

**A VEILING OF IDENTITY: ANAMORPHOSIS AS DOUBLE VISION IN CONTEMPORARY
ART PRACTICE**

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines the trope of anamorphosis as a formal dimension of art practice and as a critical tool for exploring subjective vision. Anamorphosis is a technique of perspective that produces a distorted image that may only be corrected and made coherent when viewed from a specific angle. In order to re-form an oblique anamorph, it is necessary to view the image from a position that is markedly different from the conventional, frontal viewpoint. This process of eccentric viewing relies on the observer of the work to actively locate the viewing position that will re-form the image and confer meaning. The beholder of anamorphic images becomes aware of herself as a viewing subject and consequently, this act of viewing affirms the construction of vision as reflexive and self-critical. The thesis takes as its point of departure the claim of the influential art critic and theorist, Rosalind E. Krauss that the art practice of the German-American artist Eva Hesse, specifically the work, *Contingent*, 1969, represented a reinvention for its own time of an anamorphic condition through a mutual eclipse of form and matter. Krauss deploys the device of anamorphosis as a means of addressing the problematic of the relationship between the categories of painting and sculpture, and the debates into which Hesse's work intervened during the late 1960s. The thesis outlines the history of anamorphosis and its relation to geometric perspective from its genesis in the Renaissance to contemporary artists' engagement with anamorphic strategies of disruption. The psychoanalytical model of vision proposed by Jacques Lacan deploys anamorphosis as an exemplary structure in the elaboration of the gaze. The thesis discusses various dimensions of the anamorphic in art practice since 1970, with reference to works by Hannah Wilke, Richard Hamilton, Rachel Whiteread, Christine Borland and Shirazeh Houshiary.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter One: The History of Anamorphosis	8
Chapter Two: Hesse's <i>Contingent</i>	39
Chapter Three: Krauss's Anamorphic Condition	63
Chapter Four: Anamorphosis in Art Practice Since 1970	110
Conclusion	133
Bibliography	136
List of Illustrations	
Fig. 1: Eva Hesse, <i>Contingent</i> , 1969. Cheesecloth, latex, fibreglass, 350 x 630 x 109 cm. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.	150
Fig. 2: Eva Hesse, <i>Contingent</i> , 1969.	150
Fig. 3: Eva Hesse, Test piece for <i>Contingent</i> , 1969. Latex over cheesecloth 365.8 x 111.8 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.	151
Fig. 4: Hans Holbein the Younger, <i>Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve ("The Ambassadors")</i> , 1533. Oil on oak, 207 x 209.5 cm. The National Gallery, London	151
Fig. 5: Mel Bochner, <i>Wrap: Portrait of Eva Hesse</i> , 1966. Ink on graph paper, 11.11 cm diameter. Framed 19.69 x 19.69 x 0.64 cm. Private collection.	152
Fig. 6: Rachel Whiteread, <i>Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial</i> , 2000. Steel and concrete, 10 x 7 x 3.8m. Judenplatz, Vienna.	152
Fig. 7: Hannah Wilke, <i>Hannah Wilke Through the Large Glass</i> , 1976. 10 minute, colour, silent 16mm film on video.	153

- Fig. 8: Richard Hamilton, *The Passage of the Bride*, 1998-99. 153
Oil on cibachrome on canvas,
102 x 127 cm.
Estate of Richard Hamilton.
- Fig. 9: Richard Hamilton, *Bathroom Fig. 1*, 1999. 154
Oil on cibachrome on canvas,
50 x 50 cm.
Collection of Rita Donagh.
- Fig. 10: Richard Hamilton, *Bathroom Fig. 2*, 1999/2000 154
Oil on cibachrome on canvas,
100 x 100 cm.
Estate of Richard Hamilton.
- Fig. 11: Rachel Whiteread. *Water Tower*, 1998. 155
Translucent resin and painted steel,
370.8 x 274.3 cm.
Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- Fig. 12: Christine Borland, *Phantom Twins*, 1997. 155
Leather, sawdust, replica foetal skulls,
dimensions variable.
Tate Collection.
- Fig. 13: Christine Borland, *Alpha Foetal Protein Test, Cold*, 1999. 156
- Fig. 14: Shirazeh Houshiary, *The Extended Shadow*, 1994. 156
Lead, gold leaf,
400 x 100 x 100 cm.
The Government Art Collection, British Embassy, Paris.

INTRODUCTION

The thesis examines the trope of anamorphosis as both a formal device in art practice and as a critical tool for interrogating subjectivized viewing. It also discusses the ways in which anamorphic strategies of distortion and disruption have been variously deployed in contemporary art practice to create a strategic aesthetics of the in-between.¹ The thesis contends that these strategies contribute to the construction of a trope of veiling, enacting a subtle negotiation of complex webs of subjectivity, identity and difference, and providing a rich site for critical engagement with a range of apposite discourses. The thesis proceeds from Rosalind Krauss's claim that the German-American artist Eva Hesse's sculptural installation, *Contingent*, 1969 is characterised by an anamorphic effect that addresses the problematic of the relationship between painting and sculpture. I examine Krauss's concept of an anamorphic condition in depth, considering both her critical approach and Hesse's art practice within the specific historical context of a feminine, Jewish lived experience in post-war New York. Having examined Krauss's critical appropriation of the strategy of anamorphosis, my thesis questions whether it is feasible to read some aspects of the anamorphic within a context of more recent cultural theory and art interventions that seek to negotiate issues of subjectivity, identity and difference. The thesis contends that whereas Krauss envisioned the anamorphic condition as the potential eclipse of form and matter, its visual dynamic, specifically in its denial of the centric viewing position and privileging of the oblique, remains a viable strategy in contemporary art production.

The term anamorphosis derives from the Greek, 'to form anew'. It is a technique of perspective that produces a distorted image that can only be corrected when viewed from a particular angle. In order to re-form an oblique anamorph, it is necessary to view the image from a position that is markedly different from the conventional frontal position of viewing. Indeed from this viewpoint, the

¹ Marsha Meskimmon uses this term in her essay on Christine Borland's installation work, *Winter Garden*, 2001. She cites Elizabeth Grosz's definition of the in-between as the locus for social, cultural and natural transformations, arguing that feminist art theory and contemporary women's art are mutually transformative practices. I concur with Meskimmon's view that, 'A corporeal notion of theory acknowledges the significance of thinking-in-making and encourages the emergence of a dynamic, process-based criticism between texts and images – as well as between subjects and objects. It is precisely this dynamic mode of criticism, formed at the in-between of thinking and materiality, which has enabled female subjectivity and sexual difference to be reconceived against the grain of disabling normative conventions of woman as other. Feminist art criticism and the contemporary practices of women artists have been crucial to the development of these ideas and they invite us to explore the significance of aesthetics and sensory knowledges in articulating embodiment through the in-between', Marsha Meskimmon, 'Christine Borland's *Winter Garden*', in Perry, G., ed., *Difference and Excess in Contemporary Art: The Visibility of Women's Practice*, Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, p. 133.

anamorph is unrecognisable and relies on the viewer to locate the viewing position that will re-form the image, thereby conferring meaning. Although the technique is related to *tromp l'oeil* (French for 'deceiving the eye'), this visual device does not require the viewer to seek out an alternative vantage point. Anamorphic art has been described as an, 'art of wonder' that exploits its manipulation of the visual field in order to excite the viewer's curiosity and insist on her dynamic contribution to the process of constructing meaning.² However, our engagement with an anamorphic image entails more than just the realisation of an arresting and intriguing perspectival trick; anamorphic art is also an act of veiling, a deliberate attempt to conceal hidden knowledges from the uninitiated gaze. The aesthetics of anamorphosis is predicated on the notion that multivalent meanings can be mutually supported within the same material situation.

Lacanian psychoanalytical theory proposes that the anamorph serves to reveal the structures of our subjectivity. In this thesis, I make the claim that anamorphic visual strategies can also be located within theoretical discourses of subjectivity and identity, a process that can offer compelling interpretative insights into examples of contemporary art practice. The term 'subject' typically refers to the psychological construction of subjectivity, a post-structural theoretic construct that views the individual as a de-centred, multiple, contradictory and ever-changing subject, constructed within language, power relations and social practices. It refers to the life of the subject in time and in relation to the world; a lived experience contingent on culture. Subjectivity displaces the paradigm of an autonomous, unified and centred subject confronting the world. Michael Steinberg asserts that, 'The endless work of subjectivity involves the constant renegotiations of the boundaries between self and world, with the world and history continuously reappearing in the texture of the self in the form of language, other cultural practices, received ideas and ideologies'.³ In contrast, 'identity' can involve the desire of the individual to both express their individuality and classify themselves within a larger cultural context, for example, national, gender and culture identities. Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock have described how we are 'bearers of and actors in a culture', but that we are also subjected to that culture and subject to its authority.⁴

Writing a decade after the making of *Contingent*, Krauss developed her identification, informed by Lacanian psychoanalytical theory, into a conceit that elaborated upon the notion of a mutual eclipse of the conventions of sculpture and painting. Krauss's concept of an 'anamorphic condition' both

² Peter Muir, 'October: *La Glace sans tain*', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 6.4, 2002, p. 431.

³ Michael P. Steinberg, 'Mendelssohn and Judaism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Mendelssohn*, ed., Peter Mercer Taylor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 28.

⁴ Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed: Social History of Art*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996, p. 106.

reflected formalist concerns of the aesthetic discourse of the 1960s, particularly with regard to the Minimalist paradigm, and the critical preoccupation with French theoretical approaches current at the time that Krauss was assessing Hesse's work. Krauss compares *Contingent*, 1969 with *The Ambassadors*, 1533; Hans Holbein the Younger's double portrait that incorporates the anamorph of a skull that only becomes fully coherent when viewed from an acute angle. Krauss argues that Holbein's painting is marked by its insistence on two mutually exclusive vantages and this assertion forms the crux of her comparison with *Contingent*, a work that she considers to embody the condition of a 'mutual eclipse' between the separate conventions of painting and sculpture. She proposes that the work is characterised by a double perspective; when viewed from the front, its edges manifest the sculptural, whereas viewing at an angle emphasises the surfaces and planes of the panels, thereby reiterating the pictorial.

Critical commentators have tended to make reference to Krauss's interpretation, but have not addressed her reading in detail. In her broad survey of the critical writing associated with Hesse, Griselda Pollock describes Krauss's anamorphic reading as a, 'subtle analysis'.⁵ Similarly, Yve-Alain Bois has briefly referred to Krauss's strategy in addressing the relationship between painting and sculpture in Hesse's work as, 'the sideways move' of anamorphosis.⁶ Kathryn A. Tuma argues that Krauss's identification of a double perspective relates to a rotational logic inherent in Hesse's work and like Krauss, suggests that the artist operated within an interstitial zone between the conventions of the pictorial and sculptural.⁷ Krauss's critical approach stresses formalist concerns through post-structuralist semiotic and psychoanalytical perspectives; however its firm negation of social and cultural factors serves to underline the, 'absent conversations about the veiled role of Jewishness' identified by Lisa Bloom.⁸ Recent research has aimed to recover displaced elements of Jewish subjectivity in Clement Greenberg's aesthetic theory, and this scholarship has particular relevance to Krauss's critical relationship with Greenbergian formalism.⁹ Vanessa Corby has also analysed the lacuna of Jewish ethnicity located within the hegemonic discourse associated with

⁵ Griselda Pollock, 'A Very Long Engagement: Singularity and Difference in the Critical Writing on Eva Hesse', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p. 33.

⁶ Yve-Alain Bois, 'Dumb', in Elizabeth Sussman and Fred Wasserman, *Eva Hesse: Sculpture*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 19.

⁷ Kathryn Tuma, 'Eva Hesse's Turn: Rotations Around the Circle Drawings', in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, ed. Catherine de Zegher, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, pp. 215-271.

⁸ Lisa Bloom, *Jewish Identities in American Feminist Art: Ghosts of Ethnicity*, New York and London: Routledge, 2006, p. 10.

⁹ Louis Kaplan, 'Reframing the Self-Criticism: Clement Greenberg's "Modernist Painting" in Light of Jewish Identity', in *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, ed. Catherine M. Sousloff, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999, pp. 180-199.

Hesse through an examination of archival sources relating to the artist's exile from Nazi Germany.¹⁰

I argue that whereas Krauss's analysis of an anamorphic condition is predicated on the relationship between the categories of painting and sculpture, Hesse's art practice may concurrently be read in terms of an expression of ambivalence, deriving from the contradictions inherent in a post-Holocaust culture, and the pressures associated with Jewish assimilation into U.S. Culture at that historical juncture. It could also be symptomatic of anthropologist Karen Brodtkin's description of Jewish women in this specific context, possessing a, 'kind of double vision that comes from racial middleness'.¹¹ The critical framework provided by Marjorie Garber is crucial in grounding this consideration of Jewish identity within the specificity of its cultural context in post-war America.¹²

I propose that the trope of veiling is a recurrent theme in the discourse surrounding Hesse's art practice, reflecting the language of anamorphosis where accepted limits of vision and perspective are disrupted. The sense of concealment inherent in the strategy of anamorphosis and the dynamics of viewing demanded by the anamorph may also be suggestive of the veiling of Jewish ethnicity in art historical discourse. Whereas recent scholarship has done much to excavate the displaced elements of Jewishness in art historical discourse as a whole, and specifically in the critical writing associated with Hesse and Greenberg, Krauss's formulation of the anamorphic condition has not previously been analysed with regard to Jewish subjectivity. The originality of the thesis lies in my proposal that Krauss's identification of the anamorphic condition may also be read in the light of Jewishness being perceived as a form of double vision. Both Krauss's position as a Jewish art critic and the dominance of the journal *October* in the critical reading of twentieth-century art make these questions pertinent and worthy of investigation.

I discuss the history of anamorphosis as a system of perspective, from its genesis during the Renaissance to the seventeenth century, when it was considered both a symbol of the divine and a mysterious manifestation of natural magic. I consider the device's gradual decline during the centuries that followed when it became merely an entertaining diversion and gentle pastime, until anamorphosis attracted the attention of the Surrealists, particularly Salvador Dalí, during the earlier part of the twentieth century. The early career of the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan was influenced by his close friendships with the Surrealist group. In his highly influential theory of the

¹⁰ Vanessa Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, pp. 97-127.

¹¹ Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America*, London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 1-2.

¹² Marjorie Garber, *Symptoms of Culture*, New York: Routledge, 2000.

gaze, Lacan used the example of Holbein's *Ambassadors* to demonstrate the simultaneous possession and dispossession in the field of vision. Anamorphic perspective is claimed to be indicative of a symbolic castration in the visual field because the apparently meaningless blot of the anamorph disrupts the imaginary perfection of geometric perspective and forces the viewer to abandon her illusory sense of visual mastery.

The artist Daniel Collins has defined anamorphic projection as a technique of distortion and disruption and describes the viewer as the 'eccentric observer' who is made aware of the oblique and contingent nature of their point of view.¹³ Consequently, the act of viewing anamorphic images affirms the construction of vision as reflexive and self-critical. Its visual dynamic promotes the counter viewing position defined by Irit Rogoff as the, 'curious eye', as opposed to that of the, 'good eye' of art history that makes value judgments and is exemplified by the pronouncements of Greenbergian formalism.¹⁴ The disconcerting effect produced by the anamorphic image undermines the illusion of transparency that sustains the field of vision, thereby emphasising contingency and subjectivity in its transgressive quality.

I discuss examples of art practice since 1970 that incorporate strategies that may be interpreted as disrupting the visual field or privileging the oblique viewing position. Both Hannah Wilke and Richard Hamilton engaged with Marcel Duchamp's seminal work, *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even*, 1915-1923, in their respective art practices. In her performance work, Wilke deployed her own body as a means of re-embodying the nude of the *Large Glass* and Hamilton's digital manipulation of painted images similarly imposes additional layers of meaning on the earlier work. Rachel Whiteread's, *Water Tower*, 1998, interrogates our assumptions regarding the relation between the viewer and works of public sculpture, and invokes the uncanny through a chance encounter that disrupts the familiar. I also draw a comparison between Krauss's reading of *Contingent* and Rachel Whiteread's *Holocaust Memorial*, 2000, in Judenplatz, Vienna. In Krauss's analysis of Hesse's work, she identifies a concentration on the condition of edge. Within the problematics of painting, this is compared to a curator installing a group of Rembrandts at a ninety-degree angle to the wall, thereby effectively rendering them useless, as their normal function is annulled. The paintings would no longer make a certain order of things visible and meaningful and consequently, the objecthood of the object would eclipse its function. Whiteread has arguably

¹³ Daniel Collins, 'Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: Inverted Perspective and the Construction of the Gaze', *Leonardo*, 22.1, 1992, 73-82, and, 'Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: History, Technique and Current Practice', *Leonardo*, 22.2, 1992, 179-187.

¹⁴ Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, 2000.

adopted a similar visual strategy that reflects the anamorphic effect achieved by Hesse, in her memorial to the extermination of over sixty-five thousand Austrian Jews. A 'nameless library' with book shelves and a blind door; the edges of the books' pages are turned outwards, rendering them unreadable like Krauss's Rembrandts and locating the strategy within terms of the semiotic incapacity of representation associated with the Holocaust. The critical discourse associated with Whiteread makes repeated reference to Hesse's sculptural practice, as Whiteread's work is often viewed in terms of a re-casting of the minimalist rhetoric.

Although I do not wish to imply any teleological progression between the work of these artists, my thesis argues that the deployment of anamorphic strategies represents a dynamic artistic and critical engagement with the project Gill Perry describes as the, 'unveiling or rewriting of history in which language and visual images can be used to naturalize patriarchal power relations'.¹⁵ Consideration of the anamorphic image is also relevant to the on-going critical reassessment of Minimalism, a process that Briony Fer argues has revealed its obsessive forms as a site of fantasy and compulsion.¹⁶ In my thesis I have employed a feminist methodology, as my intention is to recover elements that have been displaced, and to provide alternative readings informed by more recent scholarship. In my research I have been mindful of the questions posed by Griselda Pollock when examining the discourse that has been generated by Hesse's life and work, 'What does that history of writing add up to now? How does it look? What was not said or even sayable? What questions were raised and then abandoned? Why not then, but now?'¹⁷ When I first read Krauss's account of *Contingent*, I found her proposed identification of an anamorphic effect particularly compelling. I was intrigued by the startling juxtaposition of Hesse's work with that of Holbein's, two works bracketed together in a manner that is reminiscent to me of Wölfflin's method of pairing works.¹⁸ I became interested in the contextual influences that had shaped Krauss's writing in 1979, and her position as a woman Jewish critic in relation to both Hesse and Greenberg. Having read Vanessa Corby's analysis of the lacuna of Jewish ethnicity located within the hegemonic discourse associated with Hesse, I would argue that it is feasible to examine Krauss's concept of an anamorphic condition within discourses that negotiate issues of identity and subjectivity. The works of contemporary art that I have chosen to discuss, exemplify for me the nuances of Krauss's

¹⁵ Gill Perry, 'Introduction: Visibility, Difference and Excess', in Perry, G., ed., *Difference and Excess in Contemporary Art: The Visibility of Women's Practice*, Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

¹⁶ Briony Fer, 'Treading Blindly, or the Excessive Presence of the Object', *Art History*, Vol.20, No. 2, June 1997, p. 271.

¹⁷ Griselda Pollock, 'Encountering Encounter: An Introduction', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p. 19.

¹⁸ The critical methodology of Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945) was influential in the development of formal analysis.

anamorphic condition and underline the continuing relevance of the anamorphic as a transgressive, critical framework.

CHAPTER ONE

The History of Anamorphosis

Anamorphosis has a complex history that draws on a diverse range of both visual and textual sources. As a device that has intrigued artists, mathematicians and philosophers alike, anamorphic perspective has been experienced as a wondrous marvel and a symbol of the divine, but has also been regarded as a scientific curiosity and an entertaining parlour game. This chapter traces the history of the device of anamorphic perspective from its genesis and dissemination in the early sixteenth century and revival in the following century, to the Surrealists' fascination with anamorphic images. It also addresses the technical aspects of anamorphosis as a system of perspective, and the variety of images and effects that have resulted from the deployment of this visual strategy. I consider the contribution of psychoanalytical theory, most notably Jacques Lacan's theory of the gaze as the field of desire, where he deploys Holbein's painting, *The Ambassadors*, 1533 (fig. 3) to explicate his critique of Cartesian space. Finally, I examine the contemporary engagement with anamorphosis, and artist Daniel Collins' designation of the viewer of anamorphic images as the 'eccentric observer'.

Hubert Damisch makes the insightful comment that the history of perspective, 'cannot be solely identified with that of artistic "realism". It is also the history of a dream'.¹ Perspective (from the Latin word *perspicere*, to see through) is a geometrical construction by which the three-dimensional world may be projected onto a two-dimensional plane to create the illusion of space. Within the extensive discourse on perspective, anamorphosis is often regarded as a subversion that reiterates the fixity of the rules of perspective. Citing Barbaro's *La pratica della prospettiva* (1559), Stuart Clark identifies the salient features of anamorphosis.² First, that it is a 'perspective scheme' – a version, or possibly a perversion of perspective, but not a rejection of it. Secondly, that anamorphic representations rigidly follow the rules of perspective, but reverse them. Clark points to Barbaro's awareness of the excitement and wonder aroused by the anamorphic, linking this to the interest manifested by collectors in the developing culture of the *Kunst-und-Wunderkammer*.³ Finally, in his

¹ Hubert Damisch, *A Theory of Cloud: Toward a History of Painting*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto: 2002, pps. 133-134.

² Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 90.

³ The *Kunstkammer* (art-room) and *Wunderkammer* (wonder-room) were European Renaissance cabinets of

analysis of the dynamic between artist and viewer Clark comments that,

Above all, perhaps, he recognised that the beholder of this art form was very much at the mercy of its creator, both in being tied rigorously to a wholly contrived, pre-determined viewpoint and also in having to wait upon a kind of revelation of the painter's hitherto withheld intention. This last feature has made anamorphosis seem to most modern commentators like a commentary on the artificiality and contrivance of perspective itself, which was known, after all as *perspectiva artificialis* (as well as *costruzione leggitima*) and governed likewise by the tyrannies of viewpoint and intention...Precisely in being a derivation of perspective, anamorphosis was able to act as its interpreter, exposing its claims to objectivity and truth by adapting it for yet more manipulative and deceitful purposes.⁴

Indeed, anamorphosis self-reflexively disrupts the hegemonic role of perspective in the history of vision, and reminds us that perspective is neither uniform nor universal, but rather contingent upon both intention and the beholder of the image.

The most comprehensive account of anamorphic art remains Jurgis Baltrušaitis' *Anamorphosis ou magie artificielle des effets merveilleux*, published in 1969 and translated into English as *Anamorphic Art* in 1976. Born in 1903, Baltrušaitis was a Lithuanian art historian and critic who studied at the Sorbonne with Henri Focillon. His work on anamorphic perspective formed the basis of a major exhibition, *Anamorphic Art* that travelled around the United States in 1977, two years before the publication of Krauss's essay on *Contingent*. Shown also at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam in 1975 and the Musée des Arts Decoratifs, Paris in 1976, the exhibition and translation of Baltrušaitis' work were responsible for stimulating a renewed interest in a somewhat neglected device of fine art practice. Indeed, Baltrušaitis notes that, 'Contemporary artists have been intrigued by these pictures in which the subjects emerge and disappear as if by magic. Art historians have for the most part classed them as curiosities of no general importance'.⁵ Baltrušaitis makes the claim that accelerated and decelerated perspective are forced to their logical extreme by the principle of anamorphosis.⁶ He cites the Roman architect Vitruvius' formulation of minor adjustments in the construction of facades and columns to compensate for 'errors' of vision; discerning in this deliberate destabilisation of form as a method of creating the illusion of equality, a vital precursor of the anamorphic.

Baltrušaitis then considers the first anamorphoses and their dissemination during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He identifies Leonardo da Vinci's drawings of a child's face and an eye in the

curiosities.

⁴ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, 2007, p. 91.

⁵ Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey Ltd, 1977, p. 11

⁶ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 1.

Codex Atlanticus (1483-1518) as the earliest known examples of anamorphosis, arguing that, 'The anamorphic game is thus directly associated with a genius and with artists of the top flight. The value of such testimony cannot be overemphasised'.⁷ Indeed throughout his account, Baltrušaitis is always keen to validate the strategy of anamorphosis as more than just a 'scholarly game'.⁸ Another important early example of anamorphic art is a *Vexierbild* (puzzle picture) executed by the Nuremberg engraver and pupil of Dürer, Erhard Schön, between 1531 and 1534. Described by Baltrušaitis as a 'linear chaos', when the image is viewed from an oblique angle four portraits emerge of the Emperor Charles V, Ferdinand I of Austria, Francis I and Pope Clement VII.⁹ However, the landscapes from which the sovereigns' heads appear are connected to specific events – a military scene behind Charles V, the siege of Vienna behind Ferdinand I, God threatening a Turk and an armed ship behind the Pope, and Turks with camels alluding to Francis I. Baltrušaitis emphasises that Schön's design combines two pictures in one, 'The features of the hidden royal effigies disturb the topographical sites. They hover over scenes of historical vicissitudes like phantoms covering vast tracts of land. The vision takes place in an agitated landscape, marked by the sovereign power which it conceals. It is at once a drama and a piece of witchcraft.'¹⁰ Baltrušaitis' quotation exemplifies his view of anamorphosis as the absurd and fantastic aspect of perspective. Indeed he describes *Thaumaturgus Opticus*, 1646, the seminal perspective study by the Parisian mathematician and scholar, Jean-François Nicéron as a work, 'in which science unfolds in a fairy-tale atmosphere'.¹¹

The seventeenth century has been described as a golden age of catoptric apparatus, illusions and fictions, and a time when a number of studies of perspective appeared.¹² Baltrušaitis explores the complex web of ideas generated by the French mathematicians of the Minim mendicant order, namely Marin Mersenne, Emmanuel Maignan and Jean-François Nicéron, and their involvement with the mathematician and philosopher René Descartes; a group of intellectuals for whom visual ambiguity underlined philosophical doubt. Indeed, it is a central premise of Baltrušaitis' account that the Minim monastery was a Cartesian centre, its connections with Descartes established through Mersenne, who had known the philosopher when they both studied at the Jesuit college of La Flèche. Descartes spent a number of years at the monastery before departing for Holland and

⁷ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 33.

⁸ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 1.

⁹ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 11.

¹⁰ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, pps 11-12.

¹¹ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 39.

¹² Fabiola López-Durán and Lars Muller, ed., *Felice Varini: Points of View*, Zurich: Lars Muller Publishers, 2004, p. 105.

corresponded regularly with Mersenne. Indeed, Baltrušaitis states quite emphatically that, 'It is certain that their relationship deeply influenced the spirit of the whole group'.¹³ He also views Nicéron's work on anamorphic perspective as a brilliant confirmation of Cartesian reflections on palpable reality. More recently, Lyle Massey has argued that anamorphic perspective challenges both the supposedly rational construction of vision associated with perspective and the assumed rationality of the Cartesian subject. She proposes that, 'Through anamorphoses we will see that the Cartesian *cogito* might be better understood not as a philosophical *fulfillment* of the spatially situated, rational subject seemingly promised by the linear grid but rather as *defense* against's perspective's disseminating threat to subject self-certainty'.¹⁴

Nicéron (1613-1646) was the youngest member of the order of Minims in Paris and studied under Mersenne.¹⁵ He wrote a treatise on perspective, *La Perspective Curieuse* in 1638 that was republished in 1646 after his death as *Thaumaturgus Opticus*. In his presentation of its geometric principles, Nicéron argued that perspective was a form of '*magie artificielle*', as the effects that could be created through the use of perspective were regarded as being aligned with natural magic. The second half of *Thaumaturgus Opticus* is devoted to the explication of anamorphic images and Nicéron describes the process by which he produced his own anamorphic images on the walls of the Roman and Parisian chapter houses of the Minim order, along with his contemporary, Emmanuel Maignan who also wrote on the subject of perspective. Hanneke Grootenboer defines the importance of Nicéron's work in the development of anamorphic art in terms of his adaption of existing ideas to a geometrical system based on the *costruzione legittima* of Renaissance perspectivists.¹⁶ Nicéron also distinguished three categories of anamorphic perspective dependant on the viewer's position; optical, when the viewer looks in a horizontal direction; anoptical, when the viewer looks upward; and catoptical, when the viewer looks downward (the latter category requiring a conical or cylindrical mirror to reform the anamorph).

In 1642, Nicéron painted *St. John the Apostle writing the Apocalypse* at Santa Trinità dei Monti, the Minim monastery in Rome, beside Maignan's anamorphic mural, *St. Francis of Paola*. Nicéron also

¹³ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 61.

¹⁴ Lyle Massey, 'Anamorphosis through Descartes or Perspective Gone Awry', *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 4, 1997, 1150.

¹⁵ The monastery of the Minims, founded in 1609 in Paris, was a important centre for scientific studies. It occupied a building designed by François Mansart close to Place Royale (now Place des Vosges). Baltrušaitis states that, 'The most illustrious men in the world of religion and scholarship met there and the foundation became an intellectual centre of European character.', Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 61. Its library is said to have housed twenty-six thousand volumes.

¹⁶ Hanneke Grootenboer, *The Rhetoric of Perspective: Realism and Illusionism in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Still-life Painting*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005, p.105.

painted two large anamorphic wall paintings in the upper galleries of the cloister of the Paris monastery, *Mary Magdalene in Sainte-Baume in contemplation* and *St. John the Evangelist on the island of Patmos*. Nicéron described how he transferred the outline of an image from a reversed, scaled-down drawing marked with a square grid to an elongated grid drawn on the cloister wall. The frame holding the smaller drawing was attached to the wall with hinges allowing it to be positioned perpendicular or flat to the wall. A bead on a string hung vertically in front of the drawing and a long cord stretched horizontally were used to map the position of details. By this means, it was possible to transfer co-ordinates from the original drawing to the grid on the wall. Nicéron also used a viewing tube to check the accuracy of individual sections of the work. According to his *Perspectiva Horaria* (1648), Maignan used a similar method to create his image of St. Francis of Paola, using extended silk cords to transfer the preliminary drawing to the wall. Maignan's painting has survived, but Nicéron's mural was destroyed by Napoléon Bonaparte's troops when they sacked the monastery in 1798.¹⁷ Such anamorphic murals were particularly popular during the seventeenth century. They often fully covered one wall and were constructed so that the viewpoint was located on the threshold of a doorway. The viewer caught a glance of the reformed image, literally in passing, as they entered the room.¹⁸ Frances Terpak proposes that these anamorphic paintings may have functioned as practical demonstrations of mathematics and perspective to the novices of the monastery, as both Nicéron and Maignan were professors of mathematics. She also speculates that Maignan's keen theological interest in transubstantiation may serve to explain his study of the anamorphic, 'The striking difference in the anamorphoses when viewed from the side instead of from the front would have accorded well with the tenets of the Catholic Church. Faith is hedged in by mystery, doubleness, and fleeting glimpses of the truth'.¹⁹ Terpak then describes the experience of viewing an anamorphic panel depicting Saint Margaret and the Dragon where the viewer confronts an expanse of illegible colour that resolves into a coherent image when viewed from a different position. She compares this particular dynamic of viewing to the Eucharist, the central rite of the Catholic church where the bread and wine are revealed to the believer as the body and blood of Christ, commenting that, 'The initiate into the time-honored mysteries of Catholic dogma would be disposed to understand and exploit the dual nature of anamorphosis'.²⁰

Indeed, Maignan controversially compared perspective to the way the eyes were 'deceived' in the

¹⁷ Barbara Maria Stafford and Frances Terpak, *Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen*, Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2002, p. 239.

¹⁸ Grootenboer, *The Rhetoric of Perspective*, 2005, p. 106.

¹⁹ Stafford and Terpak, *Devices of Wonder*, 2002, p. 239.

²⁰ Stafford and Terpak, *Devices of Wonder*, 2002, pps. 239-241.

mystery of transubstantiation, or the appearances of Christ transfigured as a pilgrim or a gardener.²¹ Terpak's speculation accords well with Grootenboer's reminder that the effects created by anamorphosis were originally regarded as being symbolic of divine revelation.²² Clark insists that the anamorphic murals were not simply intended to be displays of technical ingenuity, but rather powerful articulations of religious conviction, 'For Christ to be prefigured as the redeemer at the very moment of original sin was only to make an obvious theological point; to hide him in an anamorphosed image and then bring him mysteriously into focus was to express that idea by means of the symbolism of vision itself.'²³ Clark also cites the Bishop of Meaux, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet who when preaching on Ecclesiastes, claimed that anamorphic images were the perfect natural emblems for a world where justice may only be seen from, 'a certain point' revealed by faith in Christ.²⁴ Baltrušaitis also makes the comment that Maignan himself declared that it was his interest in Nicéron's research that led him to develop his own method and apparatus for producing anamorphic images. Indeed, Baltrušaitis suggests that the working relationship between Nicéron and Maignan was perhaps, 'a matter of competition and compromise'.²⁵ However, Baltrušaitis also describes the apparent symbolism of the murals, echoing Bossuet's words that, 'The huge compositions in the cloister of the Minims, with saints taking shape and disintegrating, serve as a constant reminder of the scientific research carried out in the monastery and of the uncertainty of appearances which, in religious thought, corresponds to the idea of the inconstancy and the vanity of this world'.²⁶

Leading to his analysis of Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, Baltrušaitis discusses the retransmission and redefinition of anamorphic techniques to Germany through the work of Kircher and Schott. The Jesuit, Fr. Athanasius Kircher (1602-80) was in contact with the scholars based at the Minim monasteries of Trinità dei Monti and Paris, and also with Descartes through the intervention of Mersenne. Kircher's studies were eclectic. He was also a keen collector of curiosities and owned a *Wunderkammer* that contained ancient objects, stuffed animals, automata and mirrors.²⁷ Kircher was particularly interested in mechanical devices and the distortion of forms. He devised a form of apparatus similar to Maignan's, comprising a frame on one upright with a veil stretched over it. A

²¹ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, 2007, p. 95. Maignan's comparison of transubstantiation with the deception of the senses caused by optical illusions brought him into a dispute with the Jesuit scholar Théopile Raynaud. Maignan maintained that he was not accusing God of planting delusions in men's minds. See Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2002, pps. 209-210.

²² Grootenboer, *The Rhetoric of Perspective*, 2005, p. 110.

²³ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, 2007, p. 94.

²⁴ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, 2007, p. 94.

²⁵ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 59.

²⁶ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 70.

²⁷ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, pps. 175-176, n. 1.

movable 'sight' allowed it to be set at the desired height and distance. The device was described as 'mesoptical' and Baltrušaitis likens it to Dürer's 'window', rather than Nicéron's 'door', as it represented a return to the earliest of perspective instruments, namely Alberti's 'intersector' of a frame with a veil of threads.²⁸ Kircher's apparatus was designed to be used for examining rays, putting objects and images into perspective and the gradation of clock faces and sundials.

He envisaged gardens where trees and plants could be arranged in such a way that they were transformed into the shapes of animals. Baltrušaitis comments that, 'The perspective instrument is no longer a static apparatus, registering visual rays. It becomes an active force, projecting around it worlds which are broken up and then recomposed as if by magic. Whereas the French Minims methodically pursued their experiments within the limits of logic, the German Jesuit was carried away by his speculations and extended his domain into the unreal. Even mountains and rocks could be reconstructed to resemble living beings.'²⁹ Kircher's pupil, the Jesuit Gaspar Schott regarded all curiosities of nature and techniques as supernatural manifestations. His major work, *Magia universalis naturae et artis*, published in four volumes, first in Wurzburg (1657-9), then in Bamberg (1674-7) included a whole book devoted to the study of *Magia anamorphotica*. Baltrušaitis points out that the words 'anamorphosis' and 'anamorphon' appear here, whereas Kircher did not use these terms. Schott also discloses Kircher's sources, namely Dürer, Nicéron and Maignan, and recommends Nicéron's method for projecting images onto long walls.³⁰ Clark also points out the ideological incentives at stake in playing with vision as a means of elucidating mathematical and scientific theory. The title pages and dedications that prefaced such treatises that explicate optical effects indicate the appeal to powerful, courtly patrons and collectors of wonders. Kircher's *Ars magna*, for example, was dedicated to Archduke Ferdinand, the eldest son of Ferdinand III and later Archbishop of Prague. Kircher incorporates imperial symbol, such as a double-headed version of the imperial eagle, to illustrate his optical theories. Similarly, Nicéron used a faceted lens to produce a flattering composite picture of Louis XIII of France from twelve different images of rulers of the Ottoman Empire.³¹

Arguably the best known example of Western European anamorphic art is, *The Ambassadors*, a double portrait by the German artist and printmaker, Hans Holbein the Younger that dates from

²⁸ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 80.

²⁹ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 81. Baltrušaitis also refers to an early work by Descartes where the philosopher describes how topiary can be used to cast shadows of particular figures when seen from certain viewpoints.

³⁰ In his assessment of Schott, Baltrušaitis comments that, 'The disciple is much more precise and scrupulous than the master, his advice is also more logical and more practical', Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 87.

³¹ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, 2007, p. 105.

1533 (the same year as one of Schön's engravings and the anamorphic portrait of Charles V). Holbein had settled permanently in England a year earlier, working under the patronage of Anne Boleyn and Thomas Cromwell. By 1535, he had become King's painter to Henry VIII. In the painting, two French ambassadors, Jean de Dinteville, Seigneur de Polisy (1504-65) and Georges de Selve, Bishop of Lavaur (1509-42) are portrayed life-size in front of a table with a shelf. On the top, is a celestial globe, astronomical instruments, a book and a sun dial; below a terrestrial globe, a set-square, a pair of compasses, a lute and two books – *The Arithmetic of the Merchants* by Petrus Apianus and the *Gesängbüchlein* by Johann Walter. In the top left hand corner of the painting a silver crucifix is partly concealed by a silk curtain. Baltrušaitis refers to a strange object, 'like a cuttle-fish bone' that floats above the floor, an anamorphic distortion of a skull which reforms when the viewer stands close, looking down from the right.³² He comments that, 'A mysterious air of solemnity broods over the whole scene. The dignitaries – so worthy, so imbued with their mission and their knowledge – the earth, the sky, the apparatus for measuring the world, Christ, the enigmatic skull – everything is so realistic as to verge on the unreal'.³³ There has been extensive discussion regarding the symbolism of the objects, which relate to the *quadvirium* of the liberal arts, namely arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music.³⁴ Baltrušaitis also describes the painting as a systematic study and demonstration of perspective in all its forms, although the sense of coherence implied in his assessment is contested by Shahar Bram who describes a painting 'torn' between contradictory principles of representation that are mutually exclusive but nevertheless co-exist in the same image.³⁵ The iconography of *The Ambassadors* also relates to *vanitas* imagery, a tradition associated with Northern Europe where motifs such as skulls, decaying flowers and hour-glasses were included as symbols of the fragility of life and the passage of time. In *The Ambassadors*, the anamorph has its counterpart in a small skull depicted on the brooch of Dinteville's beret. The juxtaposition of the objects that surround the men with the presence of the death heads echoes the words of the German writer Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, who complains of the, 'uncertainty and vanity of all art and science', in a pamphlet written in 1529.³⁶

Baltrušaitis reconstructs an imagined viewing of *The Ambassadors* in its intended location of

³² Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 91.

³³ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 91.

³⁴ For discussion of the symbolism of Holbein's painting see Mary F.S. Hervey, *Holbein's "Ambassadors": the Picture and the Men: An Historical Study*, London, George Bell and Sons: 1900 (Hervey's account identified the sitters in the portrait); Susan Foister, Ashok Roy and Martin Wyld, *Holbein's Ambassadors*, London, National Gallery, 1996; Oskar Bätschmann and Pascal Gleiner, *Hans Holbein*, London: Reaktion Books, 1999; and John North, *The Ambassadors' Secret: Holbein and the World of the Renaissance*, London: Phoenix, 2004 (In his highly detailed account of the painting's symbolism, North proposes that the eye that reforms the skull also corrects the flaws in the measuring instruments and finally turns its gaze to the crucified Christ)

³⁵ Shahar Bram, *The Ambassadors of Death: The Sister Arts, Western Canon and the Silent Lines of a Hebrew Survivor*, Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2011, p. 44.

³⁶ Rose-Marie and Rainer Hagen, *What Great Paintings Say Volume I*, Cologne: Taschen, 2003, p.139.

Dinterville's Château de Polisy, an experience that he equates with a theatrical spectacle,

Let us imagine a room with an entrance in the middle of one side, and two side-entrances opposite, with the picture placed between the two side-doors, in the axis. *The Mystery of the Two Ambassadors* is in two Acts. *Act One* is played when the spectator enters by the main door and finds himself a certain distance away from the two nobles, who appear at the back as on a stage. He is amazed by their stance, the display of luxury, the intense realism of the picture. He notes a single disturbing factor: the strange object at the ambassadors' feet. Our visitor advances in order to have a closer look. The scene becomes even more realistic as he approaches, but the strange object becomes increasingly enigmatic. Disconcerted, he withdraws by the right-hand door, the only one open, and this is *Act Two*. As he enters the next room, he turns his head to throw a final glance at the picture, and everything becomes clear: the visual contraction causes the rest of the scene to disappear completely and the hidden figure to be revealed. Instead of human splendour he sees a skull. The personages and all their scientific paraphernalia vanish, and in their place rises the symbol of the End. The play is over.³⁷

An alternative thesis is proposed by Edgar R. Samuel who argued that the distorted skull may have been designed for use in conjunction with a trick lens. If this was the case, then the viewer would look at the skull from a stand-point directly in front of the picture and not from the extreme right-hand edge. He cites a comment made in 1602 by a German nobleman visiting the court of Elizabeth I, who was impressed by a portrait of Henry VIII that was intended to be viewed through an optic device ('eine sonderliche opticom'). Samuel suggests that a thick-walled blown glass tube may have been used and furthermore that such a device provides a superior re-forming of the anamorph of *The Ambassadors*,

If we look at the picture through the walls of a glass tube, we see at the point where the tube and the anamorphosis intersect, a clearly imaged and undistorted skull. We see the magnificent young Governor of Troyes and his sad, pale friend, the Bishop of Lavaur, both in the prime of their life and at the height of their powers. Between them stand the emblems of higher learning and below, in the glass, is the skull of Death, at once a reminder of the transience of worldly glory, a brilliant demonstration of artistic skill and a fascinating scientific toy.³⁸

Supporting this view of anamorphosis as a playful, intellectual pastime, Alan Shickman refers to the variety of perspective glasses available during that period in his analysis of Bushy's response to the Queen in Shakespeare's *Richard II*. Citing Agrippa von Nettesheim's comment in 1533 that experiments with mirrors and lenses were, "daily seen". Shickman refers to Edgar's argument as being reasonable but unproved; however he does suggest that Agrippa's mention of 'Pillar-fashion'd'

³⁷ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, pps. 104-105.

³⁸ Edgar R. Samuel, 'Death in a Glass: A New View of Holbein's *Ambassadors*', *Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 105, No. 727, 1963, p. 441.

glasses lends some support to the thesis.³⁹

Baltrušaitis traces the shift that occurred during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as anamorphosis came to be regarded as an entertaining, optical diversion rather than a manifestation of the magical and mysterious, 'Monsters, marvels, astounding effects and supernatural phenomena become scholarly games, farces and technical tricks. They develop as an amusement of pure science, aiming to instruct by diverting. We have left the realms of fantasy far behind. Nevertheless, a kind of strangeness and a passion for curiosities survive'.⁴⁰ Citing Nicéron's frescoes as excellent examples of anamorphic projection, Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopaedia*, 1751, devoted an article to anamorphosis in their first volume. Their discussion of technical aspects is derived not from Nicéron however, but from the explication provided by the German philosopher Christian Wolff (1679-1754) in his scientific treatise written in 1715. Baltrušaitis describes anamorphosis at this time as being an inherent element of scientific manuals and a formal exercise of artists' virtuosity.⁴¹ In Italy, Galli Bibiena's treatise of 1732 referred to Nicéron's system and the more complicated formula presented by Accolti (references were also made to the work of Barbaro and Dürer). Linear anamorphosis was in decline, being replaced by catoptric anamorphoses that require the use of a mirror to correct. During the nineteenth century, developments in printing meant that anamorphic images became more readily available. The status of the device diminished from being an unconventional mode of representation that formed the subject of scholarly treatises and theoretical debate to a parlour game and novelty. However, in his *Traité de Perspective* of 1804, J. - B. Lavit considered the use of anamorphosis in architectural applications, specifically the construction of facades, side walls and ceilings, and proposed that the method could be used to create the illusion of a gallery appearing to have more sculptures.

