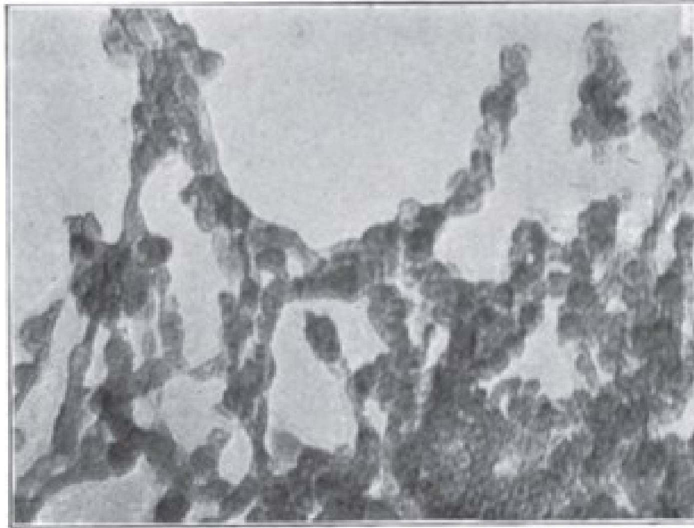


Fig. 12.—Unhealthy blood.

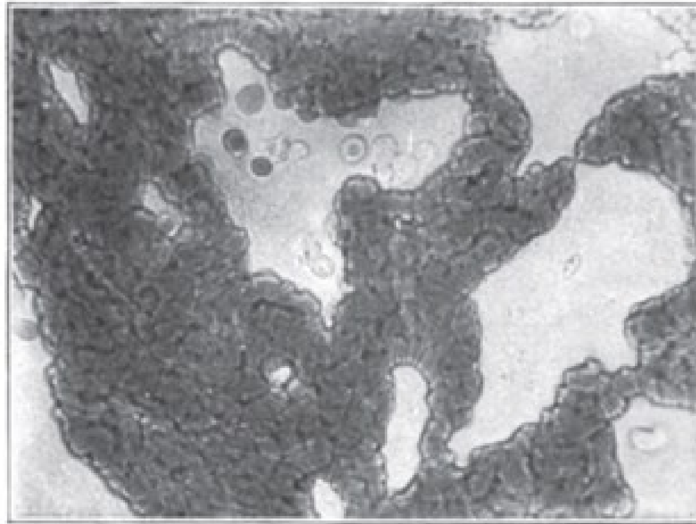


Fig. 13.—Unhealthy blood.

67

Figure 2.4. Lincoln Watkins. "Unhealthy blood", *Diagnosis By Means Of The Blood*. New York and London: Physicians Book Publishing, 1902, 67. Photograph.

