



Dolls and Puppets as Artistic and Cultural Phenomena

(19th – 21st Centuries)

ed. by **Kamil Kopania**

The Aleksander Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Art in Warsaw
The Department of Puppetry Art in Białystok



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Publisher:

The Aleksander Zelwerowicz
National Academy of Dramatic Art in Warsaw
The Department of Puppetry Art in Białystok
Sienkiewicza 14 Str.
15-092 Białystok, Poland
www.atb.edu.pl

Publication supported by:

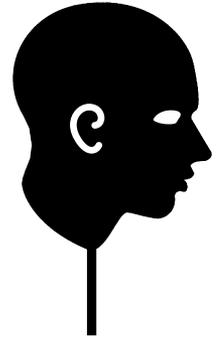
The Institute of Art History, University of Warsaw
www.ihs.uw.edu.pl

Print and binding by:

ARGRAF Sp. z o.o.
Jagiellońska 80 Str., 03-301 Warsaw
www.argraf.pl
Print run: 300

ISBN: 978-83-938151-9-7





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Kamil Kopania – Institute of Art History of the University of Warsaw,
The Aleksander Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Art in Warsaw
– The Department of Puppetry Art in Białystok

Prof. Henryk Jurkowski – *in memoriam*



Prof. Henryk Jurkowski

The introduction to this volume was originally intended to take a different form. However, on January 3, 2016, during the final stages of work on this publication, I received the sad news that Prof. Henryk Jurkowski had died in Warsaw at the age of 89. Jurkowski was an outstanding theoretician, critic, playwright, translator, scholar of the history of puppet theater, president of UNIMA (Union Internationale de la Marionette) from 1984 to 1992 and honorary president since 1992, lecturer for many years in art schools both in Poland and abroad (including the Department of Puppetry Art at the Białystok branch of the Aleksander Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Art in Warsaw), and a penetrating observer of the postwar development and transformation of this area in the arts, who remained active as a scholar through the last days of his life; his special rank in the discipline is attested by his bountiful contribution to it, consisting of several dozen books, printed in numerous languages, and many articles.

What was the essence of the Henryk Jurkowski phenomenon? This Polish scholar embodied a quality of particular importance to those involved in the puppet theater broadly defined and issues relating to dolls and puppets in world cultures; a quality that unfortunately has become increasingly rare in recent decades. Prof. Jurkowski was a real, old-fashioned (in the best sense

of that term) humanist. He did not focus, like most contemporary scholars, on a narrow area of knowledge, nor was his scholarship fragmentary. His work, though seemingly focused on the relatively narrow subject of the puppet theater, was inextricably linked with an effort to place the problems he dealt with in the widest possible cultural context and to create comprehensive, erudite studies of ancient, modern and contemporary culture.

Prof. Henryk Jurkowski's voice was a singularly important one in contemporary discussions about the puppet theater. It is hard to think of another scholar who provided such a far-reaching analysis of problems, processes, and changes perceptible in European culture. The range of his gaze was made possible, to a considerable extent, by the fact that the Polish and broader Central-Eastern European perspective allowed him to perceive many cultural phenomena left unnoticed in the West. Can you imagine finding a scholar at one of the most famous and reputable universities whose work chronicles the history of the theater in Europe and encompasses developments not only in Spain, France, Germany and Great Britain, but also in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Russia and the territories comprising the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth? You will search in vain for any such person. At the same time, Prof. Jurkowski knew how to produce such syntheses, and did so, as we can see from examining his monumental two-volume *History of European Puppetry* (1996 and 1998), as well as *Ecrivains et marionnettes. Quatre siècles de littérature dramatique en Europe* (1991), *Métamorphoses. La marionnette au XXe siècle* (expanded 2nd edition, 2008) or *Przemiany ikonosfery. Wizualny kontekst teatru* (Transformations of the Iconosphere. The Visual Context of Theater Art, 2009). Writing works in the areas of theory and aesthetics of puppet theater, he approached them from a broad, pan-European perspective, as demonstrated by his *Aspects of Puppet Theatre: A Collection of Essays* (1988). He was also the creator, and for many years an editor, of the *Encyclopédie mondiale des arts de la marionnette* (2009).

In discussing the breadth of Henryk Jurkowski's intellectual horizons, it is important to underscore the interdisciplinary nature of his scholarship. The professor was not only a scholar of the puppet theater; he was above all a scholar of culture, interested in puppets, their meaning, history, functions, and aesthetics. When performing his analyses of theatrical subjects, he referred not only to the findings of historians or theoreticians of the theater; but also sought out the works of art historians, literary scholars, historians of religion, and ethnologists. Various kind of sources of knowledge and confrontation with diverse scholarly points of view enabled him to create

truly broad, bold interdisciplinary analyses, by which we can recognize a real, thoroughly educated, thinking humanist. In a time when increasing value is placed on specialization, when studies are expected to be fragmentary and as predictable, and subjects as uncontroversial, as possible, Jurkowski outlined comprehensive panoramas of problems, delineated areas for further research, and shaped the way we look at the puppet theater. In essence, he was interested in almost every kind of activity relating to the animation of things, but in particular their use in forms of ritual, whether theatrical or para-theatrical. This is amply shown in his book *Materiał jako wehikuł treści rytuału* (Material as Vehicle for Ritual Content, 2011), as well as the earlier *Przemiany ikonosfery...* (Transformations of the Iconosphere...) mentioned above. A two-volume work, now in manuscript form, with the promising title *Lalka w kulturze* (The Puppet in Culture) is waiting to be published. We can only hope for it to be edited and published without hindrance or delay.

In Paris in 1852, the first-ever history of the puppet theater in Europe, was published: entitled *Histoire des marionnettes en Europe depuis l'antiquité jusqu'à nos jours* (History of Puppets in Europe from Antiquity to the Present), it was written by Charles Magnin. This book may properly be called exceptional, and the kind of book every scholar dreams of writing, in that over 150 years after its publication, far from being an oddity or curiosity, it remains a valuable, substantial work, an indispensable prerequisite for seriously pursuing the study of the history, forms, and essence of the puppet theater. I have no doubt that the two volumes of Prof. Henryk Jurkowski's *History of European Puppetry*, and many other publications of his, will likewise serve scholars as useful sources of knowledge and inspiration for many decades to come.

I will close on a personal note. The scholar we have just lost is one to whom I am particularly much indebted. Prof. Henryk Jurkowski's passion for the history of the puppet theater proved contagious to me when I was still an art history student, and he later offered his full support for my work, always insisting that broad horizons of thought were more important than academic specialization. He was also a reader of my doctoral dissertation, and proved ultimately to be the rescuer of its defense in 2009. As it happened, the second of my readers was unable to arrive on time, since unfortunately the train by which he had hoped to travel to Warsaw became the weapon used in a suicide... Prof. Jurkowski was recovering from an operation in the hospital, but had asked me to telephone before the defense. I called and mentioned

that the defense would not take place (in accordance with Polish law, which stipulates that at least one of the dissertation's readers must be present at its defense). Prof. Jurkowski went silent for a moment, after which he declared that in that case he would check himself out of the hospital. My wife took a taxi to the professor's house and both came to the National Museum in Warsaw, where the defense took place. He was thus not only a great scholar, but also a man of great kindness and character. In Poland, we often speak of individuals from his age group as representing the generation of the Warsaw Uprising, and thus a generation of people loyal to a cause, with a strong backbone, upright and honest (and it is true that Prof. Jurkowski was a soldier in the Warsaw Uprising, one of the most tragic events in the Second World War). And that is precisely how I will remember him. Let the present volume be a tribute offered to the memory of Professor Henryk Jurkowski, one of the greatest authorities in the field of studies in animation.

Sara Ayres – Research Associate, Kingston University, United Kingdom

At The Uttermost Limit of Vision: The Wax Dolls of Lotte Pritzel (1887-1952)



Figure 1: Atelier Madame d'Ora, Die Puppenkünstlerin Lotte Pritzel (1924)

Emerging during the twilight years of the Wilhelmine Empire in Munich's Schwabing bohemia, Lotte Pritzel was a sculptor of dolls, which she called *Puppen für die Vitrine*, or dolls for glass cases (**Figure 1**). Her figures measure no higher than twenty centimetres; their bodies and features are elongated, androgynous and sometimes eroticized. Their faces bear the "peculiar translucence and slight sweatiness of the wax medium," as Marina Warner has described it.¹

Pritzel's early figures have movable limbs. Her later static figures, developed from around 1914 onward, perch on plinths and pedestals, which Pritzel bought from the Auer Dult market. The dolls were displayed in recycled glass cloches and cases, in a manner reminiscent of Victorian arrangements of taxidermy, or other naturalia.²

One of Pritzel's early exhibitions inspired no less a poet than Rainer Maria Rilke to write a famous essay on her dolls³; she refused Oskar Kokoschka's commission for his Alma Mahler effigy;⁴ and in Berlin she advised Hans Bellmer

¹ Marina Warner, "On the Threshold: Sleeping Beauties," in *On Dolls*, ed. by Kenneth Gross, trans. by Idris Parry (1994) (London: Notting Hill, 2012): 108-129 (113).

² This mode of display was later utilised by Man Ray, Claude Cahun and, more recently, Jake and Dinos Chapman. See Jane Munro, *Silent Partners: Artist and Mannequin from Function to Fetish* (Cambridge: Fitzwilliam Museum; New Haven and London: Yale, 2014).

³ Rainer Maria Rilke, "Zu den Wachs-Puppen von Lotte Pritzel." First published in *Die Weissen Blätter*, March 1914.

⁴ See Bonnie Roos, "Oskar Kokoschka's Sex Toy: The Women and the Doll Who Conceived the Artist," *Modernism/Modernity* 12.2 (2005): 291-309. See also Justina Schreiber, "Hermine Moos, Malerin.

on the construction of his first articulated Poupée.⁵ Her work was acquired by the architect Ernst Friedmann,⁶ the publisher Alexander Koch,⁷ and the Viennese Expressionist Egon Schiele.⁸ Contemporary accounts confirm that she was regarded as the only artist among the many dollmakers active during the period.⁹ In 1923 she was the eponymous subject of a documentary film produced by UFA.¹⁰ Her prominent profile at the time contrasts sharply with her near obscurity today.

Pritzel's figures, created from wax, cotton wool and textile on a wire armature, are very fragile. Much of her oeuvre is lost; a number of the remaining objects are in a degraded condition. The Munich City Museum created a centenary exhibition for Pritzel in 1987 and holds the most important collection of Pritzel sculptures.¹¹ Other works are held by the Egon Schiele Art Centrum in Český Krumlov and the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt. A definitive monograph on Pritzel has yet to emerge.

Excellent work has been done on the field of women's sculpture in the Weimar era, notably by Erich Ranfft and Ute Seiderer; however, this scholarship has focused on women carving and casting in stone and bronze, such as Renée Sintenis, Kathe Kollwitz and Milly Steger.¹² While there is a wealth of

Anlässlich eines bisher unbekanntes Fotos von Kokoschkas Alma-Puppe/Hermine Moos, Painter: On the Occasion of Discovering a Hitherto Unknown Photograph of Kokoschka's Alma-Doll" in *Oskar Kokoschka, ein Künstlerleben in Lichtbildern, an Artist's life in Photographs: aus dem Oskar Kokoschka-Zentrum der Universität für Angewandte Kunst Wien*, ed. by Bernadette Reinhold and Patrick Werkner (Vienna: Ambra IV, 2013): 86-91.

⁵ See Therese Lichtenstein, *Behind Closed Doors: The Art of Hans Bellmer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Peter Webb and Robert Short, *Death, Desire and the Doll: the Life and Art of Hans Bellmer* (Chicago, Bristol: Solar, BUP, 1985); Sue Taylor, *Hans Bellmer: The Anatomy of Anxiety* (Cambridge: MIT, 2000).

⁶ Interview with Irmelin Mayer, Teddington, Thursday 10 April 2014. Email to Sara Ayres from Jutta Hofmann-Beck, Munich City Museum, 12 June 2014.

⁷ See illustration in Wilhelm Michel, "Neue Wachspuppen von Lotte Pritzel," in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* IV 6 1914, 312-326, (312, 321); and also *Das Haus eines Kunstfreundes. Haus Alexander Koch, Darmstadt*, ed. by Alexander Koch, intro. by Kuno Graf von Hardenberg (Darmstadt: Alexander Koch, 1926) 6., which shows a photograph including the Pritzel sculpture *Libelle*.

⁸ Egon Schiele Datenbank der Autographen, ID: 2409, www.schiele-dokumentation.at

⁹ For example, see Max von Boehn, *Dolls and Puppets* (London: George G Harrap, 1932), 219.

¹⁰ I would like to thank the Murnau Stiftung for lending me a copy of this film. Ulrich Kayser's, *Die Pritzel-puppe* (1923) features not only Lotte Pritzel, but also actress Blandine Ebinger and the dancer Niddy Impekoven. The last part of the film shows Ebinger in Frank Wedekind's *Die Kaiserin von Neufundland*. Her costume is designed by Pritzel. Niddy Impekoven then performs *Pritzel-Puppentanz*.

¹¹ Several dolls were also exhibited in the recent exhibition, *Ab Nach München! – Künstlerinnen um 1900*, which took place from 12.09.2014 – 08.02.2015.

¹² Eric Ranfft, "German Women Sculptors 1918-1936: Gender Differences and Status," in *Visions of the Neue Frau*, ed. by Shearer West and Marsha Meskimmon (Scolar Press: Aldershot, 1995): 42-61; and Ute Seiderer, "Between Minor Sculpture and Promethean Creativity. Käthe Kollwitz and Berlin's Women Sculptors in the Discourse on Intellectual Motherhood and the Myth of Masculinity," in *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic*, ed. by Christiane Schönfeld (Königshausen und Neumann: Würzburg, 2006): 89-111.

work on the leitmotif of dolls, puppets and mannequins in the output of European avant-gardes in the first half of the twentieth-century; it has focused mainly on male artists, and the Surrealists, who took Hans Bellmer into their circle in the 1930s.¹³ Often this work addresses the potential for the uncanny animation of the objects of mass manufacture, specifically of mannequins. The mannequin's seductive exposure behind the glass walled display spaces of the modern city forms a spectacular locus for the commodification and hybridization of human bodies and consumer products. Bellmer's influence on the Surrealists in this regard is well-documented.¹⁴

Pritzel's dolls are highly original artworks; while potentially drawing on a wealth of possible precedent objects, they demonstrate no absolute reference points. The wax figures and their historicized costumes render them, at first sight, queerly anachronistic, as strange little relics of the Rococo, perhaps. My objective for this chapter is to articulate a position for Pritzel primarily in relation to the work of her close friend, the Surrealist sculptor and photographer, Hans Bellmer, which has previously been carefully analyzed. I will argue that photographs of Pritzel's doll sculptures reproduced in books and journals directly prefigure Bellmer's Surrealist strategies for the photography of his *Poupées*. Pritzel's dolls' photographic representation, their resistance to interpretation and their strangely sterile sexuality, rehearse and anticipate Bellmer's disturbing, irrational images of his repeatedly dismembered and reconstituted doll-sculptures.

Like Bellmer's *Poupées*, Pritzel's figures are handmade and unique. Pritzel's dolls bear a striking family resemblance to one another, whether male or female, pale or dark-skinned, fantastical hybrids or orientalist dancers. Instantly recognizable, they form a singular, queer species in the sculpture of the period and demonstrate the diversity of modernist art practices emerging in late Wilhelmine Munich. Pritzel also worked as a costume and set designer in the theatre, experience whose traces are particularly visible in the complex gestures and expressive mobility of the later, static figures. As Ingrid Stilijanov-Nedo has pointed out, the strong, structural relationship of the dolls to the contemporary practice of expressionist dance is immediately evident.¹⁵ Pritzel's work may be regarded as having its deepest aesthetic root in the sinuous, elongated forms of Symbolism and

¹³ Marsha Meskimmon's *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (London; New York: IB Tauris, 1999) is a significant exception to this rule.

¹⁴ See, for example, John C Welchmann, ed. *Sculpture and the Vitrine* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013) and Alyce Mahon, "The Assembly Line Goddess: Modern Art and the Mannequin" in Munro: 191-221.

¹⁵ Ingrid Stilijanov-Nedo, "Fundstuecke" in *Katalog des Ausstellung Lotte Pritzel 1887-1952 Puppen des Lasters, des Grauens und der Ekstase* (1987): 71-74 (73).

Jugendstil.¹⁶ Pritzel develops the androgynous lines of Gustav Klimt's drawings and the taut, twisting bodies and articulate hands of Viennese Expressionism into three-dimensional wax forms. Egon Schiele acquired one of Pritzel's early figures around 1912, most probably when he was exhibiting in Munich. Six years later, in 1918, Schiele wrote to his friend Arthur Roessler, asking him to obtain another on his behalf.¹⁷

It is perhaps unsurprising that Pritzel was taken up by Koch, who was a champion of Jugendstil and the Wiener Moderne. Pritzel's figures were featured by his periodical, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* (DKuD hereafter) between 1910 and 1924. These lavishly illustrated articles now form a record of Pritzel's practice. This record is not straightforwardly documentary, but rather deliberately discursive.¹⁸ It seems likely that the journal's photographs of the figures were art-directed by Pritzel and that these photographs formed an aspect of her practice. None show the figures in their vitrines, suggesting that within the journal context, Pritzel considered the camera lens a good substitute for the effect vitrinization produced in exhibitions. The articles reveal distinct development both in the form and representation of the dolls during this period.

DKuD's 1911 presentation of these early dolls, with movable limbs, shows them arranged in a series of theatrical vignettes, the pictorial frame doubling as a proscenium arch (**Figure 2**). None of the dolls are presented singly. Inhabiting their own opaque, self-sufficient doll world, they seem oblivious to the viewer or the camera. It may well be the case that Pritzel's early exhibitions of her dolls, which took place in her Schwabing studio and in the Galerie Caspari,¹⁹ were similarly staged or installed, the dolls posed in groups in a manner indicative of Pritzel's interest in performance. No captions or clues are given as to the dolls' purposes or activities within these images. Rilke, after viewing an early exhibition, wrote of the dolls:



Figure 2: Lotte Pritzel, Puppen, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 33 (1910-1911)

They swarm and fade at the uttermost limit of our vision. For their only concern is to dwindle away. Sexless like our childhood dolls

¹⁶ This has been pointed out by, among others, Wolfgang Glüber, in "Puppen für die Vitrine: Zu den Wachspuppen der Lotte Pritzel," in *1996+1997 Kunst in Hessen und am Mittelrhein*, Heft 36+37 (1998): 139-149.

¹⁷ Michael Huber, "Schiele und der Kampf der Kenner" in *Kurier*, 11.04.11, www.leopoldmuseum.org/media/file/111_Kurier_11.04.11.pdf [Accessed 10 November 2014]

¹⁸ Pritzel's works were photographed and published in DKuD in January 1911, December 1912, January 1914, September 1916, March 1920, May 1922 and October 1923.

¹⁹ Barbara Borek, Lotte Pritzel (n.d.) <lotte-pritzel.de>

themselves, they experience no decline in their permanent sensuality, into which nothing flows and nothing escapes.²⁰

Indeed, the tactility of the wax medium and the dolls' pliable limbs stand at odds with Pritzel's insistence on the dolls' vitrification. The repeated definition of her sculptures as "Puppen für die Vitrine" is the only programmatic or interpretive statement she ever made regarding them. The placing of the dolls in vitrines renders them untouchable and self-sufficient, inhabitants of a space apart. It foregrounds their unavailability to the viewer/voyeur and defines his or her separated, even alienated relationship to the dolls' vitrified

world. Any exchange or transaction with these objects is taboo; they inhabit the very opposite end of the scale from the worn dolls of childhood.



Figure 3: Lotte Pritzel, Puppen, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 33 (1913-1914)

DKuD's 1914 article "New Wax Dolls by Lotte Pritzel," is sumptuously illustrated with photographs, two of which are tinted, and documents new developments in the presentation of Pritzel's sculptures (**Figure 3**).²¹ The illustrations show several of the dolls presented on plinths, which implicitly signify their rising status as autonomous artworks. The doll-sculptures retain their movable limbs, but are more often photographed alone, less often in contact with one another. This set of images occupies a liminal place in Pritzel's development, between the early movable objects and the later, static sculptures.



Figure 4: Lotte Pritzel, Puppe, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 45 (1919-1920)

By 1920, Pritzel's dolls had become fully static. DKuD's 1920 review likens them to peculiar insects, fixed and pinned in their display cases.²² Now, every doll is represented as an autonomous sculpture; each stands upon its own plinth. The backgrounds are clean and spare, lacking the theatrical drapery of previous presentations. These serve to decontextualize the objects and draw attention to their form and objecthood. Besides the full length frames, several of the works are also shot as portrait studies, which conjure the dolls as individual personalities (**Figure 4**). There is something reminiscent of the silent movie star in these images. The pictorial strategies for manufacturing

²⁰ Rainer Maria Rilke, "Dolls: On the Wax Dolls of Lotte Pritzel," in *On Dolls*, ed. Kenneth Gross, trans. Idris Parry (1994) (London: Notting Hill, 2012): 51-62 (60-61).

²¹ Wilhelm Michel, "Neue Wachspuppen von Lotte Pritzel," in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, IV 6 1914: 312-326.

²² R Coester, "Lotte Pritzel, Muenchen," in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 45, March 1920: 346-364 (347).

the Hollywood starlet in illustrated mass-media are transposed to the representation of art dolls in DKuD. Pritzel's career coincides with an explosion of illustrated printed media and, of course, popular film. While the early dolls' depiction in DKuD does not engage with the implications of mass reproducibility, the later dolls' portraits signify Pritzel's rising awareness of the performance of a new and ubiquitous erotic unavailability – that of the dolls produced by the Hollywood film factory. The dolls morph into exhibition objects of the modern age *par excellence*, handcrafted originals artificially animated by mass marketed, technological reproducibility. Interestingly, it is the later, static dolls which exemplify this new mobility.

Max von Boehn wrote, "All the perversions of a soulless, hopeless species drowning in sensuousness are here carried to extremes, a ghostly existence in the world of reality. Lotte Pritzel's dolls have more of the essence of our age than a whole glass palace full of modern pictures."²³ Walter Benjamin, no fan of von Boehn, conceded that he had accurately characterized the Pritzelpuppen.²⁴ The doll in its vitrine evokes the Benjaminian prostitute in the Arcades and prefigures the Surrealist mannequin; it represents the false, seductive mirage of an intimacy promised in the body of the commodity that capitalism always forecloses, an intimacy which swarms and fades at the uttermost limit of vision. The reproduction of the dolls' images knowingly rearticulates the constantly deferred gratification inspired by the object presented behind glass, whether that of the lens or the vitrine.

I suggest that the discursive strategy articulated in Pritzel's photographs of her dolls directly inspired Bellmer's representation of his *Poupées*. Bellmer published photographs of his first doll in the Surrealist journal, *Minotaure*, in 1934. These images are well known. The images I turn to now appeared a year later, and accompanied the Paul Éluard short story, "Appliquée". Inspired by Bellmer's doll, it related the story of a young girl who dreams her double. Bellmer in turn illustrated the article (**Figures 5 and 6**). Above the title a postcard is reproduced showing a row



Figure 5:
Hans Bellmer, Illustrations
in *Minotaure* (1935)

²³ Von Boehn, 220.

²⁴ Walter Benjamin, "Lob der Puppe. Kritische Glossen zu Max v. Boehns *Puppen und Puppenspiele*" (1930) in *Walter Benjamin – Kritiken und Rezensionen, Gesammelte Schriften III (1912-1940)*.
www.textlog.de/benjamin-kritik-puppe-puppen-puppenspiele.html [Accessed March 4, 2014].



Figure 6:
Hans Bellmer, Illustrations
in *Minotaure* (1935)

of adolescent girls, whose natural, outdoor setting feels at odds with their posed, Tiller-style presentation as multiples sprung from the same mould. On the facing page, Bellmer has created a composition of broken doll parts, from which sweets and biscuits seem to spill. A photograph of a *putto*, possibly also made of sugar, is inserted into the text. On the next page, Bellmer reproduces a tinted photograph from the 1914 issue of DKuD, featuring two of Pritzel's dolls. It is accompanied by another reproduction and two further compositions by Bellmer, one showing masks posed like eggs in a nest and another of broken, manufactured toy objects. The illustrations interweave the themes of cheap consumables, reproduction, mass production, doubling and fragility.

At first sight, the inclusion of a photograph of Pritzel's unique dolls might seem a straightforward homage to a person whom Bellmer acknowledged as an influence and who had been a close friend since 1925.²⁵ But several formal and thematic correspondences between Pritzel's and Bellmer's work can be observed. Pritzel's works were published in two small-format books in 1921; this was also the format Bellmer chose to exhibit his first doll in the self-published *Die Puppe* (1934) and *La Poupée* (1936).²⁶ Bellmer's photographs, like Pritzel's, are theatrical, performative and artificial. Photographs of the Second Doll in the 1946 edition *Les Jeux de la Poupée* were also hand-tinted with a vibrant palette, as was this specific photograph of Pritzel's dolls that Bellmer chose to reproduce in *Minotaure*. Bellmer's photographs of his dolls not only respond to Pritzel's strategies for using photographic reproduction to interpret, exhibit and disseminate images of her dolls: they use journals to create awareness and endow the work with a certain legitimacy; and establish the private modes of looking which the small book format facilitated. Not least, I would argue, Bellmer was inspired by the reflexive potential the DKuD photographs opened up to critique mass culture, modern technologies, and their impacts on the human body. Therese Lichtenstein argues that:

Bellmer's dolls participated in the dialogue of ambivalence about mass culture found in many early-twentieth-century avant-garde

²⁵ We know that Pritzel witnessed the creation of this doll and acted as a supportive friend. Pritzel's daughter, Irmelin Mayer, relates that her mother took her to Hans Bellmer's studio to see this first Poupée. Irmelin, only 14 years old, was encouraged to press the doll's nipple to trigger its mechanics, but point blank refused to look at the moving pictures secreted in its belly. Interview with Irmelin Mayer, Teddington, Thursday 10 April 2014.

²⁶ *Das Puppenbuch* (Berlin: E. Reiss, 1921); and *Puppen* (Munich: Hyperionverlag, 1921).

*representations... The frozen, immovable aspects of Bellmer's dolls, like assembly-line parts, are a metaphor for the alienation and modification of human lives and desires under high capitalism.*²⁷

Pritzel, by placing her dolls in the non-contact zone of the vitrine, also plays on this register of frustration and the impossible desire for authentic, unmediated touch in modernity. Her dolls, female, male and indeterminately androgynous, of different races, represented without internal hierarchy, extend the theme of alienated desire across a queerly diverse spectrum. Her approach does not exhibit the violence and mute despair Bellmer's photographs appear to me to express (they rather evoke a sense of wicked glee); neither do they conform to structures of hetero- or racial normativity.

It has been widely argued that Bellmer's dolls articulated a political response to the rise of Fascism, a move that led to Bellmer's exile in Paris in 1938, where he was supported by the Surrealists. (It strikes me that the fantasy of the older male sexually "reconfiguring" the female adolescent is a somewhat normative asymmetric structure within which to express a transgressive political resistance). Despite his photographs being virtually unknown in Germany, Bellmer was classified as a degenerate artist. Given their close friendship, and the character of her work, it seems unlikely that Pritzel would not have shared Bellmer's anti-Nazi, anti-authoritarian views, and she did suffer a kind of internal exile under Fascism, which, in contrast with Bellmer's experience, rendered her isolated. As Erich Ranfft has shown, of over 100 practising women sculptors identified as active between 1910 and 1940, of whom 65 were well-known, following the prohibitions imposed by National Socialism, "nearly all of these women sculptors were left with few opportunities or were forced to withdraw into obscurity."²⁸ Pritzel's figures' sexual ambiguity and languid morbidity do not conform to the idealized bodies Nazi cultural policy demanded. Pritzel would have found it increasingly difficult to show or sell her work from 1930 onwards. Artists need networks to operate. Without the protection and promotion of a powerful peer group such as the Surrealists, Pritzel's works were left behind by history.

²⁷ Lichtenstein, 15.

²⁸ Ranfft, 42.

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Puppetry Elements in the Works of European Surrealists

Introduction

Surrealism, a trajectory of uncommon discoveries, was influenced by Freud's theories and the attempts to unveil the human unconscious. It extends across all forms of art, including literature, cinema and theatre. In addition, some variations on its methods and techniques have had a pronounced effect on puppetry, both on its essence and its visual elements. With a closer look at these effects and influences, we can trace elements of puppetry in Surrealist works. An analogy between techniques of Surrealism and features of puppetry will lead to a broad perspective for understanding the matrix of Surrealism. Surrealist works could be created through a number of techniques, including automatic writing, chance and accident, and the use of a surreal object and thus categorizing them by a particular technique is difficult at times. However, this paper will focus on the technique which has had the greatest effect on each Surrealist work. First, puppetry elements in some of the methods used in Surrealism – in which the marvelous and magical have a function similar to that of fantasy in puppetry – will be explored. Next, the technique of automatic writing which produces random and fantastic images (including in puppetry) will be examined. Lastly, the paper will examine the relation between object and actor as a common ground between Surrealism and puppetry. The extent to which these methods are put to use in the works of modern and contemporary artists who played a pivotal role in redefining the puppet, like Tadeusz Kantor, Philippe Genty, and Ilka Schonbein, will also be studied. Throughout the paper, theories of Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud will be discussed as enunciating the fundamental principles governing the works of art analyzed.

Although the relationship between Surrealism, puppets and puppetry has not received due attention, according to the hypothesis of this paper, relating Surrealism to puppetry can provide us with a new perspective on puppetry; by taking a close look at the style of surrealist art, we see the shared features of these two artistic approaches. If we take a closer look we find that puppetry is replete with representations of visual tricks and childhood desires, which are also prominent in Surrealism. In incorporating these features (whether in form or content) puppetry is indebted to Surrealism. Examining some Surrealist artworks sheds light on these features. This paper searches for the interrelatedness of Surrealism and puppetry in various forms of art, including painting, collage,¹ and theater. For the aim of this conference, which is to introduce puppets and puppetry as cultural and artistic phenomena, this paper presents an alternative and complicated viewpoint (on puppetry) to artists and students of this branch of art, both performers and researchers. This paper will focus on the works of European practitioners of Surrealism, including Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, Rene Magritte, Yves Tanguy and Paul Klee, for two reasons: a) Surrealism was formed in Europe before the movement spread to other countries; and b) the outbreak of the First World War affected the way European artists saw their outer and inner worlds.

1. Fantasy, the Mysterious and Marvelous

The use of fantasy in puppetry arts can be seen as the counterpart of the use of elements of the marvelous and magical in Surrealism to depict the borderlines between reality and dream. In general, fantasy has some common ground with Surrealism, since both are rooted in man's psyche and his unconscious and both objectify his dreams.

Fantasy is an indispensable part of puppetry, because the presence of the puppet/object blurs the boundary between fantasy and reality. As Shiva Massoudi says, "fantasy, with its suspension between reality and dream zones, fits perfectly with the dual nature of the puppet. Puppets are fantastical not only in terms of the concepts that they convey but also in terms of their essential identity, in other words, they come into being in liminality between dream and reality."²

¹ A technique of composing a work of art by pasting different materials including pieces of colorful paper, cardboard, cloth, newspaper clippings, parts of photographs on a single sheet of paper before completing the work by painting or drawing.

² Shiva Massoudi, "Juxtaposition of Dream and Reality: Separating the Concrete from the Abstract in Puppetry," *The Honar Quarterly* 72(1386[2007]): 96.

The very presence of the puppet-object provokes uncertainty in the observer, uncertainty about the puppet's being a reality or a dream; because the puppet becomes alive before their eyes and performs both ordinary and extraordinary deeds. Although the puppet has human-like features and introduces itself as a being from reality, eventually it returns to its hidden essence, which is dream. At this blurred zone of reality and dream it dramatizes illusions, dreams and impossibilities in such a way that we, though dubious, believe it, and at this point fantasy comes to life, since fantasy "is neither against reality nor unreal, but it is a kind of reality."³ In other words it is fantasy's predilection to relate itself to reality but, then, to show a disparity. A good example of fantasy in puppetry is *The Dead Class* by Tadeusz Kantor (1915-1990). It is a work that reflects a dream-like reality and a poetic dream. It is a fantastical narrative about death in which old students sit behind the school desks, as if they have returned to the school from the realm of death. In another scene, those same students enter the class with vitality, carrying children in the form of puppets on their backs. In this play, "the old students are the realities that have travelled from present to past and the puppets... with them are the dream of present and the concretization of their self in the past."⁴

The return of the dead to the world and the clash of past and present dramatize the experience of the fantastical world of the artist's mind: "Old people who carry their childhood and are indulging in a delusional truth and an uncanny dream. Old students who have awakened from death and are now alive, they shed tears for the death of the soldiers in the war, a dead soldier rises and goes somewhere... and all these fragments of the real past juxtaposed with the fragments of the dream are the attainment of the fantasy at its peak."⁵

Max Ernst (1891-1976), a key figure in the Dada movement, became one of the first artists who joined Surrealism. He created many works using the collage format. Ernst put different negatives together and then completed the work with his own painting. In other words, the photographs express reality while the artist's emotions and thoughts are conveyed through drawings and paintings. This is another composition made of reality and dream that leads to fantasy. In his collages, reality is reflected through objects. In *Two Children Are*

³ Mohammad Mohammadi, *Fantasy in Children's Literature* (Tehran: Rouzgar Publications, 1378 [1999]), 131.

⁴ Shiva Massoudi, *Introduction to Fantasy* (Tehran: Namayesh Publications, 1387 [2008]), 90.

⁵ Massoudi, *Introduction to Fantasy*, 92-93.

Threatened by a Nightingale (**Figure 1**) the frame and the wooden house and the gate affixed to the painted scene are examples of using objects for depicting the real world while the human figures and the land resemble the artist's imagination. Puppetry also uses similar juxtapositions of dream and reality. Its compositions allow for fantasies shaped in the mind to be realized though a puppet. "When the puppeteer is visible and is not a part of the show but the puppet he manipulates plays a role in it; reality is the puppeteer and fantasy is the puppet which is animated on the stage."⁶ In fact, fantasy does not transcend reality; however, it achieves an essence of reality that is not visible but could be made known through some signs and indications. As the result of observing this juxtaposition of reality and dream, the audience reaches a superior reality. Both Surrealism and puppetry in principle seek a combination of the mind and the eye, or fantasy and reality.



Figure 1: Max Ernst, *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale*, 1924.

Marc Chagall (1887-1985) is among the artists who have combined the real world with imagination to create fantastic realms. Chagall did not belong to the Surrealist movement; however, due to the links between the symbolic images in his works and the human unconscious, this paper will examine the nature of his works and their ties to puppetry in relation to Surrealism. In Chagall's paintings, the motif of flexible humans floating or flying in the skies is rooted in the unconscious, possibly reflecting archetypal images. These images may also be associated with the divine child archetype: "This divine child symbolizes a new and emerging thing that appears in the soul and claims the place which belongs to it though pain and suffering."⁷ Since Jung emphasizes the instinctive nature of such archetypes, we can consider Chagall's motifs as symbols of instincts that define human nature. James Roose-Evans finds the familiar images and symbols in the first production of Squat Theater Company, namely *Pig, Child, Fire!*, reminiscent of Chagall's works. He describes the first scene of the play thus: "a giant puppet figure of a man hangs upside down with the head of a real and identical- looking actor protruding from its anus; a girl sitting on a ledge holding a goat on a string; a woman shuffling to and fro in shoes too large for her."⁸ (**Figure 2**).



Figure 2: Theodore Shrank, *Pig, Child, Fire!*, 1982

⁶ Massoudi, "Juxtaposition of Dream," 98.

⁷ Ernest Aeppli, *Les rêves et leur interpretation*, trans. Delara Gharaman (Tehran: Mitra Publication, 1378 [1999]), 213-214.

⁸ James Roose-Evans, *Experimental Theatre: From Stanislavsky to Peter Brook*, trans. Mostafa Eslamieh (Tehran: Soroush Publication, 1392 [2013]), 146.

This Hungarian theater group, which began its activities in the late 1960s, was looking to link the audience's life to the play's characters. In its performances, Squat created surreal image fragments that invited the audience to look inward. Therefore, the fluidity of Chagall's motifs as well as the presence of personified animals is realized through puppetry's potential for portraying fantasy. For instance, techniques like shadow and marionette reveal the marvelous and fantastic aspects of the characters, and while keeping the totality of the work's atmosphere, confront the audience with symbolic elements.

As noted earlier, fantasy overlaps with the marvelous and magical. The use of the marvelous and magical makes the strangest things seem ordinary; this creates a mysterious realm which is the land of sur-reality. "Only with going into the world of illusions, where man's brain loses its control, can one attain the deepest ecstasy of the universe, intuit and express it."⁹ The aim of surrealists in using this technique is to make the observers face ecstasy, dream, and depth. In order to achieve this aim, those artists avail themselves of the power of the unconscious. The magical feature of the puppet which goes back to its ritual functions could be related to Surrealism's link with primitive art. There is an affinity between magic and magical thought, the kind of thought whose aim is to release humanity from its limitations. The magical points toward mysteriousness and unnatural events related to the world of the spirits. One reason for creating puppets is to cater to the need for supernatural powers which brought about the expansion of rituals and customs; for this reason puppets have sometimes been considered to be beings with magical powers. At first a puppet performed its religious tasks in the form of a mobile mask, then it was removed from the shaman's face, and through a series of changes it served different functions and, in the form of an independent puppet, continued to perform its previous roles. In ancient times, humanity believed that every object in the universe had a soul and attempted to communicate with them: "one form of communication was via totem which acted as the soul of the predecessors."¹⁰ For instance, humanity believed itself bound to the element of water and considered it our protector. Gradually, humanity felt the need for objectifying the protector spirit and gave form to it in different shapes. The mask is one of the forms which were the sources of puppet formation. The mask was gradually removed from the shaman's face and found an independent life in the form of a puppet. Jung considers the masked man "an archetypal image since the mask is the

⁹ Reza Seyyedhosseini, "Literary Schools," 2nd ed. (Tehran: Negah, 1393 [2014]), 824.

¹⁰ Massoudi, "Juxtaposition of dream," 92.

embodiment of his instincts.”¹¹ A mask was a totem which had a magical and healing power, any person who took hold of this holy object was endowed with these powers.

Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) is one of the playwrights who joined the ranks of the Surrealists for a period and was influenced by their ideas. He was interested in the origins of the theater and its role as a ritual art affecting the human psyche. In his view, theater is a magical medium which affects man’s inner world and its hidden aspects. In addition to the influences of Asian ritual performances, Artaud’s interest in shamanic rituals could be the result of his acquaintance with the Surrealists and with Freud’s theories about the unconscious. Artaud focused on the aspects of theater involving the human psyche and traced those aspects back to their origin in rituals that had a magical and healing effect and mastered the human soul and psyche. His work sheds light on the relationship between primitive ritual performances and Surrealist thought, and consequently, the human psyche.

Surrealism’s affinity with primitive art, rooted in the magical features of primitive art forms, is reflected through the magical properties of puppets. In order to discover the supernatural elements, primitive peoples used their imagination and created objects, masks, and tools that were used in magical and religious rituals.

According to Abbe Breuil, “by reducing an animal to an image, the prehistoric man made it subjugated in his hunting zone.”¹² Archaeological findings show that “because of the ecstasy induced by rituals and magic dances, the caveman hunter treated the paintings of the animals as if they are alive.”¹³ The magical power of the mask used by shamans fifteen or twenty thousand years ago is like that of these images (paintings). It is obvious that “Magic” situates humanity in a position of immediate communication with the universe. Before anything else, it was this magic that embedded itself in the humanity’s way of thinking and helped us visualize a magical element, due to fear and anxiety that afflicted man’s consciousness. Primitive man followed his dreams and fantasies when he created images of animals or was using a mask; it seems s/he could not identify the real or could not differentiate it from the dream.

Since child-like perspective relates to fantasy, it can be counted as a common element in both Surrealism and puppetry. In fact, “in Freudian psychoanalysis, much creative behavior, especially in the arts, is a substitute for and continuation of the play of childhood. Where the child expresses himself in games

¹¹ Carl Gustav Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, trans. Mahmood Soltanie (Tehran: Jami, 1392[2011]), 359.

¹² Helen Gardner, *Art Through the Ages*, 6th ed. (Tehran: Negah, 1384[2005]), 32.

¹³ Gardner, *Art Through the Ages*, 33.

and fantasies, the creative adult does so in writing, say, or painting.”¹⁴ With this in mind, we can now understand the simultaneous presence of childlike perspective and consequently puppets in some works of the Swiss German Paul Klee (1879-1940), who is one of the most influential painters of dreams. The fantastical strain in some of his works can be found in some of their prevalent features like using a child’s perspective and the surrealist poetic essence, taking inspiration from the simple and pure art of primitive man, which reveals the contents of the unconscious: “According to surrealist thought, regression to prehistory mirrors the return to an untrained state of childhood, freeing the unconscious.”¹⁵ Although he was not officially a surrealist, his fantastical approach places some of his dream works close to the category of Surrealism. Since he was inspired by primitive art, African masks and puppet shows, the presence of “puppets” can be studied in his works.



Figure 3: Paul Klee, *Outbreak of Fear III*, 1939.

Moreover, childlike perspective and childhood memories can be seen among the common sources of inspiration both for surrealists and puppet artists. As earlier mentioned, this source has close relations with both fantasy and the marvelous and magical because children believe in and think about fantastical and marvelous images and nurture them in their imagination. In fact, childhood events such as psychological trauma are represented through vague and fantastical images in works of art. In other words what is felt or seen during childhood gets deposited in the child’s mind untouched before being represented in an artistic work. Paul Klee, through a childlike perspective, directly depicted puppets in some of his works including “The Outbreak of Fear”

(Figure 3), “Restless Bed,” “Sentimental Doll,” and “Children’s Games.” As Russell Stephens puts it: “Klee seeks to evoke the idea of a child (or person) through his use of the motif of a puppet.”¹⁶

Puppets’ fragmented parts come together to shape surrealistic forms and relate untold and unseen themes, including the brutal mass killings of people during World Wars I and II, or projection of childhood desires in war times. Klee uses the motif of a puppet and its wider implications while keeping a sense of the fantastical and marvelous.

¹⁴ George Frederick Kneller, *The Art and Science of Creativity*, trans. Ali Asghar Mosaded (Shiraz: University of Shiraz Publication, 1380[2001]), 33.

¹⁵ “Azure Day catalogue entry,” accessed November 8, 2014, www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/tanguy-azure-day-t07080/text-catalogue-entry.

¹⁶ Russell Stephens, “The Late Paintings of Paul Klee: Social Conflict and the Meaning of Modernism” (Paper presented at the University of British Columbia, Canada, Vancouver, April 2013).

Likewise, one can refer to Alfred Jarry's *King Ubu*¹⁷ when discussing the childlike perspective that comes with exaggeration and wonder. Although regarded as a precursor to the Theater of the Absurd, *King Ubu* has been performed using various forms of puppetry with a surrealistic approach in many countries. Michael Meschke (1931), a Swedish puppeteer, is a shining example, who took a puppetry approach to this play and used a mixed puppet technique. **(Figure 4)** In this sense, puppets contributed a lot to the meaning of the play. For instance, exaggerated characters and extraordinary events, as well as Jarry's satiric wit, give the text a childlike quality. The unusual behavior of a commander who, at the urging of his wife, assassinates the king and rises to power, bringing about anarchy by breaking established rules, can be seen as a childish game which is only conceivable to a child's raw and inexperienced mind. Puppetry can properly convey the marvelous nature of the work, with its dominance of fantasy and childlike atmosphere.



Figure 4:
Beata Bergström, *King Ubu*
directed by Michael Meschke
1964

2. Automatic Writing – Dream

Automatic writing, the practice of listening to the voice of the subconscious and re-producing it in written words, leads to the creation of infinitely dream-like images, since dreams are viewed as the natural language of the unconscious. The practice of this technique, which requires the awakening of the subconscious, results in the visualization of fantastic creatures and elements as well as childish and archetypal images, since the dream language is symbolic. These symbols are reminiscent, both in appearance and formation, of the structure of puppetry. Automatism also has some affinities with the concepts of chance and accident in Surrealism.

The automatic functioning of the mind in dreams is, Freud believes, a withdrawal from the outer world into a new reality. Just as dreams can be a fantastic tool for understanding humans, automatism can also function as a method for presenting dreams, helping the audience find the way into their own subconscious. According to Seyyed Hosseini, Breton found that "hidden in the depths of the unconscious [was] a voice which could be registered if noticed."¹⁸ Automatic writing involves disconnection from

¹⁷ Ubu Roi

¹⁸ Seyyedhosseini, *Literary Schools*, 827.

everyday reality and the conscious mind. Achieving this psychic state requires much effort since the mind must be completely receptive and passive in order to reach it. In this way, the resulting images or words “are dictated by the unconscious.”¹⁹ Consciousness might interfere in the act of automatic writing, but as Michel Carrouges notes, it “does not interfere as an external force to canalize automatism, but it is positioned within the act to secure integrity and impeccability of hearing.”²⁰



Figure 5: *Convergence Line*, by Philippe Genty, 2003-2006

One of the directors of puppetry who employs automatism to awaken the unconscious is Philippe Genty (1938). He and choreographer Mary Underwood used puppets, objects, raw materials, actors, special effects, and the magic of surreal images to portray illusions that are only visible in the dream-world. They associate these images with the unconscious of the audience. Since entering the audience’s unconscious requires undermining their logic and rationality, Genty avoids a logical narrative in his works and opens up the possibility of multiple interpretations for the audience. “In the manner of the surrealists, Genty and Underwood (choreographer) develop images from personal dream analysis and their adaptation of automatic writing in a game they developed called ping-pong, during which two or more people quickly exchange images without editing or critiquing their responses.”²¹ Genty uses magic, fantasy and automatic writing to create images which are impossible to find in everyday reality: “Stowaways features a singing kangaroo on skis, while in *Ligne Fuit* a large, inflated woman eats the human actors’ heads.”²² **(Figure 5).**

The art of puppetry has the potential to use automatism as a tool for activating the unconscious in the audience and creating random images that have no logical relation to each other. Accident, another technique used by surrealists, has some affinities with automatism but is different. In automatism, the unconscious finds an expressive outlet, while in an accident, man faces a manifestation of the outer world. For instance, in the surreal

¹⁹ Seyyedhosseini, *Literary Schools*, 827.

²⁰ Seyyedhosseini, *Literary Schools*, 830.

²¹ Alissa Mello, “Compagnie Philippe Genty: On Directing and Collaboration,” *Puppetry International* 34 (2013): 5-6.

²² Seyyedhosseini, *Literary Schools*, 5.

play *The Breasts of Tiresias*²³ by Guillaume Apollinaire, the character “Therese” rejects the traditional maternal activities of pregnancy and giving birth, since she considers them oppressive. She becomes the male “Tiresias” when her breasts transform into balloons and float away. Meanwhile, her delinquent husband decides to have children without the assistance of a woman, manufacturing 40,000 babies in a single day. In addition to the marvelous and fantastic qualities of the images in this play, the author also relies on chance and accident. The idea of placing two balloons on the body may have stemmed from the instinctive tendencies of the author. Furthermore, according to Jung’s interpretation, a “circle is the symbol of soul”²⁴ and the breasts could signify Therese’s soul, departing from her body; and the soul here is the unconscious. As Farhad Nazerzadeh Kermani mentions, “surrealist plays are the combination of a number of scenes put together randomly resembling fragmented dreams.”²⁵ Moreover, the production of 40,000 babies a day reminds one of the contemporary mechanized life.

These images, according to Freud, “reside in the depths of the unconscious in a logical and acceptable context”;²⁶ in other words puppetry is indebted to Surrealism, which first embraced the dream element. Thanks to Surrealist innovation, puppetry became an appropriate medium for the visualization of marvelous and fantastic images, personification, illusions, and special effects in surrealist plays. A surreal image that arises from the author’s unconscious finds its way into the unconscious of the audience, a process which can become possible through a puppet performance. Although there is no specifically defined framework for creation of a puppet in the works of Surrealism, the outcomes reveal similar inspirations and techniques.

French surrealist painter Yves Tanguy (1900-1955) “employed automatism to create his paintings which were influenced by his childhood memories.”²⁷ Research shows automatism was Tanguy’s main driving force and along with inspirations from nature and childhood, images contributed to the creation of dream-like scenes and biomorphic forms in his works. *Azure Day* (**Figure 6**) is one of the works he created, using the technique



Figure 6: Yves Tanguy
Azure Day, 1937

²³ Guillaume Apollinaire, *Les Mammelles de Tiresias*. Paris: Arvensa, 2014.

²⁴ Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, 365.

²⁵ Farhad Nazerzadeh Kermani, *An Introduction to Drama* (Tehran: The Organization for Researching and Composing University Textbooks for the Humanities (SAMT), 2013), 411.

²⁶ Mohsen Ebrahim, “In the Vague Depths of a Dream (A Review of Surrealism)” *The Honar Quarterly* 14 (1366[1988]): 96.

²⁷ Ebrahim, “In the Vague Depths of a Dream,” 103.

of automatism. The movement and fluidity in the manner of drawing creatures and objects in this painting resemble animals, plants, rocks or other elements. These creatures represent living, moving subjects and put forth a different form from each angle. Dynamism and fluidity, the founding principles of the object-puppet, are discernible in these creations. The shapes in such paintings, which are usually rectangular and pointed, could be considered what Jung calls symbols of "earthbound matter, of the body and reality"²⁸ and thus as living figures.

What is readily discernible is the presence of the characteristics of the puppet in the appearance and nature of the organisms depicted in Tanguy's paintings. The figures present in Tanguy's works can also be likened to archetypal structures with no static patterns. To quote Jung, "archetypes are dynamic factors that manifest themselves in impulses, just as spontaneously as the instincts. Certain dreams, visions, or thoughts can suddenly appear;"²⁹ and as Jung notes, the unconscious is guided by the same archetypes. The unconscious mind is the source of the creatures, objects, imagery and desires in puppetry and Surrealism. The factor which is comparable in Tanguy's surrealist paintings and puppetry is dream. A dream that is depicted through automatism or may come forward by accident. One could also refer to *The Rapidity of Sleep*. In this painting, Tanguy depicts patterns similar to human body parts. Each of these patterns can be associated with real and living objects.

3. Objects and Man

In puppetry, using an object (which here includes mannequins and everyday items) means "giving life and meaning to the lifeless object that has a certain function in everyday life. The object hence comes to use through personification and removal of its previous roles and functions."³⁰ In Surrealism also, ordinary objects are made use of by displaying their extraordinary features, remaining disconnected from other objects or creating unusual compositions. In the process, these objects usually acquire the independent character of a living being. On the other hand, in Surrealism objects are meant to reflect the artist's thoughts and unconscious desires. Next, objects,

²⁸ Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, 379.

²⁹ Ebrahim, "In the Vague Depths of a Dream," 103.

³⁰ Samareh Mirfendereski, "Expansion of Formal Boundaries of Puppet Through Actor's Body," (BA thesis, University of Tehran, 2012).

mannequins, and sculptures will be studied in the works of Surrealism and puppetry.

Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978) is among the painters whose work provided a crucial inspiration for the Surrealists and was endorsed by Breton as the movement's essential pioneer. De Chirico presented a different reality in the form of mannequins and objects through juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated objects. Breton appreciated de Chirico's metaphysical style in which objects were redefined; but it seems he found de Chirico's later work objectionable as the artist turned toward the theatrical and the classical. Nevertheless, mannequins, sculptures and objects should be regarded as common elements in both de Chirico's work and Surrealism.

For de Chirico, objects have a certain aspect that affects human emotions and he seeks to portray that unexplainable quality. In his opinion, "what makes the logic of our everyday life and activities is an endless chain of memories linking us to objects."³¹ In de Chirico's work, objects are deprived of their usual function and role. Regular and irregular geometric shapes, wardrobes and shelves, sculptures and mannequins and other objects create, in their irrational combinations, a fantastic, marvelous and illusory atmosphere. In his work, things take on a mysterious aspect, as if the mannequins and sculptures are staring at a certain point in between life and death. De Chirico's figures often have mannequin heads and human body parts; they are a mix between man, mannequin, sculpture and object which Maurizio Fagiolo dell' Arco has termed "Man-statue-object."

De Chirico developed an interest in theater and referred to the theatrical nature of mannequins before introducing the concept of the Man-statue-object, so the concept could have been inspired by his designs for the theater. Although de Chirico's mannequins were solid and static, there was a mysterious and living side to them. This companionship of man and mannequin in his works leads to an illusory atmosphere. De Chirico believes "the lyrical meaning and the plastic development of my mannequins, the former upright-like actors on the stage, others seated with monumental torsos and short legs like the apostles of Gothic cathedrals."³² Therefore de Chirico applied his theories of the theater to his paintings and the "mannequin" in his works was a theatrical and dramatic element.

³¹ Rouin Pakbaz, *In Search of New Language* (Tehran: Negah 1369[1990]), 575.

³² Personal Translation by Sara Schumacher (modified slightly by Tim Williams), from: Giorgio de Chirico, "Discorso sullo spettacolo teatrale," *L'Illustrazione Italiana* (25 Ottobre 1942) quoted in Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco, *Giorgio de Chirico all'epoca del Surrealismo* (Milano: Electa, 1991), 47.



Figure 7: Giorgio de Chirico, *The Mathematicians*, 1917

In *The Mathematicians* (**Figure 7**), de Chirico juxtaposes geometrical shapes, objects and human body parts to craft imaginary characters. The geometric designs which resemble a building inside the trunk of the facing figure and its legs that are at the same time table legs reveal de Chirico's knowledge of mathematics. However, here we must focus on his use of things and the human body, which can be linked to Kantor's theory of the bio-object. As will be discussed later, in the theory of the bio-object, man and things complement each other and present a unique combination, the object-actor. According to Jung, "artists seek to give visible form to the 'life behind things' and so their works are a symbolic expression of a world behind consciousness (or, indeed, behind dreams, for dreams are only rarely non-figurative)."³³



Figure 8: Mario Del Curto *The Old Lady and the Beast*, by Ilka Schonbein, 2009

In puppetry, objects and people are capable of creating images beyond their own functions. This potential is developed in Ilka Schonbein's works. Schonbein is a contemporary German puppeteer who combines different materials and objects with body parts to create fanciful and marvelous images. In her characters, the human body helps to breathe life into the object, complements the image and contributes to the audience's belief. This method enables her to present surrealistic images made of the human body and non-human objects. In *The Old Lady and the Beast* (**Figure 8**) the marvelous harmony between the actor's body, his or her clothes, and the puppet, is such that despite the fact that the puppet is partly formed by the actor's body, it seems totally independent and the actor, while being the puppeteer, simultaneously performs as an independent character. In some of her other works, including *My Own Flesh and Blood*, Schonbein uses the mannequin's body to achieve similar compositions.

Object and man also play a central role in the works of surrealist painter Rene Magritte (1898-1967) who was influenced by de Chirico. As in puppetry, his works reflect the company of man and object. Just as modern puppetry uses strange images, symbols and metaphors to convey different messages in an indirect way, Magritte relies in his paintings on projecting illusions onto the human body and objects. He takes up a different approach to things and uses them to present his unconscious. According to Epictetus, "men are disturbed,

³³ Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, 402.

not by things, but by the principles and notions which they form concerning things.”³⁴ In *The Collective Invention* (**Figure 9**), Magritte binds man and object together with poetic and fantastic elements, reflecting the nature of life and death. The object in front of the audience (a lifeless fish) is expected to come to life any moment as it entangles with the human body: the picture evokes a mermaid whose parts have been displaced in order to gain surreal characteristics. Magritte retains the physical features of the object and finds a place for it in the composition of his work, in which the object goes through a metamorphosis both in essence and function to suggest meanings beyond its physical form. Like de Chirico, he uses objects and geometrical shapes to attain a certain magical and illusory effect.



Figure 9: Rene Magritte
The Collective Invention, 1934

The Birth of the Idol (**Figure 10**) shows a figure made of familiar objects, including a bilboquet or baluster which has lost its previous function and is given anthropomorphic features. As Mohammadi puts it, “personification is animating and manipulating natural phenomena, in a way that they find more power and meaning than the previously had.”³⁵ Its placement beside the mannequin’s arm gives the piece of wood human characteristics. This is in harmony with Kantor’s view according to which things come to life alongside man. He sees the mannequin as a living and capable model for the living actor. Though Kantor did not believe in replacing actors with puppets, he used puppets and objects to create surreal and illusory images.



Figure 10: Rene Magritte
The Birth of the Idol, 1926

De Chirico and Kantor both believed in the ability of things and mannequins to arouse emotions and their own ability to transfer the human soul to puppets and objects. If the actor needs to convey emotions and feelings, the object serves a symbolic function, reflecting the actor’s feelings. As Monique Borie puts it: “Sculptures, wax figures, mannequins and puppets, and all object-bodies have the value of symbolic forms and can, better than the living body of the actor, bring the theater to the metaphysical and poetic dimension between life and death.”³⁶

³⁴ Simon Critchley, *On Humor*, trans. Soheil Sami (Tehran: Andisheh Emrooz 1383 [2004]), 9.

³⁵ Mohammadi, *Fantasy in Children’s Literature*, 25.

³⁶ Monique Borie. “The Living Body and the Object-Body: An Anthropological Approach,” in *Uber-Marionettes and Mannequins* Craig, Kantor and their contemporary legacies, ed. Carole Guidicelli. (France:co-publishing: L’Entretemps and Institut International de la Marionnette, 2013), 148.

Kantor's approach to objects corresponds with the Surrealist poeticism that portrays objects as they might be in their own world. In his works, Kantor "shows how objects speak as he believes in inner life of things based on his mystical view."³⁷ He sees objects as possessing a life and soul which achieve a superior consciousness after death: "Who says in arts objects are inferior to man and of lesser significance? They do possess life and soul too."³⁸ In his view, objects inherit their lives from the actor. In other words, after death the actor gains a deeper consciousness and transfers that consciousness to the object that always accompanied him; in doing so, and after losing his natural and biological features, the actor turns into an object. "To eliminate psychology and illusion and restore dramatic action to geometric forms, to colors, and movement: these have been the building blocks of Kantor's theater since his first shows."³⁹

Kantor creates bio-objects by letting his objects speak through his actors. The bio-object is so named because the object gains the features of a living creature and becomes an integral part of the actor. "Such as the man with a table on his back and a priest strapped to a rotating bed in Wielopole, Wielopole."⁴⁰ In Kantor's works, "puppets and mannequins possess a superior consciousness, which is one that arrives after death."⁴¹ A superior consciousness that corresponds to the deeper reality in Surrealism, based on which the reality succeeding death is a superior one. It is in the realm of imagination that fantasy and images are created.

Conclusion

Based on the issues raised, it can be concluded that puppets originate from a desire for supernatural powers and Surrealism is, in its essence, a rebellion in order to achieve more spiritual and formal freedom, by which the impossible can be made real. Puppets, like Surrealist art, delve into the depths of reality. Surrealism and puppetry are both tasked with the spiritual and physical transformation of man and creating of extraterrestrial beings. A review

³⁷ Eleanor Margolies, "Ventriloquism", 50.

³⁸ Naser Hossein Mehr, *Europe's Contemporary Theater* (Tehran: Nika Publication 1390 [2011]), 219.

³⁹ Valentina Valentini, "Tadeusz Kantor's Object-Actor: Emballages, Happenings, Poverty," in *Uber-Marionettes and Mannequins* Craig, Kantor and their contemporary legacies, ed. Carole Guidicelli. (France:co-publishing: L'Entretemps and Institut International de la Marionnette, 2013) 205.

⁴⁰ Eleanor Margolies, "Ventriloquism: Kantor, Templeton, and the Voices of the Dead", trans. Hamid Bahrami Raad, *Namayesh* 67 (1382 [2003]), 52.

⁴¹ Valentini, "Tadeusz Kantor's Object," 207.

of the roots of modern puppetry, including primitive art and rituals and elements such as fantasy, reality, the marvelous and magical, as well as the influence of automatism and new methods in puppetry, which are the result of the introduction of objects and actors, tend to lend the puppet a deeper meaning both in the realm of culture and art. The automatic workings of the artist's mind, childhood memories, dreams and illusions are all elements that contribute to works of puppetry art and are considered key elements in Surrealism. A Surrealist work, which is the product of such views and techniques, whether in the category of visual or performing arts, can be presented through the medium of puppetry. Therefore, puppet and puppetry elements in Surrealist works can be explored in a semantic or comparative study. These elements could be explained according to the following categories:

| Puppetry techniques and approaches in Surreal works: | Elements contributing mainly to the techniques and approaches: |
|---|--|
| Fantasy The Marvelous and Magical | Juxtaposition of imagination and reality - primitive art - childlike perspective |
| Automatic Writing - Dream | Dream-like images and symbols-Archetypes |
| Man and Objects | Personification Bio-object |

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Paul Klee: Protected Children, Broken Puppets and the Problematization of Modernism



Figure 1. Paul Klee, *Geschützte Kinder* (Protected Children), 1939

Upon first glance, it is an image that appears to have been made by a child - something perhaps painted in a primary school classroom or created as a rainy day project at a summer holiday camp (**Figure 1**). The odd mismatched tone of the picture's colour fields – purple tossed between orange and blue, the uneven messiness of the painting's dabbled texture, its clunky, disjointed rendering of space – are all characteristics evocative of the realm of children's art. Like wooden play blocks, broad dark open-ended lines are arranged to evoke the shapes of signs, objects and buildings. Small black crescents in the picture's upper portion, which indicate tiny distant boats, suggest the presence of both a surrounding body of water and the zig-zag perimeter of a beach. Foregrounded in the center of the image, and depicted in the simplest symbolic manner, are three figures, seemingly struggling to protect themselves against a lake-side gust of wind. While one purple-eyed child (a boy?) has managed to keep his black umbrella aloft, the small 'angelic' figure next to him (a girl?) has not been so fortunate. Her turquoise-coloured umbrella appears to have completely tumbled over. Likewise, a third (female?) figure, positioned just behind the two children, and placed at the center of the picture's composition, appears also to be just about to lose control of her umbrella. However, a more careful examination

of the painting reveals an image that speaks to the presence of an artistic intention far beyond that found in children's art. For example, the umbrellas – with their broad rounded coverings and curved handles – have been employed to simultaneously relay the contrasting motifs of both a mother's breast and a fishhook. Furthermore, the haunted jet-black eyes of the picture's slightly larger central figure – an older child? a young mother? – placed next to the edge of the hooks, evokes an expression of violence that runs counter to the tone of innocence inherent in the painting's overall child-like form. As such, we note that there is something of the pathos of death in this image. It is in this realization that we come to discover an entirely different level of meaning, one intimately connected with the historical moment in which it was created.

Geschützte Kinder or "Protected Children" was painted in 1939 by the artist Paul Klee.¹ It was among a series of works he produced while in exile in Bern, Switzerland following his departure from Germany after Hitler's accession to power in 1933.² This paper will focus on a small selection of paintings and drawings, including that of *Protected Children*, created by Klee during the years 1938 and 1939. Particular attention will be given to a series of puppet images fashioned during this period. The paper will also provide comparisons with respect to several paintings produced at roughly the same time by Surrealist painter Joan Miró, an artist whom Paul Klee had influenced deeply. Klee, who had been diagnosed as suffering from scleroderma in the mid 1930s, died of cardiac paralysis resulting from myocarditis at the age of 60 on June 29th, 1940.³ Previous scholarship, including that of Clement Greenberg, has identified a shift in Klee's painting during this final period of his life. However, art historians have debated the nature and significance of his work.⁴ Some have interpreted Klee's late work within the context of his consciousness and contemplation of his own

¹ Listed as item 8049 in the Paul Klee *catalogue raisonné*, *Protected Children* is 75.2 x 100.3 cm. *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, ed. Paul Klee Foundation, Museum of Fine Arts Berne, vol. 8 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998-2004), 178.

² Listed as item 8049 in the Paul Klee *catalogue raisonné*, *Protected Children* is 75.2 x 100.3 cm. *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, ed. Paul Klee Foundation, Museum of Fine Arts Berne, vol. 8 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998-2004), 178.

³ Hans Suter, *Paul Klee and His Illness: Bowed but Not Broken by Suffering and Adversity*, trans. Gill McKay and Neil McKay (Basel: Karger, 2010), 74-76. Scleroderma is a very rare, chronic, inflammatory disease that affects the connective tissue of the skin, blood vessels and internal organs. The term actually means "hard skin." Hippocrates discussed the disease in ancient times. One of its symptoms is the tightening of skin around the face which causes what is known as a mask face. Suter, 48-52. For a longer discussion of the Klee's disease see *Paul Klee and His Illness*, 38-113.

⁴ Greenberg's analysis of Klee's late work, written after the war, is grounded in formalism, "... it is a disservice to Klee not to recognize how much better he painted in the teens and twenties than in the thirties. To fail to do so is to show oneself blind to the specific virtues of his art." Clement Greenberg in *Merle Armitage, Five Essays on Paul Klee by Merle Armitage and others*, (New York: Distributed by Duell, Sloan, & Pearce, 1950), 47-48.



Figure 2. Paul Klee,
Angstausbruch III
(Outbreak of Fear III), 1939

impending mortality.⁵ A case in point is the writing of the scholar Marcel Franciscono, who frames his reading of Klee's later images such as *Outbreak of Fear III* (**Figure 2**), within the context of the artist's proximity to his own death, and avoids any references that might connect this image and others to the realm of the social and political situation in which he (Klee) found himself.⁶ However, I would contend that Klee's work from this period evidences an acute awareness of the dire historical circumstances in which he found himself just prior to, and in the early days of, the Second World War.

Although Klee left Germany at the end of 1933, he witnessed enough of the Nazi rampage to experience an awakening of his political consciousness.⁷ On February 1, 1933, just two days after Hitler came to power, the Dusseldorf Academy, where Klee was then teaching, was denounced within the Nazi press as an "Art Swamp in Western Germany," and a "haven for Jewish artists, staffed at the bidding of Klee's (own) Jewish dealer Alfred Flechheim."⁸ Klee was specifically singled out and targeted as a "Galician Jew."⁹ In April 1933, the Bauhaus, where Klee had previously taught for ten years, was also raided by police on the pretext of searching for evidence of Communist activity.¹⁰ This happened only weeks after the Reichstag fire, which the Nazis had blamed on the Communists,

⁵ Suter's book on Klee is a good example, as the progression of the Klee's work is literally measured against the clinical advancement of his disease. To his credit, Suter does reference the Nazis' rise to power and the coming of the Second World War. However, the focus on the biographical aspects of Klee's illness are used to minimize readings of Klee's images that might reference the motif of death in the context of violent social conflict and the impending war that was the historical reality of Europe in the late 1930s. Suter, *Paul Klee and His Illness*.

⁶ Marcel Franciscono writes, "...to what extent can the mood of his (Klee's) late work be said to have been affected by his illness. The generally accepted view has been that the illness was central to the meaning and expression of much of it. Although Klee's style was not itself the product of his scleroderma, it was the vital new fact of his life after early 1935, and in all probability the psychological cause of his great productivity, perhaps even of his new sureness of conception. This needs to be emphasized because the attempt has been made to minimize its significance, even for his work of 1939[...]" Marcel Franciscono, *Paul Klee: His Work and Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 300. These comments and arguments are then used to frame his reading of *Outbreak of Fear III* and other late Klee paintings within the context of this same argument, one predicated on the myth of the creative artist perched at death's door. Franciscono, *Paul Klee*, 308 - 322.

⁷ O. K. Werckmeister, "From Revolution to Exile," in *Paul Klee*, ed. Carolyn Lanchner, Museum of Modern Art (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1987), 52.

⁸ Werckmeister, "From Revolution to Exile," 48.

⁹ "...the great Klee makes his entrance, already famous as a teacher of the Bauhaus at Dessau. He tells everyone that he has pure Arabic blood, but is a typical Galician Jew. He paints ever more madly, he bluffs and bewilders, his students are gaping with wide-open eyes and mouths, a new, unheard-of art makes its entrance in the Rhineland." Werckmeister, "From Revolution to Exile," 48. Also note, Galician Jews are a subdivision of the Ashkenazim who came geographically from western Ukraine. "Jewish Galicia & Bukovina: Promoting the Study and Commemoration of the Cultural Heritage," <http://jgaliciabukovina.net/>, last accessed July 8, 2015.