The remaining part of Baltrušaitis' account of the history of anamorphosis is concerned with mirror anamorphoses produced both in Europe and China. The catoptric method entails breaking up an image around either a conical or cylindrical mirror. The distorted picture is drawn in a semi-circle or circle and is placed on a flat surface with a mirror (usually a cylinder of highly polished metal) standing upright in the centre. The visual effect differs from that of linear anamorphosis as the corrected image is seen from the front, and the viewer does not have to shift position in order to reconstitute it. (Baltrušaitis compares the effect to an automaton causing pictures to arise directly

³⁹ Allan Shickman, 'The "Perspective Glass in Shakespeare's Richard II', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1978, p. 219.

⁴⁰ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 117.

⁴¹ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 118.

out of a confused tangle).⁴² The catoptric technique was first described by the mathematician Jean de Vaulezard whose *Perspective cilindrique et conique* was published in 1630. Vaulezard described the method as a recent discovery, and Kirsti Andersen comments that he was 'enchanted' by the mathematical problems offered by catoptric anamorphosis. Noel Malcolm, however, insists that the value of the enterprise for Vaulezard lay in the rational explanation of apparently marvellous effects through the rules of geometry.⁴³ Vaulezard's solutions proved too complicated to have any practical application, with Nicéron advocating a simpler procedure to construct mirror anamorphoses.⁴⁴

During the twentieth century, the deployment of anamorphic perspective was revived through aspects of Surrealist art production.⁴⁵ Baltrušaitis comments that modern art critics have linked anamorphosis with Surrealism, stating that, 'There is no doubt that anamorphosis contributed to the overturning of forms which opened up the way to every sort of deviation; but the resemblance is only superficial. The geometrical and fantastic dreams of our time have their roots in a spontaneous order or disorder. They often form a spiritual link with previous cycles'.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, during the twentieth century, the anamorph does recur in Surrealist art, particularly in the work of Salvador Dalí. The Surrealist project was closely related to the development of psychoanalytical theory and shared the same aim of excavating the subconscious. The movement's founder, André Breton (1896-1966) had studied medicine and served on a neurological ward in Nantes during the First World War. He then transferred to the psychiatric centre at Saint-Dizier where he came into daily contact with mentally ill soldiers evacuated from the front. Breton started to experiment with methods of Freudian analysis, particularly recording patients' stream-of-consciousness experiences for subsequent interpretation (he met Freud in Vienna in 1921, but never qualified as a

⁴² Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 131.

⁴³ Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 206.

⁴⁴ Kirsti Andersen, *The Geometry of an Art: The History of the Mathematical Theory of Perspective from Alberti to Monge*, New York: Springer, 2007, p. 415.

⁴⁵ Margaret Iversen and Stephen Melville identify three significant landmarks in the twentieth century theoretical discourse concerned with perspective; namely, Erwin Panofsky's 1927 paper, "Perspective as Symbolic Form"; Maurice Merleau-Ponty's critique of single-point perspective and Lacan's Seminars of the 1960s. In their analysis of perspective, art historians have often focused on the technique's geometric and scientific history. Panofsky, however, proposed that perspective should be considered as a historically contingent, symbolic form with each culture representing space in a manner peculiar to its mode of perception. He believed that the ancient world viewed space as 'aggregate', that is to say, a collection of discrete objects in space, but the Italian Renaissance saw the development of a 'systematic' ordering of space – a space that was perceived as continuous, infinite and homogenous. Panofsky made the claim that progress in spatial understanding paralleled the development of abstract thought. Panofsky's theory has had a far reaching influence on art historical discourse of the twentieth century, making a significant contribution to the exploration of the metaphorical and allegorical aspects of perspective, although his work did not directly address the issue of anamorphic perspective. See Margaret Iversen and Stephen Melville, *Writing Art History: Disciplinary Departures*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010, p. 109.

⁴⁶ Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, 1977, p. 130.

psychoanalyst).⁴⁷

Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism* was published in 1924. Seven years after its publication, Jacques Marie Émile Lacan qualified as a psychiatrist. Influenced by reading an article on paranoia by the little-known painter Salvador Dalí, who had been admitted into Breton's original Paris group in 1929, Lacan also started at this time to engage with the work of Freud. His doctoral thesis, *On Paranoid Psychosis in its Relations to the Personality* was acclaimed by Surrealist artists, but found less favour with the Parisian psychiatric establishment. Lacan also developed close ties with the Surrealist group, forming friendships with Breton and Dalí. Indeed, Margaret Iversen goes as far as to say that, 'Lacan learned so much from Dalí, Breton and Surrealism generally, psychoanalytic theory cannot simply be "applied" to art. Rather, Lacanian theory itself is thoroughly imbued with a surrealist aesthetic'.⁴⁸ Conversely, Dalí referred to Lacan's thesis in the first issue of the Surrealist review, *Minotaure*, in 1933, and Lacan made many contributions to this and other Surrealist publications.⁴⁹ Hanjo Berressem asserts that Dalí's images, 'provide a perfect "text" for a visual approach to Lacan's topology, an approach that balances Lacan's own emphasis on language and its metaphoricity, with an emphasis on the image itself'.⁵⁰ In his seminar, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan compares the anamorphic skull of Holbein's *Ambassadors* to, 'that loaf of bread composed of two books which Dalí was once pleased to place on the head of an old woman' (this is a mis-translation in Sheridan's English version, as Lacan was referring to a 'two-pound loaf' of bread that appears in Dalí's *Retrospective Bust*, 1933). The anamorphic distortion of the skull also evoked for Lacan, Dalí's effect of hard forms becoming soft, for example the soft watches in *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931. However, Steven Levine's comment should be noted that in, 'comparing Holbein's and Dalí's distended forms, Lacan averred that the latter were no less phallic than the former, although once again the Sheridan translation errs in stating the contrary'.⁵¹

In his analysis of Dalí's engraving, *Soft Skulls and Cranial Harps*, 1935, Haim Finkelstein claims that the skulls depicted are obviously of anamorphic origin.⁵² He comments that the most curious

⁴⁷ Clifford Browder, *André Breton: Arbiter of Surrealism*, Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1967, pps. 7-8.

⁴⁸ Margaret Iversen, *Beyond Pleasure: Freud, Lacan, Barthes*, Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007, p. 14.

⁴⁹ Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, London and New York, Routledge: 2005, p. 5.

⁵⁰ Hanjo Berressem, 'Dalí and Lacan: Painting the Imaginary Landscapes', in Willy Apollon and Richard Feldstein, *Lacan, Politics, Aesthetics*, Albany: State University of New York, 1996, p. 289.

⁵¹ Steven Z. Levine, *Lacan Reframed*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008, p. 79. Sheridan's translation reads, 'Dalí's soft watches, whose signification is obviously less phallic than that of the object depicted in a flying position in the foreground of this picture', Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York and London: Norton, 1998, p. 88.

⁵² Haim Finkelstein, 'Dalí's Small Stage of Paranoid Ceremonial', in Robert Harvard, ed., *Companion to Spanish*

element of the engraving is a man plucking the strings of a harp where the strings form a net of lines that meet at a vanishing point on the eye socket of a small skull. Finkelstein compares the image to Dürer's device for perspective drawings and claims that, 'Even the most meticulous perspective arrangement, Dalí seems to suggest, ends up in a vanishing point which is the empty eye socket of an anamorphic skull, whose implications far surpass the obvious phallicism of these distensions. *Soft Skulls and Cranial Harps* thus epitomizes the dichotomy in Dalí's paintings between the universal, disembodied vision and the bodied eroticisation of vision; in other words, on one hand, the largely deceptive adoption of Renaissance perspective, and, on the other, its subversion by means of the anamorphic vision of perspectival distortion'.⁵³ A critical interpretation again underlining the role of anamorphosis as a subversion that reiterates the fixity of the rules of perspective.

Psychoanalytical theory makes a crucial intervention in the history of anamorphic perspective, specifically the model of vision proposed by Lacan in his conception of the mirror stage and discussion of the gaze in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Jacques-Marie Émile Lacan was born on 13 April, 1901 in Paris, to a bourgeois Catholic family. Lacan's mother was a devout Catholic and he was educated at the Jesuit, Collège Stanislas (Lacan's younger brother entered a monastery in 1929). On completion of his baccalauréat, Lacan studied medicine at the Sorbonne, later specialising in psychiatry. During his clinical training, he worked with the celebrated psychiatrist, Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault, who exerted a profound influence on Lacan and his decision to become a psychoanalyst. In 1934, Lacan became a member of *La Société Psychoanalytique de Paris* (SPP), but psychoanalytical practice was almost entirely suppressed by the Nazi occupation of France. During the war, Lacan worked in a military hospital in occupied Paris. He spent five weeks in England studying the practice of psychiatry, and began delivering professional papers again the following year.

In his revision of psychoanalysis elaborated during the 1950s and 1960s, Lacan called for a 'return to Freud', re-reading his work in the light of Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics and Hegelian philosophy, and reaching the conclusion that the unconscious is structured like a language. In 1953, Lacan became President of the SPP; however following severe internal disagreements, often involving Lacan's role and techniques, three analysts broke away to form the *Société Française de Psychanalyse* (SFP). Lacan resigned from the SPP and joined the break-away group in

Surrealism, Woodbridge: Tamesis Books, 2004, p. 129.

⁵³ Finkelstein, *Companion to Spanish Surrealism*, 2004, pps. 129-130.

June of that year. He was informed by the International Psychoanalytical Association that his membership of that body had lapsed, as the SPP was the only analytic society in France that was officially recognised. On 8 July, Lacan addressed the SFP on, '*Le Symbolique, l'Imaginaire et le Réel*' and in September, in Rome, he delivered his '*Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse*' ('The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis'). In November of that year, Lacan started his public seminars, beginning with Freud's writing on techniques.

Lacan gave yearly public seminars in Paris from 1953 to 1981. In January 1964, he was appointed lecturer at the *École Pratique de Hautes Etudes*, commencing with his seminar on *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* at the *École Normale Supérieure*. Here he was addressing a larger, lay audience, rather than practising psychoanalysts. Indeed, most Lacanian theory has been garnered from Lacan's spoken teaching, as very little was written for publication.⁵⁴ Lacan's psychoanalytic description of vision has been highly influential, specifically his *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* that theorises the role of signification in shaping visual subjectivity, and "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the 'I'" which discusses the formative stages of visual experience. As Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson have indicated, 'many of the key concepts of psychoanalytical theory have a specific visual status (the imaginary, the gaze), or refer to visual experiences (castration anxiety, the mirror stage), to sign-making (condensation, displacement), or to concepts we tend to visualize (the breast, the phallus).'⁵⁵

In 1936, at the Fourteenth Congress of the International Psycho-Analytical Association held at Marienbad, Lacan presented a paper, '*Le stade du miroir*', later translated into English as 'The Mirror Stage'. However, Lacan was prevented from speaking beyond the ten-minute time allocated and the paper was not submitted for publication in the conference proceedings. The version published in *Écrits* dates from 1949, when Lacan presented '*Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du JE*' ('The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I') to the Sixteenth

⁵⁴ A number of commentators have discussed the particular challenges presented by Lacan's style of delivery via the seminar structure; for example Tim Dean advocates an approach whereby the reader is attentive to Lacan's conceptual mobility, 'It pays to bear in mind that for almost quarter of a century Lacan improvised seminars before a live audience; and so despite his baroque polemics and his ostensibly dogmatic manner, Lacan was never just presenting a theory or outlining a position. Even the most cursory inspection of his seminars reveals a highly mobile, dialogic mode of thinking in process – an intellectual style that we violently disrespect by making it into a theoretical edifice or system.', Tim Dean, *Beyond Sexuality*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press: 2000, p. 13. Lionel Bailly compares Lacan's technique to the philosophers of the classical world who expounded and developed their ideas in a discourse with their students, 'In even the most lucid speaker, transcriptions from speech are often problematic; the speech of a man who engaged his audience by many means other than pure logical exposition becomes quite obscure when written down.' Lionel Bailly, *Lacan: A Beginner's Guide*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, 'Semiotics and Art History', *The Art Bulletin*, Vol.73, No. 2, 1991, p. 195.

Congress of the IPA in Zürich, although Lacan continued to develop his theory of the mirror stage from Seminar I in the early 1950s, to Seminar XXII in 1975. Lacan's mirror stage develops the Freudian concept of narcissism. In common with Freud, Lacan asserted that the ego has no *a priori* status, but comes into being in the mirror stage. However, although the stage correlates with a phase of maturation, it is as much a structural concept as it is a literal experience.

Lacan asserts that his conception of the mirror stage is directly at odds with any philosophy that derives from the *cogito*, that is to say he rejects the Cartesian notion that a stable sense of identity exists before the acquisition of language.⁵⁶ He describes the mirror stage as a process of identification, namely the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image, 'The jubilant assumption of his specular image by the kind of being – still trapped in his motor impotence and nursling dependence – the little man is at the *infans* stage thus seems to me to manifest in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, prior to being objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as a subject'.⁵⁷ According to Lacan, the child's first assumption regarding his or her subjectivity derives from the child's first perception of their body in a mirror. Lacan calls this form the 'ideal-I', the origin of all secondary identifications that occur and asserts that, 'the important point is that this form situates the agency known as the ego, prior to its social determination, in a fictional direction that will forever remain irreducible for any single individual or, rather, that will only asymptotically approach the subject's becoming, no matter how successful the dialectical syntheses by which he must resolve, as *I*, his discordance with his own reality'.⁵⁸ Lacan proposes that the total form of the infant's body is given to him as a unitary figure or gestalt. In gestalt theory, the brain unifies shapes, curves and lines into recognisable images. Indeed, according to Lacan, the image is, 'more constitutive than constituted'.⁵⁹ The self is therefore the product of an identification with something fictional, with an image or an other. The act of recognition is not self-evident, as the infant has to see the image as being both itself (its own reflection) and not itself, as it is only a reflected image. According to Lacan, the child's entry into language is dependent on this recognition, and it is in the realm of the Symbolic where language is privileged, that the subject is formed. However, although the Symbolic order is central to Lacanian theory, it is one element in a tripartite structure that includes the Imaginary and the Real. Within the Imaginary, the subject believes in the transparency of the Symbolic and fails to recognise the lack of

⁵⁶ Lacan, *Écrits*, Bruce Fink, trans., New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006, p. 75.

⁵⁷ Lacan, *Écrits*, 2006, p. 76.

⁵⁸ Lacan, *Écrits*, 2006, p. 76.

⁵⁹ Lacan, *Écrits*, 2006, p. 76.

reality inherent in the Symbolic. The imaginary is where the subject 'mis-recognises' (*méconnaît*) the nature of the Symbolic.

The Other's gaze is often simultaneously present in the encounter, as the parent holds the child in front of the mirror (although Lacan also refers to the infant propped up by a *trotte-bébé*, or baby walker). The child identifies with the human form and recognises not its own unco-ordinated body, but the autonomous body of the adult parent figure which the child assumes is identical to and constitutive of his or her own image. As Shoshana Felman comments, 'The mirror thus epitomizes perception as a visual centering anchored in the misperception – in the denial – of one's own castration: the apparent fullness of the image in the mirror is an objectification of the gaze which, in substantifying the image as an object, elides it from the very insufficiency experienced by the subject. Facing his mirror image, the child perceives himself as king (all powerful, all seeing), in much the same way as the subjects, in "The Emperor's New Clothes" attribute sovereignty to the king so as to deny their own unfitness'.⁶⁰ Of course, the child is still totally dependent upon adults for all its needs and has limited control of its bodily movements. Malcolm Bowie has therefore described the mirror stage as a manifestation of autonomy and mastery in their earliest draft forms.⁶¹

Lacan insists that the ego is based on the illusion of wholeness and mastery, and its function is to maintain this illusion of coherence and unity, by refusing to accept the truth of fragmentation and alienation. Indeed, the very fiction of totality is predicated on this fragmentary body and on separation and loss. He describes the mirror stage as, 'a drama whose internal pressure pushes precipitously from insufficiency to anticipation – and for the subject caught up in the lure of spatial identification, turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body to what I will call an "orthopedic" form of its totality – and to the finally donned armor of an alienating identity that will mark his entire mental development with its rigid structure'.⁶² Bowie comments that multiple re-readings of Lacan's account of this process have elided the sense of derision that is present there, for Lacan comments that chimpanzees recognise the mirror as an epistemological void, but the child retains a perverse will to be deluded by its reflection, 'The mirror, seemingly so consoling and advantageous to the infant, is a trap and a decoy (*leurre*)'.⁶³

In his 'Remarks on Daniel Lagaches's Presentation', Lacan defined anamorphosis as the, 'existential

⁶⁰ Shoshana Felman, 'Lacan's Psychoanalysis, or the Figure in the Screen', *October*, Vol. 45, Summer, 1998, p. 103.

⁶¹ Malcolm Bowie, *Lacan*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 22.

⁶² Lacan, *Écrits*, 2006, p. 97

⁶³ Bowie, *Lacan*, 1991, p. 23.

divorce in which the body vanishes in spatiality...artifices that instate in the very prop of perspective a hidden image, reevoking the substance that was lost there'.⁶⁴ Lacan delivered a lecture on anamorphosis on 26 February, 1964, as part of the four lectures that comprise the seminar, 'Of the Gaze as *Objet Petit a*'. Lacan argues that subjectivity must necessarily be understood as the negation of self-certainty, and this negation is given a figural shape in anamorphosis. For Lacan, the instability inherent in the anamorph supports his critique of the Cartesian *cogito* and its impossible figuration exemplified in the phrase, "I see myself seeing myself".⁶⁵

Lacan asserts that the gaze functions as the *objet petit a*, the unattainable object of desire in unconscious fantasy. The concept of the *objet petit a* is central to Lacan's theory of desire and is implicated in the three orders of the Imaginary, Symbolic and Real. In common with many Lacanian concepts, it evolved from his earliest work to the final seminars of the 1970s. The 'a' stands for '*autre*' (other) and developed out of the Freudian 'object' and Lacan's concept of otherness. Lacan insisted that the *objet petit a* should remain untranslated so that it would acquire the status of an algebraic sign. The *objet petit a* is not an object that is lost because then we would be able to find it and satisfy our desire. As Sean Homer comments, 'It is rather the constant sense we have, as subjects, that something is lacking or missing from our lives. We are always searching for fulfilment, for knowledge, for possessions, for love, and whenever we achieve these goals there is always something more we desire; we cannot quite pinpoint it but we know that it is there'.⁶⁶ Slavoj Žižek describes the *objet petit a* as an entity with no substantial consistency that acquires a definite shape only when it is looked at from a viewpoint slanted by the subject's fears and desires. Similarly, Bowie asserts that, 'It is anything and everything that desire touches, and cannot exist where desire is not'.⁶⁷ I would concur with Yannis Stavrakakis' argument that the concept of the *objet petit a* gradually takes on the place of the symbolic phallus with the object-cause of desire becoming the signifier of desire. Indeed, Stavrakakis argues that it be possible to consider the two terms as being identical.⁶⁸

Lacan argues that an intimate relationship exists between the *objet petit a* that co-ordinates our desire and the gaze that threatens to undo desire through the eruption of the Real. Furthermore, he introduces a split between the seeing eye and the unseeable gaze, which always sees the human

⁶⁴ Lacan, *Écrits*, 2006, p. 570.

⁶⁵ Lyle Massey, 'Anamorphosis through Descartes or Perspective Gone Awry', *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 4, p. 1187, n. 61.

⁶⁶ Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 87.

⁶⁷ Bowie, *Lacan*, 1991, p. 166.

⁶⁸ Yannis Stavrakakis, *Lacan and the Political*, Abingdon: Routledge, 1999, p. 50.

'seeing' eye. Lacan refers to Merleau-Ponty's unfinished posthumous work, *The Visible and the Invisible* to insist on this schism between eye and gaze, and between the scopic field and the drive manifested at the level of the scopic field.⁶⁹ However, Lacan's model of vision does diverge from Merleau-Ponty, a difference cogently summarised by Grootenboer who states that, "both Lacan and Merleau-Ponty and Lacan use painting as a model to map out the visible in an attempt to articulate what escapes it. Whereas Merleau-Ponty defines the visual field as a chiasm between the look of the perceiver and that which is visible, Lacan conceives of the visual field governed by the gaze, where the intertwining of eye and gaze appears as a lure, an appealing misrecognition of sight. He thus defines the field of vision as a continuing process of deception".⁷⁰ Lacan's anamorphic gaze differs from *le regard* of both Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. Lacan cites the latter's *L'Être et le Néant* ('Being and Nothingness'), published in 1943, where the reifying power of the gaze is explored, asserting that,

The gaze, as conceived by Sartre, is the gaze by which I am surprised – surprised in so far as it changes all the perspectives, the lines of force, of my world, orders it, from the point of nothingness where I am, in a sort of radiated reticulation of the organisms. As the locus of the relation between me, the annihilating subject, and that which surrounds me, the gaze seems to possess such a privilege that it goes so far as to have me scotomised, I who look, the eye of him who sees me as object. In so far as I am under the gaze, Sartre writes, I no longer see the eye that looks at me and, if I see the eye, the gaze disappears.⁷¹

This passage from Lacan's lecture on Anamorphosis refers to Sartre's scenario of the watcher in the park, where he enters a public park and realises that he is alone. He is thus able to regard everything from his vantage as the unchallenged centre of the visual field.⁷² However, another man enters the

⁶⁹ The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) was a prominent figure in the field of phenomenological analysis. He described the spatial organisation of Cézanne's paintings as a 'lived perspective', closer to natural perception than the strictures of geometric perspective that have been imposed on our relation to the visual. Iversen and Melville comment that Cézanne's efforts to faithfully represent the object as it is given in perception created warped distortions, drawing attention to the active process of perception denied by the systematic distortions of geometric perspective, 'Merleau-Ponty's complaint, then, is not that perspective involves "distortion" but rather that a structure has imposed itself on vision so persuasively that it has become natural. Its "naturalness" deepens what is already a tendency inherent in vision, as opposed to touch, to incline us to think of our relation to objects as separate, outside, discontinuous. In addition, perspective installs the mathematical, measurable or calculable in the heart of the work of art, which should be the prolongation of a gaze that explores the world without these supports. To construct a painting according to the rules of perspective is to determine a priori the look of the visible, therefore obviating the need to really see or to interact bodily with the world.', Iversen and Melville, *Writing Art History*, 2010, pps. 113-114. Lacan repeatedly addressed Merleau-Ponty's thinking in his seminars and acknowledged the validity of his investigations in the phenomenological domain. Lacan's view was that Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the signifying function was limited, specifically in relation to the constitution of the subject; however, Lacan's seminars nevertheless build on some of Merleau-Ponty's central concepts.

⁷⁰ Grootenboer, *The Rhetoric of Perspective*, 2005, p. 51.

⁷¹ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York and London: Norton, 1998, p. 84.

⁷² 'I am in a public park. Not far away there is a lawn and along the edge of that lawn there are benches. A man passes by those benches. I see this man. I apprehend him as an object and at the same time as a man', Jean-Paul Sartre,

park and Sartre's 'reign of plenitude and luminous peace is brought abruptly to an end...The watcher is in turn watched; observed of all observers, the viewer becomes spectacle to another's sight'.⁷³

Norman Bryson describes the shift that occurs as all the lines of perspective that had originally converged at the centre point of the watcher run away to meet the intruder, who is also standing at his own centre of everything he surveys, 'the watcher self is now a tangent, not a center, a vanishing point, not a viewing point, an opacity on the other's distant horizon. Everything reconverges on this intrusive centre where the watcher self is *not*: the intruder becomes a kind of drain, which sucks in all of the former plenitude, a black hole pulling the scene away from the watcher self into an engulfing void'.⁷⁴ Bryson compares Sartre's scenario to Raphael's painting *Lo Sposalizio*, 1504 ('The Marriage of the Virgin'), for although the architectural spaces appear to turn towards the viewer, standing centrally surveying the scene, the architecture of the piazza also turns towards a place where the viewer cannot exist, a term that Bryson describes as a negative counterpart to the central viewing position. He comments that the orthogonal lines across windows, doors and pavements converge at a vanishing point where the viewer is not, 'The lines of the piazza race away towards this drain or black hole of otherness placed at the horizon, in a decentering that destroys the subject's unitary self-possession. The viewpoint and the vanishing point are inseparable: there is no viewpoint without vanishing point and no vanishing point without viewing point. The self-possession of the viewing subject has built into it, therefore, the principle of its own abolition: annihilation of the subject as center is a condition of the very moment of the look'.⁷⁵

However, as Bryson points out, in Sartre's conception of the gaze the agent of reversal in the visual field is another being, whereas Lacan dispenses with the personalised other in his lecture, 'The Line and Light' where he recalls being in a boat with Brittany fishermen when he was younger. In this scenario, Petit-Jean points out a sardine can floating on the surface of the waves and glittering in the sun, and says to Lacan, "You see that can? Do you see it? Well, it doesn't see you!" Petit-Jean finds the rather lame joke highly amusing, Lacan much less so, because the joke is at his expense and emphasises that as a young intellectual, he does not fit into the physical and dangerous world inhabited by the fishermen. Lacan asserts that, 'in a sense, it was looking at me, all the same. It was looking at me from the level of light, the point at which everything that looks at me is situated – and I am not speaking metaphorically'.⁷⁶ In contrast with Sartre's scenario, Lacan's account depends on

Being and Nothingness, Abingdon: Routledge, 2000, p. 254.

⁷³ Norman Bryson, 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field', in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster, New York: The New Press, 1988, pps. 88-89.

⁷⁴ Bryson, 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field', 1988, p. 89.

⁷⁵ Bryson, 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field', 1988, pps. 89-90.

⁷⁶ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 1998, p. 95.

the irruption in the visual field of the Signifier, rather than another viewer.⁷⁷ From this viewpoint, the world of visible objects is not spread passively before the mastering eye, rather the eye becomes the recipient of a vision that actively shows itself.⁷⁸ Contrasting this condition of visibility with the Renaissance system of linear perspective that he terms 'geometral', Lacan claims that we encounter the visual, 'not in the straight line, but in the point of light – the point of irradiation, the play of light, fire, the source from which reflections pour forth'.⁷⁹ In this system of visibility, the subject intercepts the light as a 'screen', as Lacan asserts, 'if I am anything in the picture, it is a, ways in the form of the screen, which I earlier called the stain, the spot'.⁸⁰ The 'blind spot' or *tache* that reoccurs in his model of vision is an important psychoanalytical concept for Lacan; whether stains, punctiforms, sutures, splits, or 'points of irradiation', the spots are signs of the 'essential vacillation of the gaze' and as such are manifestations of castrated vision.⁸¹ As Emily Apter asserts, 'The scotomized Lacanian subject is caught in a contentious struggle for mastery between the eye and the gaze'.⁸² The blind spot is created by a cultural conditioning that has taught us what to select out of the field of vision and how to achieve a selective blindness. As Peter Schwenger states, 'It is impossible to see "the thing itself" in its ineluctable being, so what we see is largely determined by our pre-determined classification of the thing, our ideas about it, the words by which we control it'.⁸³ In this process, the point of light is simultaneously visible and invisible. Lacan describes, 'a play of light and opacity' between the point of light and the point of gaze, implicated in the 'ambiguity of the jewel'.⁸⁴

Norman Bryson in his paper, 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field' argues that the line of thinking that

⁷⁷ Bryson, 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field', 1988, p. 91.

⁷⁸ Peter Schwenger, *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects*, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2006, p. 37.

⁷⁹ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 1998, p. 94.

⁸⁰ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 1998, p. 97.

⁸¹ Scotomization, or the formation of mental 'blind spots' (from the Greek *Skotos* for darkness) was a defensive process described by the French psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, René Laforgue, in a letter to Freud in 1925. It comprises the refusal to accept a known fact by means of a compromise between two incompatible tendencies – a mode of psychic unawareness distinct from repression, as defined by Freud. This was rejected by Freud, who argued the point with Laforgue in a series of private and public exchanges, and consequently the term was dropped from the orthodox psychoanalytic vocabulary. Lacan, however, revived its usage and the *scotoma* metaphorically marks the vanishing point where the eye catches itself off-guard in the act of seeing itself see itself. See Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994, pps. 353-354. Jeremy Biles compares this motif of the 'blind spot' in the mind's eye to the ink spot and the extended ellipse that appears in Georges Bataille's writing, Jeremy Biles, *Ecce Monstrum: Georges Bataille and the Sacrifice of Form*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2007, p. 216, n. 33.

⁸² Emily Apter, 'The Garden of Scopis Perversion from Monet to Mirbeau', *October*, Vol. 47, Winter, 1998, p. 93

⁸³ Schwenger, *The Tears of Things*, 2006, p. 38. On the subject of cultural conditioning, see also Bryson, 'For human beings collectively to orchestrate their visual experience together it is required that each submit his or her retinal experience to the socially agreed description(s) of an intelligible world. Vision is socialized, and thereafter deviation from this social construction of visual reality can be measured and named, variously, as hallucination, misrecognition, or "visual disturbance", Bryson, 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field', 1988, p. 91.

⁸⁴ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 1998, p. 96.

passes from Sartre to Lacan is restricted to a conceptual enclosure where vision is still theorised from the standpoint of a subject positioned at the centre of the world, even though their efforts are directed towards a radical decentering of the subject. A consequence of this centering of the subject's viewpoint means that, according to Bryson, 'vision is portrayed as menaced at that vestigial center, threatened from without, and in some sense *persecuted* in the visual domain, by the *regard* or Gaze'. Bryson asks, 'Why should I or anyone spend time wrangling over Lacan's concept of the Gaze? My own answer must be that, although I have reservations about a certain paranoid coloration within it, nevertheless Lacan's account of visuality seems to me historically extremely important. It marks a fundamental shift away from the ground on which vision has been previously thought'.⁸⁵ Bryson describes how the nineteenth century saw the rise of a conception of vision where truth lay in the retina and in the physiology of the eye and neurology of the optical apparatus. This mode of thinking lies behind formalist approaches in art history, from which emerges the notion of art as, 'a matter of perceptual purity: timeless, sequestered from the social domain, universal'.⁸⁶ However, postmodernism has enabled us to move beyond this conception in its insistence that both the visual field and the viewer are socially constructed.

Anamorphic perspective is used as an exemplary structure in the elaboration of Lacan's theory of the gaze, wherein Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors* is used to demonstrate the simultaneous process of possession and dispossession in the field of vision. Bowie claims that in the painting we witness the representation of the alpha of human experience already overprinted with the omega of death.⁸⁷ In Lacanian theory, anamorphosis is indicative of a symbolic castration in the visual field, as it causes the imaginary perfection of geometric perspective to break down (Lacan understands castration as a structured process by which imaginary identifications give way to the law of the symbolic function). Consequently, we are forced to abandon our imagined and reassuring sense of visual mastery and confront our lack (in the form of death in Holbein's famous painting). In *The Ambassadors*, two image systems are superimposed on each other without being legible simultaneously. When the viewer stands centrally in front of the painting, the 'eye' sees the image and the anamorph as an incoherent stain. While walking away from the painting, in the last 'gaze' that the eye casts back, the anamorph reforms and the image recedes to a stain. Subsequently, Holbein's painting flattens two points of view onto one image-plane with the intention of making them exclude each other. The anamorphosis of the skull is an emblem for the constitution of subjectivity itself, symbolising the function of splitting by the encoding of two points of view in one

⁸⁵ Bryson, 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field', 1988, p. 106.

⁸⁶ Bryson, 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field', 1988, p. 107.

⁸⁷ Bowie, *Lacan*, 1991, p. 165.

painting – the traditional, geometral point based on Renaissance perspective and the anamorphic point of view glimpsed obliquely as the viewer moves away from the image. Indeed, Lacan proposes that the traditional viewing position where we see the two ambassadors is based on *vanitas* and mis-recognition. The central perspective is effectively 'annihilated' as the stain denotes the 'blind spot' of geometrical space. Lacan states that, 'Holbein makes visible for us here something that is simply the subject as annihilated - annihilated in the form that is, strictly speaking, the imaged embodiment of the *minus-phi* of castration, which for us, centres the whole organization of the desires through the framework of the fundamental drives'.⁸⁸ Lacan further elaborates on this process when he identifies the significance of the anamorph,

For the secret of this picture, whose implications I have pointed out to you, the kinships with the *vanitas*, the way this fascinating picture presents, between the two splendidly dressed and immobile figures, everything that recalls, in the perspective of the period, the vanity of the arts and sciences – the secret of this picture is given at the moment when, moving slightly away, little by little, to the left, then turning around, we see what the magical floating object signifies. It reflects our own nothingness, in the figure of the death's head. It is a use, therefore, of the geometral dimension of vision in order to capture the subject, an obvious relation with desire which, nevertheless, remains enigmatic.⁸⁹

Death and the subject are related to each other like the painting and the stain, or like the central perspective and the anamorphosis. As Hanjo Berressem comments, "Where the one is, the other is not, yet one cannot think the one without the other. The mutual exclusion of the image and the anamorphosis thus has to be seen as an artistic strategy that mirrors and repeats the "subject" of the painting. The painting, and Lacan with it, thus play out the central perspective (the visual grammar) against its distortions."⁹⁰ Lacan explains how anamorphosis deforms a perspectivism that coincides with the construction of the Cartesian subject as a central geometral point, 'It is not for nothing that it was at the very period when the Cartesian meditation inaugurated in all its purity the function of the subject that the dimension of optics that I shall distinguish here by calling 'geometral' or 'flat' (as opposed to perspective) optics was developed'.⁹¹ For Lacan, anamorphosis disrupts the field of vision elaborated by Descartes, as organised uniformly and geometrically from the viewpoint of the neutral observer. In Descartes' model the subject and object must be radically separate, whereas in Lacanian theory, the subject is implicated in the object of its vision by the 'gaze'.⁹² In *The Ambassadors*, the phallic gaze of the dominant Cartesian scopic regime is challenged by another –

⁸⁸ Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI*, 1998, pps. 88-89.

⁸⁹ Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI*, 1998, p.92.

⁹⁰ Hanjo Berressem, 'Dalí and Lacan: Painting the Imaginary Landscapes' in Willy Apollon and Richard Feldstein, eds., *Lacan, Politics, Aesthetics*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1995, p. 271.

⁹¹ Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI*, 1998, p. 85.

⁹² Joanne Faulkner, *Dead Letters to Nietzsche, or the Necromantic Art of Reading Philosophy*, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010, p. 49.

the anamorphic gaze when the viewer stands at the threshold and casts a final, lateral glance back. Indeed it is only through this oblique, Surrealist glance that dramatises the vanity of our perceptions that the viewer is able to see what is elided by the orthodox, perspective- based model of vision and representation.⁹³

Lacan compares the stretched skull to an erect penis. However the comparison is not fundamentally based on the anamorph's general resemblance to the shape or physical properties of the phallic organ. What is actually “phallic” about the skull is its symbolic status as a signifier of absence, 'How is it that nobody has ever thought of connecting this with...the effect of an erection? Imagine a tattoo traced on the sexual organ *ad hoc* in the state of repose and assuming its, if I may say so, developed form in another state. How can we not see here, immanent in the geometral dimension – a partial dimension in the field of the gaze, a dimension that has nothing to do with vision as such – something symbolic of the function of the lack, of the appearance of the phallic ghost?'⁹⁴ Elizabeth Kraver describes Lacan's reading of the anamorph as a phallic ghost as one of the most daringly idiosyncratic passages of the Seminar.⁹⁵ Malcolm Bowie makes the comment that impersonal laws of mathematics have created an emblem of male potency from a symbol of death, bestowing upon the phallic structure of cancelled manhood a grotesque new physical form.⁹⁶ In Lacan's model of vision, the 'phallic' is precisely the detail that does not fit or sticks out from the surface scene, denaturing it and rendering it uncanny. Lacan defines the phallic signifier as a 'signifier without signified', which renders possible the effects of the signified. In his analysis of the films of Alfred Hitchcock, Slavoj Žižek describes the Lacanian designation of the phallic element of a picture as the meaningless stain that renders all the constituent parts of that image suspicious, opening up the abyss of the search for meaning,

The ground of the established, familiar signification opens up; we find ourselves in a realm of total ambiguity, but this very lack propels us to produce ever new “hidden meanings”: it is a driving force of endless compulsion. The oscillation between lack and surplus meaning constitutes the proper dimension of subjectivity. In other words, it is by means of the “phallic” spot that the observed picture is subjectivized: the paradoxical point undermines our position as “neutral”, “objective” observer, pinning us to the observed object itself. This is the point at which the observer is already included, inscribed in the observed scene – in a

⁹³ Margaret Iversen, 'Orthodox and Anamorphic Perspectives', *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 18, Issue 2, 1995, p. 83. Iversen describes Lacan's reading of *The Ambassadors* as, 'a pictorial demonstration of his view that only when the position of illusory mastery is vacated, does the stubborn reality of the inevitability of our own death come into full view'.

⁹⁴ Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI*, 1998, p. 88.

⁹⁵ Elizabeth Klaver, *Sites of Autopsy in Contemporary Culture*, Albany, State University of New York Press: 2005, p. 95.

⁹⁶ Bowie, *Lacan*, 1991, p. 173.

way, it is the point from which the picture itself looks back at us.⁹⁷

This process draws attention to the subject precisely positioned in a specific and limited place in history and culture, whilst the subject is simultaneously dislocated and standing outside of their imagined sense of mastery and wholeness.

Lacan's theory of visuality underpins the artist Daniel Collins' designation of the viewer of anamorphic images as the 'eccentric observer', defined as, 'simply an alternative to the usual model of a viewer occupying a central position with regard to the material world. An eccentric observer is exactly the observer of the anamorphosis, an observer who literally stands apart and is self-aware of the process of seeing'.⁹⁸ In his 1992 assessment of anamorphosis, Collins considers the 'eccentric observer' as a viewing subject who acknowledges the oblique and contingent nature of their point of view, whilst realising that a full appreciation of aesthetic objects stems from their active role in relation to the object. Consequently, the viewer is no longer a passive consumer, but is implicated in the dynamics of the art work and in the active construction of meaning. The shift from the notion that meaning is a product of the artist to meaning as function of the viewer is related to Roland Barthes' designation of the art object as text. Indeed, the revision of author-viewer-object relationships pervaded the aesthetic discourse of the 1960s. Barthes' highly influential essay, 'The Death of the Author' was published in 1967, and Collins refers to his claim that a text's unity lies not in its origin, but its destination. Collins asserts that, 'In the act of observing works of art...it would seem essential to acknowledge that the observer not only creates the object by virtue of her directed gaze, but creates the self by engaging what, for the observer, are significant objects'.⁹⁹ Collins qualifies Barthes' claim by citing two examples of visual experience. First, the act of looking in a mirror, where the reflection of the observer deflects attention away from the objecthood of the mirror itself. Secondly, the confusing complexity of a Baroque altar that places the viewer in a position of subservience. Collins proposes that, 'While it is indeed attractive to embrace a hypothesis that states unequivocally that a "text's unity lies not in its origin, but its destination"...it is also important to recognise the inertia still extant in certain dynamics between an observer and the objects of her gaze. A deep investment in a particular way of seeing – resulting in the single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the author-God) discussed by Barthes – will not go away

⁹⁷ Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*, MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 1992, p. 91.

⁹⁸ Daniel L. Collins, 'Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: Inverted Perspective and Construction of the Gaze', *Leonardo*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1992, 73-82.

⁹⁹ Collins, 'Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: Inverted Perspective and Construction of the Gaze', 1992, p. 76.

because we declare it obsolete'.¹⁰⁰ However, Collins makes the claim that Minimalist sculptors successfully shifted attention away from the object towards the relationship between the observer and the object by suppressing referential and informational aspects of the art work. Collins describes the viewpoint required to observe anamorphic projections as, 'special, fleeting and perhaps difficult to attain. This is not the stuff of mass media. Nor, given the inherent awkwardness of viewer position, does anamorphosis lend itself readily to casual contemplation, let alone meditation. It is not the kind of image one can dwell upon; rather it is like something seen out of the corner of the eye, glimpsed at high speed or seen through a keyhole. As a result, any content or image buried in the anamorphosis seems (to borrow a word from Freud) 'uncanny' perhaps even illicit'.¹⁰¹ Collins refers to anamorphosis as a 'secret discourse', where difficult or illicit subject matter may be concealed, asserting that this places anamorphosis in a category of experience that is at once magical and taboo.

Collins defines the 'eccentric observer' as the viewer willing to seek a glimpse of Freud's concept of the uncanny, or *das Unheimliche* (literally 'the un-home-like') through their engagement with the anamorphic image. Nicholas Royle describes the uncanny as, 'a flickering moment of embroilment in the experience of something at once strange and familiar. Uncanniness entails a sense of uncertainty and suspense, however momentary and unstable. As such it is often to be associated with an experience of the threshold, liminality, margins, borders, frontiers'.¹⁰² Freud traced the feeling of the uncanny back to a period before the self has entered the symbolic realm, when the ego has not marked itself off as being separate from the external world. Whereas Freud defined the phenomenon of the uncanny as a 'return of the repressed' that is out of sight as long as it does not return, Julia Kristeva terms this state 'maternal abjection', a process that perpetually haunts the periphery of consciousness.¹⁰³ Reminiscent of Nicéron's murals intended to be seen in passing over the threshold, the anamorphic condition is characterised by the experience of the uncanny that Krauss describes as a, 'metaphysical shudder'.¹⁰⁴ The uncanny can also be defined as a sensation produced by time and remembrance, the flood of repressed memories that fill the subject with dread as she encounters some seemingly unrelated object or person'.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Collins, 'Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: Inverted Perspective and Construction of the Gaze', 1992, p. 77.

¹⁰¹ Collins, 'Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: Inverted Perspective and Construction of the Gaze', 1992, p. 77.

¹⁰² Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, p. vii.

¹⁰³ Noëlle McAfee, *Julia Kristeva*, New York and London: Routledge, 2004.

¹⁰⁴ Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT Press, 1994, p. 178.

¹⁰⁵ Jane Blocker, *Where is Ana Mendieta? Identity, Performativity, and Exile*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999, p. 71.

Freud's essay on 'The Uncanny' of 1919 has been described as an exploration of the aesthetics of anxiety, and has become a key reference point in discussions of visual studies.¹⁰⁶ Hugh Haughton describes this seminal text as one of Freud's strangest essays, 'about a particularly intense experience of strangeness'.¹⁰⁷ It takes as its point of departure Ernst Jentsch's paper, '*Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen*', published in 1908, and is followed by Freud's reading of E.T.A. Hoffman's Gothic story, 'The Sand Man' which appeared in his *Nackstücke* of 1816-17. Citing Jentsch, Freud lists a range of instances that can arouse a sense of the uncanny. First, he refers to the doubt concerning whether an apparently animate object is alive, and conversely whether an inanimate object may actually be alive, for example, waxwork figures, realistic dolls and automata. Secondly, Freud refers to the effects produced by epileptic fits and manifestations of insanity because to the onlooker they may appear as automatic, mechanical processes hidden behind the familiar image of a person. Freud states that he is not entirely convinced by Jentsch's arguments, but takes them as the starting point for his own investigation.¹⁰⁸ Freud considers that the most potent example of the uncanny in 'The Sand Man' is not, as Jentsch contends, the uncertainty regarding whether the doll Olympia is alive, but the fear of losing one's eyes that Freud relates to the castration complex.¹⁰⁹ Freud also cites the anxiety provoked by the 'double' or *Doppelgänger* as an aspect of the uncanny. Citing the study of the double by Otto Rank, Freud describes how ancient societies regarded the double as an insurance against the extinction of the self, but that the double's meaning has evolved so that it is viewed as the uncanny harbinger of death, rather than an assurance of immortality.¹¹⁰ Freud refers to fear of, 'the evil eye' which he describes as one of the uncanniest and most widespread superstitions, and the repetition of chance events, cut off limbs and being buried alive. As Mladen Dolar asserts, the uncanny is the pivotal point around which psychoanalytic concepts revolve, with all the instances described by Freud sharing the common denominator of the irruption of the real into 'homely', commonly accepted reality.¹¹¹ Furthermore, the real can never be dealt with directly, 'it emerges only in an oblique perspective and...the attempt to grasp it directly

¹⁰⁶ Hugh Haughton, 'Introduction', in Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock, London: Penguin Books, 2003, p. xli.

¹⁰⁷ Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. xlii.

¹⁰⁸ Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. 135.

¹⁰⁹ Motifs of blinding and blindness recur in Freudian theory as symbolic of the threat and fear of castration, centred on the figure of the blind man at the centre of the Oedipal structure.

¹¹⁰ Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. 142.

