Art History and Textual Return: Reading Self-portrait, Geometry and Paint

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

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Abstract

This thesis is a revisitation of issues in art history in the wake of Hal Foster's *The Return of the Real* (1996) and Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993). It turns on a central research question: art or textuality? Variously grounded in the proposals of Object-Orientated Ontology (OOO), posthumanism, and Hegelian-Lacanian theory, I identify a move within contemporary criticism to forward a notion of pure and undefiled objecthood in art. The result, I argue, is a transcendental reading of paintings. In order to counter this narrative, and subverting a formulation from Foster, I aim to stage a 'textual return', leading me to question a variety of discourses within recent Art Theory: neuro-phenomenology; new materialism; algorithmic theory; immanence philosophy, and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Although this thesis does not call for any claim of recoverable history or a psychoanalytical Real in art, it does read both a difference and an impossibility of difference between images and language; an inescapable structure, form, and narrative that haunt critics' own (political) resistance.

My offered chapters of this thesis engage with three main areas in Art History: Self-portrait and Faciality (Chapter 1), Lines, Geometry and The Visual Field (Chapter 2), and Paint, Psychoanalysis and Narrative (Chapter 3), which lead to discussions around the historical, scientific, psychoanalytical, or political notions of transparency, authenticity, equilibrium, transformation, representation, materiality, visuality, affect, and identities in Samantha L. Smith's 'Blinding the Viewer: Rembrandt's 1628 Self-portrait' (2015), Claudio Celis Bueno's 'The Face Revisited: Using Deleuze and Guattari to Explore the Politics of Algorithmic Face Recognition' (2020), Gilles Deleuze's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), Joan Copjec's 'The Strut of Vision: Seeing's Corporeal Support' (2004), Charles Blanc's *The Grammar of Painting and Engraving* (*Grammaire des arts du dessin*) (1874), Babak Saleh and others' 'Toward automated discovery of artistic influence' (2016), Dany Nobus's 'From Sense to Sensation: Bacon, Pasting Paint and the Futility of Lacanian Psychoanalysis' (2019), and Parveen Adams's 'The Violence of Paint' (1995). These notions, in turn, are caught up in the collapse, discrepancy, and inconsistency of theorists' own terms, whose indivisible object, either art or literary criticism, is questioned in this thesis.

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Introduction: Art and Textuality in Art History

i.)   A Textual Return

My longstanding interest in art (paintings/images) and language has, in this thesis, led me to explore both the necessary difference of the terms, and the impossibility of maintaining their discrete status. Across academic fields, the issue of the separate spheres of art and language has been debated. My interest, at least as an entry point for further discussions, is in reading debates around the art of modernism and postmodernism, and notions of the limits of textual signification and framing. In this I can be understood to be reacting against what can seem a ubiquitous move in art history, certainly since the publication of Hal Foster's *The Return of the Real*. Within this text, and subsequent works influenced by it, theory in the 1970s is regarded as a low point, because of its commitment to textuality. The forward movement of art theory since then is, on the contrary, framed in terms of an understanding of what falls outside textuality, such as materiality, affect, (neuro)scientific or objective structure, and the Hegelian-Lacanian Real.

Hal Foster's intervention is dependent upon in the idea of 'deferred action', ostensibly borrowed from Freud's term 'Nachtraglichkeit'. Foster is interested in what he takes to be the impossibility of the present, resulting from the backward formation of history, the idea that, quite simply, the past becomes itself only after the fact. Nevertheless, I read in Foster a difference to Freud's construction of backward formation, which is, I would contend, bound to a narrational effect, a particular *perspective*. For Foster, instead, 'Nachtraglichkeit' is not necessary about narrational retrospection but is framed instead as retroaction through a deferral in *act*:

> I borrow the notion of deferred action (Nachtraglichkeit) from Freud, for whom subjectivity, never set once and for all, is structured as a relay of anticipations and reconstructions of events that may become traumatic through this very relay. I believe modernism and postmodernism are constituted in an analogous way, in deferred action, as a continual process of anticipated futures and reconstructed pasts. Each epoch dreams the next, as Walter Benjamin once remarked, but in so doing it revises the one before it. There is no simple now: every present is nonsynchronous, a mix of different times; thus there is no timely transition between the modern and the postmodern. In a sense each comes like sex(uality), too early or too late, and our consciousness of each is premature or after the fact.

In this regard modernism and postmodernism must be seen together, in parallax (technically, the angle of displacement of an object caused by the movement of its observer), by which I mean that our framings of the two depend on our position in the present and that this position is defined in such framings.[1]

For Foster, 'borrowing' is not understood to be caught up in the problematics of retrospection. The result, I would argue, is constructed as a certain perspective on a certain and stable Freudian perspective. In other words, Foster can be read as committed to a metalanguage that is not itself caught up with questions of delay and framing. My interest, if I were to really work through this quotation, would be in the copula, the various beings that the *act* of retrospection requires, but remains distinct from. That is to say, how is act problematised by textuality within Foster's formulations? In this thesis, my approach is to think about the excess framing required for '[t]here is no simple now', and how this excess might problematise the stability of the kind of authoritative and subversive Freudian art history Foster creates. But my interest in this thesis, as can already be read, I think, is not to do this with Foster, but instead through what this initial frame of mine is already setting up as a deferral, reading a variety of works on art history, from the nineteenth century to the present, from geometry to materiality, and from the psychoanalytic to discourses that position themselves directly against this.

ii.)   Paul Gilroy's '"Jewels Bought from Bondage": Black Music and the Politics of Identity'

At this early stage, however, I would like to turn to what I consider one of the most urgent articulations of the specific anti-textual position I have read within art and cultural criticism: Paul Gilroy's chapter, '"Jewels Bought from Bondage": Black Music and the Politics of Identity' in his *The Black Atlantic* (1993). Gilroy begins the chapter by taking issue with deconstructive approaches to art and culture in general, and Black music in particular:

The discrete notion of the aesthetic, in relation to which this self-sustaining political domain is then evaluated, is constructed by the idea and the ideology of the text and of textuality as a mode of communicative practice which provides a model for all other forms of cognitive exchange and social interaction. Urged on by post-structuralist critiques of the metaphysics of presence, contemporary

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[1] Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, October Books (The MIT Press, 1996), p. 207.

debates have moved beyond citing language as the fundamental analogy for comprehending all signifying practices to a position where textuality (especially when wrenched open through the concept of difference) expands and merges with totality. Paying careful attention to the structures of feeling which underpin black expressive cultures can show how this critique is incomplete. It gets blocked by this invocation of all-encompassing textuality. Textuality becomes a means to evacuate the problem of human agency, a means to specify the death (by fragmentation) of the subject and, in the same manoeuvre, to enthrone the literary critic as mistress or master of the domain of creative human communication.[2]

Gilroy's attack against 'the' 'idea' 'of textuality' calls on 'the ideology', where deconstructive practice introduces the danger of that textuality becoming 'a model' of 'other forms' of 'exchange' and 'interaction'. Textuality, as I read it here, is taken to take over, obscuring or colonising processes that fall outside of its bounds. In order to keep away from the damage of political constructions of that textuality and preserve certain black identities, Gilroy calls for an 'attention' to 'the structures of feeling'.[3] In this, Gilroy believes that it is possible to slide away or escape from 'the' 'idea' of 'textuality'. In another sense, I read an implication that 'the structures of feeling' are understandable and not 'merged with' that specific 'text'/'totality' which can be independent of perspective. What can we understand the relationship between a 'show[ing]' of 'black expressive cultures' and the 'incomplete' 'critique' as that textuality? That is, how is it that Gilroy 'show[s]' music (his analysis and perspective on Black music/art) which is separate from 'the' idea of textuality in his book? What is Gilroy's framing of music/art in his book different from that 'textuality'?

For Gilroy, the defects of 'the' idea of textuality lie in its '[incompletion]' of '[expressing]' black culture, its lack of engaging with 'the problem of human agency' and its nature of being closed to a 'difference'.[4] Thus, Gilroy's effort is to prove 'the structures of feeling' (such as black music) is instead a sense of remedy which offers, at one stage at least, a completion of expression, an engagement with the problem and displacement of 'creative human communication'. If 'the' idea of textuality for Gilroy is a sense of avoidance

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[2] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 77.

[3] A different idea of 'structures of feeling' can be found in the work of Raymond Williams: Raymond Williams, 'Structures of Feeling' in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 128-135.

[4] The idea of 'its nature being closed to a "difference"' is from my reading of an implication of being 'wrenched open': '[…] where textuality (especially when wrenched open through the concept of difference) expands and merges with totality'. In another sense, textuality is somehow naturally closed to a difference, but it is also through a difference that textuality that can be 'wrenched open'. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, p. 77.

and being emptied out, what is the implication of Gilroy's profound critique of black identity in relation to his problematisation of that textuality?

Let us engage further with Gilroy's argument of that textuality: 'I want to shift concern with the problem of beauty, taste, and artistic judgment, so that the discussion is not circumscribed by the idea of rampant, invasive textuality'.[5] For Gilroy, 'textuality' here is presupposed to be the hurdle of the history of black music, and expression. Black music, instead of that textuality, in another sense is not 'rampant' and 'invasive'. Textuality here, which Gilroy problematises, aggressively invades, colonises and threatens black culture. Moreover, there is an antagonism with Gilroy's framing of that textuality: we can read that textuality is 'rampant', but it also 'circumscribes'. It circles, contains, and frames. That is, it is 'rampant', yet framing, too free and too restrictive. In order to '[discuss]' 'the problem of beauty, taste and artistic judgement', 'textuality' here is something that needs to be displaced.

I read that for Gilroy, that 'textuality' is a sense of excess of the 'discussion'. On the contrary, music, for Gilroy, is the *authentic* model that can achieve an un*circumscribed* 'discussion'. Here it should be again made clear that Gilroy elsewhere rigorously questions one aspect of this construction: the authenticity of Black music is, for him, always ongoing, always debated, always historical, and not about some naturalised and original feeling. My difficulty with thinking through the formulation discussed above is other to this, however: what would be the nature of the 'discussion' to which Gilroy refers? I do not read the 'discussion' here to be communicated *in music*; instead, the 'discussed' is surely that excess of that 'textuality' that Gilroy is at pains to resist, an extra that is unaccountability necessary to what Gilroy takes as a necessity to black experience and art ('the structures of feeling', for example). I read that for Gilroy there is a sense of resistance against the 'discussion' being that 'textuality', yet 'discussion' here is not only all-important, according to Gilroy, it is something other than 'structures of feeling', other too than music.

My stake, then, is with the move, familiar from post-Foster art criticism, to move on from textuality, and the extent that such a move always requires the disruptive return of what it would dismiss. If we are to agree that textuality is not, say, art, that there is a difference between painting and word, what collapses are needed to secure this?

It is with this problem in mind that I will turn shortly to two twentieth-century examples of ekphrastic poetry. My interest is in how the two poets in question have engaged

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[5] Ibid., pp. 77-78.

what I read both have, in their different ways, understood as a difference, the art that is not the word, the art that is not poetry. How is the difference between the two maintained, and at what point is the difference necessarily troubled? But first, I will outline the chapters that follow, and how they engage the questions introduced thus far.

iii.)   An Overview of the Chapters In This Thesis

In Chapter 1 (Self-portrait and Faciality), my main focus is to offer a counter critique on my selected contemporary criticism of modernism/postmodernism in art history (especially on self-portrait and face) in relation to neuroscience, affect theory, Object-Orientated Ontology (OOO), Facial Recognition Technology (FRT), and Gilles Deleuze's rhizome/faciality theory. My reading of critics' (such as Samantha L. Smith, Claudio Celis Bueno, and Gilles Deleuze) problematic constructs of neuro-scientific, technological or philosophical evidence, which is claimed to be self-evident truth/object, is in turn built upon the critics' contradictory textual narratives, which necessitate a detailed analysis of their scientific, historical and political discourses.

In detail, my discussion in this chapter is divided into three parts: for the first part, my discussion will be engaging with Smith's neuro-scientific and her Derridean narrative concerning one of the most famous and controversial seventeenth century Dutch Self-Portraits (of 1628) from Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, with respect to its blindness, vision and memory. In my analysis, I propose to be cautious of the risk of this strand of scientific approach, substituting as it does questions of reading and a perspective for a universal conclusion of an object-led movement based on neurons. In this, it opens up my further concern '*what will become of us*',[6] leading to my second part of the discussion around the danger of a reductive and politicised framings in Facial Recognition Technology (FRT) discourse. In this section, my interest is to engage with the Deleuzian framework offered by Bueno's philosophical advocate on the equilibrium between signification and asignification in FRT which is claimed to be able to tackle the issues of racism, transparency and political integrity. Nevertheless, my offered reading of Bueno suggests a collapse and anti-effect in his discourse in which I would argue Bueno is caught up with the neoliberal narrative he critiques. This leads to my further detailed discussion in the third part about Deleuze's faciality theory in *A Thousand Plateaus*, and the extent to which Deleuze stages an

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[6] This idea is from Jan De Vos's concern which I will discuss in Chapter 1. De Vos, J. *The Digitalisation of (Inter)Subjectivity: A Psy-critique of the Digital Death Drive* (1st ed.) (Routledge, 2020), pp. 4-5.

unacknowledged return to structures of universality. I argue that Deleuze's dedication to addressing political centralism and dictatorship ironically calls upon a mono system of lines, plateaus and assemblages which will be connected to my discussion in the final part of Chapter 2.

In Chapter 2 (Lines; Geometry; The Visual Field), following up with my discussion in Chapter 1 in relation to my critique of the indivisible and independent object in art history, my analysis will focus on the debates between materiality and the Real in geometrical criticism from the nineteenth century till the current era, including Charles Blanc (a nineteenth century French art critic), Gilles Deleuze (a twentieth century French philosopher), Joan Copjec (a contemporary theorist), and Ahmed Elgammal (a contemporary scientist). My interest is to explore the structure constituted inside or outside of geometry with regard to the visual field, materiality and the Real. My reading offers a critique of the idea of geometrical representation which involves a classic representational approach, anti-psychoanalysis standpoints, a Lacanian perspective of representation, and structural data analysis (AI).

In detail, this chapter is split into four main parts: for the first section, I will be discussing Joan Copjec's natural perspective and artificial perspective in relation to her idea of gaze in her chapter 'The Strut of Vision: Seeing's Corporeal Support'. I will be problematising Copjec's assurance of her Lacanian non-seeing (gaze) which is located in definitive structure — projective geometry. By questioning what is outside of Copjec's structure of representation, I open up a connection to the earlier art criticism from Charles Blanc. I read Blanc's representation of geometry as a deferral and a reversed logic of framing. Contrary to a reading of deferral in art, in the third section, I will be discussing and problematising the contemporary theories of Artificial Intelligence in art history, as promoted by Ahmed Elgammal, which has replaced historical and literary analysis with algorithmic lines, which are immediate, systematic and comparable, in two world-renowned paintings, Frederic Bazille's *Studio 9 Rue de la Condamine* (1870) and Norman Rockwell's *Shuffleton's Barber Shop* (1950). In the final part of Chapter 2, I will then return to Deleuze's theory of assemblages of lines in *A Thousand Plateaus* which requests a transformation, a change, running counter to AI's reasoning. Nevertheless, my close reading points out that Deleuze's efforts to eliminate a structure (via lines) can be read to be his own trap of (political) freedom.