¹⁰ Werckmeister, "From Revolution to Exile," 51.

and which resulted in the subsequent suspension of most civil liberties within Germany, including that of habeas corpus.¹¹ In 1916, in the midst of the First World War, Klee became involved in the Dadaist art movement, which had crystallized as a protest against the War and the civilization that had brought it forth.¹² Works by Klee appeared in Galeria Dada exhibitions in Zurich in 1917, and were also included in various Dada publications.¹³ Following Germany's military defeat in 1919, Klee had become a member of the short-lived Bavarian or Munich Soviet Republic which, based on the model of the Budapest Soviet, attempted to establish a worker's state within Germany's most southern province.¹⁴ Together with several other artists, including Hans Richter, Klee had been given the title and responsibility of Commissariat for Painting.¹⁵ However, following the suppression of the revolutionary government and a brief exile in Switzerland, Klee subsequently avoided involvement in politics.¹⁶ Over the period of the Weimar Republic he enjoyed success as an artist. In 1920, Klee was invited by Walter Gropius to teach painting at the Bauhaus, where he would stay until his move to the Dusseldorf Academy in 1931.¹⁷ Nevertheless, following the Wall Street stock market crash, Germany's ensuing economic

¹¹ Washmann notes that within days of the fire, thousands of the regime's political opponents were arrested in Berlin alone. Nikolaus Washmann, *Hitler's Prisons: Legal Terror in Nazi Germany*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 166.

¹² Hugo Ball wrote: "the Dadaist wages war against the agony of our age and its intoxication with death. Averse to any sage inhibition, he cultivates the curiosity that revels in even the most dubious form of a rebellion. He knows that the world of systems has gone to rack and ruin and that time, a cunning creditor, has started a rummage sale of godless philosophies. The point at which a booth owner is assailed by fear and a bad conscience is the point at which a horse laughs and a mild solace begins for the dadaist..." Quoted in Richard Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, ed. Hans Kleinschmidt, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969) 30. On Dada's initial crystallization as protest against the First War also see, John Willett, *Art & Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety 1917-1933*, (New York, Pantheon Books, 1978), 26-30.

¹³ Two images by Klee appeared in a double issue of *Dada*, numbers 4-5, in May of 1919. Marcel Franciscono, *Paul Klee: His Work and Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 219-220.

¹⁴ John Willett, *Art & Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety 1917-1933*, 46-47.

¹⁵ Hans Richter submitted a position paper for the Art Commissariat clarifying the new revolutionary relationship that was to exist between art and society, "The spirituality of abstract art signifies the immense extension of man's sentiment of freedom ... Art in the state must mirror the spirit of the entire people's body. Art ...should belong to every individual and to no class ...such work guarantees to the people the highest vital value." O. K. Werckmeister, *The Making of Paul Klee's Career: 1914-1920*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 173.

¹⁶ Klee initially fled to Switzerland to escape the military intervention that crushed the Bavarian Soviet. Many of those who participated were given sentences in prison. In fact, the Education Commissar, Gustav Landauer was murdered while serving his jail time. Werckmeister, *The Making of Paul Klee's Career*, 175. Werckmeister notes that during the period of the 1920s, with one single exception, Klee makes no reference to the term "revolution" in his work. O. K. Werckmeister, "From Revolution to Exile," 47.

¹⁷ Marcel Franciscono, *Paul Klee: His Work and Thought*, Klee joins Bauhaus, 241; Klee moves to Dusseldorf Academy, 267. Gropius wrote to Klee that he had been waiting for a year for "the right moment" to offer him the job. Interestingly, in 1919 Klee was unable to land a position at the Stuttgart Art Academy due to his association with the Bavarian Council. This despite or perhaps because of the fact that left wing students considered him to be a "comrade-in-arms." O. K. Werckmeister, *The Making of Paul Klee's Career*, 189-191.

collapse, and the Nazis' accession to power, the political realm came crashing back into Klee's world.¹⁸ Now, under the catchword of "revolution," Modernism itself was to come under direct attack by the Nazis.¹⁹ In the summer of 1933, intellectually influential Nazi party member Alfred Rosenberg denounced both Expressionism and the Bauhaus.²⁰ Hitler would later adopt Rosenberg's declared anti-Modernist position, referencing the dangers of "artistic sabotage" carried out by the Cubists, Futurists, Dadaists others.²¹ It should be noted that following the Second World War, Rosenberg was convicted at Nuremberg for crimes against humanity and executed for his decisive role in shaping Nazi ideology.²²

Klee was again directly attacked by the Nazis in 1937 when seventeen of his works were exhibited in the regime's *Entartete Kunst* Degenerate Art show.²³ The program for the exhibition stated: "What does the exhibition of 'Degenerate Art' want? It wants to expose the common root of political anarchy and cultural anarchy, and to unmask the degeneration of art as art bolshevism in the full sense of the word."²⁴ Within the show, Klee's art work was situated within the categories of "confusion" and "insanity."²⁵ Several of his pictures were mockingly adorned with quotes from the artist which were taken entirely out of context. Below Klee's 1922 image of the *Zwitscher-*

¹⁸ The 1929 stock market crash led to the recall of American loans and a credit crunch within Germany. John Willett, *Art & Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety 1917-1933*, 178. During the subsequent crisis, support for the Nazis grew in both national and state elections. In September of 1930, Hitler's National Socialist Party received five and half million new votes and 105 seats in the Reichstag. Eighteen months later in 1932, the Nazis won control over the state of Prussia and, crucially, the Berlin police. Concurrently, Hitler just missed beating the left in the national seat total in the Reichstag, and held 230 deputies to the Socialists' (SPD) and the Communists' (KPD) combined total of 232. Willett, *Art & Politics in the Weimar Period*, 202.

¹⁹ In two articles entitled "Revolution in the Visual Arts" and "Revolution as Such!" Rosenberg redefines the meaning of the term Revolution from a National Socialist and anti-modern perspective. O.K. Werckmeister, "From Revolution to Exile," 51.

²⁰ Werckmeister, "From Revolution to Exile," 51. For several months after the Nazis came to power, a debate between Joseph Goebbels and Rosenberg took place over the official attitude that should be taken towards some aspects of modern art. Goebbels supported Expressionism, arguing it was German and Nordic, with roots in Gothic art. Rosenberg, on the other hand, sought to promote *volkisch* art - art of and by the German people - over forms of modernist aesthetics. Stephanie Barron, "1937: Modern Art and Politics in Prewar Germany," in *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* (New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art - Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991), 12.

²¹ O. K. Werckmeister, "From Revolution to Exile," 52. Also see, Stephanie Barron, "1937: Modern Art and Politics in Prewar Germany," *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art - Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991, 12.

²² Rosenberg was cremated in the ovens at Dachau. Robert Cecil, *The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology*, (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1972), 214-230.

²³ Werckmeister, "From Revolution to Exile," 54.

²⁴ Werckmeister, "From Revolution to Exile," 54.

²⁵ Werckmeister, "From Revolution to Exile," 54.

-*Maschine*, or the *Twittering Machine*²⁶ (**Figure 3**), which blends biology with the mechanical, was placed a remark from the artist stating, "I am not to be comprehended purely in this world's terms: my home is with the dead as much as with the unborn."²⁷ During the wide-spread confiscations of modern art that swept Germany during this period, no less than a hundred of Klee's works were seized.²⁸ Many of these paintings and drawings would later be sold abroad by the Nazis to help raise foreign currency for the regime.²⁹ The widespread vilification and repression of Modernism and Modernist artists, including of Klee himself, was part of a broader ideological program of ruthlessly "cleansing" or purging the *gemeinschaftsfremde*, or the community of those who were considered to be aliens, from Germany.³⁰ This program was initially carried out through both physical violence and "legal terror" visited upon members of the left, Communists (KPD), Socialists (SPD), trade union leaders, and liberals.³¹ It was also extended to other groups within German society, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, homo-sexuals, social outcasts, the mentally challenged, Roma, and Jews.³² This is not even to mention the book burnings instituted by Goebbels, in which works by blacklisted authors like Heinrich Mann, Sigmund Freud, Erich Maria Remarque, Thomas Mann and others were set alight.³³ The Nazi terror was so extreme that they even went



Figure 3. Paul Klee, *Zwitscher-Maschine* (Twittering Machine), 1922

²⁶ An analysis of Klee's formal technique in the *Twittering Machine* can be found in Beeke Sell Tower's book on Klee at the Bauhaus. Tower cites the painting as an example of how Klee uses a colour ground in a chiaroscuro fashion for his linear constructions. Beeke Sell Tower, *Klee and Kandinsky in Munich and at the Bauhaus* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981), 139. Also see, item 2975 – *Zwitscher-Maschine* or *Twittering Machine*, painting, *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, ed. Paul Klee Foundation, Museum of Fine Arts Berne, vol. 3, 436.

²⁷ *Degenerate Art*, 80.

²⁸ O. K. Werckmeister, "From Revolution to Exile", 54.

²⁹ "Paintings from the degenerate art auction will now be offered on the international art market. In so doing we hope at least to make some money from this garbage." Joseph Goebbels, quoted in *Degenerate Art*, 135.

³⁰ Nikolaus Wachsmann, "The policy of exclusion: repression in the Nazi state, 1933-1939," in *Nazi Germany*, ed. Jane Caplan (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2008), 122.

³¹ Wachsmann, "The policy of exclusion," 123. Also see Wachsmann, *Hitler's Prisons*, 112-113. "Already in the first weeks after Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, the attention centred on political opponents of the new regime. SA and SS men carried out violent attacks on Communist supporters while the police stood idly by. In Prussia, such thugs were even employed as auxiliary policemen, following a decree by the new head of the Ministry of the Interior Hermann Goring on 22 February 1933. This meant that the same Nazi activists who only a few weeks previously had fought their political enemies on the street could now settle old scores as state officials." Wachsmann, *Hitler's Prisons*, 166.

³² Jehovah's Witnesses, who refused to give the Nazi salute for religious reasons, were banned from practicing their religion in 1935. Wachsmann, *Hitler's Prisons*, 126, 132, 144, 160. See also Wachsmann, "The policy of exclusion," 124-125, 133, 144.

³³ Goebbels' book burnings began on May 10, 1933. He announced, "the period of Jewish intellectual imperialism is over. From its ashes a new spirit will arise." University towns were especially targeted,

as far as to arrest and punish, in specially established courts, those who told jokes about Hitler.³⁴ All forms of non-conformism were interpreted as attacks on the state.³⁵ According to Nazi ideology, a new national community could only emerge once those who were alien, sick, and dangerous were physically removed from society.³⁶ Interestingly, concentration camps such as Dachau were first established on Himmler's orders during this initial period of terror in March of 1933 as a direct consequence of the policy of mass arrests.³⁷ So, it is within this cultural and political context that Klee's late work, which was created in exile from Germany, needs to be understood.

Before returning to the painting, *Protected Children*, it is necessary to point out that Klee had a long-standing affinity for the art of children. As the scholar O. K. Werckmeister notes, it is perhaps "one of the most salient features" of his work.³⁸ However, it is also important to grasp that the actual meaning of these child-like forms within Klee's auteur effectively shifted over time. Initially, between 1911 and 1914, during his early *Der Blaue Reiter* period in Munich,³⁹ Klee's use of children's art was linked to the notion of the immediacy of experience; something that the artist argued was closer to what must have, at one time, constituted the primordial origins of art.⁴⁰ Wassily Kandinsky who, along with Klee, was a member of *Der Blaue Reiter* art circle, spoke of their respective interest in children's art as an attempt to be attuned

with students and teachers marching and shouting Nazi slogans before the libraries were purged of the offensive books and the texts set on fire. Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1992), 52.

³⁴ Adam, *Art of the Third Reich*, 123-124.

³⁵ Wachsmann, *Hitler's Prisons*, 113.

³⁶ Wachsmann, "The policy of exclusion," 122.

³⁷ Wachsmann, "The policy of exclusion," 124. When the Nazis first took over the German state there was no blueprint for the concentration camps. However, regular prisons soon became overcrowded, and by April 1933 Bavarian penal institutions already held over 4,500 prisoners in protective custody. SS Reich Leader Heinrich Himmler had established Dachau in his role as Munich Chief of Police. Its first SS commandant, Hilmar Wackerle oversaw a policy of arbitrary violence in which prisoners were openly threatened with the death penalty for acts of resistance. Twenty-five prisoners were murdered in 1933. To hide their responsibility for the killings, guards claimed that either the inmates had been shot while trying to escape or had committed suicide. *The Nazi Concentration Camps 1933-39*, ed. Christian Goeschel & Nikolaus Wachsmann (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 4-5.

³⁸ O. K. Werckmeister, "The Issue of Childhood in the Art of Paul Klee," *Arts Magazine* 52, no. 1 (1977), 138.

³⁹ Klee joined *Der Blaue Reiter* and the circle around Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc in the fall of 1911. Although he did not participate in the group's first show, Klee did contribute 17 works to its second exhibition in the spring of 1912. Tower, *Klee and Kandinsky*, 36.

⁴⁰ Klee stated, "For there are still primordial origins of art, as you would rather find them in the ethnographic museum or at home in the nursery (don't laugh, reader), children can do it too, and that is by no means devastating for the most recent tendencies, but there is positive wisdom in this fact. The more helpless these children are, the more instructive art they offer; for already here there is corruption: if children start to absorb developed works of art or even to emulate them. Parallel phenomena are the drawings of the insane, and thus madness is no appropriate invective either. In truth all this is to be taken much more seriously, if the art of today is to be reformed." Werckmeister, "The Issue of Childhood in the Art of Paul Klee," 138.

to the “inner sound” of things, thus romantically referencing what he contended was the unhampered spiritual reality of children.⁴¹

Interestingly, several pedagogical studies of children’s drawing had been undertaken in Munich in the decade before the First World War. One of these was by the city’s school Superintendent, Georg Kerschensteiner. The studies demonstrated how children pass through an early stage of schematic figure drawing before ultimately arriving at what Kerschensteiner considered to be the “correct form” of representation, which was realism.⁴² Klee, who had been living in Munich since 1906, and had a keen interest in children’s art, must have been aware of these surveys.⁴³ Examined within the context of pedagogy, Kerschensteiner’s writings effectively criticized the earliest schematic drawings produced by children as stereotypical, and then lauded their later stage-by-stage development towards realistic forms. However, as Werckmeister points out, Klee and Kandinsky would have drawn the exact opposite conclusion.⁴⁴ They would have seized on the early schematic forms as an alternative rather than as a preliminary stage of representation.⁴⁵ While Kerschensteiner recognized expression to exist only in the shape of a clearly-drawn visual subject, Klee saw it in the nature of the form itself.⁴⁶ Thus, at this time in history, for Klee, child-like art was not only a way of over-turning the conventions of modern art, it also represented a challenge to the forces of socialization. In the 1920s, Klee’s use of children’s art became, in some

⁴¹ Werckmeister, “The Issue of Childhood in the Art of Paul Klee,” 139.

⁴² Kerschensteiner’s study entitled *Die Entwicklung der zeichnerischen Begabung* (The Development of the Gift of Drawing) was based upon a collection of half a million drawings by 58,000 Munich school children. The text itself contained 847 reproductions on 141 full-size plates. Werckmeister, “The Issue of Childhood in the Art of Paul Klee,” 141-142. Werckmeister cites two additional studies by the art historian Karl Lamprecht, and by the psychologist William Stern at the University of Breslau. Werckmeister, “The Issue of Childhood in the Art of Paul Klee,” 141. An additional examination was produced by Siegfried Levinstein entitled *Kinderzeichnungen bis zum 14. Lebensjahr* (Children’s Drawings until the Age of Fourteen), Michael Baumgartner, “Paul Klee – The Discovery of Childhood,” *Klee and Cobra: A Child’s Play*, ed. Zentrum Paul Klee (Hatje Cantz Verlag GmbH & Company, 2011), 14.

⁴³ O. K. Werckmeister, “The Issue of Childhood in the Art of Paul Klee,” *Arts Magazine*, 141. It should be noted that in German culture, there existed a long history of preoccupation with child psychology and education. In his book, the *Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794), Friedrich von Schiller had affirmed play as a necessary creative component of the rational mind and as an emancipatory source of hope and energy for the world. See Ramar Zinguer, “Architecture in Play: Intimations of Modernism in Architectural Toys 1836-1952” (PhD Thesis Princeton University, 2006), 26. In the early nineteenth century, German educator Friedrich Froebel would, in fact, materialize Schiller’s thinking within children’s pedagogical practice with the founding of specially crafted schools. According to Froebel, teaching should be undertaken through objects he called *gifts*, and then links should be made with activities that are conducted in natural settings. The metaphor underpinning his approach was that children were to be treated like flowers in a garden, thus the new term he coined to describe the school was kindergarden. Zinguer, “Architecture in Play,” 9, 10, 26, 27.

⁴⁴ Werckmeister, “The Issue of Childhood in the Art of Paul Klee,” 142.

⁴⁵ Werckmeister, “The Issue of Childhood in the Art of Paul Klee,” 143.

⁴⁶ Werckmeister, “The Issue of Childhood in the Art of Paul Klee,” 143.

respects, a kind of personal signature for the artist.⁴⁷ However, the historical circumstances had changed by the 1930s. During this period, the earlier idea of children's art as a form of authentic and unspoiled creativity was something that had begun to resonate with a conservative and reactionary political ideology. Hans Friedrich Geist, an elementary school teacher and an art educator, had begun to propagate an ideology of "natural originality" as opposed to the "decadence" of the Weimar Republic.⁴⁸ In 1929, Geist met with Klee, and authored an essay for the magazine *bauhaus 3* with respect to an exhibition on children's art.⁴⁹ A year later, Geist published a report – "Kinder über Paul Klee" (Children on Paul Klee), detailing the positive and instinctive understanding that children had of Klee's art.⁵⁰ Klee, though, for his part, rejected Geist's interpretation of his art work, "Do not associate my works with those of children! They are worlds apart..."⁵¹ In discussions with Geist, Klee now emphasized the fundamental distinction between children's art and what he, as a Modernist, was producing. "Never forget," he stated, "the child knows nothing about art."⁵² Klee understood that the child, in his or her coming to terms with reality, had provided the form. However, it was now the artist who purposefully chose to transform these raw materials by self-consciously reworking them into art.⁵³ In fact, Klee's 1939 painting *Protected Children* is exemplary in demonstrating precisely this transformative process. For his own part, four years after his discussion with Paul Klee, Geist openly hailed Hitler as the leader of a new Germany and placed his theories of art pedagogy regarding the uninhibited creativity of the child at the disposal of the new Nazi state.⁵⁴

As noted, at one level, Klee's *Protected Children* can be understood as engaging in a host of formal and technical investigations that were particular to the era of 20th century Modernist painting. In creating his picture of three figures struggling to hold onto their umbrellas against a lake-side gust of wind, Klee

⁴⁷ Werckmeister, "The Issue of Childhood in the Art of Paul Klee," 143.

⁴⁸ Michael Baumgartner, "Paul Klee – The Discovery of Childhood," *Klee and Cobra: A Child's Play*, ed. Zentrum Paul Klee, 15.

⁴⁹ Baumgartner, "Paul Klee – The Discovery of Childhood," 15.

⁵⁰ Baumgartner, "Paul Klee – The Discovery of Childhood," 15.

⁵¹ Baumgartner, "Paul Klee – The Discovery of Childhood," 15.

⁵² Werckmeister, "The Issue of Childhood in the Art of Paul Klee," 147.

⁵³ Werckmeister, "The Issue of Childhood in the Art of Paul Klee," 148.

⁵⁴ In 1934, Hans Friedrich Geist published a book detailing his pedagogical theories entitled: *The Rebirth of the Artistic out of the People. A Book on the Art of the People and its Confirmation in the Creativity of the Child, as an Example of Practical Work at Nationhood*. Werckmeister, "The Issue of Childhood in the Art of Paul Klee," 148.

clearly has enacted a process of simplification and abstraction in which only the barest of essential information is provided. Displaying little in the way of perspective, the image has a quality of flatness about it which resonates with the “object nature” of the painting itself. As previously mentioned, the dappled brushwork across the surface of the picture foregrounds the artist’s act of painting while simultaneously giving the image a rich tactile quality that draws attention to its physical presence. The image is constructed with bands of harmonizing colour fields fenced in by loose geometric shapes - circles, half circles, and pyramids. On the right side of the painting, the angular nature of the building takes on an almost “cubist-like” quality. Klee’s three central figures have not been given any embodied physical presence. In fact, there is a sense of weightlessness about them that Klee exploits thematically through the motif of the blowing wind and the toppling umbrellas. *Protected Children* is an image that cannot be said, with any certainty, to have been drawn from life by the (adult) artist, but rather appears to have been constructed through the use of a simple code of symbols such as a curve for a boat, two sticks for feet, a hook that conflates between a human arm and a umbrella handle. We also see that Klee is able to configure large and complex ideas by using only a minimal juxtaposition of these symbols. An example previously mentioned was the presence of the “nipple-like” figure on the umbrella which is meant to evoke the concept of a nurturing breast. Another configuration with respect to the child on the bottom left of the picture employs a combination of the golden colouring of her head, the outward bell-shaped flare of her body, and the positioning of the crooked handle across her forehead to evoke the idea of a small “angelic” presence.

Furthermore, one of the overriding qualities of Klee’s *Protected Children* is its ambiguity. Throughout the picture, formal and thematic assertions at all levels are repeatedly undercut. Yes, there are colour fields, but at certain points they abruptly and inexplicably shift their tone or change colour altogether. Yes, there are geometric forms, yet the shapes are just as often broken, incomplete or contradictory. The most striking of these is the tapering rectangular figure on the left side of the canvas, which is adorned with a cross. Is this a representation of a doorway? A building or church? Could this be a person? Perhaps, keying off the figure of the cross - a nun, walking past or accompanying the children in the street? The figure does have a set of eyes and a nose, yet inexplicably it is given no fixed head – there is just a yellow unbound field that swirls into the landscape. Perhaps it is blonde hair being blown around by the wind... Perhaps the figure itself is simply a vision... Or a spectre... Similarly, on the far right of the canvas we find an



Figure 4. Paul Klee, *Zerstörtes Labyrinth* (Destroyed Labyrinth), 1939



Figure 5. Paul Klee, *Ohne Titel (Elektrischer Spuk)* [Untitled (Electrical Spook)], 1923



Figure 6. Paul Klee, *die Puppe wird frühstücken* (The Doll Will Have Breakfast), 1938

unconnected pair of sideways looking eyes which are mounted on a wall rather than being attached to a body. In their ambiguous placement, this floating pair of dots serves to biologically animate, so to speak, the part of the building on which it has been placed. Even Klee's formal rendering of the painting's defining black (wooden block) lines resonates with this quality of the ambiguous gesture, for they themselves have not actually been drawn. Rather, the lines are the result of a dark undercoat to the picture and have ultimately been realized as the residue of any area that has not been painted over. However, within the realm of ambiguity, it is Klee's defining child-like form that provides the greatest overriding gesture of all. All the formal considerations of Modernist painting – simplification and abstraction, lack of perspective, and flatness are all evoked and then simultaneously trumped, so to speak, by Klee's use of children's art. In other words, Klee's deployment of the form of children's art is itself an act of Modernist negation par excellence.

This aspect is further highlighted if we examine *Protected Children* side by side with the very next painting that Klee produced in 1939 – *Zerstörtes Labyrinth* or *Destroyed Labyrinth* (**Figure 4**).⁵⁵ This image features many of the very same formal modernist techniques that have just been discussed. It is not a painting that is drawn from life. Offering no perspective and no depth, it is a flat assemblage of fifteen ambiguous shapes and signs scattered over a red monochrome surface. The figures here are not geometric; rather they resemble something between calligraphy and skeletal bones. The signs are arranged across the surface in such a way that they interface with each other, but do not touch. They are themselves also flat, without depth, and again monochrome red, though for the most part, they have a darker shading than the painting's background. All are outlined by a trace of a thin black line. Weaving in and out of the pathways between these shapes, Klee has worked the canvas with both his brush and scraper to provide an effect of movement and wear. My point in comparing the two paintings is on the one hand, to highlight the Modernist assumptions that intersect in the two images, which were produced back-to-back within Klee's studio. However, it is also my intention to underscore that

⁵⁵ Item 8050. *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 8, 178.

the child-like schematic of *Protected Children* is a form Klee appropriates, and through which he, as a Modernist painter, elects to approach his subject matter.

Klee's use of puppets, and his puppetry in general, can be seen as a small subset within his broader interest in children's art. Between 1916 and 1925 Klee had produced a series of fifty hand puppets for his son Felix.⁵⁶ In one instance, he actually elected to use a light socket to fashion one of the puppets' heads (**Figure 5**). In the late 1930s, approximately a year before he painted *Protected Children*, a specific puppet motif - that of the broken puppet - surfaced in Klee's work. Alongside the paintings Klee created during his exile were a sizable number of drawings. Examining these images in sequential order within Klee's *catalogue raisonné*, it is possible to follow the development of some of his key ideas in the period immediately preceding the creation of *Protected Children*. In 1938, Klee initiated a long series of pen and paper drawings in which the theme of artist abstraction is eventually superimposed on the motif of human dismemberment. Notably, it is the figure of the puppet that serves as the conceptual fulcrum through which this idea is unfolded.

The series begins with several different images of dolls (*puppe* in German) depicted as having separate segmented bodily sections (**Figure 6**).⁵⁷ This is quickly followed by two further images of children as string puppets, entitled *Children's Games* (**Figure 7**) and *Battle Among Children* (**Figure 8**) in which the figures are depicted respectively fighting and playing with each other.⁵⁸ Here, I would argue that Klee seeks to metaphorically evoke the idea of a child or person through his use of the motif of a puppet. At one point, within the *Battle* image, we see a string being cut, and this results in several different puppet-humans flying apart and scattering into their constituent pieces. In his next drawing, entitled *Repair* (**Figure 9**), amidst the ruin and carnage, Klee has one figure with a pipe (perhaps the artist himself) take the time to string the puppet back together.⁵⁹ However, as if sensing

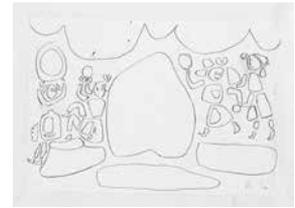


Figure 7. Paul Klee, *Kinder-spiele* (Children's Games), 1938



Figure 8. Paul Klee, *Schlacht unter Kindern* (Battle among Children), 1938



Figure 9. Paul Klee, *Reparatur* (Repair), 1938

⁵⁶ Michael Baumgartner, "Paul Klee – The Discovery of Childhood," *Klee and Cobra: A Child's Play*.

⁵⁷ Item 7634 – *die Puppe Wird Fruhstucken* or *The Doll Will Have Breakfast*, drawing; item 7635 – *Angelehnt* or *Leant On*, drawing; item 7636 – *Empfindsame Puppe* or *Sentimental Doll*, drawing, *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 7, 498.

⁵⁸ Item 7638 – *Kinder-Spiel* or *Children's Games*; item 7637 – *Schlacht Unter Kindern* or *Battling Children*, drawing, *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 7, 499.

⁵⁹ Item 7639 – *Reparatur* or *Repair*, drawing, *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 7, 499.

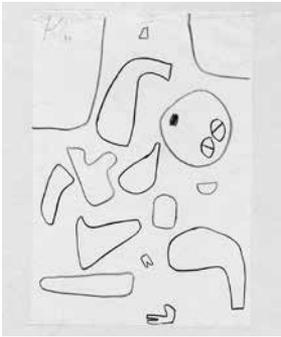


Figure 10. Paul Klee, *gesprengt (Blown Up)*, 1938



Figure 11. Paul Klee, *ein Wut-anfall (An Outburst of Rage)*, 1938



Figure 12. Paul Klee *wie sie musizieren! How they Make Music*, 1938

the larger conceptual possibilities of the unstrung form, Klee abandons the theme of repair and instead creates several more drawings of puppets that are fragmented and broken. In one image, we see the scattered pieces of the figure tossed about the frame - a severed hand at the bottom edge, an arm tipped off to the side, an oval shaped head near the middle. Its open mouth and closed, twisted eyes clearly indicate that it has perished. However, the title of the image, *gesprengt* or *Blown Up* (**Figure 10**), conceptually links the inferred death and physical dismemberment of the puppet-human directly to an act of war.⁶⁰ At the time the image was created, it had only been a year since the Nazi Condor Legion's terror-bombing of Guernica on April 26, 1937 had taken place in support of Franco's forces in the Spanish Civil War. This had led to the deaths of over fifteen-hundred civilians.⁶¹ In fact, at the moment this drawing was conceived in 1938, the Spanish Civil War was still raging, though this is not to say that this particular image made direct reference to that conflict. However, within this drawing, Klee also simultaneously overlays the idea of physical dismemberment with the notion of modernist abstraction. In effect, Klee's drawing asks: is this scattered figure an evocation of the dynamism of the human form? Or, are we looking at the result of an aerial bombing? It is with this drawing that Klee reaches the point at which the artist's practice, aesthetics, and notions of the beautiful are themselves problematized by the events of history.⁶²

After completing *Blown Up*, Klee continues his theme of the overlapping of abstraction and dismemberment through a series of broken puppet images whose titles serve as ironic foils for the display of death and carnage. *An Outburst of Rage* reveals a flattened corpus rendered by Klee as making an odd, frozen gesture as if the dead figure were shouting out to the world (**Figure 11**).⁶³ The very next image in the artist's sequence of

⁶⁰ Item 7642 - *gesprengt* or *Blown Up*, drawing. *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 7, 500.

⁶¹ 1,654 people were killed in the attack - the first deliberate targeting, through aerial bombing, of a completely unmilitarized and undefended city. Franco denied that it happened and blamed the destruction of the city on its inhabitants. Ian Patterson, *Guernica and Total War* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard Press, 2007) p. 17. Also see Guernica History Learning Site: www.historylearningsite.co.uk/modern-world-history-1918-to-1980/the-spanish-civil-war/guernica/

⁶² Adorno refers to Klee and the Surrealists in the context of a critique of the fetishisation of artistic form. Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*. ed. Gretel Adorno, & Rolf Tiedemann trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997 (1970), 291-292.

⁶³ Item 7643 - *ein Wut-anfall* or *An Outburst of Rage*, drawing, *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 7, 501.

drawings, *How they Make Music!* (**Figure 12**), presents a scene of scattered instruments such as horns and cymbals interspersed with a mix of body parts.⁶⁴ In some instances it is difficult to tell the musicians from their instruments... is that part of a violin or a human thigh?

Klee follows this particular image with another expression of music- (and drawing-) related irony, entitled *Composing Oneself* (**Figure 13**).⁶⁵ Here, the curly hair sketched around the head of the broken, deceased figure, whose stiffened arm gestures like a conductor, has the appearance of so much smoke. Next, *Restless in Bed* (**Figure 14**) presents us with multiple smashed and jumbled human faces that seem to be in dialogue with each other about their own grim fates.⁶⁶ It is as if they (the dead) are asking each other... who is the most hideous amongst us now? *A Child and the Grotesque* shows the split open face of a young girl positioned between the broken heads of two of her toy clowns (**Figure 15**).⁶⁷ Yet another shredded puppet-like figure is revealed in *Changed Places* (**Figure 16**).⁶⁸ And, in the picture *In the Chandelier-Style*, (**Figure 17**) the pose of an outstretched body is juxtaposed with the sculptural gestures of a household lighting ornament.⁶⁹ All these drawings, and many others from this period, continue to explore the motif of the broken puppet scattered around the picture frame by the events of war. Obviously, at one level, the anthropomorphism inherent in the figure of a puppet allows Klee to approach the representation of such charged material through the prism of a secondary form. However, I would argue that at another level, what makes the broken-puppet such an expressive vehicle for Klee is that its simple sign-like quality is exceedingly effective in negotiating the visual transition from the three dimensions of a sculptural figure to the flat two-dimensional surface of a picture frame.

The idea of the unstrung, scattered puppet-person, I would argue, is the very motif Klee employs early in the year 1939 in painting

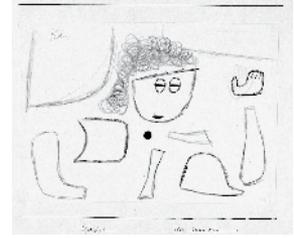


Figure 13. Paul Klee, *sich sammeln* (Composing Oneself), 1938

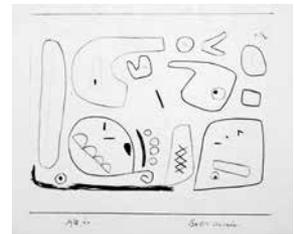


Figure 14. Paul Klee, *Bett=Unruhe* (Restless in Bed), 1938



Figure 15. Paul Klee, *ein Kind und das Groteske* (A Child and the Grotesque), 1938

⁶⁴ Item 7644 – *wie sie musicieren!* or *How They Make Music!*, drawing. *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 7, 501.

⁶⁵ Item 7645 – *sich sammeln* or *Composing Oneself*, drawing. *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 7, 501.

⁶⁶ Item 7646 – *Bett=Unruhe* or *Restless in Bed*, drawing. *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 7, 502.

⁶⁷ Item 7652 – *ein Kind und Das Groteske* or *A Child and the Grotesque*, drawing. *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 7, 504.

⁶⁸ Item 7675 – *vertauschte Plätze* or *Changing Places*, drawing. *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 7, 511.

⁶⁹ Item 7676 – *Im Leuchter-Stil* or *In the Chandelier-Style*, drawing. *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 7, 512.



Figure 16. Paul Klee, *vertauschte Plätze* (Changed Places), 1938

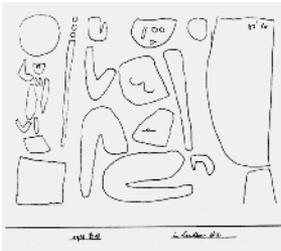


Figure 17. Paul Klee, *Im Leuchter-Stil* (In the Chandelier-Style), 1938



Figure 18. Paul Klee, *ein Weib für Götter* (A Woman for Gods), 1938

Outbreak of Fear III (**Figure 2**).⁷⁰ Completed during the realization of this series of drawings, the compositional similarity between this picture and *Changed Places* (**Figure 16**) is unmistakable – note the tucking of the single severed, bulbous, wide-eyed head into the upper corner of the painting, or the linear arrangement of limbs and broken body parts measured against the straight edges of the picture frame. In fact, within the series, *Outbreak of Fear III* was preceded by two drawings that bear the same name (*Outbreak of Fear I* and *Outbreak of Fear II*) and which are virtually compositionally identical to the final painting.⁷¹ Thus, it is possible to read this work both within the context of both its reference to war and its problematization of Modernist abstraction. Indeed, I would argue that *Outbreak of Fear III* is the artistic summation of this entire broken puppet period within Klee's work. Accordingly, rather than functioning solely as a barometer of the physical and psychological state of the artist, as the scholar Marcel Franciscono contends, *Outbreak of Fear III* is also indicative of Klee's attempt to engage, through his art, with the desperate historical circumstances in which he found himself.⁷² The same is also true of another of Klee's paintings completed in the midst of this series in late 1938 – *A Woman for Gods* (**Figure 18**).⁷³ The image shows a naked female figure, impossibly twisted into the picture frame: her head pointing in one direction, her feet and arm in another. Drained of colour, her eyes are open, yet frozen and off-center. Her white body is placed atop a pink (feminine) surface (a blanket?) and is entirely outlined in red. Many of the smaller motifs used by Klee in his

⁷⁰ Item 7828 – *Angstausbruch III* or *Outbreak of Fear III*, watercolour. *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 8, 80.

⁷¹ Item 7731 – *Angstausbruch* or *Outbreak of Fear*, drawing, *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 8, 27. Also, item 7814 – *Angstausbruch II* or *Outbreak of Fear II*, drawing, *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 8, 75.

⁷² Franciscono states, "... it would be surprising if we could not interpret some of his somber pictures as reflection of public anguish. But this having been said, there is not much overt political context in the (Klee's) late work." Then, after referencing the drawings *True to the Fuhrer* and *Silly Youth: War* as examples of Klee's political work, he goes on to declare that a political reading of the artist's late pictures extends only to, "a relative handful out of the more than 2,300 works Klee drew and painted between 1937 and 1940." Franciscono effectively disavows that *Outbreak of Fear III* or any of the previous drawings I mentioned were connected to the political circumstances of 1938 and 1939. The "disintegration" of the human figure in *Outbreak of Fear III* is interpreted psychologically. Franciscono entirely misses the irony present in Klee's titles, such as *Why, You're Dripping! (Du triffst ja!)*, which references a bleeding corpse, as well as the artist's problematizing of abstraction. Rather, Franciscono fetishizes the Klee's style and work. Marcel Franciscono, *Paul Klee: His Work and Thought*, 300-308. See also footnote 6 in the present work.

⁷³ Item 7654 – *ein Weib Für Götter* or *A Women for the Gods*, drawing. *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 7, 504.

puppet-person drawings are here re-employed by the artist, most notably the severed (gloved) hand which has also now been colored in red. In fact, Klee once again presents us with a painted abstraction that is simultaneously an image of dismemberment. The woman has in fact been killed, crushed and blown apart by bombs that could well have fallen on her home. The aerial bombing of civilians was, at this moment in history, a new Fascist invention. As such, the title, *A Woman for Gods*, could be considered to be have been an intentional ironic reference to both her death and the Nazi celebration of Nordic and master race mythology in their artistic and cultural program.⁷⁴ And here, it should also be noted that Klee was not simply responding to the horrific abstract reality of the aerial bombing of cities. He was also reacting to the situation in the late 1930's that the consequences of war upon civilians populations was being made much more immediate through the rapid visual dissemination of images within the mediums of magazine photography and film. Grim pictures revealing the victims of aerial bombardments appeared in the newsreel footage of the time. And Klee, living in a relatively large city such as Bern would, despite his illness during these years, certainly have had the opportunity to see this material.⁷⁵

There was one Modernist movement at the beginning of the 20th century that consummately celebrated – that of the Italian Futurists, particularly Marinetti.⁷⁶ In a manifesto glorifying Italy's colonial war in Ethiopia, Marinetti stated,

For twenty-seven years, we Futurists have rebelled against the idea that war is anti-aesthetic ... We therefore state: ... War is beautiful because – thanks to its gas masks, its terrifying megaphones, its flame throwers, and light tanks – it establishes man's dominion over the subjugated machine. War is beautiful because it inaugurates

⁷⁴ "The high cultures of the Indians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans were Indo-Germanic creations. They unmistakably show Nordic creativity ... Even today we feel an affinity with those cultures of the same racial origin. People of other races also created cultures, but when we approach the culture of ancient China, or Babylon, of the Aztecs and the Incas, we feel something different. They too are high cultures but they are alien to us. They are not of our race; they transmit a different spirit. They have never reached the same heights as those created by the Nordic Spirit." – SS (Internal Security Force) Training Manual. Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1992), 52.

⁷⁵ In a brilliant example of curatorial juxtaposition, located directly across from Picasso's painting of the bombing of *Guernica*, currently displayed on the second floor of Madrid's Reina Sofia Museum, and which I visited in October of 2015, is a film by Martin Patino (1971) entitled *Songs for After the War*, containing actual newsreel footage from the Spanish Civil War. The images that appear in this film from the 1930's include the shattered half buried bodies of victims, women and children among them, whose deaths were the direct result of the new aerial bombing of cities.

⁷⁶ John Willett notes that Italian Futurism went into decline following that country's entry into the First World War, the very moment at which Marinetti's right-wing values could actually be tested against the reality of war. John Willett, *Art & Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety 1917-1933*, 25.

the dreamed-of metallization of the human body. War is beautiful because it enriches a flowering meadow with the fiery orchids of machine-guns. War is beautiful because it combines gunfire, barrages, cease-fires, scents, and the fragrance of putrefaction into a symphony. War is beautiful because it creates new architectures, like those of armored tanks, geometric squadrons of aircrafts, spirals of smoke from burning villages, and much more. ... Poets and artists of Futurism ... remember these principles of an aesthetic of war, that they may illuminate ... your struggle for a new poetry and a new sculpture!⁷⁷

Klee's broken puppet drawings and paintings such as *Outbreak of Fear III* and *A Woman for Gods* negate Marinetti's idealization of the "geometric squadrons of aircrafts" and the "spirals of smoke from burning villages," as well as his overall aestheticization of war by ironically uniting these acts of

violence with their victims. In this sense, Klee's images of the late 1930s are also reminiscent of Goya's series of etchings entitled *The Disasters of War*, created after Napoleon's invasion of Spain in 1808.⁷⁸ Completed over a ten-year period, the eighty images, never shown in Goya's lifetime, graphically detail the absolute savagery of the torture, rape, killings, and executions that took place in the guerilla war that unfolded during Napoleon's occupation.⁷⁹ One Goya etching, entitled *An Heroic Feat with dead man (Figure 19)*, shows mutilated corpses mounted on a tree for display. Although none of Klee's images approach the level of Goya's direct raw savagery, through their symbolic reference to the butchery visited on the victims of war, some of Klee's pictures may be considered to be thematically comparable.



Figure 19. Francisco Goya, *Grande hazaña! Con muertos!* (An heroic feat! With dead Men!), c.1810-1813

The overlap of the theme of dismemberment with Modernist abstraction in Klee's late images finds a striking historical resonance within the contemporaneous work of the Surrealists and in the paintings of Joan Miró. However, the meaning and the significance of the relationship necessitates

⁷⁷ Benjamin quotes Marinetti's manifesto with regard to Fascism's aestheticization of war at the end of his *Work of Art* essay. Benjamin concludes by noting, "Communism replies by politicizing art." Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 3, 1935-1938*, ed. Howard Eiland & Michael W. Jennings trans. Edmund Jephcott & Howard Eiland (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 121-122.

⁷⁸ Goya's *Disasters of War* were created by the artist between 1810 and 1820. Goya died in 1828. The images were first published in 1863. William M. Ivins, Jr. "Goya's Disasters of War," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 19 No. 9 (September 1924), 220. Also see, "Francisco Goya, The Disasters of War (1810-1820)" Richard Harris Art Collection HYPERLINK "<http://www.richardharrisartcollection.com/portfolio-view/francisco-goya-2/>" "<http://www.richardharrisartcollection.com/portfolio-view/francisco-goya-2/>" April 10, 2013.

⁷⁹ Ivins, "Goya's Disasters of War," 220.

some historical explanation. When the Surrealists originally formed in Paris in the early 1920s, they did not have any coherent sense of visual style.⁸⁰ André Breton, who authored the Surrealist Manifesto, had originally identified a number of painters, including Paul Klee, whose ideas and work he believed to be compatible with the goals of Surrealism.⁸¹ In fact, one of the disputes at the time was whether Surrealism could actually be constituted as an aesthetic.⁸² In the midst of this debate, several members of the Surrealist group surrounding André Breton, including Antonin Artaud and André Masson, had discovered Paul Klee's images.⁸³ At that time, the notion of the dream took a central role in the emerging aesthetic of the Surrealists. As Breton had first proclaimed in the Surrealist Manifesto,

*I believe in the future resolution of these two states, apparently so contradictory, which are dream and reality, in a sort of absolute reality, or surreality, if one may so to speak. It is in the quest for this surreality that I am going, certain not to find it but too unmindful of my death not to calculate to some slight degree the joys of its possession.*⁸⁴

Examined within this context, certain Klee images, such as the previously mentioned *Twitter Machine* (**Figure 3**), or *Seventeen, Mad* (1923) (**Figure 20**), which are both constructed out of lines, symbols, and signs that are assembled in a foggy, flat, non-representational glazed color field and that are full of subtle chromatic gradations, seem emblematic of this process.⁸⁵ For André Masson and Joan Miró, who were both searching for a new form, Klee's art work was a revelation.⁸⁶ As young painters in the early 1920's, they were working through Cubist assumptions with respect to representation. Miró has noted that, "...there was

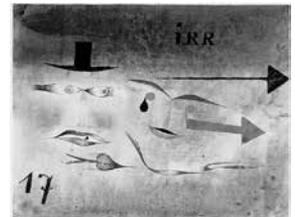


Figure 20. Paul Klee, *Siebzehn, irr*, (*Seventeen, Mad*), 1923

⁸⁰ Ann Temkin, "Klee and the Avant-Garde; 1912-1940," *Paul Klee*, ed. Carolyn Lanchner, Museum of Modern Art (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1987), 20-21.

⁸¹ Temkin, "Klee and the Avant-Garde," 21.

⁸² Pierre Naville, the first editor of the journal *La Révolution Surréaliste*, together with Benjamin Péret opposed any concept of an aesthetic, and in 1925 'published a denial of the validity of Surrealist painting. Temkin, "Klee and the Avant-Garde," 21.

⁸³ Temkin, "Klee and the Avant-Garde," 21.

⁸⁴ André Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924) HYPERLINK "<http://www.tcf.ua.edu/Classes/Jbutler/T340/SurManifesto/ManifestoOfSurrealism.htm>"<http://www.tcf.ua.edu/Classes/Jbutler/T340/SurManifesto/ManifestoOfSurrealism.htm> April 10th, 2013.

⁸⁵ Temkin, "Klee and the Avant-Garde," 21-24. Also, item 3230 – *Siebzehn, irr* or *Seventeen, Mad*, painting, *Paul Klee: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 4, 109.

⁸⁶ Temkin, "Klee and the Avant-Garde," 24. Masson discovered Klee in 1922 through a reproduction in a German book which he showed to Miró. See, William Rubin and Carolyn Lanchner, *André Masson and Twentieth-Century Painting* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1976), 102.

the discipline of Cubism. I learned the structure of a picture from Cubism."⁸⁷ To Masson and Miró, Klee's art of this period represented an idiom that was more responsive than Cubism to the poetic and the intuitive, and yet was married to a semi-Cubist syntax.⁸⁸ However, as art historian Ann Temkin has noted, of the two painters, it was Miró, with his lyrical and often humorous line," whose work bore a "more immediate affinity to that of Klee."⁸⁹

By the end of the 1920s, Breton's original interest in Klee's work had soured.⁹⁰ It was around this time that Klee's imagery found itself caught up in the split within Surrealism between the ideas of Breton and George Bataille.⁹¹ Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to fully explain the host of differences that existed between the two figures, suffice it to say that their disagreement turned on how "eruptive images" could engender a "convulsive" revolutionary aesthetic reorientation of human experience.⁹² Using Freud's theories as a guide, Breton had sought to unlock the power of dreams and the unconscious in order to achieve an immediacy of expression by circumventing the conscious control of image-making through such techniques as automatic writing and drawing.⁹³ However, Bataille had come to believe that far from confronting and liberating the low or base realities of human thinking and the violent nature underpinning human desire, Breton's approach actually idealized and sublimated these energies, thus suppressing any revolutionary response.⁹⁴ Unlike Breton, Bataille elected to embrace Klee, recognizing that he was a painter who resonated with his own aesthetic predilections.⁹⁵ Writing of him, Bataille said, "Klee, it seems to me, was rather the sweetness of a vice, something less remote than generally is painting, and that I have trouble distinguishing from myself."⁹⁶

⁸⁷ Carolyn Lanchner, "Peinture-Poésie, Its Logic and Logistics," in *Joan Miró* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1993), 20.

⁸⁸ Temkin, "Klee and the Avant-Garde," 24. Also see, William Rubin and Carolyn Lanchner, *André Masson and Twentieth-Century Painting*.

⁸⁹ Temkin, "Klee and the Avant-Garde," 24.

⁹⁰ Temkin, "Klee and the Avant-Garde," 27.

⁹¹ Temkin, "Klee and the Avant-Garde," 28.

⁹² Maureen Lunn, "Looking At Dirty Pictures: Sur(sous)realism, Fascism and Reproducing Intoxication in the 1930s," *Public*, 120.

⁹³ Dawn Ades & Simon Baker, Fiona Bradley, *Undercover Surrealism: George Bataille and Documents*, (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2006), 11. Also see "The Automatic Message" André Breton, *What is Surrealism? – Selected Writings*, ed. Franklin Rosemont (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1978), 97-109.

⁹⁴ Ades, Baker, Bradley, *Undercover Surrealism*, 11. See also Lunn, "Looking At Dirty Pictures," 120.

⁹⁵ Miró states that Breton scorned Klee, *Joan Miró: A Retrospective* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Yale University Press, 1987), 31.

⁹⁶ "Klee, me semble-t-il, avait plutôt la douceur d'un vice, quelque chose de moins distant que ne l'est généralement la peinture, et que j'ai du mal à distinguer de moi-même." *Joan Miró: A Retrospective*, 37n. Also see,

Bataille was an extremely complex and idiosyncratic social critic and thinker who conceived of human existence as being immediately mediated by, and through, a language exterior to our own being.⁹⁷

In Klee, Bataille found someone who he believed was similarly interested in the low forces of the senses, those worldly details that were not the high, ideal and beautiful spaces of the “above” which Bataille claimed Breton espoused.⁹⁸ Rather, Bataille suggested these were the sites of the monstrous. Over the course of 1929 and 1930, Bataille published a review entitled *Document*.⁹⁹ Interestingly, in one of the issues, Bataille brings Joan Miró and Klee together, publishing an article on the Spanish Surrealist painter while at the same time including several images by Klee.¹⁰⁰ One of the constant features within Bataille’s publication was the phenomenon of deliberate interactions between different images.¹⁰¹ Just across from Klee’s painting of the shaking, reaching figure in *Fou en transes* (Crazy Trance), Bataille places several ancient gold coins, evoking, between images, the idea of being mad for money.¹⁰² And, next to Klee’s painting entitled *Clown*, Bataille places an image of Ireland’s Saint John, thus mocking the notion of religion. Again, in each case, the suggestion elicited by the juxtaposition was clearly intentional, and speaks to Bataille’s understanding, not only of the value of Klee’s images, but also of how they could be deployed “profanely” to explode cultural myths, such as, in this case, the ideologies of capitalism and religion.¹⁰³ In a 1929 essay on

George Bataille, *Cahiers d’Art*, 20 – 21, 52.

⁹⁷ In his essay, Hollier uses the metaphor of the Labyrinth (drawn from Bataille) to explain and describe Bataille’s understanding of the relationship of human beings to language, “Human beings have a labyrinthine structure, the labyrinth is the structure of existence because existence is unthinkable without language (“man existing entirely through language”) that is, it could not take place without the mediation of words (words, their mazes...). Language makes man into a relationship to, an opening to; it prohibits his withdrawing into utopian self-presence, cuts off his retreat toward closure. It dispossesses him of his origins. Language is the practical negation of solipsism. The impossibility of finding a basis within oneself. Like a negative umbilical cord (one that would attach a person not to the origin but to the absence of origin), an umbilical lack that must be produced through writing, and in writing, until death comes to cut the thread.” Denis Hollier, “The Labyrinth and the Pyramid” in *Against Architecture: The Writings of George Bataille* (MIT Press, 1989), 65. Also, “There is no being outside language, but because it is necessarily “mediated” by language that deprives me of *ipséité*; it is where ‘my’ being gets lost.” Hollier, “The Labyrinth and the Pyramid,” 72.

⁹⁸ Lunn, “Looking At Dirty Pictures,” 122-132.

⁹⁹ Fifteen issues were published. Dawn Ades & Simon Baker, Fiona Bradley, *Undercover Surrealism; George Bataille and Documents*, 11.

¹⁰⁰ *Document* (Paris), 5 (October, 1929).

¹⁰¹ Dawn Ades & Simon Baker, Fiona Bradley, *Undercover Surrealism; George Bataille and Documents*, 14.

¹⁰² *Document* (Paris) 5 (October, 1929) 287.

¹⁰³ Interestingly, the film technique used within Soviet revolutionary cinema such as Eisenstein’s *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925) was constructed according to just such a theory of montage, in which a new idea would explode from the “dialectical” juxtaposition of two separate images. Undoubtedly, by 1929, Bataille and the other Surrealists would have seen some of these films. Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory* ed. & trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1977 [1949]).

Surrealism, the concept of “profane illumination” was put forward by Walter Benjamin to characterize a mechanism that lay at the center of their aesthetic. It was described by him as a creative overcoming of religious illumination, and “a materialistic, anthropological inspiration, in which hashish, opium, or whatever else can give an introduction.”¹⁰⁴ Interestingly, Miró’s paintings, which were included with those of Klee in the same issue of *Document*, were themselves constructed along this same demarcation of “profane illumination” and as Surrealist mockeries of earlier well-known works. For example, Miró’s *Intérieur hollandaise I* (Dutch interiors I) was based upon Martensz Sorgh’s the *Lute Player*.¹⁰⁵

When the Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936, Miró, who was from Catalonia, was deeply affected.¹⁰⁶ During the course of a visit to Paris with his family in November of that year, he suddenly found himself in involuntary exile.¹⁰⁷ As it had also done with Klee, the political violence of the 1930s had now cut Miró off from his homeland. The following year, he completed a painting entitled *The Reaper (Catalan Peasant in Revolt)* for the Spanish Republic at the Paris World’s Fair.¹⁰⁸ However, it is another image produced by Miró at this time which I wish to examine in light of the theme of the juxtaposition of abstraction and dismemberment.



Figure 20. Joan Miró, *Head of a Man*, 1937

In 1937, Miró created a small painting entitled *Head of a Man* (**Figure 21**). This image presents us with a side profile of a person which has been traced by a thin white line against a jet-black background. As in Klee’s *Woman for Gods* or *Outbreak of Fear III*, the lone figure is pressed tightly up against the edges of the frame, in this case, on three sides. What appear to be the man’s ear, nose, and chin are all swollen, distorted, and misdirected. The long, extended white lashes which surround his eye socket create the concurrent impression that a many-legged insect is crawling across the man’s murky skin and face. In fact, the man’s open, crooked mouth, exposing numerous sharp but

¹⁰⁴ Walter Benjamin, “Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia,” *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings Vol. 2 part 1, 1927-1930*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 209.

¹⁰⁵ *Document* (Paris) 5 (October, 1929), 265-275. Also included by Bataille were Miró’s paintings, *Portrait de la Madame Mills* (Portrait of Mrs. Mills), after Constable; *Portrait d’une dame en 1820* (Portrait of a Woman in 1820), also after Constable; and *Portrait de la Reine Louise de Prusse* (Portrait of Queen Louise of Prussia).

¹⁰⁶ Joan Miró: *A Retrospective*, 10, 41.

¹⁰⁷ Carolyn Lanchner, *Joan Miró*, 68.

¹⁰⁸ *The Reaper* or *El segador* was subsequently lost shortly following the closing of the exhibition. Lanchner, *Joan Miró*, 69.

disorganized teeth, and the figure's chopped elephant-like trunk, move the painting towards the realm of the grotesque. There is a misanthropic aspect to Miró's *Head of a Man* which is entirely absent in Klee's work. Despite having been crushed to death, the figure in *Woman for Gods* still possesses a sense of dignity and a lived identity. Interestingly, in Miró's image, the length of the figure's neck, which is, tellingly, too thin and too long, suggests that the head itself might actually be mounted on a pole or spike. However, conceptually, the fact that Miró has to use the title of the work to underline the fact that this *is* a man underscores that some kind of catastrophe has befallen the figure. While Klee employed the motif of the fragmented puppet to signify the dismemberment caused by war, Miró here also uses the depiction of crushed and distorted physical features. Miró's man exudes the sense of having been flattened by some great force that awkwardly froze his expression at the very instant he looked up towards the sky. Now stuck within a tight coffin-like black frame, the figure testifies to the great crime that killed him.

Yet, as with the aforementioned Klee paintings, including *Protected Children*, it should be understood that Miró's *Head of a Man* is simultaneously engaged in a host of formal and technical investigations particular to the era of late 1930s Modernist abstraction. The flatness of the black monochrome image which, I might add, was not drawn from life, is one notable example. The simplicity of Miró's use of line to evoke the weightless forms of the head and the insect eye is another. There is also the reworking of the painted surface of the man's face using artistic "mistakes," including drips, splatters, and random colours to add texture and complexity. Furthermore, Miró's sophisticated deployment of the frame, encroaching in close proximity to the outline of the image to create additional tension, is yet another manifestation. And finally, there is the artist's use of ambiguity, which is embodied within the very selection of the subject matter: Is this image actually what it says it is – the head of a man? All these questions and techniques were under investigation within the realm of abstract Modernist painting at that time.

In this sense, the gap between Miró's "man" and his depicted "remains" is very much in line with Klee's own strategy of overlapping Modernist abstraction with the physical dismemberment of war. In Miró's case, was the abstract figuration of the man in his painting an artistic gesture? Or was it (also) the work of bombers? Again, though it was not the only slaughter of civilians that took place during the Spanish Civil War, the attack on Guernica did occur in 1937, the year *Head of a Man* was painted. Thus, in the late 1930s, when faced with situations of social conflict, both Klee and Miró elected to employ similar

strategies with respect to overlaying Modernist abstraction with the violence of war. In this sense, and to varying degrees, both artists recognized that within their historical time frame, issues of artistic practice, aesthetics, and notions of the beautiful had themselves become problematized by history. It is as though, through these gestures, both artists attempted to profanely awaken and vanquish the artistic suppositions sleeping in the forms of abstraction itself.

Finally, returning to the image with which we first began this paper, it is important to point out that Klee's *Protected Children* (**Figure 1**) was made in 1939, a period of time not only after the realization of his broken puppet series, but also the creation of the paintings *A Woman for Gods* and *Outbreak of Fear III*. In this sense, the picture of a small group of children grappling against a lakeside gust of wind represents an image that was produced at a somewhat different historical moment. By the spring of 1939, the bombing and destruction that had characterized the intense fighting of the Spanish Civil War was now coming to an end with the defeat of the Spanish Republic and the victory of Franco and Fascism. The Republican city of Barcelona would fall to the Nationalists on January 26th, Madrid would be taken two months later. Thus, the (dialogical) link that, in Miro's painting of a bombing victim in *Head of a Man*, allowed for the direct profane interpenetration of Modernist abstraction and the violence and mutilation of war had now shifted. However, it had not entirely disappeared. Klee's slightly later work is still infused with the drama of the historical crisis in which he was immersed. In this respect, I would argue that *Protected Children* must be understood as an image created in closer proximity to the approach of the Second World War and the growing realization by many, including Klee, that with the victory of Fascism in Spain a far greater human catastrophe was now looming on the horizon. In fact, 1939 would be the very year in which the Nazis invaded Poland, ultimately setting off a new global conflict. Examined from this historical perspective, *Protected Children* possesses a visionary dimension. The image represents a moment in which, looking out towards a small group of children struggling to protect themselves against a storm, Klee is struck by the scene's latent (historical) allegorical significance. Could it be that the black (burning?) umbrella being held by the worried purple-eyed boy, will afford him shelter from the conflict about to engulf his world? And in the midst of this approaching catastrophe, what is likely to be the fate of Klee's child "angel" who cannot even hold her turquoise umbrella aloft? Certainly some, such as the central figure of Klee's painting whose haunting black eyes stare directly towards us only a moment before she is to be (seemingly) "fish-hooked,"

will die. It is a grim future Klee foresees for these innocents and millions more like them throughout the world. The storm they are struggling against is the approaching global war. Unlike the broken puppet drawings in which Klee presents the results of conflict (with a caustic irony), here the artist depicts the impending weight of a war about to begin and its coming tidal wave of victims. Thus, within the name – *Protected Children* – there is also an element of irony, but here it is mixed with a deep sense of pathos. On a scale that was heretofore unimaginable, the children playing before him today were going to be killed, and there was nothing the artist could do other than to deploy his powers to record his vision in the hope that at some distant point in the future, an image put down by those who now lie beyond the realm of hope, would eventually be deciphered.

This paper was originally developed in an art history graduate seminar conducted by Professor Sergio Guilbus at the University of British Columbia in 2013 on *Modern Art on the Eve of the Second World War*. I want to thank Professor Guilbus for his considerable assistance in helping to formulate my approach to this topic.

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Puppets and Paradox: On the Bauhaus Stage with Oskar Schlemmer

There is a persistent misunderstanding of the stage work of Oskar Schlemmer that fails to grasp the full complexity of the way he emulates the puppet form. While chairing the theater workshop at the Bauhaus in 1926, Schlemmer began making a set of eleven performances, which he entitled *Bauhaus Dances*. Understanding these dances proves challenging because of Schlemmer's seemingly contradictory allegiances. On the one hand, he had a deep admiration for puppets and his diary entries attest to a desire for his dancers to appear puppet-like. Nevertheless, Schlemmer's art and writings reveal a humanistic preoccupation with live performance, as well as his formal and philosophical understanding of what he called "man in space". His personal writings reveal that he understood "the living" as sacred and took a mildly critical view of mechanization. Dance and performance critics have emphasized the object-like quality of his performers, with some going so far as lambasting Schlemmer for dehumanizing directorial choices. However, this perspective neither recognizes the humanity that remains central to Schlemmer's work, nor intuits metaphorical readings of his imitations of puppets.

Heinrich von Kleist's essay "On the Marionette Theater" proves to be an insightful lens through which to analyze the *Bauhaus Dances*, particularly *Flats Dance* and *Game of Bricks* (both reconstructed by Margarete Hastings with the assistance of original dancers in 1968). After reading "On the Marionette Theater," Schlemmer actually contemplated replacing his performers with puppets. Although he did not abandon the use of live dancers, his choreography explicitly references the movement and aesthetics

of puppetry. Analyzing the choreography and costuming of *Flats Dance* and *Game of Bricks* through Kleist reveals Schlemmer's emulation of puppets as a Romantic pursuit, namely a desire to re-harmonize the world, and expresses the paradoxical conception that puppets symbolize ultimate freedom.

There is a traceable line of criticism that focuses on the object quality of Schlemmer's performers. A dance critic in 1926 finds fault with his minimalist choreography and impersonal costumes:

Costumes, stage and human bodies become apparatus, machinery, clockwork toys. This new ballet has absolutely nothing in common with artistic dance expression, not even with marionette or doll plays... Those who prefer the whistle of the underground, the lifeless mechanical shriek of engines and motors, to the sincere expression of human feelings, will no doubt become enthusiastic about this new 'Ballet.' (Anderson 73)

Along the same lines, in the book *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*, RoseLee Golderberg asserts, "Costumes of the Stage workshop were designed to metamorphose the human figure into a mechanical object... In this way Schlemmer emphasized the 'object' quality of the dancers and each performance achieved his desired 'mechanical effect,' not unlike puppets" (Goldberg 107). Neither the 1920s critic, Schlemmer's contemporary, nor Goldberg, our contemporary, consider the *Bauhaus Dances* from Schlemmer's perspective, which requires unpacking the complexities of his dances by looking back to what he was reading and thinking.

In 1926, Schlemmer mused in his diary:

One might ask if the dancers should not be real puppets, moved by strings, or better still, self-propelled by means of a precision mechanism, almost free of human intervention, at most directed by remote control? *Yes!* It is only a question of time and money. The effect such an experiment would produce can be found described in Heinrich Kleist's essay on the marionette. (*Letters and Diaries* 197)

Without deserting live performance, Schlemmer developed costume and choreographic vocabularies that elicit the notion of puppetry. More specifically, *Flats Dance* and *Game of Bricks* make tangible Kleist's theories of grace as described in "On the Marionette Theater."

Puppet show logic drives *Flats Dance*. The work begins with three panels – a red rectangle, a yellow rectangle, and a blue square – moving smoothly around the stage. The shapes move as a set, rearranging efficiently to create different compositions and remaining frontal so as not to reveal the secret of their mobility. The three parts come to rest at center stage and a masked head peeks over the top of the middle panel. Hands and feet appear on either side, creating the illusion of a giant figure that then disappears after a playful dance of its limbs. At this point, the panels split and flit around the stage as separate parts, then join together for a second time. Now, two identical figures step out from either side and startle each other. As they turn away, the panels separate and a third dancer emerges, sneaking up on the other two. One of the original pair turns and mimes shooting the third performer, who shouts and falls backwards as the stage goes black.

A close reading of the choreography of *Flats Dance* exposes Schlemmer's exploration of Kleist's theories of inanimate grace. In "On the Marionette Theater," Herr C explains the mechanics of puppet grace, "Each movement... will have a center of gravity... The limbs that function as nothing more than a pendulum, swinging freely, will follow the movement in their own fashion without anyone's aid..." (Kleist). One can observe this fixed center of gravity as the giant in *Flats Dance* rocks from one foot to the other, while keeping its torso upright and allowing its appendages to follow like pendulums. The dancers pivot on a single point to change direction, as if being spun from their heads like a top. Additionally, the performers' hands and feet remain flexed and tense, as if made out of plastic material.

The only genuinely human element that rings out in *Flats Dance* is the chilling yell of the shot performer as the stage fades to black. This ending seems sinister. There is a stark contrast between the composed giant and the three paranoid performers at the end of the piece. In other words, the playful stage realm deteriorates as the show continues. Such a sequence could be interpreted as purveying a cynicism regarding progress, to which Schlemmer admits in the context of explaining another dance, *The Figural Cabinet I* (1923), as "half shooting gallery – half *metaphysicum abstractum*" (Goldberg 99). Goldberg agrees that it is an attempt "to parody the 'faith in progress'" (99).

If there is an underlying suspicion in *Flats Dance*, *Game of Bricks* is more explicit. It is a parody of building and architects, and directly references Bauhaus aesthetics with blocks of primary colors. Three figures pull the blocks from a heap and set to work constructing separate towers. The mood is competitive

and the pace quick. Once finished, they transform their towers into furniture pieces and lounge proudly. One performer suggests working together and combining their blocks. The other two reject this camaraderie, but eventually acquiesce and achieve a tower that reaches above their heads. The builders bow self-contentedly, lower themselves to the floor, and scoot away from their creation. Though they essentially succeed in their building feat, one begins to question whether the dancers' accomplishment warrants celebration. The tower trumps humanity and a structure that is supposedly utopian has no inhabitants.

Schlemmer's activities and comments about the Bauhaus support this analysis of *Game of Bricks*. Schlemmer often sounds somewhat resentful regarding the role of the Bauhaus Stage within the school at large. He called the theater workshop "the 'flower in the buttonhole' of the Bauhaus" (Trimingham 23) and, more bitterly, "the fifth wheel on the Bauhaus wagon" (23). Less passively, Schlemmer organized a slogan party, which was meant to be satirical and yet reflected his very real concern that the theories of the Bauhaus would become holy writ and subsequently suppress creativity and experimentation. *Game of Bricks* is perhaps a theatrical exploration of these thoughts.

The choreography of *Game of Bricks* relates very closely to that of *Flats Dance* in that it appropriates for live performance puppet qualities articulated in "On the Marionette Theater," especially in terms of pendular limbs and an implied external operator. Herr C touts the advantage of puppets over living dancers:

[A] dancer who wished to improve himself could learn a great deal from observing [marionettes]... [A puppet] would never be affected. For affectation appears... when the soul locates itself at any point other than the center of gravity of movement. Because the puppeteer absolutely controls the wire or string, he controls and has power over no other point than this one: therefore all the other limbs are what they should be –dead, pure pendulums following the simple law of gravity. (Kleist)

A significant characteristic of the choreography of *Game of Bricks* is its emphasis on isolation, or segmenting the body so its parts move separately. Legs extend freely and without a reaction from the body, and torsos bend at the hips before arms swing to follow. The dancers maintain a forward-leaning stance. Their upper bodies move before their legs, as if they are being pulled

by a string extending out from the tops of their heads. They perform the same pivot as in *Flats Dance*: with their feet glued together and toes on the floor, they swivel their heels to change direction, like figurines in a shooting gallery. The dancers march rhythmically and determinedly, but without covering much ground. They frequently walk in small circles around themselves. This type of gait, especially its failure to achieve distance, evokes the motions of wind-up toy soldiers. Schlemmer's dancers mechanically transport blocks and build without any pause to imply consideration or reflection. Moreover, the performers freeze eerily during pauses in the movement sequences, as if waiting to be activated by some external force. Such choreography lends an inanimate quality to the performers.

Schlemmer's costuming for *Game of Bricks* and *Flats Dance* enhances the impersonal quality of his choreography. In Kleist's essay, Herr C remarks on puppets' lack of affectation as "an outstanding quality we look for in vain in most dancers" (Kleist). Marionettes possess an unthinking poise and abandon that live dancers can only hope to imitate because they are burdened by self-consciousness. Human movement is affected because we are conscious of ourselves and our environment. We are aware of being watched. In Schlemmer's *Bauhaus Dances*, it is difficult to associate self-consciousness with the performers partly because of their concealing masks and clothing. They remain faceless, hidden behind masks with only two small eyeholes. Their unitards are padded and their necks disappear between artificially broad shoulders. Hands are gloved and feet covered. No trace of skin is visible. Schlemmer rejects realism in favor of geometric abstraction. His costumes blot out all indicators of individuality so that it is not the performers who make lasting impressions, but images and actions. Additionally, the panels in *Flats Dance* and grid on the floor during *Game of Bricks* create smaller stages within the actual stage, much like a puppet theater.

Given the extent of Schlemmer's interest in puppets, one might question his continued dedication to live performance, which, again, is something Schlemmer wondered about himself: "One might ask if the dancers should not be real puppets..." (*Letters and Diaries* 197). But this sentiment is not necessarily expected from an artist whose career shows a commitment to live performance. Looking at Schlemmer's plans for Bauhaus courses, his diary entries on mechanization, and the conclusion of Kleist's "On the Marionette Theater" helps us to realize that Schlemmer's desire to make his dancers puppet-like and his parallel humanist concerns, like his distrust of progress through mechanization, are not irreconcilable, but deeply linked.