¹¹¹ Mladen Dolar, "I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night": Lacan and the Uncanny', *October*, Vol. 58, Autumn 1991, p. 6. Dolar also makes the important point that although Freud describes the uncanny as a universal human experience, the examples that he outlines are all historically situated, 'Hoffmann, the sudden emergence of the doubles in the romantic era, the extraordinary obsession with ghosts, vampires, undead dead, monsters etc., in Gothic fiction and all through the nineteenth century, the realm of the fantastic – they all point to the emergence of the uncanny at a very precise historical moment', p. 16.

makes it vanish'.¹¹²

Freud provides a detailed study of the lexical range of the German terms *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, however the semantic structure that exists between these two words cannot be exactly reproduced by the English approximation of uncanniness (Freud also uses the word 'eerie' whilst noting the etymological correspondence of *unheimlich* to 'unhomely'). Dolar comments that the English translation of *unheimlich* largely retains the ambiguity of the German term, however this is not the case in the standard French translation of "*inquiétante étrangeté*, so Lacan devised the term, *extimité* (a condensation of the two terms 'intimate exteriority')¹¹³ Dolar asserts that this term aims directly at the essential dimension of psychoanalysis because it un-does the binaries that have formed the basis of traditional thought such as interior/exterior, mind/body, essence/appearance, subject/object and spirit/matter; 'the dimension of *extimité* blurs this line. It points neither to the interior nor to the exterior, but is located there where the most intimate interiority coincides with the exterior and becomes threatening, provoking horror and anxiety. The extimate is simultaneously the intimate kernel and the foreign body; in a word it is *unheimlich*'.¹¹⁴ Lacan, in his 1963 seminar, *L'angoisse* ('Anxiety'), invokes the uncanny as one of many things that can appear at the site of anxiety. The difference between the Freudian uncanny and the Lacanian uncanny is that Freud describes the conditions for the individual experience of the uncanny, whereas Lacan offers a structural account of how certain 'objects' are produced as being uncanny.¹¹⁵

Collins states that the notion of a 'secret discourse' associated with the illicit and voyeurism is exemplified by Marcel Duchamp's posthumous work, *Étant donnés: 1. La chute d'eau, 2. Le gaz d'éclairage* (Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas), 1946-1966, where the viewer must peer through holes in a wooden door in order to partially see, 'an eroticized, mildly anamorphic and androgynous nude'.¹¹⁶ Krauss has underlined Duchamp's stipulation that the viewer must adopt the prying role of voyeur in order to engage with the work, 'throughout those pages of instructions for how to set up and light the little diorama... he consistently refers to the beholder who will be positioned at the viewing point of the spectacle-the peepholes drilled into the assemblage's rustic door-by a very explicit term. Voyeur, he says. Not viewer. Voyeur.'¹¹⁷ It is this unexpected view of something private from an unwittingly privileged point of view that Collins argues places

¹¹² Dolar, "I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night": Lacan and the Uncanny', 1991, p. 21.

¹¹³ Dolar, "I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night": Lacan and the Uncanny', 1991, p. 6.

¹¹⁴ Dolar, "I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night": Lacan and the Uncanny', 1991, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ Jon Stratton, *Coming Out Jewish*, London and New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 65.

¹¹⁶ Collins, 'Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: Inverted Perspective and Construction of the Gaze', p. 77.

¹¹⁷ Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1994, p. 111.

anamorphosis in a category of experience that is both magical and taboo.¹¹⁸

In his overview of the use of anamorphosis in art practice since 1960, Collins makes the distinction between artists who explicitly incorporate anamorphic perspective in their art works and those whose work is described by others as having anamorphic characteristics (within this thesis I concentrate on contemporary art works that fall within the latter category). Collins also discusses the appeal of anamorphosis and why it continues to be a viable strategy for artists,

For many contemporary artists, myself included, the largely discredited nature of anamorphosis is enough to pique our curiosities. Combine this rather perverse attraction with the recent resurgence of interest in problems of vision – and with the implicit goal of dissecting the subtle ideological processes at work in the construction of the gaze – and I think sufficient explanation of why certain artists are attracted to its effects have been made.¹¹⁹

The reason why Collins describes anamorphosis as 'discredited' appears to be related to his assertion that the device's use in 'serious art' had declined since the early nineteenth century, being more likely to be found, 'illustrating cheap publications than gracing the halls of kings. Its charms were seen to be of a class with other perceptual oddities such as kaleidoscopes and magic lantern 'phantasmagoria' popular in the late 1700s and early 1800s'.¹²⁰ However, he could also be referring to the fact that anamorphosis had become a relatively neglected visual strategy until Baltrušaitis' study revived interest in it. Collins lists contemporary artists who have used anamorphic effects in their work, including Jan Dibbets, Marcus Raetz, Jan Beutener, Patrick Ireland, Jonathan Borofsky, Justen Ladda, John Pfahl, Michael Heizer, Buky Schwartz and Collins' own work.¹²¹

Collins briefly discusses the work of the Dutch conceptual artist Jan Dibbets (born 1941) who explored anamorphic effects through his 'perspective corrections', a series of about forty black and white photographs taken between 1967 and 1969. The earlier works were made on grass, using white rope to 'correct' the spatial distortions caused by a limited perspective on space. Later 'perspective corrections' were made on the walls of Dibbets' studio. Dibbets' *My Studio I*, 1969

¹¹⁸ Collins, 'Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: Inverted Perspective and Construction of the Gaze', p. 77.

¹¹⁹ Daniel L. Collins, 'Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: History, Technique and Current Practice', *Leonardo*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1992, 179.

¹²⁰ Collins, 'Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: History, Technique and Current Practice', 1992, p. 179.

¹²¹ Collins describes it as a partial, descriptive list, stating that, 'In certain cases, the use of the term anamorphic, as far as I know, has not been used to describe their work. In others, the references to the history of anamorphic art in their work are explicit and frequent', Collins, 'Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: History, Technique and Current Practice', 1992, p. 180. Collins has worked on a project at Arizona State University developing a computer technique for mapping three-dimensional anamorphic images that can then be 'unwrapped' to aid the construction of complex anamorphic sculptures; a technological development reminiscent of the history of anamorphosis as an object of scientific and mathematical curiosity.

shows a corner in an empty room, with a pipeline running along the skirting board that guides our eye into the depth of the interior. However, on the wall it appears that a square has been drawn, divided by two diagonals into four triangles, that disrupts the coherence of our view. Grootenboer describes the visual conundrum that confronts the viewer,

Our eyes are confused because we see the geometrical figure as if standing directly in front of it, while we throw an oblique glance – between its lines – at its ground, the wall behind it. What we see is not simply a drawing of a square, but an anamorphic figure; that is, it appears as a square only at the point from which the photograph was taken and from which we view it. Naturally, we cannot observe it from any other location than the one presented to us. Though we may hold the picture itself at different angles, we can never change our angle to the wall in the picture. We can only imagine how the figure would look when actually seen from the front. It would reveal itself as a trapezoid, the two horizontals diverging slightly to the left side.¹²²

Grootenboer describes Dibbets' 'perspective correction' as an anamorphosis in reverse, as the element of surprise associated with an image emerging from its distortion is absent, rather it is the distortion itself that the viewer is required to discern. Consequently, in Dibbets' work, anamorphosis is reduced to its pure structure. We are reminded by Dibbets' square that although anamorphosis appears to represent a radical break from the conventions of perspective, it is created strictly according to perspectival rules. Indeed, Grootenboer makes the comment that, 'anamorphic art uses perspective's own weapons against it in order to pursue its opposite: rather than showing images, it hides them'.¹²³ Grootenboer refers to the playful nature of Dibbets' series of works, but claims they are nevertheless a serious statement regarding the dominance of linear perspective within our visual field. She points out that the only way to escape the impasse created by the perspectival paradox inherent in Dibbets' *My Studio I* is to realise that looking straight at the photograph and looking awry at the square may occur simultaneously in a moment of perception, if one accepts the resulting confusion and ambiguity as part of our visual field. Grootenboer argues that the alienating effect of the image serves to underline how well our eyes are adjusted to the hegemony of linear perspective. Through observing Dibbets' work we come to the realisation that our vision is not as reliable as we assume and that orthodox perspective is not self-evident. Grootenboer calls it an invitation to view linear perspective from the point of view that anamorphosis proposes, 'Anamorphic images teach us that it is possible to look at the margins of our own visual field, insofar as we are willing to marginalize our point of view'.¹²⁴

¹²² Grootenboer, *The Rhetoric of Perspective Realism*, 2005, pps. 97-98.

¹²³ Grootenboer, *The Rhetoric of Perspective Realism*, 2005, p. 98.

¹²⁴ Grootenboer, *The Rhetoric of Perspective Realism*, 2005, p. 100.

A further example of an artist who has explored the use of anamorphic perspective is Shigeo Fukuda, one of Japan's most prominent graphic designers. Born in Tokyo in 1932, Fukuda graduated from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music in 1956 and joined Ajinomoto Co. Ltd. After leaving the company in 1958, he became a freelance artist working as a graphic designer, sculptor, theatrical set designer and muralist. His first major exhibition, *Toys and Things Japanese: The Works of Shigeo Fukuda*, was held in Tokyo in 1965, comprising one hundred and twenty playthings constructed from natural materials. Both Fukuda's two and three dimensional work is characterised by a fascination with a wide range of optical illusions. During the 1980s, he created a number of shadow sculptures. These works appear to be random assemblages of bottles and metal objects, but when they are lit by a spotlight they reveal coherent shadow images; for example, *One Cannot Cut the Sea*, 1988, comprises a pile of two thousand and eight hundred metal scissors welded together that reveals the shadow image of a ship with full rigging.

Fukuda's work also directly engages with linear anamorphosis. His works, *Van Gogh's Sunflowers*, 1988 and *Fresh Guy, Arcimboldo*, 1988, both comprise relief sculptures of wood and plastic that when placed on a long table before a mirror, produce undistorted reflected images of Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* and Arcimboldo's *Vertumnus*. Fukuda also created an anamorphic mural in the gymnasium of Taishido Junior High School. Often described as a visual humorist, Al Seckel aligns Fukuda's work with the Japanese cultural concept of *asobi* meaning 'playful' or 'fun'.¹²⁵ However, although Fukuda's optical illusions are often associated with the whimsical and entertaining, Seckel opens his discussion of Fukuda's art practice with a quotation from François Barré that, 'We live dangerously in the world that Fukuda fashions. Reassured and satisfied by a first perception, we may be shaken by the second image, which suddenly turns us head-over-heels'.¹²⁶

Barré's comment reiterates the effects wrought by anamorphosis. A system that transgresses the fixed rules of perspective from within and unsettles our vision, undermining preconceived notions concerning how we perceive the world. In this overview of the history of anamorphosis, we see how the visual effects created have been associated with magic and the supernatural, but also with the determination of philosophers and mathematicians to rationalise these 'picture puzzles'. In parallel with perspective's shift from the practical to the metaphorical, anamorphosis becomes for

¹²⁵ Al Seckel, *Masters of Deception: Escher, Dali and the Artists of Optical Illusion*, New York, Sterling Publishing: 2004, p. 95. The broad genre of *asobi-e* or play pictures includes riddle, shadow, assemblage and letter pictures that were intended to entertain children and adults alike. See Ewa Machotka, *Visual Genesis of Japanese National Identity: Hokusai's Hyakunin Isshu*, Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009, p. 168, n. 6.

¹²⁶ Seckel, *Masters of Deception*, 2004, p. 95.

Lacan a structure of subjectivity that denies the illusion of the unified, Cartesian *cogito*. Baltrušaitis' authoritative account was a key factor in stimulating renewed interest in an area of art history and practice that had become neglected. His work also profoundly influenced Lacan's discussion of anamorphosis. Recent art practice demonstrates a reinvigoration of anamorphic techniques used to create a wide variety of visual effects.

CHAPTER TWO

Hesse's *Contingent*

This chapter considers Eva Hesse's sculptural installation, *Contingent*, 1969, a late work often regarded as the 'masterpiece' of her oeuvre (see Fig. 1). In attending to the conditions of the work's production and reception, my aim is to provide a more detailed context for an analysis of Rosalind Krauss's claim that Hesse's work represented a reinvention for its times of an anamorphic condition. The chapter discusses the production of *Contingent*, including the intervention of those who assisted in its fabrication; its initial showing at the *Art in Process IV* exhibition, subsequent exhibition history and critical reception of the work. The physical deterioration of *Contingent* continues to be a contested area where issues surrounding the proposed re-fabrication of Hesse's latex and fibreglass pieces remain unresolved. I will also consider the influences of Hesse's milieu at the time of *Contingent*'s production and the ways in which these contextual details have been subsequently shaped by the critical discourse surrounding the artist.

The Making of *Contingent*

Eva Hesse's sculptural installation, *Contingent* was first exhibited in New York, at the Finch College Museum of Art's *Art in Process IV* show in December 1969.¹ Subsequently, the work reached a much wider public audience when it was photographed in Hesse's studio by the magazine *Artforum* for its cover of the May issue, featuring Hesse's interview with Cindy Nemser. The installation comprises eight hanging panels of cheesecloth, latex and fibreglass that are suspended from the ceiling. Varying in length, some pieces hover above the floor whilst one bends at its base. The middle section of the panels are more opaque and have yellowed with age, whereas both ends have a greater transparency. Lucy Lippard recounts that work commenced on *Contingent* in November 1968. Hesse was helped by Martha Schieve, a student assistant from the Great Lakes Colleges Association and Douglas Johns, a partner in Aegis Reinforced Plastics, whom Hesse had collaborated with on the works shown at her one-person exhibition, *Chain Polymers* at the Fischbach Gallery in November 1968. Hesse's illness

¹ *Art in Process IV*, Finch College Museum of Art, Contemporary Wing, New York, 11 December, 1969-26 January, 1970.

was progressively worsening at this point and Lippard notes that an increasing reliance on assistance in the fabrication of her works was becoming imperative.²Hesse initially resisted the intervention of others and had to be persuaded by Sol LeWitt, who argued that a long historical precedence for this collaborative form of production existed. Bill Barrette, who also became a regular assistant along with John Singer, then recalled that, 'she got over feeling queasy about having people help her on other than the mechanical things'.³

Contingent was not completed until 1969. Lippard recounts that in the autumn of that year, although Hesse was no longer able to teach at the School of Visual Arts in New York, a group of students offered a day's assistance in order to complete the work, permitting her to show *Contingent* at the *Art in Process IV* exhibition that was to open on 11 December. Curated by Elayne H. Varian, it exhibited the work of a number of Hesse's contemporaries including Carl Andre, Lynda Benglis, Mel Bochner and Robert Morris.⁴ When *Contingent* was shown at the exhibition, where Lippard claims that the work 'dominated' the show, it was accompanied by Hesse's statement,

Hanging.

Rubberized, loose, open cloth.

Fiberglass-reinforced plastic.

Began somewhere in November-December, 1968.

Worked.

Collapsed April 6, 1969. I have been very ill.

Statement.

Resuming work on piece,

have one complete from back then.

Statement, October 15, 1969, out of hospital,

short stay this time,

third time.

Same day, students and Douglas Jones began work.

MORATORIUM DAY

Piece is in many parts.

Each in itself is a complete statement,

together am not certain how it will be.

A fact. I cannot be certain yet.

Can be from illness, can be from honesty.

² Lucy R. Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, New York: New York University Press, 1976, p. 138.

³ Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, p. 164.

⁴ The artists exhibiting at *Art in Process IV* were: Carl Andre, Lynda Benglis, Mel Bochner, Bill Bollinger, Rafael Ferrer, Barry Flanagan, Eva Hesse, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Robert Ryman, Richard Van Buren and Lawrence Weiner.

irregular, edges, six to seven feet long.
Textures coarse, rough, changing.
see through, non see through, consistent, inconsistent.
enclosed tightly by glass like encasement just hanging there.
then more, others. Will they hang there in the same way?
try a continuous flowing one.
try some random closely spaced.
try some distant far spaced.
They are tight and formal but very ethereal. sensitive. fragile.
see through mostly.
not painting, not sculpture. it's there though.
I remember I wanted to get to non art, non connotive,
non anthropomorphic, non geometric, non, nothing,
everything, but of another kind, vision, sort.
from a total other reference point. is it possible?
I have learned anything is possible. I know that.
that vision or concept will come through total risk,
freedom, discipline.
I will do it.

today, another step. on two sheets we put on the glass.
did the two differently.
one was cast-poured over hard, irregular, thick plastic;
one with screening, crumpled. They will all be different.
both the rubber sheets and the fibreglass.
lengths and widths.
question how and why in putting it together?
can it be different each time? why not?
how to achieve by not achieving? how to make by not making?
it's all in that.
it's not the new. it is what is yet known,
thought, seen, touched but really what is not.
and that is.⁵

In his review of the retrospective, *Eva Hesse*, held at Tate Modern in 2002, Alex Potts refers to the absence of *Contingent* from the exhibition and claims that Hesse's much quoted statement underlines the artist's, 'serious ambitions and belief in the power of art'. Indeed, he also maintains that Hesse's practice represented a reinvigoration of the utopian impulses of the earlier modern avant garde; a conviction that art had a transformative role to play in everyday life.⁶ I would add that Hesse's

⁵ Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, p. 165.

⁶ Alex Potts, 'Eva Hesse. London', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 145, No. 1200, March 2003, p. 237. The exhibition, *Eva Hesse* was shown at Tate Modern, London between 13 November 2002 and 9 March 2003. It was co-curated by Elisabeth Sussman for the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Renate Petzinger for Museum Wiesbaden. The Tate Modern installation was curated by Sheena Wagstaff.

statement reflectively probes her uncertainties regarding the condition of her health and the processes and aims of her art practice. The text is also characterised by Hesse's self-questioning combined with emphatic declarations. To a certain extent, the binary oppositions that pervade Hesse's art work appear also in her writing. Alison Rowley has compared the vertical and irregular structure of Hesse's statement to one of the panels, describing it as the ninth element of the installation.⁷ The text, as reproduced in Lippard's monograph, is also divided into three parts, reflecting the tripartite structure of each piece. Rowley also notes that Hesse originally planned to construct at least nine panels, but only had enough latex for eight.⁸

Exhibition History

Following its first appearance at the Finch College Museum of Art, *Contingent* was shown as part of the exhibition, *L'Art Vivant aux Etats-Unis* at the Foundation Maeght in St Paul de Vence, France from 16 July to 30 September, 1970. The exhibition also included works by Jasper Johns, Lester Johnson, Tony Smith, Richard Van Buren, Frank Stella and James Rosati. *Contingent* then returned to the United States where it appeared in the *Seventieth American Exhibition* held at the Art Institute of Chicago from 24 June to 20 August, 1972. The exhibition was curated by A. James Speyer and exhibited the work of thirty eight artists including Dan Flavin, Helen Frankenthaler, Robert Morris, Robert Ryman, Robert Smithson and Frank Stella. *Contingent* was lent to the exhibition by Fourcade, Droll Inc. Donald Droll had been manager of the Fischbach Gallery and offered Hesse representation in March, 1967. He was also an executor of Hesse's estate. In 1972, Droll left the Fischbach Gallery and formed a partnership with the French American contemporary art dealer, Xavier Fourcade. Fourcade was the owner of the Xavier Fourcade Gallery in Manhattan and represented many artists including Willem de Kooning, Joan Mitchell and Catherine Murphy. He was also an executor for the estates of Barnett Newman, Ashile Gorky, Tony Smith (shared with the Paula Cooper Gallery) and Eva Hesse. The photograph included in the exhibition catalogue is unusual, as it shows *Contingent* from a different angle than is more usual in photographic images of the work (see Fig. 2). From 27 September to 29 October, 1972, *Contingent* was exhibited in *Eva Hesse* at the Detroit Institute of Arts followed by, *Eva Hesse: A Memorial Exhibition* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York from 9 March to 22 April,

⁷ Alison Rowley, 'A Painter's Hesse', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p. 143.

⁸ Rowley, 'A Painter's Hesse', 2006, p. 152, n. 18.

1973. This exhibition travelled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago from 19 May to 1 July and then to the Pasadena Art Museum in California from 29 September to 10 November, 1973.

The International Council of the Museum of Modern Art, New York curated *Some Recent American Art*, an exhibition that toured five state galleries in Australia (Melbourne, Perth, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane) and to the City of Auckland Art Gallery in New Zealand. However, *Contingent* was only exhibited at two venues; the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (15 April to 12 May, 1974) and the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (10 June to 7 July, 1974); its exclusion from the other venues perhaps suggesting that concerns had been raised regarding the physical state of the work.

During the 1970s, The National Gallery had started to collect American painting and sculpture and in November 1973, *Contingent* was purchased through Fourcade, Droll Inc.⁹ The Acquisition Committee Minutes note that the work was acquired as a fine example of, 'Worldwide Contemporary Sculpture' and that Hesse was considered to be one of, 'the best of the younger school of American artists'.¹⁰ The work was then regularly on display from 1982 until the mid-1990s. Between 1999 and 2001, a series of discussions took place between the National Gallery of Australia and San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art concerning whether *Contingent* could be lent for the Hesse retrospective that was shown in San Francisco, as well at Museum Wiesbaden in Germany and at Tate Modern, London. Lucina Ward, Curator of International Art at the National Gallery of Australia recalls that, 'At the time we agonised over whether to make the work available for loan, even to a single venue, but the request was finally refused: it was felt that the risks – of the central sections cracking under the weight of the fibreglass – were just too great for it to travel'.¹¹

In 2009, *Contingent* was exhibited as part of the National Gallery of Australia's, *Soft sculpture* exhibition.¹² Indeed, Ward has described Hesse's work as, 'one of the motivating factors for the show'.¹³ The exhibition was described as an examination of the historical relationship between anti-form works of the 1960s and 1970s and later categories of art to the present day. Fifty five works were displayed, including pieces by Richard Serra, Lynda Benglis, Lucas Samaras and Claes Oldenburg. In

⁹ Accession no. NGA 74.395.A-H.

¹⁰ I am grateful to Lucina Ward, Curator of International Art at the National Gallery of Australia for this information.

¹¹ Lucina Ward, email correspondence with the author, 25 March, 2010.

¹² *Soft sculpture*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 24 April – 12 July, 2009.

¹³ Lucina Ward, email correspondence with the author, 25 March, 2010.

common with the *Seventieth American Exhibition* of 1972, *Contingent* appeared with one of Robert Morris' early felt pieces, in this case, *Untitled* 1969, purchased by the National Gallery of Australia in 1975.¹⁴ I will discuss *Contingent's* alignment with Morris' felt pieces with regard to opacity later in this chapter; however, I would suggest that there are also parallels between the sense of indeterminacy that appears in Hesse's statement and in Morris' account of the hanging of his felt pieces, where he comments that, 'especially in the early works, some had [the] same, or very similar cuts and were hung in different ways. Some had, for me anyway, a number of possible hanging positions. But when things go out of the studio they tend to get finalised. I never insisted that a given work be hung from time to time in another position (which I would have done had I kept the work). Well, Brancusi was always rearranging those bases, so there is a precedent'.¹⁵

Lucina Ward has framed her discussion of 'soft sculpture' within the concept of 'inherent vice', a legal term that refers to loss caused by a hidden defect or the intrinsic nature of goods insured. From the conservator's perspective, inherent vice is the tendency of material to deteriorate due to the essential instability of its components or the interaction between those components. Ward comments on materials such as latex, fibreglass, polyurethane foam and thermoplastic adhesives that artists have deployed during the twentieth century as a means to challenge traditional categories of sculpture and the difficulties faced by collectors and conservators as these materials age, 'The 'inherent vice' of many plastics and resins – their vulnerability to light and inability to last – may imply a lack of suitability for art, particularly sculpture, traditionally one of the most durable and monumental of disciplines. But the virtues of plastic – liquidity, implied movement and the ability to 'capture' a moment – are also incredibly compelling'.¹⁶ These intrinsic qualities certainly appealed to Hesse and she expressed to Cindy Nemser her acceptance of the inevitability of change, 'Life doesn't last, art doesn't last. It doesn't matter'. However, Hesse also felt a responsibility towards the people who purchased her latex art works, 'I feel a little guilty when people want to buy it. I think they know but I want to write them a letter and say it's not going to last. I am not sure what my stand on lasting is. Part of me feels that it's

¹⁴ Robert Morris, *Untitled*, 1969. 284.0 x 363.2 x 111.8 cm. Acc. no. NGA 75.152. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. Morris began to make sculptures using felt in Aspen, Colorado in the summer of 1967. At that time he was working in fibreglass, but found the setting of that medium difficult to control at the high altitude of Aspen. Morris was offered a studio by the John Power Institute that had previously been a felt factory. There were still remnants left there that Morris deployed in his sculpture.

¹⁵ Robert Morris, correspondence with the National Gallery of Australia, 19 May 1986.

¹⁶ Lucina Ward, <http://nga.gov.au/Exhibition/softsculpture/Default.cfm?IRN=15029&BioArtistIRN=16623&MnuID=3&GalID=5&ViewID=2>.

superfluous and if I need to use rubber that is more important'.¹⁷

The most recent development in the exhibition history of *Contingent* is the National Gallery of Australia's expectation that the work may again be shown as part of the gallery's permanent collection. Ward has commented that, 'During the intervening period, between the 2002-03 retrospective and preparations for *Soft sculpture* in 2008-09, we have assessed and reassessed the work. Recently we have started to consider whether *Contingent* might have reached the extent of its deterioration... We have also come to realise that the decay of material is no less in storage than when the work is on show – although obviously the fact of display brings with it other risks. We will continue monitoring it but expect to have *Contingent* back on show, in the permanent collection displays, later in the year.'¹⁸ This intriguing possibility represents the most recent development in the work's exhibition history, overturning Douglas John's earlier assessment that, '*Contingent* is now buried in the archives “down under” in Australia and will never be seen again by the public’.¹⁹

The Role of *Artforum*

Krauss's essay on *Contingent* begins by identifying American art magazines of the late 1960s as the new vehicle for a vigorous discourse characterised by critics and artists writing with articulateness and power. Described by Krauss as the centre and medium of art world discourse, *Artforum* magazine was founded by Philip Leider in San Francisco in 1962.²⁰ It moved to Los Angeles in 1965, before settling in New York in 1967. This move broadly coincided with a shift in the style of work championed by the magazine from late Modernism towards Minimal and Conceptual Art. The publication's influence within the art world at the time when *Contingent* appeared on its front cover can hardly be overemphasised. Amy Newman has stated that, 'To this day, *Artforum* of the 1960s and early '70s is remembered as a monolithic agent of power and coercion, anointing only those artists whose work could be elucidated through the criteria of formalist analysis'.²¹ However, not only did the magazine have a significant influence on the the careers of individual artists, it also demonstrated its importance

¹⁷ Cindy Nemser, 'A Conversation with Eva Hesse' in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 18.

¹⁸ Lucina Ward, email correspondence with the author, 25 March, 2010.

¹⁹ Alison Rowley, 'The Fourth Dimension: Doug Johns interviewed by Alison Rowley', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p. 94.

²⁰ Rosalind Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 27.

²¹ Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962-1974*, New York: Soho Press, 2000, p. 6.

as a discursive focus for vigorous and polemical debate in the art world. As Newman has commented,

This was a time that was teeming with debates about advanced culture, about a meaningful role for art in society, and the relevance or irrelevance of the psychological or political, formalist or cultural, approaches to art and criticism. And these debates took place – literally in the pages of *Artforum*...warranted or not, *Artforum* was the paramount institution – and its writers the voices that others responded to – in *this* arena at *this* time, as the Museum of Modern Art and its director Alfred Barr had been in the two previous decades.²²

Although Newman identifies formalism as *Artforum's* sanctioned critical approach, she also acknowledges the range of intermediary theoretical positions (between formalist and psychosocial analyses) that co-existed in the magazine. The aesthetic discourse generated by its early writers was characterised by intense personal friendships and allegiances that shifted over time; for example, Leider was greatly influenced by his lifelong friendship with artist Frank Stella.²³ He was also an enthusiastic supporter of Sidney Tillim, with whom he shared a bond that has been described as, 'a common self-awareness of their Jewishness – what Tillim calls “Yiddishkeit”: a Talmudic inclination of mind, and to some degree, a similarity of background'.²⁴ Michael Fried's writing for *Artforum* began to appear in 1965. Two years later, 'Art and Objecthood', his seminal text on 'theatricality' in literalist art appeared in the American Sculpture issue, along with the third of Robert Morris' 'Notes on Sculpture', Sol LeWitt's 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art' and Robert Smithson's essay, 'The Development of an Air Terminal Site'.²⁵ In 1969, Leider devoted an entire issue to the publication of Fried's doctoral thesis on Manet. Krauss has described Leider and Fried's use of hyperbolic language as, 'a kind of badge worn by Jews from New York...I think that Michael and Phil loved each other so not just because they admired each other's intelligence but because they were both telling the same Jewish joke'.²⁶ Krauss was originally recommended to Leider by Fried and started to write reviews and articles for the magazine in 1966. After her break with Fried, Leider initially resisted giving Krauss a place on the masthead, as he did not want to risk offending Fried.

A colour image of *Contingent* appeared on the cover of *Artforum* in May 1970, accompanying a excerpt

²² Newman, *Challenging Art*, p. 2.

²³ Between 1965 and 1974, seven *Artforum* articles and three covers were devoted to Stella's work.

²⁴ Newman, *Challenging Art*, p. 11. Sidney Tillim was contributing editor of *Artforum* from 1965 to 1970, during which time he wrote nineteen articles for the magazine.

²⁵ Philip Leider's response to the inclusion of Sol LeWitt's 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art' was, 'I detested his work but I knew that there was a part of the New York art world that admired this guy – for example, the whole group around Eva Hesse, who loved LeWitt. The magazine was called “forum” for a very good reason', Newman, *Challenging Art*, p. 157.

²⁶ Newman, *Challenging Art*, p. 152.

from feminist art critic Cindy Nemser's interview with Hesse, edited from a transcript of around ninety pages.²⁷ Nemser had conducted the interview a few months before Hesse's death as part of her broader project of interviewing women artists for her book, *Art Talk: Conversations with Twelve Women Artists*, published in 1975. According to Krauss, the consequence of a image of *Contingent* appearing on the front cover of *Artforum* was that, 'a relatively unknown artist was suddenly acknowledged as having a voice of extraordinary authority'.²⁸ Of course, by virtue of appearing on the cover of this hugely influential publication, authority was also conferred on Hesse's work. As Irving Sandler has commented, 'An article in or a reproduction on the cover of *Artforum* contributed more to an artist's status than did similar treatment in any other art magazine'.²⁹ Indeed, Hesse's achievement was magnified by the fact that in the first ten years of *Artforum's* history, women artists appeared on only eleven out of one hundred and three covers.³⁰ The choice of art that appeared on the cover of *Artforum* was very much dictated by Leider, who commented that,

I chose the covers. Always. And without counsel. I never consulted with anybody about things like that. I trusted myself. When I was hot, absolutely. I would want to direct the reader's attention to the most important thing in the magazine. As often as I could I would tie it to an article by Michael [Fried]. Covers were based on the importance of the article *and* the visual impact – both...I didn't think of the cover as a selling tool. I thought of it as being the “talking” thing – that people would talk about it: “Did you see that cover?”...I kept thinking that people would be blown away. They couldn't imagine things like this would happen. But in other cases the cover was oriented towards a piece of writing I thought was really important.³¹

In an interview where Leider reflected on whether he considered he had given sufficient attention to specific artists, he commented that,

We felt that whichever women artists were good would get any attention they deserved. I didn't even feel that it was like an unknown or an unconscious prejudice against women artists. I just wasn't aware of it, I still am not. I just don't think there are an awful lot of women doing work and certainly not a lot of women doing good work. I thought Helen Frankenthaler was a wonderful artist and we gave her a lot of the attention that she deserved. I don't know any women artists who really suffered because they were women...Lynda Benglis is a question mark; obviously I should have looked at her harder. She was more original than I thought she was. And there must have been many others like that. Eva Hesse. I should have done more with

²⁷ *Artforum*, New York, vol. 7, no. 9, May 1970, pp. 59-63.

²⁸ Rosalind E. Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 27.

²⁹ Irving Sandler, *American Art of the 1960s*, 1988, cited by Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962-1974*, New York: Soho Press, 2000, n.p.

³⁰ Newman, *Challenging Art*, p. 513, n. 90.

³¹ Newman, *Challenging Art*, p. 227.

Eva, but there was a legitimate excuse there: She really comes into her own the year she died. Worse artists were getting more space than she was. I was just put off by that gang around Lucy Lippard, I didn't like those guys.³²

It could be argued that Leider's diminishing of the challenges faced by women artists at that time underlines the significance of Hesse's work attaining front cover status. Anne Wagner makes the comment that a small measure of the progress made by women artists following the second world war could be witnessed in the gradual disappearance of the convention of automatic reference to a woman's married name in articles or reviews.³³ Hesse herself wrote in response to a letter from Cindy Nemser that asked whether she thought that female artists were discriminated against, 'The way to beat discrimination in art is by art. Excellence has no sex'.³⁴ Griselda Pollock notes that Hesse's comment is often read as an anti-feminist statement, rather than being indicative of an inevitable pre-feminist defensiveness.³⁵

Critical Response

The work has generated a diversity of critical responses. Writing ten years after the exhibition, Krauss described *Contingent* as, 'surely one of the most masterful and moving' works generated during the 1960s; claiming that it countered the formalist discourse that had characterised the decade, with a message of expressionism, manifested solely through matter.³⁶ Krauss describes the elements of *Contingent* as, 'bannerlike'³⁷, 'hanging, veil-like, perpendicular to the wall';³⁸ the specificity of her choice of language connoting an ironic juxtaposition between the sense of visible protest or advertisement suggested by the form of a banner, and the concealment and invisibility signified by the image of a veil. However, the work has also evoked far more emotive descriptions; the feminist art historian Anna C. Chave, likening it to, 'a ghastly array of giant soiled bandages, or worse yet, like so many flayed human skins (distantly evocative of the Nazis' notorious use of human flesh to make

³² Newman, *Challenging Art*, p. 307-08.

³³ Anne M. Wagner, 'Another Hesse' in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 131.

³⁴ Vanessa Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p.112, fig. 36.

³⁵ Griselda Pollock, 'A Very Long Engagement: Singularity and Difference in the Critical Writing on Eva Hesse', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p. 31.

³⁶ Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', 2002, p. 27.

³⁷ Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', 2002, p. 30.

³⁸ Rosalind E. Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 50.

lampshades).³⁹ The critical discourse generated by *Contingent* is characterised by discussions regarding the work's relationship to external light and its positioning within the conventions of painting and sculpture; the changes wrought by processes of deterioration and the presence of bodily connotation. Above all, it is frequently regarded as the 'masterpiece' of Hesse's oeuvre.

Lippard recalls that, '*Contingent* finally consisted of eight glowing composites of rubberised cheesecloth and fibreglass run through various proportional and textural changes, the light catching each translucent sheet a different way, producing different colors'.⁴⁰ *Contingent*'s interplay with light, described by Griselda Pollock as, 'luminosity', is frequently cited as evidence of the work's painterly quality.⁴¹ Hilda Werschkul, for example, has commented on how a photograph showing *Contingent* hanging in Hesse's studio demonstrates how light enhances the painterly illumination of the work. Furthermore, Werschkul claims that examples of studio photographs suggest that Hesse valued the impact of external lighting, although she cautions against any notion that Hesse believed that external light was integral to her work.⁴² Douglas John's memory of Hesse's response to *Contingent* also emphasises the visual effect created by external light and is possibly suggestive of an element of random chance at play in the work's relationship with light, 'I remember Eva's reaction and her joy when the pieces of *Contingent* were hanging in the loft. She was quite overwhelmed by the way the light streamed through the window and interacted with them and probably she felt that *Contingent* was her most important piece'.⁴³

Physical Condition

The rapid and irrevocable physical deterioration of *Contingent* has become a significant aspect of the discourse surrounding the work. Hesse's choice of materials and their fragility has been appropriated as a form of *momento mori*, a motif that is also relevant to Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, with Douglas Johns claiming that, 'the deterioration was part of the concept. My interpretation of this is that it was

³⁹ Anna C. Chave, 'Eva Hesse: A 'Girl Being a Sculpture'', cited by Anne M. Wagner, 'Another Hesse', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 151.

⁴⁰ Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, 1976, p. 164.

⁴¹ Griselda Pollock, 'A Very Long Engagement', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p. 33.

⁴² Hilda Werschkul, 'Modernism, Memory and the Studio in the Late Drawings of Eva Hesse', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p. 196.

⁴³ Alison Rowley, 'The Fourth Dimension: Doug Johns interviewed by Alison Rowley', p. 93.

her intention to bring the fourth dimension – time – into her sculpture.’⁴⁴ As early as 1966, some of Hesse’s work was either disintegrating or becoming discoloured from varnish. According to Lippard, Hesse commented, ‘so what. They are not wasted. I went further in the work that followed. I take more care technically, I plan and figure out more wisely’.⁴⁵

The implications for curators’ practice have been carefully detailed by Elisabeth Sussman.⁴⁶ In her preparation for the 2002 retrospective at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Sussman attempted to see every surviving latex work, ‘I wanted to see that work. I wanted to know (what) kind of state it was in. I wanted to know whether people were making the right or the wrong call about not showing it. I wanted to know about *exhibitability*. I wanted to know about the artist’s intentions. I really wanted to have all those answers, and these questions shaped my approach to the exhibition’.⁴⁷ In Sussman’s account, it appears that deterioration is not the only concern regarding Hesse’s late sculptural work, but also the inherent unpredictability of the behaviour of latex, an uncertainty that Sussman poetically describes as, ‘a wonderful ongoing mystery’, in her assessment of the work, *Aught*, 1969.⁴⁸ Her account of the negotiations that resulted in the University of California Museum in Berkeley allowing this work to be exhibited tends to cast the installation in the light of a holy relic. Comprised of four panels of plastic sandwiched between latex sheets, Sussman describes that,

It had been lying in its boxes at Berkeley since 1986. The curators were afraid to take it out. It hangs on the wall with grommets. The last time they had exhibited it, they hung it up in the gallery on its grommets. A couple of days into the hanging, it started to weep, that is, the latex began to drip. It literally started oozing, and as it oozed, gravity dragged it down. The curators could see that it was sinking. They were afraid that the weight of it would tear it off its grommets, and it would fall off the wall. So in 1986, they had taken it off the wall, taken it out of the exhibition, put it back in its boxes, put the lids on and put it away and that was it.⁴⁹

When the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art asked to borrow the work, ‘The Berkeley curators told us of their harrowing experience in 1986 saying, “Oh no! We can’t let that happen again. It’s going to weep and we can’t do it.”’⁵⁰ Sussman then describes how a specialist in latex, Sharon Blank, argued

⁴⁴ Alison Rowley, ‘The Fourth Dimension’, p. 93.

⁴⁵ Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, p. 73.

⁴⁶ Renate Petzinger and Elisabeth Sussman, ‘The Curatorial Encounter: Two Views from the Exhibition Front’, in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, pp.161 – 175.

⁴⁷ Sussman, ‘The Curatorial Encounter’, p. 171.

⁴⁸ Sussman, ‘The Curatorial Encounter’, p. 173.

⁴⁹ Sussman, ‘The Curatorial Encounter’, p. 173.

⁵⁰ Sussman, ‘The Curatorial Encounter’, p. 173.

that the work could still weep, regardless of whether or not it was enclosed in a box. On this premise, the curators allowed the work to be displayed, but it had to be examined and measured every day to ensure that the panels did not liquefy or sink on the wall. However, as Sussman states, 'For some reason or another, known only to the latex, it remained completely and utterly stable for the whole two months it was on display'.⁵¹ In contrast, the Guggenheim Museum will resolutely not exhibit, *Expanded Expansion*, 1969, which was last seen in the 1980s, when it fell down. Sussman describes how its latex sections that are permanently boxed have hardened and crumbled to the point that they resemble a, 'mummy's shroud'.⁵² Her account, permeated as it is by references to shrouds, weeping and the mysteries associated with the display of Hesse's work is almost quasi-religious in tone, in spite of Sussman's ready acknowledgment of the mythologizing of Hesse as an artist.

As Alex Potts and Amelia Jones have both suggested, sculptural installations literalise the understanding of the work as a kind of body through the viewer's embodied experience in relation to it.⁵³ In the case of *Contingent*, the viewer's ability to move in space in relation to the work's parts is curtailed, a state of affairs that until recently had been assumed to be permanent. As Douglas Johns commented, '*Contingent* is now buried in the archives "down under" in Australia and will never be seen again by the public. Pity.'⁵⁴ As I mentioned earlier, the work did not appear in the 2002 retrospective as it was considered too fragile to travel; a situation clearly at odds with Chave's assessment that, 'Hesse escalated Minimalism's impetus toward the birth or mobilizing of the perceiver – by making works whose detached or dangling components, informal-looking organisation and pronounced tactility tended to invite the touch of spectators'.⁵⁵ Indeed, Lucy Lippard described Hesse's variants of the work *Accession I*, 1967, as, 'extremely palpable and tangible'.⁵⁶ Similarly, in her interview with Hesse, Cindy Nemser commented that, 'It's a very tactile work. My experience of it was that I wanted to get inside it...All your work is extremely tactile. One wants to touch it, handle it'.⁵⁷ Hesse then described how people damaged the first of five versions of *Accession* by getting inside it when it was displayed in a museum. The work then had to be repeated as it had been promised to

⁵¹ Sussman, 'The Curatorial Encounter', p. 173.

⁵² Sussman, 'The Curatorial Encounter', p. 174.

⁵³ Amelia Jones, 'Body', in Nelson, R.S. and Shiff, R., eds., *Critical Terms for Art History*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 257, n.2.

⁵⁴ Rowley, 'The Fourth Dimension', p. 94.

⁵⁵ Anna C. Chave, 'Minimalism and Biography', *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 82, No. 1, 2000, p.156.

⁵⁶ Lucy R. Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, New York: New York University Press, 1976, p. 104.

⁵⁷ Cindy Nemser, 'A Conversation with Eva Hesse' in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 11.

someone. Hesse stated in the interview that, 'I'm not asking everybody to, but every time I've been in a place where I've seen my work, there were hands on it'.⁵⁸ As Chave has noted, the next version was placed under protective glass.⁵⁹ Ironically, Hesse was photographed posing with *Accession III*, her hands resting on what Chave has described as its, 'shag rug-like interior'.⁶⁰ Douglas Johns has called for examples of Hesse's work to be re-fabricated in order to allow the viewer the experience of interacting with them by touch, suggesting also that the new works could be exhibited with the originals as a means of demonstrating Hesse's intention,

The newly created pieces could be strongly lit to make them explode with light, as was my experience with *Eva* in that little Bowery loft. People would be able to touch them and the result would be a far richer experience that celebrates life and the joy of the here and now, juxtaposed with the reality of the ravages of time.⁶¹

However, re-fabrication is a contentious issue. Ann Temkin has commented that Hesse's sculptures were made at a cultural moment when impermanence was a prominent aesthetic aspect and new art was often intentionally ephemeral, citing Lucy Lippard's term, the 'dematerialisation' of the art object. One argument against re-fabrication is that Hesse's unstable works represented a rethinking of the traditions of sculpture that should not be separated from the historical moment in which it occurred.⁶²

Luce Irigaray criticised the French phenomenological philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty for according an, 'exorbitant privilege to vision' and thus totalising the question of vision at the expense of the other senses such as touch.⁶³ Significantly, Merleau-Ponty's work on visual experience exerted an important influence on the generation of younger modernist critics writing in the 1960s and early 1970s.⁶⁴ Hesse's sculptural works arguably operate against the autonomy of the visual in their tactile appeal; however, as Hilda Werschkul has suggested, in the history of art, tactility and touch often connote emotion.⁶⁵ These expressive forms are generally encoded within society as feminine values and

⁵⁸ Nemser, 'A Conversation with Eva Hesse', p. 12.

⁵⁹ Chave, 'Minimalism and Biography', p. 162, n. 60.

⁶⁰ Chave, 'Minimalism and Biography', p. 162, n. 60.

⁶¹ Rowley, 'The Fourth Dimension', p. 94.

⁶² Ann Temkin, 'Uncertain Mandate: A Roundtable Discussion on Conservation Issues', in Elisabeth Sussman, ed., *Eva Hesse*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002, p. 292.

⁶³ Briony Fer, 'Treading Blindly, or the Excessive Presence of the Object', *Art History*, 20.2, 1997, p. 277.

⁶⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) from "Eye and Mind"', in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, p. 768.

⁶⁵ Hilda Werschkul, 'Modernism, Memory and the Studio in the Late Drawings of Eva Hesse', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p. 200.

consequently, Hesse's retreat from high modernism in her work's appeal to the sense of touch has been interpreted as a feminist art practice.⁶⁶ However, Susan Buck-Morss recalls the original etymological meaning of the word "aesthetics" as encompassing the whole sensory experience of perception.⁶⁷ She traces the development of an anti-corporeal discourse within the modern era wherein "aesthetics" came to be applied to the cultural forms of art rather than sensible experience. She defines the motif of autogenesis as one of the most persistent myths in the history of modernity, the construct of an entirely self-contained being impervious to the senses and in spite of its castrated form, gendered as male.⁶⁸ The autonomous, autotelic subject is sense-dead, yet Hesse's manipulation of the sense of touch arguably disrupts this alienation of the senses and challenges Krauss's assessment that Hesse's docility kept her fixated on the pictorial.⁶⁹ Until very recently, *Contingent* was known only through photographic reproductions. A final eclipse of the photographic image over the sculptural had been brought about, as it is the raking angle of Krauss's description that the images represent. The sense of 'two mutually exclusive vantages' had seemed irrevocably lost and a new photographic order imposed.