In Chapter 3 (Paint, Psychoanalysis and Narrative), my discussion of paint is connected up with the debates between materiality and the Real in the second chapter. My

selected two contemporary critics, Dany Nobus and Parveen Adams, taking up with the Lacanian psychoanalytical approaches, advocate an avant-garde way of interpreting Francis Bacon's art (such as his *Triptychs* of 1944 in Nobus's discussion) in relation to the Lacanian idea of the Real which is situated outside of representation and narrative. Based on my close reading, I will be arguing that Nobus's and Adams's refutation against textuality is in turn caught up with their inescapable narratives, forms and structures.

In the first part of this chapter, my reading of Nobus's 'From Sense to Sensation: Bacon, Pasting Paint and the Futility of Lacanian Psychoanalysis' problematises Nobus's claims of futility of Bacon's capture of appearance, psychic, unconsciousness, immediacy, sensations, the exorcisement of narration, the violence of paint, the infantile scream, and progressive frameworks in Bacon's *Triptychs* of 1944. I read these various claims to the non-textual as ending up in deferral, forms and narrative. In the second part of this chapter, my reading of Parveen Adams's 'The Violence of Paint' destabilises her contention of the product of lamella in Francis Bacon's art which is the absolute Real and a detachment from symbolic, in that the gaze in painting is secured. My close reading overturns Adams's confidence in transcendental lamella which I read is instead returned to be readable and textual (such as shadows or shapes in painting). At the very end of this thesis, my return to Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait* of 1659 in David Sylvester's *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon* gives a close and response to my reading of deferral and textuality throughout this thesis, (my *own* reading) which is an ineludible frame of my critique of art history and literary criticism.

iv.)   A Reading on Frank O'Hara's 'Why I Am Not a Painter'

Now, I am returning to two poems as my frame of the thesis, which exemplify my argument of art and textuality from my previous overview of the chapters.

Representation and arts?

I undertake an analysis of Frank O'Hara's 'Why I Am Not a Painter'[7] not to offer any definition of paint or narrative, but to draw the difficulties it introduces concerning the distinction and collapse of words and images. Nonetheless, there are many ways to read this poem which cannot be pinned down for just one way of reading. By way of introduction, therefore, I introduce Derrida's construction of indeterminable meanings in his book, *The Truth in Painting*:

> And if you were to bide your time awhile here in these pages, you would discover that I cannot dominate the situation, or translate it, or describe it. I cannot report what is going on in it, or narrate it or depict it, or pronounce it or mimic it, or offer it up to be read or formalized without remainder. I would always have to renew, reproduce, and reintroduce into the formalizing economy of my tale-overloaded each time with some supplement the very indecision which I was trying to reduce. At the end of the line it would be just as if I had just said: "I am interested in the idiom in painting." And should I now write it several times, loading the text with quotation marks, with quotation marks within quotation marks, with italics, with square brackets, with pictographed gestures, even if I were to multiply the refinements of punctuation in all the codes, I wager that at the end the initial residue would return.[8]

Contrary to Derrida's theory of art, among modern art and literature critics, the belief in representation is instead prevalent. Take, for example, *Ekphrastic Encounters: New Interdisciplinary Essays on Literature and the Visual Arts*, where David Kennedy and Richard Meek propose thinking through between art and literature via representation and an encounter between the two:

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[7] Frank O'Hara, 'Why I Am Not a Painter', in Mark Ford (ed.), *The New Poets: An Anthology* (Carcanet, 2004), p. 30.

[8] Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). p. 2.

'Why I Am Not a Painter' thus opens up various questions about the relationship between literature and the visual arts that have long fascinated writers, artists, theorists, and critics. Is it competitive or collaborative? To what extent can one form of art be used to define or describe the other? Can the supposed inadequacies of poetry and painting ever be overcome? What happens when one medium attempts to represent the other? Such questions come into particular focus when we consider the practice and process of ekphrasis – the verbal representation of visual art.[9]

Nevertheless, aligning with Derrida's quote above, I would say the problem of representation relies on a definite truth of reading literature or painting. Despite the various caveats introduced, in this understanding, the 'verbal' does not impact on the 'visual', or, at least, there is a limit to impact: prior or other to the 'verbal', there is a knowable 'visual art'. I would contend that 'the relationship between literature and visual arts' is problematically stabilised through this narrative of 'representation', with the difference returning to a structure of the narration which necessitates an act of reading/perspective on it, instead of a self-evident interpretation.

'Why I Am Not a Painter'

Let us get started with the first and the second stanzas in this poem:

> I am not a painter, I am a poet.
> Why? I think I would rather be
> a painter, but I am not. Well,
>
> for instance, Mike Goldberg
> is starting a painting. I drop in.
> "Sit down and have a drink" he
> says. I drink; we drink. I look
> up. "You have SARDINES in it."
> "Yes, it needed something there."
> "Oh." I go and the days go by
> and I drop in again. The painting
> is going on, and I go, and the days
> go by. I drop in. The painting is
> finished. "Where's SARDINES?"
> All that's left is just

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[9] David Kennedy, and Richard Meek, 'Introduction: from paragone to encounter' in *Ekphrastic Encounters: New Interdisciplinary Essays on Literature and the Visual Arts*, eds. by David Kennedy, and Richard Meek (Manchester University Press, 2018), p. 3.

letters, "It was too much," Mike says.[10]

First of all, in the claim 'I am not a painter, I am a poet. Why? I think I would rather be a painter, but I am not', I read out that the differentiation between 'a painter' and 'a poet' has to do with the relationality set up by the I's 'think[ing]' and justification. A 'painter' and a 'poet' are not categorised to be the same in this perspective but are split from one another according to the I's negation and confirmation. 'I am not a painter' is not because of the unwillingness to be a painter, but the negation is instead built upon the I who 'would rather be a painter'. This knowledge of what a painter is based on the I's reason of 'rather be[ing] a painter' according to an 'instance' of 'Mike Goldberg'. The identity of being a poet is secured by what 'I am not' and what a painter is. On the other hand, 'I am not a painter' is constituted by the unfulfillment of the 'think[ing]' of I. This thinking fails to fulfil the I's preferred identity — 'I would rather be a painter'. I read a tension between the thinking of I and the identity of what 'I am not'. Nevertheless, this tension, that I read as irony, is addressed through a collapse of the difference between the two (a poet and a painter).

To engage further with this collapse, I would return to the example of Mike Goldberg who is narrated by the narrator on the I and the perspective of I. The start and the finish of a painting are related to the movement of the I who has 'drop[ped] in' three times. The paint, the movement, and the progress of the painting of Mike Goldberg are not known by the narrator on him/Mike/the painter but on the I, the poet. We can only know the narrator's perspective on the saying of Mike/him: '"Sit down and have a drink"', '"Yes, it needed something there"' and '"It was too much"'. From the first conversation, the start of paint is related to the involvement of a drink between the I and the we ('I drink; we drink'). The repetition of drinking is necessary to the construction of the I and the we (in retrospection) in a location where the I drops in. That is, this process of painting happens in a space with Mike and the I. What is painted on the painting is inaccessible from the perspective on the painter/ and the perspective of the painter. Instead, this paint is defined through the saying of the I ('a real poet') — '"You have SARDINES in it."' '"SARDINES"' are what is in the painting and this is what the 'you' 'have' it. Nevertheless, I read that '"SARDINES"' are different from that 'something' in the saying of the painter: '"Yes, it needed something there."' '"[S]omething"' is needed there in the painting but is not necessary to be the 'object' SARDINES or 'letters' SARDINES. Nevertheless, for the I, 'all that's left is just letters' —

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[10] O'Hara, 'Why I Am Not a Painter', p. 30.

"'SARDINES'". There is a gap between the letters SARDINES and the other SARDINES in the paint ("'You have SARDINES in it'").

We can read that for Mike, SARDINES or the painting of something 'was already too much'. I read that there is a sense of deferral of the meaning of SARDINES in which there is a discrepancy between the I's understanding of SARDINES and the painter's paint. In another sense, 'all that's left is just letters' could imply that SARDINES in "'where is SARDINES'" is not letters SARDINES but something else. That is, there is a gap between "'something needed there'" and "'where is SARDINES'" as this "'something'" from the painter does not meet the requirement of SARDINES proposed by the poet. In another sense, the painting of that "'something'" does not necessarily relate to the letters SARDINES even though letters are 'left' in paint. For the 'I', letters are not paint and the paint of SARDINES is different from the letters. That is, for the I, the poet, words, and images are separated into different categories, or the I has had a predetermined image of what SARDINES is. For Mike, SARDINES was "'too much'" — in this perspective, letters, images, and paint collapse into the same. In other words, paint is always in a displacement of the other regardless of the difference between letters and paint. Nevertheless, the absence of the painted SARDINES can be read in what is called/named — 'SARDINES' — for the painting. The identity of the finished work is bound up with the naming or calling of the painter. Even though there is an implication of liberation from the connections between the word (SARDINES) and images (SARDINES), this liberation is still returned to rely on the structure of narration/ the knowledge of the narrator.

> But me? One day I am thinking of
> a color: orange. I write a line
> about orange. Pretty soon it is a
> whole page of words, not lines.
> Then another page. There should be
> so much more, not of orange, of
> words, of how terrible orange is
> and life. Days go by. It is even in
> prose, I am a real poet. My poem
> is finished and I haven't mentioned
> orange yet. It's twelve poems, I call
> it ORANGES. And one day in a gallery
> I see Mike's painting, called SARDINES.[11]

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[11] Ibid., p. 30.

'[O]range' is 'a color' that the 'I' 'am thinking of'. This '[writing]' of 'a line' could be related to the 'thinking' of the I. A color orange is situated in a thinking prior to an act of writing. Nevertheless, this writing of orange is split from a thinking of orange as this writing is not of 'a whole page' of/about orange but is 'a whole page of words'. The thinking of orange is instead written in 'a line'. A line or lines is/are displaced by 'a whole page of words'. There is a shift in perspective from 'a line about orange' to 'a whole page of words' while this 'orange' is not claimed to be a word or part of words here. A whole page is not isolated to constitute 'twelve poems' but there is a doubleness of a page — 'another page'. I read another shift in perspective in '[t]here should be so much more not of orange, of words, of how terrible orange is and life'. 'There should be so much more not […]' implies that there could be something already there prior to a negation such as something 'of orange, of words, of how terrible orange is and life'. Nevertheless, in this perspective, this 'should[ness]' (the necessity of excluding orange) in place is to correspond to the claim 'I haven't mentioned orange yet'. In another sense, 'a whole page of words' contains writing 'not of orange, of words, of how terrible orange is and life', but at the same time I read that there is a gap between 'should be so much more not of' and what is already there (something less than 'so much more').

This writing is in a process marked by 'days go[ing] by' and the process of writing produces a 'finished' product. I read that this finished poem is split from the beginning of thinking of orange and the process of writing about orange. This finished poem has not 'mentioned orange yet'. In one sense, if I read an implication that there should be so much *less* of orange, of words, of how terrible orange is and life in the process of writing, there is an alteration/ change/ shift in the finished product — 'I haven't mentioned orange'. In this sense, the writing 'of orange' is cancelled in the finished poem without mentioning orange. Or, we can probably read in another way — the writing has nothing to do with mentioning the word — orange, but the writing is constituting and constituted by the idea of orange. That is, orange here is written (but is less) in the poem but is not 'mentioned' in the form of 'words'/letters. These one and other pages are 'my poem' instead of my poem*s* while 'my poem' shifts to 'twelve poems' which are called 'ORANGES'. The identity of 'ORANGES' is stabilised through naming. This calling/ naming could be still returning to the structure of the 'thinking' of a color orange prior to writing and the act of naming. That is, this naming is not out of nothingness or at random, but the narrator already knows what the finished poems are before the act of naming even though this writing about orange has detached from mentioning orange.

I read that 'I am a real poet' secures the position of poems as this claim of 'real[ness]' implies that 'twelve poems' called 'ORANGES' are in a knowable structure of what a poem is (the definition of a poem) according to the knowledge of the narrator. Both identities of 'ORANGES' and 'SARDINES' return to cling to the act of calling/naming. I read that for the narrator, there is a collapse into sameness between painting and poems, paint and words due to the similar act of calling/naming for the finished product in the end. Accordingly, although this poem is called 'Why I Am Not a Painter', I read an irony of this collapse between a poet and a painter. On the other hand, there is a doubleness of languages in which I read that the poet is of a claim of self-depreciation and at the same time of a claim of being a genius. In other words, this is the humour of the poem, as I read it. 'Why I Am Not a Painter' could imply that 'I' am a real poet/painter and not a real poet/painter. As I have stated at the beginning, my reading of ironies here does not offer any pre-defined representation of a poem/arts or any correct or non-correct reading of literature. This is what Sue Walsh's argument forwards:

> In conclusion, the notion of irony would seem to undermine any persisting notion of language as simply representational, or of ideology as something a critic can detach herself from and diagnose in/for others. Likewise, the notion that any discourse purporting to give an account of the "real" world (such as "history" for example, or "science") can be privileged as somehow outside of discursive production and so used as a bench-mark from which to judge the "correctness" of the work of literature is also problematized. For if, extrapolating from de Man, irony is the condition of language, the corollary is that "[t]here is no such thing as faithful and literal speech, which is at one with its world, and then ironic or distanced speech, which would speak with a sense of distance, quotation or otherness" (Colebrook, 2004, p. 129). Thus the so-called instance of "irony," read closely, merely serves to underline that the constitutive structure of language is not one that can be escaped through recourse to a position outside of language, through, for example, an appeal to "reality" or the (gendered) "body" since these too are themselves always already effects of discourse.[12]

If there is an impossibility of escaping from any constitutive structure of language, I would say an appeal to the idea of painting or poems that is *situated outside of language*, such as 'SARDINES' or 'ORANGES', can be read to be collapsed into 'effects of discourse' in this poem. There is a difference over the difference between painting and writing. The danger is

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[12] Sue Walsh, 'Gender and Irony: Children's Literature and Its Criticism', *Asian Women*, vol.32, no.2 (2016), p. 106.

that the irony might be read simply to retrieve the differences it problematises. Nevertheless, for me, this does not mean there is no difference between paint and words or painting and writing. Whatever ironic effect may be read — whatever doubleness of deferral — that cannot be understood as the opposite or overcoming of difference, without the irony that is required disappearing.

Figure I.1 Michael Goldberg, *Sardines,* 1955

v.)   A Reading on John Ashbery's 'The Painter'

Ironies and arts?

Stephen J. Ross in his book, *Invisible Terrain: John Ashbery and the Aesthetics of Nature*,[13] analyses John Ashbery's poem, 'The Painter',[14] framing the work in terms of the collapse of conventional art. For Ross, '[t]he painter [in the poem], a kind of Dadaist, reaches for a mode of art-making that would outstrip the very category of art itself'.[15] This suggests to me a certain limit, in so far as a pre-determined category is necessitated by this outstripping — 'the very category of art itself'. That is, for Ross's reading of the poem, art categories are already set up to be pre-constructions for this deconstruction. I would say Ross's analysis of Ashbery's poem between nature and art, such as '[h]ow could he explain to them his prayer [t]hat nature, not art, might usurp the canvas?',[16] is inescapable from an origin — his understanding of what art is and is not. Nevertheless, my attention to this poem does not lie in an argument between nature and art. My interest is especially in Ashbery's deconstruction and ironies of paint which I read in terms of deferral, where paint returns to cling onto Ashbery's pre-construction/pre-knowledge of art.