Schlemmer's endeavors as a painter, sculptor, and choreographer communicate his fascination with portraying "man in space." The human figure, more specifically the body in motion, stands in the foreground of Schlemmer's intellectual beliefs. The courses he designed for the Bauhaus epitomize his metaphysical emphasis on "man." Schlemmer outlined anthropocentric coursework to augment his students' aesthetic education. He explains, "In the future I shall have the theme 'man' as the subject of my teaching... Theory of descent... sexual biology, ethics and so on" (*Man* 20). In her book *The Theater of the Bauhaus: The Modern and Postmodern Stage of Oskar Schlemmer*, Melissa Trimmingham extrapolates:

[Research] into the body in motion takes his thinking to a new level... Movement admits change, flux and impermanence... Schlemmer's interest lay not so much in speed and motion as manifested in the modern world of cars and trains and clock time... as in the deeper ramifications of motion, flux, change and impermanence within philosophy, metaphysics, and ethics. (Trimingham 76)

Schlemmer's interest in the speed of modern times does not necessarily translate to a desire for mechanization. Perhaps performing movement appealed to Schlemmer because it reflects the realities of flux and relativity. And it is important to note that the live human body remains present amid this interest in motion.

In the same vein, Schlemmer's recorded thoughts on mechanization, which are often ambiguous, though not overtly antagonistic, seem to nostalgically reserve "the living" as sacred. He writes, "The sign of our times is... mechanization, the inexorable process which takes possession of every sphere in life and art. Everything which can be mechanized is being mechanized. Result: *we recognize what is unmechanizable* [my emphasis]" (*Letters and Diaries* 197). Schlemmer's disparaging tone characterizes mechanization as seeping into every realm and squelching life. His response to rapid industrialization is reactionary, as he places value on the "unmechanizable." This sentiment speaks to a humanist bent and contextualizes Schlemmer's aesthetic focus on the human figure and attraction to working with live bodies on the stage.

In his book, *The World of Modern Dance*, Jack Anderson is more nuanced than the aforementioned critics, astutely acknowledging the constant presence of

humanity in Schlemmer's work. He responds to other critics' cries of dehumanization:

Such attacks horrified Schlemmer. Far from advocating dehumanization in life or art, he thought his productions exemplified humanity's laudable desire for 'precision, instead of vagueness,' a desire to 'escape from chaos and a longing for form.' Moreover, he viewed his *peculiarly* costumed dancers as timeless figures capable of symbolizing joyous and tragic aspects of the human condition. (Anderson 73-74)

Identically clad, unspecific dancers were his attempt to portray universal figures. A desire for "precision" and an "escape from chaos" partially explain the appeal of puppets. However, Kleist's "On the Marionette Theater" implies a more convincing explanation.

Kleist's speaker recounts Herr C's conclusion that a marionette's charm and physical finesse are contingent on its lack of consciousness and knowledge of self. Herr C extends this theory to humankind, musing on live dancers' clumsiness:

Such mistakes... are inevitable because we have eaten of the tree of knowledge. And paradise is bolted, with the cherub behind us; we must journey around the world and determine if perhaps at the end somewhere there is an opening to be discovered again... That is the last chapter of the history of the world. (Kleist)

Kleist's essay suggests that falling from grace in a metaphoric sense manifests itself in literal falling, or a lack of physical grace. Consciousness creates tumult where there was once innate harmony. Following this logic, Schlemmer's choreographic and costumed imitations of puppets are not actually at odds with his humanistic beliefs, but profoundly related to a desire for a return to harmony, innocence, and the ecstatic freedom such an absence of awareness affords.

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The Living Doll: A Look at Hans Bellmer's Later Work from the "Puppet's" Standpoint

On the cover of *Le Surréalisme, même*, issue 4, there is a form that can only be identified as a body by the stretched skin revealing the bumps of a curved spine and a deep cut that splits a woman in two; two buttocks that are trussed up, like the wings or legs of a bird before cooking, tightly bound together. Though unidentifiable from this angle, this captured form is that of Unica Zürn and is part of a series of photographs taken by Hans Bellmer, titled *Unica Litogée* (Unica Bound, 1958). The presence of a real human body both physically pictured or merely depicted in a drawing or painting, is central to Hans Bellmer's work; forming the foundation of his entire oeuvre. Following his infamous *Die Puppe* (The Doll) series (1934), female bodies in Bellmer's work have been interpreted as puppets, objects, rather than subjects, capable of subjective views of their own. *Unica Bound*, a sequence of photographs taken in collaboration with Unica Zürn, introduces the body in flesh, prompting a new approach to seemingly familiar images.

This paper offers a different perspective on Hans Bellmer's well-known *The Doll* series by focusing on his later work, after 1953, the year he met his long-term partner and fellow German artist Unica Zürn. Zürn had an intimate bond with Bellmer from 1953 until her death in 1970. Over the course of their relationship, they had a fruitful artistic exchange, living together and contributing to each other's works. Taking the photographic series *Unica Bound* as focus of discussion, the images are considered within Bellmer's wider oeuvre with reference to texts written by Zürn on Bellmer, his artistic work, and their relationship. Rethinking the status of women surrealists merely

as passive bystanders to their male counterparts, the paper suggests that the role of women has been a defining factor in much of Bellmer's work, one that goes beyond the misogynistic overtones of *The Doll* series. Bellmer and Zürn's collaboration prompts an interesting discussion as Zürn is someone who has been specifically referred to as the living doll in Bellmer's life and work.

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER:

In 1953, Bellmer travelled to Berlin for the first time since the war and was randomly introduced to Unica Zürn at a gallery meeting. By 1949, Zürn had become a known writer within the Surrealist collective Die Badewanna and often frequented in various events within the post-war Berlin art scene. Zürn describes this meeting in her personal diary as a chance encounter, one that would change their lives forever: "It began in Berlin, a chance meeting at a gallery opening. Mutual recognition from the first moment... and suddenly meeting again on a platform at the Jungfernheide subway station."¹

Close friends and biographers of Bellmer have described the two artists' relationship as a unique bond. Constantin Jelenski, for example, describes the importance of Zürn to Bellmer: "with her beautiful pale, expressionless face and long black dress she formed an essential part of Bellmer's life. It was an important relationship for both of them... their relationship was one of mutual admiration."² Peter Webb describes them as "a strange couple: both always wore black, and Unica usually walked rather stiffly, a few paces behind Bellmer, his head balding but with long hair at the back... one could picture them as Dr. Coppelius and his doll Olympia."³ We notice that in both accounts, Zürn is described in a particular way; the emphasis on an expressionless face and "stiff" movements culminates with Webb's reference to Zürn as Olympia in Jacques Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* (and the original source, Hoffmann's "Der Sandmann", 1816). While Webb is referring to the influence Max Reinhardt's re-staging of the opera in 1933 had on Bellmer's first construction of *The Doll*, it coincidentally defines Zürn's role in Bellmer's life and work as *The Doll*.

Various representations of the couple seemingly support this type of reading, such as a posed photograph taken in 1955; Zürn, in the foreground cradles

¹ Unica Zürn, Crecy in *Gesamtausgabe Band 5* (Berlin: Brinkmann und Bose Verlag, 1998).

² Constantin Jelenski, "Introduction" in Alex Grall, *Hans Bellmer* (Academy Editions, 1972).

³ Peter Webb and Robert Short, *Hans Bellmer* (New York: Quartet Books, 1985), 218.

the doll in front of her torso, gazing down at it, while Bellmer, in the back, looks sternly at the viewer as he takes a drag from his cigarette. The black and white photograph, which is clearly a staged performance, presents a curious relationship between Zürn and *The Doll*, leaving Bellmer in the background. In *Subject to Delusions*, Caroline Rupprecht notes that the face of the doll resembles Zürn's: "Bellmer's photograph evokes an uncanny resemblance between the woman and the doll, but it is Bellmer who appears as the 'puppeteer' in back."⁴ The identification of Bellmer as "puppeteer" renders the two female figures in the fore as puppets, thus likening Zürn to the inanimate form constructed and controlled by Bellmer.

Hans Bellmer had been initiated into the Surrealist circle with his first series of works entitled *The Doll* in 1934, and had become a familiar name to many leading artists in Paris. It was Bellmer's second series, *Les Jeux de la Poupée* (The Games of the Dolls, 1938-1949) that he showed to Zürn in their first arranged meeting in Berlin. Zürn was a German writer and graphic artist, whose work is based on her experiences of being incarcerated in mental institutions. An objectified account of a mentally ill woman is consistently brought forward in her writing and in her visual drawings, which all express the interior world of women undergoing such experiences. In her journal entry, "Meeting with Hans Bellmer", Zürn describes her encounter with this "famous" book of photographs as an "immense surprise" and states her admiration of Bellmer's ability to discuss eroticism in the manner of a "logical philosophy". Another book Bellmer was working on at the time was *Petite Anatomie de l'inconscient physique ou anatomie de l'image* (Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious or the Anatomy of the Image, 1957), a self-theorization of *The Doll* series, where the anagram is used to define the perfect form for a linguistic representation of the body.

Bellmer was introduced to anagrammatic composition by Bulgarian writer and poet Nora Mitrani during their short relationship between the years 1946 and 1949. *Rose au Coeur violet* [Rose with a violet heart], written together with Mitrani and Joë Bousquet, is the prototype anagram for Bellmer, which shaped his seminal text *The Anatomy of the Image*. In a letter to Bernard Noël, Bellmer writes: "One or the other of us proposed making anagrams with the line from [Gérard] Nerval ["Rose with a violet heart"]. Yes, it was like a fever. Anagrams work better with two people, a man and a woman. A sort

⁴ Caroline Rupprecht, *Subject to Delusions: Narcissism, Modernism, Gender* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 154.

of competition or rather a liveliness which one encourages in the other.”⁵ In another letter Bellmer writes of Mitrani: “From time to time, a girl friend from Paris has shared my isolation in the country, as friend, comrade, collaborator, and as it seemed to me, sister of the impossible.”⁶ Bellmer’s preference for or dependence on a woman collaborator played a significant role in his creative process, especially in the last two decades of his artistic career.

In his monograph, Peter Webb points out that Bellmer often recreated his previous works in new projects. Bellmer played around with the image of his doll sculpture in a series of drawings that depicted variations of female parts in the form of an octopus. These drawings which date from as early as 1942 are titled “cephalopod”: the body is formed of only head and legs with orifices that are charged with erotic implications. In another series of photographs from 1946, Bellmer experiments with real female bodies.⁷ In that year, Bellmer was commissioned to illustrate George Bataille’s erotic novel *Story of the Eye*, and his illustrations are directly modelled after these photographs. While these particular illustrations were not used for the eventual publication, they demonstrate the relationship between different media in his work.⁸ The photographs picture close-ups of female genitals and a nude female riding a bicycle as described in Bataille’s explicit story. These offer a very graphic representation of what Herbert Lust has called a “vagina mug shot,” which carried the title “The Lover Portrait” for a while, and is now generally referred to as “I am God” (in reference to Bataille’s other novel illustrated by Bellmer, *Madame Edwarda*, 1941). These images are read in reference to Bellmer’s cephalopod studies due to the eight visible fingers that recall an octopus. The few scholars and collectors who have commented on this photograph, which is hand-colored like the second doll series, maintain that Nora Mitrani is indisputably the model, while others consider it to be part of a series of bicycle photographs, where the model has been identified by the barely visible face as a prostitute.⁹ While Mitrani may not be the model depicted

⁵ Hans Bellmer quoted in Bernard Noel, “La langue du corps” in *Obliques*: special issue dedicated to Bellmer (Editions Rougerie, 1975), 37. Also referenced by Renee Riese Hubert, *Surrealism and the Book* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988), 200.

⁶ Hubert, *Surrealism and the Book*, 204.

⁷ Two of these photographs have been published in Herbert Lust, *Octopus Time* (Wittenborn Art Books, 2008).

⁸ Bellmer’s use of different media in his practice, whereby a photographic composition could be modelled after a sculpture or similarly drawings that are modelled after photographs, represents his creative outlook, which followed a strict and systematic mode of expression that, according to him, “all obey the same generative law.” Hans Bellmer quoted in Hubert, *Surrealism and the Book*, 153.

⁹ A group of friends including Herta Hausmann participated in the completion of the series. See photographs of Bellmer, Zürn and Hausmann in Unica Zürn, *Gesamtausgabe* (Berlin: Brinkmann and Bose, 1998).

in these photographs, Bellmer had made several drawings of Mitrani during their short relationship, and she in turn had a lasting effect on *The Doll* by introducing Bellmer to anagrammatic composition.¹⁰

Bellmer showed a preference for working with female collaborators in constructing poems, and his partners and models played a significant role in his production of visual work. From 1946 onwards, Bellmer almost always used real life women models for his projects. These models provided more than anatomical accuracy; they were a source of inspiration to Bellmer, one on which he remained dependent for the rest of his career. In 1964, Bellmer wrote in a letter to Dr Gaston Ferdière: "Without the presence of a woman... my will to work, to draw is nonexistent."¹¹ The importance of a woman's presence for his creativity reached a high upon meeting Zürn in 1953.

In 1957, Bellmer photographed Unica Zürn as an extension of his long exploration of permutations of the body by way of multiplying, dividing and rearranging its parts. His anagrammatic approach to the body-text relationship is embedded in his early drawings, and in *The Doll* series. However, Bellmer's photographs of Zürn go beyond his well-known images of dolls. In these photographs, a human body is fragmented and multiplied. One of the photographs from the Unica Bound series was cropped into a collage for the Surrealist journal *Le Surréalisme, même*. In this image, a singular continuous string wrapped around the flesh creates multiple cuts around the body, pluralizing its form. The collage is branded with his initials "H.B." like a tag, and the cover is inscribed "*A tenir au frais...*" (Keep in a cool place) as a crude joke on the flesh as meat. In the collage, the tonal contrast of the photograph is exaggerated, darkening the background to partially lose the domestic setting of the photographs. The flesh now becomes an abstract form resting on a fabric that has preserved its brown chequered design despite the mutilated pigmentation. The brush strokes, visible around the form, give the flesh a plastic quality, a superficial reference to violence as in Bellmer's first doll series *Die Puppe* in 1933, and the second series *La Poupée* in 1935. However, the photographs present the body in its actual flesh, in no way concealing its animate form.

¹⁰ Nora Mitrani's work as a poet and her insights on Bellmer as artist have been greatly overlooked and though the subject extends beyond the intentions of this article, her oeuvre and relationship with Bellmer calls for further research.

¹¹ Hans Bellmer and Unica Zürn, *Lettres au docteur Ferdière* (Paris: Ypsilon Editeur, 1994).

READING UNICA BOUND IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DOLL SERIES

There are two interrelated analyses of Bellmer's work that have been read into these photographs. The first, which derives from Hal Foster's extensive writing on Bellmer and is echoed in the writing of Alyce Mahon, is his disarticulation of the female body as an escape mechanism from and a violent protest against the National Socialist reign in Germany during the 1930s.¹² This interpretation comes from a short prose poem that was written in 1936 but was not published until 1958, in the same issue of *Le Surréalisme, même* as the *Keep in a cool place* collage. In this poem called *Der Vater* (The Father), Bellmer spoke of his desire to escape the patriarchal order in the games that he played with his brother, where they would pretend to be little girls. Thus, the female body became for Bellmer a shelter or refuge to which he could escape. In his poem, Bellmer writes: "we were probably adorable, rather more like little girls than the formidable boys we would have preferred to be. But, it seemed to be more fitting than anything else to lure the brute out of his place in order to confuse him."¹³ Thus, the exchange of gender consequently and intentionally affects the power relations between father and sons. Therese Lichtenstein has argued that, as a mark of his rejection of the strict masculine models sanctioned in Germany in the twentieth-century, Bellmer escaped into the female form to avoid submitting to these ideals. Here, passivity is aligned with dominant views of femininity, which Bellmer adopts as a chosen action; rejecting the domination by the "Father" as male, and receiving it as female, consistent with a Freudian system of domination.

This notion is developed further in the second analysis of Bellmer's work in terms of his desire towards the "hermaphrodite" body. Bellmer's wish to become and experience woman is expressed in *The Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious* (published in 1957 but actually developed during the late 1930s), where he writes of a compelling desire to merge with the opposite gender in order to possess her:

At the moment we were one flesh, our love was woman...
I possessed her within myself before actually possessing her...

¹² See Hal Foster, "Armor Fou" in *October*, Vol. 56, High/Low: Art and Mass Culture (Spring 1991) and *Compulsive Beauty* (The MIT Press, 1993): 101-122. Alyce Mahon, "Hans Bellmer's Libidinal Politics" in *Surrealism, Politics and Culture* (eds.) Raymond Spiteri and Donald LaCoss (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003) and Rosalind E. Krauss, "Claude Cahun and Dora Maar: By Way of Introduction" in *Bachelors* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2000), 24-27.

¹³ Therese Lichtenstein, "The Hermaphrodite in Me" in *Behind Closed Doors: The Art of Hans Bellmer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) 48.

It seemed that I wanted to be reborn from her as the woman I invisibly was.¹⁴

Bellmer's definition of his body as the feminine body speaks of his desire to become it, in order to possess it. In "The Anatomy of Love," Bellmer clearly states that "a multiplication must first be experienced within the physical organism of the person looking, and that she belongs to his memory... the man must have lived the image of the woman physically before he can actually visualise her."¹⁵ Thus, Bellmer's compelling desire to merge with the opposite gender and to experience what the woman experiences in her body is a desire to possess the woman, a way of conquering by means of division.

Looking at *The Father* and *The Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious*, it becomes clear that the gender-political aspects of Bellmer's work are restricted to seeing the female body as an extension of male desire, within a language that speaks "for" woman (or for man in the guise of woman), as opposed to one that speaks "as" woman. The partnership of Bellmer and Zürn is read by Susan Rubin Suleiman as "a double-voiced discourse, containing both a 'dominant' and a 'muted' story."¹⁶ The critical reception of Bellmer's work is projected onto these photographs, and one could therefore claim that not only is Zürn's body bound by Bellmer, but the reading of her participation has been bound to the discourse of Bellmer. In order to really see "Unica Bound" we must first untie the restrictions of such readings.

UNICA UN-BOUND

There are ten known photographs that exist in print from the series. The use of string to bind the body is a prominent characteristic, and has led to the insurmountable identification of the series with previous drawings, particularly *Bound Victim* as illustrated in "The Anatomy of Love." The drawing is described as an image of a man tightly binding his victim's "thighs, shoulders, and breasts with crisscrossed wire haphazardly causing bulges of flesh."¹⁷ Whilst the act described by Bellmer is performed by a man (in the case of *Bound Victim*, drawn by himself), there is no sign of Bellmer in the photographs. Instead, some of the photographs show Zürn holding the ends

¹⁴ Hans Bellmer, "Anatomy of Love" in *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious: or The Anatomy of the Image* (Waterbury Center, Vt.: Dominion Press, 2004), 27.

¹⁵ Bellmer, "The Anatomy of Love," 23-4.

¹⁶ Suleiman, *Subversive Intent*, 27.

¹⁷ Bellmer, "The Anatomy of Love," 32.

of the string that is wrapped around her body. Five of the ten photographs abstract the body into “bulges of flesh,” where the head and limbs are cropped by the frame of the picture. In the five remaining images Zürn is partially dressed with her arms actively engaging with the act of being tied up. The latter also reveal more personal characteristics of Zürn such as her pressed lips and hair falling over her shoulder. The inclusion of Zürn’s arms portrays a distinction from the inanimate images of *The Doll*, and even the cropped photographs of her body. Here, Zürn is actively participating in a masochistic act which contests the identification of her role as a passive bystander to the objectification of her body.

In “The Violence of Merging: Unica Zürn’s Writing (on) the Body,” Caroline Rupprecht considers *Unica Bound* as Bellmer’s misogynistic attempt to turn the body into a “landscape.” In her discussion, Rupprecht turns to Suleiman who asks: “How are we to distinguish Bellmer’s sadism from Nazi sadism, both of them directed against the ‘feminine’?”¹⁸ Thus, Rupprecht responds by referring to the photographs as evidence of Bellmer’s misogyny where Zürn’s body is “reduced to a mountain of flesh.” Zürn’s body is read as one of Bellmer’s dolls, as “embodiments of female passivity and victimisation”. The series of black and white photographs capture Zürn’s body in compositions that undergo a sort of mitosis, repeatedly dividing and multiplying, however the collage further crops and manipulates one of these images resulting in an abstracted form that appears plasticized due to the application of paint. The difference between the two is clearly marked by the titles for each, *Unica Bound* and “*Keep in a cool place*,” that also highlights the distinction between animate and inanimate. The presence of Zürn’s body demonstrates a physical participation and a willed involvement in the photographic series. Therefore, it could be said that Rupprecht’s reading disregards the symbolic value of different materials and mediums used in the series and the participation of Zürn in its production. In her claims of Bellmer “reducing Zürn into a mountain of flesh,” Rupprecht reduces Zürn’s body in these photographs to the inanimate figure in the doll series.¹⁹ In another account, Alyce Mahon interprets Zürn’s participation in the *Bound* series as her exploration

¹⁸ Rupprecht, “The Violence of Merging: Unica Zürn’s writing (on) the body” in *Subject to Delusions*, 136.

¹⁹ This interpretation finds further support in Rosalind Krauss’s reading of Bellmer’s *Doll* series: “They are not real bodies and they are not even whole bodies.” Though Susan Rubin Suleiman considers this a failure to see the “aggressive sexual-visual politics” of the photographs, it nevertheless supports my distinction between *The Doll* photographs and the *Litogée* series, as well as my further distinction between the collage and photograph. Rosalind Krauss quoted in Susan Rubin Suleiman, “Dialogue and Double Allegiance: Some contemporary women artists and the historical avant-garde” in *Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism and Self-Representation* (ed) Whitney Chadwick (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), 136.

of the psychology of violence, similar to Bellmer's need to explore the psychology of fascism."²⁰ In "Hans Bellmer's Libidinal Politics" (2003), Mahon interprets Zürn's active participation in the series as her exploration of the psychology of violence and her own potential, as a German, to be "as terrible a murderer as the Nazis."²¹ Mahon's account, where the main discussion is centred around Bellmer's anagrammatic approach to the female form as a tool of political provocation and deconstruction, reduces Zürn's artistic and literary practice to an extension of Bellmer's work: "Zürn's writing style involved that cutting and *jouissance* typical of Bellmer, twisting the normal meaning of words, cutting up phrases, and using alliteration for dramatic, violent effect."²²

Mahon's reading is motivated by her goal of underlining the political implications of Bellmer's work. In her account, Bellmer's consistent use ("consumption") of libidinal excess and libidinal politics is seen as the intertextual nature of his art. Thus, *The Doll* series, *The Anatomy*, his anagrammatic collaboration with Mitrani and the *Bound* series are all read under the premises of a violence against the body politic of Nazi Germany, placing the anagrammatic relationship between text and the corporeal as the crux of her argument. Considering the act of inscribing the body and deconstructing the text as an interdependent process, Mahon merges the connotations of Bellmer's work with Zürn's, drawing cursory associations: "Bellmer took a series of photographs of Zürn which mimicked this image of cruelty... Bellmer binds Zürn in a manner similar to the 'victim' in *La Petit Anatomie*... The topography of these photographs is similar to those he made of his dolls: bleak close-ups of the objectified female, macabre in their intimacy and shocking in their domesticity."²³ As stated, the presence of an actual body in the series complicates the relation of these photographs to previous images of *The Doll*. While Bellmer's fantasy of fragmenting the female body is realized in *Unica Bound*, and is a major advance in his sadistic representation of the body, what is important to point out in this account is the active collaborator in the photographs.

²⁰ Alyce Mahon, "Hans Bellmer's Libidinal Politics" in *Surrealism, Politics and Culture* (eds.) Raymond Spiteri and Donald LaCoss (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 265.

²¹ Mahon, "Hans Bellmer's Libidinal Politics," 265.

²² Mahon, "Hans Bellmer's Libidinal Politics," 262.

²³ Mahon, "Hans Bellmer's Libidinal Politics," 263.

FROM THE “PUPPET’S” STAND-POINT

While in her 2003 essay, Mahon references Zürn as a supplement to appreciating the intertextual nature of Bellmer’s art, her discussion of Zürn’s role in these photographs is more inclusive in an earlier account, “Twist the Body Red: The Art and Lifewriting of Unica Zürn” (1999). Here, Zürn’s performance in *Unica Bound* is regarded as an aggressive division of the “self”, though again in relation to rejecting the Aryan ideal. The photographs are described as “allegorical portraits of a female muse by a male Surrealist.” Building on this, Mahon identifies some aspects of looking at Zürn’s collaboration and paves some way into contemplating what her practice provokes. She questions: “What was Zürn’s role in these constructions of the female (her own) body?”²⁴ pointing to two particular photographs in the series where Zürn is “pulling on her own binds,” and “squeezing her own stomach.” While these observations lead Mahon to clearly state Zürn’s role as collaborator, the response she offers is through Bellmer: “Bellmer’s writings also give us an insight into his photographs of Zürn.”²⁵ These two photographs, one of which does not involve binding or string at all, are in fact the most interesting of the series, and prompt a closer consideration of Zürn’s artistic production. This particular image which Mahon describes as Zürn “squeezing her own stomach” clearly portrays a different effect from the bound body: that the assault against the body is self inflicted. The photographs of Zürn firmly pressing her stomach specifically recall sections of the book *The House of Illnesses* written by Zürn in the same year the *Unica Bound* photographs were taken.

By 1949, Zürn was a published writer, and from then onward she continued to write assiduously, producing nearly one hundred known anagrams, over twenty-five manuscripts, and several personal journals. In her short career, Zürn built a truly rich oeuvre in which fragmentation plays a consistent role in textual and visual representation.²⁶ The three key texts, *The House of Illnesses*, *The Man of Jasmine* and *Dark Spring*, all written sporadically in the period from 1958 to 1969, demonstrate Zürn’s fusion of text and image, where visual components are incorporated into the body of the text, and the symbolic language of images goes beyond corporeal fragmentation.

²⁴ Alyce Mahon, “Twist the Body Red: The Art and Lifewriting of Unica Zürn” in *n.paradoxa*, Vol. 3 (1999), 61.

²⁵ Mahon, “Twist the Body Red,” 61.

²⁶ See my monograph *Unica Zürn: Art, Writing and Post-War Surrealism* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2015).

It is important to distinguish Bellmer's attitude towards the female body from Zürn's fragmentary representation of it. As mentioned, this early reading is informed by Foster's analyses which build on the political implications of Bellmer's practice.²⁷ Mahon explicitly aligns her argument with Foster and Therese Lichtenstein and distances herself from the more psychoanalytically oriented reading of Sue Taylor. Bellmer's attitude towards the female body, as stated by Foster in "Armor Fou" (1991) indicates a hint of "proto-fascist subjectivity [that is used] as an armor [sic], for self-definition, for self-defence."²⁸ Foster's reading points to the photographic medium of *Die Puppe* and the mechanical quality of the dolls that represent a connection to the "(proto)fascist metallization of the human body," which is brought to a sadistic realm by the fragmentation of that body. While this refers specifically to Bellmer's first doll series, where a mechanical body made of papier-mâché and other inanimate materials was disarticulated, the use of an actual female body in the *Bound* series complicates its reading. The act of sadism is realized in the visual effect of cutting into the flesh, and in turn received masochistically by an active participant. By transferring the implications of *The Doll* on to these photographs, we not only forget that the images are of an actual body, but the act of sadism is received by a participating subject. Thus, revealing the confusion of Bellmer's desire with that of Zürn leads us to see that their relationship and their artistic collaborations are informed by a sadistic and masochistic binary that invites us to consider the subject's desire as collaborator.

In her analysis of Bellmer's anagrammatic investigation of the body, Angela Moorjani rightfully emphasizes that "the repeated disarticulations and permutations [the dolls] imply are for him primarily a matter of (ecstatic) *male* eroticism."²⁹ The psychological processes that are bound up with language in early experiences of fragmentation are produced within an order of male dominance. Zürn, who was a practitioner of fragmentation, was well aware of this. In a letter titled "Letter to Polly" (1964), Zürn is cited by Moorjani

²⁷ In "Armor Fou," Hal Foster examines issues of aura and anxiety in relation to the uncanny, and analyses Bellmer's work as a reaction to the psychic apprehensions of fascism and Nazi commands. Foster accounts that "Bellmer responds directly to Nazism... he rejected engineering, the profession dictated by his father, for publicity, which he also rejected when the Nazis came to power lest he abet them in anyway. It was then that he turned to his *poupées* [dolls] - as an attack on fascist father and the state alike." Foster, "Armor Fou," 87. Although there is a strong case for Bellmer's denunciations of Nazism, Foster points out that "Bellmer contests fascism even as he participates partly in it." Foster, "Armor Fou," 93.

²⁸ Foster, "Armor Fou," 84.

²⁹ Angela Moorjani, "Anagrams of Self: Hans Bellmer" in *The Aesthetics of Loss and Lessness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 1992), 69. Also see Zürn, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 6 (2001).

acknowledging Bellmer's *The Anatomy* as part of this order of male dominance: "Zürn was right when she maintained that *The Anatomy* is a book for men."³⁰ Zürn's observational writings on Bellmer and his work reflect this awareness and provide an insight into his artistic processes.

Written in 1970, "Meeting with Hans Bellmer" is a retrospective documentation that reads almost like a short biography of Bellmer through the eyes of Zürn. In her description of Bellmer making portraits of others, we find the portrait that Zürn paints of Bellmer as a hard-working Surrealist artist whose work left everyone in awe. It was posthumously published in French in a collection of diary-entries under the title *Vacances à Maison Blanche* [Holidays at the White House] in reference to her internment at the psychiatric hospital of the same name. Using the third person pronoun "she", a typical form of expression in Zürn's writing, she narrates her encounter with Bellmer with details of everyday life. The first few pages read like the diary of a school girl in love with a mysterious and fascinating figure who she keeps running into by chance. The story begins in Berlin, where the two meet in a gallery opening and she becomes enchanted by Bellmer's face. She snoops around town to find out more about him, asking the art-dealer Rudolf Springer, "What kind of man is this Bellmer?" and receiving the answer: "A tremendous artist." This hagiographic tone dominates the rest of the text which goes on to talk about Bellmer's projects and success. Zürn makes a particular effort to describe Bellmer's work methods, for example, while preparing to make portraits. She notes that he requires a high degree of concentration, intuition and also a certain coldness. She writes: "His love for truth, and his keen sense of a superior reality stood against lies that he never committed."³¹

Her short text is partly reminiscent of Nora Mitrani's unfinished biography of Bellmer, *Rose with a Violet Heart* (1949), which is highly poetic in language and philosophical in content. Zürn's account, by contrast, includes a representation of their everyday life, the simple, mundane likes and dislikes of the artist, things like their first meal in Paris and what they ordered in a Chinese restaurant. She writes about their collaboration, how they contributed to each other's work; how Bellmer encouraged her to draw, and how he taught her to make anagrams, but also how she helped with the practical aspects of his published books, pasting photographs manually, as well as their collaboration on anagrammatic poetry.

³⁰ Hans Bellmer, "Letter to Polly, 1 November 1964," *Obliques*, cited in Moorjani, "Anagrams of Self: Hans Bellmer," 69.

³¹ Peter Webb, *Hans Bellmer*, 46.

“Remarks of an Observer” is a second, much shorter text about Bellmer, presumably written around the same year as the biographical one, though it is a much more poetic interpretation of Bellmer’s oeuvre. Zürn particularly comments on the “cephalopods,” describing the creature as “The Woman - head and legs without arms... she has seen this monster at St. Anne: a mental illness in an erotic fit.” Zürn’s interpretation of the cephalopod as a representation of the image of the hysteric reveals a distanced observation in reference to her recorded experience of being in a mental asylum. She declares her proximity to *The Doll*, where this figure is not an image she identifies with but one whose appearance she describes as one of the “subjects” in her narratives. Zürn’s declaration of detachment from the cephalopod figure suggests that her participation in *Unica Bound* was an active collaboration. She merges Bellmer’s representation of her with the representation of one of the hysterical subjects in her own work. However, the difference between the two artists’ representation of the female body can be stated in terms of Bellmer representing the female body as an extension of male desire, as opposed to Zürn’s fragmentary representation that escapes the collective (male) imagination of the Surrealists.

In the same text, Zürn continues: “the legs and the arched back and the terrible language; the scenes of madness, of torture and ecstasy: the drawings by him with the feeling of a musician, the neatness of an engineer, the cruelty of a surgeon.”³² Her language is ambiguous, almost praise; reflecting on a life-time spent making such drawings, she suggests that Bellmer may be an “erotomaniac” himself. As a result of his obsessive representation of the hysterical woman, Bellmer is said to embody the madness he sought to represent in art; thus accomplishing the wish he made nearly twenty years earlier in *The Anatomy*. As a final note that reads almost like a warning, she writes: “A man or woman who is sketched by him, or photographed by his pencil, takes part with Bellmer in an abomination of him/herself.” For Zürn, the act of sitting or posing for Bellmer is an active, rather than a passive collaboration, where both partake in violence against the body. Thus, her active collaboration in this masochistic game is acknowledged and described by her as deliberate.

While Bellmer may be playing the role of “Dr. Coppelius” with his “Olympia” (the doll, the hysteric), this does not imply that Zürn is also one of Bellmer’s dolls; instead, it urges us to question the role of Zürn and her own artistic

³² Unica Zürn, ‘Remarques d’un observateur (sure Hans Bellmer) [sic]’ in *Obliques* no. 14-15 (1977), 257.

subjectivity; which in this case may be read as part of a “muted story”³³ – one from the perspective of the silent observer of the “hysterical” woman, curiously gazing at her “subject”. Returning to the photograph where Zürn firmly holds *The Doll* in her arms, as if it is the subject-matter of her own narrative; the doll and the image of the “hysteric” is therefore a mutual interest of each artist that is explored from two different ends.

In our quest to discover an alternative approach to reading Bellmer’s representation of the female body, Zürn’s participatory role as well as her reflective writing sheds light on Bellmer’s use of multiplication that takes form in a singular sadistic manner which aims to shatter the Aryan ideal with the effects of sexuality. By contrast, Zürn’s use of the technique of multiplication takes form in a polymorphous state, where a plural identification with a variety of selves develops into a literary style. Bellmer’s use of fragmentation is solely corporeal, while Zürn’s masochistic participation in submission and possession occurs both physically and mentally. Zürn’s awareness of the male-dominated order of Bellmer’s vision assumes her writings operate outside of it, by utilising what may appear as similar methods with strategic differences. The gender-political aspect of Bellmer’s work is restricted to seeing the female body as an extension of male desire, within a language that speaks “for” woman, as opposed to one that speaks “as” woman. Zürn gives voice to *The Doll*, in her physically embodiment, whilst retaining her distance by means of her observational narratives.

³³ Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 27.

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A Different Kind of Intimacy: Greer Lankton and the New York Dolls

***Personality Crisis*¹: through dolls, a new perspective on feminism**

The role and place of women have very often been associated with that of *keeper of the house*, both physically and metaphorically: their aim is to create a safe haven for the family. For instance, in the very first pages of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, Dean Moriarty gets up after a night of drunkenness with his friends and suddenly knows exactly what should be done to improve their situation: Marylou should prepare breakfast and clean up the floor! In another classic of the '60s quest for freedom, Arthur Penn *Alice's Restaurant*,² Alice is clearly the one in charge of providing home and nourishment (physically and emotionally) for the wandering artists who need to come home at some point. Even if Alice does make the desperate move of visiting Arlo Guthrie in NYC, she comes back just in time to prepare Thanksgiving dinner! And avant-garde art has not escaped these stereotypes either. Japanese artist Mieko Shiomi, for instance, tells of how, when she moved into the loft in New York City that George Macuinas was transforming into an artist-run community, all meals were first prepared equally by the participants (and thought of as a proper form of art under the name *Fluxus dinner communes*), but things then fell back into place very quickly: "even if the first few days men did the shopping and women the cooking, soon after women had to take over everything."³

¹ Song by *The New York Dolls* (1973).

² *Alice's Restaurant*, a movie by Arthur Penn (1969), taken from the song bearing the same title by Arlo Guthrie, tells of a series of characters setting up a community in an old church, having fun while looking (in part) to escape the Draft during the Vietnam war.

³ Midori Yoshimoto, *Into Performance: Japanese Woman Artists in New York* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

These three stories tell of three stereotypes: women are there to protect, take care and nourish, and it is this precisely this traditional division of gender that the New York downtown scene of the 70s (Punk musicians, artists, movie directors...) challenged the most, in part through the music of the cult band The New York Dolls, who were instrumental in putting forward the figure of grown-up men dressing-up as dolls, in part through the extravagant puppets and dolls of artist Greer Lankton.

Life-size, beautifully sewn, fully dressed, wearing heavy make-up and fancy hairstyles, Greer Lankton's dolls are all at once glamorous and grotesque, and their highly ambiguous personalities echo the works of Hans Bellmer ("Hans Bellmer is my favorite artist"⁴), the ravaged faces of Egon Schiele, the Dada dolls of Emmy Hennings during her Cabaret Voltaire period and even the outrageous look of rock musicians Alice Cooper and Kiss in the mid-'70s. Building magnificent and baroque rooms for her dolls to haunt with her own hands, Greer Lankton reinvents the concept of the children's playground-turned-insane-asylum, and gives a new dimension to the traditionally maternal womb by distorting three elements considered archetypal female attributes: dolls, seen as typical role-play objects for little girls; rooms, usually understood as emblematic of female territory (while men are free to roam outside these boundaries), and food, an element whose refusal by Greer Lankton would eventually cause her own death in 1996 at the early age of 38. Furthermore, in creating her monstrous Dolls and putting them in equally monstrous homes, Greer Lankton is challenging two forms of domination, as Rubin Suleiman shows in her essay *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde*⁵: first, men's domination of the avant-garde, and more disturbingly, the dominant feminist approach of the '60s based on the humanist values put forward by Judy Chicago's most famous piece, *The Dinner Party* (1974-1979) or by the intensively political work of Jenny Holzer and Barbara Krueger. In Greer Lankton's nightmares, there seems to be no place for any direct social or political statement concerning feminist issues, only room for individual fears and doubts. Through the presence of these unbelievable bodies made of wool, felt and straw (but strangely resembling real humans) Greer Lankton brings into light elements which the previous humanist generation of feminists had refused to deal with: monstrosity, mental illness and physical suffering, addiction, fetishism... Through her work, Greer Lankton creates

⁴ Claudia Giannini, *Mattress Factory. Installations: 1990-1999* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), p. 95.

⁵ Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

a world of beautiful and bizarre freaks, which presage many concerns of the art world in the '90s, such as can be found in, for example, the pictures of Cindy Sherman: the emphasis on the body, distorted sexuality, fashion and, in her figures' resemblance to puppets, performance.

In this sense, Greer Lankton's world appears post-human as well as post-feminist. By distorting the female body to the point of creating grotesque and frightening figures, Greer Lankton successfully reinvents a playground where adults can now surround themselves with dolls, as they did in childhood, but where these dolls turn into anything but reassuring figures. In this sick and twisted environment, Greer Lankton develops a feminist approach which forces men to look at the violence and oppression which *they themselves* have hidden in these dolls and given to little girls to play with, and by doing so, to bear witness to the monstrosity which they contain, physically, emotionally and poetically. While Hans Bellmer's famous Doll (*La Poupée*) is clearly a male sexual fantasy, Greer Lankton's are embodiments of what we refuse to cope with: bulimia, anorexia, drug and pill addiction, deformity. Sowing together totally unhealthy and self-destructive bodies, Greer Lankton gives shape to her own darkest fears, as her friend Nan Goldin puts it in her obituary for Lankton: *A Rebel Whose Dolls Embodied Her Demons* (1996). In her extravagant and twisted installations, Greer Lankton invents vast chambers decorated in a baroque style which can be seen at the same time as protective wombs where many precious childhood memories, jewels and sophisticated garments find refuge from a hostile outside world, and as horrible dens populated by the nightmares of a dying city (New York in the late '70s) containing blood stains, drugs, AIDS victims...

In this sense, the world of Greer Lankton clearly falls under what Nick Zedd and Richard Kern have defined through their pictures and films as "the aesthetic of transgression"⁶: an esthetic based on the apology of physical disorders and mental aberrations. Through her clever use of highly ambiguous figures (her dolls appearing both as incredibly realistic and totally monstrous *at the same time*) Greer Lankton seeks to transcend three major taboos: first, the gender taboo; second, that of innocent childhood memories (understood as an unbroken string of happy events, of which dolls are an important part); and, third, the idea of a room as a protected safe haven, while in fact cruelty and madness are everywhere... Turning these representations upside down by bringing disorder to the heart of the nursery means opening the doors

⁶ Jack Sargent, *Deathtripping. The Extreme Underground* (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2008).

of the play room and letting the dolls live an adult life in a world filled with pain and disorder. Greer Lankton clearly operates in the fragmented, contradictory and violent world of the Lower East Side Punk scene, a form of monstrous feminism best described by artist, musician, and Lankton friend Lydia Lunch in the poem accompanying *The Scene Of The Crime Could Be Anywhere At Any Time*, in which she appears facing the audience with a gun in her hand screaming: "I admit it / I get drunk on disasters, calamities, casualties / I am high on bombs bursting in air / Rifles ricocheting off the bellies of pregnant women / The bombing of abortion clinics."⁷

Who are the Mystery Girls?⁸: redefining gender boundaries

In understanding this radical redefinition of womanhood, it is important to notice that Greg Robert Lankton (born 1958) only became Greer Lankton in 1979 after undergoing a sex change operation, paid for, in part, by members of her father's church, a religious upbringing which played an influential role in Greer Lankton's art. At 21, Greg Robert Lankton therefore decides to get rid of his biological status and to create for himself a body which is, in many ways, as ambiguous as the ones pieced together for the Dolls. These figures made of bits and pieces therefore become for Greg/Greer Lankton the very embodiment of these physical and emotional transformations: being neither male nor female, belonging both to the world of childhood and that of adulthood.

The best incarnation of this splendid ambiguity in New York City in the mid '70s was no doubt the cult band The New York Dolls: a totally original as well as improbable blend of glamour, avant-garde theater and street gang flamboyance, putting on stage for the first time rock stars acting as little girls, a mixture of *Coney Island* and Antonin Artaud. A sexually ambiguous aesthetic defined by Loraine O'Grady: "Theatrically the Dolls may be a glitter Cabaret but musically they are punk rock. David Johansen is an absolutely fantastic combination of Mick Jagger and Marlene Dietrich."⁹ From this complex background, The New York Dolls put together in 1972 a form of cross-gender performance never before witnessed to such an extent in popular music, an aesthetic which transforms every musician in the band into an improbable

⁷ Lydia Lunch, *The Gun Was Loaded* (London: Black Dog, 2008) p.159.

⁸ Song by the *New York Dolls* (1974).

⁹ Nick Kent, *All Dressed Up, Got No Place to Go: The Troubled Splendour of the New York Dolls in: The Dark Stuff: Selected Writings on Rock Music: 1972-1995* (Cambridge, MA: The Perseus Books Group, 1995), p. 166.

mixture of street hoodlum, punk, drag queen and classical ballerina, as described by the British critic Nick Kent in *All dressed Up. Got No Place to Go* (1973): "David Johansen in his flapper chic, perched in front of the microphone like a little girl trying to look coquettish in her mother's high-heels. Arthur Kane, dressed in a little tutu and little else, is playing crappy one-note bass and looking like the world's foremost ongoing accident."¹⁰

In a mere couple of years of activity before falling apart (1972-1975), The New York Dolls, through their music, stage presence and art work, brought to the New York art world a form of flamboyant sexual ambiguity (which goes way beyond the traditional *Camp* or *Queer* esthetic) which was to influence many artists in the years to come (Klaus Nomi, Robert Mapplethorpe, Patti Smith...) beginning with Greer Lankton's own New York dolls, in which every participant looks like "the world's foremost ongoing accident," dressed part in rags, part in drag.

***Lonely Planet Boy*¹¹: inventing a new body to inhabit**

With her many installations (over three hundred in all) Greer Lankton takes this whole esthetic of transgression one step further, and uses the shape of dolls as the perfect vehicle to embody a world in perpetual transition: from male to female as herself, but also from childhood to adulthood, from wool and felt to near-life creatures. In this sense, playing with dolls allows Greer Lankton to create a world clearly *in-between* worlds, as she puts in an interview: "*Because I do feel different. I don't feel completely like a girl, I don't feel completely like a boy.*"¹² In this sense, Greer Lankton decides to work with puppets as her artistic material precisely because this material is an imperfect one, giving birth to figures made-up of bits and pieces which never fully cohere; no matter how realistic the portraits, the dolls will always be nothing more than an *Imitation of Life*, to reference Douglas Sirk's 1959 classic melodrama. In their accepted imperfection, the hundreds of dolls which over the years ended up occupying every available space in her surroundings function as mirrors of Greer Lankton's own body: no matter how radical a transformation they undergo, some of the elements they are made up of will constantly reveal themselves.

¹⁰ Kent, *All Dressed Up*, p. 168.

¹¹ Song by the New York Dolls (1973).

¹² Interview of Greer Lankton published at: <http://www.theblitzkids.com>. Last accessed July 26, 2015.

Greer Lankton will exorcize the haunting presence of many identities inside one body by launching a vast portrait gallery of sexual-misfits like herself: Taxi, one of Andy Warhol's models for the series *Ladies and Gentlemen* (1975), Candy Darling...When asked whether some of her dolls were themselves transvestites, or even transsexuals like herself, Greer Lankton therefore answers: "Some of them are. Some of them I change from a boy to a girl, or a girl to a boy. Sometimes I just get sick of them being the same sex. They look better when I mess them around."¹³ One of her early pieces, very simply entitled *Freddie + Ellen* (1982) is a clear illustration of this process of *messing around* with gender identities. Here, we are faced with a difficult identity to recognize (between male and female, between reality and fiction) since these figures look at the same time totally realistic, shaped from real life characters (a German cabaret performer of the 30s and a close friend from NYC) and totally monstrous: huge lips, out-of-proportion body-parts, wild make-up, and strange hair. Very often Greer Lankton's dolls stretch their sexual attributes to their breaking point, turning their bodies into male and female monsters, which makes it difficult for the viewer to fully recognize *who's who* from a gender point of view: the extreme thinness of many dolls, the sunken cheeks and stick-like arms and legs makes it difficult to even be sure of the female (or male) signs we believe are there, somewhere. A difficult identification reinforced by the fact that Greer Lankton plays brilliantly with the texture of the doll's skin, making it impossible to attach what we see to any given sex, sustaining even further a sense of physical disorientation.

The incredible and magnificent rooms Greer Lankton builds as temples for her beloved misfits therefore host the most extreme phenomenon: bodies are always too thin or too fat, too big or too small, too weak or too strong. A case in point is *Blue Babe* (1986) which is nothing more than a huge piece of flesh held together by a tiny bathing suit. Those invited to inhabit Greer Lankton's *Rococo grottos* (meant to recall those built for extravagant palaces in the eighteenth century) are always outcasts, drug addicts, suffering from anorexia or bulimia, always on the fringe of what is considered acceptable. And although these outcasts are very often closely modeled on real characters taken from Greer Lankton's immediate surroundings (artists, art collectors, friends and lovers, neighbors...), they necessarily suffer from some sort of excess: too rich or too poor, too sick or too healthy, and always wearing too much make-up.

¹³ Interview of Greer Lankton published at: <http://www.theblitzkids.com>. Last accessed July 26, 2015.

***Private World*¹⁴: Imitation of Life**

Greer Lankton's dolls are therefore presented in a no-man's land between the authentic and the artificial, between the very realistic context of their surroundings and the monstrosity of their being, heightening their theatricality, is the theater being exactly where Greer Lankton herself spent most of her life. A very successful model (even with the popular press) she had led an unstable back and forth existence between the glamour of up-town Manhattan and the desperation of the Lower East Side. A close friend of Nan Goldin, she appears frequently in the latter's magnificent portrayal of New York's downtown life, *The Ballad of The Sexual Dependency*¹⁵: putting on some make-up, sometimes simply lying in bed, getting skinnier and skinnier as severe anorexia gets the best of her. In these pictures both Greer Lankton and Nan Goldin share the same fascination for suffering bodies, dark colors and social misfits, strange characters coming from the many dark corners of New York's *Wild Side*, as Lou Reed sings it.

While the character of *La Poupée* imagined by Hans Bellmer spends most of her time totally naked (or rather, not-dressed) and seems to be floating in some empty space out of this world, Greer Lankton's dolls clearly take possession of extensively and expensively furnished rooms. Acting both as architect, interior decorator and stage director, Greer Lankton fills every available space with luxurious arm chairs, fancy beds, beautiful lamps, rugs and expensive flower compositions. Again, as with the bodies themselves, every shape and color, every prop and detail is used to render a perfect, but utterly impossible, *Imitation of Life*.

In many ways, Greer Lankton's entire world is built around this principle of accumulation: every available corner must be filled with numerous pictures, family photographs, drawings, religious objects, draperies, mirrors and canvases; an entire mythology she has been carrying around since childhood, transforming her own apartment into an incredible and decadent *Merzbau*. In doing so, Greer Lankton mixes authentic objects imported from the real world with her own fantasies, like a surrealist collage reminding us of the highly ambiguous use of everyday objects by Meret Oppenheim, making it even more difficult to tell where to draw the line between fiction and reality. Witnessing this incredible entanglement, it is striking to see to what extent these two worlds (the world of Greer Lankton herself and the one she has

¹⁴ Song by the New York Dolls (1973).

¹⁵ Nan Goldin, *La ballade de la dépendance sexuelle* (New York: Aperture Foundation, 1986).

created for her dolls) actually coincide; very often, as she poses side by side with her dolls, it is difficult to tell them apart, since both seem to share the same ambiguous body, and seem to be suffering from the same addictions: alcohol, pills and drugs... which would eventually kill Greer Lankton from an overdose in 1996. In these strange and over populated surroundings both characters seem equally alive, or equally dead.

The dolls therefore appear as the perfect extension of Greer Lankton's own broken, fragile and in some ways artificial body, suffering from the same sicknesses and weaknesses, putting on the same dresses and living in the same quarters. Whether this implies, in the end, that the Dolls have taken over an adult house, or that Greer Lankton has found refuge in a doll house of her own, is left open to debate.

The various rooms Greer Lankton patiently designs (always collecting things from second-hand shops, garage sales or flea markets) are therefore both strange and beautiful places, somewhere between a night asylum for the many outcasts of the city and the protective (but for Greer Lankton physically impossible) maternal womb. These rooms also act as the perfect stage for her rich personal mythology, a wild circus filled with freaks and misfits and where every object tells a precise story, a sort of imprisonment which will eventually bring her to seek and occupy what will literally be her last room, the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh.

Chatterbox¹⁶: *It's all about ME, not you*

In this sense, Greer Lankton's very last work: *It's all about ME, not you* (1996), is clearly an autobiographical journey from her childhood to her death bed, making it obvious to everyone-out-there *who* exactly is at the center of the performance. Having finally found an opportunity to leave her cramped apartment, Greer Lankton is allowed for the first time to occupy a vast space and given ample resources to work with, made possible by the *Mattress Factory* in Pittsburgh, a location specializing in installation and with a long history of outcast artists such as Yayoi Kusama, Michael Tracy, and Buzz Spector.

With *It's all about ME, not you*, Greer Lankton becomes both artist, set decorator, actor and director of her own story, but precisely at a moment where she herself is rapidly disappearing from the stage, ruined by anorexia, drug abuse, alcoholism and addiction to too many pills.

¹⁶ Song by The New York Dolls (1974).

The visitor to these very personal nightmares first enters the installation through a gate which opens onto a narrow corridor, and suddenly finds himself in a large room which is an exact copy of Greer Lankton's apartment in Chicago, where she lived and worked for the last year of her life. The walls are painted deep greens and blues, various pictures of herself hang on the walls, and the ceiling is covered with fake stars cut out of gold paper (like the ones found at a children's birthday party), the ground is covered by a deep green synthetic lawn, and the whole room is lit by rich and warm colors. The room is inhabited by the dolls and figures Greer Lankton made during the course of her lifetime.

In this sense, *It's all about ME, not you* is above all a composite world, part retrospective of the artist's career and part mausoleum to the great number of her comrades who have died over the years, many of them from AIDS. This refuge for broken bodies and broken identities is turned by Greer Lankton into "a mausoleum for the lovers" to quote the French writer d'Hervé Guibert¹⁷ (whose writings also concentrate on the remembrance of dead friends) a mausoleum haunted by, among other of her personal heroes, the ghost of Andy Warhol's close friend Candy Darling, transsexual artist and performer, whose Puppet is at the center of the stage.

It's all about ME, not you also plays the part of Greer Lankton's funeral chamber, since she appears on her own death bed: a skinny body with a disproportioned head, covered by a striking red blanket and surrounded by dozens of pill bottles, all in their undamaged original packaging and beautiful funeral flowers.

In many ways *It's all about ME, not you* resembles a sick and twisted version of a nineteenth century boudoir: it shares the same taste in outrageous colors and shades (deep blue, purple, light pink, rose...), the same passion for accumulating weird and fancy objects, the same kind of display on the walls. But, instead of being a glorification of the traditional bourgeois values usually attached to the notion of *home* (shelter and security, peace of mind...). *It's all about ME, not you* is built around modern terrors and nightmares and brings together (for the very last time) all the pieces of a complex life-puzzle which goes back to Greer Lankton's childhood as she describes herself in the *Artist's Statement*, written for the *Mattress Factory* just before her death: "Artificial Nature / Dolls engrossed in glamour and self-abuse / The Vanity / The Junkie /

¹⁷ Hervé Guibert, *Le mausolée des amants* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001).

The Anorexic / The chronic masturbator / It's all about ME Not you / Trapped in my own world in my / head in my tiny / apartment."¹⁸

The most striking figure here is the doll, both familiar and intriguing, called *Raggedy Ann*. A classic of children's literature in the United States,¹⁹ a great number of them are just abandoned here in what could be a funeral pile, no more than left-overs from bygone days. These monstrous *Raggedy Anns* embody the fears which (if we look closely enough) are hidden in children's toys, especially when abandoned by those who got tired of playing with them as grown-ups. Many dolls now collected, protected and saved by Greer Lankton herself, appear to us in all their different shapes and sizes: obese, skinny, tiny or huge, lying down or standing up, resting on a stool or standing on top of a cupboard.

Throughout the room are also scattered some very personal and emotional shrines to Greer Lankton's personal pantheon of heroes: Candy Darling, Nan Goldin, Patti Smith, but also Jesus and the Virgin Mary, as well as many objects going back to her religious up-bringing, such as crucifixes, medallions, rosaries...making *It's all about ME, not you* look like a secret and mysterious attic (or basement) where precious family heirlooms, photo albums and souvenirs are being collected, protected and worshiped.

Sadly, *It's all about ME, not you* is a beautiful re-enactment of a highly personal story just a few months before this story actually ended for good. Precisely through the use of such extremely fragile material as cloth, wool, cardboard, wood and paper we are made aware that this totally narcissistic world is born out of the extreme fragility of Greer Lankton's own world, the fragility of being a transsexual person in a non-welcoming world, the fragility of her own status as an artist operating on the fringes of the New York art world,²⁰ due in part to the very nature of her grotesque representations. But above all a fragility due to her own body and soul as displayed in the right hand corner of the room, right above Greer Lankton's own dead body, many intriguing body parts appear, just waiting to be assembled again: torsos, pieces of tattooed skins on the walls, like the physical clues of a broken identity, impossible to bring together again.

¹⁸ Giannini, *Mattress Factory*, p. 94

¹⁹ Raggedy Ann: a character created by American writer Johnny Gruelle in a series of books he wrote and illustrated for young children. Raggedy Ann is a rag doll with red yarn for hair and has a triangle nose. The character was created in 1915 as a doll, and was introduced to the reading public in the 1918 book *Raggedy Ann Stories*.

²⁰ Although her work was shown by the ground breaking gallery Civilian Warfare, in the mid '80s, and again (in 1995) at the Biennial Exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Venice Biennale.

Inaugurated a few weeks before her untimely death of an overdose in 1996 *It's all about ME, not you* is therefore conceived as a magnificent embodiment of all the souvenirs and contradictions which have made up this composite figure known to us as *Greer Lankton*, always on the brink of many identities, always on the verge of disappearing, as she puts it: "I've been in therapy since 18 months old, started drugs at 12, was diagnosed as schizophrenic at 19, started hormones the week after I quit Thorazine, got my dick inverted at 21, kicked Heroin 6 years ago. Have been Anorexic since 19 and plan to continue, and you know what I say, Fuck Recovery, Fuck psychiatry, fuck it all because I'm over it."²¹

This ambiguity, is mirrored by the artistic status of the work itself, appearing as both sculpture, installation, performance, bringing together elements of high and low culture. In this sense, *It's all about ME, not you* (like all of Greer Lankton's work) fundamentally deals with transgression: between genders, between real life figures and fake material, between realism and the grotesque, ultimately between life and death itself. And it does feel ironic in many ways that the dolls and puppets she so patiently gave birth to would look so alive, while she herself is now gone.

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The Transnational Adventures of the Kewpie Doll: Mediating Nostalgia in Pre-War Japan

The ubiquitous Kewpie doll was born in 1909. Traveling quickly from its home in North America across Europe and East Asia, Kewpie dropped anchor in Japan. As Kewpie proliferated, it metamorphosed in scale, design, and purpose; produced in a wide range of media, the Kewpie doll was enlisted to serve multifarious goals: from indoctrinating motherhood, to domesticating warfare, to marketing mayonnaise. This essay examines the Kewpie doll as a case study in the unstable dynamics of transnational visual and material cultures. I argue that the Kewpie doll functioned as a ready-made yet malleable discursive site, one whose unmoored cultural associations were commandeered by commercial and political entities, and reinscribed with hegemonic ideology. In particular, I claim that the Kewpie doll trafficked in affect, enabling cultural nostalgia to be harnessed, re-coded, and leveraged for economic and political purposes.

At the outset I wish to foreground two interrelated points of emphasis, one being the particularity of dolls as forms of transnational media. In analyzing the superabundance and incessant flows of commodities that characterize globalized modernities, Arjun Appadurai describes a functional equivalence between things and bodies such that both coexist interdependently as part of what he terms a “living continuum.”¹ I suggest here that doll-media complicate this continuum, primarily through resemblance, which connects dolls fundamentally to the human sensorium, and thus to particular affect. This also renders doll-media especially susceptible to emotional investment, making them potent instruments of ideology.

¹ Arjun Appadurai, “The Thing Itself,” *Public Culture* 2006 Volume 18, Number 1: 15-22, 17.

Such aspects of doll-media inform my second point of emphasis, which is their relation to modern time and temporality. Scholarship in recent decades has addressed how modernities are critically configured by multiple temporal frameworks. These include, for instance, narrations of nationhood as much as routinizations of production or chronologizations of the body.² The interplay of these heterogeneous temporal modes produces tensions and ambiguities in the social perception of the present that is characteristic of nostalgia: a past-focused orientation that, in Svetlana Boym's formulation, is "coeval with modernity itself."³

I propose that doll-media imbricate vitally with modern time constructs. As global commodities, doll-media in themselves instantiate the tangle of temporal modes that authorize international commerce. But more importantly, they focus and concretize the ideologies that drive those temporal flows, especially those animating cultural memory – the primary fuel for nostalgia. Inasmuch as those temporal flows are socially engineered, a key question becomes how and to what ends doll-media are employed to adjudicate them. Through a case study of the Kewpie doll in Japan, this essay serves as an exploration of the socio-political power of dolls as transnational media.⁴

As the global phenomenon of the Kewpie doll presents an array of investigative itineraries, I limit my focus here to one segment of a complex – and ongoing – tour: Kewpie's origins and then residency in Japan up to World War II.

KEWPIE'S BIRTH AND EARLY YEARS

The Kewpie doll sprang forth in 1909 from the imagination of Rose O'Neill (1875-1944), an artist and illustrator from Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.⁵ Conceiving her creation as a fanciful version of Cupid – from which the name Kewpie derives – O'Neill described Kewpie as "a sort of little round fairy

² For critical perspectives on issues of time and temporality in relation to European modernity, see Peter Osborne, Peter Osborne, "Modernity is a Qualitative, Not a Chronological, Category: Notes on the Dialectics of Differential Historical Time," In *Postmodernism and the Re-reading of Modernity*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), and David Wilcox, *The Measures of Time Past: Pre-Newtonian Chronologies and the Rhetoric of Relative Time*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). For a critical study of time and temporality in relation to Japan, see Stefan Tanaka, *New Times In Modern Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

³ See Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002), xvi.

⁴ An excellent example of recent studies examining related issues of Japanese popular culture in an international context is the collection of essays *In Godzilla's Footsteps: Japanese Pop Culture Icons on the Global Stage*. Ed. William M. Tsutsui and Michiko Ito (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁵ For a biography of Rose O'Neill, see Shelley Armitage, *Kewpies and Beyond: The World of Rose O'Neill* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994).



Figure 1: Photograph of Child-sized Kewpie doll in living room with seated Japanese child. 1920's.

whose one idea is to teach people to be merry and kind at the same time.”⁶ As seen in a later iteration, (**Figure 1**) Kewpie’s anatomy indeed presents as an amorphous blend of child-like angel, supernatural sprite, and human child: having a pudgy and genderless, under-formed shape, with its cheerfully beneficent disposition iconized by a topknot, starfish hands, and sideglancing eyes.

In addition to its ambiguous ontology, Kewpie manifested in a panoply of personality-forms: identical yet separately embodied aspects of Kewpie’s protean personae – such as a carpenter, gardener, or cook – distinguishable only by identifying attribute.⁷ Debuting first as an illustration for *Ladies Home Journal*, these Kewpie-minions were ensconced in narratives of moralizing sentiment. The ensuing public enthusiasm has led one historian

to draw a parallel between Kewpie’s nostalgic brand of modernism and the changing values of the middle-class in early-twentieth-century America, writing how “the Kewpies expressed a modern version of folk, classic, and religious sources in the public arena...The secularization of this iconographic past provided a new imagery for readers concerned with the proper daily management of their lives yet desirous of amusing transportation to the realm of the fanciful, comic, or mysterious.”⁸

This observation is significant because it indicates several key facets of the Kewpie phenomenon that will have particular relevance in the context of Japan. Primary among these is Kewpie’s instrumentalization through popular media to promulgate socially sanctioned attitudes and behavior, the targeting of adults – especially women – at least as much as children being a critical component. But most remarkable in the present context is the pursuit of that project through the mechanism of nostalgia. By invoking a shared past – in this case cupids and fairies – re-imagined and re-formulated in the present, Kewpie from its very origins constituted plural senses of time. And as a commodity-object, Kewpie’s role as an emotion-imbued temporal nexus was only enlarged. The very first narrative illustrations of Kewpie seem to presage this superfluity, with their streams of identical Kewpies overflowing the page; Kewpie’s iterations of sameness adumbrate visually the material profusion and accelerated pace of its commercial replication across the globe.

⁶ “Rose O’Neill (1874–1944),” *The State Historical Society of Missouri*, accessed January 11, 2014. <http://shsmo.org/historicmissourians/name/o/oneill/>

⁷ *Kewpies and Beyond*, 120.

⁸ *Kewpies and Beyond*, 110.

Indeed, Kewpie's immense popularity sparked what has been described as a "Kewpie craze," leading to a merchandising frenzy as a host of Kewpie products flooded the global market. These included not only items designed for children, such as paper dolls, and collected Kewpie stories, but also a range of goods targeting adults – primarily women – such as Jell-o, Oxydol, greeting cards, and sheet music.⁹ But outpacing by far the commercial success of all other products was the Kewpie doll. In response to public demand for Kewpie, O'Neill designed a three-dimensional version of Kewpie in 1912 to be manufactured in Germany, then the largest producer of toys worldwide.¹⁰ Standing 6 inches in height, these Kewpie dolls were fabricated in bisque, and packaged in boxes decorated with Kewpie slogans.

Despite the great popular success of the dolls, Germany's involvement in World War I brought a virtual halt to their manufacture. It is testament to Kewpie's power to aggrandize cultural feeling to observe how the doll subsequently became embroiled in transnational politics; in the United States' ensuing boycott of German-made toys, Kewpie was a privileged object, singled out and made the figurehead of warring national ideologies. Many contemporaneous propaganda *cum* advertisements for toys encapsulate this tethering of Kewpie to nationalist agendas. For example, an advertisement issued by the Tip Top Toy Company is dominated by a photograph of Kewpie, posed frontally against a dark ground. Framed from above by Kewpie's name in large capital letters, and from below with the words "MADE IN AMERICA," the image boldly proclaims American ownership of Kewpie's ancestry, along with the commercial promise of its progeny.

In this way illustrating the power of doll-media to serve as conduits of collective emotion, Kewpie here performs as a material space of contestation, as it were, in the cultural imaginary of the American nation-state. And in terms of temporality, the advertisement's subheading veritably says it all: "The Greatest Doll of All Time." Moreover, as if Kewpie did not already elicit sufficiently emphatic allegiance, nationalistic fervor localized in the doll to such an extent that Kewpie spawned a sub-species of itself, so to speak. Launched by the newly formed Maiden Toy Company, the "Maiden America"

⁹ *Kewpies and Beyond*, 46. Though the topic lies beyond the scope of this paper, it bears mentioning that Rose O'Neill employed Kewpie to advocate for women's suffrage. A vigorous visual campaign – postcards and also such items as Kewpie-shaped soaps – depicted Kewpie in patriotic gear, thereby conjoining the gendered imperatives toward domestic and civic duties with consumption. See *Kewpies and Beyond*, and also Miriam Formanek-Brunell, *Made To Play House: Dolls and the Commercialization of American Girlhood, 1830-1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), especially pages 117-134, for a discussion of political and gender-related aspects of Kewpie in America.

¹⁰ *Kewpies and Beyond*, 160.

doll – the wordplay of the name capitalizing on the current social zeal to promote products made in America – was strongly influenced by Kewpie design, though more clearly articulated to resemble a human, female child. Swathed in the American flag, the Maiden America doll was marketed as “The National Doll,” a title endorsed by the promise of being “cuter than Kewpie.”¹¹

With German toy production disrupted by the War, France and Belgium, as well as the United States, tried to pick up the reins of the Kewpie doll’s manufacture. However, it was Japan who took the lead to quickly become the largest global supplier of Kewpie dolls. Due to Japan’s natural abundance of camphor – a key ingredient in celluloid – the dolls were produced primarily in the new, modern medium.¹² Exploiting that resource, Japan’s industrial zeal was such that, by 1928, it commanded over 70% of global production of all celluloid toys.¹³ In addition to its change in material fabrication from bisque to celluloid, the Kewpie doll also morphed in scale, from miniature to a child’s life-size. The doll also shifted in stylistics; because Japan never received an official license to manufacture the Kewpie doll, it sidestepped legal issues by making slight changes to the original design of the doll, such as modified head shape or facial features. Some of these altered versions were re-named as “Cupid” or “Angel” dolls, as well as what, in Euro-American contexts, were called carnival or boopie dolls, all of which were marketed alongside the eponymous Kewpie doll.¹⁴

Kewpie thus joined the legions of celluloid toys produced in Japan for foreign export, that is to say, the other commercialized embodiments of imagined cultural identities.¹⁵ But just as imaginaries are fluid, so too are their material incarnations changeable. And in both areas of this variability, Kewpie quickly outstripped its transnational doll-patriots. For the profusion of Kewpies did more than feed a craze for the doll in the United States; Kewpie took root in the cultural imaginary of modern Japan, where the doll mediated the plural discourses of that modernity, along with its many temporal frameworks.

¹¹ *Made to Play House*, 145.

¹² Julie Pelletier Robinson, *Celluloid Dolls, Toys and Playthings* (Paducah, KY: Collector Books, 2006), 136.

¹³ Jordan Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan* (MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 219.

¹⁴ *Celluloid Dolls*, 137, 139.

¹⁵ As Robinson remarks, “During the 1920s, a tide of inexpensive celluloid toys flooded into the United States from Japan.” See *Celluloid Dolls*, 139.

KEWPIE IN JAPAN I: MEDIATING MODERN “TRADITIONS”

Japan’s Greater Taishō (1912-1940)¹⁶ epoch evinces what Dipesh Chakrabarty has described as the “polysemy and...uneven temporalities” constitutive of the modern.¹⁷ During this period Japan transitioned into a full-scale imperial nation-state, establishing colonial hegemony in East Asia, and achieving economic and military parity with World Powers. This cultural ascendancy was attended by myriad changes in Japan’s social infrastructure, most notably increased urbanization and industrialization, the rise of the bourgeois class, and the vigorous growth of a cosmopolitan consumer culture. Of critical import was the flourishing in Japan of a mass media network, which gave determinant form and fuel to the period’s ideological machinery and its thematic thrust – the pursuit of a modern Japanese identity – by promulgating nationalizing admixtures of cosmopolitanism, traditionalism, and consumption.