The themes of light and deterioration that pervade the critical discourse surrounding Hesse's late work neatly coalesce in Briony Fer's analysis, where she draws attention to the irony that, 'Hesse's strange encrusted forms, particularly as they are subjected to decay through light-light of all things, the light that animates the shadow of life of her work-show solid form in the process of collapse, sculptural form laid waste'; a process of structural decomposition that Fer relates to the Kristevan concept of abjection.⁷⁰ The trope of veiling that pervades analysis of *Contingent* may be located in both the Kristevan concept of abjection and within the realm of the anamorphic. With regard to the latter, in the classical story of the *trompe-l'oeil* contest between Zeuxis and Parrhasios, it is an image of a veil that is judged to be the most deceptive. Anamorphosis has often been deployed as a strategy of representation in contexts where there is a deliberate attempt to conceal religious, political or erotic imagery.⁷¹ Discussed by Krauss with regard to the work of Cindy Sherman, the lifting of the veil has

⁶⁶ Chave, 'Minimalism and Biography', p. 156.

⁶⁷ Susan Buck Morss, 'Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered', *October*, Vol. 62, 1992, p. 6.

⁶⁸ Buck-Morss, 'Aesthetics and Anaesthetics', 1992, p. 8.

⁶⁹ Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', 2002, p. 50.

⁷⁰ Briony Fer, 'Sculpture as Sample', in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, ed. Catherine de Zegher, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, pp. 273-304.

⁷¹ An example of a politically sensitive image hidden by means of anamorphosis was a portrait of Charles I circulated amongst Royalist sympathisers after the king's execution in 1649 (see Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphoses*, 1984, p. 29). Erhard Schön, the Nuremberg engraver and pupil of Albrecht Dürer produced a number of *vexierbild* or 'picture puzzles'; distorted anamorphic landscapes that concealed hidden images. Schön's *Three Kings and a Pope*, 1535 contains concealed portraits of Francis I, Ferdinand I, Charles V and Pope Paul III. Another image shows a couple kissing next to

been said to reveal the defetishized body of the 'monstrous feminine'.⁷² Krauss also identifies the notion of unveiling and the penetration of the interior to the appropriation of the female body as a hermeneutical metaphor, a site of unveiling that reveals a hidden truth (a process that can be related to the notion of a knowledge concealed by the anamorph). Citing Laura Mulvey, Krauss identifies the hidden truth as that of the wound inflicted by a phantasmatic castration. The interior of the female body is consequently projected as, 'a kind of lining of bodily disgust – of blood, of excreta, of mucous membranes'.⁷³ Mulvey discusses women's collusion with this notion of veiling the unspeakable through an adoption of the cosmetics of the masquerade and the attempts at expunging the physical marks of the feminine. The notion of the imagined penetration of the exterior veil is present in both Chave's description of *Contingent* resembling a series of hanging skins and Krauss's designation of the appearance of veils. It also occurs in the squeamishness that Mel Bochner argued was a common reaction to Hesse's polyethylene and fibreglass pieces, and his descriptions of her smaller sample pieces resembling 'plastic vomit' and being redolent of the sewer system.⁷⁴

Test pieces

Whereas Krauss's writing solely addresses *Contingent*, other commentators have studied the work in relation to two separate panels, Hesse's preparatory drawing and written notes. I will discuss in more detail in the following chapter how the analysis of these additional sources has brought other critical ideas to the fore regarding *Contingent*, however it is important here to briefly outline the conditions of making of these separate panels and the ways in which they may relate to the work as a whole. The first panel (S-168) has been referred to as a 'test piece' for *Contingent*.⁷⁵ Hesse gave it to her friend Naomi Spector, who worked at the Fischbach Gallery, and the artist, Stephen Antonakos. They had previously bought Hesse's work and the gift underlines the sociability of minimalist art production at that time.⁷⁶

an elongated landscape that when viewed from the right shows the same couple engaged in sexual intercourse.

⁷² Rosalind Krauss, 'Cindy Sherman: Untitled', in *Bachelors*, October Books, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2000, p. 131. It is interesting to note that in Catherine Bernard's analysis of the critical practice of Catherine Belsey, Sherman's photographs representing details of putrefying corpses are referred to by Bernard as, 'gruesome anamorphoses'. Bernard comments on Lacan's reading of anamorphosis, specifically the process by which the subject is negated and annihilated ('néantisé') and applies this to, 'Sherman's anamorphoses [where] subjecthood is re-problematized as abjecthood under the dark sun of vile, grotesque melancholia', Catherine Bernard, 'When the Real Matters; interpreting the visual with Catherine Belsey', *Textual Practice*, Vol. 24, Issue 6, 2010, p. 974.

⁷³ Krauss, 'Cindy Sherman: Untitled', p. 148.

⁷⁴ Briony Fer, 'Sculpture as Sample', in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, ed. Catherine de Zegher, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 296.

⁷⁵ The work is numbered in accordance with the entries in, *Eva Hesse Catalogue Raisonné Volume II: Sculpture*.

⁷⁶ Antonakos was born in Agios Nikolaos, in southern Greece. His family moved to New York in 1930, when he was four years of age. He had abandoned easel painting by 1956 and had moved to a studio in the fur and garment district of New York, where fabric was discarded in the streets. This led to Antonakos producing fabric collages that he referred to as

Hesse often gave test pieces as gifts to friends, including Spector, Gioia Timpanelli and Sol LeWitt. LeWitt decided to display the works that Hesse gave him in a glass pastry case he obtained from the Bowery. Hesse was so pleased with the effect this created that she bought glass cases of her own in which to arrange a series of test pieces.⁷⁷

The panel is in relatively good condition, having been kept rolled in storage for almost thirty years. It was never exhibited publicly in Hesse's lifetime and was purchased by the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. On 14 November 1996, where it is exhibited for very short periods.⁷⁸ The work comprises of a single panel of cheesecloth, painted with latex and hung over a wooden bar that is suspended from the ceiling at ninety degrees from the wall (see Fig. 3). Spector has commented in detail regarding the work's provenance and conservation,

It was shown very rarely because we were aware of its unusually fine condition and fragility. We did hang it in the loft for a few months, but we began to ask ourselves, "What are we doing?" After that, we pretty much kept it in storage all the time. It was rolled up in polyurethane and suspended within its crate so it would not come into contact with anything, and the crate was kept in a dark, cool place. We did the best we could to preserve the piece, and we knew the arrangement was better than many of the big storage facilities could offer. So we thought it was safe. When the National Gallery of Art came to see us at a certain point, we began to reconsider whether the work should remain out of sight. We thought that placing the work with the museum was an ideal opportunity, as it was a public institution with significant resources and an international profile. When their conservators came to examine the test piece, we were very impressed with the way they handled it. Many nurses graduate, but only some know how to take care of patients. The National Gallery conservators displayed a degree of knowledge and care that made us feel very comfortable. It was a gift from the artist. What is remarkable is that it hung pretty freely, and it still does. When you walk by the work, it feels very alive visually and kinetically, and it occupies the same space as the viewer, which is one of the most important aspects of Eva's work. So we just thought it should live, rather than be in a state of suspended animation. I think luck also played a role in the preservation of the piece. We didn't do anything that anybody who cared wouldn't do. But it is illuminating now to see how

'sewages'. After 1960, he started to produce neon sculpture. Hesse also gave the test piece for *Augment* and *Aught*, 1968 to Spector and Antonakos.

⁷⁷ Three glass cases are extant: an untitled work of 1967-68 which was given to LeWitt, and two additional untitled works dating to 1968. Robin Clark has commented that, 'LeWitt's and Hesse's placing of small works in pastry cases was most directly inspired by the restaurant supply stores that line the blocks of Bowery just below Houston Street, but perhaps the precedents of other artists also played a role. René Magritte's *Ceci est un morceau de fromage*, a small oil painting of cheese displayed in an actual glass cheese, may have been known to them, and they were well acquainted with Claes Oldenburg's painted plaster models of food displayed in Bowery pastry cases. While her display techniques echo those of Oldenburg and Magritte, the objects Hesse displays rely more on an evocative, biomorphic Surrealism than on the punning strategies of the older artists'. Robin Clark, 'Glass Cases and Test Pieces', in Elisabeth Sussman, ed., *Eva Hesse*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002, p. 227.

⁷⁸ Spector and Antonakos lent the work to the Yale University Art Gallery's 1992 Hesse retrospective that travelled to the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C.

the latex works used to look.⁷⁹

The National Gallery of Art's installation shot shows the work hanging parallel to a wall, whereas a photograph taken in Spector and Antonakos' SoHo loft shows the panel hanging perpendicular to the wall, like the composite parts of *Contingent*. In this image the piece of cheesecloth and latex looks luminous and ethereal, its stained edge juxtaposed with the harder edge of an Antonakos canvas that looms out of partial darkness. The photograph's composition is an interesting exercise in the manipulation of edge. As the two works sit sociably side by side, it is almost as though the Antonakos canvas is functioning as a marker of scale, but also underlining the striking antithesis of the wall-bound, resolute flatness of the latter and the liminality of Hesse's ghostly distortion of that accepted form. It appears like a manifestation of a known and familiar world represented by the Ambassadors with a hovering, indistinct shape at its edges; a glimpse of the uncanny, seen out of the corner of the viewer's eye. However, the photograph included in Lippard's monograph shows Hesse's work in isolation. Although taken in the same loft (an overhead pipe and decorative ceiling tiles are visible in both images), it appears to be an earlier photograph, as the wall is painted brick that is plastered in the later version. Is the later image a deliberate attempt to impose the presence of Antonakos' canvas, underlining the position of Hesse's work within the specific context of a private collection? Whether by design or accident, I would argue that the contrast between the two works shown in the image exemplifies the slippage between the categories of painting and sculpture that so dominated 1960s aesthetic discourse and forms the basis of Krauss's analysis of *Contingent*.

The status of the panel has been the subject of debate. Although the work has been described as a 'prototype' and a 'test piece' for *Contingent*, Fer has commented on Spector and Antonakos' insistence that they regarded the piece as a work in its own right.⁸⁰ It is interesting to note that in her description of the work Fer states that, 'it was full size and hung over a piece of dowelling. Like the eight-panelled piece it hung at right angles to the wall, the way it had in the studio rather than due to any thought about how it should be exhibited'.⁸¹ This appears to diverge from Lippard's account who writes, 'Hesse also gave a long sheet of rubberized cheesecloth to Naomi Spector, a friend who worked at Fischbach; it was to be hung perpendicular to the wall'.⁸² Her brief comment may suggest that the hanging of the

⁷⁹ Temkin, 'Uncertain Mandate: A Roundtable Discussion on Conservation Issues', 2002, p. 297.

⁸⁰ Briony Fer, *Eva Hesse Studiowork*, Edinburgh: The Fruitmarket Gallery, 2009, p. 177.

⁸¹ Fer, *Eva Hesse Studiowork*, 2009, p. 174.

⁸² Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, 1976, p. 164.

work was intentional on Hesse's part, but perhaps also undermines the panel's status as a work in its own right, in that Lippard's description of it as a sheet of cheesecloth suggests to me that it was a by-product of the process that Hesse was working on. Conversely, Lippard also gives the impression that the panel was considered as being distinct from other pieces that were made as prototypes. She also refers to the work in her catalogue raisonné as a 'test piece for *Contingent*'. Whereas the other panel (S-169) is described as, 'prototype for one unit of *Contingent*'.⁸³

This second extant panel had been completed before Barrette and the students from the School of Visual Arts came to assist Hesse. In Lippard's account she states that, 'He [Barrette] remembers that when they arrived, a couple of sections had been made, one of which was a single prototype with small fiberglass ends which had been made through the trap door in the ceiling and was too long to hang in the studio. This was made in 1968, and exists now as a separate "piece"'.⁸⁴ At some point, the panel has been folded over and has stuck together. It is therefore much shorter than when it was first made. The work differs from S-168 in its construction, but like the composite parts of *Contingent*, it was made by coating a length of cheesecloth with latex in one long section, with fibreglass and polyester resin sections being added at each end. Fer claims that, 'It relates to *Contingent* as well as to Hesse's drawings, not just as a way of looking through a texture, but also because the visual and the tactile are impossible to separate. Neither window nor wall, but detached from both'.⁸⁵ I am particularly interested in Fer's description of, 'neither window nor wall', as I contend that this assessment aligns the work, and indeed *Contingent*, with the trope of veiling that I discussed earlier. In Fer's analysis, this idea is further emphasised by her comment on the contrast between Hesse's work and Richard Serra's *Remnant*, 1966-67, a hanging piece of vulcanised rubber formed of layers of, 'absolute and impenetrable opacity'.⁸⁶ The work addresses the problematic of the categories of painting and sculpture very differently from Hesse's manipulation of light; indeed, Carter Ratcliff comments that the work, 'invites you to think of it as a painting and then snarls at you if you do. *Remnant* is sheer, unadorned matter'.⁸⁷ In contrast with the oppressive density of Serra's use of latex (vulcanised rubber, as opposed to liquid latex), Hesse's work is succinctly described by Fer as, 'a series of variations of grades of light and weight – and in the end it's all illusion'.⁸⁸ I would also point out that a similar contrast may have existed when

⁸³ Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, p. 232.

⁸⁴ Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, p. 164.

⁸⁵ Fer, *Eva Hesse Studiowork*, p. 177.

⁸⁶ Fer, *Eva Hesse Studiowork*, p. 178.

⁸⁷ Carter Ratcliff, 'The fictive spaces of Richard Serra', *Art in America*, December 2007.

⁸⁸ Fer, *Eva Hesse Studiowork*, p. 179.

Contingent was shown in the same exhibition as one of Robert Morris's felt pieces, *Untitled*, 1970, an oppressive-looking, phallic presence eight feet in height that is also formed from resolutely opaque layers of material.⁸⁹

In her essay, 'Sculpture as Sample', Briony Fer concentrates her analysis on the so-called test pieces that she claims formed a vital part of Hesse's sculptural practice, in order to reveal an underlying logic in her work as a whole. In contrast with Krauss's critical position, Fer discerns a dual seriality at play in *Contingent*; basing her argument on the test piece owned by the National Gallery of Art, Washington. . Fer elevates the status of the piece, claiming that, 'it holds its own as a work in relation to the other exhibits'.⁹⁰ Linking it explicitly with an untitled drawing that comprises eight strips of varying lengths, she argues that, 'In the test piece, you can see her thinking about the gradation from light to dark and dark to light just as she had through the liquidity of wash in the drawing.'⁹¹ Fer also claims that the test piece demonstrates Hesse's additive method, increasing opacity through the layering of latex and thereby working towards, 'a kind of serial thickness'. Furthermore, Fer points to Hesse's notes for *Contingent* where she describes the installation as a, 'piece in many parts. Each in itself is a complete statement, together am not certain how it will be'.⁹² Fer suggests from this that Hesse's own brand of seriality had to encompass a significant level of coincidence and chance. This interpretation may therefore appear incompatible with the arguably more controlled and purposeful quality of anamorphosis. The rhythm of seriality characterises what Wagner has termed, 'the aggression and absurdity of the minimalist grammar',⁹³ a methodology that Mel Bochner has claimed as the defining concern of artistic production in 1960s New York.⁹⁴ Furthermore, Bochner has emphasised the reproductive quality of seriality, claiming that, 'Eva gave the language of minimalism, as well as its form, an erotic twist'.⁹⁵ Mignon Nixon has expanded readings of seriality in Hesse's work into the realm of the psychic. Drawing upon the work of psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell, Nixon locates seriality within the social structure of the kinship group, where the child confronts her loss of uniqueness and exclusivity of parental love when faced with siblings. Consequently, Nixon argues, 'to accept that one

⁸⁹ Robert Morris, *Untitled*, 1970, 8 ft x 6 ft x 1 inch.

⁹⁰ Fer, 'Sculpture as Sample', 2006, p. 288-289.

⁹¹ Fer, 'Sculpture as Sample', 2006, p.289.

⁹² Fer, 'Sculpture as Sample', 2006, p.291.

⁹³ Anne Wagner, 'Another Hesse', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 175.

⁹⁴ Mignon Nixon, "'Child" Drawing', in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, ed. Catherine de Zegher, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, p.55.

⁹⁵ Mel Bochner, 'About Eva Hesse: Mel Bochner Interviewed by Joan Simon', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p.42.

is subject to seriality – to the annihilating sensation of being eclipsed by the other and, ultimately, of being extinguished by death - is, in these terms, to be able to live.’⁹⁶ Nixon’s assertion, whilst confirming the centrality of serial art in 1960s aesthetic discourse, also provides an echo of Krauss’s proposed eclipse of form and matter.

Corporeality

Anne Wagner has drawn attention to the extremes of description that *Contingent* has generated, depending on whether or not the commentator perceives the presence of the body in Hesse’s work. Where a corporeal connotation is perceived, descriptions of the sculptures tend to be characterised by the gruesome, or a sense of pathos. The trope of veiling is also a recurrent theme, reflecting the language of anamorphosis where accepted limits of vision and perspective are disrupted. Lippard argued for such a memory of the body in Hesse’s work, *Connection*, 1969. Comprising of twenty hanging wire armatures wrapped with fibreglass cloth and painted with polyethelene, Hesse was apparently dissatisfied with the work, as she felt it was too decorative. *Connection*, originally titled, *Icicles*, was a collaborative work between Hesse, Johns and Schieve. In her description of the piece, Lippard claims that, ‘there is an extreme pathos to the twenty dangling units; they are attenuated remnants, skeletal in presence, disturbing and even ugly, rather than “too beautiful”’.⁹⁷ She also compares them with, ‘reaching organs (that) wither on their wire stems’.⁹⁸ Jeanne Siegel describes the work as, ‘thin bone-like skeins of fibreglass and polyester resin that reflected the light’.⁹⁹ Fer has commented on, ‘how Hesse’s work may bear the marks of the body, or have bodily connotations without being of the body, and without being symbols in the sense of individual forms standing in for parts of the body’.¹⁰⁰ Fer’s statement cogently summarises the critical responses to *Connection* and *Contingent* that discern a memory of the body inherent in Hesse’s sculptural work. Similarly, Joanna Greenhill has commented that, ‘The shadow or *memory* of the body is there, nothing more, nothing less, ...in the veiling of *Contingent*’.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Nixon, ‘“Child” Drawing’, 2006, p. 56.

⁹⁷ Lippard, ‘Eva Hesse’, 1976, p. 138.

⁹⁸ Lippard, ‘Eva Hesse’, 1976, p. 138.

⁹⁹ Jeanne Siegel, ‘Still Searching for Eva Hesse’, www.artnet.com/magazine/features/siegel/siegel17-17-02.asp, 2004, accessed 14 July, 2007.

¹⁰⁰ Briony Fer, ‘Bordering on Blank: Eva Hesse and Minimalism’, *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 57.

¹⁰¹ Joanna Greenhill, ‘Everything in Eva Hesse’s Work was Different...’, in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p. 228.

Wagner strongly criticised Chave's description of *Contingent* evoking soiled bandages and flayed skin and dismissed the argument that Hesse's life, art and writing could be related to the trope of a pathologised femininity deformed by a phallogentric culture. She argued that Chave reduced *Contingent* to a, 'catalyst of sensationally grisly comparisons.'¹⁰² Furthermore, Wagner describes her account as, 'an example of historically determined special pleading', charging Chave with reading Hesse's work retrospectively and ahistorically from her knowledge of the artist's brain cancer¹⁰³ Wagner stated that,

The terms of Chave's analysis of Hesse...are unthinkable without the artist's death and the subsequent uses made of her life and art; unthinkable likewise without the multiple stresses on the bodily imaginary effected in the age of AIDS: the stresses exerted not only by consciousness of a tragic epidemic, but by the commodification of horror and violence as the dominant cultural imagery of the day.¹⁰⁴

Wagner also argued that Chave's analysis amounted to a, 'polemical rewriting' of the ambitions, effects and meanings of Hesse's art; however I contend that Hesse's terminal illness should not be elided from the account of the making of *Contingent*.¹⁰⁵ I support Pollock's aim of fully acknowledging the physical and psychic pain that Hesse suffered, whilst not, 'drown(ing) the subject of a creative practice in an impoverished account of her suffering'.¹⁰⁶ Chave responded to Wagner's criticisms through a letter to the editor of *October* in 1995,

Turning to a specific sculpture discussed at length by Wagner: Eva Hesse produced *Contingent* from her sick bed, through the agency of assistants, in a time when she was intermittently swathed in bandages from her surgeries. The work is formed of mottled, yellowish-white, translucent latex over loosely rectangular sheets of cheesecloth, a fabric akin to gauze. That I should have evoked the image of "soiled bandages" and flayed skin in relation to *Contingent* strikes Wagner as exaggerated. I will have to leave it to others to decide whether this image is any more extreme than Wagner's evoking the window Hesse's mother jumped through in relation to the cloth-wrapped picture stretcher that forms the basis for *Hang Up*?¹⁰⁷

I agree with Chave that Wagner makes a similar connection between Hesse's life and art when she attributes the meaning of the window motif in Hesse's drawings as a return in representation to the

¹⁰² Wagner, 'Another Hesse', 2002, p. 151.

¹⁰³ Wagner, 'Another Hesse', 2002, p. 188, n. 26.

¹⁰⁴ Wagner, 'Another Hesse', 2002, p. 152.

¹⁰⁵ Wagner, 'Another Hesse', 2002, p. 152.

¹⁰⁶ Griselda Pollock, 'Encountering Encounter: An Introduction', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p. 20.

¹⁰⁷ Anna C. Chave, 'Response to "Another Hesse"', *October*, Vol. 71, Winter 1995, p. 147.

scene of Ruth Hesse's suicide.¹⁰⁸ Hesse herself did not attempt to separate the fact of her illness from the making of *Contingent*. In her statement that accompanied the work, she makes three separate comments regarding her illness; 'Collapsed April 6, 1969. I have been very ill'; 'out of hospital, short stay this time, third time' and, 'I cannot be certain yet. Can be from illness, can be from honesty'.¹⁰⁹ After Hesse's first operation in the spring of that year, Lippard also wrote,

When they finally discovered the brain tumor, they operated immediately. It was now April 18 in another day or so she would have been dead. Fortunately she remembered nothing but a few vague impressions from that time. When she awoke she recalled only "change of head gear, bandage, wrappings, care, very tender care, time – vague, and very real things. Space orientation all off – totally inaccurate and unaware, dislocated. Never afraid. Someone always there, never aloneness...No one knew what condition I'd be in after the operation. There were so many possibilities."¹¹⁰

When Hesse's words are read in conjunction with the statement that accompanies *Contingent*, it seems neither morbid or extreme to find connections between not only the physical resemblance to bandages that Chave refers to, but also the disruption of Hesse's spacial orientation and her awareness of the scope for differing possibilities.

Wagner has remarked upon the preliminary drawings for *Contingent* employing an explicitly phallic imagery, 'they visualize the elements that will become the work's eight hanging parts as having a kind of bodily energy and a quasi-organic thickness and substance: rather than hang, they seem to stand or rise, and sometimes culminate in a thick protuberant head'.¹¹¹ Wagner argues that these references are effectively eliminated by the act of hanging, the means by which *Contingent* abandons its claims to sculptural properties and becomes associated with painting. Consequently, the assumption that Hesse's work shifts towards painting reinforces Krauss's assertion of Hesse's refusal or inability to leave that specific discursive space. Indeed, Krauss argues that by infusing the rigid materials normally associated with sculpture with luminosity and radiance, Hesse was effectively addressing the problematic of two dimensions, as opposed to the three dimensions of sculpture.¹¹²

Joanna Greenhill recalls her first encounter with Hesse's sculpture through Lippard's monograph. And

¹⁰⁸ Wagner, 'Another Hesse', 2002, p. 167.

¹⁰⁹ Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, 1976, p. 165.

¹¹⁰ Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, 1976, p. 154.

¹¹¹ Wagner, 'Another Hesse', 2002, p. 178.

¹¹² Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', 2002, p. 50.

later at the Whitechapel Gallery. She comments on the 'anarchic' quality of Hesse's work, contrasting with the traditional expectation that sculpture should possess a strong structure and form and be able to withstand the passage of time.¹¹³ Greenhill reflects that Hesse's art practice offered a counter model to formal or "real" sculpture, but recognises that this was not a new idea as such, but came out of the movements of minimalist and conceptual art. She claims that, 'A key issue was that it would be seen more broadly as fine-art-based work rather than sculpture because of the ease in which it moved between two-dimensional and three-dimensional space'.¹¹⁴ It is interesting to note that Greenhill discerns an 'ease' in Hesse's negotiation of the categories of painting and sculpture, whereas in Krauss's view there is an unresolved tension. Greenhill recognises that Hesse's practice is aligned to minimalist art, but radically different from it. Krauss, however, argues that Hesse's work is 'unthinkable' without minimalist precedents. Indeed, she asks, 'How can an oeuvre so visibly built on the armature of a predominantly minimalist discourse be simply termed "original"?'¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Greenhill states that, 'the difference was that Eva Hesse was a woman and could operate more completely as a role model for future generations of artists', whereas Krauss rejects feminist readings as cases of special pleading.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Joanna Greenhill, 'Everything in Eva Hesse's Work was Different...', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p. 229.

¹¹⁴ Greenhill, 'Everything in Eva Hesse's Work was Different...', 2006, p. 227.

¹¹⁵ Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', 2002, p. 30.

¹¹⁶ Greenhill, 'Everything in Eva Hesse's Work was Different', 2006, p. 227.

CHAPTER THREE

Krauss's Anamorphic Condition

In this chapter I examine Rosalind Krauss's critical encounter with the work of Hesse, specifically the claim that Hesse's oeuvre can be read as a reinvention of anamorphosis for the historical moment in which her practice is located. I elaborate on the various aspects of Krauss's notion of an anamorphic condition, situating her critical approach both within a Lacanian model of vision, and the debates into which Hesse was formally and structurally intervening. I also consider Krauss's reading of *Contingent* in the light of other interpretations of Hesse's work, and within the wider art historical discourse that has sometimes tended to mythologise the artist's life.

Krauss's essay, '*Contingent*' reconstructs the New York art world of a decade earlier; drawing a comparison between Hesse's sudden entry into public awareness, when an image of *Contingent* appeared on the front cover of the highly influential magazine *Artforum*, and the vigorous, rapidly shifting contemporary art scene of 1960s New York. Hesse's work intervened in the multiple debates that characterised the aesthetic discourse of that time and place. Art practices such as Minimalism, Conceptual art and Performance art all explored radical new possibilities in the relation between viewer and art work, and indeed how the art object should be defined. Krauss's essay crystallises a historical moment when there was a vigorous reassessment of the categories of painting and sculpture and the art works that could be said to operate in the 'gap' between these conventions. For Krauss, it was the device of anamorphosis, predicated on two systems of visibility coalescing in one image, that provided a critical intervention in these debates. Later critical assessments, specifically those proposed by Kathryn Tuma and Briony Fer, do not read Hesse's practice in terms of anamorphosis, but rather favour a logic of rotation.

Krauss emphasises the importance of Lacanian psychoanalytical theory in the construction of her counter-history of modernism, defined by a cancellation of empirical vision, 'Lacan, it struck me, provided a key to this refusal, a way of giving it a name'.¹ On 2 December, 1975, Lacan gave a lecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where Krauss had been teaching from 1974.²

¹ Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1994, p. 22.

² Lacan visited the United States from February to March, 1966 where he gave lectures on the subject of desire and demand at Columbia University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University, the University of Detroit, the University of Michigan and the University of Chicago. He also addressed a colloquium at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore. In the same year, Lacan published *Écrits*. In 1975, Lacan returned and lectured at Yale

The journal *October* was founded in 1976 by Krauss and Annette Michelson, and its contents prominently featured Lacan's psychoanalytical texts. In the first issue, Krauss deployed Lacan's concept of the '*vide*' (void) in her article, 'Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism', where she draws an analogy between the narcissistic projections of the analysand and performances by video artists such as Vito Acconci and Bruce Nauman.³ In 1977 and 1978, the publication in English of *Écrits* and *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* were pivotal moments in the transmission of Lacanian theory in the anglophone world. Krauss's essay on *Contingent*, her first critical appraisal of Eva Hesse's work, appeared in 1979. Krauss relates *Contingent* to the visual system of anamorphosis, although she makes no explicit reference to Lacan's text. I would argue, however, that Krauss's essay should be considered in the light of the publication of the translation of Baltrušaitis' work in 1976, the 1977 exhibition *Anamorphic Art*, and the publication of the translations of Lacan's theories.

A striking aspect of Krauss's analysis of *Contingent* is her claim that an anamorphic effect resonates in Hesse's oeuvre, entailing form and matter exhibiting the potential of a mutual eclipse. Krauss's model of the anamorphic condition is grounded in Lacanian psychoanalytical theory, specifically the seminar on anamorphosis in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* discussed in Chapter One.⁴ Krauss's identification of the anamorphic is not limited to her analysis of Hesse's work, as she also discusses the visual strategy in relation to the artists Claude Cahun, Giorgio de Chirico and Salvador Dalí. In the case of the pre-Surrealist artist, de Chirico, Krauss discerns an anamorphic quality in the tension perceived between figure and ground.⁵ She also discusses Dalí's preoccupation with the, 'psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic object' and its position within a, 'modality of misrecognition'.⁶ Finally, Krauss associates anamorphosis with the avoidance and destabilisation of form, and thereby with Georges Bataille's concept of the *Informe*.⁷

University. On the 24 November, he took part in a general discussion on the interpretation of dreams and the following day he discussed the hysteric as productive of knowledge, and properties of Borromean knots. On 1 December, Lacan participated in a general question and answer session and on 2 December, he lectured at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he defined linguistics as that which gives psychoanalysis a hold on science.

³ Rosalind E. Krauss, 'Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism', *October*, Vol. 1, Spring, 1976, 50-64.

⁴ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York and London: Norton, 1998.

⁵ Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994, p. 92.

⁶ Krauss, 'The Optical Unconscious', 1994, p.149.

⁷ 'Formless' or 'informe' is an entry in the 'critical dictionary' of the French surrealist, Georges Bataille, published in his periodical, *Documents*, 1929-30. The term evokes the degradation of form and meaning; a transgression of the role of art in Western aesthetic discourse. Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer comments that, 'Bataille viewed this operation as an aggression against established, academic, and bourgeois aesthetic demands and norms. His use of vile analogies for formlessness (such as spittle, excrement, or crawling insects) was intended to undermine logic, purpose, propriety, hierarchy, and idealism, while emphasising, by contrast, base materiality ("base matter", lack of meaning and formal definition as part of a strategy of counter-Freudian sublimation)', Nina Athanassoglou Kallmyer,

Rosalind Epstein Krauss was born in 1941 and grew up in the Washington D.C. area. She attended Wellesley College, followed by Harvard University where she received a Ph.D. for her research on the American sculptor David Smith in 1969 (later published as *Terminal Iron Works* in 1971). Krauss was at Harvard at the same time as the art critic and historian, Michael Fried. Both were followers of Clement Greenberg, but later rejected his formalist model of modernism predicated on opticality. From the late 1960s, Krauss had been contributing to *Artforum* and *Art International*, including articles on Donald Judd and Jasper Johns. Krauss became an associate professor of Art History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and was promoted to the position of full professor within two years. In 1971 she became a contributing editor of *Artforum* where the following year she published 'A View of Modernism', an essay that begins to refute the tenets of Greenbergian formalism. In 1972, Krauss left M.I.T. to take a position at Princeton University and in 1975, she became an associate professor of Hunter College in New York. The following year, Krauss left *Artforum* and together with Annette Michelson and the artist Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, she founded *October*, a journal that introduced ideas of French post-structuralist theory, popularised by Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes. In his book on Krauss, David Carrier assesses her influence as a critic and theorist in the following terms,

The story of her [Krauss's] career can, with pardonable exaggeration, be taken for the history of American criticism in this period. After Greenberg, no one has had as much influence on American art critics as Krauss. Her style of argument (though not always her taste) has been immensely important. Many art critics and, more recently, some art historians are heavily indebted to her ways of thinking. With her collaborators at *October*, the journal she co-founded, Krauss defined the dominant style of present-day academic writing.⁸

Carrier proposes that four stages of Krauss's critical writing can be identified. The first comprises early formalist essays from the 1960s when Krauss was a follower of Clement Greenberg. This includes her book on David Smith, *Terminal Iron Works*. The second phase is described as an anti-

'Ugliness', in *Critical Terms for Art History*, Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, eds., Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 291. In 1997, Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss curated, *L'Informe: Mode d'emploi*, at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. The exhibition included works by Marcel Duchamp, Jean Fautier, Cy Twombly, Claes Oldenburg, Mike Kelly, Robert Morris and Gordon Matta Clark. Only four women artists were included, namely Eva Hesse, Yayoi Kusama, Lygia Clark and Cindy Sherman. Structured around four non-chronological categories of Horizontality, Base Materialism, Pulse and Entropy, Hesse's *Seven Poles*, 1970 was exhibited in the Horizontality category.

⁸ David Carrier, *Rosalind Krauss and American Philosophical Art Criticism: From Formalism to Beyond Postmodernism*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002, p. 2.

formalist narrative of modernist sculpture developed in the 1970s in *Passages in Modern Sculpture*.⁹ The third stage covering the period of the 1980s is characterised by structuralist theorising in, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*. The fourth stage comprises post-structuralist accounts of the semiology of cubism and the 'informal' in modernism and postmodernism.¹⁰ Krauss's essay, *Contingent* was written in 1979 and should be positioned in the second stage that Carrier identifies, two years after the first publication of *Passages in Modern Sculpture*. However in Krauss's influential account of modernist sculpture, Hesse's work is briefly mentioned. Concentrating mainly on the work of Serra, Judd, Andre, Johns and Stella, Krauss describes Hesse as a major proponent of process art. She claims that the observable logic of Hesse's work is the principle of transformation, stating that, 'Working with processes of melting and rolling, or melting and molding, Hesse gives her objects an anthropological imagery, as though attention to that initial change from raw to processed brought her into a sculptural space that was itself extremely archaic'.¹¹ Krauss also includes an image of *Contingent*, juxtaposed with an image of Carl Andre's floor piece, *Twelfth Copper Corner*, 1975.

Krauss's text was written ten years after the making of *Contingent* for a catalogue that accompanied the exhibition *Eva Hesse: Sculpture* at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London; the first major exhibition of Hesse's work in Europe and the first time that Krauss had addressed Hesse's work.¹² The essay was later to be included as a chapter of *Bachelors*, Krauss's collection of essays on nine women artists. Krauss revisited Hesse's art practice in her later essay, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', written in 1993, as a chapter of *The Optical Unconscious*. In a foreword written by Nicholas Serota, the director of the gallery, the emphasis on Hesse's authority that pervades Krauss's text is reiterated, 'Looking at Eva Hesse's sculpture today one is struck by its authority and its continued freshness nearly ten years after her death'.¹³ The catalogue comprises Serota's foreword, Krauss's essay, 'Eva Hesse' (later to be entitled 'Eva Hesse: Contingent') and a selection of extracts from

⁹ In *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Krauss traces a reformulation of the sculptural object, involving a radical transformation of what we expect sculpture to be. Pointing to early precedents in the work of Rodin and Brâncuși, she analyses works that lack a unitary point of view and demand a more active perceptual engagement (including movement) from the viewer. Such works additionally generate an explicit awareness of this activity.

¹⁰ Carrier, *Rosalind Krauss and American Philosophical Art Criticism*, 2002, p. 2.

¹¹ Rosalind E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1981, p. 272.

¹² The exhibition *Eva Hesse: Sculpture* was held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 4 May – 17 June 1979; followed by the Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, 30 June -5 August 1979 and Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hannover, 17 August -23 September, 1979. Krauss states that, 'My first written appraisal of Hesse's work was as a catalogue introduction to *Eva Hesse: Sculpture*...in which I analyze her work in relation to painting, particularly the problematic connected to anamorphosis', Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 1994, p. 329, n. 71.

¹³ Nicholas Serota, 'Foreword', in *Eva Hesse: Sculpture*, ed. Nicholas Serota, London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1979. Of course I am aware of the contradictions inherent in Krauss's work, specifically the uneasy tension between authority and docility in her critical account of Hesse.

Hesse's notebooks chosen by Hesse's friend, Naomi Spector¹⁴. Krauss's text is accompanied by both a photograph of *Contingent* and the front cover of *Artforum* (followed by images of Jasper Johns's *Canvas*, 1966, Jackson Pollock's *Untitled*, 1951 and Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, 1533). Ironically, although Krauss's essay concentrates on *Contingent* and Hesse's statement and two related studies are reproduced, the work did not form part of this exhibition and functions as a marker of absence. In reviewing the 2002 retrospective of Hesse's work at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Pamela M. Lee also commented on this lack, 'Some major later works are striking in their absence (one thinks in particular of *Contingent*, 1969, and *Augment*, 1968), forcing us to imagine them crumbling away in a warehouse somewhere'.¹⁵ Indeed, it seems rather incongruous in the specific context of this exhibition that although the front cover of the catalogue was dominated by an image of *Untitled (Rope Piece)*, 1970, a work that appeared in the exhibition, the critical emphasis of Krauss's essay is firmly on *Contingent*.

In Krauss's essay '*Contingent*', she begins by describing the New York art world of the 1960s as, 'a center of self-confident aesthetic energy on which there was lavished money, glamour, attention'.¹⁶ Krauss identifies the New York School as the catalyst for transforming, 'a provincial bohemia into a boomtown'.¹⁷ With the emergence of Abstract Expressionism in the 1940s and 50s, the centre of the international art world had shifted from Paris to New York. The Second World War had precipitated violent changes. Groups of artists in Europe were disrupted and many fled to the United States, particularly the Surrealists. By 1942, the group including Breton, Ernst, Masson, Tanguy, Dalí, Kurt Seligmann and Matta, together with Léger, Mondrian, Chagall, Feininger, Jacques Lipschitz and Gabo, along with many art historians, critics and art dealers had come to America. New York also contained significant collections of modern art. At the end of the war, the United States became an influential cultural, as well as political and economic world power, promoting the development of a vigorous new art movement.¹⁸

Krauss compares the New York art world of the 1960s to, 'a small, private company gone suddenly, euphorically, dizzyingly public'.¹⁹ Annette Van den Bosch has commented that, 'the marketing of the 'new' that characterised American capitalism was successfully applied to works of art, leading to an

¹⁴ Naomi Spector worked at the Fischbach gallery.

¹⁵ Pamela M. Lee, 'Eva Hesse: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art', *Artforum*, May 2002.

¹⁶ Rosalind Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 27.

¹⁷ Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', 2002, p. 27.

¹⁸ Herschul B. Chipp, with contributions by Peter Selz and Joshua C. Taylor, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968, p. 507.

¹⁹ Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', 2002, p. 27.

altered situation in the art world as well as the markets in other countries that adopted New York practices. The speculative character of the 1960s market for modern and contemporary art meant that those works could be resold more quickly than older paintings'.²⁰ Widespread doubts concerning international currencies injected more money into the art market and from the late 1960s there was an increasingly close connection between the art market and international money markets, for example, the boom in the art market of 1967 to 1968 was a consequence of the reevaluation of sterling in 1967. A renewed interest in art investment also coincided with the devaluation of the French franc in 1969. By the late 1960s, the main collectors of contemporary American art were located in Germany, Italy and Japan. Van den Bosch describes the New York art world and market of the 1960s as being characterised by a rapid processing of styles and reputations.²¹ This sense of vigorous change is reflected in Krauss's text where she describes Hesse entering the art world discourse, 'through one simple stroke' and achieving, 'instantaneous recognition'.²² Krauss argues that as well as its economic connotations, the word 'public' also carries the notion of discourse, 'a collective language about the aims, ideals and even rules of a given enterprise, the conversion of a merely private preoccupation into a discipline'.²³ As I discussed in Chapter Two, Krauss identifies *Artforum* as the centre of art world discourse at that time. She comments that the publication of an image of *Contingent* appearing on the front cover meant that, 'a relatively unknown artist was suddenly acknowledged as having a voice of extraordinary authority'.²⁴ Krauss argues that authority a decade of public debate had paved the way for Hesse's entry into the aesthetic discourse of the time.

What aspects characterised the nature of this public debate? Jon Bird and Michael Newman have commented on the 'porousness' of the categories of Conceptual art, Minimalism and Performance art (the movements associated with Process art and Earth art could arguably also be added to this list). These art practices often represented a critique of social and cultural value systems and explored new possibilities of a different relation between art work and viewer. Peter Osborne asserts that Conceptual art represented a radical attempt to realign two independent domains of the cultural field, namely the productions of art and philosophy. He argues that this also involved an attempt to transfer the cultural authority associated with philosophy to the domain of art production. Osborne claims that the discursive conditions for this transference were established by Greenberg's notion of

²⁰ Annette Van den Bosch, *The Australian Art World: Aesthetics in a Global Market*, Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin Academic, 2005, p. 19.

²¹ Van den Bosch, *The Australian Art World*, 2005, p. 19.

²² Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', 2002, pps. 27-28.

²³ Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', 2002, p. 27.

²⁴ Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', 2002, p. 27.

Modernist art as a self-critical art which explored the definition of its medium. The social conditions were influenced by an expansion and transformation of art education in the 1960s, within a context of growing cultural and political radicalism. Osborne comments that, 'The generation of New York artists who came to prominence in the 1960s were the first group of artists to have attended university. Their reaction against the anti-intellectualism of the prevailing ideology of the art world – which was at one a reaction against its social conservatism – was profound'.²⁵ Benjamin Buchloh argues that oppositions within the formation of Conceptual art arose in part from differing readings of Minimal sculpture (and its pictorial equivalents in the painting of Mangold, Ryman and Stella), and how the new generation of artists emerging in 1965 responded to those readings and the Minimalist artists they selected as their own central figures of reference (for example, Dan Graham engaged with the work of Sol LeWitt, whereas Mel Bochner chose Dan Flavin as his primary influence). Buchloh also cites Bochner's exhibition, *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art* at the School of Visual Arts in 1966, as probably the first truly conceptual exhibition. Bochner assembled drawings, sketches and documents associated with his art production and placed Xerox copies in four loose-leaf binders that were presented on four plinths, an intervention that Buchloh describes as transforming the format and space of exhibitions.²⁶

In 1973, Lucy Lippard defined the period from 1966 to 1972 as one in which the art object was dematerialised through the new practices of Conceptual art.²⁷ She describes the process of dematerialisation as a process characterised by a de-emphasis on material aspects of the art work such as uniqueness, permanence and decorative appeal. Lippard comments that, "'Eccentric Abstraction", "Anti-Form", "Process Art", "Anti-Illusionism", or whatever, did come about partly as a reaction against the industrialized geometry and sheer bulk of much minimal art. Yet minimal art was itself anti-formalist in its non-relational approach, its insistence on a neutralization of "composition" and other hierarchical distinctions. Sol LeWitt's premise that the concept or idea was more important than the visual results of the system that generated the object undermined formalism by insisting on a return to content'.²⁸

²⁵ Peter Osborne, 'Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy', in *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, Michael Newman and Jon Bird, eds., Reaktion Books: London, 1999, p. 50.

²⁶ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions', *October*, Vol. 55, Winter, 1990, p. 109.

²⁷ Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997.

²⁸ Lippard, *Six Years*, 1997, p. 5.