The idea of irony in 'The Painter' has been analysed in Ross's aforementioned work, where he suggests:

> The poem embeds this[17] and a series of other paradoxical ironies: it is a formally
> successful example of one art form that narrates the failure of another; it elevates
> nature over art within the artificial domain of a sestina; and it gestures toward
> — without, perforce, being able to achieve — an aesthetic paradox: an ekphrasis
> of nature. In these ways, the poem unfolds along interfering narrative and formal
> tracks. What is says productively clashes with what it does.[18]

I read a range of difficulties in this formulation, not least the notion of '[embedding]', which constructs the 'ironies' as existing outside or beyond that of the '[embedded]'. Here, the

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[13] Stephen J. Ross, *Invisible Terrain: John Ashbery and the Aesthetics of Nature* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

[14] John Ashbery, 'The Painter', in *Collected Poems 1956-1987*, ed. by Mark June Ford (New York: Library of America, 2008), pp. 27-28.

[15] Ross, *Invisible Terrain: John Ashbery and the Aesthetics of Nature*, p. 3.

[16] Ashbery, 'The Painter', pp. 27-28.

[17] '[T]his' here has to do with Ross's analysis of the sixth stanza: '"[f]inally all indications of a subject / Began to fade, leaving the canvas / Perfectly white" which is 'art's impossible limit—rather than a mimetic object'. Ross, *Invisible Terrain: John Ashbery and the Aesthetics of Nature*, p. 2.

[18] Ibid., p. 2.

poem offers a place (such as 'one art form'), that does not alter the particular 'ironies'. '[I]ronies' transcend the specifics of language. At the same time, the poem, at one stage is bordered, and in such a way that calls upon the natural: 'the artificial domain of a sestina'. In this, however, the 'sestina' is situated outside of the 'domain'. Instead of reading Ashbery's ironies as natural oppositions like Ross's,[19] even as these are one-stage unachievable, I would say these ironies are formulated and shifting according to the narrator's perspective as my alignment with Sue Walsh's critique on the notion of irony:

> That irony is linked to ideas of self-reflexivity by both Haraway and Riley (Riley, 1988, p. 98) […] for the problems around the question of irony result in a tendency […] to produce thematic readings that implicitly mobilize a conception of language as "reflecting" an assumed "reality." Attention to irony, by contrast, "consists in dragging authority as such into a scene which it cannot master" (Felman, 1982, p. 8) by revealing language's relationship to the supposed "real" to be always subject to perspective; it opens things up to question and leaves scope for holding two or more potentially incompatible ideas in play at the same time. Irony, not as a trope but as the condition of language, refuses the petrification of meaning.[20]

In 'The Painter', within different shifts in perspective, I would argue that the so-called Avant Garde art movement (against paint, the brush, the canvas) does not maintain a secured position in the poem, but this movement is framed ironically to be a failure and a triumph at the same time.

Ashbery's 'The Painter'

As follows, I will begin with my close reading of the first stanza of Ashbery's poem, *The Painter*, following up with my analysis of another six stanzas in a sequence:

> Sitting between the sea and the buildings
> He enjoyed painting the sea's portrait.
> But just as children imagine a prayer
> Is merely silence, he expected his subject
> To rush up the sand, and, seizing a brush,

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[19] Ibid., p. 2-3.
[20] Walsh, 'Gender and Irony: Children's Literature and Its Criticism', p. 107.

Plaster its own portrait on the canvas.[21]

'Sitting' is located 'between the sea and the buildings'. This '[s]itting' is not in or on the sea or the buildings, but there is another space in the betweenness for that '[s]itting'. That is, this location of betweenness is not isolated on its own but is known based on others — 'the sea' and 'the buildings'. In this construction of sitting, '[h]e' 'enjoyed painting the sea's portrait' instead of, say, the buildings' portrait. This '[enjoyment]' is not of the sea or the sea's portrait but is of 'painting the sea's portrait'. Nevertheless, this fulfilment of painting is 'just as children imagine a prayer'. This is knowledge of what children are (instead of what adults are) according to an act of '[imagining] a prayer'. This imagination of a prayer is 'merely silence' for the perspective on the children. This 'merely silence' could be read to be not an absolute silence but is of a certain degree of silence — 'merely' silence. Or, this prayer could be just silence at its purest — 'merely' silence. Nonetheless, in this merely silence, the '[expectation]' of the painter is not met — '[s]o there was never any paint on his canvas'. This '[expectation]' is compared to 'as[-ness]' of the imagination of children. That is, an autonomic act of 'his subject' ('[t]o rush up the sand, and seizing a brush, [p]laster its own portrait on the canvas') is framed by an unfulfilled '[expectation]', and his '[enjoyment]' is only 'as' an '[imagination]'. Even though this paint has never been accomplished, his enjoyment of paint has to do with the subject's movement — 'rushing up the sand', 'seizing a brush', 'plastering its own portrait on the canvas'. '[I]ts own portrait' split from 'his subject' is not painted but is '[plastered]' on the canvas. Indeed, at this stage, there is no paint. This act of plastering is subsequently shifted to paint in perspective, however: '[s]o there was never any paint on his canvas'.

> So there was never any paint on his canvas
> Until the people who lived in the buildings
> Put him to work: "Try using the brush
> As a means to an end. Select, for a portrait,
> Something less angry and large, and more subject
> To a painter's moods, or, perhaps, to a prayer".[22]

The narrator knows what was or was not on the painter's canvas, which is outside the perspective of the painter. There is an absence on his canvas — 'there was never any paint' — which implies that there is already a predetermined knowledge of what his canvas should have — 'paint', while there is a failure of this paint on his canvas. This paint is only existing

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[21] Ashbery, 'The Painter', p. 27.
[22] Ashbery, 'The Painter', pp. 27-28.

in an '[imagination]', an 'as[-ness]' of 'a prayer' and '[expectation]' of the he. Here we might return to the start of the poem once more in order to connect with this passage. 'Sitting between the sea and the buildings, [h]e enjoyed painting the sea's portrait': we can read that 'there was never any paint on his canvas', but he 'enjoyed' 'painting'. The '[enjoyment]' of 'painting' is not about the location of paint on the owned canvas. The prayer is not silence, although children mistake it for such, and this is as the situation in which the painter imagines the subject seizing the brush, because he is himself, we might suppose, not doing anything. The imagination of the child at prayer means that, we might say, the child is not praying, but merely in silence. So too, the painter is not painting. He is sitting and he is expecting. Yet the painter is a painter, and he 'enjoyed' 'painting'. If we return to the stanza here — 'Until the people who lived in the buildings': there is a shift from the perspective on the 'he' to the perspective on 'the people' who are specified as '[living] in the buildings'. According to the narrator's perspective on the people, there is a certain definition of '[working]' on the canvas. In this perspective, the absence of paint on the canvas does not count to be an achievement of painting. Accordingly, the he was 'put' to work — this work is constructed by the saying of the people. Instead of a prayer as children imagining, there are necessities of fulfilling work such as '"using the brush"', making the '"[selection]"' that is bound up with '"a painter's moods"' or '"a prayer"'. In this sense, for the people by using the brush '"[a]s a means"' and selection, this can reverse the absence of paint to presence. The narrator knows for the people there is an absolute knowledge of what paint is and what counts to be paint on the canvas. The using of the brush is 'a means'. This means is not to the beginning but is 'to an end'. This using is related to 'select[ion]'. This selection is not according to a portrait, but the selection is 'for a portrait'. A portrait is painted/ brushed not according to a portrait but by the selection of 'something'. This 'something' is 'less angry and large' — in another sense, this is still angry and large but is 'less' and is 'subject to a painter's moods or a prayer'. Nonetheless, what the painter 'enjoyed' is not 'something less angry and large' or the act of brushing. But his enjoyment of painting lies in an impossibility of autonomy of (violence of) paint, such as (the subject) rushing, seizing, 'plaster[ing] its own portrait'.

> How could he explain to them his prayer
> That nature, not art, might usurp the canvas?
> He chose his wife for a new subject,
> Making her vast, like ruined buildings,
> As if, forgetting itself, the portrait

Had expressed itself without a brush.[23]

In this perspective, there is a shift from children's prayer, 'a prayer' (from the saying of the people) to 'his prayer'. His prayer is not accessible by 'them', the people. The narrator knows what his prayer is. There are two ways of reading 'his prayer' — first, his prayer is 'that nature', 'not art'. I read that nature is not paint but 'his prayer'. There is knowledge of the difference between nature and art. This is set up as an opposition. I read that the painter's prayer is not to establish or secure the canvas but to 'usurp' the canvas. In another sense, his prayer of plastering one's own subject is nature instead of art. Art is about the painter doing 'something' according to 'his moods' or 'a prayer'. But 'nature' has to do with 'the subject' in relation to autonomy and immediacy, such as 'he expected his subject [t]o rush up the sand, and, seizing a brush, [p]laster its own portrait on the canvas'. Secondly, there is another way to read 'that nature' which could be 'his subject', 'the sea's portrait'. This sea's portrait is distinguished from 'art' — '[t]hat nature, not art'. In one sense, this 'art' has to do with 'the canvas' while that 'sea's portrait' is 'not art but nature' — so, it 'might usurp the canvas'. Art, canvas in this perspective is opposed to nature, which is contrary to the people's idea of art by brushing/painting on the canvas.

'[A] new subject', 'his wife', is chosen and made to be 'vast' which I read could relate to being 'angry and large'. This vastness has to do with the 'like[ness]' of 'ruined buildings'. In this perspective, this vastness is about ruined-ness. This making of vastness is connected to an '[a]s-if' — I read that 'forgetting itself' is related to that likeness of ruined buildings. Ruined-ness is something about forgetting. This is not to forget his wife, a new subject, but to forget 'itself'. There are splits from 'his wife', 'a new subject', to the likeness of 'ruined buildings', 'itself', 'the portrait'. Based on this making (her vast), this '[a]s if' is set up to fulfil an autonomy of '[expression]' of 'the portrait' — '[a]s if, […] the portrait [h]ad expressed itself without a brush'. That is, this '[a]s-if' '[expression]' only comes from the establishment of making. Nevertheless, '[expression]' without a brush is only from the constitution of 'as if' — that is, this making (her vast) could be involved in a brush while this act of making vast validates the absence of a brush through the narration of the narrator — '[a]s if' 'without a brush'. According to this as-if narrative, there is a sense of displacement — the act of making vast replaces 'itself' and validates 'expression without a brush'. If we return to the earlier sentence, we can see there is a repetition of the word 'as' — '[b]ut just *as* children imagine a prayer' (my italics). Nevertheless, the repetition of 'as'

[23] Ashbery, 'The Painter', p. 28.

somehow falls outside of the form of a sestina which emphasizes seven repetitions of the six words in the poem. This leads me to think — how can we read a repetition outside of repetitions? What is outside of repetition, but necessary, to the '[success]' of the 'artificial' 'form'?[24] My interest, in other words, is with the certainty of form, and the unread excesses — the textuality — such form requires.

> Slightly encouraged, he dipped his brush
> In the sea, murmuring a heartfelt prayer:
> "My soul, when I paint this next portrait
> Let it be you who wrecks the canvas."
> The news spread like wildfire through the buildings:
> He had gone back to the sea for his subject.[25]

The movement of 'dip[ping]' has to do with 'his brush' in the sea instead of in the paint. This movement of dipping is not to produce paint but is along with a '[murmured]' 'heartfelt prayer' which has to do with '[wrecking] the canvas'. This prayer is from the narrator's perspective on the he's prayer. The painting of the 'I' is not about painting a portrait on the canvas but is to '[wreck]' the canvas. But this movement of wrecking has nothing to do with the act of paint or the I, but this is fulfilled by the 'you' 'who wrecks the canvas'. The 'you' is not the 'I' but is 'my soul' which is split from the 'I'. My soul is dependent on the I's act of painting in which my soul is the one 'who wrecks the canvas'. Nevertheless, there is no access to my soul's perspective in this perspective, but this is from the narrator's perspective on the he's prayer on the I's perspective of my soul. This fulfilment has to do with the condition of the I who 'paint this next portrait' instead of my soul or the subject. That is, this final product of the paint ('the next portrait') has nothing to do with plastering or making it vast but is to reach a sense of destruction/ a remainder (the wrecked canvas).

> Imagine a painter crucified by his subject!
> Too exhausted even to lift his brush,
> He provoked some artists leaning from the buildings
> To malicious mirth: "We haven't a prayer
> Now, of putting ourselves on canvas,
> Or getting the sea to sit for a portrait!"[26]

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[24] I read this as a limit of Ross's argument. For Ross, there is nothing else outside of the form of a sestina (such as a repetition of 'buildings', 'portrait', 'prayer', 'subject', 'brush' and 'canvas' in this poem) while as I read here an example of a repetition of 'as' which is located outside the fixed structure. Does that mean the valid of a form of a sestina is defined by Ross's narrative? Please see footnote 18 for the reference.

[25] Ashbery, 'The Painter', p. 28.

[26] Ibid., p. 28.

This is from the narrator's perspective on an '[imagination]' instead of a painter's or his subject's imagination. 'Imagine a painter crucified by his subject' that I read implies an irony that a painter's prayer (his prayer of his subject 'plastering its own portrait') failed to be fulfilled, but the painter was instead 'crucified' by his subject.[27] This perspective is outside the perspective on the people's perspective or the he's perspective. On the other hand, we can read this '[imagination]' which is successful instead of being as a failed imagination in the first stanza — '[b]ut just as children *imagine* a prayer' (my italics). In this sense, the imagination in repetition here has fallen outside the formal prescribed form. Apart from this, I would problematise what Ross has set up in his argument in relation to a binary between success and failure. If we see this example of the success of imagination here, we would be questioning Ross's claim of the absolute fixed binary — 'it is a formally successful example of one art form that narrates the failure of another'. I would argue that Ross's idea of the form does not remain intact, complete or oneness as we have seen within the form of repetition there is already a split or division.[28] This '[crucifixion]' that I read can connect to a prayer of 'putting ourselves on canvas' or 'getting the sea to sit for a portrait' (in which 'the sea devoured the canvas and the brush'). Even though there is knowledge on the he's enjoyment and expectation, there is an irony in that enjoyment, expectation, and his prayer which ends up in crucifixion by the subject according to the narrator's perspective (not on people's or the he's perspective). In terms of '[provocation]' of the he, there is a shift in perspective from his prayer to the '"we"' — '"[w]e haven't a prayer"' — this '"'we'"' includes some artists 'leaning from the buildings'. I read an irony here which is that what is on canvas is reverted to be 'ourselves' instead of an individual (himself) or other portraits. In another sense, this reversal (from his '[provocation]') is contrary to the idea of art from the people who '[p]ut him to work'.