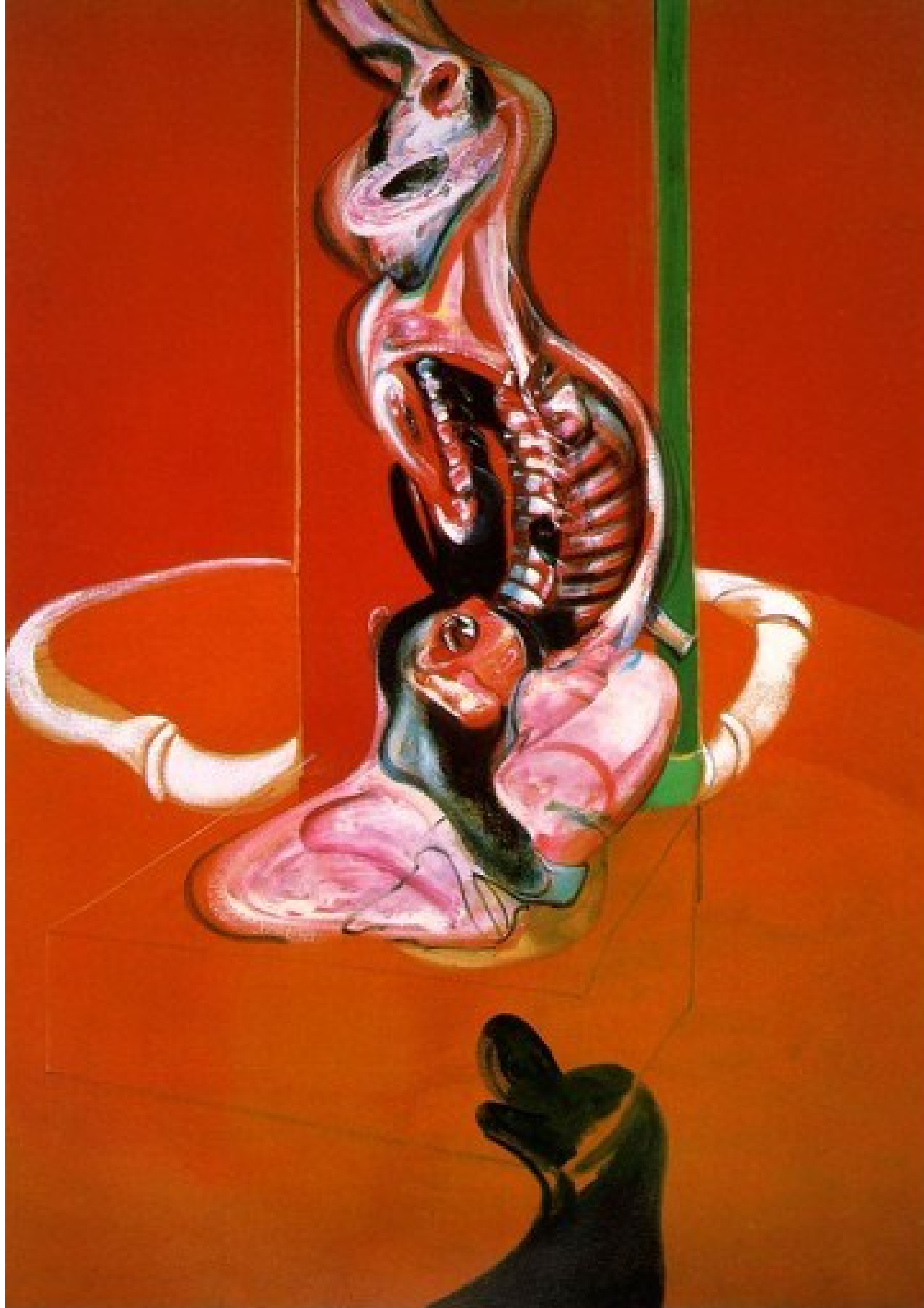


Figure 2.5. Francis Bacon. *Three Studies for a Crucifixion*, 1962. Triptych. Detail, panel three.
Oil with sand on canvas, 198.1cm x 144.8cm. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Figure 2.6. Edouard Vuillard, *Portrait of the Artist's Mother and Sister in the Studio*. 1891. Oil on canvas, 46.3cm x 56.5cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY
STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

TRAITÉ

DES

MALADIES MENTALES

PAR LE DOCTEUR

B. A. MOREL

[illegible]

[illegible]

PARIS

LIBRAIRIE VICTOR MASSON

PLACE DE L'ÉCOLE-DE-MÉDECINE

M DCCC LX

Droit de traduction réservé

Figure 3.1. B.A. Morel. *Traite Des Maladies Mentale*. Title-page. 1750.

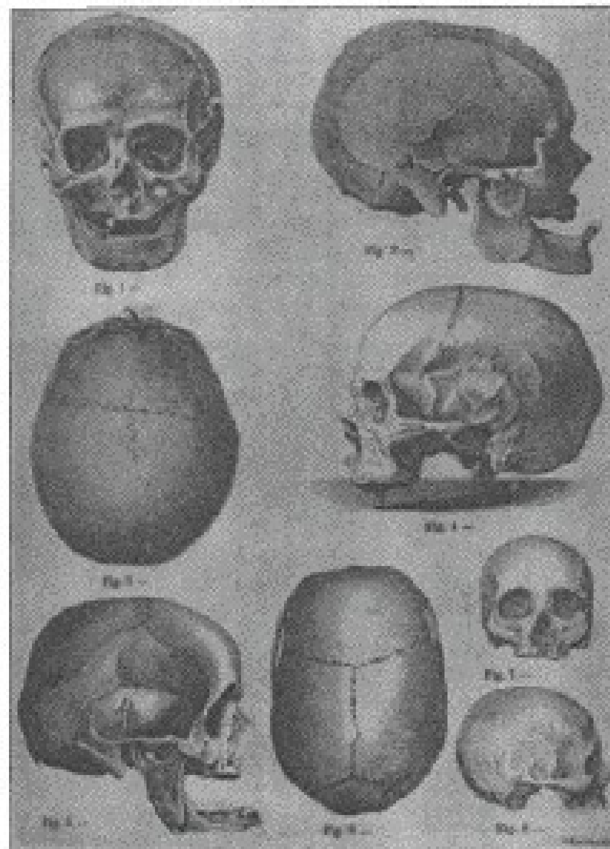


Figure 3.2. Cesare Lombroso. “Kant’s Skull”, *The Man of Genius*. London and New York: Walter Scott and Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1895, 9.

Figure 3.3. André Brouillet. *Un Leçon Clinique à la Salpêtrière*. 1887. Oil on canvas. 300cm x 425cm. Musée d' histoire de la médecine, René Descartes Université, Paris.

Figure 3.4. Paul Regnard. "Extase", Attitudes Passionelles, *Iconographie*, vol. II, plate 21, 1878. Photograph.

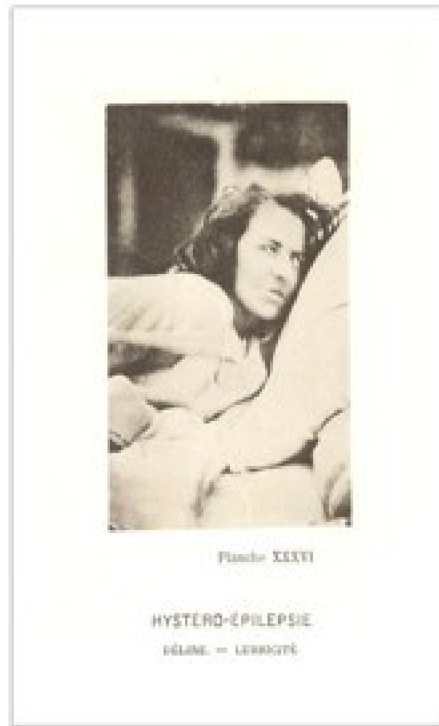


Figure 3.5. Paul Regnard. “Hysero-Epilepsie”, Attitudes Passionelles, *Iconographie,* vol. II, plate 36, 1878. Photograph.

Figure 3.6. Paul Regnard. “Hysero-Epilepsie”, Attitudes Passionelles, *Iconographie*, vol. II, plate 20, 1878. Photograph.

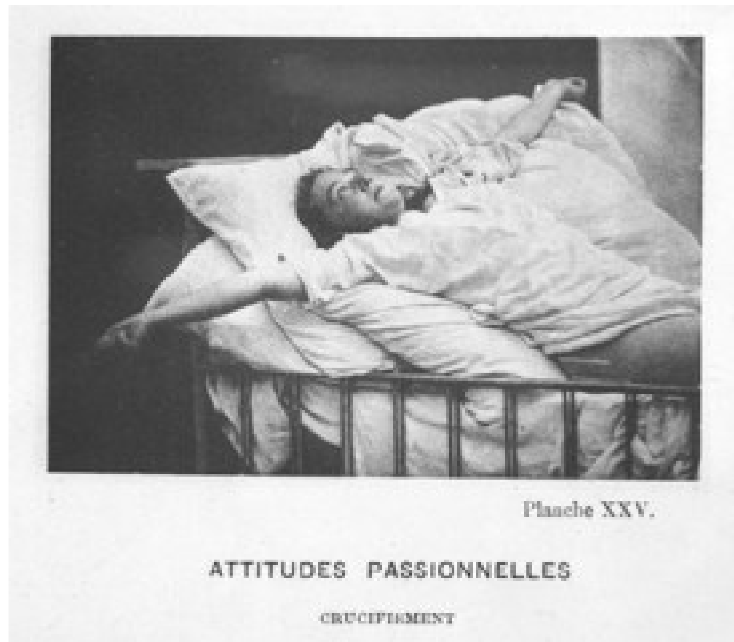


Figure 3.7. Paul Regnard. “Crucifiement”, Attitudes Passionelles. *Iconographie,* vol. II, plate 25. 1878. Photograph.