Lippard's, *Eccentric Abstraction* has become a landmark exhibition in the trajectory of conceptual art. It opened on 20 September, 1966 at Fischbach, a small commercial gallery of contemporary art in New York and included work by Alice Adams, Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse, Gary Kuehn, Bruce Nauman, Don Potts, Keith Sonnier and Frank Lincoln Viner.²⁹ Richard Williams states that the exhibition has retained, 'a substantial existence in subsequent histories of 1960s art, appearing in work by Lippard herself in 1971, and more recent critical writing by Rosalind Krauss and Briony Fer. However, nobody much seems to have liked it, including Lippard who wrote in 1971 that it had received an 'unjustified' amount of attention, 'because several of the artists in it are now so well known'...If it was something of a critical failure, 'Eccentric Abstraction' was nevertheless a project to which sustained critical attention was directed'.³⁰ Significantly, Lippard made the claim that the eccentric idiom was more closely related to abstract painting than to any sculptural form. Williams describes 'Eccentric Abstraction' as a, 'project conceived with Minimal Art very much in mind. As an exhibition it presented work that closely resembled Minimal Art, and as a phenomenon of the New York art scene, it was literally surrounded by it. As an artistic concept, it also resembled Minimal Art, in proposing a fundamentally abstract art, unitary in form, and three-dimensional, but (rhetorically) closer to painting than sculpture. It was of Minimal Art, but a departure from it'.³¹ Krauss recounts how Lippard's exhibition was tailored to, among others', Hesse's new work which Lippard saw as a, 'collection of bulbous, organlike, erotico-abstract forms' that aggressively challenged minimalist sculpture, but that Hesse surprised her by submitting *Metronomic Irregularity II*, 1966, where a tangle of cotton-covered wire projects from three square panels mounted on the wall.³² The work was criticised by Hilton Kramer for its 'second-hand' vocabulary, as he argued that it, 'simply adapts the imagery of Jackson Pollock's drip painting to a three-dimensional medium'.³³

Kramer's critical appraisal of *Metronomic Irregularity II* therefore appears to suggest that Hesse's work combines Abstract Expressionism with Minimalism. The relationship between painting and

²⁹ Lippard's exhibition was preceded by a lecture on 'Eccentric Abstraction' that she presented at the University of California, Berkeley and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in the summer of 1966. She asserted that, 'I was not trying to "create a movement," but rather to indicate that there were emotive or "eccentric" or erotic alternatives to a solemn and deadset Minimalism which still retained the clarity of that notion', Lucy R. Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, New York, New York University Press: 1976, p. 83.

³⁰ Richard J. Williams, *After Modern Sculpture: Art in the United States and Europe 1965-70*, Manchester, Manchester University Press: 2000, p. 43.

³¹ Williams, *After Modern Sculpture*, 2000, pps. 46-47.

³² Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 1994, p. 319. Lippard commented, 'At the time, I was somewhat surprised at the precision of *Metronomic Irregularity II*, although that same precision amounted in fact to the maze-like obsessiveness (image merged with process) I found one of the most attractive aspects of Hesse's work. I was even a little disappointed, selfishly, not because the piece wasn't beautiful, but because I had conceived the exhibition in terms of the more organic character of Hesse's work', Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, 1976, p. 83.

³³ Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 1994, p. 319.

sculpture had become a significant issue particularly during the mid-1960s when many painters turned to three-dimensional work. Lippard comments that, 'Sculpture was suddenly more "real" in its literalness and physicality, while painting and its illusionism were whispered to be dead. Hilton Kramer deplored this tendency in his review of "Eccentric Abstraction," where he compared Hesse to Pollock: "Forms that were once part of the imagery of painting have now been set physically free to occupy real space – and lots of it. What was formerly part of the metaphorical and expressive fabric of painting is now offered as a literal *thing*. A kind of technological positivism triumphs, but at the expense, I think, of a genuine imaginative probity. Of course, much of the history of recent painting and sculpture is the history of such positivistic reduction. In this respect 'Eccentric Abstraction' only conforms to a general tendency to substitute the literal for the metaphorical, and to compensate with inflated physical scale for the diminution of imaginative energy. Here, as elsewhere, the prose of literal minds effectively displaces the old poetry"³⁴ The following year Lippard responded to Kramer's criticism by stating that, "Three-dimensional objects can, I believe, return to the vocabulary of previous painting and sculpture, and by changing the syntax and the accents, more fully explore avenues exhausted in two dimensions or conventional materials and scale without risk of being unoriginal or reactionary'.³⁵ The exchange between Kramer and Lippard underlines the fiercely contested nature of the debates surrounding painting and sculpture at this time. Alex Potts reminds us that the, 'shift into three dimensions was not limited to, and certainly not exclusively initiated in, the New York art world. Even so, the distinctive conditions prevailing there were such that the new situation of the sculptural object was debated with particular intensity and clarity'.³⁶

Whilst insisting on Hesse's originality, Krauss asserts that, 'Hesse's art depends, to an extreme degree, on the aesthetic discourse of the 1960s, on that public debate through which the notions of minimalism were articulated both in writing and in objects: notions of serial order and modular repetition; notions of architectural scale and scaffolding by means of lattices and grids'.³⁷ Krauss argues that Hesse's work, *Sans II*, 1968, is 'unthinkable' without the precedents of Donald Judd, Carl Andre and Ellsworth Kelly. *Accretion*, 1968 and *Vinculum*, 1969 are described as being 'conditioned' by the leaning slabs of John McCracken and Dan Flavin's installations of fluorescent tubing, a choice of word that carries connotations of a significant degree of influence. *Accession II*, 1969, 'begins in the work of Judd, Robert Morris, and most important, Sol LeWitt', whilst *Hang Up*, 1966,

³⁴ Lucy R. Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, New York: New York University Press, 1976, pps 118-189.

³⁵ Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, 1976

³⁶ Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, p. xi.

³⁷ Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', 2002, p. 29.

is compared to the work of Dan Flavin and Jasper Johns. Furthermore, Krauss claims that Hesse's work is given, 'a necessary kind of permission by the soft sculpture of Claes Oldenburg and by the obsessional and sadomasochistic imagery and forms of Lucas Samaras' and cites Agnes Martin and Jackson Pollock as further influences.³⁸ Words such as, 'unthinkable', 'conditioned' and 'permission' suggest that the outcomes of Hesse's work were already determined and could give the impression that Hesse's work was merely derivative. Krauss describes it as, 'the paradox of Hesse's originality: how is an oeuvre so visibly built on the armature of a predominantly minimalist discourse to be simply termed "original"?'³⁹ Krauss answers this question by turning to Hesse's manipulation of the conventions of painting and sculpture, an intervention that Krauss situates within a framework of anamorphosis.

In her description of *Contingent*, Krauss comments that, 'In those flattened, rectilinear stretches of fabric there is an ineluctable reference to the surface and format of painting. Further, through the experience of light and color that *Contingent* generates as its condition or ambience, we feel ourselves to be in the affective terrain of painting. But *Contingent* is not a painting. And this is so because its flattened fields are not parallel but at right angles to the wall. Faced with the spread of *Contingent*, what we see is a series of edges: the edges of planes that self-evidently occupy the real space in which they hang'.⁴⁰ Writing over twenty years later, Alex Potts describes the panels in similar terms as, 'slightly different abstract sheets, each roughly formatted Rothko-like in large rectangular fields', but that the positioning of the units prevents the perception of them as paintings.⁴¹ Indeed, we can observe that the work is still being described in terms of another artist, in the way that Kramer compared Hesse to Pollock. Suzanne Hudson states that, in Krauss's reading, *Contingent*'s exemption from the category of painting derives from the work's position to the wall, '*Contingent* was sculpture or painting that approached the condition of sculpture obliquely as an unreachable if nameable limit'.⁴² Krauss proposes that this 'nameable limit' can be exemplified by anamorphic perspective.

Krauss refers to one of the most widely known examples of anamorphic art, *The Ambassadors*, Hans Holbein the Younger's full-length, double portrait of the French ambassador Jean de Dinteville and his friend, Georges de Selve, bishop of Lavaur, painted in 1533 (see Fig. 4). The work's arresting feature is an anamorphic image of a skull centrally placed at the bottom of the

³⁸ Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', 2002, p. 29.

³⁹ Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', 2002, p. 30.

⁴⁰ Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', 2002, p. 30.

⁴¹ Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 2000, p. 338.

⁴² Suzanne P. Hudson, *Robert Ryman: Used Paint*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009, p. 195.

painting. It is fully coherent only from an acute angle and appears to function as a *momento mori*. Krauss argues that Holbein's *Ambassadors* is marked by its insistence on, 'two different, mutually exclusive vantages: the one within the world, from which death is not visible; and the one outside, or at an angle to it, from which death is seen because the "world" is not'.⁴³ This assertion forms the crux of Krauss's comparison with *Contingent*, as she considers the work embodies the condition of a 'mutual eclipse'; in this case, that of the separate modalities of painting and sculpture, as opposed to Holbein's vision of death's presence in life. Krauss proposes that the work is characterised by a double perspective; when viewed from the front, the edges manifest the sculptural; whereas viewing at an angle emphasises the surfaces and planes of the panels, thereby reiterating the pictorial. Through this particular emphasis, Krauss is firmly locating Hesse's work within the parameters of 1960s aesthetic discourse, specifically its attempts to legitimise the internal structure of a given work. Hudson comments that, 'The literalism of minimalism distended illusionism into a lateral material spread across discrete objects and multiple parts, and Hesse pressed this division until form and matter were disjointed yet inextricable'.⁴⁴

Krauss's reading of *Contingent*, in common with her critical approach as a whole, draws extensively on Lacanian psychoanalytical theory. During Lacan's 1964 lecture on anamorphosis, he handed around the audience a reproduction of Holbein's *Ambassadors* to illustrate and affirm his proposition that the anamorph is a symbol of the function of the lack.⁴⁵ Krauss figuratively adopts a similar method when she asks her audience to consider *Contingent* in the light of both Holbein's portrait, and her own imagined scenario of a curator installing a group of Rembrandts at a ninety degree angle to the wall,

Within the problematics of painting, this particular experience of edge would be produced, for example, by a museum where, through some caprice of the curator, a group of, say, Rembrandts has been installed at a ninety-degree angle to the wall so that as the viewer faces the works all he or she could really see would be the sides of their frames. In this hypothetical case the paintings, the Rembrandts, would have been rendered "useless", their normal function—that of making a certain order of things visible—annulled; and instead we would be given the extrapictorial anomaly of the painting-object, or the painting-as-object. We would see, that is, the objecthood of the painting (the painting-object) eclipsing its "use".⁴⁶

⁴³ Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', 2002, p. 31.

⁴⁴ Hudson, *Robert Ryman*, 2009, p. 196.

⁴⁵ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XI The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998, p. 85.

⁴⁶ Rosalind E. Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 30.

In this part of Krauss's text, the use of the term 'objecthood' invokes Michael Fried's highly influential essay, "Art and Objecthood" of 1965, which first appeared in *Artforum*.⁴⁷ Fried was responding to the works and critical positions adopted by a number of artists for whom Donald Judd's essay "Specific Objects" had been regarded as a defining moment in reformulating the conceptual parameters of art production. Judd's essay was drafted in 1964 and published a year later in *Arts Yearbook*. The 'specificity' that Judd strove towards was a rejection of compositional works in favour of a unified single object, for he made the claim that, 'It isn't necessary for a work to have a lot of things to look at, to compare, to analyze one by one, to contemplate. The thing as a whole, its quality as a whole, is what is interesting. The main things are alone and are more intense, clear and powerful. They are not diluted by an inherited format, variations of a form, mild contrasts and connecting parts and areas'.⁴⁸ In his own art practice, Judd had abandoned painting to produce reliefs and free-standing objects, viewing 'three-dimensional work' as an 'obvious' alternative to the categories of painting and sculpture. In his critique of the former, Judd claimed that the main thing 'wrong' with painting was that it was confined to a rectangular plane placed flat against a wall, 'In work before 1946 the edges of the rectangle are a boundary, the end of the picture. The composition must react to the edges and the rectangle must be unified, but the shape of the rectangle is not stressed; the parts are more important, and the relationships of color and form occur among them'.⁴⁹ However, Judd cites the paintings of Pollock, Rothko, Still, Newman, Reinhardt and Noland as nearly attaining the status of being an entity, rather than, 'the undefinable sum of a group of entities and references'.⁵⁰ In Judd's view, 'three dimensional work' expunges the problems of illusionism and the space around marks and colours – described by Judd as the, 'riddance of one of the salient and most objectionable relics of European art'.⁵¹ James Meyer comments that Judd later recalled that he did not intend the essay to be polemical, but rather a neutral survey of the state of contemporary art.⁵² However, I would concur with Meyer that nevertheless the essay is very persuasive in presenting Judd's highly selective account of the "specific". Meyer describes Judd's Specific Object as a hybrid form between painting and sculpture that conforms to no particular style, commenting that, 'Judd was not simply tired of applying paint to canvas; his Specific Object dispensed with the category of sculpture as well'.⁵³ Fried's "Art and Objecthood" forcefully rejects the claims of Judd

⁴⁷ Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', *Artforum*, 5, June 1967, 12-23.

⁴⁸ Donald Judd, 'Specific Objects', in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds., Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, pps. 827-828.

⁴⁹ Judd, 'Specific Objects', 2003, p. 825.

⁵⁰ Judd, 'Specific Objects', 2003, p. 825.

⁵¹ Judd, 'Specific Objects', 2003, p. 827.

⁵² James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004, p. 134.

⁵³ Meyer, *Minimalism*, 2004, p. 134.

and Robert Morris and their opposition to works of composed elements. Comparing the position of what he termed literalist art with regard to modernist painting and sculpture, Fried states that, 'Specifically, literalist art conceives of itself as neither one nor the other; on the contrary, it is motivated by specific reservations, or worse, about both; and it aspires, perhaps not exactly, or not immediately, to displace them, but in any case to establish itself as an independent art on a footing with either'.⁵⁴ Fried's major objection is that, 'the literalist espousal of objecthood amounts to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theatre; and theatre is now the negation of art'.⁵⁵ In Fried's view, the theatricality inherent in literalist or minimalist art stems from an overriding concern with the circumstances in which the viewer encounters the work. Anne Wagner describes this dynamic as the viewer being bound by a, 'special grammar of equivalency and responsiveness in which subject and object are proposed as mutual, even identical...The self of the viewer is now both objectified and made cognate to the sculptural object through the agency of sight'.⁵⁶

Krauss draws a comparison between the imagined scenario of the Rembrandt paintings turned at an angle with the strategy of anamorphosis, but it should be noted that she never makes the claim that *Contingent* represents a concrete example of this visual device, but rather that there, 'is a way in which *Contingent's* own double perspective is something like that of anamorphosis. From the front, the view is of the element's edges with their sculptural condition eclipsing that of the pictorial; from a raking angle, one's perception is of the surfaces of the banners and the planarity of the rectangular fields, a perception that foregrounds the pictorial aspect of the experience'.⁵⁷ Krauss deploys the term as a means of constructing an elaborate conceit that draws together a complexity of critical strands relating to Hesse's practice. First, Krauss sees anamorphosis as a metaphor for the transgression of conventional distinctions in painting and sculpture, much in the same way that the visual strategy subverts the rules of linear perspective. Similarly, Krauss has also claimed that Anthony Caro's work, *Early One Morning*, 1962, exemplifies two mutually exclusive vantages,

There are ...two ways of relating to *Early One Morning*. The first is to experience it as a physical construction...The second alternative arises from standing in front of the work and thereby experiencing it pictorially. The achievement of *Early One Morning* is not only that it provides these two possibilities but that it shows them to be mutually incompatible.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds., Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, pps. 827-828.

⁵⁵ Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', 2003, p. 838.

⁵⁶ Anne M. Wagner 'Reading Minimal Art', in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995. p. 14.

⁵⁷ Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent' 2002, p. 31.

⁵⁸ Rosalind E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981, p.191.

Minimalist sculptors often advocated that the viewer circumnavigate their work, Carl Andre, for example, claimed that his sculptures were not revealed from any single vantage.⁵⁹ The antithesis of this visual strategy may be found in Krauss's assessment of David Smith's reliance on frontality, a characteristic that she considered to be pictorial. Krauss then developed a concept of radical discontinuity, the notion that the relationship between the front and profile of a work may not be predictable, or that its faces necessarily coalesce to form a unified meaning.⁶⁰ Finally, Holbein's *momento mori* is also replicated in Krauss's text where she reminds the reader that, 'the month of Hesse's entry into the consciousness of a wider public for art was the month of her death at the age of thirty-four.'⁶¹ Other readings of Hesse's work draw upon similar poetic connections. Even Hesse's choice of materials and the deterioration of her works have been appropriated as a form of *momento mori*, with Doug Johns stating that, 'the deterioration was part of the concept. My interpretation of this is that it was her intention to bring the fourth dimension – time – into her sculpture.'⁶² In the title of her interview with Douglas Johns, Alison Rowley also invokes the concept of the fourth dimension, a popular tradition that had a significant influence on artists during the first three decades of the twentieth century. During this period, the 'fourth dimension' signified a higher unseen dimension of space that could offer a more true reality than visual perception alone. By the end of the nineteenth century, a second approach within the tradition had also developed in which time and motion were seen to play a positive role (an idea that gained widespread acceptance after 1919 with the popularisation of Einstein's General Theory of Relativity that is based on a four-dimensional space-time continuum).⁶³

Krauss has credited Lacan with providing a theoretical key to the conceptual counterhistory of modernism and consequently, her reading of an anamorphic condition generated by Hesse's work is rooted in Lacan's psychoanalytical interpretation of Holbein's portrait.⁶⁴ Collins has provided a succinct summary of the layers of meaning afforded by Lacan's engagement with the work,

For Lacan, the glimpse of 'death's head' in the painting would be more than simply a 'secret perspective' revealing a (clichéd) *momento mori*; rather, it would be a mnemonic device providing insights into the primordial realm. Witnessing the anamorphosis, several 'readings' occur simultaneously: the memory of the phallic signifier; the dislocation or removal of the self from the proper viewing position at stage center—that is, a re-enactment

⁵⁹ Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994, p. 95.

⁶⁰ Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective*, 1994, p. 96.

⁶¹ Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', 2002, p. 32.

⁶² Alison Rowley, 'The Fourth Dimension: Doug Johns interviewed by Alison Rowley', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p. 93.

⁶³ Linda Dalrymple Henderson, 'Italian futurism and "The Fourth Dimension"', *Art Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 4, Winter, 1981, 317-318.

⁶⁴ Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 1994, p. 22.

of the primordial anxiety of castration; and, finally, a view of the void-of death itself.⁶⁵

Lacan defines the anamorph as a, 'trap for the gaze', the very action of re-forming the stain into a coherent image is a self-reflexive act where the viewer apprehends herself, that is to say, she sees herself seeing herself.⁶⁶ For Krauss, this system of visibility is exemplified by the work of Marcel Duchamp, for example, she regards his fifteen year production of Precision Optics as a bridging between the nineteenth century psychophysiological model of vision and a later psychoanalytical one (exemplified by Lacan's reading of Holbein's work), as Krauss argues that the purpose of Duchamp's optical illusions is to address the relation of vision to desire.⁶⁷

Whereas Collins defines anamorphosis as primarily a strategy of disruption, for Krauss, its properties are more closely aligned to the tension between figure and ground, and thereby to the, 'two incompatible possibilities' that she pictures in the semiotic square or structuralist graph.⁶⁸ In her analysis of Max Ernst's over-paintings, specifically his construction of scenes contained within proscenium frames, Krauss makes reference to the influence of the pre-Surrealist, Greek-Italian artist, Giorgio de Chirico,

Ernst's own sense of the corners of an image are themselves indebted to de Chirico, to the revelation he received when he saw how the Italian painter could so warp the classical proscenium of central-point perspective's stagelike cavity that looking into and entering the deep space of the picture continually led to one's feeling of being thrown back to the surface again, as though trying to enter a centrifuge. De Chirico had not embraced the modernist solution of breaking down the opposition between figure and ground, of having the one-ground, say-rise up to become the canvas's "figure". Rather, he had developed a certain kind of tension between the two; more like anamorphosis.⁶⁹

Krauss discerns a similar tension in Hesse's work, manifested not only in the mutual eclipse of the conventions of painting and sculpture, but also in the potentiality of an eclipse of form and matter; the basis of Krauss's claim that Hesse's work represents, 'a kind of reinvention for her own time of the anamorphic condition'.⁷⁰

Krauss identifies what she terms a 'modality of misrecognition' integral to the viewer's contact with the anamorph in her discussion of Salvador Dalí's preoccupation with visual distortion (Dalí

⁶⁵ Collins, 'Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: Inverted Perspective and the Construction of the Gaze', pp. 80-81.

⁶⁶ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 1998, p. 89.

⁶⁷ Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 1994, p. 135.

⁶⁸ Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 1994, p. 21.

⁶⁹ Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 1994, p. 92.

⁷⁰ Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', 2002, p. 32.

deployed anamorphic strategies extensively in his work, including both the use of linear anamorphosis and catoptric anamorphoses that require a cylindrical mirror in order to rectify the image).⁷¹ Lacan, for example refers to Baltrusaitis' description of Holbein's anamorph resembling a cuttlefish, and then describes how in his view it resembles Dalí's work, *Retrospective Bust*, 1933 and Dalí's soft watches in *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931. This so-called 'modality of misrecognition' that derives from Lacanian theory has been explored from a different viewpoint by the analytical philosopher, John Hyman, in relation to his formulation of the occlusion shape principle, where the letter I represents a part of a picture's internal subject and D represents the smallest part of the picture that depicts that part of its internal subject, 'Anamorphosis is exceptional; for whereas we normally perceive a picture's internal subject by perceiving shapes and colours on its surface, anamorphosis requires us to *misperceive* D, in order to perceive I as we are meant to. Anamorphoses are, in effect, pictures that don't mean what they say'.⁷² Consequently, this system of vision, predicated on a misperception, makes its idiosyncratic demand of the viewer, namely that the observer is required to place themselves at a radically oblique angle to the picture plane and adopt a monocular, self-conscious gaze.

As I discussed in Chapter One, Daniel Collins has defined the viewer of the anamorphic image as the, 'eccentric observer...willing to sacrifice a centric vantage point for the possibility of catching a glimpse of the uncanny from a position off-axis'.⁷³ However, Collins proposes that that this vantage point does not refute the centric viewing position, but rather acts as its shadow. Consequently, the viewing subject is made aware of the oblique and contingent nature of their point of view. Indeed, Collins argues that, 'The act of viewing anamorphic images reasserts that the construction of vision is a dynamic, reflexive and self-critical operation'.⁷⁴ Its visual dynamic promotes the counter viewing position defined by Irit Rogoff as the, 'curious eye', as opposed to the, 'good eye' of art history that makes value judgments, and is exemplified by the pronouncements of Greenbergian formalism (Krauss described Clement Greenberg as the, 'champion' of the disembodied look)⁷⁵. As Rogoff states, 'curiosity implies a certain unsettling, a notion of things outside the realm of the known, of things not yet quite understood or articulated'.⁷⁶ The disconcerting effect produced by the anamorphic image therefore operates to undermine the illusion of transparency that sustains the

⁷¹ Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, p. 149.

⁷² John Hyman, 'Words and Pictures', in *Thought and Language*, ed. John Preston, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 73.

⁷³ Collins, 'Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: Inverted Perspective and the Construction of the Gaze', p. 73.

⁷⁴ Collins, 'Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: Inverted Perspective and the Construction of the Gaze', p. 74.

⁷⁵ Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 1994, p. 107.

⁷⁶ Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 33.

field of vision. Rogoff identifies the post-Enlightenment Western scientific and philosophical discourses that regarded vision as central to empirical notions of the world as perceivable, a neutral field in which an unsituated viewer deploys an innocent, objective eye.⁷⁷ She also cites Henri Lefebvre's critical concept of spacialization that negates the illusion of transparency and the associated notion of a disembodied and despatialized viewpoint. His claim that, 'Anything hidden or dissimulated – and hence dangerous – is antagonistic to transparency, under whose reign everything can be taken in by a single glance' may be applied to the transgressive quality of anamorphosis and its associated emphasis on contingency and subjectivity.⁷⁸ Rogoff argues that space is always racially and sexually differentiated, subject to invisible boundaries that determine inclusions and exclusions.⁷⁹ She identifies the shift towards the analysis of visual culture as providing methodologies that negotiate these problematics, and I would argue that it is within this critical framework, that it becomes feasible to widen the scope of Krauss's anamorphic reading to include an analysis of other art works.

Conversely, David Topper has contested the validity of appropriating anamorphosis as a metaphorical device, maintaining that any discussion of mutual exclusivity of vantage is based on a false premise.⁸⁰ He begins his argument by citing Bruno Latour's interpretation of the anamorph in Holbein's work as a metaphor for the conflict between the incompatible viewpoints of science and religion between about 1450 and 1550. Latour declared that the anamorph of the skull and the image of the two Frenchmen are mutually exclusive. However, Topper argues that this assertion is based on an erroneous viewing point of the lower left, whereas to fully reform the anamorph it is necessary to view the painting from the upper right. Topper then draws upon the perception theory of James Gibson and his exploration of the dual nature of visual perception to support his compelling argument that there is not a mutually exclusive relation between the anamorphic and non-anamorphic forms in Holbein's painting, as the viewer is quite able to attend to both shape constancy and perspective viewpoint simultaneously.⁸¹ Significantly, Topper also cites Lacan's error in situating the correct viewing point of *The Ambassadors* as being to the left.⁸² However, despite these apparent inaccuracies within the critical discourse surrounding the device, I would argue that Topper's argument does not detract from the value of anamorphosis as a strategy defined by its self-

⁷⁷ Rogoff, *Terra Infirma*, 2000, p. 33.

⁷⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Oxford and London: Blackwell, 1993, cited by Rogoff, *Terra Infirma*, p. 35.

⁷⁹ Rogoff, *Terra Infirma*, 2000, p. 35.

⁸⁰ David Topper, 'On Anamorphosis: Setting Some Things Straight', *Leonardo*, 33:2, 2000.

⁸¹ Topper, 'On Anamorphosis', 2000, p. 116.

⁸² Topper, 'On Anamorphosis', 2000, p.123, n.6.

reflexive visuality and transgressive qualities, and that it is possible to demonstrate that works of contemporary art enact reinventions for their own time of Krauss's anamorphic condition.

Whereas Krauss elects to read *Contingent* in relation to the order of anamorphic perspective, it is useful to consider later critical approaches to Hesse's work. Kathryn A. Tuma's essay, 'Eva Hesse's Turn: Rotations Around the Circle Drawings' was written to accompany the exhibition *Eva Hesse Drawing* at the Drawing Center, New York, where Tuma was Assistant Curator of Historical Exhibitions from 2002 to 2004 and Associate Curator from 2004 to 2005.⁸³ Her essay is particularly significant, as it provides a rare example of an analysis that attempts to counter Krauss's identification of an anamorphic condition in Hesse's work. Although Tuma praises Krauss's text as, 'one of the best and earliest critical efforts to encapsulate the nuances of Hesse's work', she nevertheless rejects a reading that relies on the device of anamorphosis, suggesting that Krauss's interpretation may instead be related to a logic of rotation inherent in Hesse's creative process. Furthermore, Tuma contests Krauss's association of Hesse with notions of complicity and obedience, arguing that Hesse's late, sculptural works operate in an interstitial space between the logics of two and three-dimensional art practices, demonstrating the revolutionary turn as its defining aspect.⁸⁴

Tuma utilises Mel Bochner's work, *Wrap: Portrait of Eve Hesse*, 1966, as a means of emphasising the centrality of rotational logic in Hesse's work, reflecting the many ways in which the extensive discourse that has grown around Hesse is punctuated by Bochner's comments regarding her work and his memories of their friendship. In 1966, Bochner gave Hesse his portrait of her, composed of concentric circles of words spiralling on graph paper (Fig. 5). Bochner also made portraits for Ad Reinhardt, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Robert Smithson and Sol LeWitt, although it is the portrait of Hesse that is most often reproduced and included in analyses of her work. Anne M. Wagner, for example, opens her essay, 'Another Hesse' with not only a reproduction of Bochner's work, but a transcript of the words extracted from their concentric shells, entitled 'Portraying Hesse'. However, this is not accompanied by any critical comment and consequently, Bochner's portrait appears to operate as a defining statement regarding Hesse. It is similarly reproduced at the beginning of Wagner's essay, 'The Life of Language: How Hesse Named Her Work'.⁸⁵

⁸³ Kathryn A. Tuma, 'Eva Hesse's Turn: Rotations Around the Circle Drawings', in Catherine de Zegher, ed., *Eva Hesse Drawing*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, pp. 215-271.

⁸⁴ Tuma, 'Eva Hesse's Turn', 2006, p. 222.

⁸⁵ Anne M. Wagner, 'The Life of Language: How Hesse Named Her Work', in Catherine de Zegher, ed., *Eva Hesse Drawing*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, pp. 307-330.

Lucy Lippard recounts that when Bochner gave Hesse the portrait, 'she bought a huge thesaurus from which she subsequently chose her titles. She also bought some math books – a great fad at that time – though there were of course artists who dealt with the subject seriously, among them the sculptor Ruth Vollmer'.⁸⁶ Wagner argues that Lippard implicitly credits Bochner with Hesse's interest in words; indeed Bochner has since stated that he bought Hesse the thesaurus at her request.⁸⁷ There appears to have been a critical stalling after the first part of Lippard's statement, with attention frequently diverted to Bochner's role in the formation of Hesse's distinctive deployment of language, whereas Ruth Vollmer's influence has been diminished to the point where she is absent from Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby's *Encountering Eva Hesse*.⁸⁸ Where Vollmer does appear in the critical discourse surrounding Hesse, she is described for example by Lippard, in maternal terms, 'As an artist and as a sensitive and loving older woman bearing her mother's name, also German by birth, also with some tragedy in her life, Vollmer was important to Hesse in a unique way'.⁸⁹ It is interesting to note that Lippard's description of Vollmer in her monograph is juxtaposed with a reproduction of Bochner's portrait, yet it is the latter that has eclipsed the position of Vollmer in subsequent analysis of Hesse's work.⁹⁰ Sol LeWitt also described the relationship between Vollmer and Hesse as a 'surrogate mother-daughter one'.⁹¹ Indeed, Vollmer does appear to have occupied the role of nurturer to Hesse. Lippard recounts trips that the two women made and the gifts that they gave each other. In 1968, for example, Vollmer took Hesse to a marine supply store where Hesse bought three boat bow bumpers. She then added strings to these canvas structures and epoxied one version that she gave to Vollmer.⁹² Lippard also comments that in the same year, Vollmer gave Hesse some yellowish clay, 'from which she made one of her most beautiful pieces, although it was to be an anomaly in terms of her new work'.⁹³ As Mignon Nixon has observed, 'in the community of artists that included Sol LeWitt, Mel Bochner and Robert Smithson, drawings and small objects were regularly exchanged as tokens of friendship and artistic affiliation'.⁹⁴ When

⁸⁶ Lucy R. Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, New York: New York University Press, 1976, p. 204.

⁸⁷ Tuma, 'Eva Hesse's Turn', 2006, p. 215, n. 1.

⁸⁸ Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, eds., *Encountering Eva Hesse*, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006.

⁸⁹ Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, 1976, p. 204.

⁹⁰ Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, 1976, p. 204.

⁹¹ Ann Reynolds, 'A Structure of Creativity', in *Ruth Vollmer 1961-1978: Thinking the Line*, eds. Nadja Rottner and Peter Weibel, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2006, p. 51.

⁹² Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, 1976, p. 100.

⁹³ Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, 1976, p. 120.

⁹⁴ Mignon Nixon, 'Child Drawing', in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, ed. Catherine de Zegher, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 54. A number of Hesse's works were given as gifts; for example, *Untitled*, 1963, a drawing that incorporated watercolour paint, ink, wax crayon, graphite and paper collage was inscribed, 'for Barbara on her Birthday Dec 24 1963'; *Untitled*, 1966, known also as the Lenk Balloon was given by Hesse to the German sculptor, Thomas Lenk in exchange for one of his works; *Untitled*, 1968, an ink wash and graphite 'window' drawing was inscribed, 'for Dick van der Net', a metal fabricator who had worked with Sol LeWitt. These three examples of Hesse's work were sold at Christies' Post War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale, 13 November 2007, in New

Hesse first visited Aegis Reinforced Plastics, Staten Island, where her late fibreglass work was fabricated, Lippard notes that Vollmer accompanied her; however this is not mentioned by Doug Johns in a recent interview with Alison Rowley.⁹⁵ Finally, Lippard emphasises Vollmer's role as a mother figure when she recounts that, 'January of every year was a terrible time for Hesse due to the anniversary of her mother's death. In 1968 Ruth Vollmer took her on a trip to Mexico City, where they saw Pre-Columbian art, climbed the pyramids, and visited markets and churches.'⁹⁶ Leo Rabkin, an artist and collector of American folk art, was a close friend of both Vollmer and Hesse. In an interview with Reynolds, he recalled that Vollmer, 'took over Eva in an enormous way. She took her to Mexico – Eva had never been to Mexico'. Rabkin's wife, Dorothea, then added, 'Again she was very generous. When they went to Mexico and Eva went out with younger people – after all, she couldn't be together with Ruth all the time. She didn't make any fuss to go. She went out and bought her marvelous clothes and Gucci handbags and Gucci boots'.⁹⁷ Once it became apparent that Hesse was seriously ill, Vollmer also arranged for her to see a different doctor.⁹⁸

The privileging of Bochner's influence on Hesse's art practice may have operated to occlude that of Ruth Vollmer's, primarily regarded as a nurturing, maternal figure in relation to Hesse. Nixon also refers to their shared experience as teachers and interest in progressive education. Indeed, Nixon argues that Vollmer introduced experimental play to the artistic milieu of Minimal art by means of her contact with younger artists, particularly Hesse and Bochner. This seems plausible to an extent, however I would argue that Vollmer played a more significant role in shaping Hesse's intellectual development than is generally acknowledged. Recent research has done much to restore Vollmer's position in the history of Minimalism. Ann Reynolds became aware of the artist during her research into the archive of Robert Smithson, and she argues that the lack of a substantial archive for Vollmer may be one reason why the artist is rarely mentioned by art historians and curators. Reynolds also underlines the fluidity of artistic communities at that time,

the communities rendered visible by Smithson's archive overlapped at numerous points and

York.

⁹⁵ Alison Rowley, 'The Fourth Dimension: Doug Johns interviewed by Alison Rowley', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, Pollock, G. and Corby, V., eds., Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p. 89. Rhea Anastas comments that, 'The two artists supported each other in their first experiments with fiberglass, in 1968, with Doug Johns at Aegis Reinforced Plastics (Johns later left Aegis to work solely for Hesse). LeWitt, Bochner, and others had been encouraging Hesse to fabricate her works, but it was Vollmer who appears to have first accompanied her to do so, a companion Hesse may have felt she needed in such an "utterly male-oriented" industrial space [citing Lippard]', Rhea Anastas, "'Not In Eulogy Not In Praise But In Fact": Ruth Vollmer and Others, 1966-70', in *Ruth Vollmer 1961-1978: Thinking the Line*, eds. Nadja Rottner and Peter Weibel, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2006, pp. 71-86.

⁹⁶ Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, 1976, p. 114.

⁹⁷ Reynolds, 'A Structure of Creativity', 2006, p.56, n.11.

⁹⁸ Reynolds, 'A Structure of Creativity', 2006, p.51.

were much more heterogeneous than I had previously assumed. They consisted of individuals from a variety of professions, class backgrounds, age groups, genders and sexual orientations. In fact, many of the artists who were unfamiliar to me yet significant members of the communities I was beginning to uncover were largely accountable, in large part, for this heterogeneity. In the world I could glimpse through Smithson's archive, all of these individuals were corresponding with one another, sometimes exhibiting their work side by side, and continually trading images and works of art. They and the relatively fluid communities they were a part of did not have much institutional visibility then and certainly do not have much more now; their presence, participation, and influence are, for the most part, missing from the historical narratives of the decade. Ruth Vollmer was one of those artists: absent from these narratives, but present in the archive.⁹⁹

Like Hesse, Ruth Vollmer (né Landshoff) was of German-Jewish origin. Born in Munich in 1903, she married Herman Vollmer, a Jewish paediatric physician who was practising in Heidelberg in the early 1920s. By the late 1930s, in common with Hesse's parents, the Vollmers had emigrated to the United States and settled in New York. The abstract painter, Thomas Nozkowski has recently discussed his friendship with Vollmer. He was born in New Jersey in 1944 and like Hesse, studied at the Cooper Union. His comments regarding Vollmer are particularly interesting, because he refers to her as a mentor rather than a maternal figure, and emphasises the role of the salon as an intellectual structure of influence,

The first year out of Cooper Union, I worked for Betty Parsons. Thanks to her I met Ruth Vollmer who, in many ways, became a kind of mentor to my wife and I. Ruth conducted the closest thing that I've ever experienced to a real salon. An enormously cultivated German woman from an intellectual family – her uncle was Sammy Fisher (sic) the publisher of Fisher Verlag.¹⁰⁰ She loved and supported young artists. Eva Hesse was a protégé of hers. Sol LeWitt and Richard Tuttle were very close to her. Smithson, the Mangolds and Bob Ryman were often there, as well a group of older artists and writers.¹⁰¹

A further connection that rarely appears in writing about Hesse, relates to a series of photographs of the artist in her studio that were taken by Ruth Vollmer's brother, the photographer Herman Landshoff. Before the war, he had worked in Paris as a fashion photographer for *Femina* and *Paris Vogue* and emigrated to the United States in 1941.¹⁰² Krauss has argued that Hesse, in common with other artists (perhaps most notably Louise Bourgeois) sought to disrupt the idealisation of sculpture

⁹⁹ Reynolds, 'A Structure of Creativity', 2006, p.49.

¹⁰⁰ The publishing house, S. Fischer Verlag was founded in 1886 by Samuel Fischer in Berlin.

¹⁰¹ Chris Martin, 'In Conversation: Thomas Nozkowski', *The Brooklyn Rail*, January, 2004.

¹⁰² Anastas refers to Landshoff's photographs as central documents of the artistic dialogue between Hesse and Vollmer. She notes that in the photograph, *The Table in Eva Hesse's Bowery Studio*, 1968, a brochure for Vollmer's 1968 exhibition, *Exploration of the Sphere* at the Parsons Gallery and an invitation to *Chain Polymers*, Hesse's first solo exhibition at the Fischbach Gallery, can be seen lying on the table, Anastas, "'Not In Eulogy Not In Praise But In Fact": Ruth Vollmer and Others 1966-70', p. 79. Anne Wagner gives a detailed description of the items on the gridded table (a gift from LeWitt) in 'Another Hesse', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 88.

from within the dismembering logic of the part object, and Mignon Nixon has observed of Landshoff's photograph of Hesse with the work, *Ingeminate*, 1965 that, 'Almost twenty years before Bourgeois would pick up *Fillette* in range of a camera, there is Hesse, smilingly showing off hers, and showing that to put the object in play through the body is to demand for it a more literal level of attention'.¹⁰³

Tuma refers to the word list that Hesse compiled around the time of the *Eccentric Abstraction* exhibition, 'with Bochner's gift in hand'.¹⁰⁴ Krauss has described these words as a, 'strange ulalalia of a burble of off-rhymes', associating this with Hesse's preoccupation with the absurd.¹⁰⁵ However, Tuma contests this view, claiming that the list, 'indicates above all a stream of specific artistic concerns, or of emerging ways of thinking, about a fundamental procedural modality'.¹⁰⁶ Krauss has dismissed Hesse's habit of extracting words from a thesaurus to provide titles for her works as an attempt to achieve a more literary effect, arguing that, 'the same docility that led her to buy the thesaurus kept her fixated on the pictorial'.¹⁰⁷ Krauss also asserts that, 'Those lists came from a world of intellect that it would not have occurred to her to challenge. This, we could say, was what marked her obedience'.¹⁰⁸ Tuma extracts the word 'gyrate' from Krauss's reference to Holbein's deployment of anamorphosis to serve her argument. She also notes the presence of the words, 'gyration' and 'rotation' in Hesse's own word lists and draws attention to Krauss's elision of Lippard's italicising of 'rotation'. Tuma claims that Lippard's emphasis suggests that Hesse had originally underlined the word, thereby marking it as a central conceptual concern; the implicit suggestion being that Krauss elected to distance her analysis from this proposed aspect of Hesse's art practice.

In contrast with Wagner's approach, Tuma describes the portrait as an encapsulation of the rotational logic of Hesse's visual strategy. She cites Elisabeth Sussman's assertion that, 'a viewer cannot just stand in front of the work and read the words, but must swivel around it in a physical act that mimics some of the words used to describe Hesse as she is revealed through the strategies of her work'.¹⁰⁹ This view mirrors Bochner's own comments regarding the work, 'For the portraits of

¹⁰³ Mignon Nixon, 'Posing the Phallus', *October*, Vol. 92, Spring 2000, p. 118.

¹⁰⁴ Tuma, 'Eva Hesse's Turn', 2006, p. 224.

¹⁰⁵ Rosalind Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 48.

¹⁰⁶ Tuma, 'Eva Hesse's Turn', 2006, p.

¹⁰⁷ Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', 2002, p. 50.

¹⁰⁸ Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', 2002, p. 49.

¹⁰⁹ Elisabeth Sussman, 'Letting It Go As It Will', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Elisabeth Sussman, San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2005, cited by Tuma, 'Eva Hesse's Turn', 2006, p. 221.

Eva Hesse and Robert Smithson I wanted to change the viewer's orientation to the page. To read the Hesse portrait you either have to continually rotate the drawing or else stand on your head.'¹¹⁰ For Tuma, the word portrait represents a witty and wry comment on both the central concerns of Hesse's creative process and her, 'complex and multilayered personality...both where things were "buried, concealed, obscured"', although Tuma does not elaborate on what those things may be.¹¹¹ She does, however, directly relate Sussman's description of the movement required to view the portrait to, 'a swivelling reorientation of perspective, a rotation that turns on the beholder's spatial relationship to the object, even when the beholder is the artist herself,' a language that seems aligned with the dynamics of anamorphosis.¹¹²

Whereas Krauss's seminal text concentrated on *Contingent*, 1969, Tuma traces the incidence of rotational shifts of perspective within a range of Hesse's other work. She cites, for example, an undated watercolour that may be a floor plan of one of Hesse's apartments. Tuma argues that Hesse is rotating perspective in order to offer a bird's eye view of her living space. She also reminds the reader that, 'Modern industrial "views from above" - from superior vantages such as the top of a skyscraper or an airplane - are prevalent topoi in American postwar art'.¹¹³ Although Tuma does not develop this perceived point of comparison further, Collins has noted that anamorphic projection is a feature of traditional low-elevation photographic reconnaissance, where aerial photographs are usually taken from an oblique angle and the resulting trapezoid anamorphs are then rectified so that they can be correctly interpreted for the purposes of map-making.¹¹⁴ Tuma also draws attention to Hesse's notebook sketches where objects are frequently represented from varying perspectives. She compares these renderings to Old Master drawings, but contends that they differ from conventional Academic sheets in that, 'Motifs on the same page, drawn from rotating special orientations, are not presented as autonomous but rather as organised in fundamental conceptual relationship with each other, working together to inform new ideas for the artist to explore or for future work to be created'.¹¹⁵ Once again, the notion of a coalescence of multiple perspectives does not appear to be at a remove from the strategy of anamorphosis, but Tuma nevertheless discerns rotation as the primary logic at work.

Tuma describes Hesse as possessing the, 'bifocal mind of both draftsman and sculptor', and

¹¹⁰ Mark Godfrey, 'Language Factory: Interview with Mel Bochner', *Frieze*, Issue 87, November-December, 2004.

¹¹¹ Tuma, 'Eva Hesse's Turn', 2006, p. 221.

¹¹² Tuma, 'Eva Hesse's Turn', 2006, p. 221.

¹¹³ Tuma, 'Eva Hesse's Turn', 2006, p. 225.

¹¹⁴ Daniel L. Collins, 'Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: History, Technique and Current Practice', *Leonardo*, Vol.25, No. 2, 1992, p. 179.

¹¹⁵ Tuma, 'Eva Hesse's Turn', 2006, p. 232.

contends that she frequently operated in a realm between two conventions that did not always coalesce. However, she maintains that it is within this contested zone that Hesse's originality is located. I would argue that this claim reiterates Krauss's earlier assertion in 1979, that Hesse's work represented a reinvention of the anamorphic condition for her own time, and that *Contingent* was characterised by, 'an extraordinary authority'.¹¹⁶ Krauss also defined the problematic of the mutual eclipse of the conventions of painting and sculpture as the principal concern of Hesse's creative process, proposing that she had effectively moved beyond the aesthetic discourse of the 1960s in order to articulate a position at the edge between these two formalised conventions. However, in Krauss's revisiting of Hesse's practice in, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', the final chapter of *The Optical Unconscious*, published in 1993, Krauss adopts the view that Hesse was unable to ever fully distance her art practice from the vertical field of painting, defining *Hang Up*, 1966, as a declaration of Hesse's, 'refusal or her inability to leave the territory of painting'.¹¹⁷ *Contingent* is then proffered as an additional example of Hesse's supposed adherence to the 'fronto-parallel address' of painting; however this is inconsistent with the views Krauss expresses in her earlier essay where she sought to articulate how Hesse's work had transcended this problematic through her idiosyncratic reinvention of the anamorphic condition.¹¹⁸ Conversely, in Krauss's later essay she discerns a transgressive quality within Hesse's 'complicity' that she describes as working, 'in the most corrosive of ways, burrowing from within the pictorial paradigm to attack its very foundations', thereby retrospectively identifying Hesse's visual strategy with the theoretical apparatus of the 'bachelor machine'.¹¹⁹

Tuma's argument is significant in its claim that Hesse's work operates in an interstitial space, demonstrating an ability to think in a dimension between painting and sculpture and her use of this

¹¹⁶ Krauss, 'Contingent', 2002, p. 27.