> Others declared it a self-portrait.
> Finally all indications of a subject
> Began to fade, leaving the canvas
> Perfectly white. He put down the brush.
> At once a howl, that was also a prayer,

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[27] This could also be read to be after all a call to imagination instead of a fulfilment. If in this case, imagination is not necessary to be a successful one. My contention as follows in the passage is based on my reading of a successful fulfilment of the imagination (based on the final stanza: 'They tossed him, the portrait, from the tallest of the buildings; And the sea devoured the canvas and the brush').

[28] Ross, *Invisible Terrain: John Ashbery and the Aesthetics of Nature*, p. 2. And there is another example for a difference/split in repetition, such as sitting, in this stanza and the first stanza: '[o]r getting the sea to sit for a portrait' and '[s]itting between the sea and the buildings'. This repetition of sitting can be read to be both non-locatable and locatable.

> Arose from the overcrowded buildings.[29]

The '[provocation]' of that prayer about what is on the canvas is shifted from 'ourselves' to 'a self-portrait' here. '[A] self-portrait' is constituted by the '[declaration]' of '[o]thers' instead of the painter himself (according to the perspective of the narrator on others.) What is on the canvas in this perspective is only known by others' declaration and 'all indications of a subject'. Nevertheless, the '[declaration]' and 'all indications' have come to be an absence — 'leaving the canvas perfectly white'. This absence does not happen in immediacy but is from a process where there is a '[beginning]' of that '[fading]'. There is a result of this fading in relation to 'white[ness]' which is not a self-portrait nor any 'indications of a subject'.[30] In another sense, the narrator knows what is and is not paint/ painting on the canvas. In this perspective, whiteness does not fit in the category of people's '[declaration]' and 'indications of a subject'. But this whiteness is distinguished to be something left on the canvas. I read this 'perfectly white' connected with 'a howl' is against 'merely silence'. On the one hand, a prayer of being 'merely silence' has resulted in an absence on the canvas; on the other hand, the canvas that is 'perfectly white' is instead the supplement of 'a howl', a prayer. The canvas according to a howl, a prayer, is 'devoured' by the sea. 'A howl' in '[a]t once a howl, that was also a prayer' is 'at once' not in repetition, and 'a howl' was not only a howl but was also 'a prayer'. This is a shift in perspective from 'a prayer' of the we (which 'we haven't [had]') to 'a prayer' which '[a]rose from the overcrowded buildings'.

> They tossed him, the portrait, from the tallest of the buildings;
> And the sea devoured the canvas and the brush
> As though his subject had decided to remain a prayer.[31]

'[A] howl', 'a prayer' which 'arose from the overcrowded buildings' that I read has to do with the fulfilment/irony of '[n]ow, of putting ourselves on canvas, [o]r getting the sea to sit for a portrait'. This '[provocation]' I read is an irony in the perspective that the 'we' does not become the portrait but is the 'him', 'the portrait'. Even though '[t]hat nature, not art, might usurp the canvas', the act of the sea '[devouring] the canvas and the brush' was fulfilled by the 'they' who 'tossed him', 'the portrait', 'from the tallest of the buildings'. I read doubled ironies here: firstly, his prayer, his provocation, and a heartfelt prayer have reverted to not only wreck the canvas but also the he, a portrait, 'devoured by the sea'. On

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[29] Ashbery, 'The Painter', p. 28.
[30] Here, my further question is if a subject necessitated indications, at what point/when were there 'indications of a subject'?
[31] Ashbery, 'The Painter', p. 28.

the other hand, since 'the sea devoured the canvas and the brush', the people who 'put him to work' with the canvas, the brush, and paint have failed. In another sense, from the narrator's perspective on the painter, his ending is a triumph over complying with the structure of art ('[a]nd the sea devoured the canvas and the brush') while his triumph is also a failure of escaping from being caught up in the system ('[t]hey tossed him, the portrait, from the tallest of the buildings'). Nevertheless, ironically, his ending could also be read to be a release/liberation from the system in which the artists' triumph (by tossing the painter) turns up to be a failure (since canvas and brush are devoured). There is another sense of irony in the perspective — '[a]s though his subject had decided to remain a prayer'— it is not the 'they', the 'him', the 'portrait' remaining a prayer, but it is 'his subject' who can 'decide'. Nevertheless, this prayer I read is not from the subject's prayer but could be 'a prayer' which 'arose from the overcrowded buildings', or from a prayer in '[h]ow could he explain to them his *prayer*. That nature, not art, might usurp the canvas? (my italics)'. If we read prayer from the latter example ('[h]ow could he explain to them his prayer'), the he was 'devoured' according to 'his prayer' which the people are opposed to this prayer. Or, from the first example, we could read that 'his prayer' opposed by the people is instead ironically achieved by the people ('a prayer' '[a]rose the overcrowded buildings').

In Ashbery's poem, this absence of paint from the painter is constituted within and reliant on the systematic construction of what art is, according to the narrator's perspective on other artists/people, such as a canvas, a brush, paint, or a portrait. Based on the narrator, for the painter to overcome that cultural/major definition of art, the contrary way of doing paint, such as 'the subject plaster[ing] its own portrait on the canvas', can only be achieved in imaginary prayers — this, however, turns out to be a deferral or failure. Nevertheless, I read shifts in perspective for that failure in which being caught up within irresistible structures ends up being an ironic triumph. Take, for example, the end of the poem, where the structure of artists/people has failed to terminate a prayer for the painter; instead, his prayer is ironically fulfilled by the people who validate the subject, the sea, 'remain[ing] a prayer'[32] (in which people/ artists are opposed to this subject).

My reading of the two poems above can be related to the opening of my thesis, in so far as I read a concern with related issues in art history which have not been worked through in depth in academic work: the problematic belief of the truth to object, unreadable structures outside structures, an absolute oppositional construction, and a literary/art form

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[32] Ibid., p. 28.

without narrative. My first analysis of the poem, Frank O'Hara's 'Why I Am Not a Painter', has led me into a discussion around the difficulties of indeterminable meanings situated outside of language while this in turn ends up in a return to an *effect* of language. By working through this modern poem, I have problematised Kennedy and Meek's certainty of representation and confidence in the visual arts that is non-textual. My problematisation of this criticism of the poem is linked up with Chapter 1 in this thesis where my offered critique is directed towards the unquestionable idea of representation and a Romantic return of affect theory in Rembrandt's *Self-portrait* of 1628, and an endorsement of indiscrete and independent asignification in facial recognition technology along with Deleuze's Faciality Theory.

In regard to my second analysis of the poem, John Ashbery's 'The Painter', I have pointed out how Ross falls into his own trap of asserting an absolutely oppositional thinking in Ashbery's poem, such as a split between doing and saying, a process against language, and narratives against forms. Based on my detailed reading in perspective, this oppositionality does not always remain in its position but is constantly returned to dismiss its binary. My critique here can be connected with my argument in Chapter 3 where I have problematised Dany Nobus's and Parveen Adams's disintegration between forms/paint and narratives. Further, Ross's insistence on oppositional thinking in Ashbery's poem is necessary to his notion of ekphrasis and thus of the ability (and even desirability) to hive off textuality from painting. The excess necessary to painting (and poetry), such as its deferral in brush, canvas and prayer, has to do with the 'embedded' 'form' and 'tracks' for Ross while I have read out a readable structure outside this structure of the form/tracks (such as the repetition in the form of a sestina). Take, for example, the repetitions of 'as', 'imagine' and 'sitting' in Ashbery's poem are not read as part of the formal form and somehow fall outside the structure. Nonetheless, for me, this structure outside the structure is still readable. This argument can be tied in with my contention against unreadable lines in AI's analysis of art and Deleuze's rhizome theory in Chapter 2. Even though lines for AI and Deleuze are not read to be part of the structure (of literature, history or politics) just as Ross disregards the 'form' to be what the poem 'says', I would say prior to this dismissal of being part of the structure, a structure is already the condition for that deconstruction.

Chapter 1 Self-Portrait and Faciality

1.1 A Reading on Neurology and Rembrandt van Rijn's *Self-Portrait* of 1628

1.1.1 Introduction

Over the last ten years, there has been a move within art history to ground research in an appeal to science, especially cognitive psychology. The rise of theories of neurology and technology has resulted in an art theory that seeks to establish the general grounds for response. Within a densely populated field, I would pick out Marta Gallazzi, Marta Pizzolante, Elia Mario Biganzoli and Valentina Bollati's 'Wonder symphony: epigenetics and the enchantment of the arts',[33] Steven Brown's *The Unification of the Arts: A Framework for Understanding What the Arts Share and Why*,[34] and Suzanne Nalbantian and Paul M. Matthews's (eds), *Secrets of Creativity: What Neuroscience, the Arts, and Our Minds Reveal*[35] as some of the most widely promoted examples of this approach. Each is interested in recognising how particular structures of the brain result in universal responses to art, rather than tracking historical and cultural changes in aesthetics, or particular tensions or meanings within specific works of art. In this chapter, I will be questioning the notion that neuroscience, or any other cognitive psychology approach, can offer unchanging and unchallengeable access to the native structure of art, and to a human response to this art.[36]

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[33] Marta Gallazzi, Marta Pizzolante, Elia Mario Biganzoli, Valentina Bollati, 'Wonder symphony: epigenetics and the enchantment of the arts', *Environmental Epigenetics*, Volume 10, Issue 1, (2024). Take, for example, 'For instance, both visual art and music fruition have been shown to engage brain regions involved in emotion processing, reward, and aesthetic appreciation. Neuroimaging studies have provided evidence of heightened activity in the brain's mesolimbic system, including the ventral striatum and the orbitofrontal cortex, during the fruition of both visual art and music' (p. 2).

[34] Steven Brown, *The Unification of the Arts: A Framework for Understanding What the Arts Share and Why* (Oxford Academic, 2021), doi:10.1093/oso/9780198864875.001.0001. Take, for example, 'A majority of cognitive accounts analyse visual art in purely perceptual terms, including the aesthetic responses of viewers […]. However, it is critical that we broaden the scope of the analysis to think of visual art as a manifestation of what I shall call graphical cognition, in other words, the sensorimotor capacity to produce and perceive both objects and spaces' (p. 123).

[35] Suzanne Nalbantian, and Paul M. Matthews (eds), *Secrets of Creativity: What Neuroscience, the Arts, and Our Minds Reveal* (Oxford Academic, 2019), doi:10.1093/oso/9780190462321.001.0001. Take, for example, 'This book draws from leading neuroscientists and scholars in the humanities and the arts to probe creativity in its many manifestations, including the everyday mind, the exceptional mind, the pathological mind, the scientific mind, and the artistic mind. […] The twenty chapters of this volume examine creativity from broad theoretical overviews of neuropsychological constructs to selected aspects of its mechanisms, presented in both neuroscience and the arts. The interaction of the brain's conscious and nonconscious processing systems is explored' (p. 1).

[36] Please see more references in this field (art and neuroscience): David Gruber, *Brain Art and Neuroscience: Neurosensuality and Affective Realism* (Routledge, 2020). Paul Armstrong, *Stories and the Brain: The Neuroscience of Narrative* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020). Jussi A. Saarinen, *Affect in Artistic Creativity: Painting to Feel* (Routledge, 2020). Zoï Kapoula, and Marine Vernet, *Aesthetics and Neuroscience:*

Not the least difficulty with the arguments forwarded by the likes of Gallazzi, Pizzolante, Biganzoli, Bollati, Brown, Nalbantian and Matthews is that within them science is taken to be independent of enabling, critical language. Here we might turn to the following celebrated formulation from Donna Haraway's *Primate Visions*:

> The history of science appears as a narrative about the history of technical and social means to produce the facts. The facts themselves are types of stories, of testimony to experience. But the provocation of experience requires an elaborate technology – including physical tools, an accessible tradition of interpretation, and specific social relations. Not just anything can emerge as a fact; not just anything can be seen or done, and so told. Scientific practice may be considered a kind of story-telling practice – a rule-governed, constrained, historically changing craft of narrating the history of nature. […] To treat a science as a narrative is not to be dismissive, quite the contrary.[37]

In this sense, 'facts' are the 'produc[tion]' of science and are always framed by different 'narrative[s]' of science. There is no fixed identity of science as a single and universal story. If we take Haraway's argument as the basis for thinking through issues in contemporary art criticism, then the idea of scientific tools for recovering the origin of artwork — in the sense both of an original structure, and in the innate biological structures that respond to this — might be open to critique through a questioning of the separation of artwork and language. But, if the language and object are pre-destined to be in unity, does it mean the object can self-evidently present itself without a constitutive third (without a perspective/narrative on it)? Does it mean the narration of the artwork is already constituted before an act of reading, that the reception of the accurate *information* concerning the artwork is set up in advance for the viewers, that we can somehow discount the shadows which, from the very first, haunt Gilles Deleuze's most celebrated account of the art encounter?[38]

Scientific and Artistic Perspectives (Springer International Publishing, 2016). Paul Armstrong, *How Literature Plays with the Brain: The Neuroscience of Reading and Art* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013). G. Gabrielle Starr, *Feeling Beauty: The Neuroscience of Aesthetic Experience* (The MIT Press, 2013). Jill Scott, and Esther Stoeckli, *Neuromedia: Art and Neuroscience Research* (Springer, 2012).

[37] Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (Routledge, 1989), p. 350. This quote in relation to the issue of neuroscience has been well discussed in Karín Lesnik-Oberstein's work, 'The object of neuroscience and literary studies', *Textual Practice*, 31:7(2017), pp. 1315-1316, (p. 1321). Lesnik-Oberstein has offered critical critiques of 'unquestionably self-evident', 'self-defining' and 'self-constituted' objects respecting (cognitive) neuroscience and literary criticism which are constructed to be 'transparent' in their 'language' and 'consciousness'. My contentions concerning neuroscience and art (criticism) in this chapter align with Lesnik-Oberstein's problematisations of them (pp. 1315-1316).

[38] Such questions open a further concern, that I will be reading in detail later in this chapter, when discussing the work of new materialist critics: are viewers de-subjectivised and objects subjectivised? The idea of the art encounter can be seen in Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006).

Here we might introduce the critique of the returnable and recoverable unification between object and language in contemporary neuroscientific discourse as formulated by Neil Cocks:

> neuroscientific accounts of […] cognition recover and maintain thought as scan, brain and figure: an object of scrutiny and exchange. Therefore, these cognitivist studies are about the desire for a possibility of a return to a point of pure origin in a past where there was no split between language and object.[39]

Aligning with Haraway's and Cocks's understandings, in what follows I will develop my argument further concerning the construction of neurology, vision, and objects which are caught up in different narratives. To this end, I will begin with a reading of Samantha L. Smith's neuroscientific study, 'Blinding the Viewer: Rembrandt's 1628 *Self-portrait*'.[40] I am particularly interested in Smith's work, as it suggests a connection between neuro-phenomenological art criticism and certain readings of both art and phenomenology offered by Jacques Derrida. What kind of 'Derrida' must Smith construct in order to make this connection? And what must be excluded from the connection?