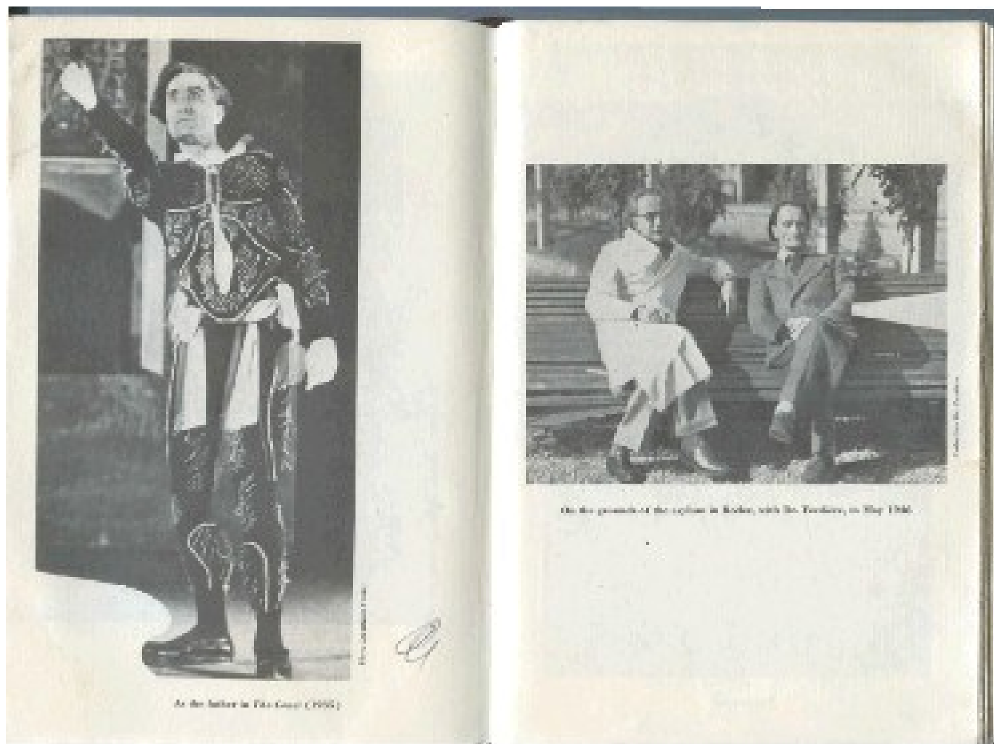


Figure 3.8. “Antonin Artaud in The Cenci”, 1935 (left), and “On the grounds of the asylum with

Dr. Ferdière". From *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings*, trans. Helen Weaver. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976, 204-205. Photographs.