¹¹⁷ Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', 2002, p. 50.

¹¹⁸ Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', 2002, p. 49.

¹¹⁹ Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', 2002, p. 50. Krauss argues that Hesse, in common with other artists (perhaps most notably Louise Bourgeois) sought to disrupt the idealisation of sculpture from within the dismembering logic of the part object or bachelor apparatus. In 1954, Michel Carrouges had identified the trope of the *bachelor machine* as an imaginative pattern permeating the work of a number of prominent twentieth century artists and writers, including Marcel Duchamp, Franz Kafka, Villier de l'Isle Adam and Raymond Roussel; see Michel Carrouges, *Les machines célibataires*, Paris: Arcanes, 1954. Named after Duchamp's *La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même*, the desiring machines exist beyond the cycle of birth, reproduction and death. As Krauss states, 'they constitute a dream of both infinite celibacy and total autoeroticism', Krauss *Bachelors*, 2000, p. 64. Furthermore, Duchamp's *Large Glass* is celebrated as the most specific model of the desiring machine, Everything is there: the plan for perpetual motion that the "Litanies" chant as "vicious circle"; the complexity of the interconnections-glider, malic molds, sieves, chocolate grinder, scissors...; the sterility of the cycle, its autoeroticism, its narcissism; the utter self-enclosure of the system, in which desire is at one and the same time producer, consumer, and re-producer (recorder or copier) – which is to say, the bachelor apparatus below, the occultist witnesses in mirrored disks on the right, the top inscription of the bride above, in the cloud Duchamp identified as "the blossoming", Krauss, *Bachelors*, 2000, p. 65.

argument to counter Krauss's assertion of Hesse's docility.¹²⁰ In support of this, Tuma points to the critical approbation that Hesse's work has attracted since her lifetime as evidence of her originality. However, this fails to take into account the insidious ways in which critical attention can also shape what Whitney has described as, 'a carefully groomed, beautifully organised, skilfully mythologized figure – half symbol/half fact'.¹²¹ Tuma also refers to the interstitial zone as a space, 'where the rules and logics of the one (dimension) conflict with, confound and displace those of the other'.¹²² However, the sense of such a displacement occurring reiterates the mutual eclipse of conventions characterised by Krauss's anamorphic condition, but it seems that for Tuma, Krauss's critical approach has become inextricably linked with her later claims of docility and obedience.

In common with Tuma, Briony Fer's recent study of Hesse emphasises the rotation inherent in her work. Fer also acknowledges Krauss's earlier writing,

When Rosalind Krauss wrote about Hesse's *Contingent* in the catalogue for the 1979 Whitechapel Art Gallery show, she compared the way that the sections were hung at a 90-degree angle to the wall to the anamorphosis of the skull in Hans Holbein's famous painting of *The Ambassadors* (1533), where the spectator has to view the painting obliquely and from an angle for the skull to be perceived. It seems to me that we can think of the relation of convex to concave in the same way, in terms of a rotation, this time of 180 degrees.¹²³

However, Fer's referencing of the rotational is subtly different from that of Tuma's analysis, as she rather concentrates on a blurring of the distinction between the categories of convex and concave as, 'a borderline which comes to take on crucial importance for Bochner and for Hesse'.¹²⁴ It is interesting to note that when Fer does introduce the anamorphic as a strategy of visual distortion, it is in relation to Mel Bochner's notebooks from 1967 and 1968, where he would make drawings, crumple them up and then redraw them. Fer claims that many of these play on the anamorphic distortions of shadows,

The crumpled paper flattened out in the large-scale photograph *Surface Dis/Tension* of 1968 shows how conceptually close Hesse's work is at this point to Bochner's, who makes the grid so elastic that it is no longer a means to structure the ground but has become the means of its disintegration. The significance of Bochner's work on perspective is to address not only the figure of the grid, but the warping of a perceptual apparatus, like the crumpling of vision itself. It is as if structure is convulsed at the very moment of seeing it. It isn't just the lines of

¹²⁰ Tuma, 'Eva Hesse's Turn', 2006, p. 224.

¹²¹ Kathleen Whitney, 'Eva Redux or What Do We Owe Eva Hesse? Some Thoughts on Legacy and Influence', *Sculpture*, 21:10, 2002, p. 31.

¹²² Tuma, 'Eva Hesse's Turn', 2006, p. 224.

¹²³ Briony Fer, *Eva Hesse Studiowork*, Edinburgh: The Fruitmarket Gallery, 2009, p. 138.

¹²⁴ Fer, *Eva Hesse Studiowork*, 2009, p. 138.

a grid which get distorted, but the normal cognates of seeing that fall away.¹²⁵

However, the collapse of the grid that Fer perceives in Bochner's work is also manifest in one of the panels that can be said to relate to *Contingent*.¹²⁶ Fer comments that, 'In the single panel [S-169], the cheesecloth is a loose open weave, used in double thickness, over which the latex layers were applied. If you look close-up you can see the gauze just showing through like the grid of a vast and spidery grid'.¹²⁷ For me, it is this complexity of surface that is the most arresting aspect of the work, particularly because this characteristic is barely visible in photographic reproductions. Like the anamorph, the work rewards close inspection and viewing from oblique vantage points. In one of its recent showings, the panel was displayed frontally, but with sufficient space around it to enable the viewer to look at the work from an angle.

Krauss's formulation of an anamorphic condition reflects the often fiercely polemical character of Minimalist discourses, and their preoccupation with an art form that resides in a category between the media of painting and sculpture. Krauss claims that within the space where form and matter demonstrate the potential of eclipsing one another, the experience of 'pity and terror' is manifest.¹²⁸ This assertion appears at the end of Krauss's essay and is therefore never fully developed; however Anna Chave's interpretation of the strips of *Contingent* resembling the Nazi act of flaying skins, explicitly expresses the horror that some critics have argued is a defining aspect of Hesse's work. Speaking many years after Hesse's death, Tom Doyle claimed that, 'The artist who had the most influence on Eva was Adolf Hitler', an utterance as shocking as Hesse's response to the work of Carl Andre that I will discuss later in the chapter.¹²⁹ Chave's critical assessment of *Contingent* and Doyle's statement also operate to excavate Hesse's Jewish ethnicity. Anne Wagner's detailed analysis, for example, concludes that Hesse's work gives its own account of a common human experience. She then makes the curious imperative that, 'We ourselves should remember that one source of that purpose is Hesse's "memory" as a Jew born in Hamburg in 1936, of the Holocaust – a

¹²⁵ Fer, *Eva Hesse Studiowork*, 2009, p. 137.

¹²⁶ Hesse's work frequently subverts the modernist formal device of the grid. In her graph paper drawings of 1967 where Hesse fills each small box with a 'x' or an 'o', varying amounts of ink are used, 'so that the mathematical field looks random, spontaneous, shimmering', Mark Stevens, 'Fear of Flaying', *New Republic*, Vol. 208, Issue 4, 1993, p. 30. Stevens also claims that Hesse 'seduces' the intellectual grid by deploying sexual imagery and references the collapse of the organising principle of the grid in her later rope pieces. Benjamin Buchloh observes that, 'Paradoxically, it is precisely from these seemingly infinite repetitions of 'O's and 'X's that an unexpectedly subversive force of utter contingency emerges', Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Hesse's Endgame: Facing the Diagram', in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, Catherine de Zegher, ed., New York, New Haven and London: The Drawing Centre and Yale University Press, 2006, p. 149. See also Mignon Nixon, 'O + X', *October*, Issue 119, 2007, 6-20.

¹²⁷ Fer, *Eva Hesse Studiowork*, 2009, p. 179.

¹²⁸ Rosalind Krauss, 'Eva Hesse: Contingent', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 32.

¹²⁹ Anne M. Wagner, 'Another Hesse', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 176.

memory that intersects her art and its criticisms at many points, including this essay. Let us not fail to talk about that.¹³⁰ However, this thesis contends that it is this failure of articulation that resides at the very heart of much criticism regarding Hesse, exemplified by the fact that Wagner's dictum is located in the final paragraph of her essay and consequently never developed further. However, since Chave's interpretation of *Contingent*, other critics have compared examples of Hesse's work to human skin, thereby positioning the installation within a Holocaust discourse. Mark Stevens claims that Hesse, 'was attracted to materials like latex and fiberglass that, while they retained an industrial character, also resembled dried human skin – orangey-yellow, translucent, almost lyrically repellent'.¹³¹ He also asserts that, 'In Hesse, touch is vital, and fraught with the fear of flaying. Her fibreglass and polyester resin pieces have a gleam like that of hardened secretions on human vellum'.¹³² Stevens recounts that he saw Hesse's work *Sans II*, 1968, with a friend, who commented that the, 'luminous series of open fiberglass and polyester resin boxes reminded him of the human lampshades he had once seen'.¹³³ However, although Stevens explicitly references the Holocaust in his critical assessment, he also interprets the resemblance of Hesse's sculptural works to skin as a manipulation of 'surface' intended to challenge the authority of abstract representation. Stevens argues that it is this relationship between the mechanically abstract and the human that makes Hesse's work disturbing. Indeed, I would suggest that it provides another instance of the tension that Krauss identifies as being anamorphic.

Erica Segre reminds us in her study of the veil motif in Mexican photography, that the veil's double is the membrane.¹³⁴ The visual trope of veiling has been perceived by some critics as a pervasive element of Hesse's art practice. Indeed, the panels of *Contingent* may be interpreted as a series of veils, demonstrating Hesse's manipulation of levels of opacity. A number of words that appear in Mel Bochner's portrait play upon this specific theme, 'obscure', 'disguise', 'conceal', 'wrap-up', 'secrete', 'cloak', 'camouflage', 'hide', 'vanish', 'shroud'.¹³⁵ However, until very recently, critical examinations of Hesse's work have arguably enacted their own veiling in the marked absence of any discussion of the artist's Jewish identity. Indeed as Lisa Bloom asserts, 'there are...absent conversations about the veiled role of Jewishness in the very understanding of feminist art in the United States'.¹³⁶ Similarly, Catherine Sousloff has identified, 'an *aporia* at the very heart of the

¹³⁰ Wagner, 'Another Hesse', 2002, p. 186.

¹³¹ Mark Stevens, 'Fear of Flaying', *New Republic*, Vol. 208, Issue 4, 1993, p. 29.

¹³² Stevens, 'Fear of Flaying', 1993, p. 30.

¹³³ Stevens, 'Fear of Flaying', 1993, pps. 31-32.

¹³⁴ Erica Segre, 'The Hermeneutics of the Veil in Mexican Photography: of *rebozos*, *sábanas*, *huipiles* and *lienoz de Verónica*', *Hispanic Research Journal*, Vol. 6, Issue 1, 2005, p. 46.

¹³⁵ Wagner, 'Another Hesse', pp. 87-88.

¹³⁶ Lisa E. Bloom, *Jewish Identities in American Feminist Art: Ghosts of Ethnicity*, New York and London: Routledge, 2006.

project of art history, a space of doubt brought about by the suppression of the history of the discipline and its effects on discourse.¹³⁷ She argues that this situation arose because Jewish art critics wanted to avoid the notion that their religion or ethnicity had anything to do with their art criticism. She contends that, 'The subjectivity of the interpreter of art and its presence in the interpretation have been evacuated into this space. It bears emphasizing here that this is not simply a biographical issue related directly and only to the experiences of particular individuals, although these experiences should be remembered and respected. The subjectivity of the interpreter bears upon the written record itself, that is, what the art historian has written, and upon the subsequent history of that writing in citation and in the practices of scholarship and art criticism, where identity and historiography converge and become manifest as discourse'.¹³⁸ A short anecdote included in Krauss's, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines'¹³⁹ relates Krauss's memory of the prominent Jewish art critic Clement Greenberg and is suggestive of Sousloff's insistence on a, 'space of doubt' regarding Jewish ethnicity, as both Greenberg, followed by Krauss within the next generation of influential Jewish art critics, have arguably erased Jewish identity from their respective critical approaches.

Krauss's essay, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines' opens with a quotation from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, their theorization of the bachelor apparatus that permeates Krauss's critical approach.¹⁴⁰ This is followed by a striking anecdote that presents an unsympathetic picture of Clement Greenberg, underlining Krauss's firm rejection of his hegemonic model of modernism.¹⁴¹ However, it also reveals her sense of a shared, gendered Jewish identity

¹³⁷ Catherine M. Sousloff, ed., *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999, p. 2.

¹³⁸ Sousloff, *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, 1999, p. 2.

¹³⁹ Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.

¹⁴⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.

¹⁴¹ Clement Greenberg was the son of immigrants from the Lithuanian Jewish enclave of North Eastern Poland. He was born in the Bronx in 1909 and attended Syracuse University. Greenberg became an editor of *Partisan Review* in 1940, art critic for *The Nation* in 1942, and associate editor of *Commentary* in 1945. His books include *Art and Culture*, the four-volume *Collected Essays and Criticism*, works on Hofmann, Matisse and Miró, and the posthumous *Homemade Esthetics*. He died in New York in 1994. A central figure in the post-war, American art world, Greenberg's critical approach established the primacy of modernist interpretations of art and had a profound impact on later critical models. See Clement Greenberg, *The Harold Letters 1928-1943: The Making of an American Intellectual*, ed. Janice Van Horne, Washington D.C.: Counterpoint, 2000 and Caroline A. Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005. Krauss includes a similar description of Greenberg in her analysis of the work of Jackson Pollock, that is repeated four times throughout the chapter, 'He's sitting there just as I remember him, next to the neat little marble-topped table, with its prim lamp in gilt bronze mounted by a simple white shade, and behind him a painting that might be by Kenneth Noland but is hard to identify in the tightly held shot that frames him. His face is much the same, flabby and slack, although time has pinched it sadistically, and reddened it. Whenever I would try to picture that face, my memory would produce two seemingly mismatched fragments: the domed shape of the head, bald, rigid, unforgiving; and the flaccid quality of the mouth and lips, which I remember as always slightly ajar, in the logically impossible gesture of both relaxing and grinning. Looking at him now I search for the same effect. As always I am held by the arrogance of the mouth – fleshy, toothy, aggressive – and its

with Hesse; characterised in Krauss's view by traits of complicity, obedience and duty. A sense of repugnance in Krauss's description of Greenberg is apparent, 'As always I am held by the arrogance of his mouth – fleshy, toothy, aggressive – and its pronouncements, which though voiced in the studied hesitancy of his Southern drawl are, as always, implacably final'.¹⁴² Indeed, Caroline Jones comments that, 'The figure of Greenberg's repulsive ethnic mouth is summoned ritually throughout Krauss's book'.¹⁴³ Furthermore, Krauss attributes Greenberg's perceived characteristics to her description of his room,

He's sitting there just as I remember him, next to the neat little marble-topped table, with its prim lamp in gilt bronze and its assortment of tiny ashtrays, one of them containing a heap of crumpled butts, the only disarray in this fanatically ordered space.¹⁴⁴

Krauss's memory of Greenberg's plea in response to a critic's article, 'Spare me smart Jewish girls with their typewriters' and Krauss's response of, 'Ha, ha, ha...sparkling with obedient complicity', leads her retrospectively to question, 'I wonder how many of us there were in those days, in the mid-1960s, smart Jewish girls with typewriters, complicit, obedient, no matter what long streak of defiance we might have been harbouring'.¹⁴⁵ However, David Carrier comments that in describing Greenberg's arrogance Krauss did not take up his remark about their shared Jewishness or his sexism.¹⁴⁶ Krauss's reflection appears to echo Betty Friedan's memory of feeling out of place as, 'a

pronouncements, which though voiced in a kind of hesitant, stumbling drawl are, as always, implacably final', Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 1994, p. 243.

¹⁴² Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', p. 47.

¹⁴³ Caroline Jones, *Eyesight Alone*, 2005, p. 498, n. 40.

¹⁴⁴ Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', p. 47.

¹⁴⁵ Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', pp. 47-48.

¹⁴⁶ David Carrier, *Rosalind Krauss and American Philosophical Art Criticism: From Formalism to Beyond Postmodernism*, Westport and London: Greenhill Publishing, 2002, p. 75. Carrier remarks, 'Who could not identify with Krauss in this stressful situation? Greenberg was aggressively nasty, and so the temptation for the younger critic to pay him back must have been irresistible. Greenberg admired Pollock; in also admiring that painter, Krauss was thus copying Greenberg. Krauss also admired Greenberg, and when she (like many of his admirers) had a falling out with him, it is unsurprising that she settled scores. She rejected him very much in his style. She too is arrogant, condescending, proud. Krauss has described herself as involved in "[shameful] complicity in Greenberg's misogynistic dismissal of those others who hadn't made it when the sides got chosen". I see his misogyny, but in dismissing those artists or critics "who hadn't made it" Greenberg was only describing what happens in the art world. Krauss too is dismissive of artists and critics', Carrier, *Rosalind Krauss and American Philosophical Art Criticism*, 2002, p. 74. However, James Elkins takes a different view of Krauss's descriptions of Greenberg, commenting that, 'the book only reinforces the sense of a beleaguered authorial voice, because its first-person narratives are still narrow expressions of her dislikes (especially of Fried and Clement Greenberg). Nothing in *The Optical Unconscious* effectively enlarges the authorial voice: it remains machiolated by an unmoving, monotonic anger. (That is evident most clearly in several passages describing Clement Greenberg; they are near repetitions of one another, and their differences are not expressively significant. It is as if – and I take this as intentional – they were repeated symptoms of some inaccessible idea, working to reinforce the apparent impossibility of exploring the deeper sources of her dissatisfaction).' James Elkins, *Our Beautiful, Dry and Distant Texts: Art History as Writing*, New York and London: Routledge, 2000, p. 154. Carrier describes Krauss as the first major female philosophical art critic, but notes that she is not conspicuously identified with feminism in her publications. Indeed, Krauss's theorising has attracted criticism from feminist commentators. Carrier's rather uncompromising assessment is that,

Jew, a reader, and a brainy girl' before studying at Smith College in 1938.¹⁴⁷ Krauss then connects her own musing with Hesse's fellow Yale student, Mark Strand's image of her possessing the air of, 'an obedient schoolgirl' and Lippard's memory of the artist's dutifulness in the role of wife.¹⁴⁸ However, these views have been contested by Wagner who, quoting Hesse, claims that Josef Albers, 'couldn't stand' her painting, nor she his. She also cites a letter from Hesse to her psychiatrist where she questions whether she wants to return to Yale, 'Discipline I approve of but it is difficult to accept when it is imposed by one person, himself a painter who has come to believe fanatically in his own interpretation of what makes art, via a highly individualised, pure, theoretical art...I feel next year to be a challenge, as I face the mighty king in person, Joseph Albers.'¹⁴⁹ Jeffrey Saletnik has suggested that Albers's Bauhaus-indebted, pedagogic methods are nevertheless materially evident in Hesse's mature work, despite her apparent frustration with his teaching approach.¹⁵⁰ However, the sentiments Hesse expressed in her own writing do not seem so far removed from Krauss's reaction to Greenberg's, 'lecturing'.¹⁵¹

Louis Kaplan has attempted to recover the element of Greenberg's Jewish subjectivity in his aesthetic theory, arguing that his writing excavates the repressions and displacements of his Jewish identity.¹⁵² Furthermore, Kaplan makes a direct causal link between what he describes as the 'dogmatism' of Greenberg's formalism and his Jewish ethnicity. He notes that many of Greenberg's early texts were published in *Commentary*, a magazine sponsored by the American Jewish Committee. Greenberg served as an associate editor, a role that placed him at the centre of what Kaplan describes as, 'a group of young and talented intellectuals who wanted to forge a *positive* Jewish identity in postwar America in the wake of the Holocaust'.¹⁵³ This view is contradicted by Bloom, who describes Greenberg as, 'a place holder for naming a set of problems around the whitening of Jewish immigrants and immigrant culture in the United States, a process that has been seen as establishing a monolithic and flattened idea of Jewishness in the 1940s'.¹⁵⁴ Bloom cites Greenberg's crucial contribution to the promotion of a modernist discourse that elevated the

'Krauss can be silly, determinedly mean spirited, and wrong headed. But she is consistently original.' Carrier, *Rosalind Krauss and American Philosophical Art Criticism*, 2002, p. 6.

¹⁴⁷ Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks*, p. 168. Brodtkin argues Jewish women played a significant role in the early, white feminist movement, but in common with Friedan they downplayed their Jewishness.

¹⁴⁸ Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', p.

¹⁴⁹ Wagner, 'Another Hesse', 2002, pp. 114-15.

¹⁵⁰ Jeffrey Saletnik, 'Josef Albers, Eva Hesse, and the Imperative of Teaching', *Tate Papers*, Spring 2007, issue 1.

¹⁵¹ Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines' p. 47.

¹⁵² Louis Kaplan, 'Reframing the Self-Criticism: Clement Greenberg's "Modernist Painting" in Light of Jewish Identity', in *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, ed. Catherine M. Sousloff, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999, pp. 180-199.

¹⁵³ Kaplan, 'Reframing the Self-Criticism', 1999, p. 182.

¹⁵⁴ Bloom, *Jewish Identities in American Feminist Art*, p. 14.

universal and the myth of the individual genius. She also points to the creation of New York as the centre of the art world. However, Kaplan's argument is compelling as he expands his reading of Greenberg's work beyond that of his art criticism. Specifically, his analysis of Greenberg's 'The Jewish Joke', a review of Immanuel Olsvanger's *Røyte Pomerantsen*, published in 1947.¹⁵⁵ Kaplan notes that Greenberg elected to align his interpretation of Jewish humour to the Freudian theoretical model of self-criticism, an element that later became central to his analysis, 'Modernist Painting'. Kaplan adopts a more sympathetic view of Greenberg and is prepared to excavate his work holistically in order to explore Greenberg's displaced subjectivity, whereas Bloom, perhaps somewhat superficially, asserts that, 'none of his writings on Jewishness are linked to his art criticism'.¹⁵⁶ Her chapter title, 'Clement Greenberg's modernist shadow' is reminiscent of the language of anamorphosis, but also suggestive that Greenberg's theoretical methodology is responsible for causing a partial darkness and thereby a negative influence in art historical discourse. She does, however, identify the cosmopolitanism of Greenberg's period of writing as a failure to understand the social conditions of its own constructions, 'presenting itself as freedom from social belonging rather than a special sort of belonging, a view from nowhere or everywhere rather than from particular social spaces'.¹⁵⁷

The rigidity of Greenberg's critical approach referred to by Krauss is justified in Kaplan's view by his fear of impending doom, 'This fear forced him to maintain an absolute religious belief in a utopian sphere of aesthetic activity, in order to avoid surrender to despair'.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, Kaplan argues that the very nature of Greenberg's formalism operated to suppress mythic and thematic possibilities, and consequently any direct encounter with Jewish issues, echoing Theodor Adorno's statement that, 'Auschwitz confirmed the philosopheme of pure identity as death'.¹⁵⁹ Kaplan claims that, 'This displacement is dictated to a large extent by the formalist's avoidance of those areas of analysis where the Jewish roots of their work would be more legible', a statement that is arguably applicable not only to Greenberg's brand of formalism, but also to Krauss's reformulation of his

¹⁵⁵ Kaplan, 'Reframing the Self-Criticism', p. 188.

¹⁵⁶ Bloom, *Jewish Identities in American Feminist Art*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁷ Bloom, *Jewish Identities in American Feminist Art*, p. 17. Krauss underlines Greenberg's apparent disinterest in the social conditions of art production in her analysis of the work of Jackson Pollock, 'In its flat compression, the story he's told about his meeting with Pollock is typical of Clem's resistance to any detailed accounts of other people. Whenever you would ask him about someone he would answer categorically: "He's a borderline," "She's a pathological liar," "He's a drunk". He would slam the lid shut on the past, as though looking back at the characters that filled it was simply not his affair. He only thought it respectable to talk about their art.', Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 1994, p. 266.

¹⁵⁸ Kaplan, 'Reframing the Self-Criticism', p. 186.

¹⁵⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, New York and London, 1973, cited by Scott Spector, 'Forget assimilation: introducing subjectivity to German-Jewish history', *Jewish History*, 20.3, 2006, p. 357.

critical approach.¹⁶⁰ Both underline Norman Kleebatt's positioning of Jewish ethnicity as, 'a missing link in the discourse on diversity and difference'.¹⁶¹ Similarly, Krauss's account of Hesse typifies Bloom's assertion that, 'There remains a great need to examine how different Jewish women's identities are tied to other social identities and mediated through institutional discourses of art history and modernism'.¹⁶² However, the scope of Bloom's own attempt to redress the relative invisibility of Jewishness in feminist art practices of the 1970s narrowly misses out any consideration of Hesse because of the date of her death. She also argues that no archives exist that could relate Hesse's work to her specific subject, 'owing to the veiling of ethnicity endemic to art history practices'.¹⁶³

Sousloff notes that a session on 'Jewish Identity in Art History' at the annual meeting of the College Art Association of America in 1996 was the first time the issue had been discussed in the institution's eighty-five year history.¹⁶⁴ German-Jewish art historians who fled the Nazis and settled in America were largely responsible for the growth of the discipline in the latter part of the twentieth-century. However, as Sousloff argues, 'For the most part these critics wanted to avoid the notion that their religion or ethnicity had anything to do with their art criticism. Thus any topic or method that ostensibly approached issues relating to Jewishness or Jewish identity could not be consciously or overtly dealt with.'¹⁶⁵ Sousloff also identifies the need to confront the impact of the institutionalisation of anti-semitism in America. Marjorie Garber, in her essay 'Gentility', notes that the Chair of the Yale College Admissions Committee in his 1944-45 annual report commented that the proportion of Jews had, 'increased and remains too large for comfort.'¹⁶⁶ Garber also indicates that Jewishness was often described as antagonistic to Americanness and therefore incompatible with the values transmitted by elite colleges. She cites Deborah Lipstadt's assessment that the 1950s, when Hesse was a student at the Pratt Institute of Design, the Cooper Union Art School and the Yale School of Art and Architecture, as a time when it was not, 'convenient to be Jewish'.¹⁶⁷ Frank Rich also describes the period as, 'the time for heavy-duty assimilation, for name changes and nose jobs and reform synagogues that bordered on the Episcopalian.'¹⁶⁸ However, although

¹⁶⁰ Kaplan, 'Reframing the Self-Criticism', p. 195.

¹⁶¹ Norman Kleebatt, ed., *Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities*, New York: Jewish Museum and Rutgers University Press, 1996, p. 3.

¹⁶² Lisa E. Bloom, 'Ethnic Notions and Feminist Strategies of the 1970s: Some work by Judy Chicago and Eleanor Antin', in *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, Catherine M. Sousloff, ed., Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999, p. 138.

¹⁶³ Bloom, *Jewish Identities in American Feminist Art*, p. 4.

¹⁶⁴ Sousloff, *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, p. 1.

¹⁶⁵ Sousloff, *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, p. 2.

¹⁶⁶ Marjorie Garber, 'Gentility', in *Symptoms of Culture*, New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 91.

¹⁶⁷ Deborah Lipstadt, cited by Garber, *Symptoms of Culture*, p. 92.

¹⁶⁸ Frank Rich, 'The Albright Question', *The New York Times*, February 9, 1997, cited by Garber, *Symptoms of Culture*,

Wilhelm Hesse changed his name to William, Helen Hesse Charash has recalled that, 'Jewish life permeated our home...Everything was Shabbas, and you know this was kiddush, and this was Pesach [Passover] and this holiday and Simchas Torah, and I saw that was part and parcel of our life, and for my mother too...My father was not religious, but he was totally traditional, the Jewishness was a lifestyle. Eva and I grew up with it as a matter of course.'¹⁶⁹

As previously discussed, Krauss emphasises the characteristics of complicity, duty and obedience in her analysis of Hesse and implicitly links these traits to a gendered, Jewish identity. Krauss adopts the view that Hesse was unable to ever fully distance her artistic practice from the vertical field of painting, defining *Hang Up*, 1966, as a declaration of Hesse's, 'refusal or her inability to leave the territory of painting'.¹⁷⁰ *Contingent* is then proffered as an additional example of Hesse's supposed adherence to the 'fronto-parallel address' of painting; however this is inconsistent with the views Krauss expresses in her earlier essay where, Krauss sought to articulate how Hesse's work had transcended this problematic through her idiosyncratic reinvention of the anamorphic condition.¹⁷¹ As discussed earlier, Krauss dismissed Hesse's habit of extracting words from a thesaurus to provide titles for her works as an attempt to achieve a more literary effect, arguing that, 'the same docility that led her to buy the thesaurus kept her fixated on the pictorial'.¹⁷² Krauss also asserts that, 'Those lists came from a world of intellect that it would not have occurred to her to challenge. This, we could say, was what marked her obedience'.¹⁷³ It is interesting to note Anna C. Chave's comment regarding Krauss's anecdote about Greenberg. In a footnote to her analysis of Minimalism and biography, Chave states that, 'Returning to Hesse's case in the final chapter of a recent book, Krauss opens with an elliptical private reference of her own, citing a slur that Greenberg had long ago muttered in her presence against "smart Jewish girls with their typewriters". With her obedience to Greenberg decidedly behind her, Krauss proceeds to diminish another smart Jewish girl whom she views as having been constrained specifically by a sense of obedience, namely Hesse, who is charged with sustaining a putatively anachronistic obedience to the authority of painting'.¹⁷⁴

p. 92.

¹⁶⁹ Fred Wasserman, 'Building a Childhood Memory: The Diaries of Eva Hesse's Histories', in Elizabeth Sussman and Fred Wasserman, *Eva Hesse: Sculpture*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 116.

¹⁷⁰ Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', p. 50.

¹⁷¹ Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', p. 49.

¹⁷² Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', p. 50.

¹⁷³ Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', p. 49.

¹⁷⁴ Anna C. Chave, 'Minimalism and Biography', *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 82, No.1, 2000, p.161, n. 29. In Chave's sustained critique of what she describes as a formidable Minimalist canon, she argues that the use or avoidance of biography has been deployed to the detriment of women artists, arguing that depersonalisation and disembodiment as key tropes of Minimalism served the interests of male artists. Chave explores the role of artists considered peripheral to the Minimalist canon, namely Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti and Eva Hesse, and the relationship between Minimalist forms of dance and art production. Chave is also keen to reveal personal relationships that may have influenced the critical reception of art works, for example, 'Following her early fealty to Greenberg, Krauss's vision of the history

Krauss describes it as fortuitous that Hesse encountered Duchamp's work at an exhibition at the Bern Kunsthalle.¹⁷⁵ Amongst the many paintings, drawings and plans exhibited, his 1913 plans for the *Appareil célibataire* as described the bottom half of the *Large Glass* were shown. However, the very nature of Krauss's critical approach does not permit the excavation of the significance of Hesse's return to the site of her forced exile in Germany, where she spent a fifteen-month residency with her husband, the sculptor Tom Doyle. Indeed, as Kirsten Swenson has noted, 'The German phase of both artists remains obscure, perhaps because the work of neither Hesse nor Doyle from this period can be fully understood in isolation from that of the other, or outside the context of their marriage'.¹⁷⁶ F. Arnhard Scheidt, a German industrialist, had been impressed by Doyle's flagstone and epoxy sculptures when he visited New York in 1963. Consequently, he invited Doyle and Hesse to live and work in a studio space above his textile factory at Kettwig-am-Ruhr, near Düsseldorf, that was in the process of being shut down. Hesse later described this arrangement as, 'an unusual kind of Renaissance patronage', an assessment that Swenson has described as capturing the sense that the stay in Germany represented a, 'cultural remove' from the New York art world of the 1960s. Similarly, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh has claimed that Hesse's travels in Europe granted her a licence to be, 'eccentric and eclectic'.¹⁷⁷

Krauss's analysis can only reflect on the good fortune of Hesse's art practice being shaped by her direct experience of the work of Duchamp. There is no sense in which Hesse's residency in Germany is considered to be a site of anxiety and struggle for the artist, or the ways in which Hesse's marking as Other may have impacted upon her practice. The journey to Europe was Hesse's first visit since her evacuation on a children's train with her older sister Helen in 1938. Although later reunited with their parents who settled in the German-Jewish community of Washington Heights, Manhattan, Eva and Helen's maternal grandparents were deported to Theresienstadt and subsequently died at Auschwitz. Their father's brother and his wife died at Bergen-Belsen. Hesse's mother, Ruth Marcus Hesse was hospitalised during periods of depression she had suffered from

of modern sculpture, and of sculpture's eventual primacy over painting, had been heavily colored by her deepening acquaintance with one of her colleagues in the Art Department at Hunter College, Robert Morris', p. 153, and, 'Most of the critics who built their own reputations by building the reputations of artists in Minimalism's inner and outer circles were friends and, at times lovers and spouses of those same artists, a fact that is a matter of record on a piecemeal basis at best and thus is widely unknown outside the circles in question', p. 151. However, it could be argued that these comments can also be read as an act of 'diminishing', as they are based on an assumption that women are intellectually manipulated within relationships.

¹⁷⁵ Krauss, 'Hesse's Desiring Machines', p. 51.

¹⁷⁶ Kirsten Swenson, 'Machines and Marriage: Eva Hesse and Tom Doyle in Germany, 1964-65', *Art in America*, 94.6, 2006, p. 212.

¹⁷⁷ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Hesse's Endgame: Facing the Diagram', in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, Catherine de Zegher, ed., New York, New Haven and London: The Drawing Centre and Yale University Press, 2006, p. 123.

since her youth. She separated from Hesse's father, William and committed suicide in 1946. The time Hesse spent in Germany is often referred to as having had a positive impact on Hesse's artistic development; however Mignon Nixon has referred to her visit as arousing, 'intense anxieties of abandonment, fear and loss that found their origin in Hesse's childhood suffering'.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, Swenson notes Doyle's assertion that Hesse was initially, 'very, very concerned about going to Germany...that was a lot of anxiety for her.'¹⁷⁹ In an interview with Fred Wasserman, Doyle states more specifically that, 'She had a lot of trepidation about going back to Germany...It was just the whole idea of returning to the country that had killed her grandparents'. Hesse reacted badly to the experience, apparently suffering violent dreams and physical illness. Doyle also recalled that she felt uncomfortable being with Germans.¹⁸⁰ Her anxiety must surely have been exacerbated by Doyle's enthusiasm for the project. He had spent fifteen months in Germany with the Army between 1946 and 1948, and had positive memories of his time there; his experience was therefore antithetical to that of Hesse's in every respect. As Swenson states, 'Doyle's persona, reflective of his roots in rural Ohio and his very American brand of machismo (as Doyle describes himself, "in Germany I dressed in logging boots all the time – I looked like a cowboy") was worlds apart from Hesse's German-Jewish roots.'¹⁸¹

Ironically, Hesse records in her date book going to see a, 'lousy German Cowboy flick'.¹⁸² Sabine Folie has also commented on the apparent opposition between their characters, 'His sunny and unclouded, albeit egocentric mentality likely reinforced her heavy and melancholic mindset and struggle for self-determination'.¹⁸³ However, it is significant to note that in the extensive discussions regarding the marriage of Hesse and Doyle, it is rarely mentioned that Doyle, from an Irish Catholic family, converted to Judaism, as William Hesse could not contemplate his daughter marrying a non-Jew. In fact the couple were actually married twice, once in a civil ceremony in 1961 and again the following year, in a Jewish ceremony following Doyle's conversion.¹⁸⁴ Hesse and Doyle separated in late 1965, just a few months after their return from Germany. Wagner has described Doyle as surviving in Hesse's personal papers as mainly a catalyst of pain and insecurity.¹⁸⁵ She also expresses her view that their marriage should not be relegated to the status of a mere footnote in

¹⁷⁸ Mignon Nixon, "'Child' Drawing', in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, ed. Catherine de Zegher, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 44.

¹⁷⁹ Swenson, 'Machines and Marriage', p. 212.

¹⁸⁰ Wasserman, 'Building a Childhood Memory', p. 127.

¹⁸¹ Swenson, 'Machines and Marriage', p. 169.

¹⁸² Eva Hesse, *Datebooks, 1964/65*, introduction by Sabine Folie; transcription and annotation by Georgia Holz and Eva Kernbauer, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 108.

¹⁸³ Sabine Folie, *Datebooks, 1964/65*, p. 4.

¹⁸⁴ Wasserman, 'Building a Childhood Memory', p. 125.

¹⁸⁵ Wagner, 'Another Hesse', p. 135.

Hesse's biography, as she emphasises the significance of Hesse's artistic collaboration with Doyle and the difficulties she encountered in negotiating the gendered roles assigned by marriage.

In stark contrast with Krauss's critical approach, Vanessa Corby's analysis seeks to redress the lacuna of Jewish ethnicity located within the hegemonic discourse associated with Hesse.¹⁸⁶ She reproduces Hesse's birth certificate registering her birth on 11 January 1936, in the Israelitische Krankenhaus (Jewish hospital) in Hamburg, pointing to the eagle and swastika emblem of the National Socialist local government, as an indelible marker of Hesse as the Aryans' Other.¹⁸⁷ Corby has also examined the significance of the pronunciation of Hesse's name, that is to say, whether or not the final 'e' is silenced. She makes the point that the Estate of Eva Hesse support new archival research that recognises Hesse's ethnicity and insists on the traditional pronunciation of the family name. However, Corby notes that according to the artist's friend, William Smith Wilson, Hesse pronounced her name as 'Hess' in the 1960s, 'My guess is that Eva, for whom authenticity was antimony, apostasy, and autonomy, pronounced her name as her self-stylisation, breaking rapport with Germany. She was born a baby without a country, why in hell should she pronounce her name in German?'.¹⁸⁸ Corby views this debate as, 'a crucial site for the production of meaning in her artworks', however she does not specify how this is achieved through any reference to specific works.¹⁸⁹ The pronunciation of Hesse's name is seen rather as representing a metaphorical line drawn by the artist between her 'American' self and her origins in Fascist Germany. Corby also claims it as a sign of the dramatic persona constructed for Hesse in the 1970s, as a universalised character fulfilling a vital role in the Women's Art Movement.¹⁹⁰

Bloom has identified a, 'complex web of identity issues' facing Jewish women artists, all of which are exemplified by the discourse surrounding Hesse; 'lapses in religious faith and practice, the pressures of assimilation and the drive to identify with a WASP norm, the difficulties of interracial marriage, and the discrimination for not being white.'¹⁹¹ It is also crucial to acknowledge, as Bloom does, that both artists and critics of this period were expected, often in ambiguous ways, to assimilate into the, 'homogenizing culture' of the United States; therefore their accounts can appear ethnically neutral.¹⁹² This appears to be the case in the critical approaches of both Greenberg and

¹⁸⁶ Vanessa Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006.

¹⁸⁷ Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', p. 107.

¹⁸⁸ Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', p. 105.

¹⁸⁹ Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', p. 106.

¹⁹⁰ Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', p. 106.

¹⁹¹ Bloom, *Jewish Identities in American Feminist Art*, p. 4.

¹⁹² Bloom, *Jewish Identities in American Feminist Art*, p. 13.

Krauss, a cultural assimilation that has resulted in the elision of Jewish ethnicity from their prominent and influential accounts of modern art.

In her analysis of *Contingent*, Krauss describes Hesse's visual strategy as a concentration on the condition of edge, 'Faced with the spread of *Contingent*, what we see is a series of edges: the edges of planes that self-evidently occupy the real space in which they hang.'¹⁹³ Within the problematics of painting, Krauss compares the experience of edge to a curator installing a group of Rembrandts at a ninety-degree angle to the wall. She argues that this operation would effectively render the paintings useless, as their normal function would be annulled. They would no longer make a certain order of things visible and meaningful; consequently, the objecthood of the object would eclipse its function. However, if Chave's description of *Contingent* is adopted as a point of departure, it is also feasible that the anamorphic effect discerned by Krauss may be read as operating to actively confound meaning. Hesse, in one of her diary entries, asks, 'One needs a point of view. Can that be one of chaos?'¹⁹⁴ The art practice of British sculptor Rachel Whiteread has been interpreted as borrowing from the Minimalist formal vocabulary.¹⁹⁵ She has more recently employed a similar visual strategy that reflects the anamorphic effect achieved by Hesse, in her memorial to the extermination of over sixty-five thousand Austrian Jews, installed on Judenplatz, Vienna in 2000 (Fig. 6). A 'nameless library' with bookshelves and a blind door; the edges of the books' pages, instead of their spines, are turned outwards, rendering them unreadable like Krauss's hypothetical Rembrandts.¹⁹⁶

This strategy is suggestive of the semiotic incapacity of articulation that has been associated with the Holocaust. As Ernst van Alphen states, 'The standard view holds that within the symbolic domain representations of the Holocaust are a case apart. In representing the Holocaust symbolic language falls short in its mimetic possibilities: the historical reality that has to be represented is beyond comprehension'.¹⁹⁷ However, in his exploration of the interconnectedness of experience and discourse, Alphen argues that representation is historically and culturally specific, and is therefore not, 'a static, timeless phenomenon, of which the (im)possibilities are fixed once and forever'.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ Krauss, 'Contingent', p. 30.

¹⁹⁴ Lucy R. Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, New York: New York University Press, 1976, p. 22.

¹⁹⁵ Octavia Nicholson, 'Whiteread, Rachel', http://www.groveart.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=287275695&hitnum=1§ion=art.094005, accessed 25 June 2007.

¹⁹⁶ Raimar Stange, 'Rachel Whiteread', in *Women Artists in the 20th and 21st Century*, ed. Uta Grosenick, Cologne, London, Los Angeles, Madrid, Paris, Tokyo: Taschen, 2005, p. 347.

¹⁹⁷ Ernst van Alphen, 'Symptoms of Discursivity', in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer, Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999, p. 26.

¹⁹⁸ Alphen, 'Symptoms of Discursivity', p. 26.

This fluidity of meaning is reflected in what Griselda Pollock has termed an ethics of interpretation, the responsibility of asking, 'questions that were not possible to frame and pose before but which are now not only possible but necessary'.¹⁹⁹ A shift in art historical discourse that is exemplified by the occlusions of Jewishness apparent in the critical approach of Krauss and the commentaries offered by Lippard and Nemser.

Citing the work of the French psychiatrist, Pierre Janet, Alphen discusses how current and familiar experiences are automatically assimilated into the existing mental structures of narrative memory, whereas some events resist integration and are not available for retrieval under normal conditions. Termed by Janet as, 'traumatic memory', its features appear relevant to Hesse's response to Carl Andre's work, *2 x 18 Aluminium Lock*, 1968 in Cindy Nemser's *Artforum* interview, where she states, 'I feel very close to the work of Carl Andre. I feel, let's say, emotionally connected to his work. It does something to my insides. His metal plates were the concentration camp for me.'²⁰⁰ Corby describes this statement as a traumatic utterance that jolts the reader.²⁰¹ She also notes how Nemser failed to pursue the issues of Jewish identity raised by Hesse in relation to Andre's work. Corby succinctly sums up the situation when she asserts that, 'The legacy of the Holocaust for Hesse was entirely Other to the everyday experiences of Nemser or Lippard. At that time there was no scholarly support that would facilitate a dialogue across the differences of these three women. The absence of an appropriate framework with which to guide Nemser's witnessing of the Otherness of this trauma led her line of questioning to a dead end.'²⁰² Indeed, Nemser goes as far as to say to Hesse that her attitude towards the convergence of life and art is 'terribly frightening' and explains why certain critics have resisted commenting on her work.²⁰³ This theoretical gap is further underlined by Lippard's reference in her biography to the 'bizarre' events of Hesse's childhood, a choice of word that perfectly encapsulates her sense of distance from Hesse's experience.²⁰⁴

Significantly, Krauss compares Hesse's manipulation of the condition of edge to the 'drawing' in a floor sculpture by Andre that she describes as, 'a real function of the separateness of each square or tile of metal'.²⁰⁵ The work of both artists is located firmly by Krauss within the context of

¹⁹⁹ Pollock, 'Encountering Encounter', p. 17.

²⁰⁰ Vanessa Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p. 110.

²⁰¹ Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', p. 111.

²⁰² Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', pp. 113-14.

²⁰³ Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', p. 113.

²⁰⁴ Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, p. 5.