1.1.2 Subjectivised or Objectivised?

In Smith's article, 'blindness' in painting is proposed as '*strengths*'.[41] It is this 'blindness' that allows painting-reading to go beyond the limitation of being within the canvas. The artist, the painting and especially the viewers can 'create'[42] what a portrait is, according to the 'memory' and 'neurological process'[43] which can fill in the absent information. I take this notion of 'fill[ing] in'[44] to be problematic, in so far as there is an untheorised area within it: it is unclear whether this act is done by the subject, neurons, or both. In Smith's argument, the identity of neurology and the 'we' shifts back and forth from one unity to two split components. Whether neurons or neurological processes are equal to/part of or discrete from the subject is not theorised in Smith's article. At one point, '[s]ubject contour completion' is set up as the same unit of the 'we', in that 'we [subject

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[39] Neil Cocks, unpublished manuscript, February 2012, cited in 'The object of neuroscience and literary studies', by Karín Lesnik-Oberstein, *Textual Practice*, 31:7(2017), p.1320, doi:10.1080/0950236X.2016.1237989.
[40] Samantha L. Smith, 'Blinding the Viewer: Rembrandt's 1628 *Self-portrait*', *Kunst og Kultur,* Vol. 98 Issue 3 (2015).
[41] Smith, 'Blinding the Viewer: Rembrandt's 1628 *Self-portrait*', p. 144.
[42] Ibid., p. 144.
[43] Ibid., p. 146.
[44] Ibid., p. 148.

contour completion] imagine it'.[45] At other stages, this neurological process is set up to be an 'instinct' or is implied to be as 'natural' "'desire'" for 'complet[ing] what we see'.[46] In this, the neurological process is constituted as inherent human nature and instinct which enable the completion of the image despite the limited information on offer.

Further, Smith writes of the completion by the '[trigger]' of 'the process of perception', necessary for the 'we' to fulfil this process.[47] In this, the subject is supplemented by neurology, as it is not the 'we' who 'complete […] automatically'.[48] Thus far, my critique has been concerned with Smith's equivocal statement in the field of neurology in relation to identity. There is a grey area in Smith's research concerning the notion of neurons or neuro-processors as subjectivised or objectivised, part or/constitutive of the subject, or not.[49] Regardless of the split or the unity of different entities, the 'we' and the neurons are, I would argue, constructed as autonomous in terms of identifying missing information, and this is a process that is knowable to Smith. Thus, the shifting position between neurons and the 'we' leads me to question: is the completion of the missing information related to the recognition *of* discrete subjects or objects, or is it formed dependent on the constitution of the third, the narration? My concern is, in part, with the notion of 'information' Smith requires.[50] For Smith, face-identification is already *a priori*, and a necessary condition for viewing and completing the recognition of the portrait based on the autonomous neurological processor. In this chapter, I will be challenging this trendy belief of the neurological process which is unquestionably positioned as cognisable nature.

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[45] Ibid., p. 148. '"Subject contour completion" means that even when something is unfinished, incomplete, or when something obstructs our vision, we imagine it whole': I read that 'mean[ing]' tying the subject contour completion and the 'we' to be a sense of one unity.

[46] Ibid., p. 148. 'As James Elkins explains, we have a natural "desire for wholeness over dissection and form over shapelessness"'. I read this as an implication of the natural desire for the neurological process as an 'instinct' mentioned in the following sentence: 'Indeed, this instinct to complete what we see and make it whole means that we bring something to this self-portrait.' For me, the logic of the missing information in which is required to be filled is validated by the set-up autonomy (such as that 'instinct').

[47] Ibid., p. 148. 'This process of perception triggers us to complete the portrait ourselves, filling in information where it is lacking or where we cannot see it'.

[48] Ibid., p. 148.

[49] The division between the subject and neurons brings my attention to the issue of neuro-movement. If we borrow the Deleuzian idea from Richard Rushton's article 'What Can a Face Do? On Deleuze and Faces', my interest should not be in what the neurons are but what the neurons do. In critiquing this argument, I am not promoting a stance that claims to know what the relationship between neurons and the subject is. However, I am problematising the limits of moves that predetermine how the painting should be viewed and understood. I would argue that this scientific neuro-narrative establishes a 'natural' mechanism of the subject and neurons. The constructed doings of the subject or the neurons automatise the nature of science in art. At the end of this chapter, I will be engaging with Deleuzian theory of the idea of face and movement which I take to be problematic in so far as it supports this idea of autonomy of actions without a third.

[50] Ibid., p. 148.

1.1.3 Affect on the Vision?

In the following discussion, I will be problematising Smith's scientific narrative based on Smith's pre-knowledge of incompletion of the vision, a vision that is contingent on her narrative of 'feel[ing]'. The problem of incomplete vision that I locate is not about a remedy for the restoration of a *correct* 'complete' vision. My central critique turns on what Smith requires for her structure of invisibility, and the confidence Smith has in this ground. The invisibility in which Smith is invested is not necessarily reliant on an absence of vision, an absence instead that is (retroactively) brought about through the structures to which Smith appeals. That is, this absence of vision or even information is already constituted in a structure, in so far as this structure identifies an excess/outside/frame to be 'filled in'. The act of filling, I will contend, calls upon something that is missing, and this missing thing is constituted as empty. This emptiness is a structural pre-condition set up by Smith for the viewers filling in Smith's constructed gap:

> Despite the visual obstacles, we feel we see Rembrandt's face, even if we have to take some time looking. So in a painting such as this, where are we getting our visual information from? We know we are looking at a head, a face even, but information is missing and the features we long to look at in an encounter with a person are obscured by shadow. A neurological process called 'subjective contour completion' is in fact playing a large role in our observation of this painting. "Subject contour completion' means that even when something is unfinished, incomplete, or when something obstructs our vision, we imagine it whole. As James Elkins explains, we have a natural 'desire for wholeness over dissection and form over shapelessness".[51] Indeed, this instinct to complete what we see and make it whole means that we bring something to this self-portrait. Where lines are blurred we complete them automatically, and where details are missing we fill them in.[52]

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[51] James Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing* (Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 125.
[52] Ibid., p. 148.

Figure 1.1 Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, *Self-Portrait,* 1628[53]

Here, the 'seeing' of 'Rembrandt's face' is not secured by physical seeing or by the painting, while what overcomes 'the visual obstacles' is that 'feel[ing]' of seeing produced by 'a neurological process'. Even though Smith does not emphasize the 'feel[ing]' at this stage, the narration implies that 'feel[ing]' of seeing is the production of '"subject contour completion"', which fulfils the '[imagination]' of seeing. This neurologic process is a supplement to the vision and a displacement of the work of 'unfinished[ness]' and '[incompletion]'. That is, the vision is split between the 'we' and the neurological movement, in that the completion of the vision is not produced by the 'we' but is instead fulfilled by an '[automatic]' system of neurology. Even though the 'blurred' 'lines' and the 'missing' 'details' are claimed to be 'fill[ed]' in by '[us]', there is, in the narration, always an otherness, an excess, with 'this instinct' and then 'a neurological process' replacing '[us]' to achieve the vision. The 'we' in this sense, I will argue, is desubjectivised under neurology to attain 'our visual information'. Crucially, the movement of '[filling]' is based on the

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[53] There is a difference between the colour tones and shadows of this self-portrait here and that of Smith's version of the self-portrait in her article, which is with the darker shadows over the eyes in painting (Smith, 'Blinding the Viewer: Rembrandt's 1628 *Self-portrait*', 2015, p. 145) even though my source and hers are all from Rijksmuseum. It could be due to the change of the photos taken in different years from Rijksmuseum or other various reasons. This picture I use is taken from the website of Rijksmuseum in 2024. This difference may open up to the question of whether the reading of the blindness in relation to neurons is of the construction of the painting. In another sense, does it mean that Smith's idea of the function of neurons is predetermined by how the shadows are constructed in the painting? That is, are humans' neurons framed by Smith's narrative/selection?

narrational claim to know what is 'missing'. What is '[filled]' is dependent on what is known already to be empty, whilst this absence to be filled is constituted through the structures introduced by Smith's narration.

The issue of neuroscience set up here as a stable and fixed structure determining the 'perce[ption]' and 'navigat[ion]' of the subject is critiqued by Jan De Vos, in his work, *The Metamorphoses of the Brain - Neurologisation and Its Discontents,* who claims that the subject 'we' is substituted by those brain images:

> For the late-modern subject, I would argue, this is the specific function carried out by the neuropsy-sciences, in the sense that, via the medium of the brain images, they flesh out the scripts that structure what we perceive and how we navigate our way through the scene (De Vos, 2013b). It is only through full acknowledgment of the fact that any analysis of this scheme will invariably culminate in the irreducibility of both the gaze and the image (and its stubborn analogue-ness) that any critical position can arise from where to assess the reductive and bio-political entanglements.[54]

If we read Smith's claim of the neurological process as a pre-determined structure, we will understand that Smith's so-called 'missing' 'information' is pre-destined by this structure before the viewer engages in a reading of information in the painting. That is, as indicated above, the self-evident information is already missing prior to any act of information — reading. As Smith further claims:

> However, this is not all. This process of making the fragmented whole goes even further with faces. We actually need little specific information to identify a face. Despite a lack of detail, some suggestive tonal patches, such as we have in this painting, are all we need to identify if what we are looking at is a face. Small signs, suggestive lines and patches of light and dark can all lead to this natural phenomenon known as *pareidolia*, the ability to find shapes, patterns and faces where they do not exist. In this light, Rembrandt's *Self-portrait* need not give us much visual information and this painting appears to play on these curious processes of vision.[55]

What Smith guarantees here are the 'fragment[ations]' of 'lines', 'signs' or 'patches of light and dark' necessary for the 'identif[ication]' of a face. But this identification is compromised, in so far as it is as it were in play before it is achieved, through the narrational

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[54] Jan De Vos, *The Metamorphoses of the Brain - Neurologisation and Its Discontents* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 123.
[55] Smith, 'Blinding the Viewer: Rembrandt's 1628 *Self-portrait*', p. 148.

assumption 'if we are looking at a face'. It is this that determines the consequential process of 'natural phenomenon', as much as, say, the 'fragment[ations]' of 'lines' and 'signs'. Thus, that narrated 'if-[ness]' is set up as the validation for the autonomous neurological process. '[P]areidolia' is not caused by the nature of the 'we', but by this 'ability' which is split from the 'we' and is '[led]' by the exterior otherness ('signs', 'lines', 'patches of light and dark') in the painting. In another word, it is the *objects* that determine the reaction and 'ability' of the de-subjectivised viewer to identify a face in painting. I will argue that this is set up as an object-led *phenomenon* which is 'natural' for Smith. This natural, object-led movement, a natural phenomenon, also establishes the subsequent 'ability', in so far as 'signs', 'lines', 'patches of light and dark' are the determiners of that idea of inherent 'ability'. Thus, the subject's recognition of a face is contingent on the knowable structure of the objects and process. In this, the 'visual information' is not constituted by the viewer's reading/viewing of a painting. There is something necessary to, and beyond the touch of reading, something to be encountered always *as is*: the 'visual information' is '[given]' to 'us'. This act of '[giving]' is granted by the set-up of natural 'phenomenon' and the 'ability' of 'find[ing]' what is missing. In another sense, a lack of information is a structured lack as the information, or its lack, is always already known. Based on this ground, the information of 'this painting' is not visioned by the viewers, but 'this painting' has the control over 'these curious processes' on which are 'play[ed]' by the painting. This 'play' of the vision originates in the 'appear[ance]' of 'Rembrandt's *Self-portrait*', an appearance unaffected by the subject. The 'vision' is produced by an object that is constituted by Smith's neurological definition of structural visual 'processes'.

1.1.4 Encountering Absence?

Thus far, according to Smith, when viewers encounter a lack, an absence – the blindness in Rembrandt's painting — this leads to be the 'creat[ion]' of vision.[56] This creation is based on Smith's understanding of the *Self-portrait* which 'need not give us much information'.[57] On the one hand, the vision is not dependent on the information in the painting; on the other hand, the ability or the neurological process is prescribed to produce the vision. Nevertheless, Smith's narration does not offer a sustained understanding of whose vision or visual information this is (it might be the subject, neurons, or the painting).

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[56] Please see the long quote in this passage and please find the reference in footnote 61.

[57] Please see footnote 55.

At the beginning of Smith's article, vision turns on the contribution of the neurological process instead of the painting, while in the latter passage here, the vision is '[created]' by the painting and the subject. This possible creation has to do with Smith's understanding of 'blinding':

> It is in this way ['the textual element' and a 'sense of touch'][58] that Rembrandt's painting creates the possibility for exploring how we see, or perhaps better put, how we do not see — sight with all its blindness. And yet, despite the lack of portrait and the blindness we encounter as observers, it is clear that we will never fail to find a face in this painting, albeit our version of Rembrandt. Rembrandt's *Self-portrait* of 1628 demonstrates that the process of seeing is very often far from a process of physical sight, and this is particularly valid when looking at and creating art, something we consider a visual process. In blinding the painting, or at least the self-portrait, we are invited not only to create our own image of Rembrandt but also to involve ourselves in the process of doing so, showing that Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait* is in some ways not a self-portrait at all, but rather a portrait by the blind, whether that be the observer or the artist.[59]

Smith constructs 'encounter[able]' absence or 'blindness' which can be fulfilled through 'a visual process'. This visual process is not constituted by 'physical[ity]', nor is it reliant on the reading of the image but is contingent on the 'creation' of '[us]'. The creation of seeing or not seeing is based on the promise of 'sight with all its blindness'. This blindness can be 'demonstrat[ed]' by 'Rembrandt's *Self-portrait* of 1628' and be 'show[n]' by the 'we'. The act of demonstrating and showing implies that blindness is a set-up in advance for achieving that display of blindness. Further, the necessity of blindness to demonstration introduces lack. This lack is based on the non-blindness in the act. Non-blindness as a lack is substituted by blindness; however, this lack is not in the demonstrating of lack. The painting of Rembrandt is objectivised to be a medium or supplement for validating 'our version of Rembrandt'. For Smith, there is no definitive vision of a painting, but the painting is framed by the observer and the artist who are as 'the blind'. Thus, the 'we' can 'create our own image of Rembrandt' and 'involve ourselves in the process of doing so'. The narration of 'the process of seeing' shifts from the object's knowledge ('Rembrandt's *Self-portrait* of 1628') of 'demonstration' to the subject's own 'involve[ment]'.

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[58] Smith, 'Blinding the Viewer: Rembrandt's 1628 *Self-portrait*', p. 154. 'The textural element in Rembrandt's self-portrait also appeals to our sense of touch, allowing the observer to follow the hand of the artist in his creative activity. In following Rembrandt's brushmarks and his creative process, the observer perhaps can also identify with the artist's other blindness […]'.

[59] Ibid., p. 154.

What I am reading here is a tension between different processes: 'giv[ing]';[60] 'blinding'; 'demonstrat[ing]', 'process' itself. Smith does not work through the difference, but it is necessary for her argument. Demonstration, for example, cannot work alone, as this would counter blindness, and absence. Demonstration is necessary, because without it the absence would be all too absent: demonstration grants certainty to the unseen. Blindness, on the other hand, works against the security of an objecthood that might do without the neurological process (even as it secures what is being missed). 'Giv[ing]' (not 'much visual information') counters the dangerous subjectivity of vision, rooting it in what can be known with confidence by a third party. All of this, according to Smith, is framed by a final 'showing' ('[…] showing that Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait* is in some ways not a self-portrait at all […]'). But unlike the process of vision, this is a 'showing' that calls upon neither neurons, nor a 'we'. What happens in 'blinding the painting' *is a showing* that is liberated even from the (recoverable, resolvable) uncertainties of the neuroscientific encounter. It is a showing without audience, a showing seemingly not subject to the theory of vision it shows.