Such manifold societal shifts were inherently multi-valent, as well as volatile, bearing the potential to destabilize as much as strengthen the nation-state. And indeed, class division, economic disparity, labor strife and political unrest proceeded in tandem with the burgeoning power and prosperity of the Japanese empire. One result of these entwined forces was an abiding tension during the Greater Taishō era between confidence in the forward momentum of Japan’s modernity, and anxiety about the meaning of that modernity vis-à-vis a collective Japanese identity. This tension found common expression in a pervasive quality of the period’s cultural production: nostalgia.¹⁸ That is, turning toward a shared native past provided means to cope with the stresses and uncertainties of dramatic change: re-imagined national narratives offering grounding and reassurance in the present, as well as guidance for the future direction of the Japanese state.

¹⁶ Greater Taishō is a descriptive term – with inclusive years that vary accordingly – used as a way to bridge and take into account the continuity of socio-political conditions that exceed the official designations of Japan’s Taishō (1912-1926) and Showa (1926-1989) eras. For a general history of modern Japan, see Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). For a more specific discussion of the Greater Taishō era, and particularly relevant to the mass consumer practices central to my inquiry, see Miriam Silverberg, “Constructing Japanese Cultural History,” in *Japan In The World*, eds. Masao Miyoshi and Harry Harootyan (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993).

¹⁷ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Afterword: Revisiting the Tradition/Modernity Binary,” in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, Stephen Vlastos, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998): 285-296, quoted, 292.

¹⁸ For recent discussions of nostalgia in relation to Japan’s experience of modernity, see *Taishō Chic: Japanese Modernity, Nostalgia, and Deco*. Lorna Price and Letitia O’Connor, eds. (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 2001), and also Jennifer Robertson, “Furusato Japan: The Culture and Politics of Nostalgia,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, (Vol. 1 No. 4, Summer 1988): 494-518.

Within this polysemic and contrapuntal social texture of the Greater Taishō era, nostalgia thus presented as a consummate component, its “sentiment of loss and displacement” both a symptom of, and counteracting salve for, the disruptions incurred by Japan’s experience of modernity.¹⁹ Moreover, as a cluster of temporal and conceptual modes, nostalgia was intrinsically hybrid, unstable and abstract, requiring localization in order to crystallize and activate consistently and to maximum effect. This is significant because the Kewpie doll served precisely as a prime locus for the free-floating nostalgia of Japan’s Greater Taishō era. Recruited by cultural agents seeking to manipulate public sentiment for commercial and political gain, Kewpie, through its own hybrid and accumulating valences, emplaced a spectrum of re-inscribed cultural associations, in doing so mediating the tensions among them.

This phenomenon is forcefully displayed in Kewpie’s relationship to Japan’s modern “traditions.” An essential feature in Japan’s negotiation of a modern identity, the cultivation of a glorified native past offered an intrinsic cultural authenticity and prestige in the face of a modernity defined largely in European terms. While the charged categories of “tradition” and “modern” typically were set in opposition, in practice they functioned less as polarities than as interweaving forces, whose interconnectedness was fraught with some tension or friction. In particular, Japan’s invention of a “folk” tradition at the beginning of the period, and the consequent reification of its “craft” products as privileged cultural patrimony, is exemplary. This is not only because the folk tradition’s ideation in an idyllic past gave decisive shape to Japan’s modern present, but also because a major focus of its nostalgic mythology was toys and dolls. Indeed, numerous societies and salons developed early in this period devoted expressly to support the collecting and display of Japan’s newly traditional toys and dolls.²⁰ As Josef Kyburz has remarked of this phenomenon, Japan’s increased national confidence, “along with a new conception of beauty and a growing nostalgia for the things of the good old days, eventually led to a reappraisal of indigenous toys as beautiful products of the Japanese genius.”²¹ In this way, toys and dolls gave tractable form to inchoate notions of a modern Japanese identity.

What is remarkable is that Japan’s folk movement defined and promoted Japan’s “traditional” toys and dolls in order to counter the perceived threat

¹⁹ *The Future of Nostalgia*, xiii.

²⁰ See Josef Kyburz, “Omocho: Things to Play (or not to Play) With,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 53 (1994):1-28. See also Frederick Starr, “Japanese Toys and Toy-Collectors,” *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* 3, 2nd series (1926): 101-116.

²¹ *Omocho*, 17.

of their extinction by the incursion of “modern” toys: the mass-produced childhood objects imported from Euro-America.²² And yet the very modern Kewpie doll straddled these fraught ideological categories. As a commercial product incepted from the West, and subsequently manufactured in Japan – and primarily in the quintessentially modern, industrial material of celluloid – Kewpie already occupied the new, hybrid classification of Japanese toy defined by toy collectors and connoisseurs in Japan as “modern traditional.” But Kewpie transgressed even that expanded notion of toy, doing so by moving fluidly between the two poles with a facility such as to signify both simultaneously.

For instance, of the great volume and variety of Kewpie-themed media that saturated the period – such as postcards, magazine illustrations, cigarette cases, trinkets, and dolls – many present Kewpie as being thoroughly modern, often doing so by featuring the doll attired in European clothes. The tuxedo-clad version of Kewpie was especially popular, that European garment being an iconic signifier of modernity in Japan. Yet inasmuch as Kewpie emblemized modernity, the doll at the same time exemplified Japanese tradition. Seen especially in the scores of Kewpie-themed postcards produced during Greater Taishō, Kewpie intermingles regularly with Japan’s newly venerated traditions; such as joining in a round of Sumo wrestling, celebrating Girl’s Day Festival, or incarnating among Japan’s legendary seven lucky gods. And at the same time in myriad other commercial images, Kewpie is rendered overtly as an amalgam of modern and traditional; a brightly colored postcard, for instance, shows Kewpie effortlessly playing a game of tennis while wearing a kimono; in another example, a grouping of Kewpies welcome Santa Claus into a traditional Japanese home, feeding him the traditional meal served at the Japanese New Year.

Media iterations such as these attest both to Kewpie’s widespread interpolation into the lived fabric of everyday Japanese life – adults and children alike – as well as to Kewpie’s potency as an ideological trope. Through its distinctive ability to variously blend evocations of both Japan’s traditional past and its modern future, Kewpie situated nostalgia amid the modern, doing so in a form at once materially focused and conceptually fluid. That is, Kewpie’s signifying pliancy made it a powerful object of cultural consumption because the doll’s

²² The Taishō-era Dictionary of Folk toys makes clear how the new classification of the Japanese folk toy was made expressly in contradistinction to modern toys, viewed as synonymous with the West. It states “the essential features of the traditional Japanese toy are the very opposite of those of the modern toy that has invaded the market everywhere, the type imported from the west since the Meiji era, mechanically mass-produced from such industrial materials as tin, rubber, celluloid, and plastic.” Quoted in *Omocha*, 6.

plural, unfixed associations could be readily maneuvered to serve political and commercial interests. Thus, inasmuch as Kewpie's channeling of nostalgia helped to ameliorate Japan's modern anxieties, that channeling process was also one of normalization, through which state-endorsed attitudes and behavior were produced and disseminated.

KEWPIE IN JAPAN II: MODERATING DOMESTICITY



Figure 2: Postcard of Mitsukoshii department store advertisement, 1918.

Such aspects of Kewpie's modern mediations can be seen in concentrated form in relation to the Japanese department store. Developing in prominence and scope since the Meiji era (1868-1912), the department store in Japan's Greater Taishō dominated urban life as an exalted zone of modern consumption: both of cosmopolitan modern goods, and of a modern lifestyle and ideology. A major apparatus of the department store's project as arbiter of modern consumer culture was its sponsored art exhibitions, which, by means of a cultural education platform, served to inculcate modern values and tastes.²³ Given their importance in shaping Japan's modern identity, it is not surprising that Japan's toys and dolls – both "traditional" and "modern" types – were featured in many of these exhibitions. Likewise, given its importance in moderating Japan's modern traditions, it is even less surprising that the Kewpie doll often officiated at these exhibitions. For example, Kewpie is featured on a postcard from 1918 that advertises an exhibition of children's toys at Mitsukoshii department store. **(Figure 2)** Standing in silhouette against a vibrant red ground, and augmented by a low-angle perspective, Kewpie's graphically outlined pose of outstretched arms assumes an air of beatific authority: at once childlike and imposing.

As a motif of modern consumer practices tethered to Japanese identity, this Kewpie-icon acts as a metonym both for modern goods, as well as for childhood itself – another temporally fraught discourse of the Greater Taishō era that focused on children both as conduits to an idealized past, and as precious resources for Japan's future.²⁴ The domain of childhood accordingly was a central feature of state ideology as a grounding force amid the ongoing

²³ See Julia Sapin, "Merchandising Art and Identity in Meiji Japan: Kyoto Nihonga Artists' Designs for Takashimaya Department Store, 1868-1912," *Journal of Design History* (Volume 17, no. 4): 317-336.

²⁴ For a discussion of the discourse of childhood in the Taisho era, see Mark A. Jones, *Children as Treasures: Childhood and the Middle Class in Early Twentieth Century Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010).

transformations of modernity: witnessed, for instance, in national education programs designed to nurture and instruct Japanese children in accord with modern “scientific” principles. As Stefan Tanaka has explained, “because childhood is a past that everyone has ‘experienced,’...it helps to stabilize the constantly changing modern society...[it] is a timeframe of the past that brings meaning to the present, the nation-state, and provides guidance for social relations.”²⁵ The paradigmatic objects of childhood – toys and especially dolls due to their resemblance to children – served to anchor and instantiate the discourse of childhood and its sentimentalized didacticism. Toys and dolls thus were imbued with myriad resonances, making Kewpie’s elevated place among them charged and polyvalent.

But of course childhood is a temporal discourse constructed by adults and serving the purposes of adults, just as, in a similar way, the signifying objects of childhood participate in the domain of adulthood. As implied above by the prevalence of toy collecting societies and exhibitions during the Greater Taishō era, the objects of Japan’s childhood were very much signal components of adult life. And not only relevant to the sphere of specialists, Japan’s toys, and especially its dolls, were also a vital presence among the general adult populace. Kewpie in particular was a fixture of that domain, continuing its role as mediator of Japan’s modern timeframes.

The significance of Kewpie’s navigations in the sphere of Japanese adulthood is better appreciated when placed in relation to Japan’s doll history. Japan possesses one of the richest doll traditions in the world, in which an astonishing variety of dolls serve a plethora of functions in virtually every cultural sphere.²⁶ One of the distinguishing features of that doll culture is that a great number of dolls in Japan circulate among adults where, among other functions, they serve as implements of authority and tokens of prestige. For instance, it was a common pre-modern practice for geishas to carry dolls with them in public, a practice due not only to cultural beliefs about the magico-symbolic properties of dolls, but because to own and display a well-crafted, elegantly dressed doll was to proclaim wealth and status. Nor did such doll functions diminish with Japan’s modernizing process; they continued, while taking on new meanings. The combined memorial and marketing convention of photographing geishas with their dolls, for instance, is a case in point, and one that combines the temporalities of “tradition,” mechanical reproduction,

²⁵ *New Times In Modern Japan*, 181, 179.

²⁶ For a history of Japan’s dolls and doll practices, see Tokubei Yamada, *Shinpen Nihon Ningyō-shi* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1961).

commerce, and human memory, among others. The Kewpie doll, as the newest addition to Japan's doll culture, built upon and extended that lineage, affective equally in negotiating the discourses and temporal structures of both childhood and adulthood.



Figure 3: Photograph of Miniature Kewpie posed in tokonoma of traditional Japanese home, early Taishō.

In this regard, a photograph from early Taishō is especially eloquent in its mixture of time-embedded elements, and its foregrounding of Kewpie amid those elements. **(Figure 3)** The image shows the spare interior of a pre-modern-style Japanese home, in which kneels a kimono-clad woman who looks up at the camera from her hand sewing. Beside a classical flower arrangement in a display alcove, a diminutive modern Kewpie doll is insinuated incongruously. To the right, from a shelf above, a traditional, child-sized Japanese doll peers into the room – the entire scene anchored at the center by a European mechanical clock. Kewpie's presence among these material collocations of Japan's past and present attests to the doll's currency among adults, as well as to its distinctive ability to signify interchangeably both traditional and modern Japan.

The domestic context that Kewpie has infiltrated here – and done so with ease and great speed after just arriving in Japan – points to the doll's importance in a major cultural project of the Greater Taishō period: the reinvention of the traditional Japanese dwelling as a modern home.²⁷ Extending from the period's increased economic growth, and in particular the florescence of a status-conscious and affluent middle-class, the state-sponsored rhetoric of a prosperous and homogeneous Japan was channeled through the consumption-based ideology of the "modern" home and of a circumambient domestic life. Based on impressions of a glamorized, product-laden European modernity, this ideology was reinforced by networks of media, manufacturing, and technological institutions such that, by the 1930s the structures and notions of the Japanese home were reconfigured into a commodified frontier of nationalistic modern ideals.

Kewpie was instrumental in cultivating that territory, and in rationalizing the disjunctive logic of the new products, practices, and technologies that populated it. An example can be seen in a New Year's Postcard from the late Taishō era depicting a gathering of Kewpies partaking of the ritual Japanese

²⁷ For a full critical discussion of the transformation of the modern home, see *House and Home in Modern Japan*.

New Year's meal. Seated around a Western-style dining table, the convivial Kewpies are also framed by a traditional Japanese folding screen in the room. The Kewpies' ease of comportment amid the hybrid schema of the décor serves to naturalize the new codes of conduct necessitated by the modern Japanese home and its conjuncture of European and traditional Japanese components.

A similarly didactic enfolding of past and present took place with the introduction of the gramophone into the modern Japanese home. The nationalistic imperative of domestic ideology meant that new behavior patterns in the home were infused with socially sanctioned attitudes. For instance, many home journals of the period promote regulation of family gatherings in order to optimize their moralizing potential.²⁸ Domestic music was a strategic component of those gatherings, viewed as a powerful means to instill collective moral sentiment. Thus, the gramophone was not only a prestigious token of modernity, but also a vehicle for administering the propagandistic function of domestic music, facilitating the family activity of its consumption. Kewpie was a major promoter of Japanese domestic music, as seen in one of many such postcards from the late Taishō era, in which a jubilant Kewpie frolics to the visualized musical notes emanating from a gramophone. **(Figure 4)** Kewpie's playful demeanor here valorizes the new modern technology, and at the same time mollifies the anxiety that attended the gramophone's use as an implement of state politics. In these ways Kewpie also engages with the suspended time of mechanical repetition, and the segmented, routinized time of modern socialized behavior.

Kewpie's linkages with modern consumption were literalized with the invention of Kewpie brand mayonnaise, which entered the modern Japanese home in 1925. Its inventor, Toichiro Nakashima, after studying in the United States, capitalized on Kewpie's mixed Western-Japanese identity, as well as the doll's associations with children – and consequently nourishment. As noted by a representative from what later became the Kewpie Corporation, "Nakashima wanted to introduce this rich sauce to his homeland to encourage young people to take in more nourishment, so they could grow as strong and tall as their Western counterparts[...]."²⁹ An advertising postcard from 1932



Figure 4: Postcard of Kewpie dancing to music of gramophone, 1930's

²⁸ *House and Home in Modern Japan*, 29.

²⁹ Quoted in Makiko Itoh, "Why Not Just Add a Dollop Of Mayonnaise?" *The Japan Times*, March 22, 2013.



Figure 5: Photograph of adult family portrait with child-sized Kewpie, 1930's

aptly illustrates Kewpie's protean nature translated into commercial replication; in emulation of its own process of production, a row of identical Kewpies appears to slide across the card as if on a conveyor belt.

And in doll form – again no less than in the world of children – Kewpie was an omnipresent and important cultural object among adults. As demonstrated by a photograph from the 1930s, a child-sized Kewpie doll is included as a valued member of an adult family portrait. **(Figure 5)** Especially in this context, held in the arms of a young woman, Kewpie's nebulous status between inanimate object and living child foregrounds the doll's relationship to motherhood, to which I now turn.

KEWPIE IN JAPAN III: MARKETING MOTHERHOOD AND WARFARE

During the 1930s, as the Japanese empire expanded and intensified military actions in East Asia, state strategies to aggrandize imperial power and military strength were increasingly focused through the fertile, female body. This coupling was encapsulated by the pro-natalist slogan "Umeyo Fuyaseyo, Okuni no tame ni," or "Let's give birth for our great nation!"³⁰ Kewpie was a pivotal moderator in this discourse, the doll's cultural entrenchment in Japan making it an ideal agent by which to mobilize nationalist sentiment. In doing so, Kewpie engaged directly with the many temporalities of the nation-state.

Since imperial discourse on women's fertility encompassed all stages of the reproductive cycle, one way that Kewpie advocated for the empire was to market sanitary napkins. The "Angel" brand in particular featured Kewpie prominently in its promotional media. A newspaper advertisement from 1935, for instance, shows a hovering celestial figure in flowing robes who hands a sanitary napkin down to a frontally seated and bewinged Kewpie. In the context of Japanese empire, the image's suggestion of fertility as a divine gift also carries the connotation that women's bodies serve the divinity of the Japanese Emperor. Recalling as well that "Angel" is one of the Kewpie doll's iterations in Japan, the mythical time here associated with Kewpie as an angel becomes enmeshed with the cyclical time of women's fertility and its commodity-analog: the sanitary napkin. In this way Kewpie facilitated the

³⁰ See Amanda Seaman, "Making and Marketing Motherhood: Guides to Pregnancy in Modern Japan" in *Manners and Mischief: Gender, Power, and Etiquette in Japan*, ed. Jan Bardsley and Laura Miller, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

state and capitalist regulation of biological time, adding nuance to Stefan Tanaka's comment that the modern Japanese body "becomes a repository for the codes of behavior of the nation-state. Inner time, while believed to be 'natural' time embedded in everyday habits or bodily rhythms, is meaningful only as socially objectified norms."³¹

Kewpie carried the nation-state's campaign to commandeer women's fertility into the social lives of young women, doing so chiefly through the many magazines targeting that demographic. Designed to appeal to school-age girls at the start of their reproductive lives, these publications employed Kewpie to solicit ideals of feminine purity and maternal feeling. For instance, the cover illustration for the inaugural issue of the young women's magazine *Reijokai* features Kewpie as a living baby boy, held lovingly in the arms of a young woman. Kewpie's role as imperial purveyor of motherhood was even more hard-hitting in the new magazines devoted to adult women that deluged the Greater Taishō period.³² This is exemplified by the cover page from the 1933 special supplement to the magazine *Women's Club*, which features a kimono-clad woman holding a child-sized Kewpie doll attired in tuxedo and top hat. (Figure 6) Smiling with pride, the woman tilts her head toward the object of her evident joy – Kewpie – which she positions toward the camera for the public to admire. Kewpie's double status here as both surrogate Japanese baby and modern commodity-toy amplifies the interlinkage in Japan of adulthood and childhood, and of tradition and modernity. Additionally, for all its mitigation by "cuteness," the stiffness and formality of the "male" Kewpie conveys a quality of militarism: Kewpie thus underscoring, while naturalizing, the imperial directive that Japanese women should be soldier-producers.



Figure 6: Cover page of special supplement to *Women's Club* magazine, showing a kimono-clad woman holding a child-sized Kewpie doll attired in tuxedo and top hat, 1933

Throughout the 1930s, the state intensified its efforts to reify the role of motherhood, notably in its adaptation of classical European religious imagery. For example, media images of women in 1930s Japan make increasingly emphatic appeals to the iconography of the Madonna and Child. Here, too,

³¹ *New Times in Modern Japan*, 182.

³² See Kendall H. Brown, "Flowers of Taishō: Images of Women in Japanese Society and Art," 17-28. In *Taishō Chic: Japanese Modernity, Nostalgia, and Deco*. Lorna Price and Letitia O'Connor, eds. (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 2001).



Figure 7: Print *Bijin* with Kewpie, by Kaburaki Kiyokata, 1917

Kewpie was employed to embody a mystical notion of motherhood, and to harness its affective power to the state. A critical mode for this project was the national apparatus of fine art, and in particular, its sub-category of *Nihonga*, or Japanese-style modern painting. Developed explicitly in con-tradistinction to *Yōga*, or Japan's Western-style modern painting, *Nihonga's* focus was nostalgic, seeking a modern identity by means of Japan's past and its traditions.³³ Kewpie's intervention in this nostalgic medium can be seen in a 1917 print version of a painting by one of the preeminent *Nihonga* painters, Kaburaki Kiyokata (1878-1972). **(Figure 7)** Interpolated into the traditional *bijin*, or "beautiful woman" genre, an infant-sized Kewpie is cradled by a Kimono-clad woman who gazes deeply at the amorphous child-doll. Depicted at once stiff and yet vibrantly animate in expression, Kewpie's indeterminate state instantiates the tensions of Imperial Japan's regime of motherhood: both its apotheosized adult-child bond, and its invocation of the past in cultivating Japan's modern future.

That Kewpie's nebulous identity is here announced through its luminous white coloration foregrounds the discourse of race in Imperial Japan – a discourse that, as with other components of Japan's modernity, was filtered through perceptions of European practices. Accordingly, the state's promulgation of Japanese ethnic purity was often expressed by using Westernized facial features in media imagery. For instance, on a 1930s postcard that depicts cameos of babies' faces to represent five World Powers, Japan's baby (*cum* nation-state) sports white skin, wavy light-brown hair, and blue eyes. Kewpie engaged with such state ideals of ethnic purity, not only by the doll's "whiteness," but also by its adoption of blue eye color; throughout the 1930s, many versions of the Kewpie doll manufactured in Japan had blue eyes.³⁴ The coupling of blue-eyed dolls with European modernity was already present from the many dolls imported from German and France – and later America – since the Meiji period – all of which had blue eyes. These soft-bodied dolls evidently blended with Kewpie in the Japanese imaginary, as witnessed by a popular Japanese song composed in 1920s Japan,

³³ Ellen P Conant, Thomas J. Rimer, and Stephen Owyong, *Nihonga: Transcending the Past: Japanese-Style Painting, 1868-1968* (St. Louis, Mo: St. Louis Art Museum; Tokyo: Japan Foundation, 1995).

³⁴ See *House and Home in Modern Japan*, 220.

“Blue-eyed Doll.”³⁵ Describing nostalgically a doll made of “American-born celluloid,” the song ironically expresses the common perception of celluloid toys as coming from America even though, as noted above, the majority of those toys were produced in Japan.

Kewpie’s emotive potential was exploited directly in Japanese war propaganda, exemplified in a postcard from the second Sino-Japanese war, as a smiling imperial soldier hands a miniature Kewpie-doll to a delighted Chinese child. **(Figure 8)** As a repository of modern Japanese culture, replete with reinvented traditions, Kewpie in this beneficent exchange metaphorizes the state’s war-justifying rhetoric of Japan as the protector of, and enlightening influence upon, East Asia. Moreover, the nostalgia solicited by the image was augmented by its purposely commemorative function. Part of an album of ninety-two postcards published in 1941, the album’s dedication reads: “This postcard album was published with war relief contributions....Thus, it is hoped that it will accompany troops and be used for mementos.”



Figure 8: Postcard of Imperial Soldier Holding Chinese Baby, 1941

Nor was Kewpie’s presence in Japanese warfare purely symbolic. As demonstrated by another commemorative album, Kewpie was an active participant in Japanese military life. Published in 1937, the album is a collection of photographic memorabilia depicting the soldiers of the 25th Cavalry Regiment of the Imperial army’s 4th Cavalry Brigade. In one of its group portraits, eight soldiers are gathered informally, wearing an assortment of clothing styles: one in traditional Japanese dress, another in uniform, and the rest in European dress. **(Figure 9)** At the center of the group sits the uniformed soldier, and on either arm of his chair stand two Kewpie dolls, one with both arms raised in a gesture of victory. The dolls’ pride of place in the photo makes evident Kewpie’s importance in cultivating the shared experience of the soldiers; whether as mascot or even talisman, Kewpie here shows its ability to encapsulate modern Japanese culture.



Figure 9: Photograph of Imperial Army 25th Cavalry Regiment of 4th Cavalry Brigade, 1937

Kewpie itself assumed a soldier personae, taking up the arms of rhetoric to serve the state via children’s education. This is well demonstrated by the many sets of Japanese alphabet cards produced during the 1930s that depict Kewpie in a variety of military settings. A card from a 1935 set, for instance, shows

³⁵ *House and Home in Modern Japan*, 219.

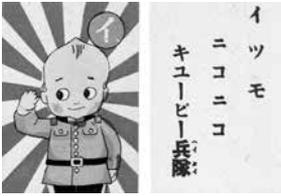


Figure 10:
Alphabet Card of “A Kewpie
Soldier Smiles Brightly”, 1935

a smiling Kewpie soldier standing at attention, “his” body framed by the radial stripes of the imperial Japanese flag; the accompanying slogan on the back of the card reads “The Kewpie Soldier Smiles Brightly.” (Figure 10) Such state co-opting of Kewpie to indoctrinate Japan’s incipient soldiers is exemplary of what Alan Tansman has described as “[t]he hand of propaganda [going] so far as to reach into the imagination itself.”³⁶ And that imagination included the domain of adulthood, witnessed by the copious postcard designs in the 1930s showing Kewpie happily engaged in soldiering. For example, Kewpie was deployed for a 1939 state campaign to promote the Sino-Japanese war; included among the various military tactics executed by the “Kewpie army” are the three-man human bomb from the 1931 Shanghai Incident.

And to bring this segment of Kewpie’s transnational travels – and Kewpie itself – back to the United States, several postcards from that same campaign were featured in a 1939 issue of the preeminent American publication of *Life Magazine*, where the images were decried for their use of cartoons to advocate violence.³⁷ Significantly, 1939 was also the year of the Time Capsule at the New York World’s Fair – in which a Kewpie doll was among the items included. Selected for how well they represented their time in history, these objects were sealed and buried precisely in order to transcend that time: to be made, in effect, *timeless*.

In these many ways, by invoking a past continuously re-imagined in a shifting present, the Kewpie doll gave vital form and focus to Japan’s modernity and its plural temporal structures. Through its signifying malleability, the Kewpie doll moved fluidly among multiple social spheres, mediating their various discourses – just as, similarly, the doll circulated among multiple nations and ideologies. In this process, the Kewpie doll illustrates the power and instability of transnational media, as well as the particular ability of doll-media to impact human emotion. I close with this example from Kewpie’s continuing travels in Japan at the Senkawa Kewpie mayonnaise factory, where the Kewpie doll reigns over time made manifest; encased in glass and stationed outside the factory in a tower like a panoptical warden, a large Kewpie doll changes clothes with every season, regulating the temporal flows of nature, of bodies and of commodities – and ideologies. Perhaps the Kewpie doll really is the “greatest doll of all time.”

³⁶ Alan Tansman, *The Culture of Japanese Fascism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 13.

³⁷ “Speaking of pictures: this is the way Japan makes the war in China fit for small children,” in *Life Magazine*, 1939, no page numbers.

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“Woolita”: Crochet Doll as Representation of Interwoven Discourse

Understanding “Being-as-Playing-a-Role”¹

Pop and feminism

In Françoise Cactus’ crochet doll “Woolita” (2003), balls of wool and threads of discourse intertwine. Thus the doll can be classified as a text both etymologically and metaphorically. Woolita materializes as a crochet doll and eventually turns out to be a fictional character, too. Therefore it is more than just an object filled with cotton wool – it is filled with *life*. The result is the fiction of a character that performs, gives interviews, narrates its own biography, and produces songs.

Woolita is a pop-construct that does not deny its artificiality. On the contrary – artificiality becomes an essential element of the character. The concept of pop in general includes spectacle and Woolita, the woollen doll, is a more authentic spectacle than many flesh-and-blood pop phenomena. Additionally, Woolita can be read as a feminist pop phenomenon. Her name is a hybrid referring to the fictional character Lolita on the one hand and to the material that she is made of, i.e. plain wool, on the other. In naming the doll Woolita, creator Françoise Cactus² positions her in two discourses of femininity.

¹ This is the revised and translated version of the article “‘Wollita’ – eine Häkelpuppe und ihre Kontexte. Einladung zum Pakt mit dem Spiel,” in *Puppen – Menschheitsbegleiter in Kinderwelten und imaginären Räumen?*, ed. Insa Fookan and Jana Mikota (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 2014), 264-275.

² Françoise Cactus is a French-German author and artist. She is also a musician and is part of the band Stereo Total.

Woolita is named after the eponymous heroine of Vladimir Nabokov's well-known novel, *Lolita*, and the type of the "nymphet" popularized by that work's reception in popular culture; the Lolita- or nymphet-motif has developed within popular culture and constitutes an ambiguous figure, combining shyness and reticence with self-confidence and indomitability.³ Depending on the context, Lolita has been presented differently in literature, film, art and music. At times Lolita is interpreted as a helpless creature, as in Adrian Lyne's 1997 film based on the novel, while at other times the type is interpreted as seductive, as for example in Marilyn Monroe's version of the song "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" in 1960. Françoise Cactus above all claims the confident aspect of the Lolita-motif for her doll.⁴

The mention of the material from which she is made in her name binds Woolita to the highly topical crafting discourse that has arisen within the last two decades during the so-called third wave of feminism. Woolita is crocheted and represents the re-appropriation of classical "womanly" cultural techniques such as knitting, sewing and crocheting – along with a reinterpretation of these activities, transformed from domestic hobbies to an activist praxis in a political, public, and collective context.⁵

Cactus's crochet doll Woolita thus offers a starting point for examining a code conversion within German handicraft practices, changing from reproductive praxis in a patriarchal system to crafting as a popfeminist praxis. Just as Woolita experiences a feminist empowerment, transforming her from her status of a lifeless object as a crochet doll into an active subject, a fictional character, the passive-homely act of handicraft develops into critical activism, blended within the term *craftivism*. Despite the fact that there were already artists using handicraft in an art context, such as Rosemarie Trockel and Mike Kelley, and despite the fact that feminists in the 1970s started knitting within seminar rooms and parliament buildings to revalue textile handicraft in public, something different and new happens with Woolita. Françoise Cactus was the first artist in Germany to develop a practice that can be called *discourse-crafting*.

³ Cf.: Andrea Bramberger, *Die KindFrau. Lust – Provokation – Spiel* (Munich: Matthes & Seitz, 2000), 9.

⁴ The motif emerges regularly within the creative work of Cactus. For example she played in a garage rock band called The Lolitas from 1986 to 1992. Cactus seems to see more of an empowered girlie in her different representations of Lolita, instead of a passive victim.

⁵ Cf. Faythe Levine and Cortney Heimerl: *Handmade Nation. The Rise of DIY, Art, Craft, and Design* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008); Mandy Moore and Leanne Prain: *Yarn Bombing. The Art of Crochet and Knit Graffiti* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2009); Maria Elena Buszek, ed., *Extra/ordinary. Craft and contemporary art* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011).

Crafting a discourse

In her crochet doll, Cactus connects various concepts, for example pop and feminism, media and market, body and identity. The crocheted object Woolita not only consists of interwoven threads of wool, but is also a text, a texture consisting of threads of discourse that usher it in and constitute it.⁶ This text can be read by following these different threads in a text-context-analysis. The striking mesh that constitutes and surrounds the doll becomes evident. Below, I would like to follow some of these threads:

Françoise Cactus started crocheting the doll for the purpose of showing it in an art show entitled "When Love Turns to Poison" in Berlin. The exhibition was received with controversy by the media and was criticized harshly. While humanly appealing, the sparsely dressed doll Woolita was predestined to be chosen as an icon for the scandal created by the tabloid press. So ultimately the media helped provide attention for Woolita and exposed her to a broad public.

The functionalization of Woolita as an icon of scandal led to further writing of the *text* Woolita, figuratively perceptible in its representation as a crochet doll and discursively beyond that. Françoise Cactus and her friend the artist Wolfgang Müller used the media scandal as a point of departure for writing a biography for Woolita, portraying her "career" progression from being a simple crochet doll in the style of a potholder to becoming a superstar – as proclaimed on the jacket of her biography, released in 2005.⁷ The "consciousness" of the doll is revealed in the biography. It is established with the aid of several quotations and intertextual references, to be discussed below. Before that, I would like to share some general reflections on the crochet doll Woolita.

Between a potholder and a blow-up doll

Woolita is a crochet doll that was crocheted with a relatively simple technique, one used to manufacture potholders, for example.⁸ The finished object Woolita measures 1,74 m and reminds the viewer of a blow-up doll. Woolita is wearing only blue panties with a red heart in the nether regions and striped

⁶ Cf. Moritz Baßler: "Einleitung. New Historicism – Literaturgeschichte als Poetik der Kultur," in *New Historicism. Literaturgeschichte als Poetik der Kultur*, ed. Moritz Baßler (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Wissenschaft, 1995), 14.

⁷ Cactus and Wolfgang Müller: *Wollita – vom Wollknäuel zum Superstar. Die Biographie mit CD* (Berlin: Martin Schmitz Verlag, 2005).

⁸ Cf. Cactus and Müller: *Wollita*, 14.

knee-length socks. She has an auburn mane and stares at her beholder with big, blue eyes that seem quite demanding with their black outlines evoking eyeliner. Her pout is opened slightly; the mandatory beauty spot is visible right next to it (**Figure 1**).



Figure 1: Woolita (2003) by Françoise Cactus, photo: Martin Schmidt.

The doll is intended to be an ironic comment on a sex-advert found in BZ, a German tabloid from Berlin: “Scharfe Wollmaus, 18 Jahre jung, will dich verwöhnen. Immer bereit.”⁹ In German there is a pun intended by referring to a “hot” woman as “Wollmaus” as “Wolle” is the German term for wool and “Maus” is the German term for a mouse.¹⁰ Legend has it that Françoise Cactus began creating Woolita right after reading this advert.

With her breasts, long hair, and made-up face Woolita is marked as “typically female” in appearance. Woolita is artificial and she is a performer. She is “deliberate camp,” following Susan Sontag’s “Notes On Camp” (originally published in 1964).¹¹ Woolita is a campy object that in its “womanhood” is perceived as “strongly exaggerated”¹². The doll stands for “the exaggeration of sexual characteristics”. Woolita is “not a woman, but a ‘woman’. To perceive camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-Role”¹³. And understanding “Being-as-Playing-a-Role” is always a key element within the discourse surrounding the crochet doll.¹⁴

Woolitas nudity is evident. Through its crocheted quality the naked, female body that oscillates between the appearance of a child (big eyes, striped socks) and a woman (luscious lips, breasts) makes a reference to discursive perceptions of the human body. By crocheting Woolita, Françoise Cactus connects the discourse of gender performance with her crafting practice.

Literary scholar Smith-Prei, who works on popfeminism, emphasizes: “German popfeminism positively embraces the negatively coded female body, whether raunchy, pornographic, sick, injured, or otherwise unruly [...] This female body acts as a visual subculture born out of the tension between traditionally

⁹ Cactus and Müller: *Wollita*, 26, in English: “Hottie, only 18, wants to pleasure you. Always ready”.

¹⁰ In this specific context of a sex advert “Wollmaus” connotes a reference to pubic hair as well.

¹¹ Susan Sontag, “Notes on Camp,” in *Against Interpretation*.

¹² Sontag, “Notes on Camp,” 279.

¹³ Sontag, “Notes on Camp,” 280.

¹⁴ The aesthetic concept of camp as explained by Susan Sontag is based on theatricality and overexaggeration. Campy examples mentioned by Sontag are “Tiffany lamps, [...] Swan lake, [...] Schoedsack’s King Kong” et cetera (Sontag, “Notes on Camp,” 277).

political notions of feminism and mass-media-driven pop culture.”¹⁵ This is exactly what Françoise Cactus brings out in Woolita, an early representation of popfeminism. In creating the crochet doll Woolita, Cactus is one of the first to combine a popfeminist understanding of the body as a text with adopting the popfeminist practice of crafting.

The Exhibition “When Love Turns to Poison”

Everything previously mentioned stemmed from Woolita being exhibited in an exhibition. Françoise Cactus created Woolita to show her at an art show called “When Love Turns To Poison,” an exhibition dealing with sexuality, at Kunstraum Kreuzberg Bethanien in Berlin in March 2004. Within the art show, different works by various artists, such as Stu Mead, Thomas Hauser, Frank Gaard, Skip Hunter & Ella Verparajugs, Mathias Seidel and Beth Love, are shown. Mostly surrounded by paintings, photographs and video installations, Woolita is one of the very few objects exhibited. She is placed within the entrance area of the show room, sitting on a stool, leaning against the wall.

The other artworks shown include the flamboyant paintings of Beth Love. Female figures that evoke nymphet-connotations, have injured bodies or seem hurt, and which are positioned within scenes that oscillate between David Lynch aesthetics and sets reminiscent of *Alice in Wonderland*. Another artist exhibited is Stu Mead. His paintings are highly provocative, because they show a progression from playful lust to the trauma of sexual abuse.¹⁶ It is obvious that he does not portray grown women, but rather young girls in sexual poses with teddy bears and lapdogs, or girls who see themselves confronted with abusive policemen.

However, it is neither a painting by Beth Love, nor one by Stu Mead that was a subject of scandal in media coverage, but the fairly harmless crochet doll Woolita.

A linking element of many of the artworks shown is the Lolita-phantasm¹⁷ that represents the balance between conflicting priorities of love and sexuality.¹⁸ Woolita, too, has to be seen as such a phantasm, carrying

¹⁵ Carrie Smith-Prei, “Knallersex für alle: Pop Cultural Body Politics in Contemporary Feminisms,” *Special Issue of Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature: From Wonder Girls to Alpha Females: Contemporary Women’s Writing in German and the Return of Feminism* 35.1 (2011), 18.

¹⁶ Cf. Anja Oswald: “Kind-Frau-Phantasma,” in *Bild – Macht – Rezeption. Kunst im Regelwerk der Medien*, ed. Stephane Bauer (Berlin: ID Verlag, 2005), 53.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁸ Cf. Stephane Bauer: “Zur Entstehung des Skandals,” in *Bild – Macht – Rezeption. Kunst im Regelwerk der Medien*, ed. Stephane Bauer (Berlin: ID Verlag, 2005), 6.

the Lolita discourse already in her name. The art show became a subject of controversy and was criticized by media and tabloids that chose Woolita as the visual focus of their coverage.

Media Scandal

Berlin tabloids, with BZ and Bild leading the way, reduced the highly controversial exhibition to potentially shocking formulas when they started reporting about it on April 7, 2004. BZ and the others introduced Woolita as the visual justification for a campaign against “When Love Turns To Poison” using the buzzword “Skandal” (the German word for scandal). In Woolita’s biography they say: “Françoise staunte nicht wenig, als sie nach ihrer Rückkehr aus Paris am 7. April 2004 in einem Berliner Zeitungsladen das Titelbild der B.Z. sah. Denn wer war das groß abgebildet? Ich! Ich hockte auf dem ‘S’ der Riesenüberschrift: ‘SKANDAL UM KINDERPORNO-AUSSTELLUNG – Ausrufezeichen.’”¹⁹

The day before, there was an article in Berliner Morgenpost, that posed the allegedly open question “Art or violence?” and charged the artist with pedophilia in its subtitle. This article marked the starting point for a fairly one-sided debate that lasted two weeks. The Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien collected 27 articles in total which contained or featured the exhibit.²⁰ The majority of the collected texts or text-picture-compositions appeared within BZ and the Berlin regional edition of Bild-Zeitung.

Overall, more than 30 articles covered the exhibition. Due to the coverage Woolita gained an iconic status, being featured as the image in ten of the articles. Nine of these articles, however did not even mention Woolita within the text. At most they provided her photo with a questionable caption, denying the artistic value of the crochet doll and the artistic abilities of Françoise Cactus, by tagging the word “artist” with quotation marks: “Die nackte Strickpuppe der ‘Künstlerin’ Cactus – Kinderschützer sind ent-setzt”²¹.

The vividness of the doll, her quality of resembling a human revenant, made her an easy target to become the focus of the scandal that had been proclaimed.

¹⁹ Cactus and Müller, *Wollita – vom Wollknäuel zum Superstar*, 15f.: “Françoise was flabbergasted when she saw the title-page of B.Z. in a Berlin newsagency after her return from Paris on April 7th 2004. Who was being featured prominently? Me! I was sitting on the ‘S’ of the gigantic heading: ‘Scandal about child porn exhibition – exclamation mark.’”

²⁰ Cf. Stephane Bauer, *Bild – Macht – Rezeption*, 136-155.

²¹ mh, pag, kf, “Irrer zerstörte Porno-Ausstellung,” *BZ*, April 8, 2004, 1, reprinted in: *Bild – Macht – Rezeption. Kunst im Regelwerk der Medien*, ed. Stephane Bauer (Berlin: ID Verlag, 2005), 140: “Naked knitted doll of ‘artist’ Cactus – child protection professionals horrified!”

In contrast to video installations, whose impact ceases when the media format is changed from visual to textual, or photographs of naked women, not uncommon within the tabloid press, Woolita provoked scandal as a doll with a human appearance. She can be read as a toy, associated with children, on the one hand, and as sexually charged, reminiscent of a rubber doll, on the other hand. Falling between these poles made her the perfect icon for the proclaimed “Kinderporno-Skandal”.



Figure 2: fish, bodo, pag, mah, “Und das soll Kunst sein?,” BZ, April 7, 2004, 6.

A representative example of this kind of coverage is the article published in the April 6 issue of BZ.²² Woolita is placed prominently as the visual scoop, just like on the cover described above. The photographic frame is dissolved. The photo is cut out and Woolita is “sitting” right in the middle of the text. The caption is “Kinderschützer sind empört: Eine große, nackte Strickpuppe empfängt die Besucher im Kunstraum Kreuzberg[.]”²³ The text is placed right between Woolita’s legs. So the article is criticizing the sexualization of a doll on the one hand while using a somewhat sexualized display on the other, with the caption not placed right under the photo, as is common, but between Woolita’s legs (**Figure 2**).

Within the text Woolita is not mentioned by name, only implied. The article says at a certain point: “ein Mädchen, das mit gespreizten Beinen auf einem Stuhl posiert” (a girl, posing astride a chair with spread legs). Most likely the term “Mädchen” (the German word for a girl) refers to Woolita, evolving her from an object, a doll, to a subject, a girl.

Instead of leaving this subjectivization to the tabloid press, Françoise Cactus and Wolfgang Müller actively joined in. Müller published a portrait of Woolita in the German newspaper taz, a daily catering to the intellectual left. Though the article is a parodistic text, it was not published on the satirical pages of the paper, but in the local section for Berlin. In his text, Müller addresses the construction of the scandal and Woolita’s status as an icon within that context. Furthermore he gives insight into the exhibition and the artistic activities of Françoise Cactus. And last but not least, even Woolita is given a chance to speak. The article, entitled “Skandal: Puppe will Superstar werden” (Scandal:

²² fish, bodo, pag, mh: “Und das soll Kunst sein?,” BZ, April 7, 2004, 6, reprinted in: *Bild – Macht – Rezeption. Kunst im Regelwerk der Medien*, ed. Stephane Bauer (Berlin: ID Verlag, 2005), 138.

²³ In English: “Child protectors are revolted: A large, naked, knitted doll is welcoming the visitors at Kunstraum Kreuzberg”.

Doll Wants to Become Superstar), plays with the attempts of the tabloids to turn Woolita into an object of scandal.

On the surface, Wolfgang Müller uses quite similar methods to those of the tabloids, for example leading the headline with the word "Skandal" (Scandal), mimicking the BZ cover from April 7th. By using the word "Superstar" he adopts another tabloid-buzzword. The scandal proclaimed by Müller seems to be that Woolita wants to become a superstar, even though she has been portrayed negatively in the media. Instead of accepting the aspersions made by BZ and alike, Müller creates the conditions for an empowerment to take place. In his parody of a tabloid article, Wolfgang Müller endows Woolita with agency. The article in taz marks the public hour of birth of the fictional character of Woolita, 18 years old. The ascriptions of the tabloids are replaced by Woolita's self-description. And in this context, a campy reading of Woolita is appropriate, if not necessary. Woolita and her supporters understand "Being-as-Playing-a-Role" as Susan Sontag intended it.

Müller weaves some quotes into his article that are written as if they are coming from Woolita. The fact that he also quotes Françoise Cactus, a real person, talking about her "daughter" Woolita, also strengthens the illusion of Woolita being real. Within the taz article, Müller manages to rewrite the so called "child-porn-scandal" surrounding the exhibition, as the tabloids put it, into a scandal around Woolita wanting to become a superstar. Though he could not reclaim interpretative sovereignty for the whole exhibition, he could at least claim it for Woolita.

The "Being-as-Playing-a-Role" went on, as several artists demanded the BZ-Kulturpreis for Woolita, a prize awarded every year by the tabloid that fomented the scandal around Woolita. More than 300 supporters signed the petition, including several German intellectuals and musicians, such as Diedrich Diederichsen, Katrin Passig and Dr. Motte. With their signing they not only demanded the award for Woolita, but enhanced the fiction of her personality. To stress their demand, some of the supporters even demonstrated in favor of handing the award to Woolita directly in front of the BZ-editorial department.

But – to cut a long story short – Woolita did not receive the BZ-Kulturpreis. Nevertheless, she did not disappear completely. Especially in the pages of taz, Woolita continued to be mentioned from time to time. Over the years from 2004 to 2011, nearly twenty articles of varied length covering Woolita were written by different authors. They wrote about the scandal around

“When Love Turns to Poison” or other exhibitions that Woolita was shown in and used her as a point of reference in discussing the works of other artists. Within these contexts, the fiction of her personality was upheld again and again, for example by the invitation to write an e-mail to Woolita. The articles were always included within the editorial content and placed in the Berlin local section of the paper, not the satirical section. The fiction took on a certain sobriety. Woolita even performed at taz’s twenty-fifth anniversary celebration.

The biography: Woolita becomes a superstar

By means of various devices, Woolita was empowered to become an increasingly believable character and eventually started a career as a “superstar”. In 2005 Françoise Cactus and Wolfgang Müller released Woolita’s biography, narrated by the character herself, including a mini-CD featuring five songs. The fictional character of Woolita became humanized by her biography. The music was composed by Françoise Cactus and Wolfgang Müller, while most of the story is told by its first-person narrator, Woolita.

Philippe Lejeune defines the autobiographical contract thus: “For there to be autobiography (and more generally *littérature intime*), there must be identity between the *author*, the *narrator* and the *protagonist*.”²⁴ Since there is only identity between narrator and protagonist, and the authorship must be attributed to others, no autobiographical contract can be made.

I propose to discuss *making a pact with fiction* and “Understanding-Being-as-Playing-a-Role”, when it comes to reading the biography and all other Woolita-contexts. Instead of an autobiographical contract, the Woolita-audience makes a pact with fiction. This is not about credibility, because it is clear that a doll cannot have consciousness and therefore cannot articulate thoughts, let alone write a biography. But there are efforts made to establish the authenticity of a fictional personality, like the above-mentioned article in taz, the call to nominate Woolita for an award, etc. Besides sharing the joy of supporting Woolita, the audience shares in criticizing the methods used by the tabloids to create scandals.

²⁴ Philippe Lejeune, “The Autobiographical Contract,” in *French Literary Theory Today. A Reader*, ed. Tzvetan Todorov (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 193.

As mentioned before, the credibility of a fictional character was compounded through the rhetorical devices of quotation and intertextual reference. The playful aspect cannot be denied when there are pop-cultural quotations evident, and the sense of spectacle is crucial. One of these spots where popcultural intertexts condense is the following:

“Wenn sich jemand mit der Kamera vor mich hinstellte, an meinen Haaren zupfte, und wie im Film *Blow Up* „Gib’s mir, Baby!“ rief, habe ich dann protestiert? Aber nein! Ich habe immerzu gelächelt und versucht, mich von meiner schönsten Seite zu zeigen. Welche Seite ist das überhaupt? Bei Barbara Streisand ist es die linke – glaubt sie jedenfalls. Ohne falsche Bescheidenheit würde ich behaupten, dass ich – obgleich ich Barbaras Silberblick wirklich bewundere – besser als sie aussehe, egal ob von links, rechts oder von vorne.”²⁵

Here the story references fashion photographer Thomas in Michelangelo Antonioni’s 1966 film “Blow-Up,” set in swinging London . Thomas attempts to uncover a murder by blowing up a photo that he shot by accident. The film is more than a mere crime story. “Sometimes reality is the strangest phantasy of all” was the slogan proclaimed in the film’s trailer. The film explores the borderline between reality and phantasy, between truth and fiction, neither of which seem to be definite, a situation that parallels Woolita’s, as she acknowledges by recalling “Blow-Up” as an intertextual reference.

“Blow-Up” is a reflexion of the mechanical illustration media of photography and film,²⁶ which Woolita experienced when the tabloids conventionalised her as the iconic face of a scandal with the help of numerous photos. The enactment aspect of photography is highlighted by the enactment of Woolita and her consciousness. Thomas Meder concludes in his discussion of “Blow-Up” that by the end of the film the photographer has learned something about reality and its subjectively alterable nature, as he takes part in a tennis match that only becomes real through a collective fiction. Meder points out that the audience is asked to emulate the protagonist’s deeds.²⁷ The embedding

²⁵ Cactus and Müller, *Wollita – vom Wollknäuel zum Superstar*, 12, in English: “When someone positioned himself in front of me with a camera, tugging my hair, and shouted, ‘Give it to me, baby!’ at me like in the film ‘Blow-Up’, did I protest then? Of course not! I smiled all the time and tried to show myself at my best. Which side is my best? With Barbara Streisand it is the left side, at least that is what she believes. No false modesty – I would claim that I look better, no matter lefthand, righthand, or front view – albeit I admire Barbara Streisand’s slight squint.”

²⁶ Cf. Thomas Meder, “Blow-Up,” in *Metzler Film Lexikon*, ed. Michael Töteberg (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2005), 87.

²⁷ Cf. Meder, “Blow-Up,” 87.

of “Blow-Up” as intertextual reference within the biography is an invitation to take part in Woolita’s “Being-as-Playing-a-Role,” which likewise only becomes real through fiction.

In addition to the film “Blow-Up,” Woolita in her role as narrator also references Barbara Streisand, the female pop star. What happens here is the integration of Woolita into an archive of female stars. Thinking big, the eight-time Grammy winner Streisand is chosen to represent success. What Woolita admires in the quoted paragraph is not Streisand’s career, because she could never keep pace with it anyway, but a physical attribute of hers, namely the “Silberblick” (a slight squint). This is not surprising, it being Woolita’s body that captures attention when her photos get printed within the newspapers. The narrator Woolita understands how the pop system works, with the pop star’s look being extremely important. Consequently she states that her looks are far better than Barbara Streisand’s. In addition to her self-classification into the category of female pop stars, she places herself within the physical stratification that is such a big part of the music business, especially when it comes to female pop stars.

Both of the intertextual references quoted here – the film “Blow-Up” and the artist Barbara Streisand – refer to the enactment aspect of photography and film and ultimately to the enactment aspect of pop itself. By bringing together these intertexts in such close concentration, the narrator Woolita condenses this quality of enactment and refers to her own artificiality and enactment.

What is suggested within the figural representation of the doll is confirmed through the texts and contexts it accesses. Woolita operates playfully. A certain campiness is part of the Woolita-text, since “[t]he whole point of Camp is to dethrone the serious. Camp is playful, anti-serious. [...] Camp introduces a new standard: artifice as an ideal [...]”²⁸

The biography was reviewed in several magazines, such as the well-known German pop-culture magazine *Spex*, which ran an article entitled “Wollita. Vom Wollknäuel zum Superstar. Nicht zum Aufblasen gedacht”²⁹. It refers to the title of the biography as well as to the rubber-doll association evoked by Woolita.

The text was written by journalist Mascha Jacobs, who describes Woolita as made by Françoise Cactus and places the doll within Cactus’s artistic oeuvre.

²⁸ Sontag, “Notes on Camp,” 288.

²⁹ Mascha Jacobs, “Wollita. Vom Wollknäuel zum Superstar. Nicht zum Aufblasen gedacht,” *Spex*, 01-02 (2006), 62, in English: “Woolita. From a ball of wool to a superstar. Not designed to blow up”.

Jacobs also outlines the efforts of the tabloids to create a scandal around Woolita, as well as the defense strategy implemented by Wolfgang Müller. Most importantly, Jacobs understands “Being-as-Playing-a-Role” and joins the pact with the fictional character Woolita. She begins parodistically with a sentence written in a manner typical of the yellow press: “Endlich erzählt Wollita (18) exklusiv die wahre Geschichte von Liebe, Wolle und Schmerz” (“Finally, In Our Exclusive, Woolita (18) Tells the True Story of Love, Wool and Pain”). Jacobs confirms the fictional character of Woolita by using sensationalizing phrases to describe Woolita’s actions.

Even the layout of the magazine carries the fiction of Woolita as a superstar. On the opposite page from the Woolita review there is a review of a film featuring George Michael. Texts placed side by side show optical equivalences. The parallel structure initially attracts attention: Title, subtitle, name of the author, photo, teaser, text. Specifically the photos are striking in accordance to their resemblance. Both pop-protagonists are shown topless. Through the optical equivalence, the potentially scandalous George Michael justifies the existence of potentially scandalous Woolita, and vice versa (**Figure 3, 4**).

Closing remarks

I have endeavoured to make it clear that within the crochet doll Woolita, strands of wool are knit together while at the same time threads of discourse knit a text together. Some of these threads of discourse were followed within a text-context-analysis, showing that the naming of Woolita refers to important female discourses, such as the Lolita discourse and the crafting discourse. Through her woollen artificiality, Woolita not only refers to the construction of gendered bodies, but also to the artificiality of pop and media enactments.

Understanding “Being-as-Playing-a-Role” is the means of choice for Woolita’s enactment in the first place. Even though the crocheted doll is haptically tangible, her portrayal as an artificial character, as a virtual pop star, requires the willingness to make a pact with fiction by the recipients. The playable object Woolita becomes the playing subject Woolita, who has to be read as “campy,” with a wink of the eye.



Figure 3: Mascha Jacobs, “Wollita. Vom Wollknäuel zum Superstar. Nicht zum Aufblasen gedacht,” Spex, 01-02, 2006, 62.



Figure 4: Hias Wrba., “George Michael - A Different Story. Aufgebauchte Lippenbekenntnisse,” Spex, 01-02, 2006, 63.

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Inspire the Naïf! **Marinka Dallos' Collection of Dolls**

The association called La Casa Totiana is a private archive in Rome that preserves the artistic legacy of Gianni Toti (1924–2007), an Italian poet, journalist and video artist, and that of Marinka Dallos (1929–1992), an Italian-Hungarian painter.¹ In the archive of Marinka Dallos, containing about 40 paintings, 300 graphics, written and visual documents of an artistic career and many other personal belongings, a collection of approximately 20 dolls is also preserved.² These dolls were beloved objects for Marinka Dallos: gifts received from visiting Hungarian friends, souvenirs brought from trips across

¹ La Casa Totiana was founded in 2009 by Pia Abelli Toti. It is a non-profit cultural association, the collection of which contains the artistic and cultural legacy of the Toti-Dallos couple. In 2010, the governmental department responsible for Lazio's archival properties declared the items of the collection "cultural goods with a particular historical importance," to be preserved and kept integrated. Further information on La Casa Totiana can be found on the association's website: www.lacasatotiana.it, last accessed October 23, 2014.

² The archive of Marinka Dallos is undergoing a cataloguing process. La Casa Totiana houses the artist's library of approximately 200 volumes that mainly consists of exhibition catalogues and literature on naïf art. The catalogue of paintings in the collection of La Casa Totiana contains 40 items, and the catalogue of graphics contains approximately 350 items. Reproductions of pictures painted by Marinka Dallos but which do not belong to the collection of La Casa Totiana are also preserved in the collection. They are available through the catalogue of slides and through the catalogue of photo-reproductions. The correspondence of the artist between approximately 1950 and 1992 was divided in groups based on the language of the correspondence and is searchable by names of senders or dates. The collection of press materials contains articles published in Italian, Hungarian, German, Spanish, and French and is organized chronologically from 1965 to 1993. Catalogues of the artist's personal and collective exhibitions are catalogued in chronological order and materials relating to the preparation, organization or documentation of each exhibition are divided into individual groups of documents. The cataloguing of the private photographic collection of the artist and that of her notes and manuscripts is also in progress. Reproductions, graphics, the collection of press materials and part of the private photographic collection are available in a digital format as well. The catalogue of the artist's oeuvre will be published in Italian and the whole archive will be re-organized, catalogued and made available for consultation in a digital format later in 2015. Consultation of artworks or archive materials can be done by appointment, with further information to be found on the website of La Casa Totiana.

Europe and from her homeland. These dolls – based on the testimony of old photographs – were always present and visible in the apartment of the artist couple, close to the corner where Marinka used to set up her easel and paint. Most of the dolls are female figures dressed in traditional folkloric costumes of different cultures. **(Figure 1)** In my paper, I would like to survey the impact of these dolls on her artistic career interpreting them as mirrors, inspirational sources, mementos and prostheses through comparison of the still existing dolls which were once owned by Marinka Dallos with artworks produced by her. I also wish to examine the impact of Hungarian folklore on her art, and I will discuss that with reference to some other dolls which did not belong to the collection of the artist but came from Lőrinci, Marinka's childhood hometown in Hungary.



Figure 1. Marinka Dallos playing with a doll. Photo taken in the 1970's.

Mária³ Dallos was born in 1929 in Lőrinci, a small agricultural village in north-eastern Hungary 60 kilometers from the capital city, Budapest. She spent her childhood and teenage years there, completing 8 years of elementary school and 4 years at a secondary school specializing in economics, both in the same region. She met Gianni Toti, an Italian intellectual, poet and journalist in Budapest in 1949 during the World Festival of Youth and Students, a politically left-wing international event.⁴ Two years later they got married and moved first to Milan and then to Rome in 1952. Until the end of the 1960s, she worked as chief secretary at the press-office of the Hungarian embassy housed in the Hungarian Academy of Rome. Marinka and her husband, Gianni Toti, became two of the most important interpreters of Hungarian culture for Italy during the second half of the 20th century, thanks to their cooperation in translating the works of many important Hungarian poets, such as Sándor Petőfi, Endre Ady, Attila József and Miklós Radnóti into Italian.⁵

³ The first name "Marinka" is her artistic name.

⁴ Sandra Lischi and Silvia Moretti, *Gianni Toti o della poetronica* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS Roma: La Casa Totiana, 2012), 17.

⁵ The most important volumes she translated are the following: Marinka Dallos and Jole Tognelli, *Ungheria Antiromantica* (Anti-Romantic Hungary, Roma: Salvatore Sciascia Editore, 1971); Ágnes Nemes Nagy, *Solstizio*, trans. Marinka Dallos and Jole Tognelli (Solstice, Roma: Empiria, 1988); Ferenc Juhász, *Sulla Tomba di Attila József*, trans. Marinka Dallos and Jole Tognelli (At the Grave of Attila József, Caltanissetta – Roma: Salvatore Sciascia Editore, 1979); Miklós Radnóti, *Scritto verso la morte*, trans. Marinka Dallos and Gianni Toti (Written on the Road to Death, Roma: D'Urso editrice, 1964); György Lukács, *Il marxismo nella coesistenza*, trans. Marinka Dallos and Alberto Scarponi (Marxism and Human Liberation, Roma: Editori riuniti, 1968); Marinka Dallos and Gianni Toti (ed, trans.), *La grande triade della poesia rivoluzionaria ungherese: Petőfi, Ady, József*, (The Great Triad of Hungarian Revolutionary Poets: Petőfi, Ady, József, Roma: Fahrenheit 451, 1999); Marinka Dallos and Gianni Toti (ed, trans.), *Poeti ungheresi: Sándor Petőfi, Endre Ady, Attila József*, (Hungarian Poets: Sándor Petőfi, Endre Ady, Attila József, Milano: Avanti, 1959).

Dallos began her painting career at the beginning of the 1960s. Her first finished painting, depicting her mother, dates from 1963. Beginning in 1968, she exhibited her works not only in various cities in Italy, but in Paris, Cologne, London, Beverly Hills, Budapest and Cracow as well.⁶ She often returned to Hungary to visit her family members, friends and childhood acquaintances, and kept up a busy correspondence with artists, art critics and collectors.⁷ Dallos's place of origin had a great influence on her artistic creation. She collected objects representing the local folkloric tradition and often represented them in her paintings. Memories of her childhood, moments of village life and Roman experiences are her most common topics; sometimes we find them surrealistically united in one picture.⁸ Her most beloved motifs were generic representations of women dressed in Hungarian folkloric costumes, village festivities, carnivals and weddings, the ruins and sights of Rome juxtaposed with its buzzing urban life, and genre paintings about wayfarer gypsies.

Dallos defined herself as a naïf painter based on her political views, saying: "It is not a coincidence that I am a naïf painter, though the word "naïf" has numerous meanings. I think I am neither innocent nor uneducated. Naïf art is also an ideology, as it is the art of the subordinate social classes. The naïf painters preserve the natural vision in themselves."⁹ However, despite her self-definition, it is unclear whether the label of "naïf artist" should be applied to Marinka Dallos. It is true that she came from a less than privileged background, being the daughter of workers from a small agricultural village. But after marrying Toti and moving to Rome, she belonged to the educated, intellectual circles of the capital, she and her husband possessed a library of around ten thousand volumes, she spoke four languages, and she participated in various political movements.

⁶ Individual exhibitions of Marinka Dallos: 1968: Cosenza, Galleria La Bussola; 1969: Capri, Palazzo Cerio; 1970: Luzzara, Café Zavattini; 1971: Caltanissetta, Rotary Club; 1972: Rome, Galleria Ciak; 1973: Teramo, Galleria G4; 1974: Rome, Tor de'Conti; 1975: Luzzara, VIII. Rassegna Nazionale; 1976: Ferrara-Pomposa, Palazzo della Ragione; 1977: Rome, Palazzo Braschi; 1977: Pavia, Castello Visconteo; 1977: Lodi, Palazzo Civico; 1980: Budapest, Kulturális Kapcsolatok Intézete; 1985: Cassino, Galleria Guglielmina Grilli; 1985: Kecskemét, Magyar Naiv Művészek Múzeuma; 1985: Perbál, Falusi Galéria; 1985: Budapest, Műgyűjtők Galériája; 1988: Lauro, Palazzo Pignatelli; 1988: Budapest, Műgyűjtők Galériája. The list of collective exhibitions was published in *Dallos Marinka festőné kiállítása, exhibition catalogue* (Budapest: Kulturális Kapcsolatok Intézete, 1980), 7.

⁷ Her correspondence with art critic Anatole Jakovsky, art historian Arsén Pohribny, artist Lajos Kassák, and his wife Klára Kassák, screenwriter Cesare Zavattini, and many others is preserved in the collection of La Casa Totiana in Rome.

⁸ Some of Marinka's pictures in which she united Hungarian folkloric elements and the Roman atmosphere are in the collection of La Casa Totiana: *L'isola Tiberina* (1985, oil on canvas, inv. no. MKD.Q.006), *Danze ungheresi in Piazza S. Ignazio* (1986, oil on canvas, inv. no. MKD.Q.028), *Fontana delle Tartarughe* (1985, oil on canvas, inv. no. MKD.Q.030).

⁹ "Nem véletlen az, hogy naiv festő vagyok, noha a naiv szónak számos jelentése van. Nem vagyok ártatlan, és azt hiszem, tanulatlan sem vagyok. A naiv művészet világnézet is, mert az alárendelt osztályok művészete. A naiv festő a természetes látását őrzi meg magában." in: Domokos Moldován, *Magyar naiv művészek nyomában* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1987), 241. Citation translated by the author.

She founded the group Romanaïf with four other Roman naïf painters, Amelia Pardo, Graziolina Rotunno, Alfredo Ruggeri and Maria Vicentini in order to institutionalize their artistic work and minimize the economic pressure of the art market on artistic creation.¹⁰ From 1969 on, she worked as a full-time professional painter, making a decent living by capitalizing on the popularity of naïf art during the 1970–80s in Italy and selling her paintings at relatively high prices. Therefore, though she was called a naïf artist in her lifetime, from a retrospective and critical art-historical viewpoint the term “pseudo-naïf” describes her artistic creation more accurately.

She painted about 350 paintings of different sizes, most of which belong to private collections. Her paintings belong to public collections in La Casa Totiana in Rome, Museo Nazionale Arti Naïfs Cesare Zavattini in Luzzara (IT), Magyar Naiv Művészek Múzeuma in Kecskemét (HU), Musée International d’Art Naif Anatole Jakovsky in Nice, Halle Saint Pierre in Paris, Musée International d’Art Naif Max Fourny in Vicq (FR), and Museo Internacional de Arte Naïf Manuel Moral in Jaén (SP).

In pre-World War II Hungary, as in many European countries, the popularity of dolls as toys designed for girls was unquestionable. We can find samples of very elaborate dolls belonging to families from an economically privileged background, and of simpler ones made of wooden sticks, strips cut out of old clothes and corn silk, predominantly in small, poor villages.¹¹ Thus Marinka Dallos’ fascination with dolls can easily be understood as a recollection of childhood memories, infused with nostalgia and longing for her homeland. The collection preserved in La Casa Totiana contains a variety of dolls from places visited by Marinka and her friends, including a Hungarian doll as well. We do not know the exact number of dolls in the collection during the painter’s lifetime, but it presumably contained more than 20 items (the quantity in the present-day collection). From a memoir, we know that Marinka used to bring a lot of dolls to Italy during the 1960s and ’70s when she could sell them as curiosities for a large amount of money.¹² Maria Edria Toffoli, ex-mayor of Luzzara, mentions a doll dressed Hungarian-style that she received from Marinka Dallos during a visit in Hungary and that has special emotional value for her.¹³

¹⁰ Description of the Romanaïf group and the introduction of its members are available in: Marinka Dallos et al., *Il fenomeno naïf, Carte segrete* 28 (1975), 43-72.

¹¹ László Felföldi et al., *Magyar Néprajz VI. Népzene, néptánc, népi játék*, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988-2002), 551-552, last accessed October 31, 2014, <http://mek.niif.hu/02100/02152/html/06/103.html>

¹² Information received June 15, 2014. from Ms. Andrea Rényi, the mother of whom once travelled with Marinka Dallos from Budapest to Rome and witnessed the transportation of dolls.

¹³ As in Emilio Pozzi, *Marinka Dallos, series “I Maestri naïfs”* (Luzzara: Museo Nazionale Arti Naïfs Cesare Zavattini, 1997), 3.

These dolls have a very important role in helping us understand Marinka's art. In what follows, I would like to introduce dolls by responding to two questions. The first asks how they were used during processes of artistic creation. Here, I will examine some dolls preserved at La Casa Totiana. The second question addresses how dolls can be re-evaluated as reliable sources when reconstructing the folk tradition of a specific region. In the second case, I will not speak about Marinka's dolls but about the ones that I found during folkloristic research in her hometown, Lőrinci. As Marinka was not only a painter, but, as I have already mentioned, an unofficial doll-merchant as well, we can presume that she used to be familiar with the dolls in folkloric costumes which were produced and collected in Lőrinci from the 1960s to the 1980s.

The basic question when I started to examine the oeuvre of Marinka Dallos together with her collection of dolls was determining whether a true relationship existed between the two without forcing them to correspond. The answer was given by other objects which once belonged to Marinka, many of which are recognizable in her pictures. They were used as models, without any modification to their appearance in her depiction of them. So they can be conceived as primary pictorial sources, in the same way we can regard elements of old photographs, ceramics, masks or posters as models.¹⁴ However, the role of dolls is not as simple as that of the above mentioned objects. When examining a doll, we must keep in mind that it has a human shape and thus represents a person of a certain age, gender, cultural background, and even a special emotional connection between the possessor and the object due to the doll's primary role of being the person's toy from a very young age. Thus, making distinctions between different artistic approaches to the use of dolls is crucial. In the following, I will discuss dolls that Marinka Dallos used as sources, taking a different attitude towards the model in each case. I will address them as prostheses, mirrors, models and inspirational sources of the artist's imagination.

Considering the traditional, substitutional role of a doll in a girl's life from the viewpoint of the learning process of femininity, I will first examine the relationship between mother and child in the pictures of Marinka Dallos.

¹⁴ The rubber Lenin mask visible in the picture entitled *Fiori e maschere* (1965, oil on canvas, location unknown, black and white reproduction inv. no. MKD.ALB.2.002, diapositive reproduction in colors inv. no. MKD.NEG.05.06.), the broken ceramic vase depicted on the picture entitled *Sgranatura e sussurri* (1971, oil on canvas, private collection, reproduction in colors inv. no. MKD.ALB.2.005), ornamental ceramic plates with flowery motifs visible on the picture entitled *Bubos* (1970, oil on canvas, private collection, reproduction in colors available in Pozzi, *Marinka Dallos*, 23.) and the photo book representing various cats showing the same posture as depicted in *Tempio di Apollo* (1989, oil on canvas, in the collection of LCT, inv. no. MKD.Q.029) are preserved in the collection of La Casa Totiana, Rome.