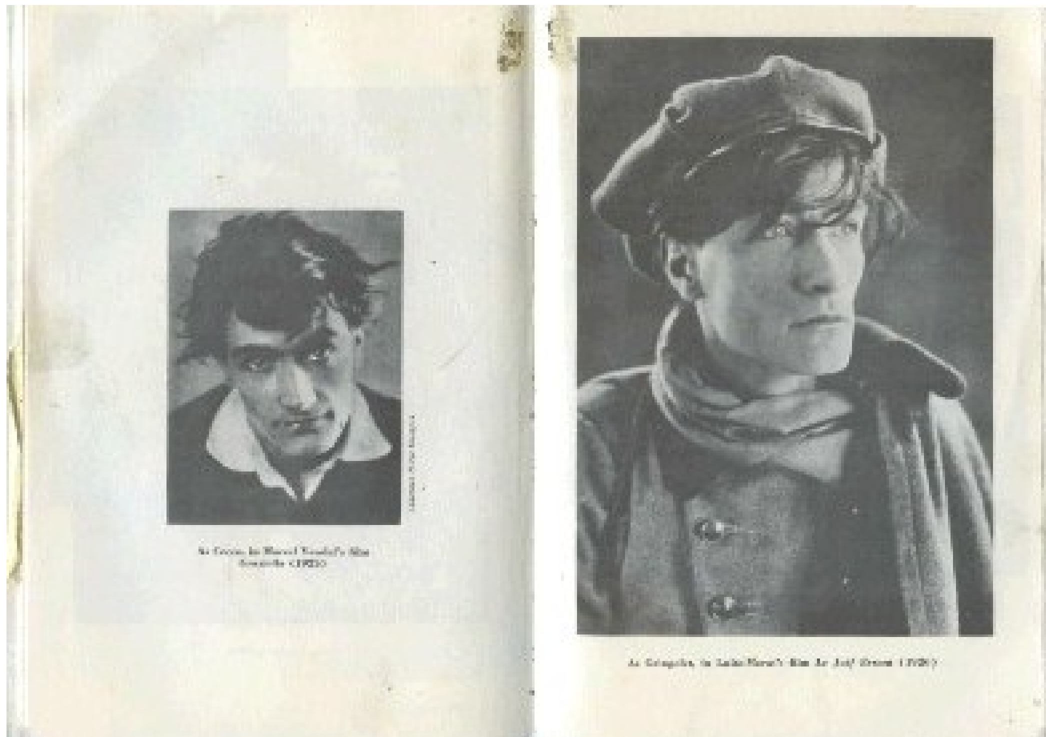
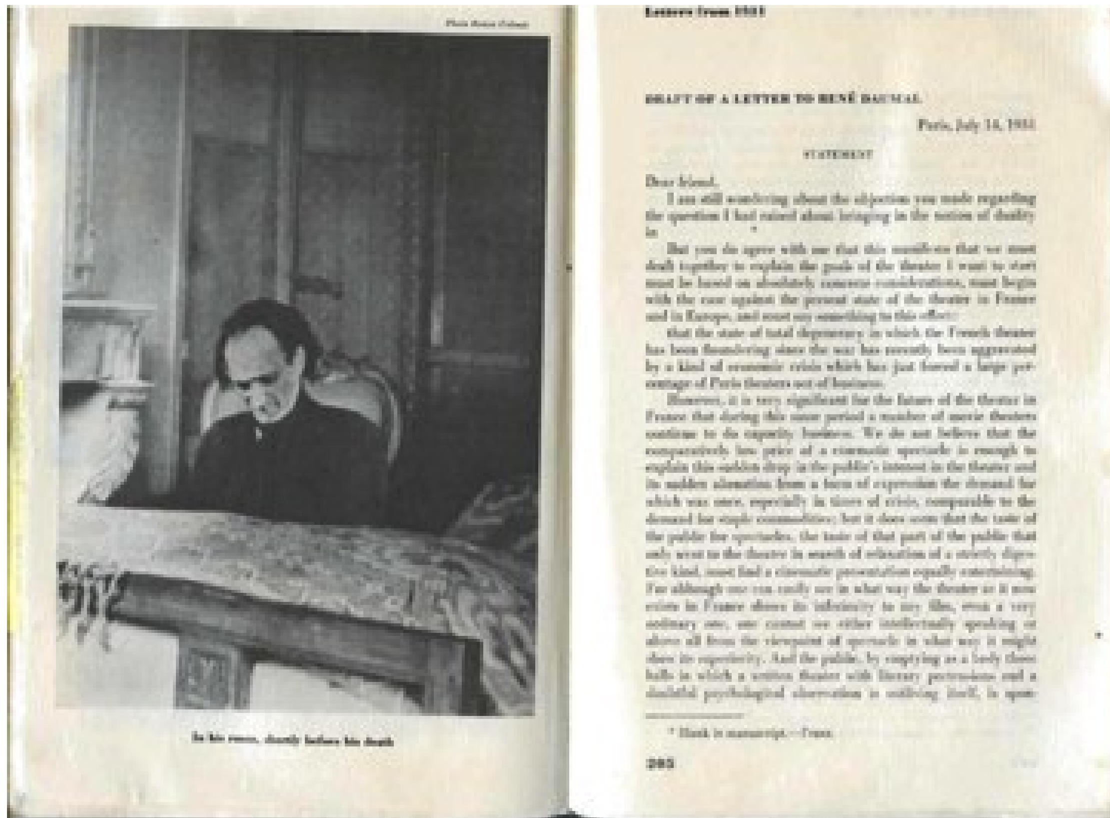


Figure 3.9. “Antonin Artaud, as Cecco in Marcel Vandal’s ‘Graziella’” 1925 (left) and “As Gringalet, in Louitz-Morat’s ‘Le Juif Errant’” 1926. From *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976, 204-205. Photographs.



In his room, shortly before his death

Letters from 1931

DRAFT OF A LETTER TO RENÉ DAUMAL

Paris, July 14, 1931

STATEMENT

Dear friend,

205

Figure 3.10. “Antonin Artaud, in his room, February 1948, shortly before his death, at the clinic in Ivry-sur-Seine”. From *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976, 204-205. Photograph.

Figure 4.1. Joseph Beuys. *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me*. 1974. Video still. Block Collection, New York.