The tensions I am reading between showing, demonstrating, and blindness can be read to repeat in Smith's account of materiality. I will argue that the subject's creation or 'process of doing so' returns to notions of materiality (such as 'brushmarks') and a 'sense of touch'.[61] This account can be connected to Chapter Three where I will be offering a counter argument against Dany Nobus's and Parveen Adams's notion of the unquestionable materiality of paint, which secures their successful theories of psychoanalytical futility and the detachment of the gaze respectively. I am interested in the place of materiality in 'our version of Rembrandt's *Self-portrait* of 1628', at the point where 'finding a face' is inevitable. This 'version' is not about 'physical seeing', but rather has to do with the 'represent[ation]' of 'Rembrandt's painting technique and "fuzziness"'. There is, in short, a notion of moving beyond a naïve understanding of present materiality. This 'represent[ation]' is related to the aforementioned 'feel[ing]' of 'seeing' and 'feel[ing]' of 'a glimpse' of the movement, which is 'this type of vision'. Objecthood, movement and affect construct the 'version' and the 'type' of seeing:

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[60] Ibid., p. 148. 'Giv[ing]' that I read is from my earlier quote (please see footnote 55): '[…] Rembrandt's *Self-portrait* need not give us much visual information and this painting appears to play on these curious processes of vision'.

[61] Ibid., p. 154.

Rembrandt's *Self-portrait* of 1628 does something similar. It presents us with a more lifelike image than a clear view of Rembrandt: that is, a glimpse or a glance. We feel he moves to or from us, as if we had caught a glimpse of him in the shadows, and in the margins of our vision. If Rembrandt's painting technique and 'fuzziness' represent our peripheral vision and coarse visual information, then it is no wonder that we feel that we have caught a glimpse of Rembrandt from the corner of our eye as if he were about to leave the canvas, after all it is this type of vision which provides us with such information: movement and identification of an object.[62]

The 'present[ation]' is of 'a more lifelike image'. This presentation is other than 'a clear view'. If the success of the work requires blindness, there is a presenting that is not blind, a presenting that might be of lack, or one that requires lack but does not itself lack in this presenting of lack. What is presented is 'a more lifelike image'. This 'lifelike[ness]' is defined by Smith's investment in 'Rembrandt's painting technique and "fuzziness"'. It is not that 'we' '[identify]' the object, but that the 'represent[ation]' of the painting provides that 'movement' of the painted Rembrandt. All the act of seeing is dependent on that structural absence and blindness in painting in which the absence can be filled based on 'a glimpse' or 'a glance'. The 'movement' of the object is linked to that materiality and unclearness of the image. Because of the 'missing' information, the subject, supported by the object, can see a 'lifelike' image with a 'movement'. This movement of Rembrandt is framed by the 'feel[ing]' of the 'we'. It is the 'feel[ing]' that produces both the movement and the vision. For Smith, the 'present[ation]' or 'represent[ation]' of the object or materiality is the ground for the 'feel[ing]' of the 'we'. I would, however, argue that 'feel[ing]' is not of the 'we' but is objectivised and split from the 'we', and is dominated and produced by the externality (such as painting) other than the subject. The 'identification of an object' is already pre-known by Smith, as she sets up this mechanism to validate the neurological vision in relation to memory. For Smith, absence or blindness is 'encounter[able]' and recoverable through a sense of the object's autonomy. It is not the subject's imagination, or an act of reading, that identifies that absence, but that absence is already established before the recognition. This set-up absence is further referred by Smith to be fillable/encountered through the 'provide[d]' 'information'.

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[62] Ibid., p. 151. (In this quote, Smith refers to two references in her footnote: David Melcher and Patrick Cavanagh, P. 'Pictorial cues in art and in visual perception', in *Art and the senses*, eds. by Francesca Bacci, and David Melcher (Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 364. R. Van De Vall, 'Touching the Face. The Ethics of Visuality between Levinas and a Rembrandt Self Portrait', in *Telling Perspectives: Essays on Art and Philosophy In and Out of History*, eds. by Claire Farago, and Robert Zwijnenberg (Minnesota University Press, 2003), p. 105.

'[T]his type of vision', I will argue, is not about any vision of the subject, but the object is constructed to predestine what a vision of the subject and object should be. That is, the idea of 'type' implies there is an origin of that 'feel[ing]' and of that 'represent[ation]', or that such feelings and representations call upon something not of the moment. I am reading an absence in 'type' that is not read as an absence by Smith, a constitutive absence that haunts the determined play between absence and presence within her work. Moreover, Smith's construction of type constitutes that information which is not information of information but is 'our' 'feel[ing]' of information.[63] And, indeed, this 'information' cannot be information on its own, but 'information' necessitates the act of 'represent[ing]' or '[presenting]' to be information. What, we might ask, must be constituted as absent for Smith's construction of absence, and the promise of its complete return, to be forwarded? How might such absences problematise the certainty of absence in her work, this certainty of our knowledge of it, the materiality it is bound to?

Even though Smith does realise this type of painting reading/vision is 'our version', I will contend that 'our version' is '[ours]' only in so far as it is defined by Smith's already established object, a painting. What is visioned by the subject is dependent on an object that cannot be subject to such vision. My contention of inescapable pre-structures (such as this predestined object, a painting) can be tied in with arguments forwarded by Jacques Derrida's work, *The Truth in Painting*: 'Discourses on painting are perhaps destined to reproduce the limit which constitutes them, whatever they do and whatever they say: there is for them an inside and an outside of the work as soon as there is work'.[64] The constitution of doing, saying, an inside and an outside of the work (discourses on painting) has to do with the necessity of the structure — 'there is work'. In another sense, Smith's confidence and discourse in 'our version' do not alter the painting itself but are returned to be caught up with her pre-destined definition of a painting.

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[63] In relation to the idea of 'feel[ing]' in neuroscience narrative (such as affect theory) that I analyse here, I would introduce Daniela Caselli's problematisation of the 'quality' of 'affect' which is, for example, constructed by 'its promise of transcending notions of otherness' and 'brings with this the allure of immediacy'. Daniela Caselli, 'Kindergarten Theory: Childhood, Affect, Critical Thought', *Feminist Theory*, 11:3 (2010), pp. 241-54 (pp. 243-4).

[64] Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 11. If I could borrow Derrida's idea of the passe-partout, I would read Smith's idea of painting as a frame (the passe-partout), and 'our version' is a frame within the frame. The differences (such as the type, our version) are made within the frame (the painting) without dismissing this necessity of the frame — 'To that extent, the passe-partout remains a structure with a movable base; but although it lets something appear, it does not form a frame in the strict sense, rather a frame within the frame. Without ceasing (that goes without saying) to space itself out, it plays its card or its cardboard between the frame, in what is properly speaking its internal edge, and the external edge of what it gives us to see, lets or makes appear in its empty enclosure: the picture, the painting, the figure, the form, the system of strokes [traits] and of colors' (Ibid., p. 12).

Here I will introduce Levi Bryant's *The Democracy of Objects*, to help us think further about the reversed relationship between the subject and object. Bryant is one of the most vocal defenders of Object-Orientated Ontology (OOO) and would not see a problem with Smith's appeal to the unseen but constitutive role of objects to a vision that is not theirs. For Bryant, rather than a post-Kantian world, wherein objects are only ever known by us in so far as they escape our knowledge, he claims that:

> We get a variety of nonhuman actors unleashed in the world as autonomous actors in their own right, irreducible to representations and freed from any constant reference to the human where they are reduced to our representations.[65]

For Bryant, 'a variety of nonhuman actors' are liberated from the 'reduc[tion]' of 'our representations'. In my reading, this liberation from the negative reliance on the human returns to 'nonhuman actors', however, because nonhuman actors are only 'as' 'autonomous actors'. That is, nonhumans are still non*human* after being 'unleashed'. The escape from humanness is established by that already set-up, inescapable inhumanness. Nonhuman actors are not legitimated by 'the human reference', but 'their own right' is set up by their 'autonom[y]'. '[T]heir own right' is the foundation of getting rid of 'representations' and 'any constant reference to the human'. This 'own right' is the right to secure the identity of inhuman 'actors'. It can be argued, however, that ethically, 'their own right' introduces problems. Can such a right be announced outside of a system of rights that extend beyond 'their own'? In other words, is there not a necessity for an 'own right' to still be a 'right' according to a law that is not applicable only to the individual? The danger here is both of reading an object in isolation, and in thinking that one could confidently police the boundary between the object (and its rights) and wider signifying systems.

A further issue is that of representation. Autonomy seemingly allows nonhuman actors to take the leading role in escaping human domination and 'our representations'. '[R]epresentations' here I read are a lack and this lack is not to be filled in, but removed. That is, for Bryant at least, without the existence of human representations, the nonhuman can be 'freed' and 'autonomous'. As I read above, however, ironically, this exclusion of humanness rather validates the necessity of the human to the construction of the nonhuman. This negation of the human is still of and from the human. And the individualisation of rights cannot escape ethical structures that extend beyond them.

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[65] Levi R Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Open Humanities Press, 2011), p. 23.

In contrast to Smith's article, Bryant is wholly dismissive of representation. His argument is that representation is lack. Objects are irreducible to representation because representation is something lesser and incomplete. This is different from Smith's notion of representation as 'blind'. For Smith, lack allows a world of fullness, and it is known absolutely. For Bryant, representation is simply a lack of reality. The difficulty with Smith's argument, however, is that this celebration of incompletion is compromised: there are appeals to lack that must go unrecognised ('type', for example); the poetics of incompletion are wholly on show; incompletion always calls on the possibility of completion, and thus the wholly present object; at one stage, the incomplete seeing is dependent on a narrational knowledge of the object, or features of the object. However much Smith may claim '[…] that blindness is at the heart of visual representation', the seeing subject, constituted by lack, is produced by the autonomic vision of the object. The representation is no longer constituted by the subject, so questions of perspective, and of framing, no longer count. Instead, the object (such as the painting or the neurological process) substitutes the position of the viewer to complete that vision. This split between the subject and its neurology dismisses the subjectivity and fulfils the act of vision and representation. My critique on this object-led movement turns, then, on the question of who grants that autonomy for the nonhuman to be 'unleashed' and that 'neurological process' to be activated. How does the narration constitute this autonomous object-led movement? If nonhuman is constructed through the negation of the human, through which way can this nonhuman escape from the human?

According to YuKuan Chen's article, 'Seeing Vision: Gesture, Movement and Colour in Painting in Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's *Staring: How We Look*', theories of art tend to (especially, as I will be arguing, in the wake of *The Return of the Real)*[66] become problematic when bypassing 'the inevitable use of language' in their constructions of reading, seeing, the objects of vision or the object-ness of vision:

> Reading, or, seeing, is in itself then already and also all about gesturing. It is already a gesturing of what and how actions/movements are read/seen/defined/identified, either differently or similarly, through the perspectives of the narration, of reading/seeing; that is, a gesturing which is

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[66] This idea of the Real (which is against the structure of the Symbolic) is from Hal Foster's *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (The MIT Press, 1996), and is in keeping with wider notions of the Lacanian-Hegelian Real. For a critique, see, for example, Neil Cocks, 'The Flight of (the) Concord: Joan Copjec and Slavoj Žižek read "Irma's Injection"', *The International Journal of Žižek Studies*, 15/2 (2021), pp.1-19.

available through both the object(s) of vision but also the object-ness of vision
– the inevitable gesturing as the inevitable use of language.[67]

From the perspective of Smith, the gesture of the reading of painting is constructed by the 'neurological process'. I would, however, contend that the reading or seeing of painting itself is already a gesturing. I am basing my argument here on Chen's appeal to 'the perspectives of the narration'. The autonomy of the neurological process is inescapable from the constitution of the narrative/story-telling of Smith. It is not about how the object could render its vision but, as Chen argues, that objects of vision or object-ness of vision are framed by 'the inevitable use of language'.

1.1.5 Memory and Vision?

Aside from my previous critique on Smith's phenomenological object-led movement as evidence for the establishment of neuroscience, I wish to further problematise Smith's understanding of Derrida's memory and vision. Smith claims:

> In *Memoirs of the Blind*, the self-portrait is used as an example for all artistic activity. As Malcom Richards notes, these examples may seem 'a trivial limit case', but Derrida's example serves to show that the artist must rely on memory to create what he has seen.[68]

Smith's reading of Derrida is constituted by her understanding of memory as something reliable, traceable and recoverable. According to Smith, memory is located outside of the canvas and constructs what the vision is, instead of being constituted by physical sight. Smith's reading on Derrida's idea of blindness and memory is, however, opposed to my own. Memory, for Derrida, is not something extractable or recoverable as a whole but is split by itself and is always constituted in a loss. Memory is not traceable by history or time, and it is also different from Bryant's theory of objects which are self-contingent and autonomous. I would suggest that Smith's criticism could be read as a counter to Bryant's ontological object, however. Bryant's investment in objects diverges from Smith's proposal, in so far as Bryant contends that there is no distinction between objects and subjects, but

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[67] YuKuan Chen, 'Seeing Vision: Gesture, Movement and Colour in Painting in Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's *Staring: How We Look*', in *Rethinking Disability Theory and Practice*, ed. by Karín Lesnik-Oberstein (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 162.
[68] Smith, 'Blinding the Viewer: Rembrandt's 1628 *Self-portrait*', p. 12.

everything is object based on 'a difference in degree' but not 'a difference in kind'.[69] In this sense, painting and viewers are all objects and are not constructed by any cultural or historical context: there is no privileged frame. Objects are self-evidently or self-sufficiently themselves. I read Bryant's idea of objects being a pure and independent entity. There is no split within the object. The relation between objects is only through '[t]ranslation' as the indirect access to the other.[70]

In contrast to Bryant, Smith's notion of objects draws a difference between objects and subjects. Nevertheless, Smith at a certain point unknowingly desubjectivises the subject and constructs painting based on her idea of 'interpretation' — 'memory and neurological processes'.[71] Smith does not theorise whether her idea of memory and neurological processes is as a split or a part of subjects or objects. Based on my reading, I would argue that Smith's subject is contingent on her idea of unchanging objects. I read that her notion of memory or the neurological process is dependent on the necessity of materiality and social constructions. Even though Smith's and Bryant's theories lead to a similar object-led direction, Smith's autonomy and objects are supported by external constructions, whilst Bryant dismisses the outer constructions — the excessive constitution — of objects. Smith's or Bryant's argument only goes so far as to stay on the idea of the unity of a pure object. Nevertheless, I would argue, Smith and Bryant neglect a thinking through of the split identity of the object. Memory, according to Derrida, is split from itself, supplemented by '''unconscious[ness]'''. In other words, the object is not constituted as present, but through deferral. As Neil Cocks stated, in an admittedly different context: 'It necessitates that the meaning of the object is "elsewhere", although never "actually", that is recoverably, so'.[72] Smith's argument, I would suggest, runs counter to this:

> According to Derrida, we bring something of ourselves, context, history and culture to looking at and interpreting art. Similarly, our experience of Rembrandt's early Self-portrait, is supplemented with memory and neurological processes within vision.[73]

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[69] Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects*, p. 26. 'In short, the difference between humans and other objects is not a difference in kind, but a difference in degree'.