²⁰⁵ Krauss, 'Contingent', p. 32.

minimalism, with its focus on both surface and where the surface stops, namely its edge. Although Corby focuses on Nemser and Lippard, the theoretical approach of Krauss has also reinforced the omission of Jewish identity from the discourse surrounding Hesse. This thesis, however, considers Hesse's manipulation of the condition of edge within more recent theoretical frameworks that stress the experience of exile as a discursive position, from where it is feasible to negotiate issues of identity and memory. As Griselda Pollock has asserted, the critical attention on issues of Jewish identity and the discursive spaces of survival, exile and traumatic memory, does not, 'subject the once pure art of Eva Hesse to the unnecessary theoretical baggage of unethical interpreters', but rather demonstrates the breadth of more recent analysis of cultural practices.²⁰⁶

Recent scholarship has revealed a wealth of textual evidence relating to Hesse's childhood, particularly Fred Wasserman's analysis of the *Tagebücher* (diaries) kept for Hesse by her father over a ten-year period. These documents were first exhibited in 2006 and reflect what Wasserman has described as Wilhelm Hesse's effort, 'to preserve a measure of normalcy in the face of a world in upheaval, his attempt to create order in the midst of chaos'.²⁰⁷ The books are a mixture of narrative, documents, photographs and elements of collage that may represent the desire to impose a meaningful narrative framework on to the family's experience. As Alphen asserts, it is these frameworks that allow for an experience of life histories as continuous entities, an illusion that had become unrecognisable for many Holocaust survivors.²⁰⁸ Wasserman notes how the *Tagebücher* also reflect a German Jewish tradition of carefully documenting family history and genealogy.²⁰⁹ This theme is echoed in Whiteread's memorial, in its recognition of the role of books in the preservation of the Diaspora and the notion of the Jewish race as the 'people of the book'.²¹⁰ It also recalls that Israel made donations to libraries as a means of remembering the victims of the Holocaust. Survivors of the Nazi genocide continued an earlier tradition of *yizker bikher*, or memorial books, detailing the lives of destroyed communities and operating as a form of collective *Kaddish*, or public mourning. Marianne Hirsch describes these texts as, 'acts of witness and sites of memory'.²¹¹ Similarly, Wilhelm Hesse's *Tagebücher* recreate his family's lost world, including a page of photographs of the apartment at Isestrasse 98, Hamburg, with poignant images of Ruth Hesse

²⁰⁶ Pollock, 'Encountering Encounter', p. 19.

²⁰⁷ Fred Wasserman, 'Building a Childhood Memory: The Diaries of Eva Hesse's Histories', in Elizabeth Sussman and Fred Wasserman, *Eva Hesse: Sculpture*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 97.

²⁰⁸ Alphen, 'Symptoms of Discursivity', p. 35.

²⁰⁹ Wasserman, 'Building a Childhood Memory', p. 97.

²¹⁰ Nicholson, 'Whiteread, Rachel', http://www.groveart.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=287275695&hitnum=1§ion=art.094005, accessed 25 June 2007.

²¹¹ Marianne Hirsch, 'Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile', in *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travellers, Outsiders, Backward Glances*, ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998.

lighting Sabbath candles, an illuminated Hanukkah lamp and views of empty rooms.²¹² Hirsch defines such photographic images as the medium that connects first and second-generation remembrance, memory and postmemory. She uses the term 'postmemory' to describe the relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experiences of their parents.²¹³ These experiences are remembered through stories and images, a form of mediation encapsulated in the *Tagebücher* and Wilhelm Hesse's imperative that, 'one thing our children shall know and must never forget: when they were little, their parents had to live through times the like of which had never before been experienced by the Jewish world'.²¹⁴ These narratives become so powerful and monumental that Hirsch argues that they become memories in their own right. In common with Hesse's childhood situation, her experience came to be dominated by a narrative that she was too young to fully understand. In this sense, it is possible to read both Hesse's work and her response to the floor pieces of Carl Andre as articulations of the position of postmemory.

Wasserman recounts that a friend of the Hesse family described them as, 'very proper, very refined, Saturday-observant' and Helen and Eva as real, '*Hamburger kleiner Kinder*' ('little Hamburg children').²¹⁵ The middle class family attended the Bornplatz Synagogue, observed the Sabbath and maintained a kosher household. Wasserman claims that the *Tagebücher*, 'suggest that Jewish religious practice provided comfort and continuity throughout the Hesse family's travails and dislocations, as the Jewish calendar clearly defined the rhythms of their lives'.²¹⁶ The languages used in the diaries also reflect the changes imposed upon the Hesses. Wilhelm Hesse wrote in German while they lived in Hamburg, English during their time in London and for the first year in America and then returned to writing in German. Wasserman describes the language of Hebrew as a, 'constant leitmotiv' in the *Tagebücher* that is predominantly used to record Jewish holidays and events. Significantly, Mel Bochner claimed a connection between Eva Hesse's language and the formal aspect of her art,

In Eva's case, part of her voice may be a question of diction because she was raised speaking German. There was a lingering stiltedness, on occasion, to her English diction. She had a way of expressing things very formally. Even in one-to-one conversation, she would

²¹² Wasserman, 'Building a Childhood Memory', p. 105.

²¹³ Marianne Hirsch, 'Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy', in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer, Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999, p. 8.

²¹⁴ Wasserman, 'Building a Childhood Memory', p. 110.

²¹⁵ Wasserman, 'Building a Childhood Memory', p. 105.

²¹⁶ Wasserman, 'Building a Childhood Memory', p. 97.

sometimes fall into the formality of the German language. There's something of that that carries over into the work. There's a way in which personal, intimate things are encased in a structure of high formality.²¹⁷

In a sense, this particular dichotomy suggested by Bochner is also reminiscent of the 'double vision' possibly associated with a gendered, Jewish identity, and underlines the sense of dislocation associated with Hesse's work. Exemplified by a work such as *Accession*, where a minimalist exterior encompasses what Maurice Berger has described as an, 'erotic, mysterious core', Bochner's comment is a further example of the trope of the oxymoron that Bois has identified as a pervasive element of the discourse associated with Hesse.²¹⁸

Hilda Werschkul, in her analysis of Hesse's so-called 'window drawings' claims that the work, *No Title*, 1969 connotes, 'the very character of difficult reminiscence'.²¹⁹ It could be argued that this trace of memory is no less present in Hesse's sculptural works. Corby has suggested that it is the, 'unmasterable past' that is the catalyst for Hesse's intuitive response to Andre's metal plates.²²⁰ Citing Bracha Ettinger, she argues that his sculpture was effectively operating as a, 'transport station of trauma' for the unknowable events of the past that had shattered Hesse's family.²²¹ Corby does not discuss the ways in which the traumatic past may be represented in Hesse's works, as her critical focus is primarily on the occlusion of Jewish ethnicity in the early writing on Hesse, arguing that its imperatives were very much directed by the urgencies of the Woman's Art Movement in the 1970s. Furthermore, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh argues that Hesse's refusal of colour in her drawing, 'is likely to have originated in a sense of mourning and solidarity with the absent, the denatured, and the destroyed body' and that her sculptural work registers a reduction to, 'mere physical/physiological surfaces and containers, hybrids defined by an uncanny synthesis of material and process, machine parts and body parts'.²²² Buchloh claims that Hesse effectively negated bodily plenitude under the historical circumstances of annihilation, inhabiting a post-Holocaust society where the, 'sheer survival of the body already bordered on the miraculous'.²²³ Arguably, this

²¹⁷ Mel Bochner, 'About Eva Hesse: Mel Bochner Interviewed by Joan Simon', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 41.

²¹⁸ Maurice Berger, 'Objects of Liberation: The Sculpture of Eva Hesse', in Helen A. Cooper, ed., *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective*, New Haven and London: Yale University Art Gallery and Yale University Press, 1992, p. 124, cited by Bois, 'Dumb', p. 17.

²¹⁹ Hilda Werschkul, 'Modernism, Memory, and the Studio in the Late Drawings of Eva Hesse', in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006, p. 198.

²²⁰ Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', p. 118.

²²¹ Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', p. 118.

²²² Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Hesse's Endgame: Facing the Diagram', in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, ed. Catherine de Zegher, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 147.

²²³ Buchloh, 'Hesse's Endgame: Facing the Diagram', p. 146.

negation of the body is manifest in the process by which Hesse made the work *Area*, 1968. By roughly sewing together the moulds of *Repetition Nineteen III*, 1968 she transformed empty containers marked by sexual connotation into a work that Lippard tellingly describes as, 'an awkward but relaxed presence' that is dented and bent, 'as though it could take whatever life gave it, but would retain the marks'.²²⁴ Hesse herself described *Area* to Nemser as, 'the insides we took out' echoing Buchloh's notion of an uncanny synthesis of machine and body parts.²²⁵

Irit Rogoff, citing the poetry of Esther Fuchs, a daughter of Holocaust survivors, explores the despair of attempting to possess an identity of one's own, 'in a society in which collective trauma has served to simultaneously infantilize and bind one to duty, to make one responsible for the existence of a supposedly better world in which such a genocide could never occur'.²²⁶ Fuchs defines this inescapable role as that of, 'Bride of Sunshine'.²²⁷ This was nevertheless an identity that Hesse firmly rejected, writing in a letter to her father in 1952, 'Daddy I want to do more than just exist, to live happily and contented with a home, children, to do the same chores everyday'.²²⁸ Corby's analysis of Hesse's construction of her sense of self focuses on the myth of the silent survivor that pervaded German Jewish refugee communities in the United States. Consequently, the majority of survivors were not at liberty to speak about their experiences. Corby cites Max Frankel's comment that, 'a fundamental optimism was preserved in a group [the German Jewish Refugees of Washington Heights] that nonetheless had its share of trauma and relocation...they are hard-working people who feel that, by dint of their own efforts, a decent life can be staked out'.²²⁹ This positive ethos is reflected in the *Tagebücher*. Wilhelm Hesse wrote in January 1944 to Eva, 'You will see and always remember, how we settled down and you became a good real American girl. So you can be thankfull (sic) as you had a good time in America, while in Germany and almost all over Europe children were starving'.²³⁰ In a poem written for Mother's Day, Wilhelm Hesse also expresses the hope that his wife may be reunited with her mother at, 'freedom's pier'.²³¹ Signed loyalty oaths recording contributions made towards the purchase of a Loyalty fighter plane were pasted into both daughters' diaries.²³² These texts, with their emphasis on hope and gratitude, reflect

²²⁴ Lippard, 'Eva Hesse', p. 122.

²²⁵ Cindy Nemser, 'A Conversation with Eva Hesse', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 14.

²²⁶ Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 157.

²²⁷ Rogoff, 'Terra Infirma', p. 157.

²²⁸ Anne M. Wagner, 'Another Hesse', in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, October Files, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 104.

²²⁹ Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', p. 126, n. 43.

²³⁰ Wasserman, 'Building a Childhood Memory', p. 122.

²³¹ Wasserman, 'Building a Childhood Memory', p. 120.

²³² Wasserman, 'Building a Childhood Memory', p. 121.

the climate of assimilation, and underline Avtar Brah's assertion that, 'The word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience. But diasporas are also potentially the sites of hopes and new beginnings. They are contested cultural and political terrains where individual and collective memories collide, reassemble and reconfigure.'²³³ The sense of a new beginning permeates the *Tagebücher* and is encapsulated in Wilhelm Hesse's claim that, 'America affords the real life for Evchen and Helen'.²³⁴ However, in its implication that their past life was in some way inauthentic, Wilhelm Hesse's statement also captures a sense of the elisions in the narrative he carefully constructed for his daughters.

Corby argues that the art historical discourse surrounding Hesse has falsely created a masterable past in its construction of her identity as artist, 'Hesse was not three years old when she left Germany. Her age is a factor that seems to have augmented the belief that the Holocaust belonged to her past and that those affected by it should simply get on with the rest of their lives and forget it.'²³⁵ Corby vigorously contests this view, arguing that geographical safety is not necessarily synonymous with a sense of security or stability.²³⁶ As she asserts, 'The course of Hesse's life was irrevocably altered and scarred by the Third Reich's persecution of its Jewish citizens. Reference to the psychic structure of trauma enables us to acknowledge this.'²³⁷ Corby achieves this by adopting Freud's definition of trauma as being constituted by a relationship between two events combined with a period of latency and revision that retroactively bestows traumatic meaning. Corby also cites Julie Heifetz's compilation of child survivor testimonies and the reluctance of one contributor who felt that she had not suffered enough for the word survivor to apply to her. She, like Hesse, had escaped from Germany with her parents without experiencing either a ghetto or concentration camp. However, Heifetz insisted on the validity of her experience as it encapsulated the anxiety and insecurity suffered during a child's psychologically crucial years.²³⁸ Rosemary Betterton claims that, 'Perhaps what is hardest to bear and most difficult to articulate is the exile's sense of guilt at having survived'.²³⁹ Corby implicitly points to the guilt of the survivor as a characterising feature of the Jewish community of Washington Heights in quoting the words of one of its members, Alice

²³³ Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 193.

²³⁴ Wasserman, 'Building a Childhood Memory', p. 113.

²³⁵ Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', p. 114.

²³⁶ Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', p. 115.

²³⁷ Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', p. 115.

²³⁸ Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', p. 115.

²³⁹ Rosemary Betterton, *An Intimate Distance: Women, Artists and the Body*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 183.

Oppenheimer, 'It is not right that people as good as ourselves had to die in concentration camps, and we were saved. We weren't better. So we have to do something'.²⁴⁰ In Hesse's case, Corby suggests that this ethic determined her need to justify herself as an artist and positions the act of art production within the terms of survival.²⁴¹

Corby's account concentrates on the gaps in the critical writing associated with Hesse, rather than providing a detailed analysis of how her experiences of exile may have impacted upon a body of work that Elisabeth Sussman and Fred Wasserman have described as evoking emotion, absence and contingency.²⁴² However, it does seem feasible to reframe Krauss's original identification of Hesse's visual strategies of disruption within this specific context. In his analysis of Hesse's hanging sculptures, for example, Mark Godfrey has examined the extent to which these works articulate a sense of displacement and disorientation.²⁴³ He focuses specifically on two works, *Right After*, 1969 and *Untitled* ("Rope Piece"), 1970, arguing that they form unhomely environments that always remain provisional, as their original shape cannot be replicated when the work is re-hung. Godfrey compares Hesse's work to Marcel Duchamp's installation, *One Mile of String*, 1942 citing T.J. Demos' reading of the work as an, 'acknowledgement of displacement' that enforces a homeless space.²⁴⁴ He also discusses the work of another German Jewish refugee, Gego, who changed her name from Gertrud Goldschmidt and settled in Venezuela. Her installation, *Reticulárea*, 1969 also creates a complex web of anodised aluminium and stainless steel that Godfrey suggests relates to her experiences as exile. His exploration of the unhomely space is curiously reminiscent of an incident that occurred during Hesse's stay in Germany. On 21 May 1965, she travelled with Doyle to Hamburg and attempted to visit the apartment where she had lived with her family. However, the current residents refused them admittance, causing Hesse great distress. Later, Doyle speculated that the couple's adamant refusal could have been explained by their fear that they were Gypsies or *gastarbeiter* (foreign workers).²⁴⁵ This anecdote and Godfrey's proposal of an unhomely space associated with Hesse's work are both suggestive of an interrogation of discourses of 'home', 'belonging' and 'exile'. They underline Pollock's assertion that, 'the work we encounter as "Eva Hesse" traverses the normal categories of art history which locate artistic identity in national spaces:

²⁴⁰ Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', pp. 117- 118.

²⁴¹ Corby, 'Doodling in the Margins of Eva Hesse's Histories', pp. 117.

²⁴² Elisabeth Sussman and Fred Wasserman, 'Preface', in Elisabeth Sussman and Fred Wasserman, *Eva Hesse: Sculpture*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, p. xi.

²⁴³ Mark Godfrey, 'A String of Nots: Eva Hesse's Hanging Sculpture', in Elisabeth Sussman and Fred Wasserman, *Eva Hesse: Sculpture*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006.

²⁴⁴ Godfrey, 'A String of Nots', p. 48.

²⁴⁵ Wasserman, 'Building a Childhood Memory', p. 129.

More recently, a particularly compelling biographical detail has been revealed. The earliest critical writing of Lucy Lippard and Cindy Nemser had focused attention on Hesse's contribution to feminist art practice and her achievements as a woman artist in a predominantly male field. However, the recent publication of the unedited transcripts of Lippard's interview with Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt reveal that the impact of Hesse's traumatic past was in fact openly acknowledged by her peers. The conversation with Smithson and Holt was recorded on 5 June, 1973, at their loft on Greenwich Street. Lippard had been engaged in taping interviews with mutual friends for the monograph she was writing on Hesse and states that, 'While I originally wanted to do a "smooth" edit of this text, Holt and the editors of *Artforum* persuaded me to leave it "rough", as a kind of (embarrassing) time capsule. And so it stands'.²⁴⁷ Perhaps the most striking feature of this transcript is Smithson's revelation that the works Hesse made at Arko Metals were built by concentration camp survivors,

RS: She went to the same fabricator that I did, Arko Metals; it used to be right on...either here on Prince or on Broome. This is interesting because there were a lot of Jews basically who had been in concentration camps, and the whole atmosphere of the place was very, um...

LL: Very what?

RS: You know, they had numbers on their arms, and it was a very gritty kind of place [...] She had those kinds of references to Carl Andre's work as reminding her of concentration camps. So there was an undertone.

LL: That was the first thing that Anita Bell said when she saw the show. I made her see the show first, and then I went through it with her. She said, "Concentration camps, all that repetition and all that grayness." And I said, "No, no, that's just Minimal art. That was from the art scene, that has nothing to do [with concentration camps]".

RS: No, I don't think you can avoid that, because she said it herself in the interview. And I remember her saying it directly in relation to Carl's work. There's a kind of squalor there that sort of appealed to me.

James Meyer describes the information as a 'bomb', delivered in Smithson's, 'indifferent tone' and argues that implicit in the recollection is the sense of a common memory shared between Hesse and the fabricators.²⁴⁸ It is also interesting to note Lippard's insistence on viewing the aspects of seriality and monochrome within a strictly formal context. Indeed, later in the interview, Smithson says, 'I think it's wrong to try to make her [Hesse] into some sort of formalist' and Lippard replies, 'Oh, so

²⁴⁶ Pollock, 'Encountering Encounter', p. 14.

²⁴⁷ Lucy R. Lippard, 'Out of the Past', *Artforum*, Issue 156, No.6, 2008, p. 237.

²⁴⁸ James Meyer, 'The Logic of the Double', *Artforum*, Issue 156, No. 6, 2008, p. 253.

do I. What I mean when I say I want to talk about her work without her life is not that I want to take the psychological or the biography out of it, but that I don't want to get into who she was sleeping with, what her gynecological operations were-all the *National Enquirer* bullshit'. The transcript is significant because it reveals Lippard's preoccupations, specifically feminism and its relations to the workings of a male-dominated 'art scene', and the ways in which these shaped the narrative that she constructed for an artist who had been her friend. Her comments suggest that she perhaps only really viewed Hesse's achievement within these specific parameters and that the formal aspects associated with Minimalism possibly obscured for her any sense of a common memory shared between Hesse and the Arko fabricators who constructed her installations.

The discourse surrounding Hesse is permeated by a tension between a tendency to mythologise the 'tragic' aspects of Hesse's biography and the necessity of understanding how these events shaped her identity and artistic practice. Kathleen Whitney asserts that, 'Hesse's story has been essential to the formation of her myth; it is full of tragedy, including forced immigration from Nazi Germany, failed marriage, great success at a young age, and early death from cancer'.²⁴⁹ However, Pollock encourages a more productive enterprise, namely the dismissal of the conventional tropes and myths associated with the artist-genius in order to, 'read closely the specific texture of a particular historical life, lending to the ever-expanding archive something of our own understanding of the complexity of what constitutes a lived, embodied life'.²⁵⁰ Arguably, this may be the cumulative effect achieved by the recent scholarship devoted to Hesse, where family documents have been used to shed light on the ways in which Hesse's early life may have intersected with her identity as an artist. Although biography has always featured very prominently in scholarship concerned with Hesse's work, this more recent discourse appears to offer a more subtle and nuanced reading of the construction of a gendered, post-Holocaust, Jewish subjectivity, whilst also revealing the 'unsayable' in the earlier critical writing. The analysis offered by Vanessa Corby successfully avoids positioning Hesse in the reductive categories of Jewish woman artist, recognising instead that the processes of subjectivity are permanently in flux.²⁵¹ Furthermore, Marianne Hirsch's use of the term *postmemory* provides a particularly relevant framework for considering the narratives that contributed to the construction of Hesse's sense of self and the ways in which her work may be interpreted as encapsulating the traces of traumatic memory. Through reference to the work of other

²⁴⁹ Kathleen Whitney, 'Eva Redux or What Do We Owe Eva Hesse? Some Thoughts on Legacy and Influence', *Sculpture*, Vol. 21, No. 10, 2002, p. 35.

²⁵⁰ Pollock, 'Encountering Encounter', pp. 19-20.

²⁵¹ In her recent book, Vanessa Corby takes as her point of departure two drawings made by Hesse in 1960-61. See Vanessa Corby, *Eva Hesse: Longing, Belonging and Displacement*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2010.

artists who have experienced exile, Mark Godfrey cogently describes how Hesse's sculptural practice evokes a sense of displacement through its creation of an unhomely space. Such examples of the recent discourse surrounding Hesse serve to underline Rogoff's definition of visual culture as a project that seeks to recognise the invisible boundary lines that determine inclusions and exclusions. They also facilitate a reframing of Krauss's identification of the anamorphic effect as a strategy of dislocation that disrupts our visual preconceptions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Anamorphosis in Art Practice Since 1970

In the light of Krauss's theorisation of an anamorphic condition through her critical encounter with the work of Eva Hesse, this chapter discusses examples of art practice since 1970 that could be said to incorporate strategies of visual distortion, or a privileging of the oblique viewpoint. My discussion of these works is augmented by Daniel Collins' designation of the viewer of anamorphoses as an 'eccentric observer', a position encompassing both Freud's concept of the uncanny and Lacan's formulation of a model of subjective vision. As discussed in chapter one, Collins makes the distinction between works of art where the artist may purposefully deploy anamorphic perspective as a means of perspectival play, and those where aspects of anamorphosis may not have been previously acknowledged. I have selected some examples of art production since 1970 that may either be considered to demonstrate some formal aspects of anamorphic perspective, or where the dynamic between the viewer and the art work incites subjective vision.

Hannah Wilke's *Hannah Wilke Through the Large Glass*, 1976 (Fig. 8) is a performance work that, to my knowledge, has not previously been considered in terms of articulating an anamorphic condition. In this silent, ten-minute colour film, Wilke performs a striptease behind Marcel Duchamp's, *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even*, 1915-1923, also known as the, *Large Glass*. It was performed during the filming of a ninety-minute special program on Duchamp made for German television called *C'est la Vie Rose*, in which Wilke featured, at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In a recent review in *The New York Times*, Holland Cotter describes Wilke's performance work,

there is a film by a contemporary female artist, Hannah Wilke (1940-93), who went to art school in Philadelphia, saw *Étant Donnés* soon after its installation and remembered finding it "repulsive". She later did a performance about it in which she assumed the place of the prone figure. And in a 1976 film made in the museum's Duchamp gallery, she engaged with *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, his other grand erotic masterwork. Dressed in a high-fashion white tailored suit and fedora, she does a slow striptease in front of the piece, or rather behind it, as the camera shoots her performance through the glass and through Duchamp's painted phallic and vaginal forms frozen in unconsummated union. Wilke, who was a great beauty, preens, shifts, undoes a button, tips her hat, shifts, stares, slowly pulls at a zipper. The Bride and the Bachelors can never complete their erotic task, but she can. In her performance she was the cool but active counterpart to the woman in

Étant Donnés, just as exposed but in control of the exposure.¹

Critics of Wilke have debated whether her work subverts the mastery of the male gaze through an ironic play on the commodifying representation of women, or is indeed complicit in the reinforcement of the very sexual stereotypes she parodies. Writing in 1976, Lucy Lippard commented on this confusion, arguing that, 'Hannah Wilke, a glamour girl in her own right who sees her art as "seductive", is considered a little too good to be true when she flaunts her body in parody of the role she actually plays in real life. She has been making erotic art with vaginal imagery for over a decade, and since the women's movement, has begun to do performances in conjunction with her sculpture, but her own confusion of her roles as beautiful woman and artist, as flirt and feminist, has resulted at times in politically ambiguous manifestations that have exposed her to criticism on a personal as well as on an artistic level'.² Indeed, it appears that for some critics, it was Wilke's 'beauty' that undermined any serious attempt on the part of the artist to subvert societal norms that operate to objectify the female nude. Ann Sargent Wooster has remarked that, 'From the beginning Wilke has called herself a feminist artist but this often seemed confusing because when she had herself photographed nude, the "pin-ups" more closely resembled a *Playboy* centerfold than the more often lumpen proletariat feminist nudes. The problem Wilke faced in being taken seriously was that she was conventionally beautiful and her beauty and self-absorbed narcissism distracted you from her reversal of the voyeurism inherent in the use of women as sex objects'.³ According to much of the critical reception of Wilke's work, it appears her only achievement with regard to the subversion of representational forms is considered to rest on her role as 'controller' of her own image. Sargent Wooster described Wilke as wresting the means of production of the female representation from male hands in order to become the director and *auteur* of her own image'.⁴ Similarly, Holland Cotter argues that Wilke is just as exposed as the passive nude of Duchamp's *Étant Donnés* but is in control of her own exposure. In Cotter's recent newspaper article, Wilke is still positioned as the preening 'great beauty' against the 'masterwork' created by Duchamp. In common with Richard Hamilton's later work where the nude is 'ghosted' in the image, the film emphasises the ambiguity of how the viewer sees Wilke in relation to Duchamp's *Large Glass*. This confusion is apparent in Cotter's comment, 'She does a slow striptease in front of the piece, or rather behind it, as the camera shoots her performance through the glass and through Duchamp's painted phallic and vaginal forms'. Cotter's correction underlines Wilke's manipulation of the viewing position, as the artist is seen through the double lens of both the

¹ Holland Cotter, 'Landscape of Eros, Through the Peephole', *The New York Times*, 27 August, 2009.

² Lucy R. Lippard, *The Pink Glass Swan: Selected Feminist Essays on Art*, New York: The New Press, 1995, p. 103.

³ Ann Sargent Wooster, 'Hannah Wilke: Whose Image is it?', *High Performance*, No. 51, 1990, p. 31.

⁴ Sargent Wooster, 'Hannah Wilke', p. 31.

camera and the *Large Glass*, comparable with Hamilton's digital manipulation of the nude.

More recent critical perspectives, most notably those of Amelia Jones and Anna C. Chave have sought to redress the balance by reasserting Wilke's credentials as a pioneering feminist artist. Jones argues that it is by the action of Wilke's very deliberate reiteration of the gaze that its insufficiency is exposed. Drawing on Craig Owen's theorisation of the 'rhetoric of the pose', Jones proposes that the artist's insistence on striking a pose invokes the Lacanian notion that this action mimics the immobility induced by the gaze, thereby reflecting power back on itself and forcing it to surrender.⁵ Returning to Wilke's proposed manipulation of notions of the artist and authority, Jones argues that, 'by adopting the rhetoric of the pose as the work itself, Wilke both insistently unveils the artist and unveils the artist as *female* (anatomically female, and so culturally feminine, and yet also clearly "masculine" in her artistic authority'.⁶ Jones' argument is reflected in the words of Wilke herself,

Performance gave me back my body, especially in *Hannah Wilke, through the Large Glass as the Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*. In that video-film-performance, I was the bride stripped bare but also the bride as artist making the artwork, so that Duchamp's *Large Glass* became, all of a sudden, just a dead symbol, a prop for a moving, live woman. It didn't matter if I was a work of art or not. I moved and didn't allow the cameraman to move. He stayed still (still life). The filmstrip was a pun; I stripped myself bare, but I stripped myself of the veil of woman being just the model for the man. I was now the model of the creative spirit, as the artist of my own ideology.⁷

Wilke's work may be read as a redefining of the 'bachelor machine' paradigm and in her description of the performance she is keen to emphasise her own agency and authority in the making of the work.

In what ways could Wilke's performance, with its playful parody of Duchamp's *Large Glass*, be interpreted within the framework of an anamorphic condition? Duchamp was particularly interested in anamorphosis and the *Large Glass* has been read as a double speculation on perspectival illusion.⁸ The *Large Glass* comprises two distinct domains, the realm of the bride above and the

⁵ Amelia Jones, 'The Rhetoric of the Pose: Hannah Wilke and the Radical Narcissism of Feminist Body Art', in *Body Art: Performing the Subject*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, p. 153. Craig Owens developed his concept of the 'rhetoric of the pose' in his article on the work of Barbara Kruger, 'The Medusa Effect, or the Specular Ruse', *Art in America*, Volume 72, Issue 1, 1984.

⁶ Jones, *Body Art*, pp.154 -155.

⁷ Linda M. Montano, *Performance Artists Talking in the Eighties*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2000, p. 138.

⁸ In Duchamp's *White Box*, there is an allusion to Nicéron's treatise, *Thaumaturgus Opticus*, Octavio Paz, *Marcel Duchamp: Appearance Stripped Bare*, Arcade Publishing: New York, 1990, p. 137. Paz described Duchamp's oeuvre as, 'a vast anamorphosis that unfolds before our eyes throughout the years. From the *Nude Descending a Staircase* to the naked girl in the *Assemblage* – different moments in the journey back toward original form.' Paz, *Marcel Duchamp*, 1990, pps. 159-160.

realm of the bachelors below; both are desiring, without any possibility of reaching a mutual understanding of each other or any sense of fulfilment. Duchamp described the lower half as a rehabilitation of single-point perspective, following its rejection in Cubism. Dawn Ades comments that,

The forms are measurable, if imperfect and sometimes irregular, and appear quite convincingly to stand on the ground beyond the Glass. The upper part (the “airy” realm of the Bride), however, is full of amorphous and we might say anamorphic forms. That Duchamp had in mind some such model of a “puzzle” perspective – for speculative rather than literal purposes – is confirmed by his note on the *Pendu femelle* [female hanged body], the suspended form on the left: “The *Pendu femelle* is the form in ordinary perspective of a *Pendu femelle* for which one could perhaps try to discover the true form/This comes from the fact that any form is the perspective of another form according to a certain *vanishing* point and a certain *distance*.” Formless in ordinary perspective – this too recalls the anamorphic blot in Holbein's *Ambassadors*, but with Duchamp's *Bride*, we are left without the alternative viewing point from which to discover the “true form”.⁹

Wilke's position behind the *Large Glass* creates an effect of superimposing the phallic forms of Duchamp's Bachelors on her nude form in an anamorphic blur. An additional 'blot' is formed by Wilke's own shadow that echoes the bachelor form. I am struck by Wilke's assessment of the *Large Glass* as, 'just a dead symbol', for arguably the malic moulds are fulfilling a similar function to that of Holbein's skull. Wilke also deploys a doubling of the bachelors through appropriating the phallic symbol of a hat, as identified by Freud. Cotter may describe Wilke's choice of fedora as 'high fashion', but her apparel is also reminiscent of the images that Man Ray produced to accompany Tristan Tzara's article, 'On a Certain Automatism', published in the Surrealist magazine, *Minotaure* in 1933.¹⁰ The Jewish American artist, Man Ray met Duchamp in 1915.¹¹ They collaborated on a number of projects and formed the New York group of Dada artists. In the first of Man Ray's two untitled images, the split crown fedora takes the form of female genitalia. The hat almost completely conceals the woman model's face and the use of a high camera angle results in the hats being viewed from above – a position where the woman cannot see herself. Krauss states that, 'The fedora, pulled firmly down on the head of the model, is photographed from above, the mannequin's face obscured by its brim. Firmly rounded, aggressive, the crown of the hat rises up toward its viewer like the tip of the male organ, swelling with so much phallic presence. A click of the shutter and Man Ray enacts the institution of the fetish: the “glance” that refuses what it sees and in this resistance turns black into white, or rather insists that black *is* white. In the logic of the fetish the paradigm male/female collapses in an adamant refusal to accept distinction, to accept the facts of

⁹ Dawn Ades, 'Dali's Optical Illusions', in *Dali's Optical Illusions*, exh. cat., Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut, 2000.

¹⁰ Tzara's article addressed contemporary hat fashion (particularly the wearing of the fedora) by suggesting that fashion was a form of unconscious expression.

¹¹ Man Ray (1890-1976) was born Emmanuel Radnitsky in Philadelphia.

sexual difference. The fetish is not the replacement of the female genitals with a surrogate, coded /female/; it is a substitute that will allow a perverse continuation in a belief that they are male, that the woman (mother) is – beyond all apparent evidence – phallic.¹² Like the anamorph, Krauss describes Man Ray's image as capturing, 'the hat within a radically oblique point of view, one that hangs suspended over the top of the head, so that the split crown of the fedora seems to yield to the upsurge of the skull below it, both expressing and denying its aggressive contour: a shine on the nose'.¹³ I would argue that Wilke's performative act with the fedora operates to expose the insufficiency of the gaze through the logic of the fetish, but also through her manipulation of Man Ray's oblique viewing angle, as she ironically 'tips her hat' to the viewer.

Wilke was born Arlene Hannah Butter in 1940, in New York, where her family of Hungarian and Russian-Polish descent, lived on the Lower East Side. In her monograph of Wilke, Nancy Princenthal comments that, 'Being Jewish was, Wilke believed fundamental to her outlook, even if it was seldom an explicit theme in her work. "My consciousness came from being a Jew in World War II. I was born in 1940, and I was a Jew. I realized what it would be to be annihilated just for a word," Wilke said in a 1989 interview. Her sister, Marsie Scharlatt, notes that there were relatives on their mother's side who died during the Holocaust, though they did not know them personally. In New York, the family's commitment to Judaism followed a typical New World pattern: the girls went to Hebrew school at a Reform temple; the family celebrated the major holidays but attended religious services only sporadically, at a Conservative synagogue; they did not maintain a Kosher kitchen. In a word, they assimilated'.¹⁴

Wilke's work is increasingly analysed within the context of her Jewish identity. Daniel Belasco, for example, compares the floor piece, *159 One-Fold Gestural Sculptures, 1973-74* where the terracotta forms are more usually considered representations of female genitalia, to *hamentashen*, a three-cornered pastry traditionally eaten during the Jewish festival of Purim. Belasco claims that, 'unlike most abstract expressionists who insisted on the singularity of their work, Wilke readily admitted that her art sprang directly from her Jewish consciousness. In a 1978 interview in *Visual Dialog*, she confessed, 'I think my work is related to my Jewishness'. Growing up in a religious, but not observant, home, Wilke claimed to have experienced Judaism as at once restrictive and inspirational. The prohibition of the creation of graven images, as well as the tradition of women's

¹² Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, pp. 162 – 163.

¹³ Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, p. 163. Freud gave the example of *a shine on the nose*, or *ein Glanz auf die Nase* as a fetish object from his case histories, the last visual impression before the uncanny, traumatic moment of realisation that the woman is not phallic.

¹⁴ Nancy Princenthal, *Hannah Wilke*, Prestel Verlag: Munich, Berlin, London, New York, 2010, pps. 8-9.

uncleanness, gave her the space and the incentive to develop her own visual language of the female body. The form of repeatedly folded sculptures that make up *159 One-Fold Gestural Sculptures* reappear in other work throughout the exhibition as a strategy to express the demand that women be present in the public sphere [Belasco was reviewing *Hannah Wilke: Sculpture and Other Work* at the Ronald Feldman Gallery]. Wilke attributed her interest in repetition to her fascination for the magical spirituality of Hebrew prayer and the cyclical nature of Jewish ritual. Taken to represent not just a woman but a Jewish woman, each of the abstractions is an assertion of Wilke's reliance on Jewish themes to comment on the larger society'.¹⁵

Richard Hamilton's painting, *The Passage of the Bride*, 1998-99 (Fig. 8) also engages with Duchamp's manipulation of perspective and is predicated on a privileging of the oblique viewing angle. Born in London in 1922, Hamilton studied at the Royal Academy of Arts at the age of sixteen and later studied engineering drafting during the Second World War. He was one of the founding members of the Independent Group formed at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. A group comprising young British artists, designers, architects and critics, their aim was to absorb everyday, domestic objects into the realms of art production. Hamilton's collage, *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing*, 1956, is regarded as the first work of Pop Art. From the early 1970s, he used the most advanced computer technology available in order to digitally generate works and to alter earlier ones. Commenting on his aspect of his art practice, Hamilton recalls, 'My first experience of computers was in 1971. Unlike some artists who were attracted to the computer in those early days, I found the visual qualities of computer generated drawings of little interest. However, when told that a computer could produce complex perspective drawings and remove the need for tedious hand plotting of a multiplicity of points, I was glad to be able to bring to fruition a project I had abandoned in 1963'.¹⁶ The computer program CAPER (computer-aided perspective) written in 1967, enabled Hamilton to complete the perspective drawing of the treads of car tyres for his portfolio of prints, *Five tyres remoulded*, 1972. Hamilton had wanted to produce a relief print where the treads would be embossed, thereby combining both a tread and the representation of a tread in the same image, but the process had been too time-consuming and laborious. It was Hamilton's collaboration with a computer animation programmer, Sherril F. Martin in Cambridge, Massachusetts that allowed him to realise the project nearly ten years later.¹⁷

¹⁵ Daniel Belasco, 'Jewish Body Art', *The Jewish Week*, 5 November, 1999.

¹⁶ Richard Hamilton, 'concept|technology>artwork', in *Richard Hamilton*, ed. Hal Foster with Alex Bacon, Cambridge MA and London: MIT Press, 2010, p. 139.

¹⁷ Mark Francis, 'Richard Hamilton: Grand New Artificer', in *Richard Hamilton*, ed. Hal Foster with Alex Bacon, Cambridge MA and London: MIT Press, 2010, p. 107.

I suggest that it is Hamilton's deployment of computer technology that specifically lends an anamorphic quality to his work, *The Passage of the Bride*, 1998-99, that was shown in the exhibition, *Double Vision*, a collaborative venture between three institutions, the DAAD, the British Council and the Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst in 2001. Curated by Andrea Schlieker, the artists selected had all participated in residencies offered by the DAAD Berlin Artists' Programme. Indeed Schlieker proposes that an, 'invaluable "binary vision"' is discernible in the work of these artists, fostered by their time spent working in Germany.¹⁸ Similarly, Ulrich Podewils, Andrea Rose and Barbara Steiner argue that the exhibition's title and selection of works reflect, 'the evolution of a new perspective and an awareness of another perception'.¹⁹ Their choice of language is suggestive of the properties of the anamorph, a visual dynamic exemplified in the work of Hamilton and Whiteread who also contributed to the *Double Vision* exhibition.

The Passage of the Bride, 1998-99 is a painted version of *A mirrorical return*, 1998, a composition that combines an interior view of a passageway with a photograph of a nude reading a letter and an image of the lower panel of Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass* (see Fig.9). The work is a complex fusion of painting on canvas with photography and computer manipulation, a process outlined by Hamilton in the exhibition catalogue,

As part of a plan to populate the *Seven Rooms*, a friend offered to model in the house from which they derive.²⁰ Kodak again lent a camera and I made many photographs which could instantly be viewed on the computer monitor. (...) The passage source has a full-size pencil drawing of the lower part of Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass*, hanging on the west wall. Since the drawing was too faint to appear on the original photograph, I scanned a transparency of the Duchamp Apparatus into the Paintbox, applied perspective, and ghosted it in to replace the invisible drawing. (...) One of the digital photographs showed the model reading a letter by the window. The figure was too remote so I brought her closer and then placed a laterally reversed copy in the picture. (...) Seeing the reflection of the nude in the Duchamp context, the reflected figure appeared redundant.²¹

I would suggest that the work represents a compelling reinvention of the anamorphic condition, originally defined by Krauss in relation to the work of Eva Hesse; a visual dynamic that privileges the oblique view and casts the viewer in the role described by Collins as that of the 'eccentric

¹⁸ Andrea Schlieker, *Double Vision*, London: The British Council, 2001, p. 49.

¹⁹ Andrea Schlieker, *Double Vision*, p. 47.

²⁰ A project created for an exhibition of five artists at the Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London, in 1995. Hamilton made seven colour transparencies of spaces in his Oxfordshire house (bathroom, bedroom, kitchen, dining room, dining room/kitchen, passage and attic) and combined these with seven black and white photographs of the gallery walls where each work was to be hung, before printing the images onto canvas.

²¹ Andrea Schlieker, *Double Vision*, p. 56.

observer'. The apparatus of the *Large Glass* is barely discernible, forming distorted patterns that cannot easily be rectified by the viewer. At first glance, the forms may not even necessarily be recognised as comprising those of Duchamp's original work (a copy of which was created by Hamilton for the Tate's 1966 Duchamp retrospective). The nine 'Malic Moulds' symbolising the Bachelors are compressed to an orange linear pattern that appears particularly distorted and the conical sieves form an arc near the head of the nude woman. Significantly, Hamilton has stipulated that the nude is, 'not a reflection, she is ghosted (maybe 70% transparent) into the glass. She blends with, rather than overlays, the Chocolate Grinder'.²² The visual effect created by this optical illusion is commented on by Elizabeth Manchester, 'Hamilton took care to ensure that she appears neither behind, nor before, but part of the glass itself. In other words, although logic would suggest that she is a reflection, she clearly is not. Just as the young woman's presence is visually puzzling, the reflection of the passageway in the glass is physically impossible in the position in which it is located on the wall'.²³ The unsettling feeling generated by the experience of looking at an image that apparently defies our 'logical' viewing position and the 'ghosted' figure who exists as a strange double manifest in the glass both produce a feeling of the uncanny. Hamilton's image is also a projection of Krauss's 'optical unconscious', 'the way that human vision can be thought to be less than a master of all it surveys, in conflict as it is with what is internal to the organism that houses it'.²⁴ This is underlined by the transgressive quality of the visual system of anamorphosis and its associated emphasis on contingency and subjectivity.

Hamilton's work is predicated on visual quotations, not only from Duchamp's allusion to sex, marriage and machinery, but also Jan Vermeer's *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window*, ca.1657. Duchamp's 'Bride' is embodied in Hamilton's nude and located firmly in the realm of the Bachelors. A new narrative structure is also imposed on Vermeer's girl reading a letter, as the viewer is led to ponder what the possible impact of the letter may be, specifically whether the information it contains will result in her status as bride being revoked in some way. The title of the work, *The Passage of the Bride* leads on from *A mirrorical return* in the same way that Duchamp's *The Passage from the Virgin to the Bride*, 1912, developed into the *Large Glass*. It has been suggested that the anamorphic skull of Holbein's *Ambassadors* is a visual signature as the artist's name means 'hollow bone'. Similarly, the conjunction of the Bride and Bachelors in the French title of the *Large Glass* has been read as an amalgam of Duchamp's first name Mar(iée) and

²² Richard Hamilton in email correspondence with Elizabeth Manchester, June 2007, www.tate.org.uk.

²³ Elizabeth Manchester, 'A mirrorical return', www.tate.org.uk.

²⁴ Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, p.180.

Cél(ibataires).²⁵ When Hamilton constructed his highly accurate copy of the *Large Glass*, Duchamp signed it, inscribing on the back, 'Richard Hamilton | pour copie conforme | Marcel Duchamp | 1965'.

David Mellor relates Hamilton's early work, *Hommage à Chrysler Corps.*, 1957 to the trope of anamorphosis, 'The power of sight is staked in the painting: the headlamps/skull's eye sockets recall the skulls of late Cézanne in their disjointedness, also the anamorphically perspectivized death's head in Holbein's *The Ambassadors*. Spectators before *Hommage à Chrysler Corps.*, like those before *The Ambassadors*, "look at this phantom, but see nothing, pass over it." Hamilton, the Renaissance perspectivist, pursued those sights which could not be rationally projected and mapped'.²⁶ The amorphous blur that erupts from the corner of Hamilton's, *Bathroom Fig. 1*, 1999 (Fig. 10) is reminiscent of the indistinct stain that intrudes into the pictorial space of Holbein's portrait. However, it is more apparent that this distorted shape is the blurred figure of an indistinct nude sitting on the side of a bath; the torso, arms and legs comprising the darker bulk of the shape, with the head diminished and barely visible. David Mellor describes Hamilton's pictorial investigations of 'the perspective of blur' from the 1950s onwards, influenced by the American scientist James J. Gibson's work on vision in motion.²⁷ In *Bathroom Fig. 2*, 1999-2000 (Fig. 11) Hamilton presents a sequel to the work; a reforming of the phallic blot into the figure of a woman, partially covered by a white robe, her hair wrapped in a towel. She is seemingly lost in contemplation, unaware of the voyeuristic gaze of the viewer. The work references the common trope in painting of the woman at her toilet.²⁸ Griselda Pollock argues that the erotic potential of the voyeuristic observation of a woman in the process of undressing is intensified by the sense of intrusion.²⁹ Indeed, I concur with Pollock's view that, 'to look at and enjoy the sites of patriarchal culture we women must become nominal transvestites', for in my view the distortion and act of reforming seen in the continuous narrative of Hamilton's two works do not operate to subvert this specific genre of art production, but rather reinforce the mastery of the male spectator's gaze.³⁰ However, it is in Hannah Wilke's engagement with Duchamp's *Large Glass*, that we can perhaps

²⁵ Francis M. Naumann, 'Marcel Duchamp', www.oxfordartonline.com, accessed 26 November, 2008.