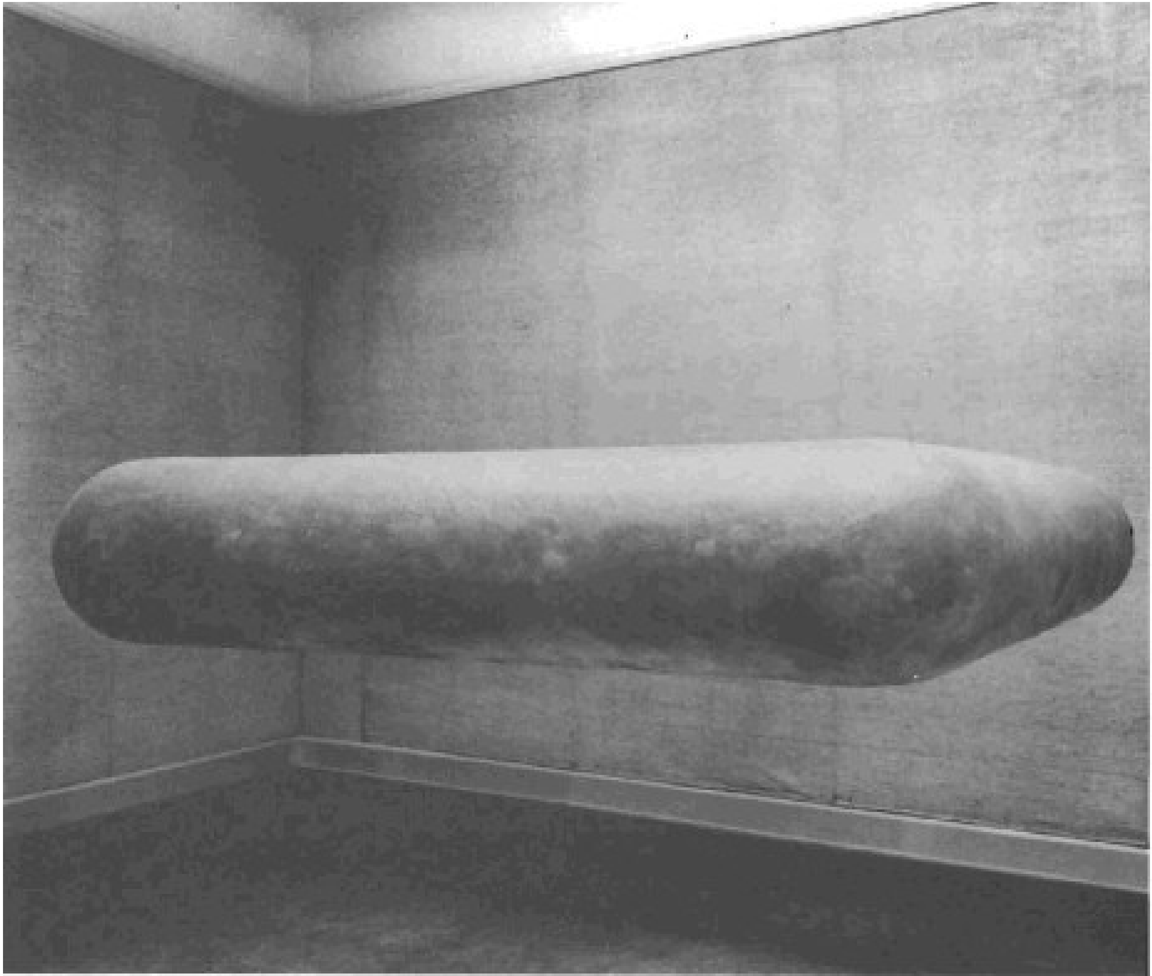


Figure 4.2. Robert Morris. *Untitled* (Fiberglass Cloud). 1967. Translucent fiberglass and nylon threads. 18 by 96 by 96 inches. Tate Gallery, London.

Figure 4.3. Robert Morris and Carolee Scheeman. *Site*. 1964. Video still. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

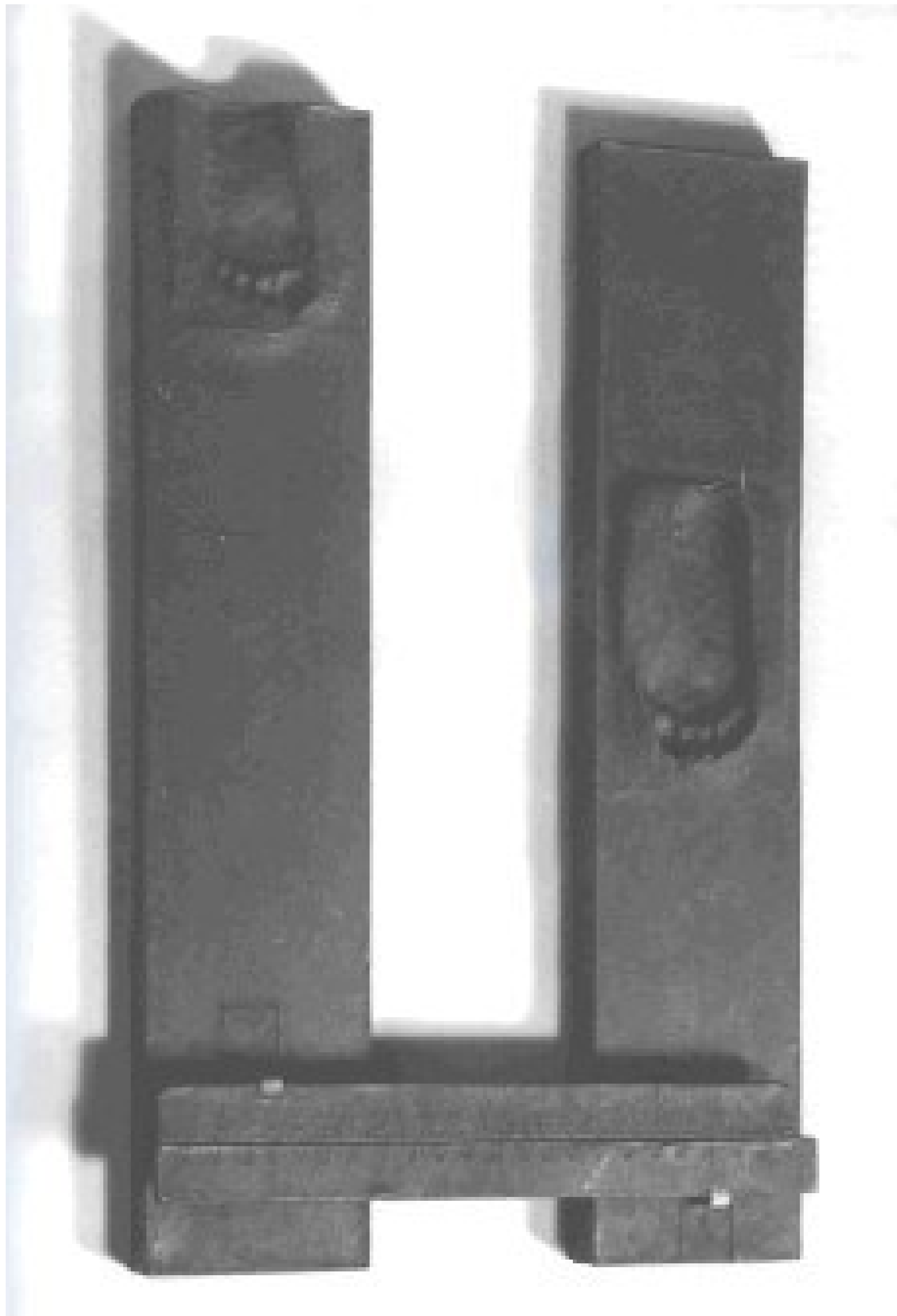


Figure 4.4. Robert Morris. *Untitled* (Footprints and Rulers). 1964. Lead over wood and
two cast-lead rulers. 39 ½ x 23 ¾ x 4 inches. Private collection.