[70] Ibid., p. 26. 'Put differently, all objects translate one another. Translation is not unique to how the mind relates to the world. And as a consequence of this, no object has direct access to any other object'.

[71] Smith, 'Blinding the Viewer: Rembrandt's 1628 *Self-portrait*', p. 146.

[72] Neil Cocks, *The Peripheral Child in Nineteenth Century Literature and its Criticism*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 166. 'The language that is determinately unhomely or foreign to Steedman's argument comes to light within it. Language unsettles the uncanny object, as understood by Steedman as a limited, external "embodiment", and as such can be taken to be the unheimlich of the unheimlich; It necessitates that the meaning of the object is "elsewhere", although never "actually", that is recoverably, so'.

[73] Smith, 'Blinding the Viewer: Rembrandt's 1628 *Self-portrait*', p. 146.

Smith proposes that 'art' 'interpretati[on]' is not limited to the canvas, but is constituted by 'bringing of ourselves, context, history and culture'. That is, the interpretation of art is something other than the art, but always necessitates the other to supplement its wholeness. I will, however, argue that memory for Derrida does not secure the experience of drawing or interpretation of art. Instead, Derrida problematises the idea of recoverable presence and restorable memory.

Take, for example, Derrida's reading on Baudelaire:

> And so, for Baudelaire, it is the order of memory that precipitates, beyond present perception, the absolute speed of the instant (the time of the *clin d'œil* that buries the gaze in the batting of an eyelid, the instant called the *Augenblick*, the wink or blink, and what drops out of sight in the twinkling of an eye), but also the 'synthesis', the 'phantom', the 'fear', the fear of seeing *and* of not seeing what one must not see, hence the very thing that one must see, the fear of seeing without seeing the eclipse between the two, the 'unconscious execution', and especially the figures that substitute one art for another, the analogical or *economic* (i.e., the familial) rhetoric of which we were just speaking — the *trait*-for-a-*trait*.[74]

There is a gap impossible to be filled in between 'speed' and 'memory' which is always in the time of a loss. It is not that memory itself 'precipitates' 'the absolute speed of the instant', but rather that 'order' is a process or hierarchical command that marks out the gap between time and memory. In this sense, the speed is caught up in 'the order', and this order 'precipitates' the movement of that 'instant' time. Memory does not transcendentally attach to or detach from the history of time by that 'order'. That order is not bonded with 'present perception' but is 'beyond' the stillness of the moment. Thus, the 'speed of the instant' is never about the 'present' moment and is not constituted by 'perception'. There is always a move, a loss in time in that memory is not sealed by time but displaces a lack in seeing, establishing 'the figures' according to '"the unconscious execution"'. When the artist draws, what is drawn is not from any objects that the artist sees nor is from the artist's secured memory. Every seeing is always in a loss in time, as there is an impossibility of capturing the present image. On the other hand, the memory does not guarantee or preserve what is seen or not seen, as 'the *Augenblick*' can never retain any sight from objects. The memory is rather always constituted in the 'eclipse', '"the unconscious execution"'. In this, the

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[74] Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 48.

unconsciousness supplements the memory to carry out that figures in eclipse. Derrida further claims about the memory and the vision:

> As soon as the draftsman considers himself, fascinated, fixed on the image, yet disappearing before his own eyes into the abyss, the movement by which he tries desperately before his own eyes into the abyss, the movement by which he tries desperately to recapture himself is already, in its very present, an act of memory. Baudelaire suggested in Mnemonic *Art* that the setting to work of memory is not *in the service* of drawing. But neither does it lead drawing as its master or its death. It is the very operation of drawing, and precisely its *setting to work*. The failure to recapture the presence of the gaze outside of the abyss into which it is sinking is not an accident or weakness; it illustrates or rather figures the very chance of the work, the specter of the invisible that the work lets be seen without ever presenting.[75]

One thing here is that vision is always constituted in the impossibility of the present presence as it is always in 'an act of memory'. '[H]is own eyes into the abyss' constitutes that invisibility and 'disappear[ance]'. The portrait of himself as the image is dependent on that disappearance of the vision of the image. The 'setting to work of memory' does not secure the drawing of a portrait while this drawing does not also dominate over memory. The drawing does not control or be controlled by the memory. The drawing does not captivate or haunt the memory in its presence and absence. The drawing of the portrait to be that 'image' has to do with 'the very operation of drawing', 'its *setting to work*'. This '*setting to work*' is not the success of capturing the presence of memory but the 'failure' of this, constructing the impossible present visibility of 'invisib[ility]'. This possible seeing of that invisibility is through that permanent state of 'eyes into the abyss'. The invisible object is seen through the disappearance of the image. Memory is irrecoverable for the past or 'past (once) presen[ce]' and thus, the portrait is not caught up with 'eclipsing' time.

> Just as memory does not here restore a past (once) present, so the ruin of the face — and of the face looked in the face in drawing — does not indicate aging, wearing away, anticipated decomposition, or this being eaten away by time — something about which the portrait often betrays an apprehension. The ruin does not supervene like an accident upon a monument that was intact only yesterday. In the beginning there is ruin. Ruin is that which happens to the image from the moment of the first gaze. Ruin is the self-portrait, this face looked at in the face as the memory of itself, what *remains* or *returns* as a specter from the moment one first looks at oneself and a figuration is eclipsed. The figure, the face, then

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[75] Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, p. 68.

sees its visibility eaten away; it loses its integrity without disintegrating. For the incompleteness of the visible monument comes from the eclipsing structure of the *trait*, from a structure that is only remarked, pointed out, impotent or incapable of being reflected in the shadow of self-portrait. So many reversible propositions. For one can just as well read the pictures of ruins as the figures of a portrait, indeed, of a self-portrait.[76]

The face is always 'the ruin' which is established by a 'betray[al]' of 'an apprehension'. The liberty from the 'indicat[ion]' of 'decomposition' is not due to its ever-present 'intact[-ness]', but it is the ruin that is set up 'in the beginning'. This beginning is dependent on the cause of the moment of 'the first gaze'. This 'first [look]', however, cannot retain the presence of the 'figuration' as 'what remains or returns' is always in an 'eclipse'. The 'integrity' and 'visibility' of the figure or the face are founded on its loss, 'the eclipsing structure of the *trait*'. This structure does not sustain or support the completeness of visibility but that 'incompleteness'. '[A] structure' detached from the 'reflect[ion]' 'in the shadow of self-portrait' constructs a displacement of a reversible 'read[ing]' of the pictures of ruins: 'the figures of a self-portrait'. The constitution of a self-portrait is always formed by other narration and substitutions. These substitutions, 'the pictures of ruins', are structured by the structure that is outside any knowable knowledge of time and history.

At odds with Smith's claim of 'this mysterious portrait of a figure in the dark' which 'forces us to reconsider the title and contextual information we bring to this painting, but also what visual information the canvas actually provides,'[77] I read a contradiction between '[mystery]' and this 'portrait of a figure' which are set against each other. I read that 'figure' for Smith is absolutely certain and assured without any '[mystery]'. Smith's belief of that '[mystery]' lies in 'what visual information the canvas actually provides'. According to that '[provision]', Smith argues that the figure is set to be uncertain and opened to interpretation. Nonetheless, that '[actualness]' and '[provision]' of 'visual information' implies a sense of self-evidence of the canvas (which 'actually provides'). I read that Derrida's understanding of 'figure' does not settle in a reliance on the canvas or information. There is no actualness of that figure. Instead, 'the figures of a portrait' have to be 'read' and the status of the 'visibility' of the figure does not remain complete and certain but can be 'eclipsed' or 'eaten away'. But from what perspective — eclipsed, but still there to be eclipsed?

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[76] Ibid., p. 68.
[77] Smith, 'Blinding the Viewer: Rembrandt's 1628 *Self-portrait*', p. 148.

1.1.6 Neurophenomenology?

Let us return to Smith's argument to think about her insistence on the idea of restorable vision and memory. Even though Smith has pointed out the impossibility of any pure vision coming from the eye, my understanding is that she validates the objects/object-ness of vision and neurology, one secured by displacement. Derrida's argument, on the other hand, is not about how memory can ever retain the vision or secure the image for the vision. For Derrida, memory itself is already a loss which cannot be the vision's guarantor.[78] Even though Smith has recognised the absence and blindness in the painting, her idea of absence is encounterable, and the memory is recoverable. I would say Smith's departure of an encounter and recovery is based on her belief in the self-manifested object and autonomic process of neurology. Smith is caught up with her phenomenal construction of a visible *absent* witness which is diverged from Derrida's endorsement of deferral and contingency of language.

Contrary to Smith's analysis on Derrida, I would align with Michael Newman's understanding of Derrida's deconstruction on phenomenology:

> That what for Derrida is at stake today in the deconstruction of these phenomenological commitments is the possibility — or not — of a witness to the wholly other, to alterity, and to the singularity of the event, becomes clear in *Memoirs of the Blind*. Drawing provides an opportunity to consider what takes place in the inscription of the *trait* (mark, trace, limit), which involves the occurrence, in the same stroke, of singularity and repeatability, of delimitation and excess. If the "origin" withdraws from presence, or was never present in the first place, how could it be witnessed? Blindly? In a "memory" of the immemorial? Derrida's work on phenomenology has concerned precisely the withholding or impossibility of a direct intuitive or perceptual revelation of (and as) the truth, and the necessity of a detour *via* writing and inscription. This detour is, not merely a moment of mediation through otherness required by the *telos* of full self-appropriation, but rather an *essential* contingency, an irreducible errancy. Derrida thus occupies a difficult terrain *between* the revelation of being in its withdrawal (Heidegger) and the (traumatic) revelation of the face of the other (*autrui*) as the "beyond" of the Law (Levinas). Refusing to decide between them, Derrida places the emphasis on their entwinement. What is the consequence for witness of the entanglement of being and the

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[78] This is other to the theory of phenomenology, understood in terms of dwelling in the present witness as Michael Newman problematises in his article: Michael Newman, 'Derrida and the Scene of Drawing', *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. 24 (1994).

Law, ethics and ontology? Can a work of art bear witness to the ethical other and the singularity of the event? […].[79]

Newman problematises an issue of 'witness[ing]' which lies in a sense of confidence in '[perception]' of 'the truth'. In one sense, Smith's contingencies on perception have brought forth the problem of the definite truth of seeing in painting. In that sense, this phenomenon is always recoverable, and truth is restorable by seeing. The issue that Derrida has raised dwells on the impossibility of present presence and origin. The witness is a constitutive past. If a witness necessitates 'a detour' formulated by Newman, such as 'writing and inscription', to what extent can Smith promise that the neuron as a pure object returns to the point of origin, of seeing? Can neurons witness and secure that presence in painting? My concern here is whether this structure of Neurophenomenology as Smith proposes slips into danger of dictating '*what will become of us*'[80] — in the way of replacing a perspective and a reading on the painting. My concern with this art theory approach (neuro-analysis of the face or the self-portrait) here leads me to discuss further in the next section concerning a reductive and politicised move in Facial Recognition Technology (FRT).

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[79] Newman, 'Derrida and the Scene of Drawing', p. 219.
[80] This idea is from Jan De Vos's concern which I will discuss further in the next section. Jan De Vos, *The Digitalisation of (Inter)Subjectivity: A Psy-critique of the Digital Death Drive* (1st ed.). (Routledge, 2020), pp. 4-5.

1.2 A Reading on Claudio Celis Bueno's Deleuzian Facial Recognition

1.2.1 Introduction

There is a rising concern that humanity is imperilled through lucrative and controlling technologies which have arisen to replace subjectivity with a de-subjectivised social and political identity in Big Data.[81] More theorists have recognised the danger of this futuristic direction, and have strived to predict and warn against what is taken to be this post-human future.[82] It could be argued that the direction of travel is familiar: here I am thinking of the narrative of identities having moved from universality to individualisation to 'dividuation'.[83] The notion of 'dividuation' was first proposed by Deleuze's analysis on Michel Foucault's disciplinary societies which focus on individuality as a whole, whilst Deleuze suggests a move to control societies which are constituted by breaking-down individuals, "'*dividuals*'":

> In the societies of control, on the other hand, what is important is no longer either a signature or a number, but a code: the code is a *password*, while on the other hand the disciplinary societies are regulated by *watchwords* (as much from the point of view of integration as from that of resistance). The numerical language of control is made of codes that mark access to information or reject it. We no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair. Individuals have become '*dividuals*' and masses, samples, data, markets, or '*banks*'.[84]

For Deleuze, societies have been changed into the position of being controlled by technologies[85] and the identity of the subject is dividable to the unrecognisable others. A

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[81] This concern has been discussed in Jan De Vos's *The Digitalisation of (Inter)Subjectivity: A Psy-critique of the Digital Death Drive* (1st ed.) (Routledge, 2020).

[82] Please find more recent discussions in this field: Zoe Hurley, 'Generative AI's Family Portraits of Whiteness: A Postdigital Semiotic Case Study', *Postdigital Science and Education* (2024), pp. 1-21. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Discriminating Data: Correlation, Neighborhoods, and the New Politics of Recognition* (The MIT Press, 2021). Nick Couldry, and Ulises A Mejias, 'Data Colonialism: Rethinking Big Data's Relation to the Contemporary Subject', *Television & New Media*, 20 (2019), pp. 336-49. Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York University Press, 2018). Claudia Aradau, and Tobias Blanke 'Governing Others: Anomaly and the Algorithmic Subject of Security', *European Journal of International Security*, 3 (2018), pp. 1-21.

[83] I read this idea from Claudio Celis Bueno, 'The Face Revisited: Using Deleuze and Guattari to Explore the Politics of Algorithmic Face Recognition', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 37(1) (2020).

[84] Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *JSTOR,* vol. 59, (1992), p. 5.

[85] Ibid, p. 6, There are more details about the control of technologies from Deleuze: '[…] the societies of control operate with machines of a third type, computers, whose passive danger is jamming and whose active one is piracy and the introduction of viruses. This technological evolution must be, even more profoundly, a mutation of capitalism, an already well-known or familiar mutation that can be summed up as follows: nineteenth-century capitalism is a capitalism of concentration, for production and for property. […] But, in the present situation, capitalism is no longer involved in production, which it often relegates to the Third World, even for the complex forms of textiles, metallurgy, or oil production. It's a capitalism of higher-order production. It no longer buys raw materials and no longer sells the finished products: it buys the finished products or assembles parts. What it wants to sell is services and what it wants to buy is stocks. This is no

'code' is what substitutes the individual. Codes are the necessity for 'mark[ing]' the 'access to information'. This produces a collapse between the mass and the individual but establishes controllable dividual materiality through 'services', 'marketing' or 'stocks'. In Christopher Laurence Hacon's thesis, 'The algorithmic subject: the neo-liberal apparatus and the social media technology of power', he explains further Deleuze's idea of dividuality:

> The production of disciplined individuals is no longer all that is at stake, and with the production of the algorithmic subject, another mode of subjectivity has emerged, founded on dividuals as nodes within a circuit or network, a subjectivity that is flexible and mobile. Following William Bogard's distinction between individuation and dividuation, mechanisms of discipline are about the individual as a whole, whereas the algorithmic subject in terms of dividuality is about breaking down the individual into various parts. The production of the algorithmic subject does not rely on a concept of human nature, a subject that is everywhere and nowhere. It is concerned with the micro, the bits and bytes of data (codes, passwords, social media 'likes', mouse clicks), separated from the individual body, de-centred and subject to attempts to reformulation via 'data doubles' that allow for intervention. The dividual is the atomised individual, whereby the individual user is broken down into pieces of data. In the case of the password, the application the person is gaining access to is not concerned with producing a certain subjectivity that involves race, sex, religion, and work, but only with whether the password is valid. The production of the algorithmic subject renders the dangerous individual governable through algorithms, and these algorithms operate in a space that is defined by conformity, reducing the space for difference.[86]

This idea of dividuality leads me to think further about the correlation between identity and algorithmic faces, which has been theorised as variously shielded, recorded, analysed, privatised and publicised. The discussion of faces and power has been caught up in the debates between the control of human subjects and non-human objects (Facial Recognition Technology, FRT). Even though critics have been raising concern about that invisible effect and power produced by the use of technologies, critics' call for a *transparent* examination often ends up in opposition to their own claims.[87] This concern has to do with the substitution

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longer a capitalism for production but for the product, which is to say, for being sold or marketed. Thus it is essentially dispersive, and the factory has given way to the corporation. The family, the school, the army, the factory are no longer the distinct analogical spaces that converge towards an owner- state or private power- but coded figures- deformable and transformable- of a single corporation that now has only stockholders […]'.