Except for one example where the artist worked from a photo, babies and small children in her pictures are static, schematic and anatomically incorrect figures.¹⁵ Marinka Dallos never had any children, although motherhood was a female topos she often expressed through her paintings.¹⁶ The frequent evocation of the topic of motherhood in her paintings can supposedly be understood as a substitution for something she never experienced but longed for. Depictions of babies are absent from her legacy, except for one instance. Marinka used the original image of a baby on a poster as a template.¹⁷ (**Figure 2**) On the opposite side of the sheet, she copied the contours of the body in order to get an anatomically correct sketch. This method reveals her study of the anatomy of a baby's body and partially explains the rigid and unnatural look of the small children in her pictures. It appears that the basic understanding of the relationship between a girl and her doll as one that duplicates the relationship between mother and child never changed in the case of Marinka Dallos. This is why I define some of her dolls as prostheses for something she never had; she missed it and tried to substitute something else for it.



Figure 2. Upper image: reproduction of a baby. Lower image: Marinka Dallos: Baby.

Leaving behind the general topic of dolls as tools used for the purpose of educating small girls for parental roles and moving one step closer to the specific dolls in Marinka's collection, I will examine how she used them as models. The first example chosen from the collection is the "gypsy woman" doll.¹⁸ Until I discovered Marinka's sequence of paintings called *Zingariade*, in which she depicted the life of Roma wayfarers (also present in her hometown during her childhood), I did not even realise that it was a doll depicting

¹⁵ The picture entitled *Zolika* (1972, oil on canvas, private collection, black and white reproduction inv. no MKD.ALB.2.016, diapositive reproduction in colors inv. no MKD.NEG.06.06.) was painted after a photo possessed by the artist and it meticulously copies the photograph's representation of the subject (a baby). The photo is also preserved in La Casa Totiana.

¹⁶ Some representative paintings of Marinka Dallos that depict motherhood and feature anatomically incorrect or sketchy figures of children are *Madonna laica* (Secular Madonna, 1967, oil on canvas, in the collection of LCT, inv. no. MKD.Q.034), *La nicchia* (1969, oil on canvas, reproduction in colors inv. no. MKD.ALB.1.025), *Verso la casa della nonna* (Toward My Grandmother's House, 1971, oil on canvas, private collection, black and white reproduction inv. no. MKD.ALB.2.001), *Con la stagione degli aironi* (Heron Season, 1972, oil on canvas, private collection, black and white reproduction inv. no. MKD.ALB.2.019, diapositive reproduction in colors inv. no. MKD.NEG.19.08) *La regina zingara* (Gypsy Queen, 1974, oil on canvas, private collection, black and white reproduction inv. no. MKD.ALB.1.055/1, diapositive reproduction in colors inv. no. MKD.NEG.08.13), and a second version of *Madonna laica* (1983, oil on canvas, private collection, black and white reproduction inv. no. MKD.ALB.3.021).

¹⁷ See graphic with inv. no. MKD.GR.037.

¹⁸ Inv. no. MKD.BA.01.



Figure 3. Upper image: Doll representing a gipsy woman. Lower image: Marinka Dallos: *Amâl*. 1971.

a Roma woman.¹⁹ The Zingariade paintings were created between 1965 and 1974 and they represent characteristic moments of Roma life, such as a merry funeral, musicians playing their instruments, wayfarers camping outside a town in moonlight or picnicking or cooking over fire in daytime, surrounded by their carriages. The doll has long, black hair, tanned skin, wears a yellow blouse and a long, colorful, flowery skirt, abundantly decorated with flounce, and holds a tambourine in her hands. Lacking evidence about the origin of this doll, by making a comparison of the doll with the Zingariade paintings I can only deduce that Marinka viewed it as representing a Roma woman. **(Figure 3)** The character named *Amâl* appears not only as subject of the painting with the same title, but also as a figure visible in the right lower corner of *Zingariade: La romni*, and a very similar figure appears in the painting entitled *Zingariade: Eppure vi hanno prestato i cavalli dei giorni*, too.²⁰ The physical characteristics of *Amâl* and her way of dressing are almost identical to those of the Roma doll. There is one more detail that is worth mentioning about the doll: it is fixed in a sitting position. This doll has never been designed for playing, her arms and legs are not moveable, it is only a decoration. In her sitting position her legs are fully

¹⁹ The exact number of the Zingariade paintings is unknown. Those which are recognizable from originals, reproductions or written information in exhibition catalogues or in the notes of the painter, in chronological order, are the following: *Funerale allegro* (The Merry Funeral, 1965, oil on canvas, private collection, black and white reproduction inv. no. MKD.ALB.1.006, diapositive reproduction in colors inv. no. MKD.NEG.01.05). *La carrozza rossa* (The Red Carriage, 1970, oil on canvas, private collection, black and white reproduction inv. no. MKD.ALB.1.032, diapositive reproduction in colors inv. no. MKD.NEG.03.01). *La notizia* (The News, 1970, oil on canvas, private collection, black and white reproduction inv. no. MKD.ALB.1.037, diapositive reproduction in colors inv. no. MKD.NEG.04.04). *Amâl* (Amal, 1971, oil on canvas, private collection, reproduction in colors in: Mario De Micheli and Renzo Margonari, *I naïfs italiani* (The Italian Naïfs, Parma: Passera & Agosta Tota Editori S.A.S., 1972), 133). *Zingariade: "... nel loro cuore di cento ettari c'è posto per un mondo..."* (Gypsyiad: "... in their heart of a hundred hectares there's enough space for the whole world..."), 1971, oil on canvas, private collection, black and white reproduction inv. no. MKD.ALB.1.054, diapositive reproduction in colors inv. no. MKD.NEG.16.13). *Zingariade: La romni* (Gypsyiad: The Romani, 1971, oil on canvas, private collection, black and white reproduction in the exhibition catalog *Marinka Dallos* (Roma: Galleria d'arte CIAK, 29 maggio – 15 giugno 1972), s.p.). *Zingariade: Eppure vi hanno prestato i cavalli dei giorni* (They even borrowed the day horses, 1972, oil on canvas, Museo Nazionale Arti Naïfs Cesare Zavattini, Luzzara). *Zigánka* (Gypsy Woman, 1972, oil on canvas, private collection, black and white reproduction inv. no. MKD.ALB.1.055/2). *Zingariade: l'ultimo calderaio* (The Last Tinker, 1972, oil on canvas, private collection, without reproduction. It is mentioned in the exhibition catalogues *Marinka Dallos* (Roma: Galleria d'arte CIAK, 29 maggio – 15 giugno 1972) and *Marinka Dallos Toti* (Teramo: Galleria G4, 1-23 febbraio 1973). *Zingariade: Quando toccano i violini* (When They Play the Violin, 1972, oil on canvas, Luigi Braghioli collection, a reproduction in color of the painting is visible on the collector's website, last accessed January 4, 2016. <http://www.lupobraghi.it/Quadri/Html/Htm-C-D/Dallos.htm>). *La regina zingara* (The Gypsy Queen, 1974, oil on canvas, private collection, black and white reproduction inv. no. MKD.ALB.1.055/1, diapositive reproduction in colors inv. no. MKD.NEG.08.13).

²⁰ See footnote no. 19.

covered by her skirt. Following the doll's example, Marinka depicts almost every female Roma character in the same sitting position with legs covered by their skirts (the best example is *La carrozza rossa* with five female characters in the same position).²¹

What makes this comparison even more interesting is the existence of the photographs which were used as direct sources for the pictures.²² (**Figure 4**) These photos were taken in Italy, presumably during the 1960s. She faithfully copied many of the figures and some objects visible on these photos onto her paintings either without any modification or with some slight rotation to make them fit in the composition. (**Figure 5**) However, everything else in these paintings is the product of her imagination and memory. She did not only select usable elements visible in the photos, but also transformed the figures into less real, more romantic, fairytale-like characters in order to make them correspond to her artistic language. Taking a look at their faces, dresses and postures, one can immediately recognise the features of her doll. She used it as a model to modify some elements of the photographed reality in order to make it more beautiful than it really was.



Figure 4. A gipsy family. Photograph 1971.



Figure 5. Marinka Dallos: *La romni*. 1971.

A different approach I wish to point out is the use of two very simple dolls representing peasant women.²³ The red one is carrying a scythe in her hands and the other one in a blue dress is carrying a faggot on her back. Both are made of cornhusk. These dolls come from the northern Italian region of Friuli and they were given to Marinka not long before the artist died of cancer in 1992 at the age of 63.²⁴ During the last year of her life she was not able to leave her home because of her poor health but she kept on painting until the last day of her life. She was aware of her approaching death and she expressed her feelings in her letters and also in her pictures. In a letter dated August 4, 1992, she wrote the following text to a friend in Lőrinci: "It would be nice to have a chat with you about things going on, and if I can keep the Great Reaper outside our door stubbornly, I might succeed."²⁵

²¹ See footnote no. 19.

²² Pictures referred to above belong to the private photography collection of Marinka Dallos in La Casa Totiana, Rome, inv. nos. MKD.FP.VI.13, MKD.FP.VI.14, MKD.FP.VI.15, 16.

²³ Inv. nos. MKD.BA.04, MKD.BA.05.

²⁴ They were presents given to Marinka between 1985 and 1990 by Pia Abelli Toti, current director of La Casa Totiana. Information received from Pia Abelli Toti, June 18, 2014.

²⁵ "Jó lenne egyszer szépen kibeszélni magunkat, elmondani véleményünket a világról és ha önféjűen továbbra is a kapun kívül tudom tartani a Nagykaszást (sic!), talán sikerülni fog." In a letter written to Mrs. Józsefné Etelka Cserháti, resident of Lőrinci dated August 4, 1992. The letter is possessed by the addressee.



Figure 6. Upper image: two dolls made of cornhusk. Ca. 1985.

She expressed her thoughts on death in her pictures, too. During her life she depicted the allegory of the Parcae from Greek mythology three times. In the first two paintings, both from 1983, she depicted the goddesses of destiny as three Hungarian women of three different ages spinning thread.²⁶ In the third one, painted in 1992, instead of women engaged in spinning she depicts three standing female figures as reapers, a common allegory for Death, as mentioned in her letter cited above.²⁷ Comparing the cornhusk dolls with the reaper women, the resemblance between them is unquestionable, both in the style and color of their clothes, in their posture and the tools carried by them. **(Figure 6)** In the case of the picture entitled *Le mie parche* ("My Parcae"), she used dolls both as substitutes for the real-life models that she lacked during the last period of her life, and as her inspirational imaginative sources for the depiction of unknown, approaching, yet peaceful death.

Finally, I would like to discuss the only doll in the collection that wears an authentic Hungarian dress.²⁸ As I have already described above, Marinka's art was strongly connected with Hungarian popular culture and folklore. She left Hungary at the age of 22 and she lived all her life in Italy, though she and her husband made annual visits to Hungary. The general role of objects representing Hungarian popular culture in their house in Rome was to remind Marinka of her roots. Letters exchanged with Hungarian friends before their visit to Rome contain useful information on this point. In these letters, in answer to the question "What shall we bring you as a present?" Marinka always asked for traditional ceramics, textiles and folkloric costumes.²⁹ Furthermore, her paintings depicting a generic female figure wearing traditional Hungarian clothes are always entitled "Maria," which is her own, original name.³⁰

²⁶ *Le parche* (The Parcae, 1983, oil on canvas, private collection, black and white reproduction inv. no. MKD.ALB.3.019), *Le parche / Passato, presente, futuro* (The Parcae / Past, Present, Future, 1983, oil on canvas, private collection, black and white reproduction inv. no. MKD.ALB.3.020, diapositive reproduction in colors inv. no. MKD.NEG.11.03).

²⁷ *Le mie parche* (My Parcae, 1991, oil on canvas, in the collection of LCT, inv. no. MKD.Q.041).

²⁸ Inv. no. MKD.BA.02.

²⁹ See letter sent by Erzsébet Istvánné Korsós from Budapest to Marinka Dallos in Rome dated June 31, 1966 (inv. no. MKD.CORR.I.4/5) and another one with the same sender and addressee dated September, 1972 (inv. no. MKD.CORR.I.10/12).

³⁰ Various paintings with the same title and identical subject are: *Maria in bruno* (Maria in Brown, 1979, oil on canvas, private collection, color reproduction published in *Dallos Marinka festőné kiállítása, exhibition*

By entitling her pictures using her own name she converts them into self-representations or containers of her presence, despite their generic subject. During her quite frequent visits to Hungary, she discovered various regions of the country, collected information about specific characteristics of local folklore, and often tried on traditional dresses of the region. In a home movie filmed by Gianni Toti during one of their visits in Hungary (a photo taken from the film is reproduced here) Marinka wears the same type of dress as the doll in her collection.³¹ It is called the “matyó” style. **(Figure 7)** This is not the typical dress of her region of origin, Lőrinci and its surroundings, but comes from eastern Hungary.³² As she was very aware of the differences among the folkloric traditions of each Hungarian region, despite appreciating their colorful diversity, she never depicted women dressed in folkloric styles different from that of her place of origin. Marinka stuck strictly to the depiction of the so-called “palóc” dresses in order to conserve not only her national, but her regional identity as well, thus converting them into mirrors of herself.³³ Although in *La Casa Totiana* we find no doll dressed in that way, we can find some in Lőrinci.



Figure 7. Upper image: Doll in Hungarian folkloric costume. Lower image: Marinka Dallos in a “matyó” costume. Detail of home movie „Lorinci partenza per Mezokovesd colori 1965”

In most criticism written about Marinka Dallos during her lifetime, she was praised above all for the authenticity of her depictions of Hungarian peasant life and folklore.³⁴ However, lacking information about the knowledge on which the opinion of each art critic was based, I decided to choose a different

catalogue (Budapest: Kulturális Kapcsolatok Intézete, 1980, front cover), *Maria in viola* (1982, oil on canvas, private collection, color reproduction published in Sándor Lintner, “*Dallos Marinka világa*,” *Magyar Hírek* (02.02.1986), 25.), *Maria in verde* (Maria in Green, 1985, private collection, visible in the 4th episode of the documentary film by Cesare Zavattini entitled *Viaggio nel pianeta Naif*, produced by Rai 3 channel in 1992. The picture is visible from 26 minutes 40 seconds, last accessed October 23, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjVLX9PygWY>; *Maria in rosso* (Maria in Red, 1989, private collection, color slide reproduction inv. no. MKD.NEG.13.12.), and a series of four seasons with the same subject entitled *Le quattro stagioni* (The Four Seasons, 1990, oil on canvas, in the collection of LCT, inv. nos. MKD.Q.058, MKD.Q.0589, MKD.Q.060, MKD.Q.061).

³¹ Home Movies Fondo Toti, dvd 1, no. 11. “*Lorinci partenza per Mazokovesd colori 1965*,” available at *La Casa Totiana*.

³² Further information about the matyó territory and its ethnography and folklore can be found in: Balassa Iván and Gyula Ortutay, *Hungarian Ethnography and Folklore* (Budapest: Corvina, 1979), 350, last accessed October 31, 2014, <http://mek.oszk.hu/02700/02790/html/107.html>

³³ The ethnic group of the palóc is referred to as “palots” in English language literature. Further information about the palots territory and its ethnography and folklore can be found in: Balassa Iván and Gyula Ortutay, *Hungarian Ethnography and Folklore* (Budapest: Corvina, 1979), 344-345, last accessed October 31, 2014, <http://mek.oszk.hu/02700/02790/html/107.html>

³⁴ Some examples are Renzo Margonari, *Naifs?* (Parma: La Nazionale, 1973), 137, Giorgio di Genova’s introduction in *Marinka Dallos, exhibition catalogue* (Cosenza: La Bussola, 1971) s.p., Arsén Pohribny: “*Naif?*” in: *Marinka Dallos, exhibition catalogue* (Roma: Galleria d’arte CIAK, 1972) s.p.

method to examine the question of authenticity. Even though I was not able to find entire sets of folkloric costumes during my research for material evidence of folk tradition in Lőrinci besides household tools and black and white photos, I found a significant number of dolls wearing folkloric costumes.

These dolls were popular in the 1960–70s and they are examples of recycling old materials.³⁵ When pieces of traditional clothing were damaged, they were not thrown out immediately but were cut in pieces and the undamaged parts were used as materials for dressing dolls. These dolls found in Lőrinci wear clothes made of the same materials and colors women used to wear in the village during the first half of the 20th century. As these were given to young wives as marriage presents, the dolls are often dressed in the traditional bridal outfit or that of a young wife. These garments were considered the most ornate, festive and expensive items of clothing. By confronting attire visible in old photographs with descriptions of occasions and methods that conditioned the way of dressing and with colors and materials visible on these dolls, one can reconstruct how the village's folkloric costumes looked in general.

While the majority of people in pre-World War II Lőrinci still wore folkloric dress, in the post-war period modern-style dress became more popular, parallel with industrialization and the diffusion of socialist political ideology in the region. When I describe the folkloric dress tradition, I therefore refer to tendencies perceptible during the interwar period. A full female attire consisted of a colorful coif on the top of the head, a blouse, a shawl fixed on the waist by a belt or ribbon, a tea-length skirt with underskirts (the number of underskirts varied between three and six), an apron and stockings with shoes or boots.³⁶ Three main types of clothing must be distinguished when describing female garments. The most formal one was the black attire worn during the biggest religious events and festivals and every first Sunday of each month by all women, regardless of their age.³⁷ The second was a garment worn during summer festivals, at weddings, and on Sundays in general. It was a combination of a blouse with small flowery patterns and a dark skirt decorated with colorful ribbons on its edge, accompanied by a black apron.³⁸ The blouse and the skirt were often but

³⁵ Four dolls dressed as newlywed wives and one doll dressed as a bride were found in Lőrinci. They are in the possession of Mirjam Dénes (author), Antal Varga (ex-mayor) and Józsefné Liptai (doll-maker). The attire of both types of dolls follows the pattern visible in old photos and the ethnographic description cited in this text. The dating of the dolls is based on information received from the owners.

³⁶ The description of traditional female clothing in Lőrinci is a summary of research made by László Nagy and published in: László Nagy, *Lőrinci krónika* (Lőrinci, 2003), 288-294.

³⁷ Nagy, *Lőrinci krónika*, 288.

³⁸ Nagy, *Lőrinci krónika*, 290.

not invariably made of the same textile. The third and simplest type of clothing, everyday work clothes, was made of the cheapest type of textiles, e.g. blue-dyed fabric accompanied by a dark apron adequate for work.³⁹

There are two special garments which are very different from the above-mentioned categories. The first one is the official attire of the bride, which is an all-white costume decorated with a lacy shawl, a blue ribbon belt and a wreath made of rosemary and pearls.⁴⁰ This is the only female costume which is accompanied by a white apron instead of a black one. The other outfit is the newlywed woman's costume, which is the most decorative of all garments. It consists of a blouse and a skirt made of expensive fabric with light, vivid colors and flowery patterns and a black apron.⁴¹ The white lacy shawl of the bride is part of the set, but this time it is augmented by a flowery or tricolor ribbon on the waist. On the top of the head newlywed wives wore a special, big coif called "bokor" (literally meaning bush) decorated by colorful ribbons.

Returning to the question of dolls and the putative authenticity of Marinka's pictorial representation of Hungarian village life and folklore, we can make the following statements. After comparing photos representing women in folkloric costumes, dolls dressed in traditional costumes (using original fabrics in Lőrinci during the 1960s and 1970s), and Marinka Dallos' paintings representing female figures of the same village, we can state that Marinka knew the dress traditions of her region very well in general. **(Figure 8)** She knew what a bride looked like, and what colors were worn by women of different ages. But we also notice that she was not very familiar with how these clothes were worn. Marinka often depicts women in monochrome dresses with bright colors.⁴² But we can never find blouses and skirts with the same color and pattern on dolls or in photos. The explanation is that women had only a few sets of clothing, so they usually matched blouses and skirts of different sets. Secondly, dolls always wear black or dark colored aprons except for the bride. Aprons had a double



Figure 8. Images from the upper left to the lower right:
 Doll dressed as a bride, ca. 1960-1970's.
 A bride from Lőrinci. Photography, 1950's.
 Marinka Dallos: Sulla soglia. 1969
 Doll dressed as a newlywed wife, ca. 1970-1980's.
 A newlywed wife from Lőrinci. Photography, 1950's.
 Marinka Dallos: Il giorno dopo. 1972.

³⁹ Nagy, *Lőrinci krónika*, 290-291.

⁴⁰ Nagy, *Lőrinci krónika*, 291.

⁴¹ Nagy, *Lőrinci krónika*, 292-293.

⁴² See the following pictures as examples: *La creatura* (1978, oil on canvas, Musée International d'Art Naif Anatole Jakovsky, Nice), *Nel cortile della Luna* (1989, oil on canvas, private collection, reproduction in colors published in *Naifs: 20 anni, Premio internazionale „Giannino Grossi”* (Varenna: Pro Varenna, 1990), 41.), *Ragazze. scalze* (1992, oil on canvas, in the collection of LCT, inv. no. MKD.Q.037).

function: to prevent one's skirt from getting dirty, and to hide the opening of the skirt at the front where it was fixed on the waist. Marinka tended to depict women with white or bright colored aprons without considering their function (preventing one's skirt from getting dirty), and many times she even forgot to add them to the costumes, so the opening cuts on the skirts be visible in her pictures if she intended to depict them realistically.⁴³ As she depicted women in skirts without aprons quite often, I assume that sometimes she forgot about the function of this piece of clothing and did not realise that the picture she created was unreal. To sum up, figures wearing folkloric dresses in her paintings are authentic from a visual point of view but they are often incompatible and dysfunctional with the cultural atmosphere they should fit in.

In my paper, I have examined the relationship between artworks of Marinka Dallos and the dolls either possessed by her during her life or originating from the territory whose ethnographic culture she represented in her pictures. My research was based on an analysis of single objects, archive photographs, and documents preserved in the archive of La Casa Totiana in Rome. By connecting the above listed documents with paintings by the artist and by considering biographical information, I succeeded in defining some dolls in the artist's collection as models, prostheses, mirrors, and sources of inspiration for her artistic imagination. To conclude my discussion of the doll's role in artistic creation based on the observations I made in my paper, I wish to emphasize that the artistic value of the dolls is absolutely irrelevant from the point of view of Dallos's artistic legacy. However, by reflecting on the geographical, cultural and documentative importance of these objects and finding out how they were related to the artist, we can get one step closer to understanding the process of artistic creation.

⁴³ See footnote 42. A peasant woman making butter wearing an everyday attire with a white apron is visible on the following picture: *Lora dello sciamano* (1990, in the collection of LCT, inv. no. MKD.Q.047).

Milica Stojanov – Museum of Childhood, Belgrade, Serbia

Museum of Childhood – From Play to Art

Introduction

Interpretations of and research into childhood and everyday culture have become increasingly important in today's society as an integral part of contemporary paradigms which strive to surpass broad, official historical narratives and thoughts in order to privilege personal history and intimate contexts. These concerns are reflected in different aspects of humanistic disciplines such as sociology, history, anthropology and others, but also in museology, contemporary art, literature etc.

This process has introduced a number of problems for academic disciplines, such as determining what constitute suitable source materials, competent testimonies, and appropriate methodologies, with constant dilemmas on how to interpret this simultaneously individual and collective experience – how to avoid overstating its autonomy as a universal/biological category, and, on the other hand, how not to overemphasize its independence from social and cultural contexts, while still providing an interpretation that grasps all the complexities involved.

Interpreting subjects of childhood, identity, memory, and history within the modern and contemporary field of visual arts, also has a very well-established practice. In contemporary art, there have been a great number of practices based on transposing and recontextualizing material with related history. It is not uncommon, especially in societies where "official" historical narratives are constantly changing, and frequently ignore the memories of entire

generations, for artists to reinterpret or re-fashion historical information, often deliberately displaced, but physically present through found objects/documents, sourced from either private or collective archives/collections and memory.

The Museum of Childhood is such a project - dedicated to collecting and using found objects related to childhood and private history, largely rooted in the Yugoslavian social and cultural context. It was initiated in 2006 by multimedia artist Vladimir Peric (1962) from Belgrade, Serbia, as an artistic concept that soon developed into a complex project that fuses practices of the contemporary collecting, art and museological/curatorial fields. Objects from the collection are used in order to interpret childhood as a category which functions between private, intimate context and wide-ranging external factors of society and culture which influence and shape childhood, combining individual experience with reflection on those multilayered concepts.

One part of the Museum of Childhood's vast and complex collection is the rubber toy of Donald Duck produced in Yugoslavia's Biserka factory in 1964, under official license from Walt Disney. In this paper, that toy will be used as a central tool for exploring the notion of dolls intended for children's play as both a cultural and an artistic phenomenon. This Donald Duck rubber doll has great documentary and historical value which can serve to delineate the social and cultural context in which it shifted from being an active factor in culture and childhood to an abandoned object at flea markets. But within the practice of the Museum of Childhood, which equally includes contemporary art engagement with the collection/heritage/past, this rubber toy also becomes a part of art installations.¹ Through artistic language, it becomes an element with allegorical significance, on which a lot of personal emotions and reflections of the author on childhood memory and turbulent socio-cultural context are projected. **(Figure 1)**



Figure 1. Donald Duck rubber toy, produced at Biserka factory, Zagreb, 1964.

A condition of determining all the layers involved in collecting and transposing these childhood toys into the artistic context is to understand their position within the childhood (inevitably a socially constructed phenomenon influenced by dominant socio-cultural context) of the author and several

¹ In the Museum of Childhood, the installations consisting of rubber toys produced in Yugoslavian factories take multiple forms and ideas, references and connotations (so far, ten different installations have been exhibited), but in this paper only one group of four installations will be considered – those in which rubber toy of Donald Duck is used.

generations of children who grew up in socialist Yugoslavia.² Therefore, the first part of this paper will be dedicated to the contextualization of the object within the framework in which it was produced, used and discarded, and the second part will be dedicated to interpreting structural features of the artworks and artistic processes which were used to transpose this found object into the domain of artistic value.

Contextualization of the Donald Duck Rubber Toy Within Childhood

In recent history childhood has been considered both as a separate stage in modern life, allowing the subject a relatively high degree of autonomy compared to earlier historical periods, and as a category representing a segment of the population that functioned as a target of propagandistic work, in order to impose desirable ideological and belief constructs so that it could be properly formed for the future. In sociology and anthropology, numerous methodologies have been developed in order to respond to the complexity of childhood as a socially constructed phenomenon influenced by various elements.

In every cultural entity, especially in societies with totalitarian characteristics, childhood is shaped by numerous external factors and tools. Mišković argues that there are three main tools and processes which function simultaneously but which can easily produce contradictions when influencing and shaping the delicate period of childhood in general - institutions, family, and the process of individualization (Mišković, 2005: 203). The tools mentioned were inevitably applied to a great extent in socialist Yugoslavia. Individualization refers to giving responsibility to children to create their own world but also to be a functional part of society. The family participates in raising the child and transferring inculcating in him or her their points of view and the ideologies they believe in. Institutional tools imply the existence of systematic constructs such as schools and other organizations where children are taught with general educational contents and positive values, but are also imposed by official political ideals and ideological constructs.³

² In this paper, the term "socialist Yugoslavia" will be used as a reference to the State of Yugoslavia after World War II when socialist system was introduced. Historically this federation with six constituent republics, changed its name several times: from Democratic Federative Yugoslavia in 1945 to Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia from 1946 to 1963, to Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia in the period from 1963 until 1992, when the territory broke apart due to civil war.

³ Among various organizations whose membership was composed of children, the most prominent organization in socialist Yugoslavia was the Association of Pioneers of Yugoslavia, founded in 1942 at the First Congress of the United Alliance of Antifascist Youth of Yugoslavia and it encompassed children between the ages of seven and fifteen. "Patriotism and preservation of basic values of socialist Yugoslavia, such as the National Liberation War, brotherhood and unity, as well as the personality of Josip Broz Tito,

When exploring the theme of childhood, it is of great importance to understand the economic, political and cultural marks of the context which influences children's education and upbringing, their play and free time, as well as the creation of diverse products intended for children, from literature to toys.

Large-scale toy production in Yugoslavia did not begin until the period between two world wars, but it was only after the Second World War that more children could acquire these products. At that time, the production of toys started to display greater diversity.

With industrialization came signs of the advent of consumerist culture. The proliferation of mass consumer society in Yugoslavia occurred during the sixties.

"The birth of consumer society at the political and ideological level can be placed in 1958 when, at the height of the Yugoslav economic miracle, the Program of the Communist League of Yugoslavia recommended more intensive development of the retail network and a greater supply of goods for consumers; notably, in that same year, the song "Mala djevojčica" (Little Girl) better known as "Tata, kupi mi auto" (Daddy, Buy Me a Car), won at the festival of popular music in Opatija. The wishes mentioned in this musical piece – bicycle, scooter, doll with a pram, cakes, candy and oranges and window shopping in town that is also sung about, announced the consumer revolution that took place in the 1960s." (Duda, 2014: 63). Special benefits accrued from the economic reform of 1965, which reduced the role of the state in the economy and introduced market socialism (Lampe, 2000: 266). Even before that, the economy was slowly becoming more independent from state administration and, according to statistics, the period saw a significant rise in production (Vučetić, 2012: 280). Though social reality was not one-sided and there were oscillations in the degree of availability and variety of consumer goods and financial resources for purchasing them, economic development and political events certainly influenced the scale of production and increased the presence of consumer goods in everyday life, as well as the presence of products intended for children's education and leisure.

constituted the content of many activities organized for pioneers, but ideology was not always crucial. In the work with children, general humanistic values (...) were promoted through the activities of Union of Pioneers, (...) namely the promotion of natural and technical sciences, opening of pioneer bookshops and theatres, organization of pioneer bonfires and camping, pioneer holiday homes and sports competitions, pioneer relay, printing of magazines, manuals and other publications, development of international cooperation and carrying out of numerous activities taking place in pioneer homes and pioneer residential complexes." (Duda, 2014: 29)



Figure 2. Paper part of one of the few types of toy packaging from Biserka factory with logotype and name of the factory.

As part of the industrialization and modernization process in socialist Yugoslavia, several factories for the production of toys and games emerged, and some factories, oriented toward providing other goods, started to include production of toys.⁴ A rubber toy of Donald Duck was made at the Biserka Factory for production of toys, balls and games, established in 1956, possibly by the merging of some previously existing toy manufacturers.⁵ **(Figure 2)**

The model discussed within this paper dates to 1964. It was produced in the technique of cast rubber from a two-part mold and was colored using several modes of painting – air brush, hand painting, and dipping the toy in the paint.

The Biserka factory was the only one among several toy manufacturers with an official license to produce toy characters to which the Walt Disney company extended the use of its copyright.⁶ During its large-scale production, from 1956 until the end of the eighties, the factory introduced toys based on 37 different Disney characters.⁷ In the Yugoslavian context, Disney was also present in other domains of culture and entertainment – literature, comics, television and film, as well as products such as notebooks, covers, badges (pins), t-shirts, and posters.

In the Yugoslavian context, Disney characters first appeared in the form of comics. Disney images first appeared in 1932 in the illustrated children's magazine "Veseli četvrtak" (Looking Forward to Thursday, Draginčić, Zupan, 2005), and then continued to appear in different forms, both in newspapers and special issues named mostly after the most popular Disney character – Mickey Mouse. There was also a weekly magazine called "Paja Patak" (Donald Duck) introduced in 1938, but its circulation lasted only a little over a year

⁴ The manufacturers documented within the collection of Museum of Childhood are: "Mehanotehnika" in Izola, "Jugoplastika" in Split, "25. maj" in Labin, "Tik Tik" in Krapina, "Kosova-Inex" and "Nišplast" in Niš, "Bata" in Beograd, "Ris" in Zagreb.

⁵ This could be traced through an inquiry into models, logotypes, and rubber material within the vast collection of toys in the funds of Museum of Childhood. These manufacturers probably included "Zorka" and "Uzor" because their logotypes ceased to appear on toys after the "Biserka" logo came into use, and some toys from "Biserka" were made according to molds which existed in previous factories.

⁶ It is not known exactly when the license came into force, but some conclusions can be drawn indirectly. The models of other rubber toys that we have in the collection, which are marked with article numbers 58 and 69, are both labeled with the year of production as 1960, so we assume that in that one year, the factory produced around 12 different rubber models. The lowest article number of any Disney toy in our collection is 31, which means that this model probably dates from 1958. So the official license can be dated to that year, but it may have been introduced at the very beginning of the factory's work, in 1956.

⁷ We can confirm this number of characters with toys from the collection of Museum of Childhood, but it is possible that more characters existed. Almost every character was produced in more than one variation, thus enlarging the overall number of rubber Disney toys to more than 80 different articles.

(Draginčić, Zupan, 2005). Disney has generally become a popular trademark of the daily newspaper “Politika,” one of the most widely read daily print media, especially its independent magazine “Politikin Zabavnik”. This magazine appeared in 1939 and had exclusive rights to the publication of Disney comics. Within this magazine, a special place was commonly granted to Donald Duck (from first issue to issue 162), on the third page within the gag panel. **(Figure 3)**



Figure 3. Third page of “Politikin zabavnik” with Donald Duck gag table, 1st issue, 1939.

After 1958, when ideological pressures greatly decreased, a large number of magazines came out, partially or completely dedicated to Disney comics.⁸ Disney comics were also present through series of picture books and books of different content, films, and number of additional products which provided and enriched children’s education, play, and leisure.

Production and consumption of Disney products in childhood was thus taking place in the context of ideological pluralism, in a climate of balance, based on the idea of Yugoslavia as a meeting point of the East and the West, but belonging to neither (Mihelj, 2011: 28). Within this synthetic framework, culture was viewed as a tool for educating and shaping young generations according to socialist principles, but with leisure and entertainment as a prominent feature. Therefore, parallel to materials imported from West such as Disney, there were forms of socialist entertainment such as “Never the Slave,” which emphasized the role of culture as a tool of socialist mobilization and progress.⁹ Popular entertainment was part of consumer culture and consumption, and it embodied the modernization and progress of society as well as marking Yugoslavian socialism as a different entity from other socialist societies.¹⁰ In such an eclectic context, it wasn’t unusual that children had

⁸ Here, we should mention “Miki” (Mickey) magazine (1966-1974) whose publisher was “Dečje novine” (Children’s Newspapers). At the beginning of the partnership, Walt Disney wrote a welcome letter to “Dečje novine” wishing them success in their future work. This letter was published in the first issue of “Miki” along with Walt Disney’s photograph and signature, which he had donated to the publisher: “In the Disney family of publishers,” says Srećko Jovanović the publisher, “we were received warmly, with some degree of surprise – as if we come from another planet. The image of us as a country and nation were strange, but mostly inaccurate and primitive. At that time we were somewhere in the middle by circulation and quality of releases – and there were magazines from nearly forty countries from five continents. ‘Miki’ had a constant reading public, and represented the first magazine of its kind in Eastern Europe.” (Zupan, 2006)

⁹ The comics strip “Never the Slave” had begun being published in 1958 (with large-scale circulation which lasted for 20 years) and soon developed its main characters – Mirko and Slavko, boy heroes and combatants in a Partizan unit, in other forms of appearance – within diverse products, including novels and feature films. They were considered to be the most popular characters from the Yugoslavian socialist context.

¹⁰ Examples of popular entertainment were visible already during the 1940s in diverse forms such as detective or romantic novels. But the proliferation of entertainment began during the 1950s (the historical conflict between Josip Broz Tito and Stalin happened in 1948, after which the Yugoslavian system made a radical departure from the strict Soviet model), and it became far more pronounced in the 1960s and

knowledge about characters who arrived from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, the Soviet Union, and, on the other side, France, West Germany, Italy, and the United States.

Walt Disney's comics and characters were among the symbols which came "imported from the West." It was the true embodiment of consumerist, American, globalist patterns, so it is not surprising that Disney's presence in various aspects of culture and leisure is viewed as one of the tools for implementing the narratives and ideas of American cultural imperialism, globalization, and capitalistic values. Much has been written on the ambivalent background of Disney's myths and constructs, disseminated in the form of products intended for children.

"They constitute a social environment inviting us all to join the great universal Disney family, which extends beyond all frontiers and ideologies, transcends differences between peoples and nations, and particularities of custom and language. Disney is the great supranational bridge across which all human beings may communicate with each other" (Dorfman and Matelar 1971: 28).

This is how the authors of the study *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in Disney Comics* criticize Disney, revealing the intentions and propaganda which stand behind the characters and rhetoric of the comics.

Among several aspects of the process of *disneyfication* and narratives which Disney introduced in order to disseminate its propaganda about consumer society, attitudes toward the "Third World," gender issues, and so on, I would like to focus on the Donald Duck character, since it is the main subject of this paper, and to emphasize some notions which relate to patterns in socialist thought.

The TV series "Disneyland" began to be shown in Yugoslavia in September 1966; Donald Duck was singled out by viewers as the most positive hero, citing the notion that "In Donald Duck there is often more human character than in a number of real persons who are brought forward via small screen every night into our homes" (Vučetić, 2011: 190). The fact that Donald Duck was viewed in the United States as "the world's diplomat" in the mission of fighting "Communist imperialism,"¹¹ and that critics in Yugoslavia, within

early 1970s. Afterwards, a significant turn was evident, particularly in 1971, when the popularly named Law against kitsch and trash was introduced.

¹¹ Terms from the text "Donald Duck and Diplomacy" from 1950 where the author suggests that Hollywood should be the capital city of a Marshall Plan of ideas, with statesmen and humanitarians such as Disney and Ford, and Donald Duck as the world's diplomat, representing western-style capitalist democracy. (Vučetić, 2011: 188).

newspapers inevitably controlled by the socialist authorities, saw Donald Duck as an extremely positive character, Vučetić finds to be an ambivalent and paradoxical situation. However, it is not unusual that Donald Duck as a character with common human weakness and flaws, common hobbies and aspirations, allowed the viewer an easy identification process, even within the socialist context. Within Disney narratives, Donald Duck is a character who always suggests some kind of rebellion toward the things in society that disturb his kind of life style and opinion. The authors of *How to Read Donald Duck* analyze various narratives in which Donald Duck shows a (justified) revolt against certain things but almost always fails at the end, often saying "Me and my big mouth" (Dorfman and Matelar 1971: 35), and providing a moral such as: Don't try to change anything; put up with what you have or the chances are you will end up with worse (Dorfman and Matelar 1971: 43). And it is that Donald Duck - the embodiment of social critique (but with limited effectiveness), who bears a trait which reveals the similarity between the two ideologies rather than their difference. This brand of social criticism with limits, often proving (in the *world of fantasy*) to be unnecessary and pointless and thus inculcating in children the feeling that nonconformity is senseless, is a common denominator of socialist and capitalist reality rather than a contrasting characteristic.

External constructs from ideological patterns to economic development influenced the children's world, and within it, the character and nature of play. Therefore, children in socialist Yugoslavia played games like "Partisans and Germans" as well as "cowboys and Indians." They also assimilated "imports" from the West, playing games such as "Indian fire" or singing "Ema esesa-esesa-pipija..." while jumping ropes and rubber bands.¹²

Disney rubber toys played a role in children's games based on *mimicry*. In the context of the general subject of the Conference and publication wherein this paper appears, the distinction between dolls and toys should be mentioned. Many definitions distinguish the two groups, but here they are both considered as tools intended for children's play, under one joint category: toys (figures) which embody animal forms, human forms and children heroes/fiction characters. For a further frame of reference, the categorization of play provided by sociologist Roger Caillois (*Man, Play and Games*, 2001) is used. According to this study, play is divided into four main categories: *Agon*, *Alea*, *Mimicry* and *Ilinx*. The third category suggests creating a fictive world using tools such as disguise, imitation, and masking, as well as miniature forms such

¹² This is an "adapted" version of the name of the Mississippi river. It was one of many products from the United States – such as jazz records and cinnamon chewing gum (Vučetić, 2011: 186)

as toy vehicles, weapons, dolls, home accessories and so on, in order to create a better illusion. In this way, a doll (a human-like figure) and the rubber figure of Donald Duck (children's hero) are assimilated through their purpose in the world of play; both are tools used in various modes of *mimicry* play.

It is hard to determine or be precise about the extent to which Disney rubber toys were used as part of children's play in socialist Yugoslavia. A thorough analysis based on ethnographical and anthropological methodologies and scholarly research may answer such questions as what age groups played with Disney rubber toys, how they created fictive constructs in playing with Disney characters, to what degree their play resembled the comics and related picture books or television series, and to what degree it resembled children's realistic surroundings, as well as to what extent the Disney characters marked the distinction between genders and so on.

It could be also interesting to mention (without going further into a feminist analysis) the character of Donald Duck in relation to gender issues, but more in the context of toy production than *mimicry* play (which historically does reveal a distinction between genders, but in this context it is needed to employ comprehensive ethnographic and anthropological research to define some prominent features of play with Disney rubber toys relating to gender divisions within the framework of socialist Yugoslavia).

The Disney rubber toys produced at the Biserka factory were mainly male characters. For example, if we take the two main characters, Mickey and Donald, they were produced in numerous variations (11 different models of Mickey and 9 different models of Donald). As far as we know, Daisy existed only in the smallest format of a model from the beginning of the production, around 1956-1958, and Minnie was produced in that period and in one later variation – as a larger figure with a tennis racquet in her hands. In *How to Read Donald Duck*, the two authors analyze the main male line in the world of Disney. The male characters are much more elaborated and diverse, and female roles are usually standardized between two opposite poles – good or bad: "If you are no witch, do not worry: you can always keep busy with feminine 'occupations'; dressmaker, secretary, interior decorator, nurse, florist, cosmetician, or air hostess." (Dorfman and Matelar 1971: 38). In the study where Wasko challenges Disney myths from several perspectives (Wasko, 2006: 20), she is quoting the content analysis of Hoerrner, stating that 57% of the Disney characters were male, and 27% were female.

It certainly seems that male characters were much more popular, so that had a considerable influence on decisions made by Yugoslavian manufacturers as to which characters to produce and distribute. Also, analyzing the vast photo archive of the Museum of Childhood, the most common Disney rubber toys in photographs depicting children with various toys are male characters (accompanying male children).

The Donald Duck rubber toy was an important element in childhood and in the cultural context of the system which encouraged its production and dissemination. It is very vividly inscribed in the memory of generations which were raised in the period from sixties to the end of eighties. However, almost every rubber toy in the collection of the Museum of Childhood was found as a discarded object on flea markets. The fact that previous owners outgrew their childhood object is not the only development responsible for this outcome. Turbulent events during the nineties (chiefly the civil war in Yugoslavia which started in 1991) and the postwar period, which encouraged further migration, conflicts, and instability as well as the intentional erasure of "Yugoslavian" marks from private and collective memory, contributed to the process in which such childhood objects (which certainly absorbed many political and ideological features of the time when they were in active use) ended up as part of the forgotten debris in flea markets.

This turbulent context formed the frame of reference for creating art installations that incorporate found Donald Duck rubber toys. The fact that what was once a memorable part of childhood became an abandoned object in flea markets provides the ambivalent emotion that has a specific disquieting significance for the artist.

Every toy is like a witness who speaks about his former owner. It is a fragment of one's abruptly ended childhood, a symbol of scattered generation which will never gather again due to former war and its long-term consequences. In front of you is a collection of five hundred destinies, which I hope you will be able to read and understand. Certainly, what you are looking at with a smile at the first glance, won't be a joyful cartoon hero, it will be someone's epitaph.

Vladimir Perić – on the occasion of the exhibition
"Repetition and Variation", 2010.

The Dual Quality of Donald Duck Toys Within Art Installations

For the artist, the Donald Duck toy holds an intimate and personal meaning, as well as cultural, political and social significance. Also the aesthetic characteristics of the toy make it an attractive choice as a functional element for installations. For the art installations discussed here, rubber toys of Donald Duck were accumulated in great numbers. To date, there are 627 pieces of this model of Donald Duck (article number 66) within the collection of the Museum of Childhood.

Such accumulation of the same object leads us to consider the significance of the object for the author of the present work. To him, a cheerful cartoon hero from childhood, found in the form of an abandoned toy at the flea market, represents evidence of absence and the destruction imposed by historical events – civil war in Yugoslavia during the nineties, when massive degradation of human and existential rights, and hence every other positive value, took place; and the postwar period whose atmosphere prolonged and encouraged the process of loss, as well as migrations and conflicts, all of which had a destructive effect on collective cultural memory and identity as well as on relationships between people who once shared common beliefs.

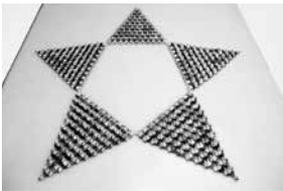


Figure 4. *Donald Duck star of Disneyland*, floor installation, Museum of Modern Art, Saint Etienne, France, 2008.

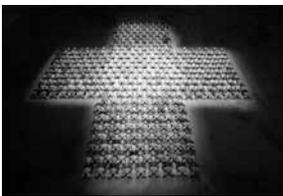


Figure 5. *Death of a sailor*, floor installation, Museum of Byzantine culture, Thessaloniki, Greece, 2010.

The artistic context of excessive accumulation and repetition offer a different kind of reading of these abandoned objects, brought back in the public space as embodiments of historicity, but also as transformed material which unveils a personal response to the complex past, history, memory and identity, commemorates loss, and indicates a critical treatment of historical testimonies.

(Figures 4 and 5)

The installations are built through contrasts in formal features as well as contextual dimensions. Through the process of arranging these objects – embodiments of the childhood innocence, as well as of the abrupt end and destruction of that state of innocence, its beliefs, and a certain way of life, into a precise mathematical pattern, the artist produces a metaphorical wholeness and harmony which failed to exist in reality. Personal response to loss is juxtaposed with the clean exactness, through grid formations which depend on repetition and variation of the same object, to produce patterns of co-hesiveness as well as visual dynamism. The polarity between destruction and coherence, chaos and order, is traversed

and synthesized in both visual and semantic dimensions, making this work simultaneously reveal and conceal the suspended memories and emotions related to wartime and postwar experience.

The pattern is used to deliberately blur the contextual meaning and emotionally charged narratives of the objects. This ambiguity, or as the artist himself often puts it, the “joyfully distressing” nature of the installations, is what engages our perception, generating both “aesthetic pleasure” as well as a thorough intellectual inquiry into the multilayered history behind the pleasant, innocuous imagery.

The artistic strategy of repetition which creates a complex and interwoven network of spatial and mathematically precise elements is not only used to reflect on the loss and (re)construction of identity, history, memory; it is also employed (along with the names of the installations, such as “Death of a Sailor” or “Scrooge McDuck’s Dream”) to articulate an ambiguous response to the constructs and myths provided at the global level by Walt Disney. The artistic process of repetition, which shows a similarity with Disney’s strategy of constantly reproducing and disseminating its heroes worldwide, is a comment on Disney’s excessive production. But with repetition within the artwork, the authenticity of the object also fades, thus referring to the production which generates uniformity rather than diversity, established typology rather than realistic multiplicity. **(Figures 6 and 7)**

On a literal level, these installations gather small narratives related to childhood heroes and their owners who outgrew them. Elements are drawn from historical reality to reveal complex layers of history and memory, but at the allegorical level, the installations clearly signify a great deal more – with personal and intimate reflection on the consequences of the turbulent past as a central feature.

Between these two poles – historical discourse and the personal experience of the artist, the mediation of the artist’s sensibility and language plays a cohesive role. Artistic processes such as accumulation, repetition, fragmentation, and juxtaposition, enable the creation of dialectical constructs where a personal response to troubling history is placed between narratives of historical and cultural value.

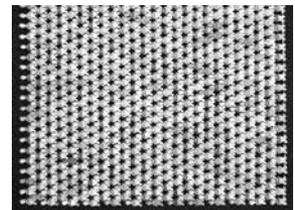


Figure 6. *Repetitions and variations* - pattern Donald Duck, floor installation, City Gallery of Požega, Serbia, 2010.



Figure 7. *Scrooge McDuck’s Dream*, installation, Museum of Yugoslavian history, Belgrade, Serbia, 2013.

It is important to emphasize that these artistic practices within the Museum of Childhood do not constitute a melancholic escape or a simple sentimentalization of the past; instead, they employ manipulation as a technique for investigation of and confrontation with the past. The strength of this subjective reflexive position, integrated with the artistic sensibility, is that it engages the author as well as the viewer in an interrogative mode, questioning the context (past, present, future) as well as the self in relation to shifts and transformations which have occurred over time and changing history.

Summary

Dolls present a multi-layered collage of meanings. One aspect of their layered complexity is their purpose and use as part of children's play. Through its purpose, especially as part of *mimicry* play as Roger Caillois named one of the four categories of play, dolls are assimilated with other toys which are used as tools to create the fictive construct of play, an illusion which can reflect the world of adults or some fantastic construct derived from children's stories, cartoons, and other narratives intended for children. Seen as tools for *mimicry* play, there is not much difference between a porcelain doll, a rubber toy of Donald Duck, or a child's toy gun.

Being an intimate object of childhood, toys powerfully recall memories and emotions related to one's own history and identity. But childhood as a socially constructed phenomenon also reflects broader narratives which shaped and influenced the period of childhood, one's individual history and experience. In such a way, toys and the whole category of play, in its authentic context as well as in its interpretation field, become an inevitable reflection of wider social concepts and culture. Connection is sometimes less visible, sometimes very strong and precise, but it is certainly unavoidable.

The concept of the Museum of Childhood as a case study here provided the material for exploring toys as documents of socio-cultural context and children's play in which they were active factors. The rubber toy of Donald Duck reflects diverse aspects of childhood, both its innocent, playful dimension and the ideological, political and social paradigms of socialist Yugoslavia which encouraged production, distribution and use of these toys. This Disney toy introduces narratives about the eclectic culture within the Yugoslavian context, based on broader imperatives which tried to create

a unique fusion of elements deriving from local, as well as both “western” and “eastern” cultural entities. The toy also delineates the degradation of this social system – the disruption embodied in the suspension of production, as well as in the abandonment of these toys which were subsequently found as debris at flea markets.

As a concept which fuses practices of collecting, the museological/curatorial field, and contemporary visual art, the Museum of Childhood also provided an opportunity to explore the same toy as an artistic phenomenon. Toys found as discarded objects are transposed into the artistic context in order to construct art installations which create an assemblage of the toy’s various contextual frames – traces of the inherent meaning which the toy had, from the ambition that created and produced it, its purpose and function, through the context of use, followed by their abandonment and degradation in the environment of a flea market. Using a particular artistic language and strategies of accumulation, repetition, and juxtaposition, these art installations fuse historicity and allegory, chaos and order, collective and individual memory.

In such a context, the rubber toy of Donald Duck can simultaneously be interpreted as an object of cultural, social and personal value, but also as a ready-made object which acquires new layers of meaning within the artistic context, revealing the author’s deep reflection on multifaceted history and memory.

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The Doll as Femme Fatale in L. G. Berlanga's *Life Size*



Figure 1. “Life Size” original movie poster.

Among the films of Spanish director Luis Garcia Berlanga (1921-2010) *Life Size*,¹ which is often overlooked or even forgotten, constitutes an outstanding artistic achievement.

G. Berlanga made films about communities, creating collective heroes and treating all characters almost equally. His concentration on portraying the community of Spanish *pueblos* has always been an important feature of his work. The protagonists of his films are usually residents of such a small community, and are all equally involved in the events of the narrative. Berlanga to some extent highlights those members of the community who fulfill important functions, such as: the mayor, the owner of a local hotel or bar, the teacher, the priest, an impoverished aristocrat or *guardia civil* officer. However, these people, with no exception, are moral cripples. Among them one finds crooks, liars, thieves, selfish people and mentally limited or spiritually bankrupt, living for today, caring only for their own business. It is difficult to find an unquestionably noble or good person in this group.

Berlanga specialized in comedies – he alluded to the Spanish tradition of *coarse comedies*. These movies, with their sharpness and comprehensive social criticism also have precedents in Spanish culture, e.g. in the book *Sueños* (Dreams, 1627) by Francisco de Quevedo and, in the visual arts, the theory of *esperpentos* (a distorting mirror) – a word created by Antonio Machado to describe the unnaturalness of human figures in Francisco Goya's paintings.

¹ Spanish title: *Tamaño Natural*. French title: *Grandeur nature*. English title: *Life Size* or: *Love Doll*.

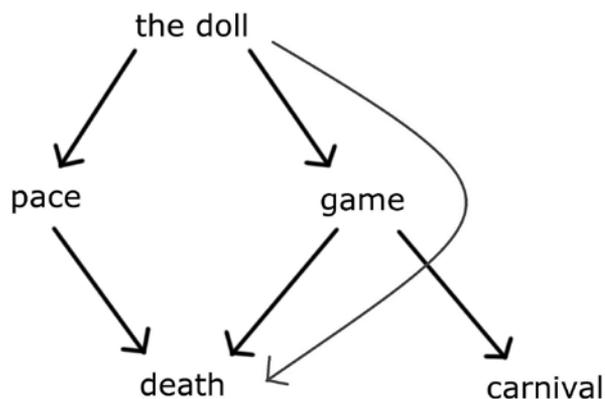
Life Size is in some ways an unusual Berlanga work. For the first time, he offers an extensive analysis of the mental and spiritual states of a particular person – Michel (played by Michel Piccoli), a Parisian dentist with an ordinary home life. It is also the only film in which Berlanga places a doll in the central role. The doll represents a normal-size woman and mysteriously induces delight in all men with its physical appearance (material, body shape and facial features). The film is in some ways more like a Carlos Saura movie than a typical one by Luis Garcia Berlanga.

Life Size was made in 1974, a year before Franco's death. It was filmed in Paris, which is interesting given the continuous weakening of Spanish censorship. Since the late '60s, artists had had more and more artistic freedom, which they mostly used to show nudity and sex. So this film does not present the complex relationships between artists and the Spanish state apparatus, but remains in the sphere of *metaphorical cinema*.²

Also, books such as *Historia del cine español* (History of the Spanish Cinema) almost completely ignore *Life Size*, limiting their description to one sentence about the filming location and the plot.³

*

The appearance of the doll in the life of Michel changes everything; the doll gradually interacts with him and ultimately leads to his tragic death. The most important aspects of these transformations are shown in the graphic to the right:



² Since 1955 there has existed a genre called *Spanish metaphorical cinema* which, in the simplest form, can be described as a cinema often difficult to understand, commenting on the political or social situation of the country, and the condition of the man himself in complex ways: showing man in conflict with history (especially civil war), other people, family, religion, god or even himself. The language of this cinema and its intellectual background was based firmly on the experience of Spanish intellectuals of the late nineteenth century – the so-called *Generation of '98*, which included such philosophers as Miguel de Unamuno and José Ortega y Gasset. But it also referenced the Spanish Golden Century, particularly Miguel de Cervantes, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, and Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas. This cinematic trend developed until the late '70s and today it is mainly associated with such artists as Carlos Saura and Victor Erice, both about ten years younger than Berlanga and Bardem.

³ Román Gubern et al., *Historia del cine Español* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2005), 395.

The doll subordinates the space around Michel and it is still transferred by him to new places, forcing the environment (people) to participate in the game. This game leads to the transgression of limits, transforming into a *carnival* (in the Bakhtinian sense). Finally the mere presence of the doll is always a harbinger of death.

In some sense, *Life Size* is a film about madness, but it is not the same kind of madness as seen in Polanski's *Repulsion* (1965). This movie can be linked to the theater of the absurd, Ionesco's theater arts or Artaud's theories. In this sense it also resembles the work of Spaniard Fernando Arrabal, such as *Viva la muerte* (Long Live Death, 1971) or Chilean Alejandro Jodorkowsky (who often used the doll theme in his work).

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The movie opens with a scene in which Michel is impatiently waiting for the release of a consignment at the airport. After receiving a carton he goes straight to his apartment and opens it there. There is a naked doll inside, a woman, life-size, as well as a poster with her photo. At first Michel treats the doll as a toy, an ordinary object for the satisfaction of his fantasies (perversions). Over time, he becomes possessed by it, and begins to treat it like a real woman. This process of the doll taking power over his life is presented carefully and in great detail in the film.

In *Life Size* the doll has an impact not only on Michel, but on all people who come into contact with it. They move from admiration to obsession, while the doll progresses from being a sex toy to becoming the goal and the only meaning of life. The doll causes unnatural lust in all people except one – Michel's wife. She has no problem with her husband's infidelities, but the appearance of the doll shocks and frightens her. In the middle of the movie she decides to become a doll, seeing it as an inviolable ideal. Michel does not disturb her illusions and says: "She is noncombustible. She is never ill. She does not cry."⁴

The praise of the doll's artifice gradually accumulates. At the beginning, Michel is not, and cannot be, quite sure of its properties – he appreciates her silence, her servitude, and her readiness for anything, which allow him to exert his will. Thanks to it he can fulfill the will of his temptation. He also appreciates the physical aspects of their relationship. During a romantic evening on the beach

⁴ *Ella es incombustible. Nunca esta enferma. Ella no llora.* All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

in the first week anniversary, he says: "I love you sweetheart. Although you are made of polyurethane. But apart from that what is the difference between polyurethane and cellular tissue?"⁵ Soon after, in response to the question from salesperson from the store with women's clothing he responds: "For me it is a woman."⁶ Michel goes even further, presents himself as its creator. As if he had no knowledge of how the doll equally transforms and shapes him. This is not only kind of psychological symbiosis, understanding without words, but a real impact on his life, decisions, and even health. This effect becomes total when Michel leaves his wife. During the divorce proceedings he cannot, despite his willingness, give his wife the entire property and the house. The doll, as the real rival of his wife, does not allow him to do so.

Isabel, Michel's wife, is shocked by her confrontation with the doll. The camera shows a close-up of her immobile face and wide open eyes. She somehow becomes artificial, less human. It seems that in some way this scene evokes the myth described in *The Actor and the Uber-Marionette* by Edward G. Craig: the myth of the first doll on the shores of the Ganges and its relationship with women, who after seeing it wanted to be like it.

Something is in the air; his [the puppets] doctors tell him he must be careful. "And what am I to fear most?" he asks them. They answer him: "Fear most the vanity of men." He thinks: "But that is what I myself have always taught, that we who celebrated in joy this our existence, should have this one great fear. Is it possible that I, one who has ever revealed this truth, should be one to lose sight of it and should myself be one of the first to fall? Clearly some subtle attack is to be made on me. I will keep my eyes upon the heavens." And he dismisses his doctors and ponders upon it.

And now let me tell you who it was that came to disturb the calm air which surrounded this curiously perfect thing. It is on record that somewhat later he took up his abode on the Far Eastern coast, and there came two women to look upon him. And at the ceremony to which they came he glowed with such earthly splendour and yet



Figure 2. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's "Life Size" (1974) - The doll represents a normal-size woman and mysteriously induces delight in all men with its physical appearance...

⁵ *Te quiero cariño. Aunque estas echa de poliuretano. Ademas que diferencia hay de poliuretano y el tejido celular ?*

⁶ *Para mi es una mujer.*



Figure 3. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's "Life Size" (1974) - ...he spies a little girl named Catherine playing in the bathroom with a doll also...

such unearthly simplicity, that thought he proved an inspiration to the thousand nine hundred and ninety-eight souls who participated in the festival, an inspiration which cleared the mind even as it intoxicated, yet to these two women it proved an intoxication only. He did not see them, his eyes were fixed on the heavens; but he charged them full of a desire too great to be Quenched; the desire to stand as the direct symbol of the divinity in man. No sooner thought than done; and arraying themselves as best they could in garments ("like his" they thought), moving with gestures ("like his" they said) and being able to cause wonderment in the minds of the beholders ("even as he does" they cried), they built themselves a temple ("like his," "like his"), and supplied the demand of the vulgar, the whole thing a poor parody.⁷

The trace of the old fear that women feel after taking the life of the first doll is typical, as we see in *Life Size*.

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Life Size shows how the space belonging to the doll expands: from the box in which it came, through the wardrobe, out into the room and the whole apartment until it finally covers the whole city. It is clear that its territory is constantly expanding. During this process, the doll enters more intensely into the main protagonist's life, almost making it impossible. At the same time, Michel's health is deteriorating, creating the impression of some kind of vampirism. As if that was not enough – more dolls, mannequins, sculptures and other figurative objects appear in his life, as if to replace his relationships with real people.

The eccentricity into which Michel falls in his Parisian apartment can be compared to the lifestyle of des Esseintes in the "Bible of Decadence," *Against Nature* (À rebours, 1884) by Joris-Karl Huysmans. His own altar, in front of which he marries the doll, his exclusive toys and other eccentric objects, appear to come from a similar understanding of life.

Berlanga had never before paid much attention to the interiors in his films, or developed them in such meticulous detail. Dolls or other humanoid toys appear in many scenes. Such solutions evoke associations with Saura's films from the late 60s and 70s. In Saura's films, spaces are often carriers of meanings, history, or even traumas. They are also a time machine or, sometimes, a real threat. In a physical sense, they are regular rooms, basements or attics filled with items from the previous era. As if that were not enough, these objects have a life of their own.



Figure 4. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's "Life Size" (1974) - Over time, he becomes possessed by it, and begins to treat it like a real woman.

The most interesting case, similar to *Life Size*, is *La madriguera* (Honeycomb, 1969), in which a young couple decides not to leave the house for a while, cut off from the world, their friends, and their family, and live through a complex system of roleplaying games. In the utility room of the house are located some items from the time of the women's childhood. These objects in the games begin to disperse after sterile rooms and themselves are added to something dark, unpleasant and dangerous at the same time. When the man is no longer able to withstand the tension of playing and losing control of his own home, he wants to leave his wife and the game. Consequently he is shot by his wife, who had previously pretended to be dead.

Similarly, Michel, possessed by a new reality, brings about a tragic outcome by leaving his house (and thus the game).

*

The games I refer to appear as various manifestations, often as certain conventions or roles imposed on the participants. Many of them can be found in Carlos Saura's movies of this period: dressing up and enlivening fantasies (*La Madriguera*); forcing someone to be someone else (*Peppermint Frappé*, 1967); reconstructing their history (*El jardín de las delicias / The Garden of Delights*, 1970); playing with ambiguity (usually in a threatening way) (*Ana y los Lobos / Ana and the Wolves*, 1973). Partly all of them are present in *Grandeur nature*.

At the beginning, Michel uses the doll only for sexual purposes – it is inanimate and attractive, neutral, with no personality, so he



Figure 5. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's "Life Size" (1974) - ...he is quite convinced that the doll wants to shut him up in the box. But most likely it is his hidden dream.

can easily treat it as an object. Michel's approach changes after he spies a little girl named Catherine playing in the bathroom with a doll also named Catherine. In this situation *playing* means: conversation and traditional mother-daughter roles. Michel is fascinated by the game and asks the girl ambiguous questions, even sexually explicit ones. In the next scene he is in his bathroom with the doll, which he now calls Catherine – in this way he gives expression to an unhealthy fascination with the girl and her doll, or mimics their relationship. By taking a shower with the doll, Michel extends the previous scene.

Beginning with these moments, he gives the doll more and more attention and endows it with new attributes. Michel's behavior towards the doll is analogous to how he might behave towards a real woman; at the same time, he retains a dominant position. The doll is no longer just a toy but has entered a higher level of existence. Michel constantly changes the doll's name (thereby changing the game), among the names are: previously mentioned Catherine, Brigitte – most likely associated with Brigitte Bardot, Marlene – presumably a reference to Marlene Dietrich (an interesting comparison can be made with her film *Der blaue Engel*, 1930), Cayetana – related to a Spanish duchess of Alba, known from Goya's paintings. Before using all these names Michel calls the doll *un flotador*, which means some kind of *float*, something that floats on water or in this case helps Michel *float through life*.

The doll continues to be Michel's mistress, but he gradually adds a growing number of everyday human behaviors, such as: examining her teeth, taking her for a romantic dinner on the beach, shopping and finally a wedding. Michel pushes his behavior so far that it seems to blur the boundary between fantasy and reality; it is clearly evident in the scene where the doll seems to be feeding the baby, or when, after the wedding night, blood is discovered on the sheet.

However, the relationship is not one-sided. Michel helps the doll become more real, validating its behavior in the world. On the other hand, some of his activities are not genuine; he merely pretends to do something, but doesn't really perform the action. This can be seen clearly when Michel pretends to shave and the non-existing sounds of the electric shaver disturb his

conversation with the doll. Perhaps the more real the doll becomes, the less real Michel is.

As mentioned earlier, the doll arouses lust in others, and finally *cheats* on Michel. His reaction is sadistic: he mistreats the doll and finally kills, it imitating a ritual similar to *seppuku*. This solution is not accidental, as the doll originally came from Japan.⁸

Finally he hides the doll under his bed, speaks about it as a corpse, and having *lost* it, falls seriously ill. This is the moment where the film's use of the grotesque becomes complete, incorporating a special feature of the grotesque – ambivalence. Grotesque can therefore express the fullness of the contradictions of life, which always oscillates between the destruction of the old and the birth of the new. Bakhtin believed this to be the essence of the grotesque.⁹

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To the rational mind, as the idea of *killing a doll* is disturbing. After all, the doll is just a non-living object, enlivened only by Michel's imagination. However, this dynamic can also be seen in some of Saura's other movies.

For example, *La caza* (Hunting, 1966) – perhaps in this case it is not exactly a doll, but rather a shop mannequin, witnessing all the events and passions of people. When it is inserted into the fire and destroyed, the fire expands and is difficult to stop. Then the desire to go on a murderous rampage comes over people and they kill each other. A more significant example is the doll from the movie *Ana y los lobos* – an ordinary children's toy, mutilated, and buried in the mud, becomes a harbinger of what will happen to the main character.

As shown in the diagram, the killing of the doll causes Michel's disease to worsen. During Christmas Eve, a group of Spanish immigrants appears at his house, with traditional food and drink, and rude manners. They are like a plague, treating Michel



Figure 6. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's "Life Size" (1974) - The doll causes unnatural lust in all people except one – Michel's wife. (...) ...the appearance of the doll shocks and frightens her.

⁸ There may be an intentional reference to the Bunraku Theater here.

⁹ Suzanne Chappaz-Wirthner, "From the History of Research on the Carnival," *Konteksty* 258-259 (2002): 135.



Figure 7. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's "Life Size" (1974) - ...she decides to become a doll, seeing it as an inviolable ideal.

arrogantly and coarsely. The doll is kidnapped by one of them. Later on in their barracks they perform a quasi-religious procession with it in the style of the Spanish Holy Week procession. They sing of the decorated doll as a *Mother of Storms*.¹⁰ This is a moment of madness and the liberation of primitive natural forces, a time of blasphemy, laughing, profanation, the moment of challenging the laws of the world – the carnival. The scene ends with an orgy, inspired by the doll.

This scene matches descriptions of carnival rituals. It is also possible to assess the whole of Michel's life from that perspective. But the participants in the carnival at some point eventually calm down and experience a kind of conversion, after which they return to normal life. This is possible despite the blasphemies they have committed, including the coronation of dolls modeled on religious types and dethronements combined with rape. Bakhtin described this important duality thus:

Crowning/decrowning is a dualistic ambivalent ritual, expressing the inevitability and at the same time the creative power of the shift-and-renewal, the joyful relativity of all structure and order, of all authority and all (hierarchical) position. Crowning already contains the idea of immanent decrowning: it is ambivalent from the very start. And he who is crowned is the antipode of a real king, a slave or a jester; this act, as it were, opens and sanctifies the inside-out world of carnival. In the ritual of crowning all aspects of the actual ceremony—the symbols of authority that are handed over to the newly crowned king and the clothing in which he is dressed—all become ambivalent and acquire a veneer of joyful relativity; they become almost stage props (although these are ritual stage props); their symbolic meaning becomes two-leveled (as real symbols of power, that is in the noncarnival world, they are single-leveled, absolute, heavy, and monolithically serious). From the very beginning, a decrowning glimmers through the crowning. And all carnivalistic symbols are of such a sort: they always include within themselves a perspective of negation (death) or vice versa. Birth is fraught with death, and death with new birth.¹¹

¹⁰ *Madre de tormentas*.

¹¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), accessed October 13, 2014. http://www.mohamedrabee.com/books/book1_7956.pdf

This dualism is impossible for Michel. He crosses boundaries that prevent him from returning to a normal life after the madness of the carnival. In a sense, his carnival is not the same as the Spaniards' experience. Michel watches the Spaniards but does not participate in their celebration, which creates a difficult situation, because *everyone must be an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act; carnival is not contemplated and not even performed; its participants live in it, a carnivalistic life.*¹²



Figure 8. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's "Life Size" (1974) - His own altar, in front of which he marries the doll...