Figure 4.5. Hannah Wilke. *S.O.S. (Starification Object Series)*: An Adult Game of Mastication. 1974-75. Mixed media. Collection Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Figure 4.6. Hannah Wilke. *So Help Me Hannah Series: Portrait of the Artist and her Mother.* 1978-81. Diptych. Cibachrome, 30 x 40 inches. Hannah Wilke Collection and Archive, Los Angeles.

Figure 4.7. Hannah Wilke. *In Memoriam, Selma Butter (Mommy)*. 1979-83. Photographs and floor sculptures. Hannah Wilke Collection and Archive, Los Angeles.

Figure 4.8. Hannah Wilke. *Why Not Sneeze…?* 1992. Wire bird cage, medicine bottles and syringes. 7 x 9 in. Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York.

Figure 4.9. Hannah Wilke. *Brush Stroke*. 1992. Artist's hair on Arches paper. Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York.

Figure 4.10. Hannah Wilke (with Donald Goddard). *Intra-Venus, June 10, 1992/ May 5, 1992*. 1992-93/ Chromagenic supergloss prints. 71 ½ x 47 ½ each. Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York.

Figure 4.11. Hannah Wilke (with Donald Goddard). *Intra-Venus, August 17, 1992/ August 9, 1992*. 1992-93. Chromagenic supergloss prints. 71 ½ x 47 ½ each. Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York.

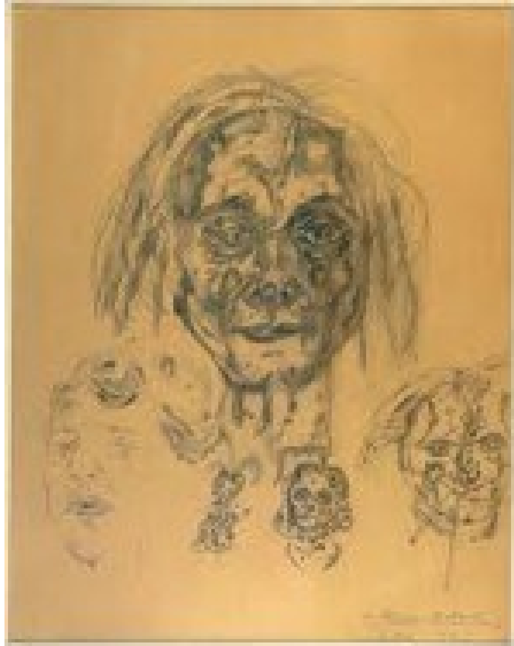
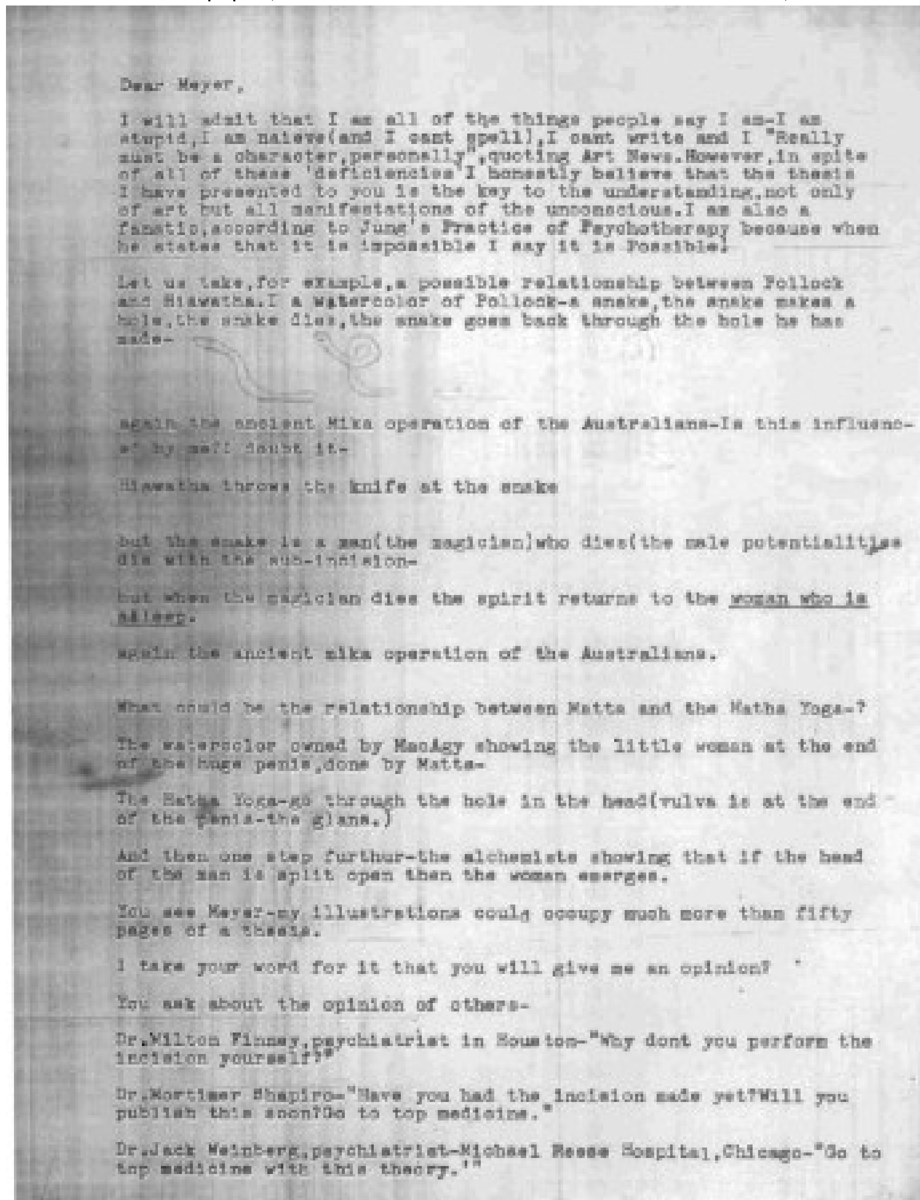


Figure 4.12. Antonin Artaud. *Autoportrait*. (11 mai) 1946. Graphite on paper, 63cm x 49cm. Private collection.