²⁶ David Mellor, 'The Pleasures and Sorrows of Modernity: Vision, Space, and the Social Body in Richard Hamilton', in *Richard Hamilton*, ed. Hal Foster with Alex Bacon, Cambridge MA and London: MIT Press, 2010, p. 29.

²⁷ Mellor, 'The Pleasures and Sorrows of Modernity: Vision, Space, and the Social Body in Richard Hamilton', 2010, pps. 22-23.

²⁸ This genre has a long history in the visual arts. Earlier examples of paintings within this genre include Jan Havickz Steen, *Woman at her Toilet*, c. 1661-65; Gustave Caillebotte's, *Woman at a Dressing Table*, 1873, Edgar Degas, *Woman at her Toilette*, 1876 and Berthe Morisot, *Woman at her Toilette*, 1881.

²⁹ Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, femininity and the histories of art*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 281, n. 44.

³⁰ Pollock, *Vision and Difference*, p. 122.

discern a more transgressive approach (Wilke and Hamilton had a relationship and collaborated on a number of projects during that time).³¹

The deployment of anamorphic strategies and their appeal to the 'eccentric observer' may be discerned in the work of the British sculptor, Rachel Whiteread. Born in London in 1963, Whiteread was the first woman to win the Turner Prize in 1993. She is best known for having developed a casting process by means of which a negative form of utilitarian objects such as bathtubs, wardrobes, book shelves and entire houses are produced. Her work has been discussed within the theoretical framework of the uncanny; for example, *House*, 1993, destroyed 1994, a concrete casting of a condemned Victorian terraced house has been described by Pamela M. Lee as, 'an oppressive mnemonic trace' that generated much controversy.³² Catherine Belsey claims that Whiteread's casts expand the range of culture in a 'specific and curiously Lacanian way' through their embodiment of emptiness that alludes to the lost real and the impossible Thing.³³

The temporary public sculpture, *Water Tower*, 1998 was produced at the request of the New York Public Art Fund in 1994. The budget and site of the proposed project were left entirely open. Whiteread rejected a number of locations in the city that were offered to her, instead opting for the rooftop of an ordinary, brownstone seven-storey block on Grand Street, SoHo where she installed a polyurethane resin cast of the interior of a once-functioning cedar water tower (Fig. 9). The work remained in situ for a year and was then transferred to the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where it is positioned on the roof. Whiteread comments that,

One of my first times in America I noticed the water towers on the roof tops of New York City and I enjoyed these objects. I didn't really know what they were, didn't really know why they were there, but as these weird wooden barrel like objects that sat on top of many roof tops in very awkward ways. It occurred to me that they were like part of the furniture of the city, sort of street benches or, they're just something that no one really took much notice of. It's something that I often do is try and give those places and spaces that have never really had a

³¹ Wilke's relationships are often referred to in critical writing about the artist. Indeed, Wilke referenced them in her own art production. Between 1969 and 1977, Wilke was in a relationship with Claes Oldenburg that ended acrimoniously. She sued Oldenburg for breach of an 'oral lifetime employment contract' in 1978. In 1989, Oldenburg took legal action and successfully prohibited the publication in an exhibition catalogue of three of Wilke's works that featured his image. In contrast, Hamilton wrote a letter supporting Wilke's right to publish, 'any material relating to me she may wish to use'. For more detail relating to the influence of Wilke's relationships on her art practice see, Laura Cottingham, 'The Other Venus – Hannah Wilke and Peter Brandt', http://www.peter-brandt.com/the_other_venus.htm, and Anna C. Chave, "'I Object' Hannah Wilke's Feminism', *Art in America*, No. 3, March 2009, 104 -109.

³² Pamela M. Lee, 'As the Weather', in *The Art of Rachel Whiteread*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2004, p. 133.

³³ Catherine Belsey, *Culture and the Real: Theorizing Cultural Criticism*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 152.

place in the world some sort of authority and some sort of voice.³⁴

There are an estimated seventeen thousand roof-top water tanks in New York that were constructed to supply water to buildings that exceeded six storeys in height. During the mid-nineteenth century, space constraints led to an increase in high-rise buildings in Manhattan and the wooden tanks were necessary to maintain water pressure. Luc Sante has described the water tower as, 'a primal element of New York City' that are comforting in their omnipresence, but have nevertheless managed to avoid dull familiarity. However, paradoxically, 'with the passage of time, they seem to grow increasingly unfamiliar. A little over a century ago, when water towers became fixtures of those ten- or twenty storey buildings they crown, they might have lurked beneath notice as much as they planed above all of Manhattan; today they make their presence felt with more insistence than they did even twenty years ago'.³⁵ The sense of the once familiar becoming increasingly unfamiliar, coupled with Sante's use of the word 'lurked' are suggestive of the uncanny. Water towers are also described as vestiges of the rural that, 'intrude upon turn-of-the-millennium Manhattan with the allure of a backwoodsman at a cocktail party'.³⁶ Similarly, Sue Malvern describes the water towers as, 'largely undesigned functional objects which were not meant to be noticed'.³⁷ Because of its high location, Whiteread's intervention into this existing terrain of familiar structures did not immediately attract attention. In her analysis of Whiteread's public sculpture, Andrea Schlieker has commented that, 'Unlike the in-your-face quality of so much 'plaza-art', a rooftop location implies active search or accidental discovery, thereby making surprise part of the experience of looking'.³⁸ In this comment, Schlieker emphasises an important aspect of the anamorphic, that is to say the requirement that the viewer adopts an active role, and the sense of surprise and discovery inherent in the viewer's engagement with the image. Sue Malvern describes *Water Tower* as, 'elusive, hard to find...Even well prepared, equipped with its location and knowing what it looks like, the viewer is taken by surprise when finally happening upon it'.³⁹ Whiteread has commented, 'I was looking for a

³⁴ Audio Program excerpt, MoMA audio, 2008, http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=82016.

³⁵ Luc Sante, 'Cabin in the Sky', in *Looking Up: Rachel Whiteread's Water Tower*, ed. Louise Neri, Zurich, Berlin, New York: Scalo, 1999, p. 89.

³⁶ Sante, 'Cabin in the Sky', 1999, p. 89. Sante frequently refers to the water towers of New York in anthropomorphic terms, describing them as, 'a bit like those people who when young were barely noticed, receded into the background at parties, show up partly cut off on the edges of group photographs, are omitted from the indexes of contemporaneous accounts of the scene. In old age, however, by dint of having outlived heir peers, they become emblematic of that very time when they were so overlooked'. He also describes the water tower as, 'a survivor, and a tough customer at that', p. 92.

³⁷ Sue Malvern, 'Rachel Whiteread's *Water Tower*', in *Difference and Excess in Contemporary Art: The Visibility of Women's Practice*, ed. Gill Perry, Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, p. 81.

³⁸ Andrea Schlieker, 'Pause for Thought: The Public Sculptures of Rachel Whiteread', in *Rachel Whiteread*, Lisa G. Corrin, Patrick Elliott and Andrea Schlieker, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and Serpentine Gallery, London, 2001, p. 61.

³⁹ Malvern, 'Rachel Whiteread's *Water Tower*', 2004, p. 78.

site that was remote but fairly evident from street level, that you could get quite intimate with, that you could see from different vantage points'.⁴⁰ I infer from Whiteread's account that she means that the site offered intimacy to her as an artist, as the work in its location cannot be accessed by the public. Wynn Kramarsky, a SoHo resident, commented on this paradox inherent in the work, 'Even when public sculpture isn't meant to be "man-on-horse," it still is. But this isn't. It's available to the public; it sneaks up on people...Because it's not publicly accessible, yet publicly visible, it doesn't create the resentment that most sculptures do. You can't touch it, but its distance affords the viewer the discipline of looking as well as a sense of pleasure and beauty and mystery'.⁴¹

The materiality of the work also lends itself to the oblique properties of the anamorph, as like Hamilton's nude, the cast appeared to blend into its environment and change according to the weather conditions. Whiteread comments that, 'on a white day you could hardly see it; on a blue day, it glowed; at night time it kind of disappears, it just becomes like a sort of smudge. And if the moon is bright, it just caresses the side of it and it just completely takes on its environment and becomes part of the sky, which is what I had always intended'.⁴² Malvern has also described the shifting visual qualities of the work and its relation to the viewer,

Viewers could not even get close enough to read its surface. It stayed aloof, above the street. It could only be viewed from a very limited number of places. Because it did not announce its presence, it was easy to overlook. When it became dark at night *Water Tower* disappeared completely. In certain kinds of light or at resonant moments of the day, such as dawn and dusk, it was a photogenic object, sucking the sky into itself. On dull days it looked unremarkable.⁴³

Malvern's description exemplifies how critical responses have tended to anthropomorphize *Water Tower*, as the work stays 'aloof' and does not 'announce its presence'. Pamela M. Lee poetically describes it as, 'A pale slip against the sky, *Water Tower* is a deliquescent, subliminal presence'.⁴⁴ Her identification of a 'subliminal presence' aligns the work's visual dynamic with the memory trace of the uncanny. Lee also asserts the active role of the viewer albeit one that is directed by the artist's intention, 'we do what Whiteread hopes the canny passerby might do: we look up. And there, alternately emerging from and submerged into the storm-tossed expanse of the sky, the work, just

⁴⁰ Rachel Whiteread, 'Working Notes', in *Looking Up: Rachel Whiteread's Water Tower*, ed. Louise Neri, Zurich, Berlin, New York: Scalo, 1999, p. 143.

⁴¹ Louise Neri, 'Commentary', in *Looking Up: Rachel Whiteread's Water Tower*, ed. Louise Neri, Zurich, Berlin, New York: Scalo, 1999, p. 176.

⁴² Audio Program excerpt, MoMA audio, 2008.

⁴³ Malvern, 'Rachel Whiteread's *Water Tower*', 2004, p. 76.

⁴⁴ Lee, 'As the Weather', p. 130.

barely comes into view'.⁴⁵ Collins has cited Roland Barthes's distinction between the text of pleasure that is associated with a comfortable practice of reading and the text of bliss that discomforts and unsettles the reader's historical, cultural and psychological assumptions. Collins argues that the anamorphic image fulfils a similar function; in creating a rupture in the text it effectively bestows an active role upon the viewer, elevating him or her from the position of an inert consumer. Consequently, Collins' 'eccentric observer' or Lee's 'canny passerby' is no longer passively absorbing a fully articulated, aesthetic object, but rather brings their own identity to bear on their engagement with the anamorph. The work could be said to be at odds with our more conventional engagement with works of public art, indeed Malvern asserts that a minimum condition of public art is that it has some mechanism for announcing its presence to the casual passer-by.⁴⁶ Her reference to the active limiting of potential viewpoints is perhaps more suggestive of the demands placed on the viewer of the anamorph, than the beholder of works of public art, although Robert Storr has made the insightful comment that, 'In general, public art is very much a public event in the path of the audience, as if to justify itself in terms of the the resources spent on it, it has to be in full display all the time. So to do something that is this discreet, that you can discover when your mind is wandering and you are looking away from the world is a lovely change from that other habit. And Water Tower is very much a public piece because it's available to everyone when they are not paying attention to the big events of the city'.⁴⁷ This comment seems to encapsulate the idea of Collins' 'eccentric observer', who attends to the art work when 'looking away from the world'. Schlieker has described the work as effectively pushing the limits of visibility to its extreme, which is arguably also the remit of the strategy of anamorphosis.⁴⁸ There is also the play of a hidden knowledge, similar to the concealed erotic, scatological and political meanings historically associated with anamorphic art.

Malvern notes that the critical discourse surrounding the work has referenced the concept of the uncanny through the defamiliarisation of an ordinary and ubiquitous object on the New York skyline. In Slavoj Žižek's analysis of the deployment of anamorphosis in the films of Alfred Hitchcock, he cites a scene in the spy thriller, *Foreign Correspondent*, when the hero finds himself in an idyllic Dutch landscape with fields of tulips and windmills. However, he suddenly notices that one of the mills is rotating against the direction of the wind. Žižek relates the effect to Lacan's *point de capiton* (the quilting point) when a seemingly natural or familiar situation is denatured and

⁴⁵ Lee, 'As the Weather', p. 130.

⁴⁶ Malvern, 'Rachel Whiteread's *Water Tower*', 2004, p. 78.

⁴⁷ Louise Neri, 'Commentary', 1999, p. 175.

⁴⁸ Schlieker, 'Pause for Thought', p. 63.

rendered uncanny because a detail 'sticks out', or is 'out of place'. Whiteread's *Water Tower* creates a similar visual dynamic as the object causes a rupture in the familiar field of vision. It is surrounded by the functioning water tanks that form the familiar skyline, but like Krauss's Rembrandts, this object is 'useless' and 'sticks out' as a strange detail that is out of place. The reception of *Water Tower* emphasises a sense of anxiety and unease. Malvern draws attention to the comments made by residents of SoHo and members of New York's art scene, 'there are repeated references to the piece as an 'alien', 'replicant', 'virus' or 'spy in the sky', all things that need to insinuate themselves precisely by not making their presence known to their hosts...they suggest a certain unease about *Water Tower* as something that haunts or lurks in the city. One of the most interesting statements is recorded by an anonymous passer-by who says it is too dangerous to look at: "If you look up in New York, people think you're a tourist...then you make yourself vulnerable on the street"⁴⁹. The notion of the work as a haunting presence that lurks above New York's congested streets is reminiscent of Holbein's skull connoting death in life. Indeed, Schlieker refers to examples of photographic 'evidence' of ghosts and ectoplasm included among the diverse sources of visual inspiration that Whiteread collected in preparation for the work.⁵⁰ Schlieker's assessment that *Water Tower* creates the impression of, 'a fleeting and marvellous crystallisation about to dissolve into the atmosphere' also connects this ethereal art object to the shifting, anamorphic skull.⁵¹

The eruption of the real signified by the skull that disrupts the field of vision is manifest in Christine Borland's sculptural installation, *Phantom Twins*, 1997, a work generated from a chance find where skulls are concealed within its interior. Born in Ayrshire in 1965, Borland was one of the four women artists short-listed for the Turner Prize in 1997. Her interest in exploring the history of medicine and its contemporary applications has resulted in collaborative work with institutions such as the Medical Research Council's Social and Public Health Sciences Unit at Glasgow University. She has also shown extensively in the U.K., Europe and U.S., including solo exhibitions at the Lisson Gallery, London and the Sean Kelly Gallery, New York. Originally titled, *Twin, Handmade, Childbirth Demonstration Models*, the installation, *Phantom Twins*, 1997, comprises two dolls that replicate the teaching models made for the eighteenth century, Scottish obstetrician, William Smellie (Fig. 11). Borland discovered the original models that were made from real fetal skeletons covered in sawdust and leather, in a cupboard at a surgeon's institute in Edinburgh and has described the horror of their character. Their discovery resembles what Andrea Schlieker has referred to in her analysis of Whiteread's work, *Water Tower*, as the, 'happenstance of 'finding' a

⁴⁹ Malvern, 'Rachel Whiteread's *Water Tower*', p. 78.

⁵⁰ Schlieker, 'Pause for Thought', p. 63.

⁵¹ Schlieker, 'Pause for Thought', p. 63.

water tower as object of choice and mould for her sculpture'.⁵² The replicas are made from replica plastic skulls that Borland obtained from an osteological supplier, combined with hand-sewn leather.

The work was first exhibited at the FRAC Languedoc-Roussillon, as part of a presentation relating to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, 1818, and has more usually been interpreted within this specific literary context. However, it is also feasible to analyse the work with reference to eighteenth century medical discourse. Lyle Massey, for example, has examined the significance of Smellie's 1754 obstetric atlas, *A Sett of Anatomical Tables, with Explanations, and an Abridgement of the Practice of Midwifery, with a View to Illustrate a Treatise on the Subject and Collections of Cases*, in its contribution to the epistemological reformulation of childbirth as a medical, rather than domestic concern.⁵³ Massey claims that anatomical atlases, 'wrenched a semiprivate ritual out of its homely confines and into the full light of public scrutiny and medical science'.⁵⁴ Prior to the eighteenth century, childbirth was not held in high regard as an area of study for anatomists, and midwifery held a low position in the hierarchy of medicine. Massey outlines the challenge that male midwives represented to the accepted mores regarding what was deemed appropriate work for men and women. Midwifery was considered to be beneath the dignity of men and medical science and male midwives were often denounced as amoral and lewd.⁵⁵ Smellie, however, managed to elevate the status of this, 'humiliating office'⁵⁶ by incorporating the respected science of anatomical dissection into his work. Consequently, man-midwifery attained an enhanced status and legitimacy, whereas female midwives who were excluded from anatomical practice, became increasingly marginalized to the domain of unskilled, domestic labour.

In addition to the work's change of title, *Phantom Twins* has been removed from its original exhibition context where the leather dolls were placed on small shelves either side of the gallery's, 'pregnant convex wall'⁵⁷ and displayed with eighty images photographed using a micro-film spy camera in the Museum of Anatomy in Montpellier. Borland had obtained permission to record material, but was allowed only to make drawings. The illicit photographs show bodies and body parts damaged by war, violence and mutilation and it appears that the reason for the museum's

⁵² Schlieker, 'Pause for Thought', p. 61.

⁵³ Lyle Massey, 'Pregnancy and Pathology: Picturing Childbirth in Eighteenth Century Obstetric Atlases', *Art Bulletin*, March 2005, Vol. 87, Issue 1, 73-91.

⁵⁴ Massey, 2005, p. 73.

⁵⁵ Massey, 2005, p.74.

⁵⁶ Anthony Carlisle, *Lancet*, March 17, 1827, 768-69, cited by Massey, 2005, p.74.

⁵⁷ Siân Ede, *Art and Science*, London: I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd, 2005, p. 143.

reluctance to allow access is that most of the specimens derive from the French colonies.⁵⁸ The work's title, *Cet Être-là, c'est à toi de le créer! Vous devez la créer!* (1997), 'This being you must create', is the monster's request to Frankenstein for the creation of a mate to alleviate his loneliness and isolation. Elizabeth Manchester has therefore interpreted *Phantom Twins* as the artist's reflection on the creation of surrogate life forms from an assemblage of old parts. It is important to note that the change of title of this work has removed its accompanying factual description and through the inclusion of the word, 'phantom' has arguably introduced a sense of the elusive and unreal. Manchester, for example, has described the twins, 'as no longer simply models, but ghosts from the past',⁵⁹ arguing that the title change encourages an expansion of interpretation into the realm of the psychological and symbolic. The word 'phantom' suggests a form that is apparent to the senses, but lacking substantial existence. A double meaning is therefore inherent in the work suggestive of both the notion of a ghostly manifestation, but also the rare condition Pseudocyesis, or phantom pregnancy. Ostensibly, the models are a copy of a copy. Smellie's original models could hardly have been perceived as a mimetic rendering of a foetus and consequently, *Phantom Twins* may be interpreted as a simulacrum, a superficial likeness that Michael Camille defines as, 'a false claimant to being which calls into question the ability to distinguish between what is real and what is represented'.⁶⁰ Originally intended as teaching models and clearly not objects of play, the twins are nevertheless frequently referred to in the critical discourse as 'dolls'. Borland has described them in these terms⁶¹ and Siân Ede has called them, 'endearingly floppy'.⁶² Manchester succinctly pinpoints the reason why their appearance is so unsettling, as they combine the visual imagery of, 'doll, toy, teaching model and dead infant', and it is this semantic layering that locates the work within the realm of the uncanny.⁶³ The knowledge that the figures originally concealed fetal skeletons is particularly disturbing and fits very closely with Nicholas Royle's assessment that the uncanny, 'has to do with the sense of a secret encounter: it is perhaps inseparable from an apprehension, however fleeting, of something that should have remained secret and hidden but has come to light. But it is not 'out there', in any simple sense: as a crisis of the proper and natural, it disturbs any straightforward sense of what is inside and what is outside.'⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Jonathan Jones, 'Heroes and Villains', in *Progressive Disorder*, Dundee: Dundee Contemporary Arts Book Works, 2001, p. 53.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Manchester, 2000, <http://www.tate.org.uk>.

⁶⁰ Michael Camille, 'Simulacrum', in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. by Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003, p.35.

⁶¹ Anne Barclay Morgan, 'Memorial for anonymous: an interview with Christine Borland', *Sculpture – Washington D.C.*, October 1999, vol. 18, no. 8, p. 18.

⁶² Ede, *Art and Science*, p.143.

⁶³ Elizabeth Manchester, 2000, <http://www.tate.org.uk>

⁶⁴ Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 2.

A similar sense of disturbance is evoked by Borland's *Alpha Foetal Protein Test, Cold*, 1999; a work that at first glance appears to reference one of minimalism's organising principles, the cube (see Fig. 12). The AFP test is a routine blood screen offered to pregnant women that establishes the probability of a foetus developing Down's Syndrome or Spina Bifida. Borland discovered that the samples obtained from this predictive, pre-natal testing are retained *in vitro* and stored anonymously in hospitals. Borland was able to retrieve her own sample and presented the glass vial, with its numbered label still attached, within a polystyrene box of dry ice that maintains the correct temperature for storage. The installation formed part of the exhibition, 'What makes for the fullness of life, for beauty and happiness is good. What makes for death, disease, imperfection and suffering is bad', at Dundee Contemporary Arts.⁶⁵ Katrina Brown has described the work as combining an apparent material fragility with a resonant and complex substance.⁶⁶ Meskimmon perceives a similar fusion in Borland's *Winter Garden*, 2001, where, 'the soft matrixial forms of the vessels are belied by the brittle solidity of the glass which shapes them. This sensual double play invites us to connect the supple corporeality of the womb to the intrusive technologies through which we have ventured to view and display its contents.'⁶⁷ Meskimmon identifies glass as the single most important component in Western optical technology of the modern period, and discusses its relationship to the intellectual developments of the Enlightenment. Lens technology promoted the notion that the whole natural world was available for inspection, in order that objective, rational truths may be formulated. Meskimmon argues that, 'Woman as the object of visual scrutiny, was also placed under the glass, dissected, magnified, imaged and objectified as material to be known by an empowered viewer.'⁶⁸ Similarly, Borland's blood sample is placed beneath glass inviting the curiosity of the viewer's gaze.

However, Meskimmon argues that the hand-blown glass vessels of *Winter Garden* are not simply operating as a visual metaphor for the essential body of woman, as they do not transparently reveal their contents to a distanced, disembodied gaze. The AFP sample is similarly protected by an anamorphic visual ambiguity, and the work fully exploits the fusion of its materials; the transparency and strength of glass combined with the disposable polystyrene packaging. In both cases, the vessels make physical reference to the womb and Meskimmon suggests that, in the case of *Winter Garden*, this symbolism is reminiscent of the, 'long legacy of intrusive forays into the interior spaces of the female body in Western medical image-and object-making, designed to 'see'

⁶⁵ 20 November, 1999 – 23 January, 2000.

⁶⁶ Katrina M. Brown, in *Progressive Disorder* (Dundee Contemporary Arts Book Works: 2001), p. 12.

⁶⁷ Meskimmon, 2005, p. 128.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

and know the truth of human reproduction and, by extension, woman.⁶⁹ Indeed, as part of a series of public talks to accompany Borland's exhibition at Dundee Contemporary Arts, Malcolm Nicholson stated that before the development of ultrasound the womb in early pregnancy was, 'more shrouded in mystery than the dark side of the moon...the uterus was a black box'⁷⁰; a striking visual reversal of Borland's white box.

Although the work first appears to be minimal in its form, it nevertheless transmits a symbolic resonance of Pandora's box. Emergent technologies have enabled extensive research into inherited disorders, and this knowledge has largely been applied in the field of obstetrics. Borland's work demonstrates a preoccupation with the ethical consequences proceeding from the human genome project, and in this regard, the artwork may be read as an image of Pandora's box with its lid irreversibly removed. Symbolising the misapplication of scientific advances, it stands as a stark reminder of the horrors of eugenics, a term derived from the Greek for 'good in birth',⁷¹ by Francis Galton in 1883. Negative eugenics was viewed as a means of countering social degeneration through the elimination of people considered to be biologically inferior. As Hannah Bradby has noted, the main effort was directed towards the enforced sterilisation of women affected by so-called 'feeble-mindedness'.⁷² In the case of the AFP test, the only possible medical intervention, in the absence of any curative therapy for the conditions cited, is a termination of the pregnancy. Borland's works often thus reflect her interest in biomedical intervention in reproduction, the development of which Rosi Braidotti suggests has normalised the dismemberment of the body and transformed it into, 'a mosaic of detachable pieces'.⁷³

In common with *Alpha Foetal Protein Test*, *Cold*, *Phantom Twins* also implicates the viewer in a downward gaze. Krauss has identified this visual strategy as operating to desubliminate the visual field through a shift from the vertical plane associated with high art, to the horizontal, a site associated with base materialism and Bataille's concept of the 'formless'.⁷⁴ As Ede has identified, Borland works with, 'bones, blood, deformity, disease and the shattered aftermath of war and murder',⁷⁵ categories that can evoke the psychical phenomenon that Kristeva has termed the

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.128.

⁷⁰ Malcolm Nicholson, 'The general development of ultrasound in obstetrics and how it affects our perception of the unborn child', 13 January, 2000, in *Progressive Disorder* (Dundee Contemporary Arts Book Works: 2001), p. 64.

⁷¹ Brown, *Progressive Disorder*, 2001, p. 9.

⁷² Hannah Bradby, 'The racist uses of genetics then and now. Do aspects of the racist eugenic thinking of the past continue in current practice?', 2 December, 1999, in *Progressive Disorder* (Dundee Contemporary Arts Book Works: 2001), p. 61.

⁷³ Rosi Braidotti, 1991, cited by Betterton, 1996, p. 5.

⁷⁴ Rosalind E. Krauss, *Bachelors* (MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 2000), p.131.

⁷⁵ Ede, *Art and Science*, 2005, p. 142.

‘abject’, a site where meaning collapses. The process involves expelling what is deemed the ‘other’ in order to constitute subjectivity; therefore the first thing to be rejected is the mother’s body, as the infant moves away from this undifferentiated union and begins to develop a sense of a discrete ‘I’. However, as McAfee notes, ‘what is abjected is radically excluded but never banished altogether. It hovers at the periphery of one’s existence, constantly challenging one’s own tenuous borders of selfhood’.⁷⁶ Barbara Creed defines the image of blood, amongst other bodily fluids, as central to our constructed notions of the horrific, as it signifies the split between maternal authority and the law of the father.⁷⁷ We respond to blood as being unclean and the very sight of it can provoke retching. In her account of the work of Céline, Kristeva describes giving birth as, ‘the height of bloodshed and life’⁷⁸ and the ultimate site of abjection. A distancing technique is employed in *Phantom Twins* where the figures may be referred to as models or dolls, but in fact they represent stillborn infants. Kristeva identifies the cadaver as an image of abjection that confronts us with the fragility of our own life, ‘the most sickening of wastes...a border that has encroached upon everything’.⁷⁹

Elizabeth Manchester has also interpreted *Phantom Twins* as a deathly reminder of the skull that must forge its way out of the maternal body,⁸⁰ a process that Kristeva defines as, ‘the strange form of split symbolization’,⁸¹ that is also attained through the discursive practice of art. Kristeva has maintained that the experience of pregnancy may only be accounted for through the means of two discourses. Firstly, there is the objective discourse of Science that Kristeva claims does not concern itself with the mother as site of her proceedings.⁸² Both artworks appear to articulate this same disregard through their marked absence of the maternal body; whilst paradoxically seeming to offer a recuperation of this lost body. Meskimmon notes that in, ‘the space of this absent body is located a dynamic in-between’,⁸³ that effectively acts to confound the assumption that the ‘truth’ of woman resides in biology. Secondly, Kristeva points to the definition of maternal identity offered by Christian theology as, ‘an impossible elsewhere, a sacred beyond, a vessel of divinity’.⁸⁴ Kristeva’s theoretical approach has been criticised by feminist critics, such as Judith Butler and Nancy Fraser, who accuse her of essentialism in her concept of the maternal. However, in ‘Motherhood According

⁷⁶ Noëlle McAfee, *Julia Kristeva*, New York and London: Routledge, 2004, p. 46.

⁷⁷ Barbara Creed, 1986, cited by Rosemary Betterton, *An Intimate Distance: Women, Artists and the Body*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 133.

⁷⁸ Kristeva, 1982, cited by McAfee, 2004, p. 54.

⁷⁹ Kristeva, 1982, cited by McAfee, 2004, p.47.

⁸⁰ Elizabeth Manchester, 2000, <http://www.tate.org.uk>.

⁸¹ Julia Kristeva, ‘Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini’, 1975, in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, translated by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980, p.240.

⁸² Kristeva, 1980, p.237.

⁸³ Meskimmon, 2005, p. 127.

⁸⁴ Kristeva, 1980, p. 237.

to Bellini', Kristeva suggests that the maternal function cannot be reduced to 'natural' ideas regarding female identity. She uses the maternal body with its 'other' within, as a model for all subjective relations, thus disrupting the notion of a unified subject. Similarly, as Meskimmon has argued, Borland's works serve to open, 'the most entrenched naturalization of woman/maternity to the competing actions and claims of histories, knowledges and power'.⁸⁵

Shirazeh Houshiary has defined the role of the artist as, 'someone who is capable of unveiling the invisible, not a producer of objects'.⁸⁶ Houshiary was born in Shiraz, Iran in 1955. In 1973, she left Iran and studied at the Chelsea School of Art, London from 1976 to 1979, followed by a position as junior fellow at Cardiff College of Art from 1979 to 1980. She was shortlisted for the Turner Prize in 1994. Houshiary's work interprets Sufi doctrine, through a formal rhetoric associated with western, Modernist sculpture. Houshiary's work has also been identified with Minimalist art practice through her focus on Islamic sacred geometry and the seriality of the repetition of Arabic words and phrases in her paintings. I propose that both Houshiary's paintings and sculptural works employ a visual dynamic that can be defined in terms of the anamorphic, both through the illusory qualities and a tension between form and ground that may be discerned in her work.

Anamorphic properties may be discerned in Houshiary's practice, along with a manipulation of different viewing positions. Her sculpture *The Extended Shadow*, 1994 is one such example of a work that can be read in terms of the anamorph. Standing in the garden of the official residence of the British Ambassador in Paris, the work is one of a number of spiral columns that Houshiary has produced (Fig. 14). *The Extended Shadow* is a four metre high column formed of a stack of cast lead heptagons, each twisted slightly to create the visual effect of a spiral. Playing on the spiritual symbolism of the number seven, Houshiary 'squares' the heptagon, repeating it forty-nine times until a complete circle is formed. However, as the stack appears to twist, the optical illusion of seven gold lines emerging is produced by the application of gold leaf to the under and upper sides of the heptagons. It is specifically this illusory technique that I propose creates an anamorphic effect. It also relates, in my view, to the 'condition of edge' that Rosalind Krauss identifies in Hesse's *Contingent*. The symbolic significance of the number seven in Sufi tradition, represented in this sculpture by the form of the heptagon, is suggestive of a hidden knowledge concealed in the anamorphic image. The act of rotation inherent in this work is also comparable to the logic of rotation discerned by Kathryn Tuma in her analysis of Hesse's work.⁸⁷ In this case, it enacts the

⁸⁵ Meskimmon, 2005, p. 127.

⁸⁶ Virginia Button, *The Turner Prize 1994*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, 1994, p. 11.

⁸⁷ Tuma, K. A., 'Eva Hesse's Turn: Rotations Around the Circle Drawings', in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, ed. Catherine de

transformative processes of alchemy, the changing of base metal into gold that was a source of inspiration for Sufi mystical poets.

Sue Hubbard has related the sculptural form of the spiral column to both Constantin Brâncuși's *Endless Column*, 1938 and Fra Angelico's *Annunciation*.⁸⁸ The former comparison is particularly apt, as there are a number of parallels between Houshiary's art practice and biography and that of Brâncuși's. Both artists left the countries of their birth to live and work in major art centres of the world and aspects of their art practice may be interpreted in terms of a 'double consciousness', for example, whereas Houshiary's *Extended Shadow* gives a concrete form to ideas of Sufism, Brâncuși's *Endless Column* has been interpreted as a stylised form of the funerary pillars that he encountered during his childhood in southern Romania. Commissioned in 1935 by the Women's League of Gorj, the *Endless Column* was a memorial to the Romanian soldiers who defended Târgu Jiu against a German force in World War I. The column is 29.33 metres in height and is composed of rhombus-shaped modules of zinc and brass-clad cast iron (a modular form that was said to have influenced Carl Andre's deployment of seriality in his floor sculptures). The sculpture derives its form from the *axis mundi*, an ubiquitous symbol for the world's pillar, the point of connection between earth and sky, that appears in both religious and secular contexts. In common with Houshiary, Brâncuși was inspired in his sculptural practice by geometric forms, in his case, the Byzantine tradition that he encountered in Romania. Houshiary's interest derives from Muslim sacred geometry, specifically the Sufi idea that the unity of the divine is revealed in geometric forms (Brâncuși was also interested in Eastern philosophy). Hubbard compares Houshiary's spiral towers with the columns of Fra Angelico's *Annunciation* and as columns of light that echo the rhythmic movement of the Whirling Dervishes. The Dervishes are the Mevlevi Sufi order founded by followers of Jalalad-Din Muhammad Balkhi-Rumi and the practice of whirling is known as the *Sema*. This form of *dhikr* or remembrance of God is attributed to Rumi who perceived the words, '*la elaha ella'llah*', or 'no god, but God' in the sound of apprentice gold-beaters hitting metal. The sound caused Rumi to raise his arms and spin in a circle in happiness. The *Sema* symbolises the turning of the Sufi initiate towards the Truth and Houshiary combines this spiral form with the gold-beaters' metal in *Extended Shadow*.

In his review of the exhibition, *Shirazeh Houshiary* at Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York, in 1999, Donald Kuspit describes his encounter with Houshiary's monochrome paintings, 'As one

Zegher, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, pp. 215-271.

⁸⁸ Sue Hubbard, 'Shirazeh Houshiary, Lisson Gallery, London', *The Independent*, Wednesday 25 June, 2008

drew nearer to several of the paintings...one began to discern the presence of Arabic texts (actually Sufist chants), meticulously transcribed onto the canvas in graphite or pigment, where they proliferate like coral. These inscriptions are clearly legible when examined up close (the fact that they are incomprehensible to most western readers only adds to their exoticism), and evoke Muslim iconography'.⁸⁹ However, in her interview with Anne Barclay Morgan, Houshiary states that the word she begins with is intentionally illegible, even to a fluent reader of Arabic, and therefore Kuspit's reference to the exotic is based on the erroneous assumption that Houshiary's 'words' would be meaningful to an Arabic-speaking observer, 'I start with structure, but move towards formlessness, toward placelessness, toward nothingness, toward something that is like a ghost. It evaporates right in front of you'.⁹⁰ Houshiary's description of the process of her art production is redolent of the shifting, intangible meanings inherent in the anamorphic image. The critical responses to Houshiary's work are similarly characterised by an emphasis on the anamorphic, although her visual dynamic is never explicitly framed in those terms. Eleanor Heartney, for example, writes that the marks Houshiary makes on the canvas, 'suggest bands, waves or amorphous puffs of smoke. Often they are barely detectable from a distance, creating a perceptual conundrum, in which presence and absence are interchangeable'.⁹¹ In common with other works of art discussed in this thesis, Houshiary's visual dynamic influences the viewer's first glance and, like the anamorph, draws them in closely to the work in order to engage with what Heartney has succinctly described as the, 'perceptual conundrum'. She also observes that it is within this visual puzzle that absence and presence become interchangeable, an insight that I suggest can be related to Krauss's notion of a mutual eclipse of form and matter. Similarly, Hubbard describes Houshiary's words as clouds that, 'appear to hover insubstantially over the solid acrylic backgrounds', an account that fits Krauss's definition of the anamorphic as a tension perceived between figure and ground.⁹² Perhaps the most compelling assessment of the anamorphic in Houshiary's work, is Fereshteh Daftari's statement that Houshiary's paintings, 'intentionally stand at the very edge of perception, the signs both emerging from nothingness and simultaneously melting back into it'.⁹³

The art works that I have discussed in this chapter have not previously been interpreted in direct relation to the anamorphic. This is not to say that the readings given here are intended to simply

⁸⁹ Donald Kuspit, Shirazeh Houshiary', *Artforum*, 1999, <http://i1.exhibit-e.com/lehmannmaupin/908a2934.pdf>

⁹⁰ Anne Barclay Morgan, 'From Form to Formlessness: A Conversation with Shirazeh Houshiary', *Sculpture*, July 2000.

⁹¹ Eleanor Heartney, 'Shirazeh Houshiary at Lehmann Maupin', *Art in America*, Volume 92, Issue 4, April 2004, p.130.

⁹² Sue Hubbard, *The Independent*, June 25, 2008.

⁹³ Fereshteh Daftari, 'Shirazeh Houshiary', published as exhibition catalogue: *Shirazeh Houshiary*, Kukje Gallery, Seoul, 17 March to 24 April 2004. <http://www.shirazehhoushiary.com/>

reduce the works to examples of anamorphosis, without acknowledging the many other meanings that can be drawn from them, but rather to suggest that the anamorphic condition may provide a key to particular aspects of the works discussed, specifically with regard to the psychoanalytical concept of the uncanny, the relation between the art work and the viewer, and the deployment of shifting perspectives.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I have demonstrated that Krauss's concept of an anamorphic condition can be effectively deployed as a critical tool in the analysis of recent art practice. Griselda Pollock, citing Mieke Bal, has made a persuasive case for transdisciplinary encounters that can 'travel' beyond the sites of their origin. My own encounter with the work of Eva Hesse was initially mediated through the critical lens of Rosalind Krauss's writing. My interest in Krauss's concept of an anamorphic condition led me to question the reasons behind framing Hesse's work in these terms. Having explored the aesthetic concerns and debates that informed Krauss's focus on the relationship between form and matter at that time, I began to consider whether the anamorphic condition that Krauss perceived in Hesse's work could be viewed concurrently in terms of discourses of identity and difference. Was it possible, for example, to re-read the anamorphic in terms of anthropologist, Karen Brodtkin's concept of Jewishness in post-war America being a form of double vision, or Irit Rogoff's ideas regarding 'unbelonging'? This process led me to question whether the tenets of Krauss's anamorphic condition could be translated in terms of examples of contemporary art practice; my conclusion being that the deployment of an interpretative framework based on Krauss's original formulation does indeed offer compelling, new readings of works of contemporary art.

Lacan deployed Holbein's portrait, *The Ambassadors* as a means of dramatising the processes of human vision and the constitution of subjectivity. Krauss's critical approach to modernism draws heavily on the work of Lacan, particular his emphasis on the twin poles of desire and loss. In his seminar on anamorphosis, Lacan handed around to his audience a reproduction of Holbein's famous painting. Similarly, in her text on Eva Hesse, Krauss juxtaposes the image of *The Ambassadors* with Hesse's *Contingent*. Krauss's assessment of this work rooted in Lacanian psychoanalytical theory, firmly positions Hesse's practice within the aesthetic discourses of the 1960s. For Krauss, Hesse's work exemplified a mutual eclipse of form and matter. My specific interest has been to demonstrate that the anamorphic realm remains a fertile critical space for interrogating hidden knowledges of subjectivity, identity and difference.

Anamorphosis is a technique of perspective that produces an incoherent image that is reformed by the act of viewing it at an oblique angle, yet Krauss expands the scope of this strategy to include instances where a tension between figure and ground is inherent in an image. She also points to the visual effect created by Hesse's concentration on the manipulation of edge and how this confounds

both meaning and our expectations of the traditional categories of painting and sculpture. Krauss's anamorphic condition is characterised by a destabilisation of form as an organising principle, aligned with Bataille's concept of the *informe*. Furthermore, the privileging of the oblique and the viewing experience of unexpectedly glimpsing the anamorph can be associated with the concept of the uncanny. The experience of anamorphosis is defined by the demand made of the viewer to alter their frontal, centrist viewpoint in order to actively construct meaning. Daniel Collins has identified the viewer of the anamorph as an 'eccentric observer' in a process that operates to reiterate the contingency of vision.

Krauss's critical view of Hesse's work is not without its contradictions. Indeed, she makes a point of characterising Hesse's art practice as paradoxical. Although Krauss describes Hesse's sculptural work as giving an impression of extraordinary originality, she nevertheless confounds this claim by describing Hesse's work as 'unthinkable' without the precedents of a number of artists including Judd, Morris, Andre, Flavin and what Krauss terms the, 'extremely codified aesthetic discourse' of minimalism.¹ Krauss comments that Hesse was not selfconscious in acknowledging the relationship between her work and that of her contemporaries. However, Mel Bochner has attempted to redress this rather one-sided view, commenting in an interview with Joan Simon that, 'all the so-called influences did not go one way. Eva influenced her male friends as much as they influenced her. LeWitt, Andre, Smithson, myself were all influenced by her'.² Recently, much work has been done to re-balance the discourse that surrounds Hesse; for example, Vanessa Corby's compelling argument for a historically situated understanding of Hesse's practice that recognises the identity of the artist as a Holocaust survivor.³ Research has also undermined the notion of Minimalism as a

¹ Rosalind E. Krauss,

² Mel Bochner, 'About Eva Hesse: Mel Bochner Interviewed by Joan Simon', *Eva Hesse*, Mignon Nixon, ed., Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2002, p. 40. For more detail regarding Hesse's influence on her contemporaries, see David Seidner's interview with Richard Serra, who comments that, 'when I was first in New York, in '67, Eva was one of the prime influences for a large group of people, people as different as Nauman and Bochner. I knew her work and I would visit her on the Bowery. Eva was quite shy, people were hanging out at Max's and when Eva would show up, she would keep to herself. She always had a very difficult time meeting with larger groups. One on one, Eva was terrific. Very, very thoughtful. She represented a real foil to strict Minimalism even though she used repetition. She was very, very concerned with putting her inner feelings on paper or in form'. David Seidner, 'Richard Serra', *Bomb* 42, Winter 1993, [www. Bombsite.com/issues/42/articles/1605](http://www.Bombsite.com/issues/42/articles/1605).

³ The Jewish Museum's exhibition, *Shifting the Gaze: Painting and Feminism*, curated by Daniel Belasco includes a late painting of Hesse's. Karen Rosenberg, in her review of the exhibition describes it as a collection of, 'smart nervy works that grapple with feminism and Judaism, often simultaneously'. In Hesse's case, Rosenberg remarks that feminism is implied through the label noting that the artist was reading Simone de Beauvoir around the time of the painting's production. However, this should be balanced by Anna C. Chave's insightful comment that, 'The risks or costs of being marked and segregated as a "woman artist" - of being stigmatized as secondary; of ghettoization; of being held accountable to an insufficiently flexible or considered feminist "party line" - were more apparent or immediate to many or most female artists and critics in the 1960s and 1970s (and arguably ever since) than the potential benefits attaching to such identification. Those who made a point of claiming such identification or aligning themselves with a feminist ideology generally took that step with a degree of ambivalence. The preponderant desire, although a fantasy then as now, was to do work in and for a world where an artist's gender

coherent movement, revealing it to be a collection of heterogeneous practices that were sometimes in opposition with each other. Indeed, James Meyer has described Minimalism as a 'field of contiguity and conflict'.⁴ I have also demonstrated the sociability of minimalist art production, discussing the role of gift-giving and the rather neglected role of figures such as Ruth Vollmer who encouraged younger artists and promoted social interaction between them.

In my study of examples of art works since 1970, I have demonstrated a number of ways in which the anamorphic may be invoked, whether through Wilke and Hamilton superimposing the image of a female nude onto Duchamp's *Large Glass*, or Houshiary's concealment of hidden texts within her work.

I concur with Corby's view that a measure of Eva Hesse's significance as an artist lies in her ability to compel others to respond to her practice.⁵ My thesis acknowledges both the importance of Hesse's practice and Krauss's critical response to it. However, the strategy of anamorphosis remains at the core of my inquiry, as I believe it offers a new interpretative framework for contemporary art. Taking Hesse's work and its critical reception as a point of departure for my own exploration exemplifies a transformative process that Corby has described as a, 'making and remaking that renders the artwork forever in the process of becoming'.⁶ In the same way that Krauss described Hesse's work as a reinvention for her own time of an anamorphic condition, I have sought to demonstrate that this critical concept may productively be applied to the art of our time, enabling us to interrogate our role as viewer of art works and the conditions that attend upon that viewing.

would never count against her', Anna C. Chave, 'Minimalism and Biography', *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 82, No. 1, 2000, p. 160, n. 18.

⁴ James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2004, p. 4.

⁵ Vanessa Corby, *Eva Hesse: Longing, Belonging and Displacement*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 2010, p. 1.

⁶ Corby, *Eva Hesse: Longing, Belonging and Displacement*, 2010, p. 3.

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