It isn't easy to grasp the whole significance of this scene, however. The Spaniards in the film are presented as liars, crooks and thieves, and they are shown as being ugly and degraded. In that context, it is hard to take the charge of blasphemy seriously, especially when a moment later Michel appears to recover the doll. After that he may come to the conclusion that his behavior does not differ particularly from the behavior of kidnappers. At the end he is faced with a dilemma: he can return the doll to Japan, he can forgive its sins, he can become its pimp or: *We finish this as a beautiful love story.*¹³ Michel chooses the last solution. For him the adventure with the doll ends in suicide, as he drives the car to the river. On the other hand, the doll – carried along by an unknown force – rises to the surface and is noticed by a passer-by. The whole story can happen again... The cycle of birth and death, the coronation and dethronement, cannot be stopped by the death of one person.

*

The film does not give any clear answer to the question of the doll's place in the world. Arguably, it creates even more questions concerning who is whose master and who is whose property. To remain in his powerful role, Michel needs the doll – so he is totally dependent on it. Their roles are mixed together. Michel records movies in which his moving body replaces the body of the doll or even becomes it. In other films, he becomes a moving doll while the doll becomes motionless pretending to be him. Once again film becomes a simple tool of manipulation. It is not surprising that the only way out of this circle is the man's death.

¹² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*.

¹³ *Acabemos esto como una bonita historia de amor.*



Figure 9. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's "Life Size" (1974) - ...more dolls, mannequins, sculptures and other figurative objects appear in his life, as if to replace his relationships with real people.



Figure 10. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's "Life Size" (1974) - ...their barracks they perform a quasi-religious procession with it in the style of the Spanish Holy Week procession. They sing of the decorated doll as a Mother of Storms.

Well worth mentioning is the fact that the man's domination over the doll always manifests itself in the sphere of the erotic. Intercourse, rape, fetishes, role play and aggression – all of these acts take place against an inert object. It is also interesting because the doll does not represent any specific person (it is not a portrait), it has no history (we only know that it comes from Japan) and theoretically, it does not present any ideas, either. It is meant to be an artifact, an image of itself. However, the movie turns the doll into an allegory of femininity, desire and intimacy. The doll does not exist as a substitute for the man; it only helps him confront himself, and confront his existence. Not without reason, Michel leaves his wife (or throws her into the closet) when she wants to be a doll, and again not without reason, Michel praises everything in the doll that is not human. In a certain situation, he is quite convinced that the doll wants to shut him up in the box. But most likely it is his hidden dream. This scene takes place exactly in the middle of the film.

Miguel de Unamuno argued that consciousness is a disease and that because of consciousness people are only *sick animals*. Michel does not only envy the doll's beauty, constancy, resilience, and eternal youth; above all, what he envies is its lack of consciousness. In this arrangement, Michel's interest in the doll is the first step toward becoming aware of his own despair. Sexual activities give him temporary relief, but everything leads him to confront his own life. Michel commits suicide not because the Spaniards rape his mistress or defile its body, but because he realizes his pitiful condition. An immobile doll has triggered all these processes in him, has pushed him to feel "the tragic sense of life in men and in peoples," also the title of Unamuno's most important book.

After all the commotion, the doll remains intact. This is why I have described it, perversely, as a femme fatale.

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The Grotesque as a Paradigm of the Puppet Theater in the 21st Century

**Through an analysis of Ilka Schönbein's show,
*The Old Lady and the Beast***

*You think I take it very seriously?
I cannot take it seriously enough.
If there is a solemn thing at all in Life,
only a marionette can interpret it on stage.*

E. G. Craig

As the specificities of the human being are becoming less and less definite, as the borders of the human body are more porous than ever and as hybrid creatures inhabit most of our imaginary spaces, puppetry, which is characterized by the “in-between” and the “ambiguity,” reveals itself as a place of reflection about the human being, since it is a point of encounter for the puppet and the puppeteer – animate and inanimate, presence and absence, human and non-human, life and death. Puppets invite their audience to “acknowledge,” according to Steve Tillis¹, at once, the two aspects of their ambiguous nature, both “object,” animated by a human behind, and “living” character, moving on its own initiative; “through the tension inherent in this dual acknowledgement, [they] pleurably [expose] [their] audience’s understanding of what it means to be an ‘object’ and what it means to have ‘life.’”²

¹ Steve Tillis, “Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet” (Master’s Thesis, San Jose State University, 1990), 127.

² Tillis, “Towards an Aesthetics,” 133-134.

Throughout the 20th century, this tension has increased and has become more complex. The emancipation of puppet shows from the “castelet” – the play board – and the wide use of puppet manipulation by puppeteers in public view that constitute one of the great revolutions in puppetry in the 20th century, have made the invisible – the puppeteer – visible; they have confronted (if not juxtaposed and joined³) the puppet and the puppeteer together on stage and brought to light the tensions between them by putting the emphasis on the dual entity, the “puppet body,” resulting from the monstrous and *grotesque* union of the human and the non-human.

In contemporary puppet theater, the actor (what the puppeteer has indeed become when he has come out of the decor) is placed in a reciprocal, and fusional relationship with the object⁴ (elevated “from the status of prop to active agent”⁵); as John Bell states, “performing object theater *de-centers* the actor and places her or him in relationship [...] to a representative of the lifeless world.”⁶ And even though puppets arise from non-living matter, that does not mean that they do not have anything to tell us about human being and life. As John Bell also writes:

“the lifeless object speaks profoundly when manipulated by its performer. And the profundity of the object, because it is part of dead world, reaches different, deeper levels of signification than live actors can.”⁷

My proposal, therefore, is to question the potentialities of the relationship between the actor and the object in the monstrous and grotesque puppet body. Through an analysis of Ilka Schönbein’s show, *The Old Lady and The Beast*,⁸ I will try to demonstrate that the object, in the puppet body (I stress that the simultaneous presence of both actor and object is essential in puppet theater⁹), indeed causes a “decentering” of the actor (and the human body), but only to concentrate the audience’s focus on the *specifically human*.

³ John Bell, “Death and Performing Objects”, <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/death.txt>, last accessed October 15, 2014.

⁴ It should be noted, as Steve Tillis has pointed out, that puppets “are not a particular class of objects, in that almost anything might be considered to be a puppet, depending upon its usage in performance” [Tillis, “Towards an Aesthetics,” 134]. And indeed, as we will see later in the article, Ilka Schönbein uses all sorts of objects to take part in creating the characters of her play —everyday items, costumes, masks, dolls, etc.

⁵ Bell, “Death and Performing Objects.”

⁶ Bell, “Death and Performing Objects.”[Emphasis added.]

⁷ Bell, “Death and Performing Objects.”

⁸ I attended the 23 April 2013 performance of the show at Maison de la Culture de Tournai – Belgium.

⁹ The dynamic tension between the actor and the object is central in every puppet theater performance.

Within the puppet body, the confrontation of the puppeteer and the puppet highlights the gap between the actor and the object, the human and non-human. According to Didier Plassard,¹⁰ the actor contrasts with the object. At first he is the whole body against the object's incomplete shape; the living flesh against the lifeless matter; the familiar silhouette against the uncanny-modelled figure; free will against servitude. Yet, in the performance, in order to allow the puppet to come to "life," the actor-puppeteer has to conceal or disguise the gesture of manipulation; he has to delegate¹¹ to the object he is manipulating his capacity to stage a character. "This delegation results in shifting the audience's focus [from the actor to the object], which leads to reshuffling the symbolic significances of the human and non-human."¹² Puppet-operator, character or grafted body (as in Ilka Schönbein's creation), the actor is not the unique center of human expression anymore. When the object seems to come to life, attracting the eyes of both the audience and the puppeteer, it transcends the limits of its character and appears as a human "magnification."

The subversive notion of "grotesque", which occupies the space of the transgression, seems highly relevant to an analysis of the puppet body as a human magnification. I will show that it is useful for characterizing the puppet body as a procedure of subversion and knowledge creation – especially anthropological knowledge – due to the "deterritorialization" of the point of view and the human magnification that it causes.

Also, after a very brief reminder of the notion of "grotesque" (not in its common but in its scientific use), my essay will focus on the analysis of Ilka Schönbein's show, *The Old Lady and the Beast*, with the exploration of the puppet body.

1. The Grotesque

According to Adams and Wilson in their book *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*:

Grotesque art can be defined as art whose form and subject matter appear to be a part of while contradictory to, the nature,

¹⁰ Didier Plassard, "Les scènes de l'intranquillité," *Puck. La marionnette et les autres arts* 20 (2014) "Humain. Non humain": 14-15.

¹¹ The puppeteer François Lazaro uses the expression "delegation theater" (*théâtre par délégation*) to refer to the puppet theater in order to take into account the huge variety of puppets (glove puppet, string puppet, table puppet, mouth puppet, shadows, performing object, etc.).

¹² "Cette délégation s'accompagne d'un déplacement du foyer de l'attention des spectateurs qui entraîne, avec lui, une redistribution des charges symboliques respectives de l'humain et du non-humain." Plassard, "Les scènes de l'intranquillité," 15.

social, or personal worlds of which we are a part. Its images most often embody distortions, exaggeration, a fusion of incompatible parts in such a fashion that it confronts us as strange and disordered, as a world turned upside down.¹³

The etymological origin of the notion of “grotesque” is pictorial. This notion has been conceptualized by French art historian André Chastel in his book *La Grottesque*¹⁴ to name the paintings discovered circa 1480-1490 in the underground halls of the Golden House of Nero. With their hybrid and transgressive forms (half-human, half-plant, half-animals), rising up and fusing into each other, these cave paintings appealed to the imagination and caused a feeling of “Worrying strangeness,” what Sigmund Freud called the “uncanny”: the representation of something both familiar and alien, and consequently disturbing.

Intriguing due to its very inherent instability, the notion soon appeared in literary aesthetics, in particular in the writings of Montaigne, who invokes the aesthetic of the grotesque in 1580 to justify the free form of his *Essais*.

The grotesque has now become an essential notion in literary criticism (especially in the area of Theater Studies), but it is still extremely difficult to define and to circumscribe because of its fundamental indeterminacy.

This indeterminacy has given rise to different interpretations, sometimes contradictory, at least in appearance. The ambivalence of this notion is illustrated by the theoretical conflict between Wolfgang Kayser¹⁵ and his “tragic” understanding of the grotesque on the one hand and Mikhail Bakhtine¹⁶ and his comic and “carnavalesque” understanding of the grotesque on the other hand.

Following Rémi Astruc’s work on the grotesque in the novels of the 20th century,¹⁷ I will understand the “grotesque” in full acceptance of its contradictions. I will positively define it as a phenomenon of transgression, indeterminacy, and the in-between, beyond the above-mentioned delineation as tragic or comic, or any kind of categorization.

¹³ James Luther Adams and Yates Wilson, *The Grotesque in Art and Literature: Theological Reflections* (Michigan: B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 2.

¹⁴ André Chastel, *La grottesque. Essai sur l’ornement sans nom* (Paris: Le Promeneur, 1988).

¹⁵ Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*, trans. Ulrich Weisstein (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).

¹⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1968).

¹⁷ Rémi Astruc, *Le renouveau du grotesque dans le roman du XX^e siècle. Essai d’anthropologie littéraire* (Paris: Éditions Classiques Garnier, 2010), 38: “le grotesque reste toujours en deçà de ces déterminations; la seule manière de l’appréhender est à travers sa non-détermination même, son ambiguïté même.”

2. The Old Lady and the Beast

2.1. Ilka Schönbein's artistic path¹⁸



Figure 1. © L'Estive, the backstage of *The Old Lady and the Beast*, by Ilka Schönbein.

Before starting my analysis, I shall here briefly mention Ilka Schönbein's artistic path in order to allow a deeper understanding of her creation.

With dreams of being a dancer (like the little girl in *The Old Lady and the Beast*), Ilka Schönbein first learned the eurythmic gesture, or "Visible Singing" of Rudolf Steiner, which can be defined as an art of speaking and singing rendered visible by movement.¹⁹ She later studied the art of string puppets with the master Albrecht Roser, who was one of the first puppeteers to reveal the artificial nature of the puppet, highlighting the human presence behind the puppet and exploiting the dual nature of the puppet, both its "object" and "living" natures.

Once she completed her training, she performed with different companies on tour for around ten years. In 1992 she eventually created her own company, *Theater Meschugge* (*meschugge* being a slang word derived from Yiddish used in German to describe someone, or something, as crazy) and took the road with her own shows to face and encounter the street audience for whom she conceived *Metamorphoses*, a solo performance influenced by the Jewish tradition as well as her feelings, as a German woman, towards the Shoah. Thereafter, she made a stage adaptation of her show and added a second character. There were successively five versions of *Metamorphoses* (later: *Metamorphoses of Metamorphoses*). This continuous re-writing of her artistic work characterizes the artistic practice of the puppeteer.

2.2. The Old Lady and the Beast: its grotesque character

In Ilka Schönbein's statement of intent for *The Old Lady and the Beast*, written in the form of an "autofictional" first-person narration, she relates the genesis of the creation of her show. The reading of the tale can illuminate at several levels: first of all, it sheds light on Ilka Schönbein's artistic approach; next, it announces a series of themes and motifs that can be found in *The Old Lady*

¹⁸ *The Old Lady and the Beast*: note of intent, <http://www.legrandparquet.net/pdf/ilka-schonbein-the-old-lady-and-the-beast.pdf>, accessed June 20, 2014.

¹⁹ Marion Girard-Laterre, "L'objet et l'acteur au corps à corps: une enveloppe corporelle commune dans la pratique d'Ilka Schönbein," *Agôn*, Dossiers 4 (2012), <http://agon.ens-lyon.fr/index.php?id=2066>, last accessed October 16, 2014.

and the Beast; finally, it tells the story of the creation of a performance that depicts the story of a story that tells itself.

One day, at the beginning of the year, I was walking on the bank of a small river near Berlin, when I suddenly noticed something in the water, something struggling for safety. With a stick, I helped it out of the river.

As a matter of fact, the thing was a little donkey. [...] [He] told me his story: his mother was a queen who didn't want to have a little donkey for baby. 'So she threw me away into the water!' It reminded me of a fairy tale I had recently read, except that, in the tale, the king was there, ready to prevent the murder. I asked the donkey whether he had a father. He answered: 'A father? What's that?'

Since then, of course, fairy tales have changed a lot. But what would I do with that poor animal in my life on tour as an actress? [...]

I read the tale again and this time, the donkey knew how to play the lute. I just thought of something: as I'm not getting any younger and as I feel more tired every day, I could teach my little donkey how to play the lute, and so one day he could take my place on stage and earn a living for both of us... [...]

And one day, after a complete working year, I was invited by the director of a little theatre in Paris, [...] for an artistic creation residence.

So, as we were in the theatre, somebody knocked on the door.

- Who's there? I asked.

- The Death! Answered the Death.

- Oh, no, Death! Not yet, I'm right in the middle of rehearsal! Clear off!

- It's not for you that I came, you great dummy, it's your father I'll take with me. He's seriously ill! If you want to say your farewells to him, hurry up!

Then, I locked the donkey in the dressing room, with a heap of straw, apple and carrots, asked the director to keep him company and went to my parent's in Germany. I found my mother in tears, my father in bed and Death at the bed head. If you have read the ancient tale *The Death at the bed head*, you must know well what that means! [...] We spent three weeks together, my mother, my father, many friends of him, me and the Death. [...] Then the Death did her work and I went back to the theatre. The Death came with me.

- I simply adore theatre, it takes my mind off things after work, she admitted.



Figure 2. © Alexandra Lebon, *The Old Lady and the Beast*, by Ilka Schönbein.

Then I took my donkey out of the dressing room. [...] I sat down in the theatre to direct his warm-up, with the Death next to me. After a couple of minutes, she whispered:

- Your donkey is not bad at all! Shall he take your place on stage some time?

- Soon, I hope! I answered.

- What will be the name of the show?

- The Donkey who plays the lute.

- Will it be a one-donkey show?

- Of course!

- When is the opening night going to happen?

- On 26 October 2009.

- Then, after 26, you will be free?

- What for?

- For a little journey, with me.

- What do you mean?

The Death fell silent and looked strangely in my direction... Well, I jumped off my seat, didn't need but two minutes to slip into my costume, and here am I back on stage! Next, I hired a musician to make my old bones dance and we have transformed the one-woman show into a duo.

Now, the show is called: *The Old Lady and the Beast*

Direction: The Death

Extraterrestrial observer: My father

Technical requirements: straw on stage, carrots and apples in dressing room.

Ilka Schönbein²⁰

Ilka Schönbein's theater is a theater of transgression, of in-between, of ambiguity. And this narrative highlights one of the most characteristic ambiguities of the puppeteer's artistic work: the fact that it plays with the tension between fiction and her actual experience. As Jacques Jusselle has noticed,²¹ love, the old age of the dancer, the travelling life, the mother/child relationship, the father's death (which occurred during the creation of *The Old Lady and the Beast*), and the encounter with puppetry are remarkable themes both in Ilka Schönbein's life and her artistic work, hence the recurrence of some of her themes in the course of her creations. Ilka Schönbein writes, in reference to the *Winter Journey* she created in 2003:

²⁰ *The Old Lady and the Beast*: note of intent.

²¹ Jacques Jusselle, *Ilka Schönbein. Le corps: du masque à la marionette* (Paris: Thémaa "Encyclopédie fragmentée de la marionette" 3, 2011), 42.

“As in all my previous shows, I would like to illustrate here the essential themes of a woman’s life: childhood, love, birth, old age, fear of death. What else? [...] the dance of life. It runs from the embryo in the mother’s womb, ecstasy of love, fills the soul when the body is troubled. It is the dance against and with death.”²²

As the tale in the statement of intent suggests, in the show *The Old Lady and the Beast*, fairy tales and reality mix and intermingle, and the line between fact and fiction is erased. At least five stories are seen as part of what constitutes the show’s narrative structure (of which the motifs of apples and death are two red threads): two of these stories are borrowed from the Brothers Grimm, *The Little Donkey* and *Godfather Death (Death at the bed head)*; one is derived from the popular tradition, *Death in the Apple Tree (Aunt Misery and her pear tree)*; and the last two were made up by Ilka Schönbein: they are the tale of a little dancer who wants to become a great ballerina and the tale of old Lena who doesn’t want to go to a retirement home. I should also point out that the story of *Beauty and the Beast* and that of *The Donkey Skin*, with themes from love and incest, both heavily influenced *The Old Lady and the Beast*.

With her show, Ilka Schönbein reminds us that, if fairy tales allow children to grapple with their fears and grow up, they also remind adults of the children they once were.²³

Yet there is no point in appearing on stage in a fairy tale; she tries to express her own “internal drama.” For Ilka Schönbein, “characters in a tale do not exist in the outside world; they reveal different aspects of our most intimate nature. Masks and puppets are certainly some of the best ways of giving life to the metaphors that these characters represent.”²⁴

The expression of the “internal drama” in Ilka Schönbein’s artistic work passes through the body of the puppeteer: the body, which is a space of predilection for the grotesque, is both the origin of her puppets, created from the cast enclosing any part of the body (Ilka Schönbein speaks about “a technique of body mask”), and the source of their movements. Being grotesque, her

²² “Comme dans tous mes spectacles précédents, je souhaite ici illustrer les thèmes essentiels de l’existence d’une femme : l’enfance, l’amour, la naissance, la vieillesse, la peur de la mort. Quoi d’autre ? [...] la danse de la vie. Elle court depuis l’embryon dans le ventre de sa mère, l’extase amoureuse, remplit l’âme quand le corps est plongé dans l’inquiétude. C’est la danse contre et avec la mort.” Quoted by Henryk Jurkowski, *Métamorphoses. La marionnette au XX^e siècle* (Montpellier/Charleville-Mézières: L’Entretemps/Éditions Institut International de la Marionnette, 2nd ed. 2008), 290.

²³ Jusselle, *Ilka Schönbein. Le corps: du masque à la marionnette*, 73.

²⁴ Ilka Schönbein, “Fairy tales: theater of the subconscious”, <http://www.marionnette.com/en/Stage/EnImages/2007>, accessed June 20, 2014.

imagined body is a “tipping”²⁵ point; it is the space of emergence for a whole new world that invites spectators to change their way of looking.

The puppets in *The Old Lady and the Beast* are not distinct creatures with heads and bodies of their own. They are parts of bodies, made from masks as well as prosthetics (**Figure 1**), and the creation of the artist’s characters depends on the union of these masks and prosthetics with her own body. The characters in *The Old Lady and the Beast* are hybrids; they appear one after the other from her own body as though generated by this very body. The scene of the unveiling of the donkey and the princess’s wedding night is a paradigmatic example of Ilka Schönbein’s artistic work characterised by a logic of superimpositions and profusion. In the original fairy tale, *The Little Donkey*, the bridegroom pulls his donkey skin off and there stands a handsome young man of royalty. This complex being, both fully human and fully animal, will be forced to give up a part of his identity, the animal one, when the King burns the donkey skin. In *The Old Lady and the Beast*, the princess shows her true colors: after taking off her dress, her shirt, her hair, her teeth, her skin, she continues, deep under the surface of appearance, her quest of unveiling. She transforms herself into a little ballerina, who then transforms herself into a great ballerina, a queen, and then into an old woman, who transforms herself into a donkey (the loving union is fusal in *The Old Lady and the Beast*), which transforms itself into a prince (it should be noticed that he is the only male character of the show) who finally transforms himself into “me” (perhaps Ilka Schönbein herself?), the old queen who is trying to cheat death. The telescoping of the narration relates to the telescoping of the bodies: all the tales in the show are digressions that allow the old queen to suspend time and delay the moment of her death. Thus *The Old Lady and the Beast* is characterised by a tendency towards proliferation, multiplication, spontaneous and anarchic self-generation that are some defining features of the grotesque.²⁶

The characters in *The Old Lady and the Beast* are hybrid creatures, resulting from the union of masks and prosthetics with Ilka Schönbein’s own flesh. Her characters cannot come to life without distorting her body. For example, the little ballerina is formed by a mask, a prosthetic arm and a tutu on one side, and by the wrist/forearm (forming the puppet’s neck) and the two legs of Ilka Schönbein on the other side (**Figure 2**). The old lady, an old beast, arises from Ilka Schönbein’s body when the puppeteer puts pants of fur on: her legs become those of a donkey and her hand is gloved with the animal’s head.

²⁵ Astruc, *Le renouveau du grotesque dans le roman du XX^e siècle*, 46.

²⁶ Astruc, *Le renouveau du grotesque dans le roman du XX^e siècle*, 235.

Lena has a flesh leg, a paper one, and two flesh arms, one of which is formed by the puppeteer's leg. There are many other examples of characters resulting from the grotesque confrontation on stage between the puppeteer and the puppet, but they are too many to list them all.

The characters in *The Old Lady and the Beast* appear and transform depending on the part of the body used by the puppeteer; each one is the result of a particular bodily anchorage that sometimes seems to overcome the laws of gravity: when Death is trapped in a tree, Ilka Schönbein's body looks as if it is hanging in mid-air (one of her legs is covered with half of a pair of black tights, becoming invisible against the black background, and is replaced visually by a prosthetic leg) (**Figure 3**). In this scene, the puppeteer plays with verticality, which is another characteristic of the grotesque. But the ascension is not infinite: the old lady cannot escape fate and the finitude of human life; she will die as suggested by the fall of the puppet body.

2.3. The puppet body and the grotesque

Like the grotesque body described by Mikhail Bakhtin, the puppet body in Ilka Schönbein's artistic work is disproportionate, protean, malleable, unfinished, covered with excrescences and openings. It relates to "an aesthetic of fragmentation," "rhapsody,"²⁷ and interlacing, which also characterizes the work of *The Old Lady and the Beast's* text.

The puppet body, in the German puppeteer's work, is indeed affected by distortion and transgression; it is a "leapfrogging over the boundaries,"²⁸ but always in the in-between: as a grotesque image, it "reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming."²⁹ In *The Old Lady and the Beast*, it is the primacy of indeterminacy between:



Figure 3. © Alexandra Lebon, *The Old Lady and the Beast*, by Ilka Schönbein.

²⁷ Muriel Cunin, "Côtelettes, bouchers, chirurgiens et viscères. Grotesque et dissection dans le théâtre de la renaissance anglaise," in *Grotesque et spatialité dans les arts du spectacle et de l'image en Europe (XVI^e et XXI^e siècles)*, ed. Aline Le Berre, Florent Gabaude and Philippe Wellnitz (Bern: Peter Lang "Contats. Série 1-Theatrica" 27, 2012), 51.

²⁸ According to the expression of François Grosjean, *The Old Lady and the Beast*: note of intent.

²⁹ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 24.

1.

The animate and inanimate: sometimes it is difficult to discern who, of the actor or the object, is manipulating whom in the performance.

2.

Life and death. Ilka Schönbein said:

[The] exchange of life and death, the moment when statue comes to life, that is what I love in puppet theatre. I try to adapt myself to the state of being of the thing that has no life... There is often a moment of pause, a moment of 'Stop!' where the life emerges in the stillness.³⁰

According to John Bell,³¹ the relationship between the living world and the dead world is in fact the central aspect of performing object theater. But in Ilka Schönbein's work, this connection is not only contingent upon the use of performing objects: life, death and the tipping point from the one to the other constitute the heart of the dramaturgy of *The Old Lady and the Beast* (notably in its themes and motifs).

Furthermore, in the show, the puppeteer's body appears to be between life and death, and at the tipping point from one to the other. She is alive and well, but everything in her appearance reminds the audience of a corpse: her skin is so pale that it looks white, her body is excessively thin and her gesture is sometimes characterized by rigidity. The paper mask and prosthetics joined to the flesh strengthen the impression that Ilka Schönbein's body is between life and death.

This image of the body at the tipping point from life to death is typical of the grotesque. In Mikhail Bakhtin's view, in the system of grotesque imagery, death is "part of life as a whole – its indispensable component, the condition of its constant renewal and rejuvenation."³²

3.

Younger life and old age: in the scene of the ballerina, a single mask presents the little ballerina and the old one, both successively and at the same time.

4.

The human and non-human: the hybridization between the human and the donkey marks the puppet body not only in its appearance but also in its behaviour, its gesture and its language, which is partly constituted of noises, cries, groans and unintelligible words.

³⁰ Quoted in Kennet Gross, *Puppet: an essay on Uncanny life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 158.

³¹ Bell, "Death and Performing Objects".

³² Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 50.

5.

The feminine and masculine: Alexandra Lupidi, the musician and actress who performed on stage with Ilka Schönbein, took on both the role and the costume of the Ringmaster. Furthermore, in the German puppeteer's body, this gender transgression turns into confusion when the old queen becomes father and mother of the child whom she gives birth to: in the original tale of *The Little Donkey*, the newly born animal has a father, the King, but in Ilka Schönbein's rewriting, the father figure has disappeared and the Queen has taken over the King's lines – which is quite paradoxical as the show *The Old Lady and the Beast* is dedicated to Ilka Schönbein's father.

6.

The creator and creature: in the scene of the old queen giving birth to the little donkey (**Figure 4**), there is a confusion between the one who is giving birth and the one who is brought to life, since the little donkey is a representation of the old body (it is "[the] animal called my body"³³ as the old lady shout several times during the show).

The image of a "senile pregnant hag" "is a typical and very strongly expressed grotesque" according to Mikhail Bakhtin.³⁴ "It is ambivalent. It is pregnant death, a death that gives birth. There is nothing completed, nothing calm and stable in the bodies of these old hags. They combine a senile, decaying and deformed flesh with the flesh of new life, conceived but as yet unformed. Life is shown in its twofold contradictory process; it is the epitome of incompleteness."³⁵ In Rémi Astruc's opinion,³⁶ the senile pregnant hag image shows the human desire to complete the life cycle, inseparable from the desire for immortality. The scene of the old lady giving birth, in which father, mother and child are being confused in one and the same person, indeed highlights the human desire for self-procreation.

As we can see in *The Old Lady and the Beast*, "the grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits. The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the body itself goes out to meet the world. This means that the emphasis is on the aperture or the convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus,

³³ "L'animal qui s'appelle mon corps!" Ilka Schönbein, *The Old Lady and the Beast*.

³⁴ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 25.

³⁵ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 25-26.

³⁶ Astruc, *Le renouveau du grotesque dans le roman du XX^e siècle*, 89.

the potbelly, the nose. The body discloses its essence as a principle of growth which exceeds its own limits only in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation."³⁷

In Ilka Schönbein's show, the puppeteer and her characters eat apples, drink cider, defecate, mate and give birth on stage. The sexual allusions are numerous in *The Old Lady and the Beast* –including in the music, especially in the old French song *Aux marches du palais* – , and the scene of the wedding night shows the union of the little donkey with the princess sharing a body with an erect phallus. The grotesque body, and this is particularly true for Ilka Schönbein's show, is above all a sexed body because, as Rémi Astruc³⁸ writes, sexuality come to form "a kind of concretization of the mystery of hybridation" (it is a vision of two bodies joined in one); it portrays the metamorphosis from the human body to a monster (the "beast with two backs").

2.4. The puppet body and the question of the human identity and otherness

All these transgressions point to the question asked by the puppet body, namely that of the human identity and otherness. *The Old Lady and the Beast* attempts to portray (and to accept) both the traumatic experiences of the gap between the sense of self-permanency and the fact that we are irrevocably changing, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of the difference between self and others.



Figure 4. © Alexandra Lebon, *The Old Lady and the Beast*, by Ilka Schönbein.

The masks and prosthetics used in *The Old Lady and the Beast* are all extensions and doubles of the old queen. But these doubles are never separate from the body they double. The puppeteer and the puppet share the same "earthly body"³⁹ and the physical boundaries of the puppeteer's body make the distinction between self and others no longer possible. To evoke a physical duality sharing one same earthly body is most relevant in the scenes of childbirth and of loving union. The puppet body materializes "an unfinished separation from others"⁴⁰ to counter the traumatic experience of the difference between oneself and others.

But the puppet body tries also to counter the even more worrying and traumatic experience of old age (tending towards death) and the experience

³⁷ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 26.

³⁸ Astruc, *Le renouveau du grotesque dans le roman du XX^e siècle*, 73.

³⁹ "Enveloppe corporelle." Girard-Laterre, "L'objet et l'acteur au corps à corps".

⁴⁰ "Enveloppe corporelle." Girard-Laterre, "L'objet et l'acteur au corps à corps".

of inadequacy between oneself and their appearance caused by ageing. In *The Old Lady and the Beast*, the difficulty of individuation in old age is portrayed when the little donkey sees its reflection for the first time in the water of a fountain. In this scene, identification with the mirror image is automatically problematic, since the mirror image reflected in the moving water is distorted.

Yet, after trying to catch its mirror image in the moving water, the little donkey turns back to the puppeteer who is entrapped in a face-to-face confrontation she cannot cope with, as it gives her a reflection of her own body ageing. In this scene, the old lady makes the claim "I don't feel old" her own, symbolizing, according to Paul Thompson (et al.),⁴¹ the experience of later life:

"It's not me! I'm not the one... who is old! I'm not the one who shits, who pees, who drools, who farts, who stinks! I'm not! It is this! This! The animal called my BODY!"⁴²

The old lady in Ilka Schönbein's show seems to experience the break between the self and its physical shell: "[the] self itself is ageless; it has stopped ageing at a point much earlier in the life-course than suggested by the appearance or functioning of the body."⁴³

She will try to get rid of this animal that metaphorically depicts her old body and will throw him into the fountain. But as with double monsters, the death of one is usually followed by the death of the other⁴⁴: she will remove it from the water while wondering what is most desirable: death or old age?

The Old Lady and the Beast presents, on stage, the gap caused by the time between an "I" who wants to keep dancing and an old body that no longer has the strength to dance and thus...to live. Ilka Schönbein's grotesque highlights the suspicion surrounding the contemporary body, which may fail or betray its owner, with death being the ultimate betrayal.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Paul Thompson, Catherine Itzin and Michele Abendstern, *I Don't Feel Old: Understanding the Experience of Later Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). Quoted by Emmanuelle Tulle, "The Ageing Body and the Ontology of Ageing: Athletic Competence in Later Life", *Body & Society*, 14/3 (2008): 4.

⁴² "C'est pas moi ! C'est pas moi... qui suis vieille ! C'est pas moi qui chie, qui pisse, qui bave, qui pète, qui pue ! C'est pas moi ! C'est lui ! Lui ! L'animal qui s'appelle mon CORPS!" Ilka Schönbein, *The Old Lady and the Beast*.

⁴³ Tulle, "The Ageing Body and the Ontology of Ageing", 4.

⁴⁴ Anne Carol, "La monstruosité corrigée, La chirurgie des monstres doubles" in *Monstre et imaginaire social. Approches historiques*, ed. Anna Caiozzo and Anne-Emmanuelle Demartini (Paris: Créaphis, 2008), 253-267. Quoted by Girard-Laterre, "L'objet et l'acteur au corps à corps".

⁴⁵ Astruc, *Le renouveau du grotesque dans le roman du XX^e siècle*, 40.

The Old Lady and the Beast replays moments of a woman's life on stage, from birth to death, and condenses the course of a life-time in one moment, one limitless space, the puppet body both looking back to the little dancing girl who the puppeteer once was and towards her coming death. In this regard, the scene of the little ballerina is an example. This scene presents the old queen (who appears at the very beginning of the show tired, worn, with a mask and black clothes); she has now removed her mask – a metaphor for her old appearance with which she no longer identifies. The mask, Ilka Schönbein's double as it was created from a cast of her face, becomes a puppet and successively portrays a little old woman, a queen and a little girl. This sequence enables the puppeteer to turn the clock back and confront real and fictive images from the past (when the little ballerina was still young), the present (while the great ballerina is moving into later life) and the future (when death will be at "her bed head").

Conclusion: the grotesque puppet body's death as the unique opportunity for the puppeteer's acceptance of her finitude

With this essay, I hope I have shown the reader how the grotesque can aptly characterize the puppet body no matter how protean it is (this protean trend being a key aspect of the grotesque itself). The very fact that the puppet body, like the grotesque, is without any limitation as to its potentialities of representation (as we have seen above, the puppet body is not subject to any anthropomorphic constraint: all physiognomies, all hybridizations, all transgressions are possible in the puppet body; furthermore, the puppeteer



Figure 5. © Alexandra Lebon, *The Old Lady and the Beast*, by Ilka Schönbein.

doesn't have to worry about the physical integrity of his puppets, since they can deal with any kind of mutilation, of dismemberment) is why it is so useful for staging the human being and exploring its current limits – the puppet body is indeed an instrument of subversion and anthropological knowledge creation.

In *The Old Lady and the Beast*, the most important dramatic transgression the puppet body questions is, perhaps, that which plays with the boundary of life and death.

As John Bell states, "[our] play with puppets, masks, images, machines, relics and other objects is always a serious matter, a play with transcendence, a play with the basic forces of life and death."⁴⁶

⁴⁶ John Bell, "Death and Performing Objects".

Through the puppet body, the performance of *The Old Lady and the Beast* appears to be “a spiritual act,”⁴⁷ a rite of passage allowing Ilka Schönbein to reinvent and go along with her old body that tends towards death. The puppet body “leapfrogging over the boundaries” without beginning or end provides a model of active subject “incarnation,” driven by a craving for life. In *The Old Lady and the Beast*, the confrontation with the puppet gives the puppeteer a new life impulse; in the show, even death appears as a renewal. “Birth-death, death-birth, such are the components of life itself [...]. Death is included in life, and together with birth determines its eternal movement.”⁴⁸ Also, the death of the puppet in the final scene, where old Lena doesn’t want to go to a retirement home (**Figure 5**), is a necessary trial for the puppeteer in the acceptance of death’s finality in order to get more out of living life. Desire for life is inseparable from desire for death, which explains the apparently macabre and yet hopeful nature of *The Old Lady and the Beast* and the last words of the show: “Long live life!” “Long live death!”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ John Bell, “Death and Performing Objects”.

⁴⁸ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 50

⁴⁹ “Vive la vie!”, “Vive la mort!” Ilka Schöbein, *The Old Lady and the Beast*.

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The Puppet as a Paradigm of the Contemporary Living Body

– An Inquiry into the Traditional Question of Artificial Life in Contemporary Puppetry

Introduction: Body-framing the Question of “Life”.

What is a body today? The notion of “body” has historical significance. The history of the body is the story of our perception of it. In our western contemporary societies, the body is a key issue and contemporary art productions reflect this concern with the corporeal dimension of existence. Moreover, in each historical era, the body takes on a fictional dimension, as it is always a place for projections and aesthetical, social, symbolic constructions of a given time and society. Thus, the contemporary western body is no exception and serves to express such well-known ideas as youth, health, longevity, speed, technological extension, etc.

It can be argued that the contemporary art of puppetry proves to be a privileged medium to address this question. The art of puppetry is not only a challenge to the *actor’s* body, as conceived by Heinrich von Kleist, Alfred Jarry, Tadeusz Kantor or Edward Gordon Craig (among others), it is also a place of experimentation on the living body *in general*. In other words, the question raised by puppetry can be summed up as follows: what is it that (only) the puppet can teach us about the contemporary western body?

Indeed, in today's puppet theater, the puppeteers have come out of the shadows to operate in full sight of the audience. Having largely disposed with the playboard, western contemporary puppetry reflects the fictional construction of the image of the body in many ways. For instance, the somehow monstrous "stage-creature," composed of both the body of the puppeteer and that of the puppet, offers a complex anti-dualistic vision of the body that questions the notions of hypernormativity and abnormality.

Yet within this general frame of questioning, this paper aims to re-address the specific corporeal issue of what "*living*" means. How may the puppet, which is yet by nature an inert object, appear as a paradigm of the *living* being? The question of "life" in the practical and theoretical fields of puppetry is a traditional issue to be addressed. Roughly speaking, the puppet is indeed, by nature, an inert object to which an artificial life is given during the time of the performance. It stages "the process by which the inanimate becomes animate."¹ That means that the model is not one of mere *imitation* or reproduction of the human life but it is one of *animation*. And, as we will see, the simple movement of the object is not a decisive criterion for the artificial process of animation. Actually, as Steve Tillis reminds us, to animate something means "in the root sense of the word, to give it the breath of life."² Metaphorically, that is indeed what a performer does with a puppet. Yet Tillis states that "non-metaphorically, it is an absurdity; for, of course, the puppet does not actually *live*."³ (Emphasis mine)

The pragmatic approach embraced by Steve Tillis is very relevant to this study. That is the reason why we will often refer to his works in the course of this article. Tillis encourages us to engage in semantic and theoretical clarifications, avoiding the dangerous pitfalls of mysticism when dealing with the artificial life of the puppet on stage. It is true that the vocabulary has to be precise: an *inert* thing is not necessarily *dead* even if a *dead* thing strongly tends to inertia. A puppet is lifeless yet animated. And as it is not, strictly speaking, "alive," it cannot, strictly speaking, be "dead". Nevertheless, the artificial life of the puppet has deep metaphorical significance. And we cannot ignore the fact that puppetry, through dichotomies such as animate and inanimate, living and dead, organism and mechanism, raises the very question of what

¹ Obratzov, cited by Steve Tillis, in Steve Tillis, "Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet." Master's Thesis, San Jose State University, 1990. p. 30. Last accessed October 22, 2014. http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/cgi/view-content.cgi?article=1024&context=etd_theses

² Tillis, "Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet," p. 30.

³ Tillis, "Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet" p. 30.

constitutes life. To put it another way, the question of life (and, conversely, that of death) is at the core of puppet performances: as Kantor often reminds us, if the object can “become alive” on stage, the living body is also a potential corpse.⁴

This paper therefore aims to address the question of life, a traditional issue in puppet theater, within the field of contemporary puppetry, both from a pragmatic point of view and on a metaphorical level, through theoretical investigation and concrete case studies. If we agree with Tillis that it is logically absurd to say that a puppet actually “lives,” we also agree that its concrete relationship to *actual life* proves more complex than it may seem at first sight. The micro-movements (such as the artificial yet real “breathing” of the puppet), the reciprocal “contamination” of the object’s inertia and of the living flesh, the phenomenon of “double-vision” are as many elements that make the scenic “life” of the puppet highly significant for the mode of existence of living beings. Indeed, as Tillis himself states, the puppet draws the audience’s attention to fundamental questions regarding what it means to be an object, what it means to have life,⁵ and, we may add, what constitutes the relationship between the two in a world where the borders between the self and its physical/virtual environment have become porous.

A Puppet’s Life – Theoretical Overview.

“Living Things”?

As a starting point for this analysis of the paradoxical “life” of the puppet, let us take a look at a naturalistic definition of “living things” which may appear useful from a strictly analytical point of view. What can these definitions teach us about the “life” of the puppet and conversely, what does the spurious life of the puppet tell us about the living beings’ “real” life?

The French 18th century anatomist and physiologist Xavier Bichat first defined life as “all the functions resistant to death.”⁶ A well-known, respected French dictionary (Larousse) echoes that first insight by defining the notion of “living things” through two relevant, complementary dimensions

⁴ See Tadeusz Kantor, *Le Théâtre de la mort*. Texts compiled by Denis Bablet (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 2004).

⁵ Tillis, “Towards an aesthetics of the puppet,” p. 134.

⁶ Encyclopédie Larousse en ligne, Article « Marie François Xavier Bichat ». Last accessed June 10, 2014. http://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/personnage/Marie_Fran%C3%A7ois_Xavier_Bichat/108843

of the phenomenon.⁷ Living things are first defined through their *appearance*: “1. what has the characteristics of life, as opposed to inanimate, inert”.⁸ Secondly, living things are defined by their primary functions, through the notion of *movement*: “2. where the functions of life are apparent, as opposed to what is dead; for instance, he is breathing, he is alive.”⁹

We may notice that the category of what is “alive” is defined in relation to its opposites: the *inert* or the *dead*. This reminds us of the semantic distinctions we already mentioned: according to the first understanding of the definition, a non-inert object – which is not *per se* “dead”; which has not, strictly speaking, ever been “alive” – can still be defined as “living.” Therefore, following the definitions, a puppet fits into the realm of “living things”: it has the *appearance* of life, assumes “the characteristics of life” (among others, that of movement) and is even, in a way we will have to pinpoint, “resisting to [metaphorical] death.”

This preliminary definition echoes Steve Tillis’ distinction between three types of signs – namely, *design*, *movement* and *speech* – that constitute the puppet. These specific signs are related to signs “that might be recognized as *signs of life*; that is, as signs one generally associates with the presence of life.” Nevertheless:

When these signs are presented by the puppet, they no longer signify the actual presence of life. The signs have been *abstracted* from life, and are now presented by something that is without life of its own. It is in response to these signs, which normally signify life, that the audience accords the puppet its spurious life.¹⁰

Steve Tillis then develops the very useful concept of “double-vision” – which we will explore later in this paper – to refer to the audience’s simultaneous acknowledgment of the puppet as both a perceived object and an imagined “life.” This concept enables us to comprehend how, beyond theatrical conventions, the deployment of abstracted signs creates an operative

⁷ Larousse, Dictionnaire de français en ligne, Article « vivant, vivante ». Last accessed June 10, 2014. http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/vivant_vivante/82299

⁸ “Qui a les caractéristiques de la vie, par opposition à ce qui est inanimé, inerte”. Larousse, Dictionnaire de français en ligne, Article “vivant, vivante”; all translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

⁹ « Où se manifestent les fonctions de la vie, par opposition à mort: *Il respire, il est vivant.* » Larousse, Dictionnaire de français en ligne, Article « vivant, vivante ».

¹⁰ Tillis, “Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet,” p. 10-11

illusion of life in which the audience believes, while simultaneously aware that it is not real. But, first of all, we shall now underline that the fundamental affinity between artificial life and natural life – in the basic sense of the term – finds a meaningful echo in this pragmatic approach to the puppet's sign-system. There is a bridge between artificial living things and natural living beings, both primitively defined through their *appearance* (or *design* in case of the puppet) and through *movement* – if we decide to put aside the speech characteristic, not essential to the mere “livingness” of a living being.

“To Live?”

But there is more: indeed, “life” is not a simple notion limited to the mere functioning of an organism. There is an existential understanding of it which implies, among other things, that “to live” is not a mere *state* but appeals to a dynamic continuity always in danger of being interrupted. And the two meanings (if not more) are deeply intertwined.

Therefore, “to be living”, “to be alive”, and “to live” appeal to three different dimensions (or levels) of being. Here, we could refer to the definition of “life” given by the French philosopher Renaud Barbaras in *Life, Movement and Desire* (2008)¹¹: “the verb ‘to live’ designates both being alive and the experience of something.” It refers to the distinction between the “living body” and the (subjectively) “lived body” (“*corps vivant/corps vécu*”). As far as the puppet is concerned, this ambiguity is highly meaningful. First of all, the puppet may be a reminder of life as metabolism conceived as self-preservation, that is, as negation of “death,” thought only in relation to what it is not (death) and not for itself. However, as we will see, it can also be thought as suggesting an alternative way to subjectively “inhabit” that very own body of ours, through a refocalization of attention toward the world. Seeing the very performance of life through micro-movements such as the breathing of the puppet implies that life as such could also be positively understood as *movement*. To quote Renaud Barbaras again: “All living beings are in effect characterized by a movement, which nothing can cause to cease, a movement that largely exceeds what is required by the satisfaction of needs.” This allows the philosopher to positively define life as *desire*, which not only tends toward self-preservation, as we have almost always thought, but toward the *manifestation* of the world. This is highly relevant for puppetry,

¹¹ Barbara Renaud, *Life, Movement and Desire*. Accessed June 19, 2014.
<http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/10.1163/156916408x258924>

which questions the relationship and porosity between “beings” and “things.” Considering that intentional dimension of “life,” we may wonder how *objects* provide the metaphors through which *subjects* can model their lives.

The Very Performance of Life.

Let us try to analyze more carefully the nature of the artificial life attributed to the puppet and its metaphorical implications.

Basil Jones, puppeteer and co-founder of the Handspring Puppet Company, makes a remarkable distinction between the very nature of the puppet and that of the live actor.¹² Obviously, the ontological status of puppet in performance radically differs from that of the human actor. The actor is a living person and therefore automatically “possesses” life. His or her “livingness” is obvious and certainly does not need to be “performed.” During the course of the performance, it is not threatened whatsoever. Conversely, a puppet is an object and therefore, by definition, lifeless. The object which is called a puppet lives and breathes only because, on the one hand, it is *designed* to look like a live thing (role of the designer/maker) and, on the other hand, because the puppeteer, at least during the time span of the performance, endeavours to create the illusion of life, with the help of the representative sign-system of movement and – if required by the story – that of speech.

Thus, the primary work of the puppet is, in Basil Jones’ words, the “*very performance of life*”. Beyond the plot and aesthetics of the performance, the puppet strives toward life, a life that is always provisional. Every second on stage, the puppet could “die.” So the puppeteer is literally engaged in a parallel, low key drama, that of inertia which is, metaphorically, a life-and-death struggle.

Two Levels of Perception.

The disappearance of the playboard in contemporary western puppetry has allowed a multiplication of narrative levels. According to Basil Jones again, the puppet is performing on (at least) two levels, one obvious, one more profound.¹³

¹² Basil Jones, “Puppetry and Authorship.” In *Handspring Puppet Company*, edited by Jane Taylor (Parkwood: David Krut Publishing, 2009): 253-268.

¹³ Jones, “Puppetry and Authorship.”

One is the macro level. It engages with the script, the story – what he calls the “choreography” – that is, all the somehow practical gestures dictated by the necessities of the story. But the second level, the *microlevel*, is equally vital to the narration: it is the “very performance of life.” It relies on all the micro-movements of the puppet (direction of the eyes, breathing, etc.) that allow the puppet to look as if it was alive. These micro-movements invite the audience into another narrative space whose intensity often exceeds that of verbal text, an existential spark of life kindled on stage.

Life and Breath.

That is why – both founders of the Handspring Puppet Company insist¹⁴ – the *breathing* of the puppet is essential. We may add that that remains true whatever the form of the breathing is: the audience’s imaginative projection or actual breathing movement automated or prompted by the puppeteer. This is what allows the puppet to *exist* on stage, even when it remains motionless on the level of macro-action. The audience, noticing the puppet imperceptibly breathing in and out, enters into an empathetic relationship with the object that is brought to life. This breathing is physical, yet it has a profound metaphorical power. The non-existent substance (air) passing through this mechanical being represents the very essence of life, which one may call the “soul” of the puppet, as a reference to the etymological origin of the notion (*anima* – which literarily means “blast of air”). For this reason, the question of breath may appear as a fundamental point to look closely at in the examples we will focus on.

Thus, it could be argued that puppet theater fills the role of theater as stated by Peter Brook in *The Empty Space*,¹⁵ making the invisible visible: by staging a performance of life, it pinpoints what we, out of habit, can no longer see, the value of breath. It exposes what is “beneath” the fictional body; what the Handspring Puppet Company may refer to as the “animal life” within us.

Two Living Bodies?

Given the above issues, one could think that, if there are (at least) two narrative levels, there are also *two types* (or levels) of *lives* on stage: the organic life, that of the puppeteer, and the artificial life, that of the puppet.

¹⁴ Jones, “Puppetry and Authorship.”

¹⁵ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (New York: Touchstone – Simon & Schuster, 1996). Accessed June 3, 2014. http://cdn.preterhuman.net/texts/religion.occult.new_age/occult.conspiracy.and.related/Brook,%20Peter%20-%20The%20Empty%20Space.pdf

Therefore, at first glance, puppetry may be seen as an *expression* of the Cartesian ideal: the mind stands as the puppeteer and the body as the puppet. It is *as if* the body were essentially lifeless until manipulated by the mind. Yet it can be argued that if the puppet was something truly wholly inanimate by nature, disconnected from its motion principle (namely, the puppeteer), that would lead to absurd statements: for instance, the refusal to acknowledge the glove-puppet as a puppet. If puppetry cannot truly *incorporate* any part of the live actor, the puppet's lifelessness cannot compete with the vivacity of the live hand in terms of capturing the audience's attention. Thus, in the case of the hand-puppet, the focus of our attention would be the puppet-operator's hand and the piece of material on it would appear as nothing more than a *costume* for the mimicking hand.¹⁶ But this conception is in fact mistaken and the art of puppetry actually offers a far more complex vision of the body. The living hand does not simply "*inhabit*" the hand-puppet as a dualistic vision of the body structure would suggest.

Indeed, Steve Tillis' criticism of the definition of the puppet as a *necessarily* inanimate object is extremely enlightening in that regard.¹⁷ He conjures up several examples to clarify his point. For instance, he evokes the theatrical figure of a puppet baby, made of a carved wooden head and a sackcloth body, brought onstage by a living "father" who proceeds to operate it rather obviously. The operator rocks it gently in order to "lull it to sleep." When it finally does go to sleep, the "father" rolls over and exposes the baby's naked behind which is nothing other than the operator's bare hand. Tillis also gives the example of two mute fighters – whose figures are nothing more than living bare human hands. But although there is little or nothing "inanimate" about these figures, Tillis notices that "these hands, as used here are generally taken to be puppets, for the hands are not thought of by the audience as pairs of hands, but rather, as something other than hands."¹⁸ Indeed, not only must a puppet not be entirely inanimate, it in fact cannot have anything inanimate about it: "the design possibilities of the puppet go so far as to abjure any use of the inanimate."¹⁹ Tillis agrees with the puppeteer Obratsov when he states that the puppet, even when its "design" is a bare human hand, remains a puppet in the sense that it lives *apart from* the puppeteer with a "rhythm and a *character of its own*." Consequently, the glove-puppet truly *is* a puppet

¹⁶ Tillis, "Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet," 35-36 and 66

¹⁷ Tillis, "Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet," 22-25

¹⁸ Tillis, "Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet," 24

¹⁹ Tillis, "Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet," 25

and not a mere hand wearing a costume. When the figure is “hybrid,” the puppet incorporates the living flesh of the operator: in the first example cited, when the audience sees the back of the operator’s hand, they not only perceive the hand as a hand, but as part of the figure: it appears as the baby’s behind. In other words, according to Tillis, in each case, the hand of the puppeteer, perceived as separate from the operator, “lives apart” from him and therefore partakes of the same nature as the rest of the figure. That is, the hand is not only perceived as a hand but *as if it were an object*.

Double Vision.

The ultimate consequence of this perception lies in the audience’s simultaneous acknowledgement of the double nature of the puppet, both as inert object and live character. It is what Henryk Jurkowski calls the “opalization” or “opalescence”²⁰ of the puppet. For several reasons, Steve Tillis prefers to describe this same phenomenon as one of “double vision.”²¹ According to the latter, this belongs to the very essence of puppetry, regardless of the form of the puppet, in all historic periods and geographic regions, whether it is done intentionally or without full conscience of it. “Double-vision” is therefore the name for a very specific way of viewing the puppet, through actual perception and a complementary act of imagination from the audience. It means that the audience is not *alternatively* perceiving the puppet as *either* an inanimate object *or* a living thing (in an “either/or” logic of “oscillation”) but that the audience chooses to acknowledge *in one single glance* the puppet’s paradoxical dual nature. The spectator perceives the theatrical figure to be an object and *at the very same time* it imagines it to be “alive,” owing to the theatrical stimulation provided by its representative signs. The “objective” dimension of the puppet is, in that sense, considered *along with* its scenic life.

These considerations allow us to clarify the specific ontological status of the puppet, definitely distinct from that of the live actor, yet truly not confined within the boundaries of the inanimate. The constant tension within double vision indeed implies a very special ontology for the puppet which seems to manifest itself always “within the slender margin of doubt”²²: the puppet’s “struggle for life” makes it a paradoxical figure, always on the threshold

²⁰ Tillis, “Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet,” 130-132

²¹ Tillis, “Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet,” 126-139

²² Tillis, “Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet,” 135-136

between the animate and the inanimate; neither strictly inert nor truly alive but somehow embracing *both states at the same time*, sailing on the ubiquitous waters of the Styx, always on the margin between the real and the unreal, between the world of the living and that of the dead. Or, in other words, “the puppet *is* and *is not* that which seems to be.”²³

The Paradoxical Unity of the Stage-Creature.

However, our analysis differs slightly from Steve Tillis’ on one point. It can be argued that the living hand of the puppeteer, when aggregated to a puppet or simply used as one, does not merely *turn itself into an object*, embracing in that way the very nature of the puppet (including its duality). From the paradoxical dual nature of the puppet, we would conclude that the theatrical “creature” created on stage by the meeting and mingling of the object and the living body of the puppeteer carries its own unity and specificity. The dialectical relationship between the object and the living body is central here: across the two figures (puppet and operator) a *single* being, of a specific hybrid genre, is represented. The co-presence and closeness between puppet and operator (emphasized when the latter is visible) implies a “contamination” between the two bodies that assemble in one single “stage-creature”. The hand of the operator is not only objectified, it is truly *incorporated* within this “stage-creature” that could be called “the puppet” but which is actually constituted of both the object and (parts of) the operator.

This subtle shift in meaning proves of profound ontological and existential significance for the audience. The hybridizing process may be full or partial, but the contact zone, evoking a form of sympathy and a tactile identification between man and object, is always meaningful. It is *as if* there was an exchange between the qualities of the body of the puppeteer and that of the puppet. There seems to be an electrical charge that passes from the body of the puppeteer into the puppet, and conversely.

Obviously, this possibility problematizes the concepts of animation and “animacy”: that is to say, how the object “becomes alive” and the living body can be turned into an object. Depending on the intention of the performance, the contact zone can take on various meanings; for instance, it can evoke, in its very materiality, the interdependence of human beings, the actual dependence of the subject upon the material world that has become a prosthetic extension of itself, the porosity between “life” and machine, etc.

²³ Tillis, “Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet,” 135

But the metaphorical implications here are even deeper. Let us take the emblematic case of the glove-puppet. As we already mentioned, the operator's hand "remains something other than a human hand" and does not merely "inhabit" the puppet as its "soul" or "animal principle" of animation. In fact, the breathing of the puppeteer actually becomes that of the puppet (sometimes even this is emphasized for performance purposes). Yet, within this intimate relationship, something deeper is going on between both bodies: breathing in unison, puppet and puppeteer happen to partake the same shared "soul" – which becomes that of an *auto-nomous* (etymologically – "giving itself its own laws") specific stage-creature with its own rhythm and identity.

After this quite long theoretical discussion, let us now see more concretely how these principles apply on stage by focusing on three examples of performances which explore, in their own way – through very different means and aesthetics – these questions of "life," "death" and embodiment.

Hyperrealism, the Animal and the Machine: Three Case Studies of Artificial Life in Contemporary Western Puppetry.

A Surface for Life Projection: Hyperrealistic Puppets.

The first example we shall focus on is the staging of the French *trois-six-trente* company *Les Aveugles* [*The Blind* or *The Sightless*], written by Maurice Maeterlinck, first performed in 2008 at the Centre Dramatique de Thionville-Lorraine (France). The performance was directed by Bérangère Vantusso, and the puppets were crafted by Marguerite Bordat, assisted by Nathalie Régior.

The *trois-six-trente* company is well-known for its use of hyperrealistic puppets. The company's work is deeply influenced by the work of the artist Ron Mueck. The latter has become famous for the extremely detailed plastic treatment of his sculptures, which renders them confusingly hyperrealistic. They actually appear as real particular individual human beings, caught in a sometimes banal yet very meaningful moment, as if time had stopped temporarily yet eternally, freezing the figures in a movement forever on the verge of resuming. Implicitly, there is a strong sense of theatricality in Ron Mueck's figures, as their postural suspended movements become as many occasions for the spectator to project narrative explanations upon them about their supposed "lives" and (human) conditions. The situations may conjure up a dreamlike realm or evoke social realism; however, the extreme

naturalism of the motionless figures – only falsified by the gigantic or reduced scale – always endows them with a truly uncanny quality.

There are many common features between Ron Mueck's work and the *trois-six-trente* production. Ron Mueck's link to puppetry is both rooted in his personal history – as he has been raised in a family of puppet and doll makers – and inscribed in his artistic formation: Ron Mueck worked with Jim Henson, the famous American puppeteer, creator of the "Muppets" and founder of The Jim Henson Company.²⁴ As we already mentioned, the French puppet company acknowledges the influence of Ron Mueck's works. This kinship is revealed first in their aesthetic choice of hyperrealism, but also in the affinity between their artistic worlds – both mingling realism and dreamlike (nightmarish) fantasy. Finally both *trois-six-trente* and Ron Mueck address the issue of ageing, a topic that proves central to the performance under scrutiny.

In the puppet adaptation of Maeterlinck's play, twelve blind characters are set up on stage, six men and six women, most of them old. They are waiting in a forest, immobile and anxious, unable to find their way back home without their guide, who actually died at their feet, as the audience realizes. The thirteen puppets (including the dead priest) are crafted in a disconcertingly realistic way, only differing from real humans in scale (2/3 of the human size). Four puppeteers are also on the stage, (occasionally) playing them and voicing the text, using microphones. The voices themselves are not necessarily attributed to a precise character, creating confusion for the spectator, who cannot always decide which of the twelve figures is speaking.

Here, the hieratic *presence* of the static hyperrealistic puppets underlines the key role of the puppet designer and reminds us of the kinship between puppetry and sculpture – the ancient sacred (mythological) statuary origin of the puppet. The plastic perfection of the lifelike motionless puppets is striking and verges on the uncanny: there is a constant play between illusion, due to the "sameness" that allows us to recognize human beings in them, and disillusionment, due to scale reduction and stillness.

If each of the figures takes on a singular identity, due to their extremely singular and personal traits, the fact that they are puppets enables the audience to relate to them as representative of a vulnerable, fragile, mortal human condition. Indeed, if the live actor, despite his or her exertions, can never

²⁴ Justin Paton and Robert Storr, *Ron Mueck: exposition* (Paris: Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, 2013).

fully get rid of his identity (remaining but a person pretending to be another person), the puppet has the symbolic power to portray “man in general.” Obraztsov suggests that the power of the puppet, residing in its inanimate nature, is that of general representative capacity: “The puppet is not a man and for that very reason it can give a living portrayal of man in general.”²⁵ As Tillis reminds us, the restriction of the actor to his physical characteristics was also one of Maeterlinck’s reasons criticisms of the human actor, whom he deemed too singular and therefore unable to portray the archetypal figures of his theater.²⁶ In the case of the *trois-six-trente* production, it is actually the subtle balance between absolutely particular figures and the general representativity of the puppets that creates the audience’s strong empathy and deep questioning.

Here, the “double-vision” principle of “life,” described by Tillis, fully works. Fundamentally, the lifelike puppets become a surface for the audience’s *projections*. Of course, the extreme realism of the figures offers encouraging material, but it is the audience members who choose to imagine that the lifeless dummies presented on-stage have “life,” taking the leap from the perception of the bizarre figures to the imagination of life. We may note that this principle of “life” does not rely only on theatrical convention. Indeed, if it were so, in order to function as “living” characters, the puppets would have to be integrated within a theatrical context with an elaborated set and props. Yet here, the puppets are presented on a relatively pared-down stage and the “double vision” principle is still fully at work.

The performance appears to be faithful to Maeterlinck’s symbolist ideas. Indeed, as the author himself states, puppets “come to life only when the spectator projects his unconscious content onto them.”²⁷ If the actual meaning of “unconscious content” may remain obscure, the suggestion is relevant: the spectators, by means of imagination, complete the abstracted signs suggested by the puppet. Yet an objection could be raised as to the actual “*abstraction*” of the signs, considering the hyperrealistic features of the figures. How would Maeterlinck, who as a Symbolist believes in the strength of *suggestion* over that of realism, respond to the hyperrealism of these puppets? And, more fundamentally, aren’t the abstraction and symbolic suggestive power necessary to puppetry wiped out by the over-realistic nature of these figures? In fact, despite their realistic features, the puppets

²⁵ Obraztsov, cited by Tillis in Tillis, “Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet,” 105

²⁶ Tillis, “Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet,” 105

²⁷ Maeterlinck, cited by Tillis in Tillis, “Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet,” 121

here are not trapped in mere *imitation*. Firstly, the movers and speakers are visible, and their presence on stage constitutes a physical obstacle to strict realism. But, more importantly, the principle of suggestion remains operative as the quasi-immobility of the puppets opens a wide gap between the stage and reality – a discrepancy which allows the suggestion principle to remain intact. The suggestion is strong for sure – but it remains a suggestion and not a mere imitation.

This very (quasi-) immobility of the figures is still to be questioned. Doesn't it endanger the "life" projection of the audience? Is movement not an essential element of puppetry's sign-system? If the figures remain almost motionless, in what sense are they still to be called "puppets"? What distinguishes them from Ron Mueck's *statues*? According to Steve Tillis, what structurally distinguishes a motionless puppet from a statue is the sign-system of speech: a talking puppet cannot be confused with a statue.²⁸ Yet here, as the voices of the character are, on the one hand, made unreal and somehow distant through the distortion of the microphones, and, on the other hand, not precisely attributed to a specific character, the sign-system of speech may not appear as a decisive and sufficient explanation to "compensate" for the lack of movement. Nevertheless, the specificity of the medium here lies in the specific slow and distended *temporality* created by the performance. In the case of Ron Mueck's hyperrealist statues, the spectator creates its own viewing temporality. He is not only allowed to move around the figure, but he is also in charge of the deciding how much time he spends watching the artist's work: he can choose to take only a quick look at the statue and think that it is "technically well made" or be willing to stare at the figure for quite a long moment. By contrast, in the case of the puppet performance, the audience is caught in the distended temporality imposed by the show that, along with the favourable darkness of the auditorium, creates the conditions allowing "double vision" to occur. Therefore, the figures of *trois-six-trente* can really be identified as *puppets*. Similarly, Ron Mueck's sculptures, set in a performative context, may be turned into puppets as well.

In fact, paradoxically, the illusion of life comes from the same source as disillusionment, namely, the presence of the living puppeteers. The proximity of the living organisms (the puppeteers) disrupts the illusion and, in the same movement, in this very proximity, breathes life into the puppets and make the inert flesh shiver, physically reinforcing the "double vision." The slow rhythm, the stillness of the figures, the frequent silent pauses, the breathing

²⁸ Tillis, "Towards an Aesthetics of the Puppet," 32-33

sounds take the audience into a state of virtual somnolence which allows *hallucinations*. The audience believes the puppets are *actually* breathing; they believe they actually see the heaving of their rib cage. In that respect, if proximity to human flesh is essential, the puppets have to remain untouched by the puppeteers. When a puppeteer happens to touch a puppet, the hallucination clears up and the projection is made (temporarily) impossible.

From a subjective point of view, the performance invites the spectators to re-consider their perception of the world. The art of puppetry therefore suggests another model for an alternative way to “inhabit” our body, or as Heidegger would say, to “being-in-the-world.” Firstly, the uncanny presence of death paradoxically highlights the value of life. Secondly, in order to live the performance fully, the audience is taken into another, slowed-down temporality, where boredom becomes a positive value. Moreover, the possibility of hallucinations glorifies the value of imagination over a mere pragmatic materialistic approach to life: through hallucinations, the spectator does not rely solely upon sight and resorts to his other senses.

***Mecananimal Life:
the Handspring Puppet Company’s Horses.***

The second example I have chosen is that of the horses constructed by the Handspring Puppet Company for a National Theater of London blockbuster called *War Horse*, first performed in 2007. Adrian Kohler and Basil Jones, co-founders of the Handspring Puppet Company, were hired as “directors of puppets” and asked to design the horse puppets which play a central role in the show. We shall here consider the theatrical functioning of the puppets apart from the plot and aesthetic of the rest of the show.

The model here is that of the *animal* – which, according to the puppeteers, suggests a way of subjectively “living” one’s human body. Each of Handspring’s horses is manipulated by three visible puppeteers: two inside the body structure – leaving their legs apparent – and one beside the horse, equipped with a microphone to perform the horse’s sounds and operate the head. The movements of the horses are extremely naturalistic in a confusingly subtle and precise way; even the ears and the tails are articulated in order to express the animal’s very emotions. If the movements of the horses are included in quite a realistic illusionist sign-system, its voluntarily “bare” design leaves the puppets’ articulation, inner structure and mechanism apparent. And, as we will see, this aesthetic choice has deep philosophical implications.

Here, the notion of “living” recalls the shared universe of the human and the animal. Indeed, the spectator is asked to situate himself *at the level of animal perception*, which is endowed with great dignity. The principle of “animal extreme perception”, claimed by Basil Jones and Adrian Kohler,²⁹ is *not* aimed at leaving out information that does not rationally make sense. Rather, it makes us realise how acute our visual and auditory perception can sometimes be. In order to understand the feeling and thought of the horse, the audience has to exert its powers of perception: the movement of the ears, of the tail, the tiniest starts of the neck, the breathing pace, the neighs and sounds, etc.: everything that the puppet does must be finely apprehended by the spectators, even those sitting in the top rows of the theater hall.

This possibility of micro-perception reintroduces the phenomenological distinction between the *living body* and the *lived body* (“*corps vivant/corps vécu*”) and, therefore, addresses the notion of human subjectivity as the self projects himself subjectively into the external world. Indeed, the very performance of life exhibited by all the puppets in the performance consists essentially of *microdramas*.³⁰

Indeed, as Basil Jones suggests, this struggle for life through micromovements may remind the spectator of his own microdramas. Our daily habits, such as getting out of bed in the morning, reaching for a cup of tea or coffee, or avoiding a collision of glasses when kissing a friend, can take on epic proportions when performed by a puppet. A process of identification takes place in which the puppet becomes the manifest incarnation of our own struggle to live, to be human, to act – sometimes, as we already mentioned, even trumping the macroaction on stage.

Moreover, the crafted cane and wooden mechanical appearance of the puppet is also meaningful. Gerhard Marx analyzes the “function of malfunction” in the company’s work in terms of life and death.³¹ He analyses the notion of “tool” as “an object designed, created and existing only in relation to its function”. He uses the Heideggerian notion of “readiness-to-hand” which means that we know the object “only through its use, only as a means to an end” and this entails that “its physicality becomes invisible in pursuit of its singular function.” The object is only discovered in use and,

²⁹ Jones, “Puppetry and Authorship,” 256-257

³⁰ Jones, “Puppetry and Authorship,” 256

³¹ Gerhard Marx, “A Matter Of Life And Death: The Function of Malfunction in the Work of Handspring Puppet Company,” In *Handspring Puppet Company*, edited by Jane Taylor (Parkwood: David Krut Publishing, 2009): 225-249.

by the same token, the very use of the object renders the object *invisible* through use. This is what Heidegger calls “the hammering of a hammer”: as long as the object successfully operates within its intended function, it is an extension of the agency of the subject, and the relationship between user and used object is not an emotional one. That is, until it breaks.