Figure 4.13. Hannah Wilke. *Intra-Venus Face*. 1992. Watercolor

on paper, 12 ½ x 9 ½ inches. Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Dear Meyer,

I will admit that I am all of the things people say I am-I am stupid,I am naieve(and I cant spell),I cant write and I "Really must be a character,personally",quoting Art News.However,in spite of all of these 'deficiencies'I honestly believe that the thesis I have presented to you is the key to the understanding,not only of art but all manifestations of the unconscious.I am also a fanatic,according to Jung's Practice of Psychotherapy because when he states that it is impossible I say it is Possible!

Let us take,for example,a possible relationship between Pollock and Hiawatha.I a watercolor of Pollock-a snake,the snake makes a hole,the snake dies,the snake goes back through the hole he has made-

again the ancient Mika operation of the Australians-Is this influenc-ed by me?I doubt it-

Hiawatha throws the knife at the snake

but the snake is a man(the magician)who dies(the male potentialities die with the sub-incision-

but when the magician dies the spirit returns to the woman who is asleep.

again the ancient mika operation of the Australians.

What could be the relationship between Matta and the Hatha Yoga-?

The watercolor owned by MacAgy showing the little woman at the end of the huge penis,done by Matta-

The Hatha Yoga-go through the hole in the head(vulva is at the end of the penis-the glans.)

And then one step furthur-the alchemists showing that if the head of the man is split open then the woman emerges.

You see Meyer-my illustrations could occupy much more than fifty pages of a thesis.

I take your word for it that you will give me an opinion?

You ask about the opinion of others-

Dr.Wilton Finney,psychiatrist in Houston-"Why dont you perform the incision yourself?"

Dr.Mortimer Shapiro-"Have you had the incision made yet?Will you publish this soon?Go to top medicine."

Dr.Jack Weinberg,psychiatrist-Michael Reese Hospital,Chicago-"Go to top medicine with this theory.'"

Figure 5.1. Forrest Bess. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. n.d., Meyer Schapiro Archive papers,
Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Washington, DC.

Figure 5.2. Forrest Bess. *Untitled*. n.d. Polaroid photograph. Betty Parsons Gallery records and personal papers Archive. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

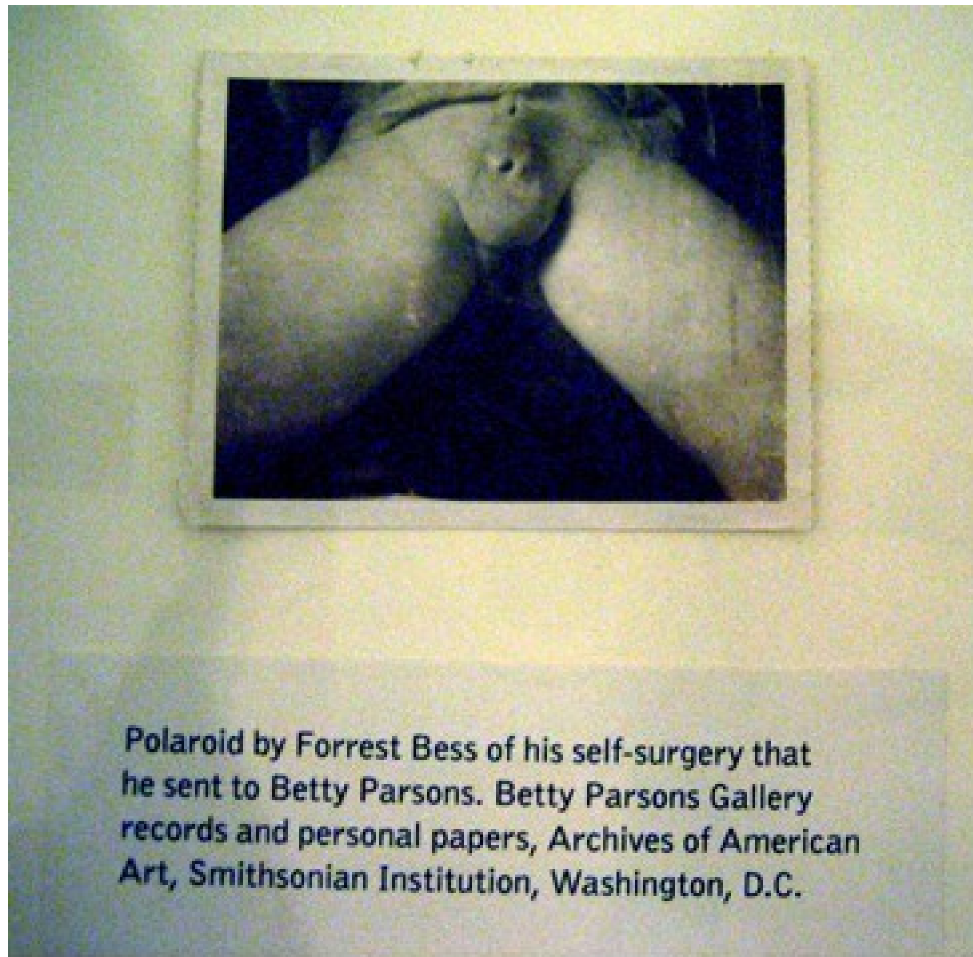


Figure 5.3. Forrest Bess, *Untitled*. n.d. Polaroid photograph, Betty Parsons Gallery records and personal papers. Archive, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Figure 5.4. Forrest Bess. *Untitled (No. 5)*. 1949. Oil on canvas, 10 x 12 7/8 in. Cartin Collection.