As soon as the functional object malfunctions or the tool becomes dysfunctional, the relationship between subject and object is renegotiated. It is when the car does not want to start, that a space opens where we pour our subjectivity onto that object. You speak to the car as if it can hear, kick it as it can hurt, insult it as if it has feelings.³²

Suddenly, the object’s physicality becomes present: there is a renewed awareness of the tool in which the tool is no longer experienced through use, but rather through its *presence*, felt as obstinate physicality. According to Gerhard Marx, the puppet is a tool, but it functions as a dysfunctional tool and the way the puppet is crafted in the Handspring’s aesthetics is a reminder of that aspect. “Working” or “functioning” becomes synonymous with the life force in the puppet, but the animated object only carries an awareness of its aliveness due to the risk of its collapse. Moreover, the puppet functions *emotionally* due to the visible risk of its malfunctioning. In other words, the puppet’s livingness (and the emotional attachment and sympathy it entails for the audience) is contained in its apparent vulnerability to inertia, in its risk of collapsing back to its inert nature. In other words, it is the puppet’s “death” that contains its very “life.”

Man a Machine? – Zaven Paré’s Electronic Marionette.

Our last example is the electronic marionette in *The Theater of the Ears*, written by Valère Novarina, in a performance directed and designed by Allen S. Weiss and Zaven Paré (sound by Gregory Whitehead), first presented at The California Institute of the Arts, Center for New Theater in 1999.³³

The performance consists of Valère Novarina’s text *The Theater of the Ears*, heard through mobile speakers in a labyrinth of voices. Novarina’s face is projected through a system of mirrors onto the head of an electronic marionette, connected by wire to a visible control desk, operated by

³² Marx, “A Matter of Life and Death,” 236

³³ See “Valère Novarina” in *Alternatives théâtrales* 72 (2002): 8-23.

a puppeteer (Mark Sussman in the original production). The robotic figure appears to be an extremely simplified representation of the human being in its basic features (verticality, face). The mechanical figure reveals its technical nature: it emphasizes the fact that everything here is fake (i.e. *art-ificial*), but it also conflates robotic and human elements (such as the metonymic projected head), therefore questioning the link between fiction and reality through Allen S. Weiss and Zaven Paré's hybridized aesthetics. To quote Zaven Paré: "What are we made of? Of breath, of mechanisms, of animal fresh, or aren't we just freaks? Or could we merely be thinking heads made of words?"³⁴

Equipped with inflatable lungs, the technology underlines the importance of breath and questions the very physical aspect of living beings; for instance, the physical voice beneath the meaning of language. As the text reads:

Actors and spectators exchange breath in the theater. This is the scene that we can never see, the scene of impossible reproduction, the struggle of tongues in space. The mouth is the top orifice of the alimentary canal. The mouth speaks but it is the mute mouth down below that mimes the mouth movement in thought.³⁵

Nonetheless, the archaism of the mechanical body shows the fragility of the technology and recalls the phenomenon described by Gerhard Marx. The machine seems about to break down at any moment. This brings to mind the condition shared to a certain degree by all material beings and things: the finitude of beings and the obsolescence of things. Human beings, as living beings, carry their death within their lives, despite all posthumanist fantasies of prosthetic immortality. Here, again, the very performance of life is essentially rooted in a metaphorical reference to its opposite, namely, death.

Conclusion.

Staging and intermingling a living body and an object, puppet performances appear as an extraordinary tool that allows us to question our actual

³⁴ Zaven Paré's website. Accessed June 16, 2014. http://www.zavenpare.com/pdf/about_machine_art_fr.pdf

³⁵ Zaven Paré's website.

perception of the body and therefore reassess common representations of it. Essentially questioning "life," puppet theater nonetheless can go as far as to erase the biological human presence on stage (as we saw with the *troix-six-trente's* and *The Theater of the Ears'* performances), or the anthropomorphic horizon (in the Handspring Puppet Company's example), in order to question the truth of "what a human being is made of." Beyond the social, aesthetical, and mythological constructions of the fictional contemporary body as utopia (it has to be x or y – namely, young, fit, healthy, etc.), we tend to evade the fundamental question of "what it means to be alive." In that respect, our investigation of the artificial life of the object has highlighted the puppet's capacity for efficiently discarding the masks and fictions of the contemporary body by staging the very drama of life, the very fact of inertia and, indirectly, the inevitable condition of (living-toward-)death. It acts as a reminder of the finitude of human life, this mortality we try to escape. By also enacting subjectivity, puppetry does not only offer a paradigm of the living body but may even be thought as a paradigm for its very construction.

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Mechanical Affections

A reconfiguration of love by *fin-de-siècle* decadent dolls

Numerous fascinating figures of mechanical lovers and dolls in *fin-de-siècle* European literature participate in the reconfiguration of love during the making of the modern world. Long before the rise of cyborgs at the end of the twentieth century, the decadent *topos* of the doll, the automaton and the puppet staged “anthropo-mechanical” amorous fantasies. In this article, I would like to dissect both the mechanical “functioning” and the technological “upgrading” of love in some turn of the century French novels: symbolist writer Villiers de l’Isle-Adam’s *L’Ève future*, “Queen of Decadence” Rachilde’s works, and Alfred Jarry’s *Le Surmâle* all depict hybrid characters, endowed with mechanical traits, who are either perceived as or are transformed into machines. After Romantic praise for the sublime and idealized emotions, love becomes reduced to a binary structure, a physical pattern of action and reaction corresponding to the increasingly precise dissection of the human body made possible by medicine and science.

In these narratives, the artificial, mostly feminine creature places technology as the exotic Other to conquer while blurring genre and gender as it/she also turns men into puppets and playthings. The carefully constructed character of the mechanical lover or the loving machine redefines masculinity and femininity in the age of the dandy. However, such a rewriting of gender roles exceeds mere reversals of previous norms and traditions, as decadent writers sharpen literary techniques of parody and irony to deviate from dominant discourses and traditional narratives. When the loved woman and the created machine are both regarded as articulated objects of knowledge and desire,

love becomes an aesthetic hybrid creation rather than a “natural” feeling leading to biological procreation in a world seeking to produce everything – images, goods, bodies, and emotions – in *series*.

Playing with dolls, a solitary game for grown-up inventors?

Machines are objects of desire and appropriation. In his comprehensive study *Edison's Eve: A Magical History of the Quest for Mechanical Life* (2002), Gaby Wood traces a history of the relationship between man and machine marked by illusions, dreams, follies and deceit. The many flaws of automatons and androids trigger ontological questions: what defines man as opposed to the machine? The consciousness of the passing of time? The presence of a soul? Can those attributes remain valid after the death of God as proclaimed by Nietzsche, when man becomes the master of a reproduction deprived of biological generation, bordering on the unusual and the supernatural? The machine, seemingly protected from death and decay, emphasizes, by contrast, the fleeting condition of man.

Before becoming mechanized, the doll is a toy associated with childhood and oscillates between two poles: love and play. In his lyrical commentary on Max Von Boehn's *Puppets and Automata* (1929), Walter Benjamin notes that the doll does not stand for the remains of a fantasized lost innocence but is an invitation to vice, perversion and cruelty. Charles Baudelaire's short writings about playthings such as “La morale du joujou” (1853) and “Le joujou du pauvre” (*Le Spleen de Paris – Paris Spleen*, 1869) analyse the child's “first metaphysical tendency”, his desire to “see the soul” of the toy. In *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863), Baudelaire describes little girls mimicking ladylike life with dolls and depicts woman as a hybrid poetic creature both natural and artificial. Just as the woman incorporates mineral and metal materials into her body through make-up and costumes, inventors and artists wish to inject a soul into their scientific toys in the hope of creating the perfect woman.

Taking up Baudelaire's misogyny in *L'Ève future* (1886, translated as *Tomorrow's Eve* or *Eve of the Future Eden*), Villiers de l'Isle-Adam stages several feminine *Doppelgängers* in a tripartite structure of life, death, and illness that culminates in an inverted birth: life devoid of its corporeal insufficiencies stands as the ultimate goal to be reached by the automaton. The artificial woman Hadaly is built to overcome the flaws of the dualism between body and soul and to amend the errors of the so-called “natural” woman Alicia Clary, who is already too artificial a counterfeit, a beautiful boring “bourgeoise.” Inspired by Plato,

Edison's quest is articulated around Cartesian descriptions of the human body as a machine, but also includes hints of social Darwinism, echoes Charcot's experiences on hysteric patients and Lombroso's theses on criminology. In Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's novel, electricity replaces vital impulse and puts the machine in its place as the norm for a new ontology.

The "Eve of the Future Eden" is an ideal android that confines technology to the feminine with a will to rewrite Genesis and the concept of generation. In her article "Automating Gender: Postmodern Feminism in the Age of the Intelligent Machine" (1991), Judith "Jack" Halberstam rewrites the story of knowledge from the first apple, from the "bite" to the "byte", and argues that the feminine cyborg defines femininity as an automatism, a social and technological "coded masquerade."¹ The decadent doll prefigures the female cyborg who "replaces Eve in this myth with a figure who severs once and for all the assumed connection between woman and nature upon which entire patriarchal structures rest."² Furthermore, in *Reconstructing Woman: From Fiction to Reality in the Nineteenth-Century French Novel* (2007), Dorothy Kelly emphasizes Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's use of the extended metaphor of inscription in his rewriting of the Old Testament to express his rejection of naturalism and realism and his denunciation of bourgeois codification as represented by Alicia Clary: "In a sense, the artificial coding has become her nature, and Alicia is the creation of the bourgeois culture that has written her identity; she is a kind of mass-produced, common subjectivity. This real woman is but an artificial product of her surroundings; she is the artificial doll, 'la poupée.'"³ In a final turnaround, the real woman becomes a doll and the machine becomes the ideal woman. The novel feasts on contemporary anxieties about societal illnesses such as syphilis, congenital weakness, degeneration and loss of virility that supposedly resulted from biological reproduction processes within a woman's body. In the construction of the ideal woman, the female body is easily replaced by a machine, a mere metal cavity. In the novel, the only positive female characters are those who are deprived of a body: the ever-sleeping motionless body of Mistress Anderson is haunted by the bodiless spirit Sowana mentally assisting the inventor in his creation of the ultimate woman.

¹ Judith Halberstam, "Automating Gender: Postmodern Feminism in the Age of the Intelligent Machine," *Feminist Studies* 17.3 (1991), 449.

² Halberstam, "Automating Gender," 440.

³ Dorothy Kelly, *Reconstructing Woman: From Fiction to Reality in the Nineteenth-Century French Novel*. (Penn: Penn State University Press, 2008), 125-126.

Dorothy Kelly also notices the influence of scientist Etienne-Jules Marey on Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's writings. According to Marey, the machine can make up for human limitations. The human body is regarded as a text that can be modified through recoding. Thus language is endowed with performative powers as it creates and controls constructed identities. Edison's quest is a solitary one, as the male inventor is finally confronted with himself in his desires and expectations. In *fin-de-siècle* novels, the female body is easily modified, but such mechanization can also be applied to the male body once it has become feminized.

“Would you be a doll”? : virginal heroines, masculine dolls and mechanical lovers

Before Donna Haraway's feminist cyborg and its emphasis on the artificiality of gender distinctions and the political implications of the confusion of nature and nurture, decadent artificial feminine dolls mechanize men to make them play the game of femininity. Cross-dressing practises produce inverted men, contradicting gender norms. In Rachilde's works, gender roles are not only inverted, but also rewritten. In her *succès de scandale Monsieur Vénus* (1884), she stages Raoule de Vénérande, a masculine heroine refusing her suitor the Baron de Raittolbe and becoming infatuated with the young painter Jacques Silvert, whom she commodifies into a man-object, a “joujou de contrebande.” After transforming him into a feminized inverted man and revealing his latent homosexuality, she orchestrates his death in a duel after his infidelity with the Baron. She then transforms his corpse into a mechanical doll, a hybrid object: an anatomical Venus that integrates Jacques's natural hair, teeth, nails and a feminine sex toy replica provided with a mechanism that opens its legs. *Monsieur Vénus* plays on errors, grammatical mistakes of agreement between sexes and genders: from the incipit of the novel, the rewriting of gender roles takes place on the microscopic as well as on the macroscopic level. The codes of narration are also subverted at the level of words, *dans le texte*.

The first scene of the novel rewrites the biblical episode of Adam and Eve's banishment from the Garden of Eden. As Raoule staggers her way through the narrow corridors in Jacques's attic, the apples have already been picked out from the forbidden tree of knowledge and are cooking in caramelised sugar, releasing an intoxicating fragrance. Later on, Raoule and Jacques share sensations through the use of drugs and sadomasochism as the masculine female character turns the man into a puppet, keeping some of his body parts as relics. In 1884, *Monsieur Vénus* was censored and Rachilde was sentenced

to two years of imprisonment in Belgium. The young female author carefully constructed her literary *persona* by cross-dressing, referring to herself as an “*homme de lettres*” and facing accusations of perversity by (playfully) insisting on her good education and virginity when she wrote her scandalous novel. Rachilde’s heroines seem to have been modelled on their creator: they are pure and virginal, yet educated, strong-willed, scandalous, able to overthrow traditional morals by their (guilty) knowledge and their skilful art. In *La Marquise de Sade* (1887), following the footsteps of her uncle, the heroine Mary Barbe becomes a doctor and describes the masculine body in detail. Ironically, it is precisely through their own reification by the medical gaze and by reading anatomical charts that young girls become perverted, fully trained in the functioning of the human machine. As in the biblical episode, knowledge is associated with sin and shame. In her recent work *Libido Sciendi: le savant, le désir, la femme* (2012), Caroline de Mulder notes that during the nineteenth century, science was thought of as the discovery and domination of Nature as incarnated in the feminine body. During the *Belle Epoque*, in spite of the emergence of the New Woman, woman remained the object rather than the subject of knowledge, taking on the role of the virginal wax doll or the anatomical Venus, the Muse or the guinea pig. In nineteenth-century literature, the male hero takes it upon himself to educate his beloved in the hopes of recreating her, of modelling her to fit his desires. In *Refaire l’amour* (the title either means *making love again* or *reinventing love*, 1925), Rachilde remarks that the aestheticizing gaze of the male protagonist creates a quasi-mythical feminine character, a paper idol in a mad Pygmalion desire to recreate a breed of women: “Au fond, le rêve de tous les hommes ce serait de créer, artificiellement ou non, la poupée splendide dont on serait l’unique mécanicien, lui ayant appris à parler, à marcher...” (At the end of the day, every man’s dream would be to create – artificially or not – the ultimate splendid doll and to become her only mechanic, having taught her how to speak, how to walk...).⁴ However, this proves to be a dangerous process when the doll rebels by reproducing the behavior of her lover.

In *La jongleuse* (1900), the heroine, Eliante Donalger, seduces a young medical student before posthumously leaving him as a legacy to her niece, a “*bas-bleu*” who takes pride in knowing how children are conceived. Rachilde explores the differences between academic knowledge, increasingly common thanks to national education under the Third Republic, and practical artistic know-how, specific skills that enhance femininity into a daily theatrical performance.

⁴ Rachilde, *Refaire l’amour* (Paris: J. Ferenczi, 1925), 79.

Eliante integrates decadent misogyny and exacerbates it while becoming a scary and disturbing doll herself, a transformation bordering on the uncanny (*Unheimlichkeit*). By saying “représentez-vous” instead of “présentez-vous” (*introduce yourself*), Eliante clearly puts the question of identity under the (spot)light of performance. She is first compared to a doll, a plaything that disappears in her coach as in a case – the use of the word “joujou” echoes both Charles Baudelaire and the philosopher Auguste Comte, who depicts the predicament of woman as her being the “joujou” of man, a piece of domestic furniture that should remain in the household. Described through the eyes of her suitor, Eliante is a real doll: “Rien ne la révélait femme. Elle demeurait une grande poupée peinte, très intéressante parce qu’il est fort naturel que les poupées soient artificielles” (Nothing revealed her to be a woman. She remained a large, painted doll, very interesting because it is very natural for dolls to be artificial).⁵ As a doll, her artificiality thus becomes natural, ontological; however, the usual fusion of woman and doll along the lines of beauty, child-like appearance and passive obedience (women, like children or dolls, are to be seen but not heard) is exaggerated until it reaches a complete identification that shakes male confidence, leaving Léon to wonder: “jouait-on avec cette poupée-là?” (could one play with this doll?).⁶

The central chapter of *La jongleuse* stages a game of exotic and erotic dolls representing Eliante having sex with monsters and animals. Her late husband’s perversion, leading to the crafting of these dolls, has contaminated her as she now refuses all physical contact with Léon and would rather have intercourse with an antique amphora than with her suitor. The voluptuously shaped treasured amphora can be either masculine or feminine and treats gender as a “free-floating artifice.”⁷ Henri Donalger’s fetishism with the motionless dolls finds its inverted echo in Eliante’s attachment to an asexual object, sculptural yet endowed with a shifting gender. Furthermore, she reproduces the same reification she has been subjected to by turning Léon into a motionless puppet, excluding him from her scene of onanism with the amphora and reducing him to a simple gaze: the admired idol becomes the affirming I-Doll, an empowering process culminating in her self-sacrifice on the altar of love.

In Rachilde’s works, when women play with dolls or become dolls, they are linked with sexual deviances, vices and illnesses of the century, namely hysteria, sadomasochism (*La Marquise de Sade*), necrophilia (*Monsieur Vénus*),

⁵ Rachilde, *La jongleuse* (Paris: Des femmes, 1982), 37.

⁶ Rachilde, *La jongleuse*, 37.

⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1991), 190.

scopophilia (*L'Heure sexuelle*), zoophilia (*L'Animale*), synesthesia, fetichism, incest (*L'Amazone rouge*), the use of drugs... Embracing queer practises, female characters assimilate what men write about them and turn their words against them. Just as Donna Haraway's cyborg is inspired by science, science-fiction, and theory, decadent heroines jeopardize regular patterns of legacies by incorporating the possibility of contamination in the act of rewriting, which becomes reproducing with changes rather than automatically copying society's codes.

Rachilde's itemization of the figure of the *femme fatale* is combined with dangerous *mises-en-scènes* exceeding the demands of nineteenth-century feminist salons, introducing a *mise-en-abyme* (embedded patterns) of storytelling and performance. In decadent fiction, women do not content themselves with being reduced to conventional dolls. They seem to experiment with their condition of dolls *à rebours*, following the analyses of the differences between onstage dancers and dolls drawn by Heinrich von Kleist in his opuscle *On the Puppet Theater*; decadent heroines seem to have understood that "misconceptions like this are unavoidable (...) since we have eaten of the tree of knowledge. But Paradise is locked and bolted, and the Cherub stands behind us. We must make a journey around the world to see if a back door has perhaps been left open".⁸ This female challenging of God, deviating from the natural ways of biological reproduction, might find its alter ego in men becoming increasingly machine-like, working with, like, and against machines, at the rhythm of the machine (from transportation to the factory), thus trying to overcome their physical limits.

"Physical love is a dead end":⁹ the pathological case of the Supermale

In his last novel *Le Surmâle* (1902), the founding father of pataphysics Alfred Jarry describes the strange characteristics of André Marcueil, capable of unusual sexual endurance, which makes him sigh: "l'amour est un acte sans importance, puisqu'on peut le faire indéfiniment" (love is a meaningless act as it can be done indefinitely).¹⁰ The novel stages several contests aiming at confronting man and machines, such as a race between a train and a team of cyclists. When man becomes a god-like demiurge by his creation of machines, morals are also reconfigured: in Shakespeare's words, *fair is foul and foul is*

⁸ Heinrich Von Kleist, *On the Puppet Theatre*.

⁹ Serge Gainsbourg & Jane Birkin, "Je t'aime... moi non plus", 1969.

¹⁰ Alfred Jarry, *Le Surmâle* (Paris: Editions Mille et une nuits, 1996), 7.

fair, vice and virtue are merged together, pleasure becomes the only currency available and accepted in the modern world. Following David Hume's peculiar definition of morals, love is now merely an impression of the soul, a fading sensation, reduced to a physical act that demands regular realization and updating.

Capable of creation, man is regarded as a reproductive machine, a technical object similar to the tank engine, the bicycle or the phonograph, that makes use of the performative and inventive power of imagination; in fact, the perfect lover, like the machine, only comes to existence by a desiring imagination: "L'amant absolu doit exister puisque la femme le conçoit, de même qu'il n'y a qu'une preuve de l'immortalité de l'âme, c'est que l'être humain, par peur du néant, y aspire" (The absolute lover must exist, since woman can conceive of him, just as there is but one proof of the immortality of the soul, which is that man, through fear of nothingness, aspires to it).¹¹ Science is described as a conquest of the mysterious and the mythical: portrayed as Ellen Elson, the biblical woman only appears as real after her death, caused by an excess of orgasms or *petites morts*, once the scientific experiment is finished. As in many decadent novels, the conclusion of *Le Surmâle* is a return to convention, heralded by Ellen's traditional marriage; the memories she keeps of this (scientific) episode of debauchery are: a call for her new husband to stay moderate in his loving attentions and a ring made of André's tears. The statement "ce n'est pas un homme, c'est une machine" (it is not a man, it is a machine) rings as a rock solid argument against the lovers' marriage, as André, who has become a machine because of his abnormal stamina, is now accounted incapable of loving. Echoing the race between the train and the cyclists, the machine, either as a real machine or as a metaphor, crushes the man who falls prey to modern *hybris*.

The emergence of the figure of the mechanical lover triggers off a confrontation between two visions of love: on the one hand, a "mechanistic," "technical" conception of physical love that is condemned to failure and on the other, socially accepted, traditional human love, bound to creation and reproduction; indeed, "ce n'est pas d'aimer comme une machine mais de ne pas aimer comme une machine sociale que le Surmâle va mourir" (it is not from loving like a machine that the Supermale is going to die, it is from not loving like a social machine).¹² The machine as fictional character emerges in decadent literature just at the point when the prism of the metaphor hints

¹¹ Jarry, *Le Surmâle*, 48.

¹² Annie Lebrun, "Une force inattendue", 144.

at a new hierarchy between man and machine. It first appears as a form of sacrilege, a blasphemous hypothesis introducing friction and tension in the closed circuits of filiation. In the second half of the nineteenth-century, Emile Zola's experimental naturalist novels turned the body into a social object marked by determinism and the social milieu. The metaphor of the machine enables the reader to understand and experience one thing in terms of another,¹³ to discover new visions, to apprehend the body in new ways, to try forms of self-invention: in the modern world, Michel Foucault's *techné tou biou* – ethical *techniques de vie* – are not separated from a certain relationship to technology, a reflexive process that questions the nature of man and expands his technical and aesthetic abilities. With the mechanization of love, modern materialist theories allegorize themselves in monstrous and chaotic hybridizations, expressing their fear of dehumanization and reconsidering the role of the human body in amorous relationships. The dehumanization introduced by *Le Surmâle* through a sexual analogy between the human body and the machine presents a literary experiment at the opposite end of the spectrum from Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's quest for idealism devoid of any physicality; tracing back the threads of intertextuality, Rachilde notices that Hadaly is Marcueil's feminine Other. Rachilde stages silent male puppets, but in Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and Jarry's texts, it is the phonograph inside the mechanism that initiates love, that replaces the most intimate part of the human body: the voice that enables one to speak for oneself and assert an ontological difference with the animal world (one could also read Paul Verlaine's poem "Un rêve familier" (1866) describing on the ideal woman as an amorous "anthropo-mechanical" fantasy, a fascinating mute figure).¹⁴ The phonograph, as an instrument of reproduction of speech, also participates in the flawed reproduction of love patterns. In *L'Ève future*, it brings the automaton to life and gives the illusion of dialogue while the doll is in fact simply reacting to the questions of her owner without articulating original thoughts or emotions. In *Le Surmâle*, the phonograph foreshadows the death of the woman and thus authorizes the search for the Ideal beyond the contingencies of the female body. Heavily informed by intertextuality – ranging from ancient to contemporary sources – decadent texts staging dolls and puppets repeatedly try to reconfigure origins, be it the origins of bodies, organisms, feelings, and texts in the modern world.

¹³ Chris Hables Gray, *The Cyborg Handbook* (London: Routledge, 1995), 128.

¹⁴ Paul Verlaine, *Poèmes Saturniens*. 1866. "Son regard est pareil au regard des statues / Et, pour sa voix, lointaine, et calme, et grave, elle a / L'inflexion des voix chères qui se sont tuées".

Dolls and puppets allow masculinity and femininity to be detached from the humanoid body. However, though the doll as such might be lovely, it is not loveable. Its uncanny character opens breaches in the heart of love, asking the question of who (*qui*) or what (*quoi*) in its “functioning”: do we love a particular person or his or her qualities? The composite doll offers a compilation of loveable qualities without explaining their sum or their cumulative whole through personal biography, thus showing a possibility of producing lovers in series and on demand. Decadent narratives staging mechanical lovers assume that traditional love stories between a man and a woman are both old-fashioned and impossible. What Americans seem to miss when they casually ask “*would you please be a doll and [do something for me]*” is that the doll can either stand for both the fantasized and desired Other and the repellent, monstrous Other. Mechanical affections conjure up ontological infections as man and machine are merged together into new hybrid fictional creatures. Being associated with sinful vices and illnesses of the century, dolls and puppets try to make up for human physical and emotional deficiencies. They also figure the human body as a hybrid composite, an organism made of flesh and mechanisms, subjected to biological and social norms, foreshadowing Marcel Mauss’s consideration of the body as a technical object that one must learn to use in a historical and social fashion. Despite the illusion of offering the possibility of a fulfilling relationship, dolls and puppets remain attached to infancy (from the Latin *infans*: the one who does not speak) and solitary games of bored children. Thus playing with dolls means first and foremost playing with oneself. Inspired by *fin-de-siècle* trends of aestheticization, decadent dolls reveal the difficulties and the lack of trust presupposed by dealing with the staining truth, the bare body with all its faults and defects. In a way, they perpetuate Auguste Comte’s love for the angelic discarnate body of Clotilde de Vaux, the ideal woman he created and educated according to the laws of positivism and through the maieutics of correspondence, dissolving her body in the body of the text. Changing the other, modelling him or her according to one’s desires, mirrors the standardization of human bodies in medical and aesthetic norms, blurring the boundaries between genders, as patterns of production in series come to be preferred to traditional circuits of reproduction and filiation.



Illustrations



Figure 1: Atelier Madame d'Ora, Die Puppenkünstlerin Lotte Pritzel (18 February 1924)
Negative on Glass, courtesy of ÖNB Bildarchiv



LOTTE PRITZEL—MÜNCHEN.

Puppen für die Vitrine.

PUPPEN VON LOTTE PRITZEL.

VON WILHELM MICHEL—MÜNCHEN.

Die Puppe ist eine Bürgerin der neuen Zeit. Einer Zeit, die das Künstliche innig liebt, besonders in ihren Anfängen, weil sie des Natürlichen, des Lebens, ein wenig müde war. Ja, es ist wirklich wahr, daß von so einer winzigen Erscheinung wie es die neue Liebe zum Puppenhaften ist, Wege führen zur Gesamtpsychologie unserer Epoche. Wie kommt die moderne Abneigung, oder sagen wir: das moderne Mißtrauen gegen das Leben zustande? Man müßte da von der Philosophie des vorigen Jahrhunderts reden, von den Maschinen, von der Entwertung der Ideale, von der Kunst des Naturalismus, vom Ästhetentum. All das soll hier nicht geschehen, in der Voraussetzung, daß jeder an sich schon die modernen Zweifel am Leben, am Regelrechten, Gesetzmäßigen und Natürlichen erfahren hat. In der Flucht vor dem Leben, dessen laute, pathetische Art die feinen, jungen Geister des fin de siècle beleidigte, wurden ganze Scheinwelten geschaffen, Welten voller Prunk und Schönheit, ohne den unrein-

lichen „Erdenrest“, der dem Wirklichen immer anhaftet. Die moderne Skepsis mokierte sich über die lärmenden Gebärden des Lebens, über seine Schweißgerüche und seine Formlosigkeiten. Und mit einem ironischen Lächeln ging sie zum Künstlichen über, das den schönen Schein lebendiger Form mit dem Adel des Nichtseins verbindet.

Sieht sich die Puppe nicht ganz wie eine liebenswürdige Symbolisierung des modernen Ästhetizismus an? Beide verneinen den Inhalt, das Leben, zugunsten der Form. Beide sind letzten Grundes von satanischem Geschlecht und Wesen. Ist es ein Zufall, daß hier bei Lotte Pritzels Puppen immer dieselbe, an Beardsley erinnernde Physiognomie wiederkehrt? Und nicht nur dies. Auch die Kostümierung erweckt auf Schritt und Tritt Erinnerungen an die bizarre, zärtlich verruchte Linie des großen Dandy und Künstlers. Der Einfall aber, diese übrigens nicht nur von Beardsley entwickelte und gepflegte Linie

Figure 2: Lotte Pritzel, Puppen, photographed and illustrated in Wilhelm Michel, "Puppen von Lotte Pritzel," in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 33 (1910-1911), p. 329, courtesy of Heidelberg University Library, Sign.: C 4821-4-4



Figure 3: Lotte Pritzel, Puppen, photographed and illustrated in Wilhelm Michel, "Neue Wachspuppen von Lotte Pritzel," in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 33 (1913-1914), p. 312, courtesy of Heidelberg University Library, Sign.: C 4821-4-4



KOPF DER
NEBENSTEH.
PUPPE

DIE KUNST UND IHR PUBLIKUM.

Neue Wendungen in der Kunst bringen den Künstler immer mit dem Publikum in Zwiespalt. Das erleben wir heute mit besonderer Schärfe. Es war genau so in der Vergangenheit. Die Nazarener wurden affektiert und maniert gescholten, die ersten Realisten galten als Zerstörer ewiger Ideale, die Naturalisten als Geschmackverderber, die Impressionisten als Auflöser aller Grundlagen der Kunst, die Expressionisten als unklare Schwärmer oder als Bluffer oder als klinische Erscheinungen.

Es geht nicht an, diesen Widerstand des Publikums, selbst des geistig vorbereiteten und durchaus gutwilligen und kunstbegierigen, gegen das künstlerische Wollen einer neuen Zeit mit Hohn und Überhebung abzutun. Es sollte wirklich mehr Liebe und gegenseitige Achtung in das Verhältnis zwischen Künstler und Kunstpublikum kommen. Es ist Tatsache, daß viele ernste Menschen es als einen Schmerz empfinden, vor neuer Kunst ratlos und ohne Zugang stehen zu müssen. Sie sind von Herzen bereit, die Kunst, jede Kunst in jeder neuen Wendung

zum Gefährten ihres Lebens zu machen. Sie brennen darauf, Freunde der Künstler auch bei deren rüstigstem Fortschritt zu bleiben. Und vieles von der Härte in den Urteilen gegen neueste Kunst kommt fraglos aus Bitternis der Enttäuschung, aus dem peinlichen Gefühl, in die Rolle des Banausen gedrängt zu sein, wo man lieben und verstehen möchte. Von da aus erwacht ein gewisser Trotz und aus ihm die Ungerechtigkeit, das große Müssen abzustreiten, das die Künstler auf ihrer dunklen, abenteuerlichen Bahn vorantreibt. Das Publikum empfindet in der präsentierenden Bewegung, mit der ihm das Kunstwerk in Ausstellungen und Kunstzeitschriften vorgeführt wird, mit Recht eine gewisse Herausforderung. Es empfindet diese Herausforderung erst recht in dem oft stolzen, hie und da anmaßenden, immer aber selbstbewußten und überzeugten Ton, in dem Künstler und Schriftsteller ihm von neuer Kunst sprechen. Es beugt sich dieser Herausforderung sehr gerne, wo es irgendwelche Werte im Werk erkennt. Aber es reagiert bitter und ablehnend,

Figure 4: Lotte Pritzel, Puppe, photographed and illustrated in R Coester, "Lotte Pritzel, Muenchen," in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 45 (1919-1920), p. 355, courtesy of Heidelberg University Library, Sign.: C 4821-4-4



Appliquée fait la cour à l'image qu'elle se forme d'elle-même. Comment ne pas être deux quand on se sent si seule? Comment, quand on est si secrète, ne pas rêver d'une confidente? Cette fois, ce sera Aminère, la toute-belle, la sacrée qui n'a pas de dos et qui parlait, tout à l'heure, en dormant.

Appliquée craint la campagne, ses champs tachés de froid, ses corbeaux éteints, ses masures si éloignées l'une de l'autre qu'elles traduisent crûment l'immensité de la haine, pour toujours. Aminère, pieds nus, ignorante, est juchée sur un rocher, moulin d'oiseaux. Elle fait signe à Appliquée de venir s'asseoir dans un des bosquets de roses de la mer qui bat la cloison. Le ciel tourne mal. La carte consultée trop tard, on est perdu. Il faudra s'en retourner par le tunnel des Danaïdes. En attendant, la double anguille profite de sa liberté. Elle joint les mains et ferme un œil. Dans le parloir mille précautions à prendre, le velours à ne pas ternir, les murs à ne pas marquer, mille précautions à prendre, mais tout à toucher.

Aminère se cache, elle a peur. Appliquée lui a pris son masque, pour tout partager. Aminère est blottie au fond du lit. Appliquée, la rage aux dents, les yeux vides, mange les lèvres de son masque, comme des braises. Elle n'a plus de salive. Rien ne diffère de la mort, sinon le feu. Le lit noir, immobile, a besoin d'une leçon. Il moulera la lave, on l'ensevelira dans des cendres blanches.

Et la foudre apporte l'oubli.

☆

Sensible lendemain, poussière secouée au soleil, comme un grand échassier fou. Flèche fine du dernier frisson. Le jouet n'a plus une goutte de sang. Non cette enfant d'hier, ardente, intacte, mais un chiffon vide contre un mur. Et une voix qui annonce, définitivement,

PAUL ELUARD.

Figure 6: Hans Bellmer, Illustrations in *Minotaure* (1935) courtesy of © The British Library Board, C180.d.1 p. 16



Figure 1: Max Ernst, *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale*, 1924. Oil on wood with painted wood elements and frame, 69.8 × 57.1 × 11.4 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA, http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=79293, accessed March 12, 2014.



Figure 2: Theodore Shrank, *Pig, Child, Fire!*, 1982, Black and white photographic print, 450x 322. http://emilyhayes64.blogspot.com/2007_07_01_archive.html>, accessed 25 Oct. 2014.



Figure 3: *Angstaubbruch III* (Outbrake od Fear III), 1939, 124, watercolor on primed paper on cardboard, 63,5 x 48,1 cm. Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Switzerland. Obj.Id 1807 <http://arttattler.com/archivepaulklee.html>>, accessed September 7, 2014. For larger color image, see page 229.



Figure.4: Beata Bergström, *King Ubu*, directed by Michael Meschke, 1964
Black and white photographic print, 447×323.
<http://www.michaelmeschke.com/index4.htm>>
accessed September 10, 2014.



Figure.5: Pascal François, *Ligne de fuite (Convergence Line)*
Directed by Philippe Genty, (2003-2006), 1201 x 800.
<http://www.philippegenty.com/companies/historique-Ligne-de-fuit.html>>
accessed March 12, 2014.



Figure 6: Yves Tanguy, *Azure Day*, 1937
Oil paint on canvas, 630x812 mm. Tate Gallery, London, UK.
<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/tanguy-azure-day-t07080>,
accessed March 10, 2014.
© 2016 Estate of Yves Tanguy / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Figure 7: Giorgio de Chirico, *The Mathematicians*, 1917
Pencil on paper, 31.2 × 21.9 cm.
Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
<http://www.wikiart.org/en/giorgio-de-chirico/the-mathematicians-1917>
accessed September 15, 2014.



Figure 8: Mario Del Curto, *The Old Lady and the Beast*, by Ilka Schonbein, 2009, 4368x2912, Directed by Ilka Schonbein. <http://www.sagoloba.fr/le-festival-des-contes-givres/ilka-schonbein-theater-meschugge/> accessed January 2, 2014



Figure 9: Rene Magritte, *The Collective Invention*, 1934
Oil on canvas, 73.5 × 97.5 cm, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany.
<http://www.wikiart.org/en/rene-magritte/collective-invention-1934>
accessed March 10, 2014.

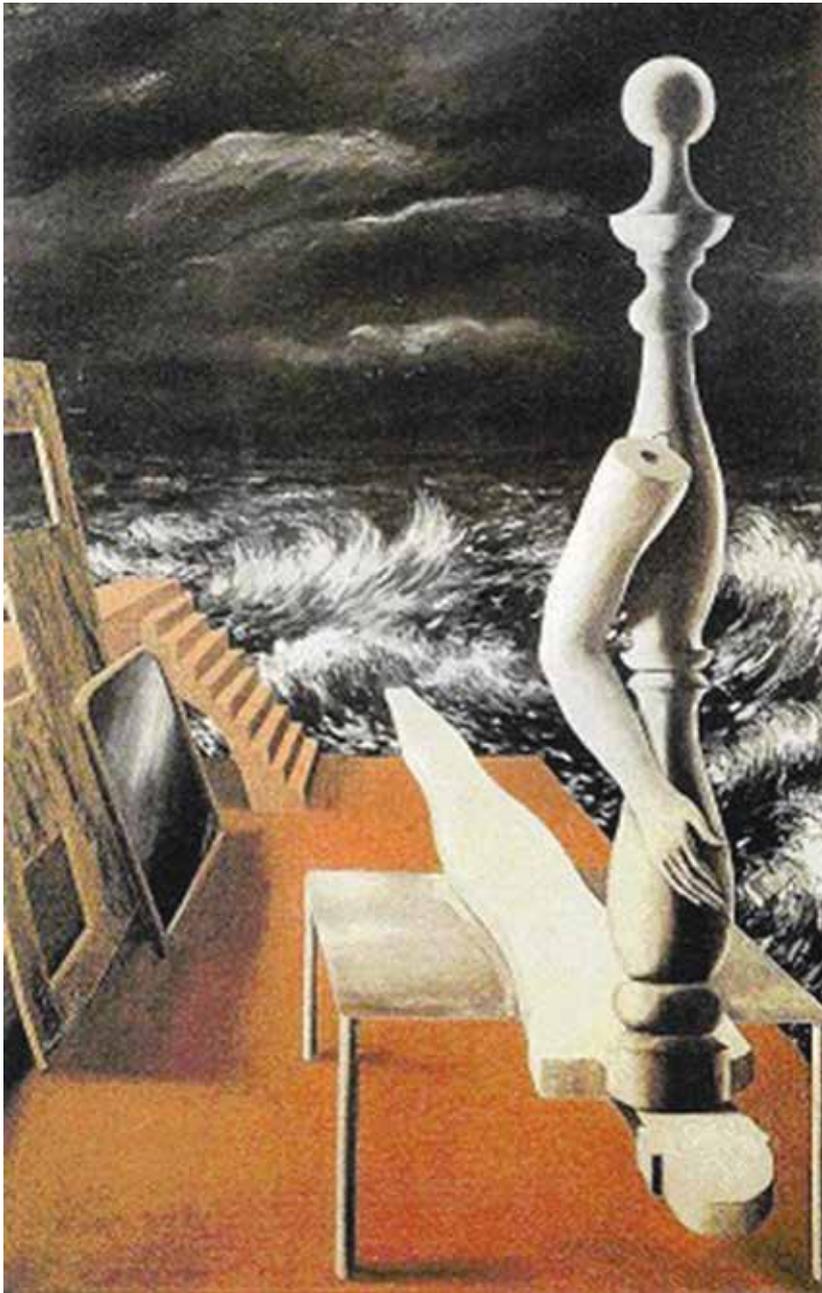


Figure.10: Rene Magritte, *The Birth of the Idol*, Oil on canvas, 1926, 120 x 80 cm, Private collection. <http://www.renemagritte.org/the-birth-of-the-idol.jsp> accessed September 15, 2014.



Figure 1. Paul Klee, *Geschützte Kinder* [Protected Children], 1939
oil on burlap laid down on burlap
75.2 x 100.3 cm
Private Collection



Figure 2. Paul Klee, *Angstausbruch III* [Outbreak of Fear III], 1939, 124 watercolour on printed paper on cardboard, 63.5 x 48.1 cm Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

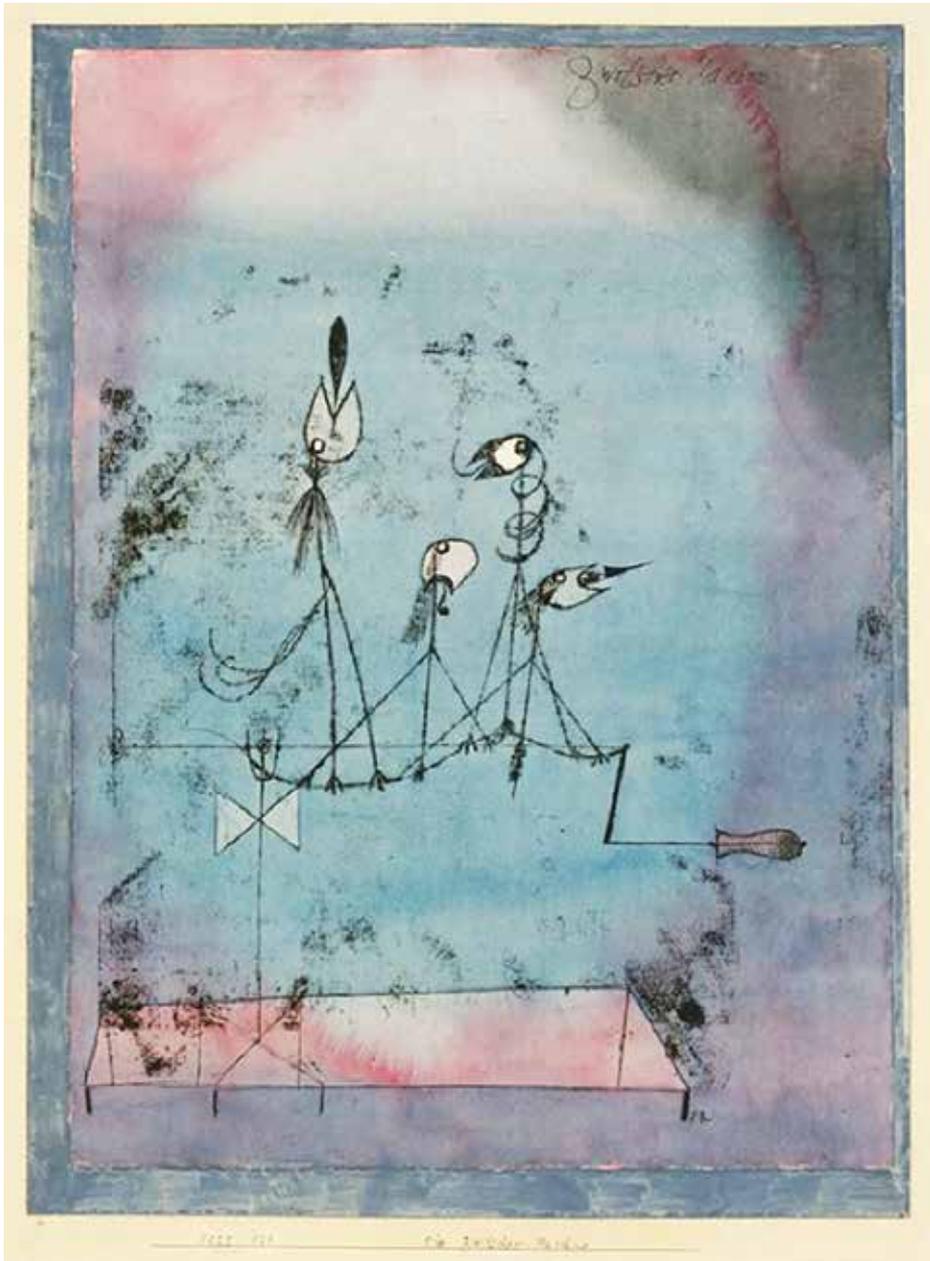


Figure 3. Paul Klee, *Die Zwitscher-Maschine* [Twittering Machine], 1922
oil transfer drawing, watercolour and ink on paper
with gouache and ink borders on board, 64.1 x 48.3 cm.
The Museum of Modern Art

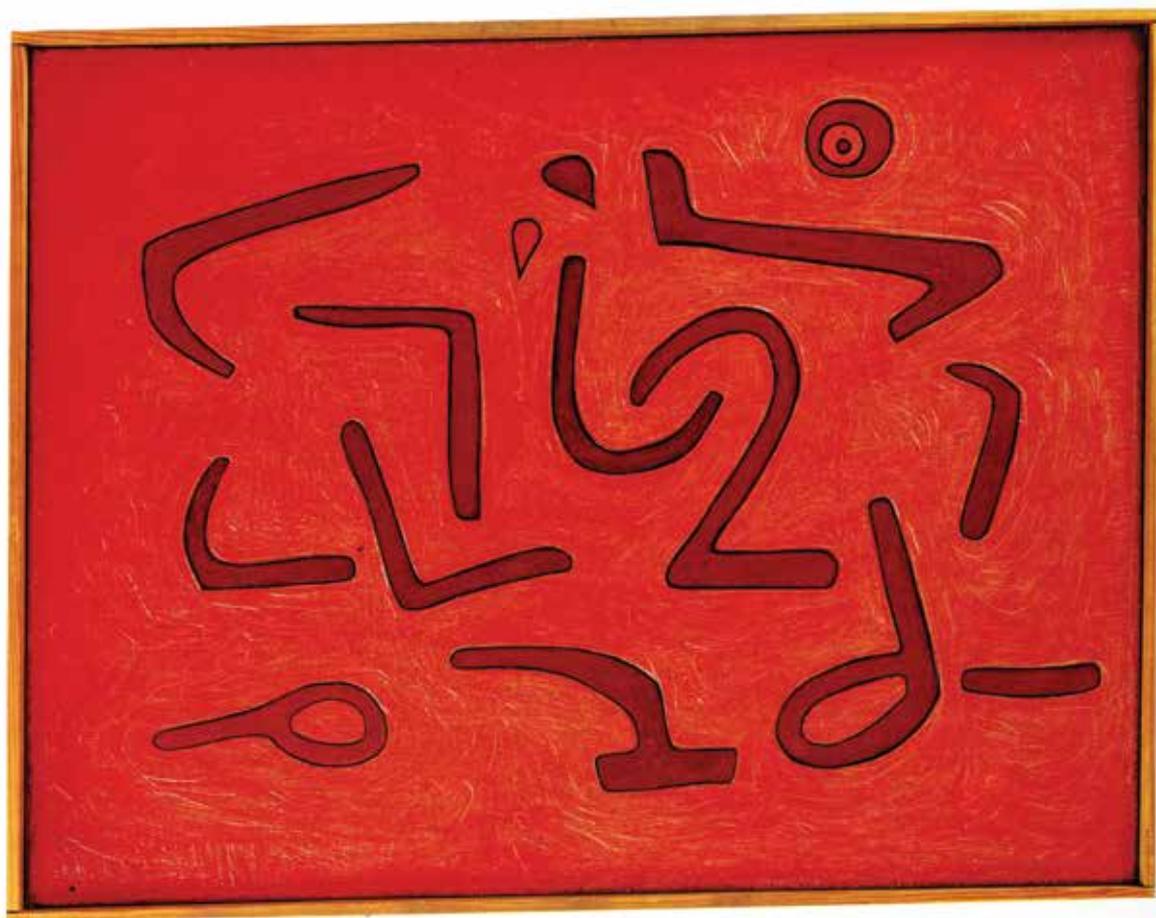


Figure 4. Paul Klee, *Zerstörtes Labyrinth* [Destroyed Labyrinth], 1939, 346
oil and watercolour on printed paper on burlap;
original frame, 54 x 70 cm.
Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern



Figure 5. Paul Klee, *Ohne Titel (Elektrischer Spuk)* [Untitled (Electrical Spook)], 1923. Hand puppet, 38 cm. Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation

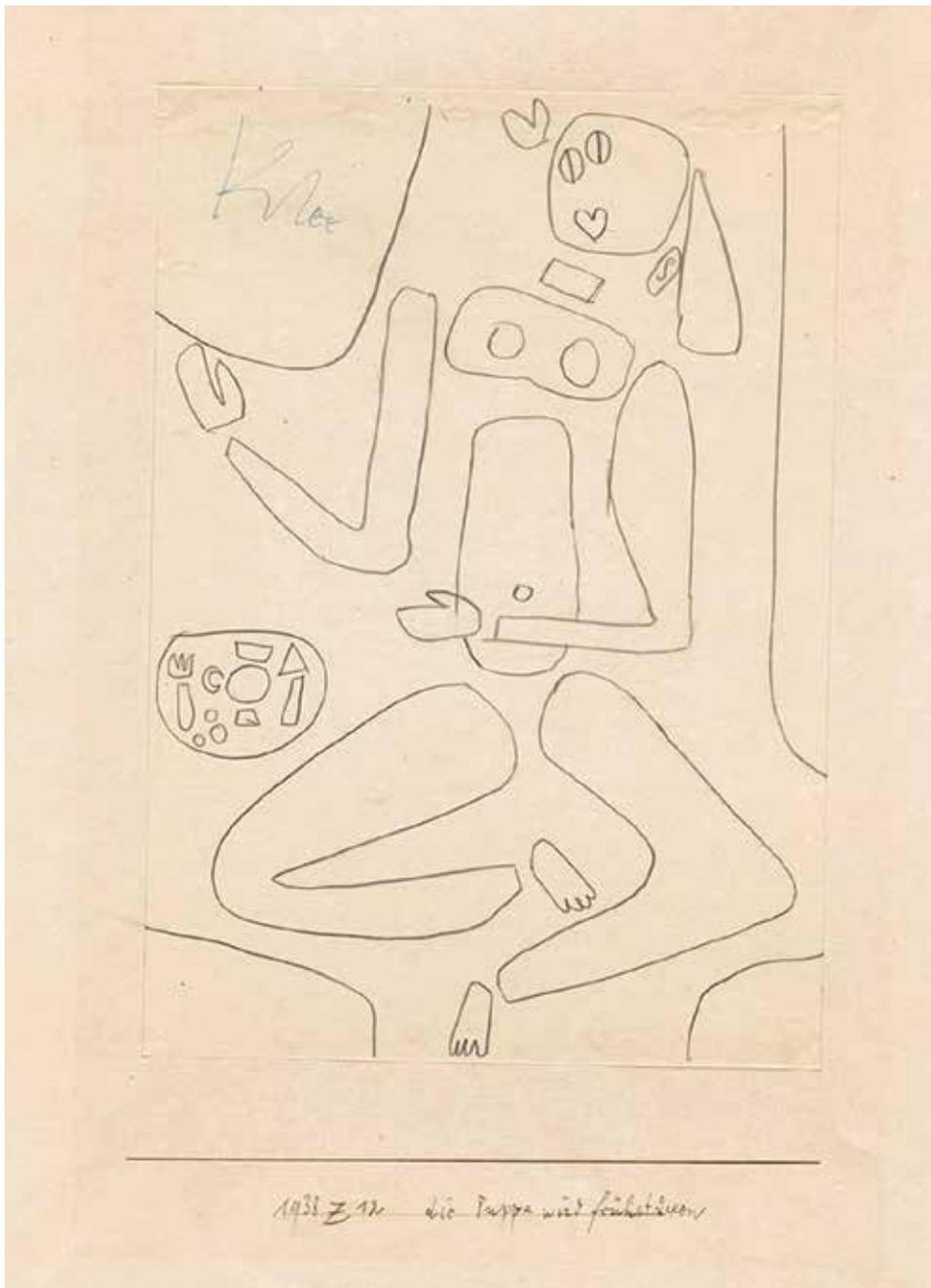


Figure 6. Paul Klee, *die Puppe wird frühstücken* [The Doll Will Have Breakfast], 1938, 432 pencil on paper on cardboard, 29.9 x 20.9 cm. Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation



Figure 7. Paul Klee, *Kinder-spiele* [Children's Games], 1938, 436
pencil on paper on cardboard, 20.9 x 29.8 cm.
Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern



Figure 8. Paul Klee, *Schlacht unter Kindern* [Battle Among Children], 1938, 435
pencil on paper on cardboard, 20.9 x 29.9 cm
Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation

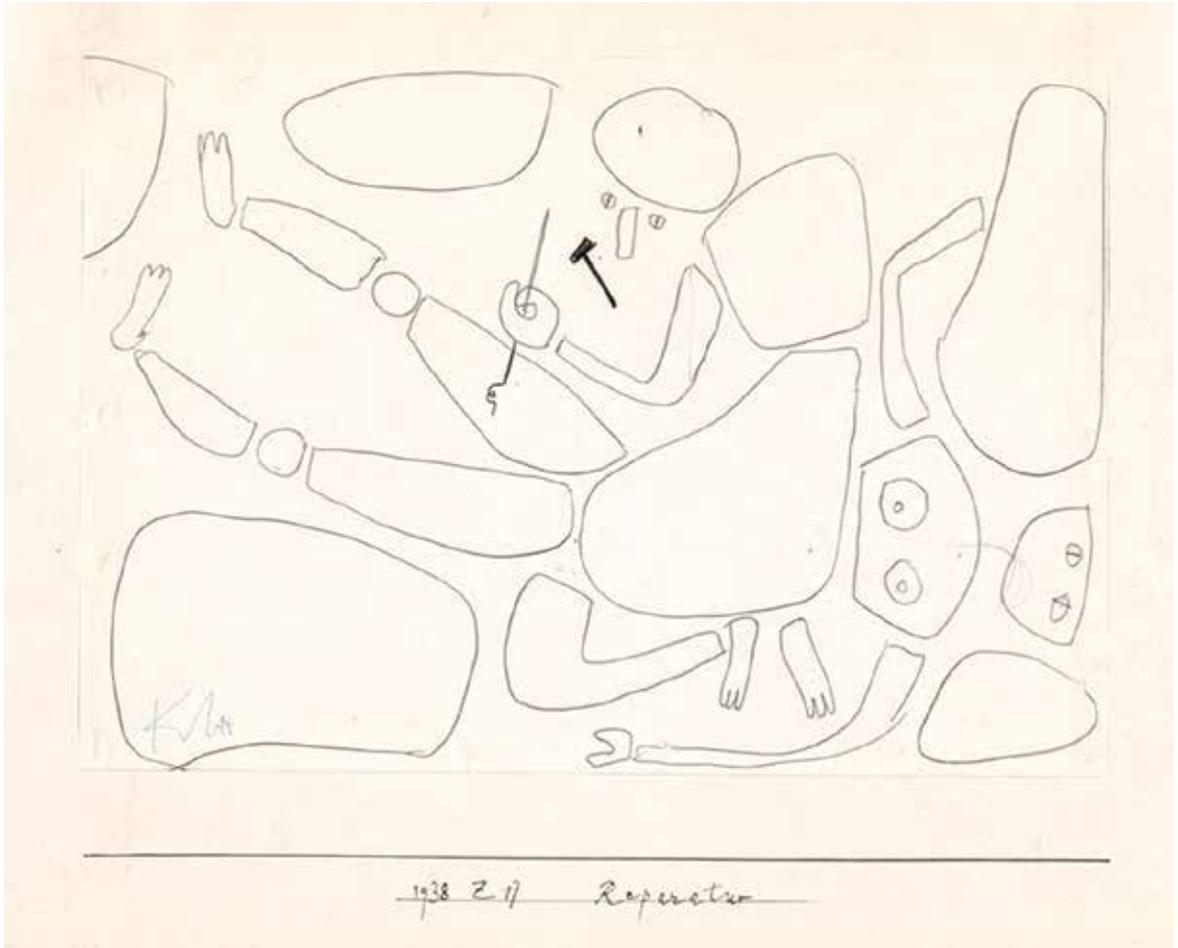


Figure 9. Paul Klee, *Reparatur* [Repair], 1938, 437
pencil on paper on cardboard, 20.9 x 29.8 cm
Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

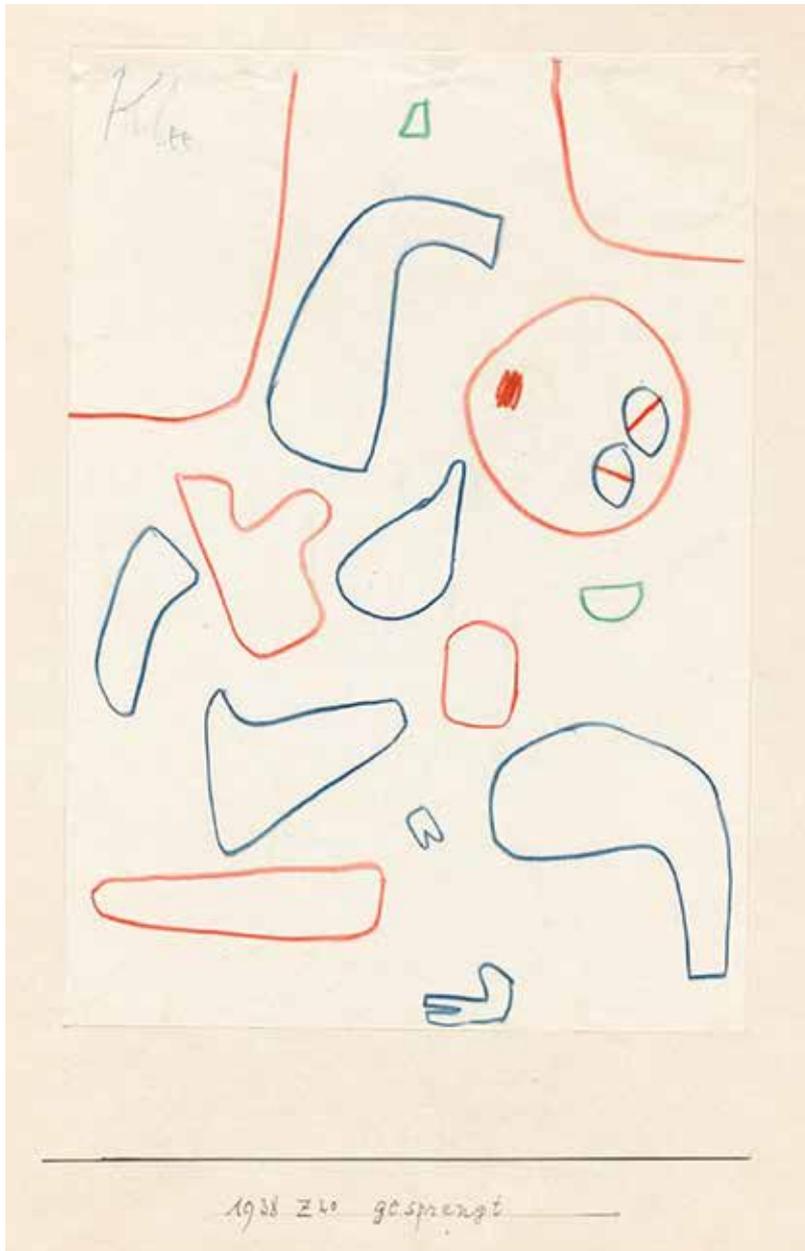


Figure 10. Paul Klee, *gesprengt* [Blown Up], 1938, 440
chalk on paper on cardboard, 29.8 x 20.8 cm.
Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

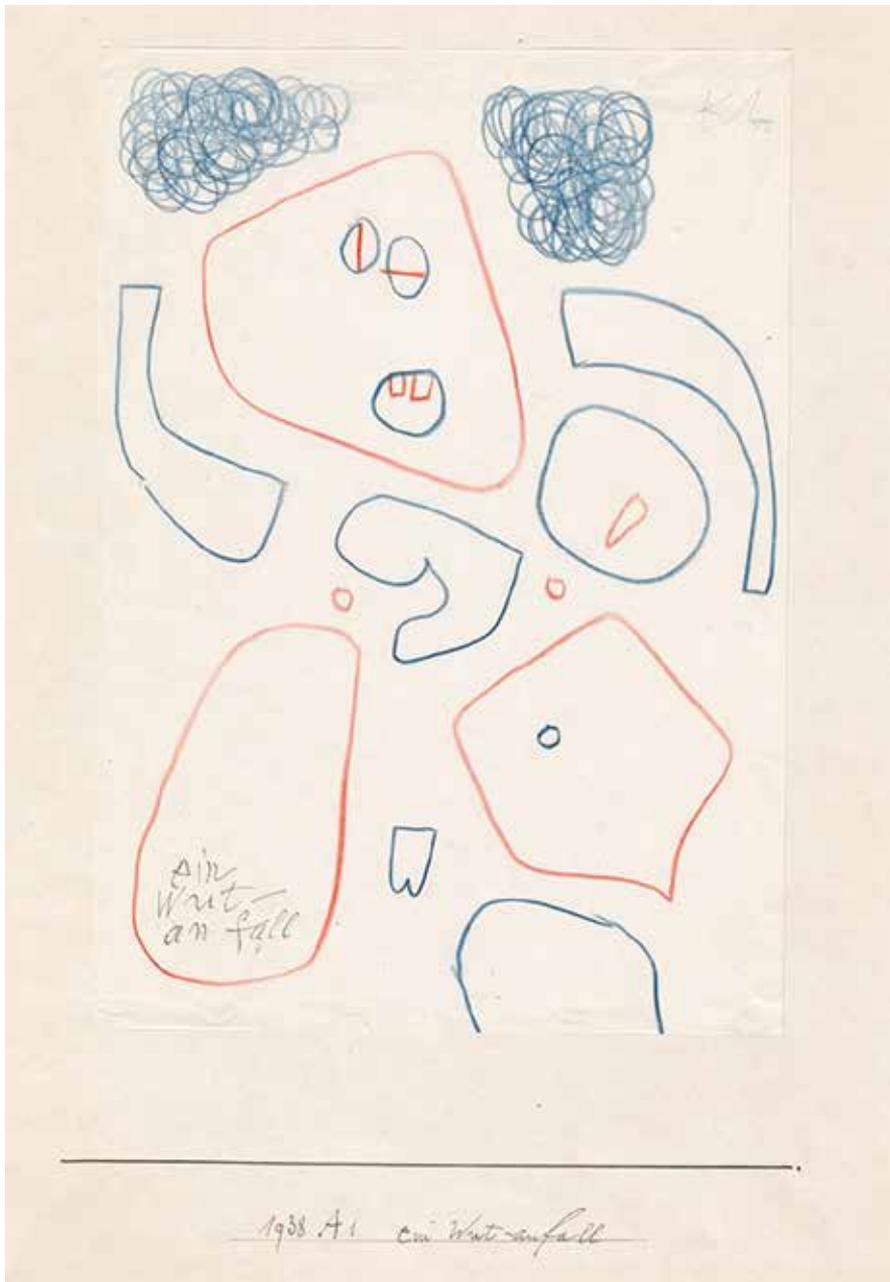


Figure 11. Paul Klee, *ein Wut-anfall* [An Outburst of Rage], 1938, 441
chalk on paper on cardboard, 29.8 x 20.8 cm.
Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

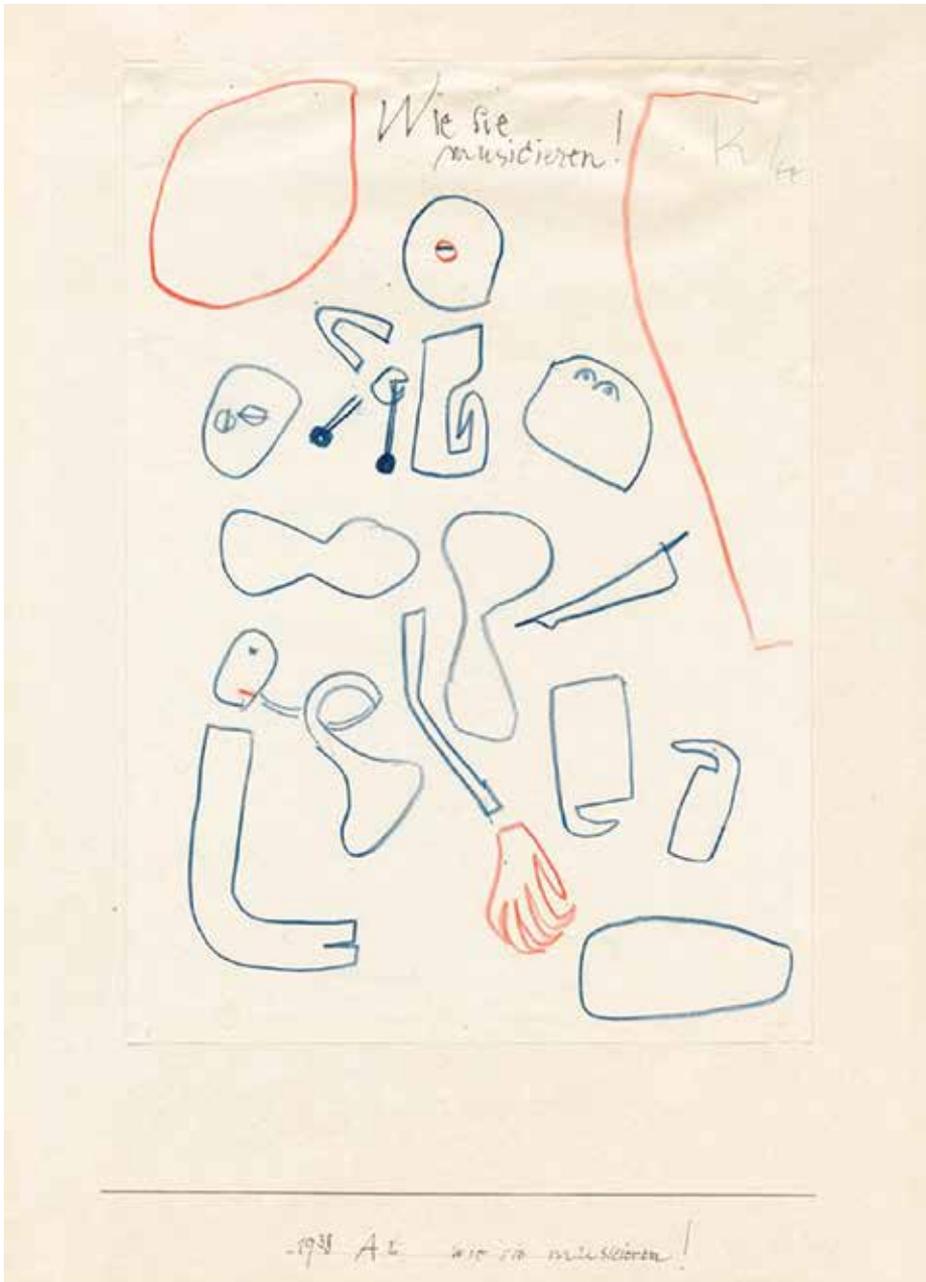


Figure 12. Paul Klee, *wie sie musizieren!* [How They Make Music!], 1938, 442
chalk on paper on cardboard, 29.8 x 20.8 cm
Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern



Figure 13. Paul Klee, *sich sammeln* [Compose Oneself], 1938, 443
chalk on paper on cardboard, 20.9 x 29.8 cm.
Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation

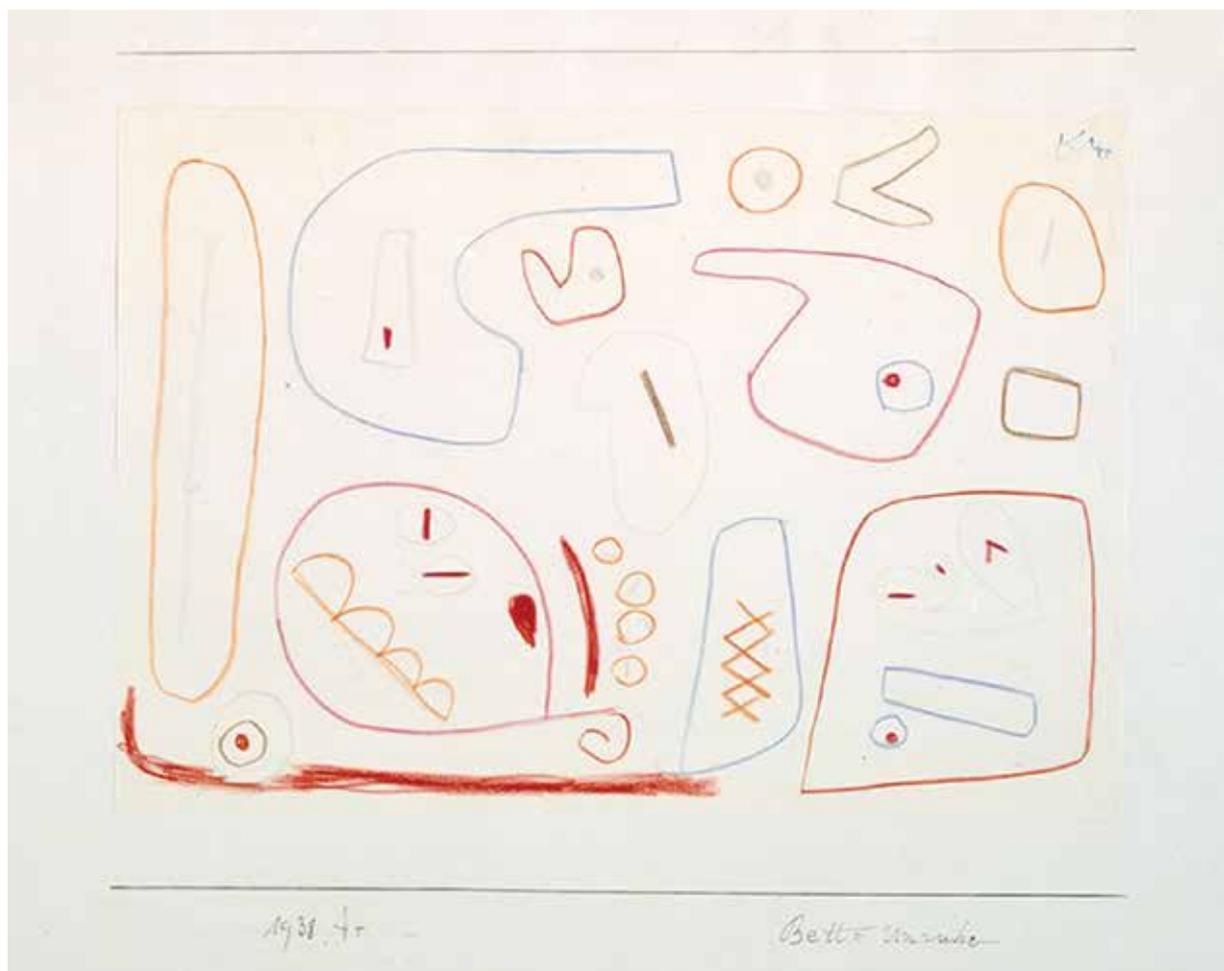


Figure 14. Paul Klee, *Bett=Unruhe* [Restless in Bed], 1938, 444
chalk on paper on cardboard, 21 x 29.9 cm
unknown whereabouts

Illustrations: Russell Stephens

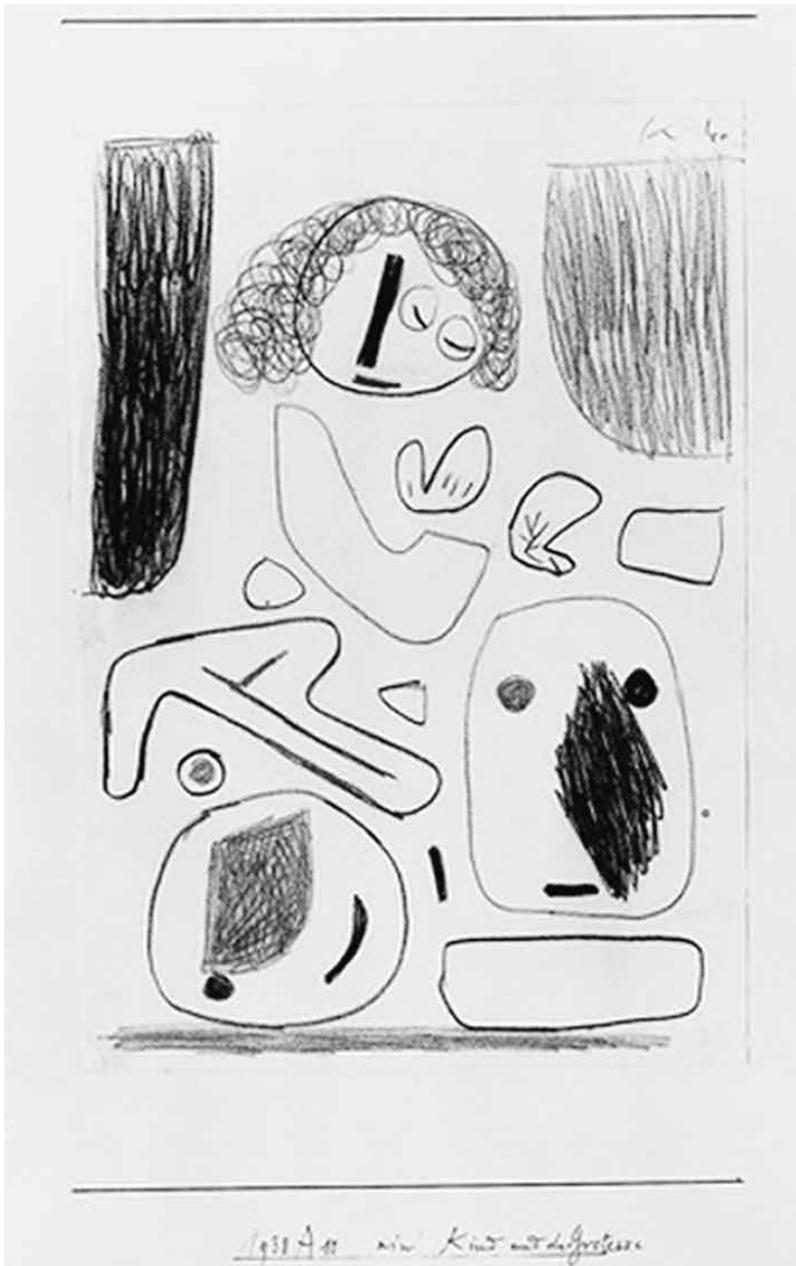


Figure 15. Paul Klee, *ein Kind und das Grotteske* [A Child and the Grotesque], 1938, 450 chalk on paper on cardboard, 30 x 21 cm. Private collection, Canada



Figure 16. Paul Klee, *vertauschte Plätze* [Changed Places], 1938, 472
pen on paper on cardboard, 20.9 x 21.7 cm.
Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

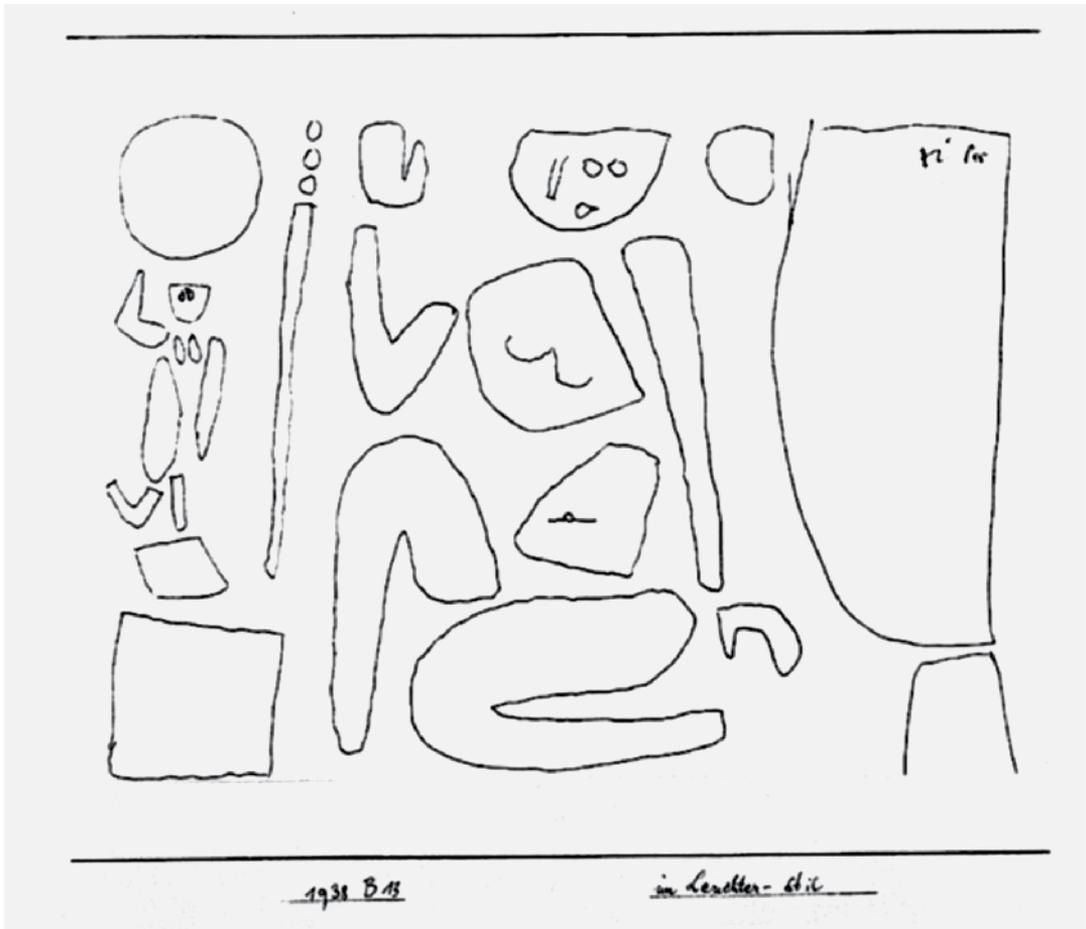


Figure 17. Paul Klee, *Im Leuchter-Stil* [In the Chandelier-Style], 1938
pen on paper on cardboard



Figure 18. Paul Klee, *ein Weib für Götter* [A Woman for Gods], 1938, 452
coloured paste and watercolour on paper on cardboard, 44.3 x 60.5 cm
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel



Figure 19. Francisco de Goya *Grande hazaña! con muertos!* [An Heroic Feat! With Dead Men!], *The Disasters of War*, 39 etching, lavis and drypoint on paper, c. 1810-1820, 24.9 x 34.3 cm Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Purchased through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Lang and the Murrin Estate Funds, VAG 67.22.39

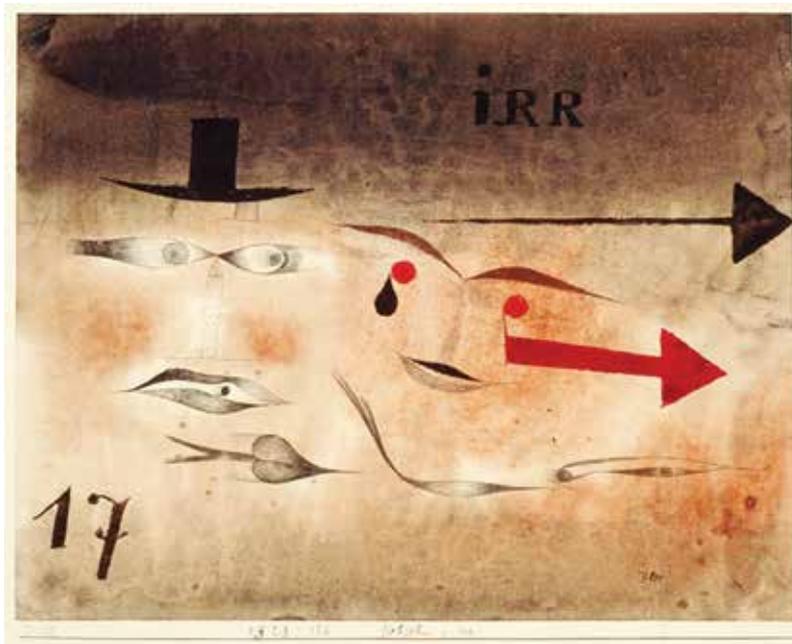


Figure 20. Paul Klee, *Siebzehn, irr*, [Seventeen, Mad], 1923, 136 pen and watercolour on paper on cardboard 22.3 x 28.6 cm Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, Vermächtnis Richard Doetsch-Benziger



Figure 21. Joan Miró, Head of a Man, 1937
Gouache on black paper 65.4 x 50.5 cm
Museum of Modern Art, New York



Figure 1: Photograph: of Child-sized Kewpie doll in living room with seated Japanese child, 1920's. Courtesy of Edo-Tokyo Museum

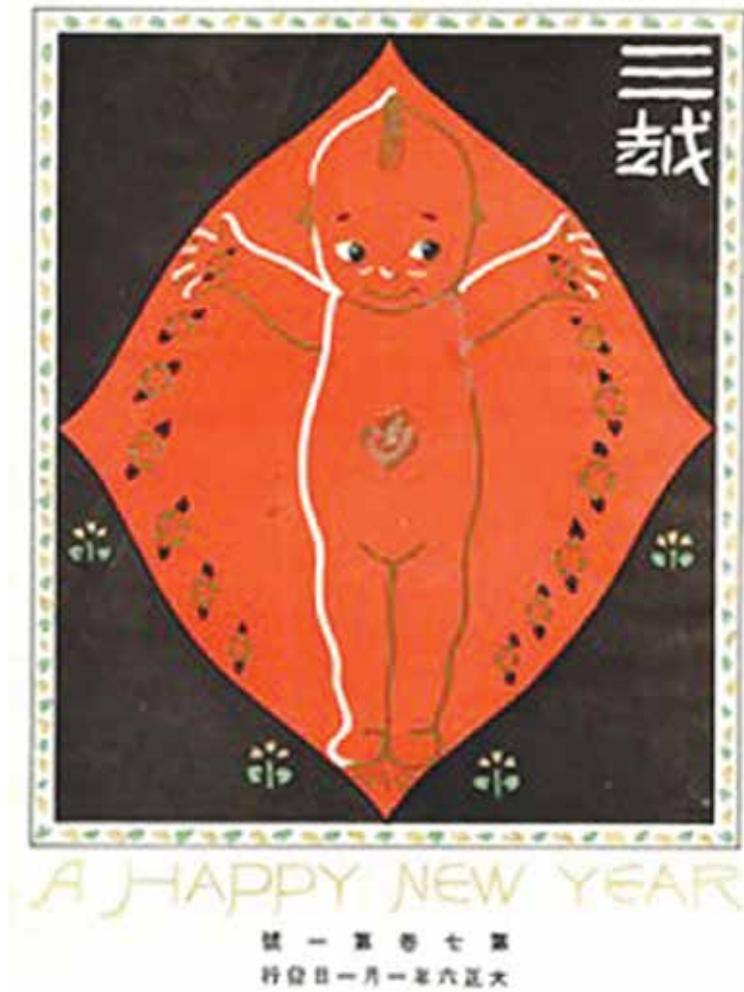


Figure 2: Postcard: of Mitsukoshii department store advertisement, 1918. Courtesy of Mitsukoshii department store



Figure 3: Photograph: of Miniature Kewpie posed in tokonoma of traditional Japanese home, early Taishō.
Courtesy of Mr. Yoshiike



Figure 4: Postcard: of Kewpie dancing to music of gramophone, 1930s
[No owner information available]



Figure 5: Photograph: of adult family portrait with child-sized Kewpie, 1930's
[No owner information available]



Figure 6: Cover Page: of special supplement to Women's Club magazine, showing a kimono-clad woman holding a child-sized Kewpie doll attired in tuxedo and top hat, 1933
Courtesy of Kodansha Publishing



Figure 7: Print: Bijin with Kewpie, by Kaburaki Kiyokata, 1917
print version of painting
Courtesy of Yayoi Museum



Figure 8: Postcard: of Imperial Soldier Holding Chinese Baby, 1941
Courtesy of Skillman Library, Lafayette College



Figure 9: Photograph of Imperial Army
25th Cavalry Regiment of 4th Cavalry Brigade, 1937
[No owner information available]

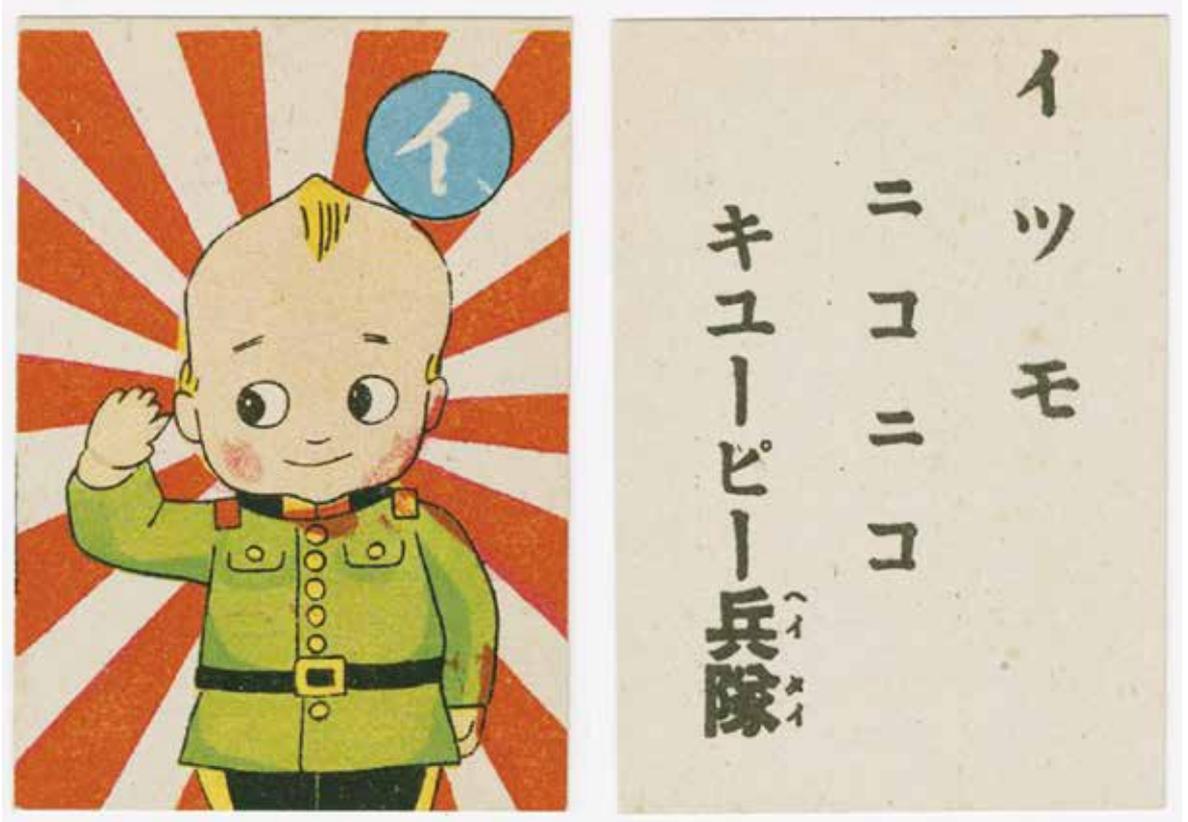


Figure 10: Alphabet Card of "A Kewpie Soldier Smiles Brightly", 1935
Courtesy of Skillman Library, Lafayette College

Illustrations: Anna Seidel



Figure 1: Woolita (2003) by Françoise Cactus
Photo: Martin Schmidt.

6

NACHRICHTEN

Prügel am Imbiss

KRPFENIC - Drei Gäste haben am Sonntag gegen 20.30 Uhr an der Bismarck-Strasse einen Imbiss-Besucher verprügelt. Der 40-jährige Vietnamer erlitt einen Jocheinbruch. Die Täter, 16 bis 20, wurden festgenommen. Die beiden älteren sind schon durch vorherige strafrechtliche Taten u.a. bekannt.

Gratis-Kaffee von der „SZ“

KRIEGER - Das „SZ“-Kaffee-Mahl führt wieder durch Berlin. Heute gibt's von 7.30 bis 14.30 Uhr frisch gebrühten Kaffee und die „SZ“ am Markt vorm Rathaus Wedding. Morgen steht das „SZ“-Kaffee-Mahl von 7.30 bis 14.30 Uhr am Markt am Hofmannplatz.

Postämter offen

KRIEGER - Zwei Post-Filialen haben auch am Karfreitag, Ostermontag und Dienstag geöffnet. Es sind die im Ostbahnhof (9-11 Uhr) und im Bahnhof Friedrichstraße (9-20 Uhr, Sonntag von 8 bis 12 Uhr).

Haft-Nachschlag

WIEBE - Matthea 14 Monate Haft für „Bambus-Werwer“ (Foto, Wetzlar B. 28, aus Kreuzberg hatte 349 Straftaten, 20 Klein-Strafttaten im Kfz, hat fast sein Wohnhaus bei einer Explosion in die Luft fliegen lassen).

Ulrich, 3 Jahre und 3 Monate Haft. Bei einer zweiten Durchsicht wurde noch eine Mordtat, Patricie gefunden. Dreifach jetzt der Haft-Nachschlag.

Flakturm wieder offen

WIEBE - Der Flakturm Flakturm in Hasenheide ist das erste Mal seit Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs für Besucher offen. Jeden Sonntag ab 12 Uhr bietet der „Verein Berliner Historischen Führungen“ an.

Lkw rammt Tram-Leitung

PRENKLAUER BERG - Bei ein Lkw-Fahrer eine Überleitung der Tram an der Schenkerstrasse. Als er gerammt hatte, wurde der Straßenbahnverkehr gestoppt von 7.30 bis 8.30 Uhr unterbrochen, die Berufsfeuerwehr-Leitung musste repariert werden. Der Lasterfahrer hatte wohl die Weisung übersehen.

Neue Polizei-Autos

FITZGERALD - Die Autobahn-Polizei hat fünf speziell für ihre Arbeit angefertigte Fahrzeuge erhalten. Es sind Mercedes-Benz-Sportler mit Sicherheitsabstreifungen. Bei der Brandbestimmung Autoschadensgut erfassen 300 Männer und Frauen. Sie sind für etwa 300 Kilometer Strecke zuständig.

Berliner angeklagt

ERTSBAER - Der Berliner Lausitzer B. 11, der in Hasenheide drei Spitzensoldaten erstach, wurde jetzt wegen Mordanschlags angeklagt. Die Staatsanwaltschaft geht davon aus, dass die Tat keinen fremdeninduzierten Charakter hat.

Mehr Schiffs-Touren

KRIEGER - Die „Hörn und Krüsch-Eckert“ erweitert ihr Angebot für die Saison 2004. Es gibt eine abendliche Bootstour durch die Inselstadt, die neue Angebote sind integriert 10 Sonderfahrten - wovon mehr als im Sommer.



Bürgermeisterin Cornelia Reinmer (SPD)
Foto: Mollath

Fotos von nackten Mädchen, Sex-Szenen mit Kindern, bezahlt vom Bezirksamt Kreuzberg

Und das soll Kunst sein?

BERLIN - Nackte Fot, durchsichtige Kinderkörper sind ein Mädchen, das mit gesperrten Beinen auf einem Stuhl posiert?

Kunst ist in Ordnung, sagt Sabine Marone von Kunstforum Kreuzberg. Das kritisiert auch ihre Mitbürgerin „Wilderweiser“ (Foto, Wetzlar B. 28, aus Kreuzberg hatte 349 Straftaten, 20 Klein-Strafttaten im Kfz, hat fast sein Wohnhaus bei einer Explosion in die Luft fliegen lassen).

Das ist unangenehm, sagt Karin Bruch, 34, aus Kreuzberg. „Das ist unangenehm“ - Das ist unangenehm, sagt Karin Bruch, 34, aus Kreuzberg. „Das ist unangenehm“ - Das ist unangenehm, sagt Karin Bruch, 34, aus Kreuzberg.

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Mitarbeiter vertraulich zur „SZ“. Die Kunststiftung Rotarier (RFR) kauft die Skandal-Ausstellung (angekauft) nach drei Skandalen. „Sie will sich die Bilder erst selbst anschauen, bevor sie dazu einen Kommentar abgibt.“

Was sagen die Künstler? Video-Künstler Matthias Sodek: „Es ist legitim, das Thema zu diskutieren. Ich will mit meinen Arbeiten, die Besucher zwingen, mitzugeben. Sie sollen sich bewegen, werden, was dort abläuft.“

Künstler Frank Gaud. „Das Problem der Puppenszene kann nicht durch Zensur der künstlerischen Autonomiefreiheit behoben werden.“

Kogel, Rechtsanwältin und Kunstrechtlerin Friederike Pflüger

Kinderschützer sind empört: Eine große, nackte Stoffpuppe, empfängt die Besucher im Kunstraum Kreuzberg. Foto: Mollath

„Künstlerin“ Francosée Costet. Von ihr stammt die Stoffpuppe. Foto: Mollath

Gross das verurteilt Rechtsanwältin Ingrid-Ekhardt-Pflüger mit gutem Grund. Er erlittete Strafrechtliche gegen die verantwortliche Kunststiftung Cornelia Reinmer.

Die Bilder für Personen ab 16 Jahren zugänglich sind, versichert das gegen die Strafrechtliche Anklage von Paragrafen 184 Absatz 1 Ziffer 2. Strafrechtliche Strafen nicht Freiheitsstrafe bis zu einem Jahr. Pflüger zur Begründung: „Kunst darf nicht die Funktion von Pädagogen werden zum Nachteil von Kindern.“

Das seien Kollegen im Kulturbereich. „Wir haben einen Bildungsauftrag. Was hier gezeigt wird, ist nichts anderes als Pornografie“, so eine

ist empört: Mutter Karin Bruch, 34, vor dem Kunsthaus Bathornia

Blick in die Ausstellungsraum



Ein intransparentes Bildchen. Foto des Berliner, Thomas Hoeser Foto: Kataling



Video-Installation von Stu Mead: Nackte Kinder, ein Plastikbecken, Puppen, überhöhte Posen. Foto: Kataling



Kind mit nacktem Po am Strand, ein Mous steht hinter ihr. Ein Bild von Stu Mead. Foto: Kataling



Ein Kuchen unter dem Gesicht. Foto: Kataling

Figure 2: fish, bodo, pag, mah, "Und das soll Kunst sein?," BZ, April 7, 2004, 6.

Wollita. Vom Wollknäuel zum Superstar Nicht zum Aufblasen gedacht

von MASCHA JACOBS



Françoise Cactus' Popflappenhäkelpuppe Wollita hat die Boulevardpresse geil auf einen Skandal gemacht. Der Ruhm zettelt Resultate. Sie hat ein Leben - und sie singt.

Endlich erzählt Wollita (18) in ihrer Biographie exklusiv die wahre Geschichte von Liebe, Woll und Schmerz und präsentiert ihre erste Solo-CD »Außer Kontrolle« an der Seite von Stereo Total. Wie ihr Aufstieg vom »Wollknäuel zum Superstar« begann? Mit einer gewerblichen Sexanzeige in der »Berliner Zeitung«: »Scharle Wollmaus, 18 Jahre jung, will dich verwöhnen. Immer bereit! Françoise Cactus zögerte nicht lang, fand hautfarbene Schurwolle im »Wollparadies Fadeninsel« und erschuft ihre Wollita nach dem Vorbild gängiger aufblasbarer »Fickpuppen«: »Augenfarbe (blau, klassisch), Haarfarbe (braun mit roten Strähnen, modern), Hörschenfarbe (blau mit rotem Herzen, französisch)« Kein Wunder, dass Wollitas ausgeprägte, träumerisch-vulgäre Anziehungskraft auch vor ihrer Entdeckung und Skandalisierung durch die Boulevardpresse überall Aufmerksamkeit erregte.

Der endgültige Durchbruch gelang ihr 2004 durch »When love turns to poison«, eine Gruppenausstellung im Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien. Die Künstler, u.a. Beth Love, Stu Mead und eben Françoise Cactus, beschäftigten sich mit sexuellem Missbrauch und der Faszination und fetischisierung von Kindfrauen. Das »Lolita-Syndrom« durchzieht Françoise Cactus' gesamte Arbeiten. Sie singt ja nicht nur bei Stereo Total und schlägt gleichzeitig auf Töpfe. Sie schreibt ebenfalls sehr gute Bücher, die nicht nur einfach, lakonisch und intelligent, sondern auch lustig sind. Sie arbeitet an Hörspielen, Theaterstücken und mail Bilder, die »mostly girls – insolent rebels, nice and sexy dreamers« zeigen. Der humorvolle Blick auf Lolitas, die eben noch nicht angepasst, stattdessen »unendlich naiv, herrlich frühreif« und altklug sind, markiert neben klassischen Männerphantasien auch selbstironisch übertriebene weibliche Attitüden – und eine Phase größtmöglicher Freiheit. Was immer an der Kindfrau bezaubert und fasziniert, erschreckt zugleich, ist stets Ausdruck einer sexuellen Grenzüberbreitung. Die feministische Selbstaneignung des Diskursfelds Lolita versetzt Cactus in die Lage, den zwiespältigen Affekt, den das Spiel mit dem Fetisch

Mädchen auslöst, zu erweitern und dieses Grenzgebiet anders zu besetzen. Und wo bleibt der Skandal? Obwohl Wollita das obscure Männerphantasie-Objekt der aufblasbaren Gummipuppe verspottet, wurde sie von »Bild« und »B.Z.«-Reportern als Anleitung zur Kinderpornographie (für Wollfischisten?) diffamiert. Eltern und Schülern wurde eine Aufwandsentschädigung für belastende Aussagen gegen einen als Künstler beteiligten Lehrer angeboten, Jungnazis zu einer Demonstration gegen »entartete« Kunst mobilisiert – der erste Nazi-Aufmarsch in Kreuzberg seit Kriegsende. Zudem wurde, hier scheint der eigentliche Anlass der traurigen Kampagne zu liegen, der Rücktritt der PDS-Bürgermeisterin Cornelia Reinauer gefordert.

Wolfgang Müller, Autor, Künstler und Musiker, ergriff die Gegeninitiative und verfasste einen Aufruf, der von über 300 Künstlern unterschrieben wurde. Er forderte den »B.Z.«-Kulturpreis für Wollita. Obwohl Wollita leer ausging, hat sie mittlerweile ihre Depressionen im Griff: »Nein, nein. Ich habe keine Fusselmanie ... Ich ertrage es nicht, demmaßen sexy zu sein!« Sie lebt zeitweise im »Palais de Tokyo« in Paris, liebt den Sänger Jacno und arbeitet als Fotomodell. Ihre (der Biographie beiliegende) Debüt-CD kann es mit den großen französischen Chansonnières aufnehmen. 58 Porträts in Deutschlands auflagenstärksten Zeitungen während der Zeit der Ausstellung haben ihren Ruhm gefestigt und bewiesen, dass Subversion stets »verletzlich offen für verschiedene Lesarten« bleibt.

Das exzellente Buch spricht eine eindeutige Sprache.

Françoise Cactus, Wolfgang Müller: »Wollita. Vom Wollknäuel zum Superstar. Die Biographie mit CD von Wollita und Stereo Total«, herausgegeben von Stéphane Baux, Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, ist bereits im Martin Schmitz Verlag erschienen. /// www.martin-schmitz-verlag.de

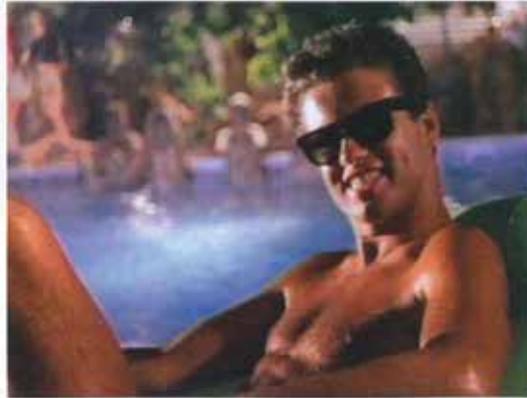
88 SPEX

Figure 3: Mascha Jacobs, "Wollita. Vom Wollknäuel zum Superstar. Nicht zum Aufblasen gedacht," Spex, 01-02, 2006, 62.

George Michael - A Different Story

Aufgebauchte Lippenbekenntnisse

1111 HIAS WRBA



Wie entkommt man den 80ern und sieht so gut dabei aus? Eine Frage, die Andrew Ridgeley besser hätte beantworten können als George Michael. In einer Doku von Soutlan Morris.

Ist das Leben als Superstar schwieriger geworden? Hat sich überhaupt was geändert?

Jacko am Boden, Madonna wie immer, Prince geht untergründige Flesharing-Wege, Was ist übrig geblieben von den Heroen der späten 80er, frühen 90er Jahre? Oder war es einfach nur immer schon besonders hart, George Michael zu sein?

Als Georgios Panayiotou wird er 1963 in East Finchley im Norden von London geboren. Dann Schule, Freundeskreis, Band, Wham, Weltruhm, »George Michael«, Solokarriere, wieder Weltruhm und so weiter. 2004 erschien das letzte Album, »Patience«, und nun kommt ein Dokumentarfilm in die Kinos, der sich rühmt, die wahre Geschichte hinter dem bewegten (Star-)Leben des Herrn Panayiotou zu erzählen.

Was war da eigentlich los auf der öffentlichen Toilette in Los Angeles? Und woher kam auf einmal »Shoot the Dog«, der spätpubertäre Protestsong gegen die Blair-Regierung mit passendem, »South Park«-inspiriertem Zeichentrickvideo? An trüben Sonntagnachmittagen können derlei Filme, wenn man sie denn auf einem Musksender seiner Wahl erhascht, durchaus Unterhaltungswert haben. Aber im Kino?

Es ist schon seltsam, dass der Regisseur Soutlan Morris dem viel versprechenden Titel und der großen Leinwand zum Trotz überhaupt nicht von den ästhetischen und formalen Gesetzen der Star dokumentarion abweicht. Konzert-ausschnitte, roughes DV-Material mit Aufnahmen vor dem Geburtshaus, immer wieder Interviews auf komischen Sofas, glossy ausgeleuchtete Lippenbekenntnisse. Obwohl es Michaels großer Minderwertigkeitskomplex zu sein scheint, nicht als Songwriter ernst genommen zu werden, wird fast überhaupt nicht über Musik gesprochen. Kein Wort über den Stellenwert von Wham in ihrer Epoche – und alles, was danach kam. Kein Versuch, die Arbeit als solche zu verstehen.

Gezeigt wird ganz viel George Michael, als Mensch, der er ja unweil auch ist. Doch immer dann, wenn es spannend werden könnte, verliert »A Different Story« in Andeutungen. Die Trennung von Wham wird retr. einfach ganz lapidar hingenommen. Dass George Michael und Andrew F diese Entscheidung auch deshalb trafen, weil ihr Manager Simon Nap (der im Übrigen später Take That ins Leben rief) einen Anteil an de einem südafrikanischen Medienkonzern verkauft hatte und die beid nicht gern mit dem Apartheidregime assoziiert sahen, wird verschwiege. hätte das zumindest ein wenig Kontinuität in die – wenn auch sehr – so doch politische – Botschaft gebracht, die der Weltstar derzeit ver

Apropos Andrew Ridgeley: Mit dem sitzt Michael angeblich das ers seit 20 Jahren wieder zusammen, und die beiden plaudern über alte. Ridgeley wird zum Stichwortgeber degradiert und erscheint vielleicht deshalb als die spannendere Figur. Was hat der eigentlich in den lets Jahren gemacht? Er war kurz Rennfahrer in Monte Carlo, seine Solo ist mehr oder weniger gefloppt – und trotzdem wirkt er in keiner Wi striert oder gar neidisch. Im Gegenteil.

Ridgeley wäre im Zweifelsfall wohl der interessantere Gesprächspartn so großspurigen Betrachtung gewesen. Dann hätte vielleicht die Behs von der anderen Geschichte, die angeblich erzählt wird, ihr Verspreche ten. Wie entkommt man den 80er Jahren und sieht so gut dabei aus? bleibt ein mediokres, vermeintlich menschenlides Bild vom Superstar Michael, der es ja auch irgendwie schwer hat und dabei trotzdem mit Leichtigkeit alle Widersprüche in der eigenen Biographie negiert.

»George Michael – A Different Story«, GB 2005, 53 Min., R: Soutlan mit George Michael, Stog, Mariah Carey, Elton John, Noel Gallagher
Kinostart: 29. Dezember 2005 // www.academy-films.com

Figure 4: Hias Wrba., "George Michael - A Different Story. Aufgebauchte Lippenbekenntnisse," Spex, 01-02, 2006, 63.



Figure 1. Marinka Dallos playing with a doll.
Photo taken in the 1970s
Courtesy of La Casa Totiana, Rome.

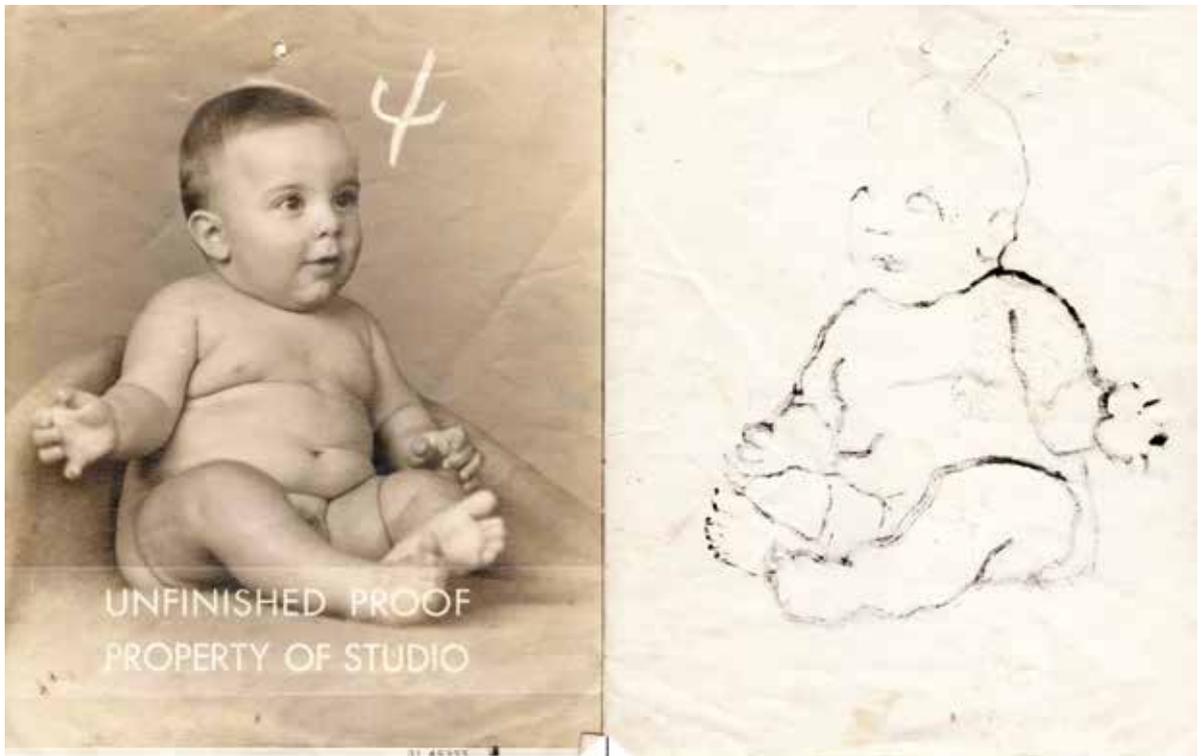


Figure 2. Left: reproduction of a baby. (inv. no. MKD.GR.038)
Right: Marinka Dallos: Baby. Acrilic on paper. (Inv. no. MKD.GR.037,
verso of MKD.GR.038). Date unknown.
Courtesy of La Casa Totiana, Rome.

Illustrations: Mirjam Dénes



Figure 3. Left: Doll representing a Roma woman. Date unknown. (Inv. no. MKD.BA.01)
Right: Marinka Dallos: Amâl. 1971, oil on canvas, 70 x 60 cm, private collection.
Doll and reproduction of the painting are courtesy of La Casa Totiana, Rome.



Figure 4. A Roma family. Photograph date unknown (probably before 1971).
Courtesy of La Casa Totiana, Rome. inv. no. MKD.FP.VI.14

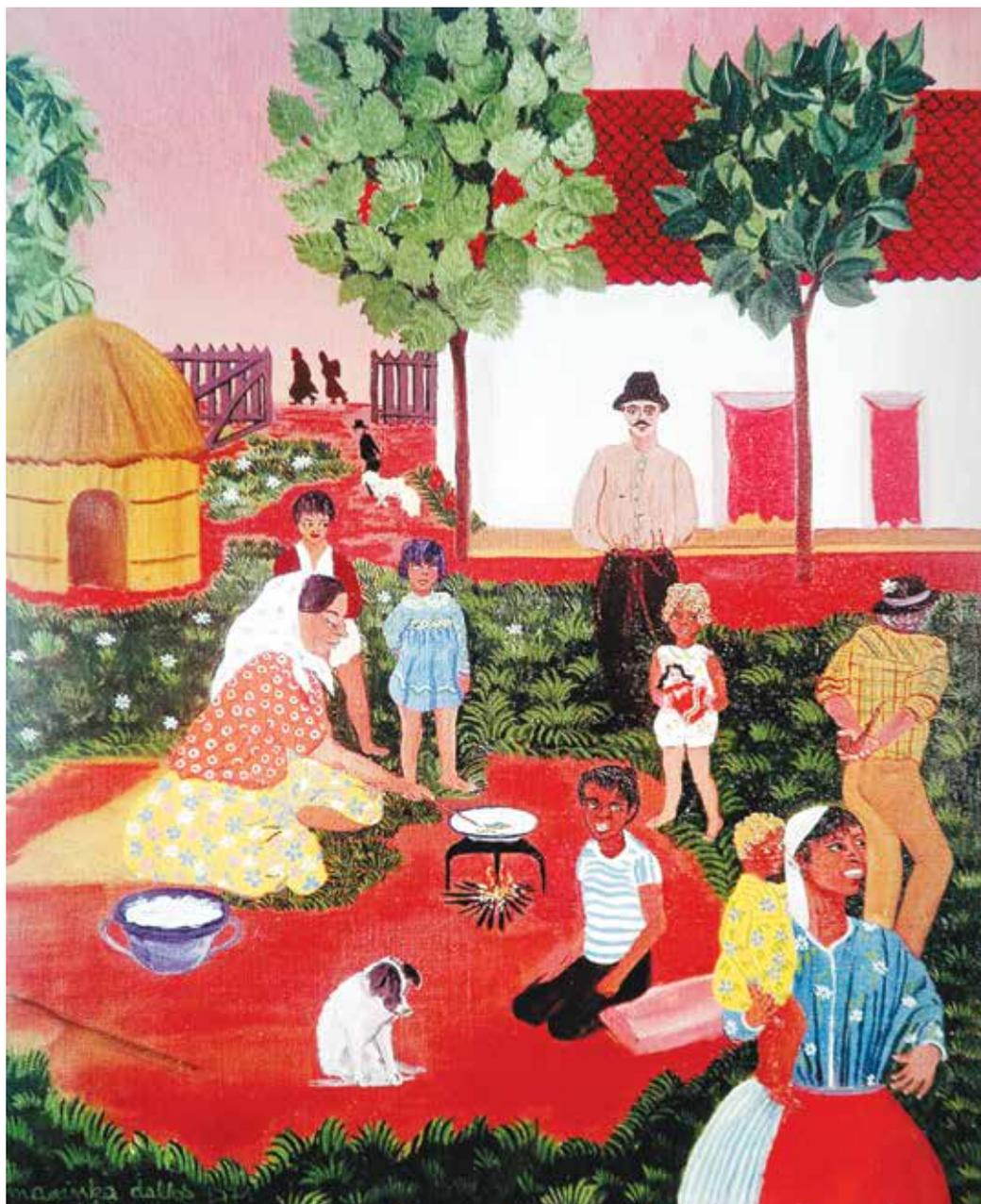


Figure 5. Marinka Dallos: *La romni*. 1971, oil on canvas, 60 x 70 cm, private collection. Reproduction based on a lantern-slide is courtesy of La Casa Totiana, Rome. inv. no. MKD.NEG.15.04.



Figure 6. Left: two dolls made of cornhusk. Ca. 1985. (Inv. nos. MKD.BA.04, MKD.BA.05).
Right: Marinka Dallos: *Le mie parche*. 1991, oil on canvas, 100 x 70 cm.
Dolls and painting are courtesy of La Casa Totiana, Rome.
inv. no. MKD.Q.041.



Figure 7. Left: Doll in Hungarian folkloric costume. Date unknown. (In. no. MKD.BA.02). Right: Marinka Dallos in a "matyó" costume. Detail of home movie „Lorinci partenza per Mezokovesd colori 1965”, Home Movies Fondo Toti, dvd 1, no. 11. Courtesy of La Casa Totiana, Rome.



Figure 8. Images listed from the upper left to the lower right corner:

Doll dressed as a bride. Lőrinci, ca. 1960-1970's, private collection.

A bride from Lőrinci. Photography, 1950's, private collection.

Marinka Dallos: *Sulla soglia*. 1969, oil on canvas, 45 x 40 cm, private collection.
Reproduction is courtesy of La Casa Totiana, Rome. inv. no. MKD.ALB.1.022.

Doll dressed as a newlywed bride. Lőrinci, ca. 1970-1980's, owned by the author.

A newlywed bride from Lőrinci. Photography, 1950's, private collection.

Marinka Dallos: *Il giorno dopo*. 1972, oil on canvas, 80 x 60 cm, private collection.
Reproduction is courtesy of La Casa Totiana, Rome. inv. no. MKD.ALB.2.015/2.



Figure 1. Donald Duck rubber toy, produced at Biserka factory, Zagreb, Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, 1964, article number 66, Walt Disney production, from the collection of the Museum of Childhood, Belgrade.



Figure 2. Paper part of one of the few types of toy packaging from Biserka factory with logotype and name of the factory, from the collection of the Museum of Childhood, Belgrade.

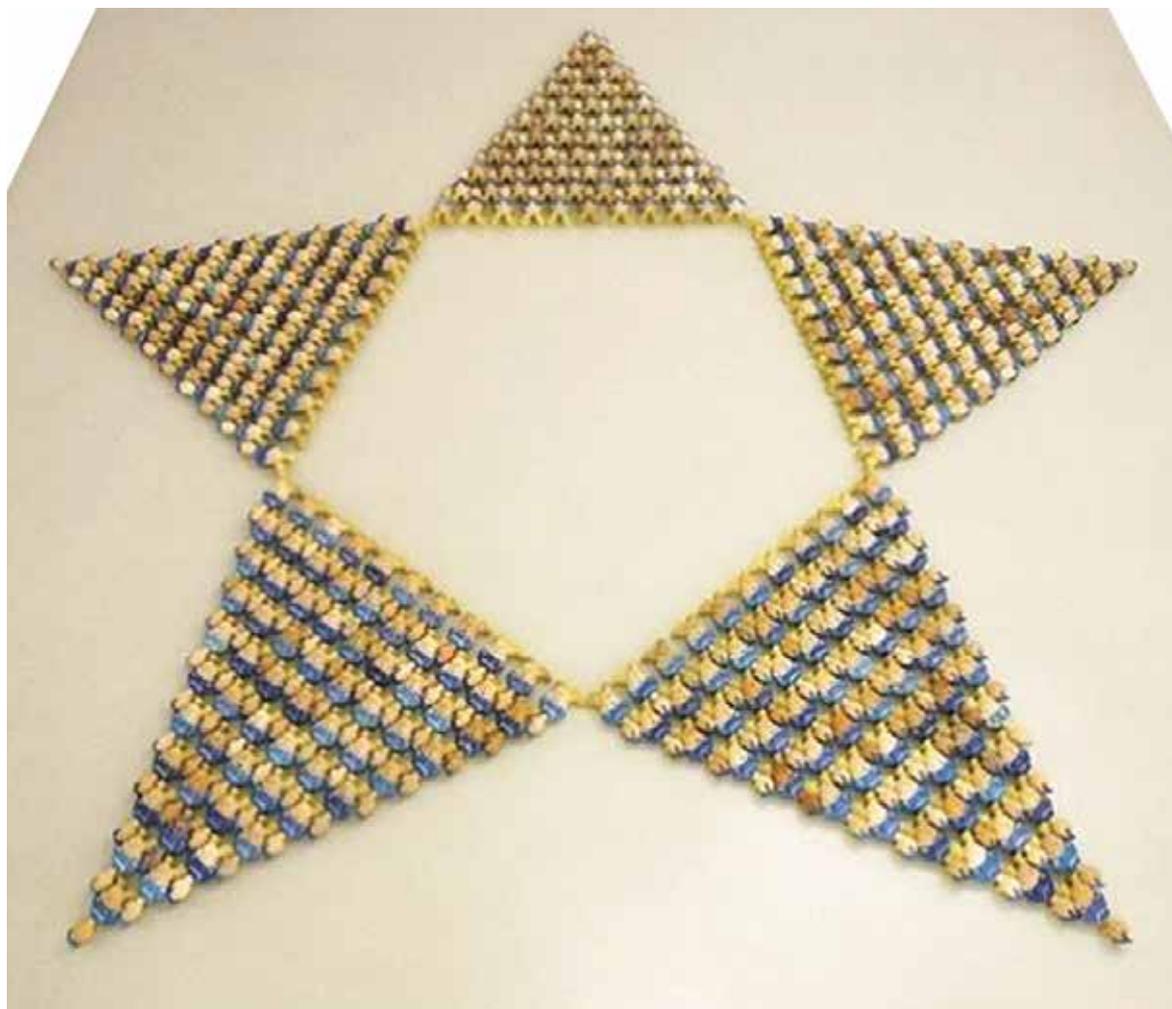


Figure 4. *Donald Duck star of Disneyland*,
floor installation, 330 elements, travelling group exhibition
“Disclosure-Underlined Memory,”
Museum of Modern Art, Saint Etienne, France, 2008
from the archive of the Museum of Childhood, Belgrade.

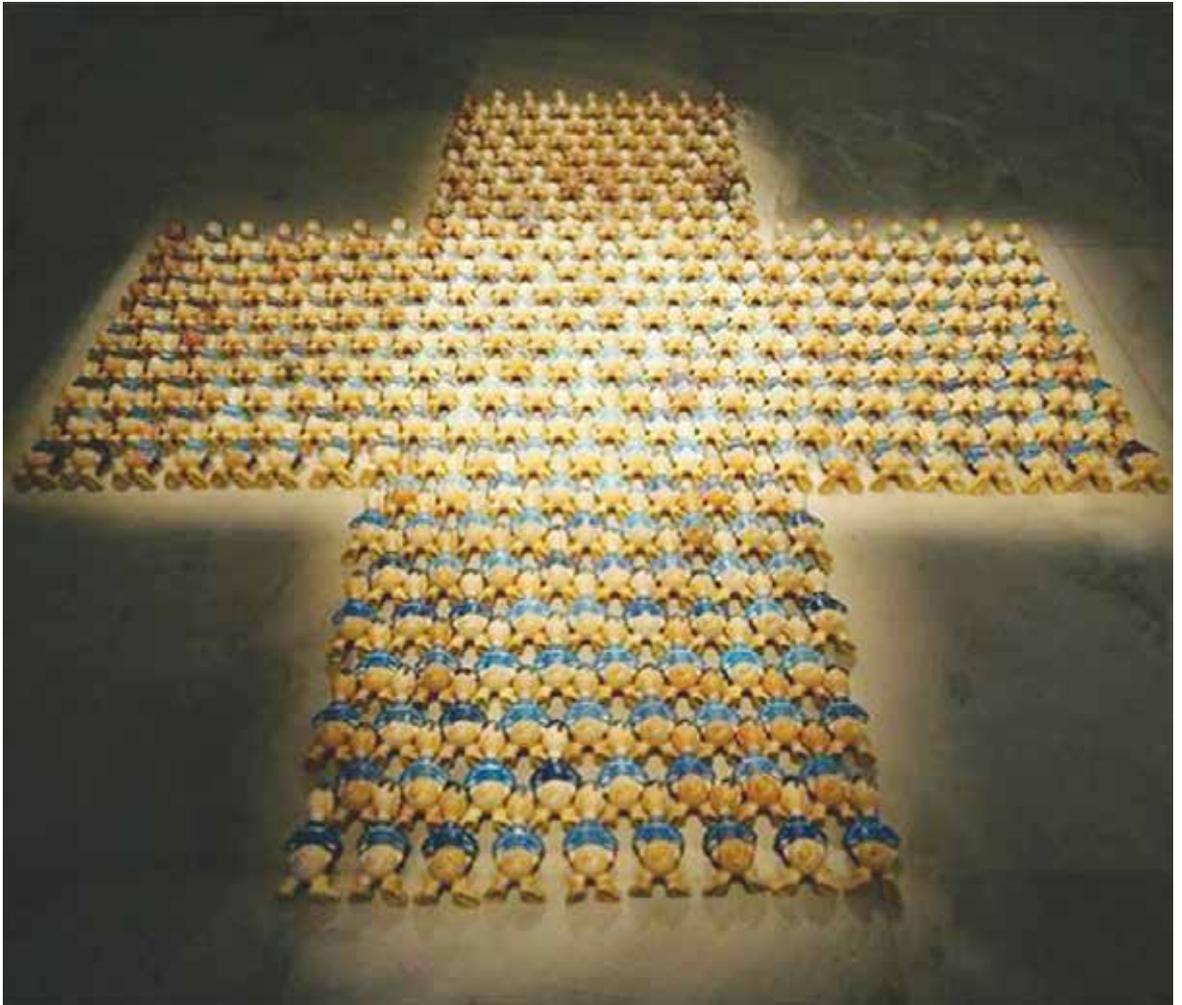


Figure 5. *Death of a sailor*, floor installation, 339 elements, travelling group exhibition "Disclosure-Underlined Memory," Museum of Byzantine culture, Thessaloniki, Greece, 2010 from the archive of the Museum of Childhood, Belgrade.

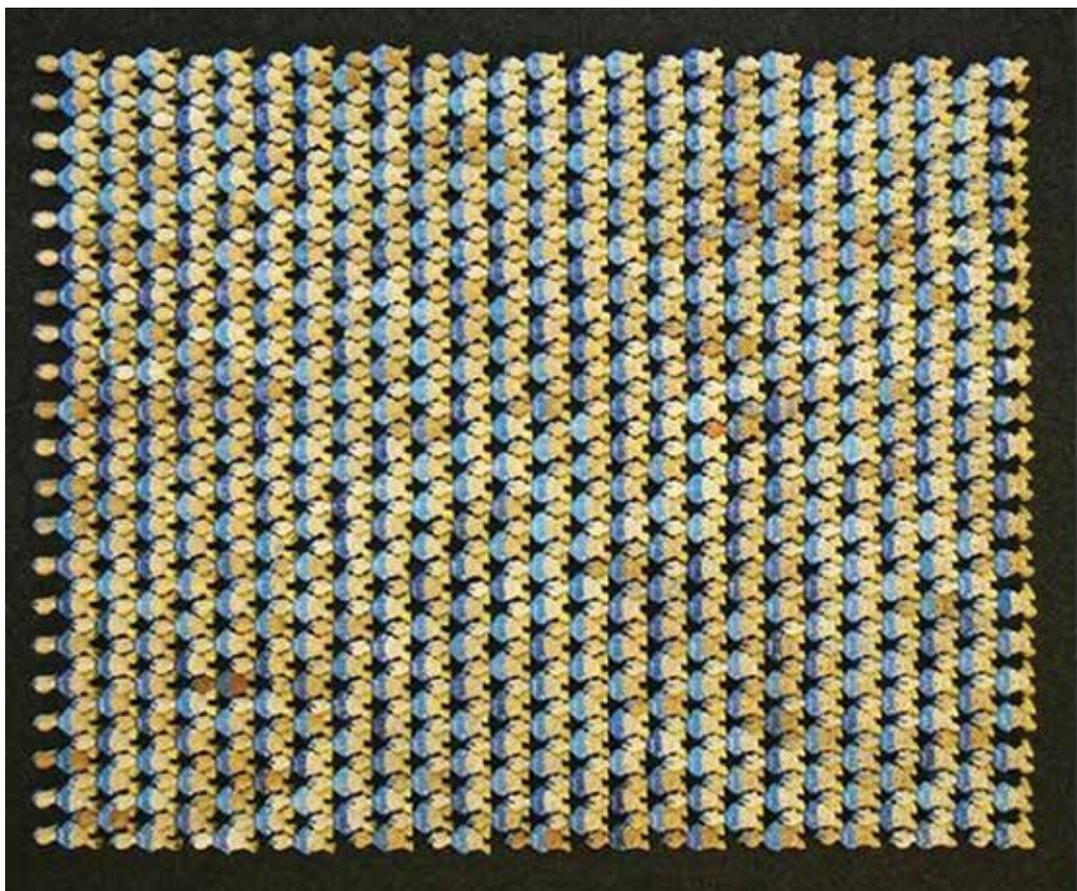


Figure 6. *Repetitions and variations* - pattern Donald Duck, floor installation, 513 elements, solo exhibition "Repetitions and Variations," City Gallery of Požega, Serbia, 2010 from the archive of the Museum of Childhood, Belgrade.

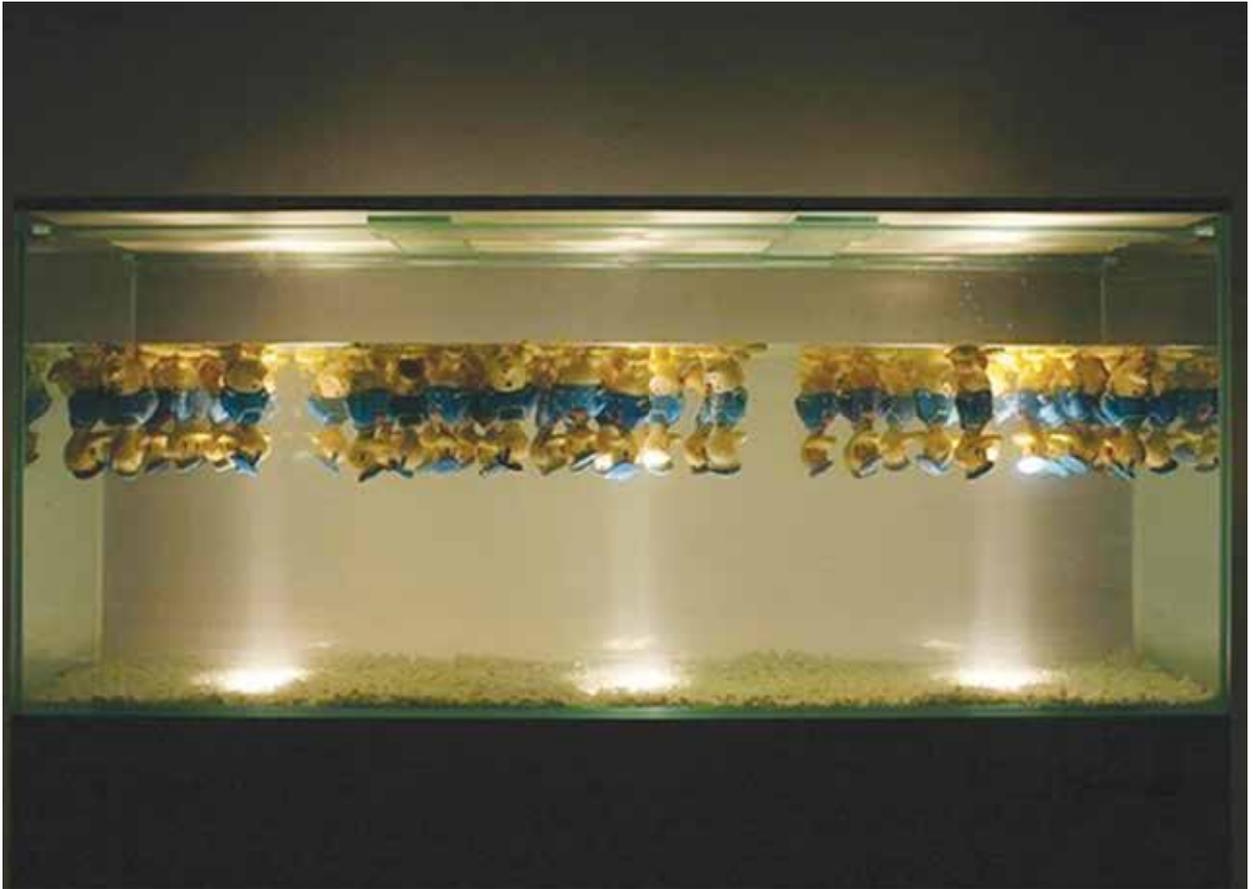


Figure 7. *Scrooge McDuck's Dream*, installation, 50 elements, solo exhibition "History=Second-Hand Future," Museum of Yugoslavian history, Belgrade, Serbia, 2013, from the archive of the Museum of Childhood, Belgrade.

Illustrations: Paweł Orzeł

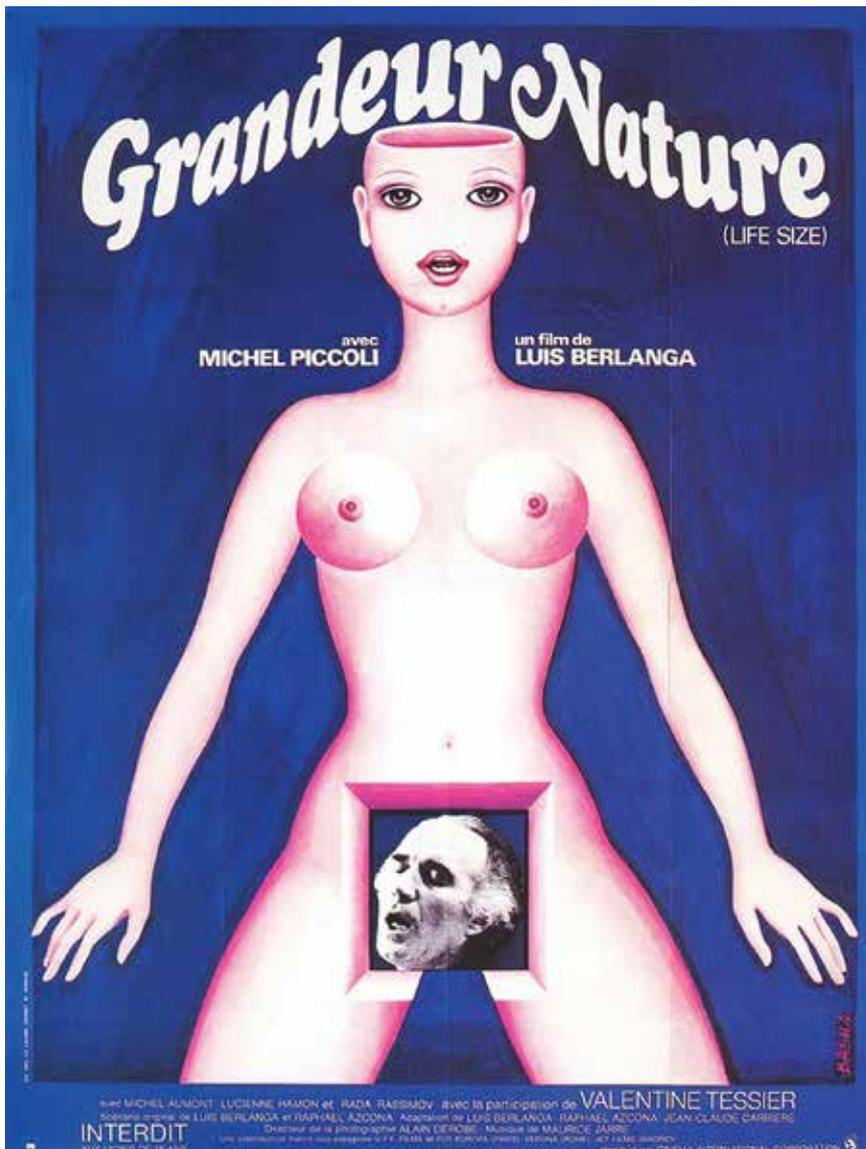


Figure 1. *Life Size* original movie poster.



Figure 2. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's *Life Size* (1974)
- The doll represents a normal-size woman and mysteriously induces delight in all men with its physical appearance...



Figure 3. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's *Life Size* (1974)
- ...he spies a little girl named Catherine playing in the bathroom with a doll also...



Figure 4. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's *Life Size* (1974)
- Over time, he becomes possessed by it, and begins to treat it like a real woman.



Figure 5. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's *Life Size* (1974)
- ...he is quite convinced that the doll wants to shut him up in the box. But most likely it is his hidden dream.



Figure 6. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's *Life Size* (1974)
- The doll causes unnatural lust in all people except one – Michel's wife.
(...) ...the appearance of the doll shocks and frightens her.



Figure 7. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's *Life Size* (1974)
- ...she decides to become a doll, seeing it as an inviolable ideal.



Figure 8. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's *Life Size* (1974)
- His own altar, in front of which he marries the doll...



Figure 9. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's *Life Size* (1974)
- ...more dolls, mannequins, sculptures and other figurative objects appear in his life, as if to replace his relationships with real people.



Figure 10. Movie still from L. G. Berlanga's *Life Size* (1974)
- ...their barracks they perform a quasi-religious procession
in the style of the Spanish Holy Week procession.
They sing of the decorated doll as a Mother of Storms.



Figure 1. © L'Estive, the backstage of *The Old Lady and the Beast*, by Ilka Schönbein. <http://blog.lestive.com/?tag=la-vieille-et-la-bete> accessed October 21, 2014.



Figure 2. © Alexandra Lebon, *The Old Lady and the Beast*, by Ilka Schönbein. http://www.alexandralebon.com/?fluxus_portfolio=la-vieille-et-la-bete accessed October 6, 2014.

Illustrations: Anaëlle Impe

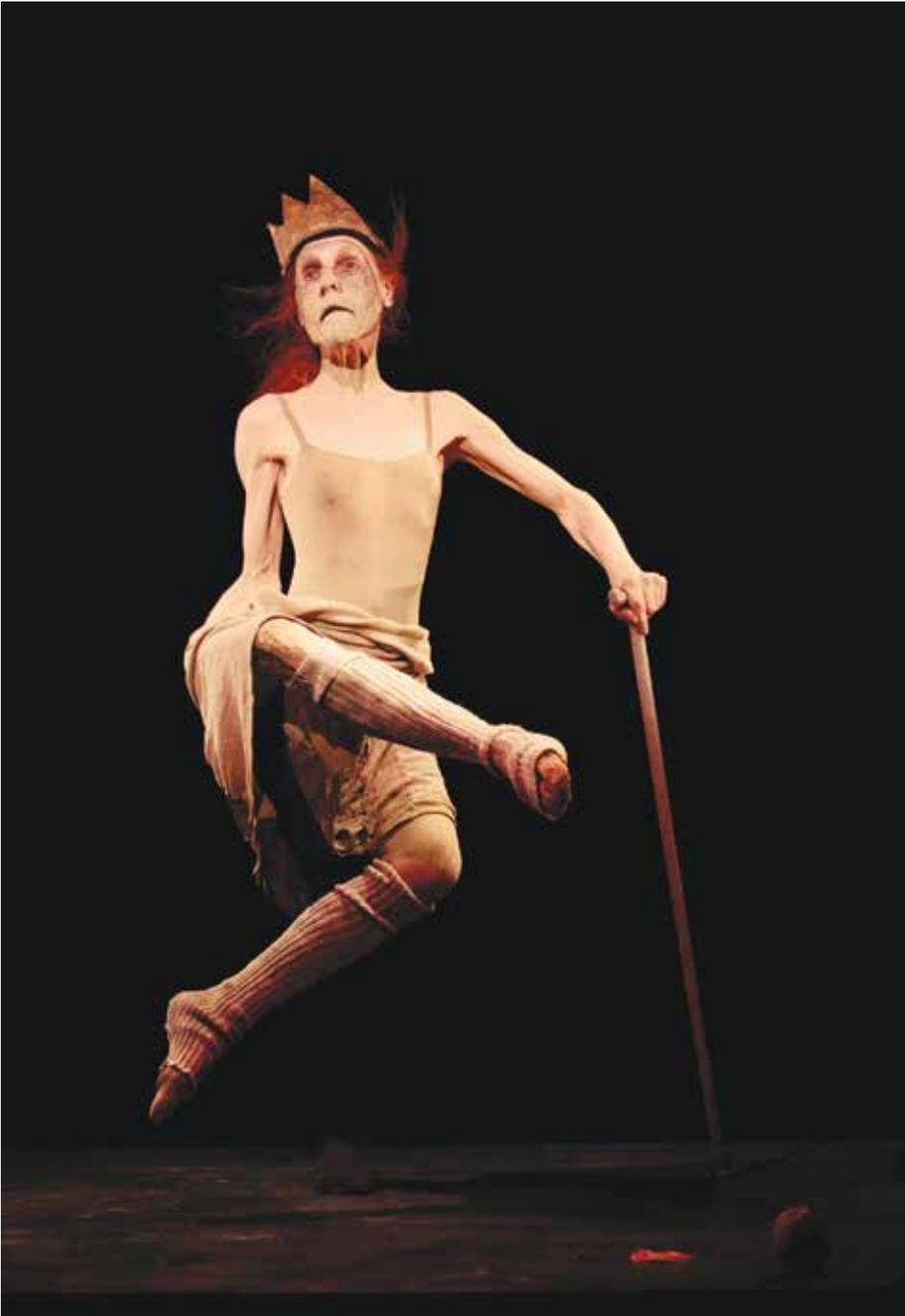


Figure 3. © Alexandra Lebon, *The Old Lady and the Beast*, by Ilka Schönbein.
http://www.alexandralebon.com/?fluxus_portfolio=la-vieille-et-la-bete
accessed October 6, 2014.



Figure 4. © Alexandra Lebon, *The Old Lady and the Beast*, by Ilka Schönbein.
http://www.alexandralebon.com/?fluxus_portfolio=la-vieille-et-la-bete
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Figure 5. © Alexandra Lebon, *The Old Lady and the Beast*, by Ilka Schönbein.
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ISBN: 978-83-938151-9-7