MATRIX/BERKELEY 125
Nayland Blake

University Art Museum
late March - early May 1989

Untitled ("The Miracle of Unmanning"), 1988-89

Figure 5.5. Nayland Blake. *The Schreber Suite*. 1989. Exhibition brochure. University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA.

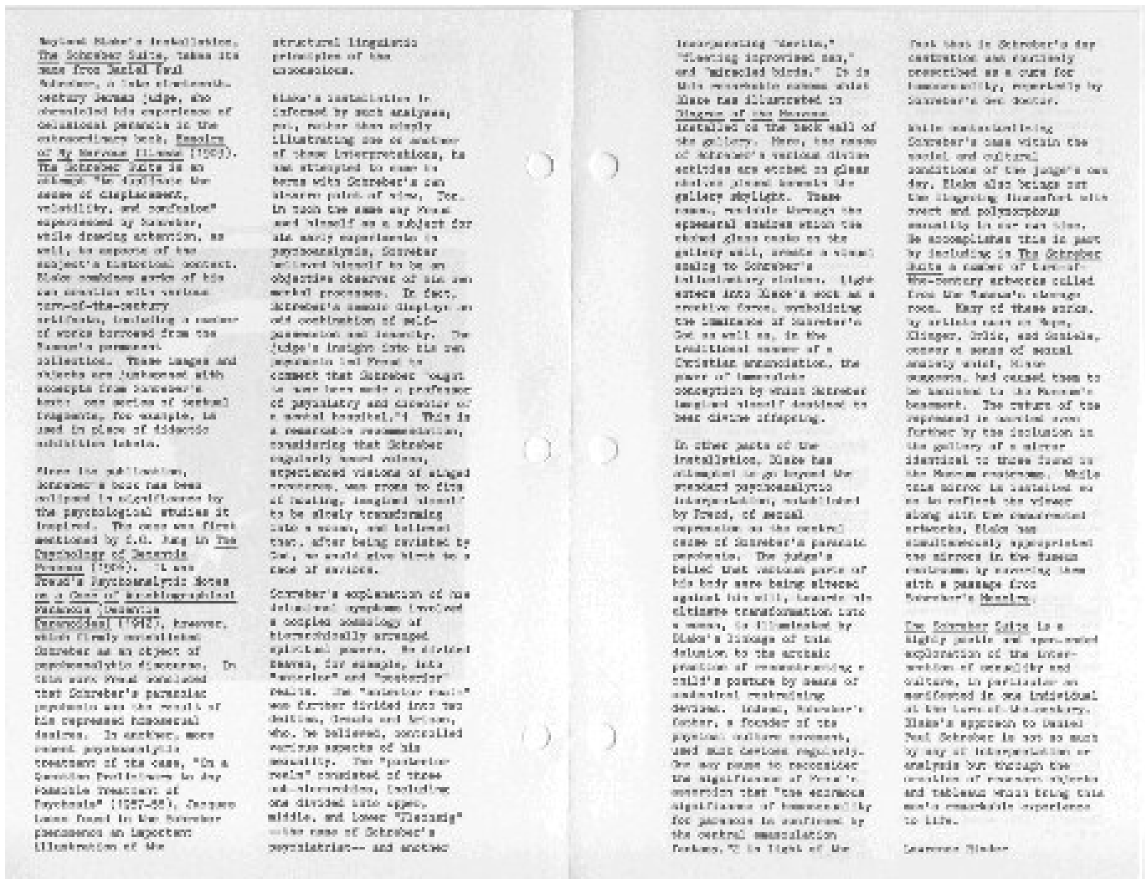


Figure 5.7. Nayland Blake. *The Schreber Suite*. 1989. Exhibition brochure. University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA.

1
The Freud/Jung Letters, ed. William McGuire, trans. Ralph Manheim and R.F.C. Hull, Bollingen Series XCIV (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 311.
2
Ibid., p. 369.

Works in MATRIX (all works are lent by the artist):

1. Untitled ("The Miracle of Unmanning"), 1988-89, framed silhouette, 10 x 15".

2. Diagram of the Heavens, 1989, glass, steel, 21 x 19'.

3. Displacement and Rectification, 1989, mirrors, shelves, 2 x 8' ea.

4. Schreber Box, 1989, mixed media, 21 x 21 x 18".

5. Design for Schreber Throne, 1989, pencil drawing, 4 x 4".

6. The Compression-of-Head-Miracle, 1989, leather, aluminum, 30 x 15 x 8".

7. Untitled ("Miracled Birds"), 1989, mixed media, 2 x 5 x 1".

One-person exhibitions:

Media, S.F., From Paths of Pain to Jewels of Glory '88; Richard Kuhlenschmidt Gallery, L.A. '89; Mincher/Wilcox Gallery, S.F., The Elision of Failed Effect '89.

Selected group exhibitions:

Randolph Street Gallery, Chicago, IL '89; Fuller-Gross Gallery, S.F. '88; American Fine Arts, NYC '88; Artspace Annex, S.F. '89.

Selected bibliography about the artist:

Hamer, Jonathan. Shift Magazine, Issue 1, '87.
Helfand, Glen. San Francisco Sentinel, Feb. 20 '87, Jan. 8 '88.
Baker, Kenneth. San Francisco Chronicle, Feb. 24, July 15 '87; March 10, April 24 '88.
Van Proyen, Mark. Artweek, Oct. 8 '87.
Berkson, Bill. Artforum, May '87.
Indiana, Gary. Village Voice, March 8 '88.

MATRIX is supported in part by grants from the Paul L. and Phyllis Wattis Foundation, the California Tamarack Foundation, Art Matters Inc., and the Alameda County Art Commission County Supervisors' Art Support Program.

Figure 5.8. Nayland Blake. *The Schreber Suite*. 1989. Exhibition brochure. University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA.

Figure 5.9. Nayland Blake. *Untitled ("Miracled Birds")*. 1989. Mixed media. 2 x 5 x 1 in.