[86] Christopher Hacon, 'The Algorithmic Subject: The Neo-liberal Apparatus and the Social Media Technology of Power' (doctoral thesis, University of Otago, 2017), pp. 239-240.

[87] Take, for example, my discussion in *1.2.6 Racism* where I have discussed about and problematised critics' idea of transparency.

of humanity leading to a threat of being dehumanised and a loss of identity. Thus, for example, Nikki Stevens and Os Keyes raise worry about this dehumanisation in their article 'Seeing infrastructure: race, facial recognition and the politics of data':

> Facial recognition is inherently built around a degree of dehumanisation. Its monodirectionality 'leads to a qualitatively different way of seeing [....] [the subject is] not even fully human. Inherent in the one way gaze is a kind of dehumanization of the observed' (Brighenti 2007, p. 337).[88]

This issue between identities and the reproduction/production of facial recognition has also recently been critiqued by Jan De Vos in his *The Digitalisation Of (Inter) Subjectivity*:

> In light of this ['the commodification of subjectivity via digitalisation'][89], does this not mean that the aforesaid question of *what will become of us*? involves envisaging the end of the human subject as we know it? Has the anthropocenic age given way to the *digicenic* age, the age of coding? In this age, it is not the human being that is the measure of things, but rather codes and algorithms which propel, apparently autonomously, the course of things. Here, the question of *what will become of us*? takes the following forms: what will happen to us when the majority of work is performed by robots or by Artificial Intelligence (AI)? What will become of us as human subjects when our lives play out ever more in virtual environments? What will it mean when each and every one of us is directly connected (neurodigitally) not only with each other, but with everything (e.g. the so-called Internet of Things)? Will we be reduced to mere nodal points in the global network of the hypermarket?[90]

De Vos's concern with digitalisation lies in the potential reduction of the subject and a certain numerical becoming. Unlike other critics, such as Claudio Celis Bueno, De Vos rejects the move to invest in improving technologies for recognition, and he critiques the appeal to autonomous systems. In opposition, Claudio Bueno, in 'The Face Revisited: Using Deleuze and Guattari to explore the politics of Algorithmic Face Recognition', argues that Algorithmic Face Recognition can constitute new identities outside the frame of language, which is beyond the limit of symbolics, such as meaninglessness and desubjectivisation. For

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[88] Nikki Stevens, and Os Keyes, 'Seeing infrastructure: race, facial recognition and the politics of Data', *Cultural Studies*, 35:4-5 (2021), p. 848, doi:10.1080/09502386.2021.1895252. The quote that Stevens and Keyes use here is from Andrea Brighenti, 'Visibility: A category for the social sciences', *Current sociology*, 55(3) (2007), pp. 323–342 (p. 337).

[89] De Vos, *The Digitalisation of (Inter)Subjectivity: A Psy-critique of the Digital Death Drive* (1st ed.), p. 4: 'That is to say, it is the commodification of subjectivity via digitalisation that constitutes the backbone of the new digital economy and its key processes of expropriation and alienation'.

[90] De Vos, *The Digitalisation of (Inter)Subjectivity: A Psy-critique of the Digital Death Drive* (1st ed.), pp. 4-5.

Bueno, a necessary antagonism, signification and asignification, is proposed to proceed with that continual process and transformation. Bueno's definition of Deleuze and Guattari's social subjection and machinic enslavement is the ground, I would suggest, for constituting '*what will become of us*'.[91] This identity of 'us',[92] according to Bueno's idea of algorithmic face recognition, is ideally intertwined with 'equilibrium' which is called for 'new critical tools' to '[maintain]' this asignification and signification.[93] Although Bueno strives to balance and justify the binary between signification and asignification, I would argue that he weighs asignification more than discourses and meanings. In my reading, as I will discuss below, his idea of asignification is naturalised as a pre-existence without questioning its readability and its inescapable structure of language. If asignification is constructed by and collapsed into signification, can Bueno's confidence in his Deleuzian 'simultaneity'[94] between signification and asignification be erected? Is there any structure, such as asignification, that cannot be engaged?

1.2.2 Equilibrium?

Bueno's emphasis on Deleuzian deterritorialisation and autonomous continuation is built on his belief of that transcendental movement which is considered as a natural process. Nevertheless, his proposed neutrality is a construction and is set up by calling attention to asignification framed by his linguistic formulations:

> Algorithmic face recognition hence requires new critical tools capable of unveiling how its inferential potential (Parisi, 2016) and its asignifying dimension (Paglen, 2016) govern on the basis of maintaining an equilibrium in which time is held still: 'instead of a before (prevention) or an after (reaction), there is continual modulation of responsiveness' (Chandler, 2019: 37).[95]

Bueno's reading implies that signification at its purest cannot reach beyond "'a before'" and "'an after'". A before and an after are caught up with the frame of 'time' while the middle-

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[91] This term is what I borrow from Jan De Vos (Ibid., pp. 4-5).

[92] This constitution of the identity of 'us' is from my understanding of Bueno's argument of algorithmic face recognition which produces both individuality (signification) and dividuality (asignification). Nevertheless, I will be problematising this proposal of equilibrium and the binary opposition which returns to rely on the structure of signification.

[93] Bueno, 'The Face Revisited: Using Deleuze and Guattari to Explore the Politics of Algorithmic Face Recognition', pp. 87-88.

[94] Ibid., p. 81.

[95] Ibid., p. 87-88. The direct quote from Chandler that Bueno uses here is from David Chandler, 'Digital governance in the Anthropocene: The rise of the correlational machine', in *Digital Objects, Digital Subjects*, eds. by David Chandler, and Christian Fuchs (University of Westminster Press, 2019), pp. 23–42 (p. 37).

ness is outside the limit of continual time. Time is not the foundation for the movement of '"continu[ity]"'. Instead, the condition of time that is 'held still' provides a ground for 'maintaining an equilibrium'. This holding of time is outside time. The 'still' 'time' secures '"continual"' movement without interruption of '"prevention"' or '"reaction"'. This achievement necessitates 'capab[ility]' of 'unveiling' 'inferential[ity]' and 'asignif[ication]', which is not reachable through signification, and thus 'new' tools are proposed. This 'unveiling', on the one hand, implies 'potential' that is veiled awaiting being 'unveil[ed]'. On the other hand, 'potential' implies the act of 'unveiling' has not yet happened. What is unveiled is not known in this perspective while already happening before unveiling. That is, the fulfilment of unveiling necessitates what is already unveiled, so the unveiled can be unveiled. Nevertheless, this 'potential' is a dismissal of unveiling. In this sense, there is an impossibility of unveiling what is unveiled which is outside the knowing of the narrator here. The unknowable potential is not accessible in this perspective, while this failure of unveiling is the success of what is predestined to be what is unveiled. The structure of 'capab[ility]' is inescapable from the impossibility of unveiling (on its own). Because of the difficulty of unveiling I read, the transcendental act of responsiveness, I would argue, is thus already happening before and without unveiling. The question is what is at stake for that continual autonomy to take place? Are those determined results/responses already established before using those 'new critical tools'? Can an asignifying dimension as antagonism be unveiled and escapable without discourse? Does this signification require this equilibrium to be an equilibrium? That is, is equilibrium always dependent on an opposition to make a balance? What are the factors of this asignification territory (unveiling, timeliness)? Can '"modulation of responsiveness"' be framed without symbolics? Can meaninglessness be constructed without a structure?

Although Bueno's idealism is to propose 'deterritorializing tools' to supplement the signifying machine, it already implies an a priori lack of signification. That is, the signifying machine is pre-known to be insufficient if a post-human future is to be imagined. Bueno's idea of a post-humanist future is only validated through the 'appropriat[ion]' of 'deterritorializing tools':

> Against the asignifying nature of facial recognition we should not oppose the
> signifying machine of the private, reterritorialized face. Instead, we should

appropriate the deterritorializing tools that the same technology has made possible in order to imagine a post-humanist future.[96]

In this sense, Bueno's faith in facial recognition is not set up to dismiss signification; instead, asignification secures the status of 'signifying machine of the private reterritorialized face'. As mentioned, for Bueno, 'deterritorializing tools' are necessary for establishing his idea of a post-humanist future. This future is led by Bueno's proposal of 'a territory of pure potentiality', which is beyond discourse, 'reterritorialization, signification and individualization':

> Alternatively, algorithmic technology could be used beyond the realm of reterritorialization, signification and individualization, that is, as a technology that disrupts the 'reflective face' while reinforcing the 'intensive face' as a territory of pure potentiality.[97]

On the one hand, Bueno's hope is contingent on that requisite dyad to sustain signification and asignification; on the other hand, from my reading, Bueno endorses more in the realm of deterritorialisation, asignification and dividuation to achieve an independent state of 'potentiality'. Bueno's inclination to this opposition is constantly shifting from duality between signification and asignification to singularity (asignification) although Bueno supports Wark's suggestions on Guattari's theory of '"mixed semiotics"' which, according to Bueno, is 'a' 'thorough' 'understanding of power relations'.[98]

> As Wark (2017: 81) suggests, Guattari's theory of 'mixed semiotics' is an attempt to move beyond structuralism, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis, challenging their shared tendency to privilege meaning and representation — a tendency which leaves out the asignifying and machinic aspects of power. Instead, Guattari develops a thorough understanding of power relations in contemporary capitalism which includes both signifying and asignifying semiotics. This conceptual distinction is necessary because contemporary

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[96] Ibid., p. 88.

[97] Ibid., p. 88. The ideas of the 'reflective face' and the 'intensive face', according to Bueno, are from Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* (Continuum, 2009), p. 89.

[98] As I understand it, these '[suggestions]' of Wark are from Bueno's own interpretation on Wark instead of what Wark claims. In Wark's work that Bueno cites here, Wark has confirmed the contribution of Gauttari and Lazzararo's idea of machines (the signifying aspect) but is critiquing the limitations of their aforementioned ideas which '[end] up being too much metaphoric a term' and 'we never quite get into any detailed understanding of *actual* machines' (p. 85). For my understanding, Wark does not claim a sense of 'thorough[ness]' of Gauttari's theory but points out the limits. The reference is from McKenzie Wark, 'Maurizio Lazzarato: Machinic enslavement', in *General Intellects: Twenty-One Thinkers for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by McKenzie Wark (Verso, 2017), pp. 77–92.

> capitalism is largely grounded on the deployment of asignifying elements such as money, computer languages and economic indicators (Guattari, 1984: 171).[99]

One thing, according to Bueno's understanding of Guattari, is to fulfil what is loss in 'power relations', asignification. This loss is a pre-known 'ground' of 'elements'. Thus, prior to any '[challenge]' or '[development]' of 'power relations', the development is already developed. The 'relations' are already bound up with a fixed opposition. That is, 'power relations' necessitate the constitution of the other, asignification. The narrator's idea of '[inclusion]' has granted what is or is not of 'relations'. Prior to inclusion, what is included is already decided, in this perspective. In this sense, there is a pre-determined structure for this achievement of opposition. Nevertheless, I would be arguing that the inclusion of asignification is an excess if asiginification is always framed by signification. The independence of asignification still falls back on the structure of signification.

On the one hand, Bueno's reading of Wark critiques the 'privilege' of signification and proposes the 'inclu[sion]' of asignification for equilibrium. The 'thorough[ness]' of Guattari that Bueno's reading of Wark emphasises is based on Bueno's idea of the necessity of antagonism. Nevertheless, this proposal is based on Bueno's confidence in the possibility of asignification at its purest. Asignification can be itself without the involvement of signification. That is, meaninglessness can retain its status to be unreadable. In this, the 'relations' can maintain as two opposed poles and definitely distinct categories, signification (meaning) and asignification (non-meaning). That is, Bueno implies that Guattari's '"mixed semiotics"' is able to restore a loss of the category of asignification, such as 'money, computer languages and economic indicators'. These 'elements' are meaningless materiality or units for supporting the signifying ground to be signifying. There is no perspective or reading/interpretation on these 'elements'. These 'elements' are situated as pure and isolated entities. Instead of producing asignification, 'contemporary capitalism' is produced by 'machinic' 'power' and asignification. In this sense, capitalism is the production of a priori, asignification.

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[99] Bueno, 'The Face Revisited: Using Deleuze and Guattari to Explore the Politics of Algorithmic Face Recognition', p. 85. If we read Wark's argument in her work, it is not Guattari's claim that moves beyond structuralism, phenomenology and psychoanalysis, but Wark comments on Lazzarato's movement: 'Lazzarato wants to move beyond structuralist, phenomenological, psychoanalytical theories, which tend to privilege the intersubjective and leave out the machinic' (McKenzie Wark, 'Maurizio Lazzarato: Machinic enslavement', p. 81).

Based on this 'ground', 'structuralism, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis' fail to dismiss meaning-ness on meaninglessness. Only if meaninglessness can be set up as a discrete and transcendental category, 'power relations' in contemporary capitalism can be '[understood]'. Thus, what I read out of Bueno's implication (according to his reading of Wark and Guattari) is that a singular signifying stance is not sufficient to support their categories of 'elements' and 'power relations'. These semiotics can only be known from the outside of symbolics which is not structured to be any 'meaning' or 'representation'.

Thus far, I have read out a sense of contradictoriness in which Bueno has ignored how his idea of signification has structured asignification and how this dyad does not remain in a fixed opposition in his own formulation. Bueno's dichotomy between the two has sometimes led to a dismissal of signification. If in this sense, how can his idea of 'equilibrium' be maintained?

> As a sign of a privatized body, the face signifies a specific individualized role within the social division of labour. In this sense, algorithmic face recognition still carries an ideological function which naturalizes a given social order as necessary and objective (Paglen, 2016). As an asignifying machine, however, algorithms, 'do not recognize agents, individuals, roles, or even clearly defined objects' (Guattari, 1984: 172). Hence, they operate neither through ideology or repression (Wark, 2017: 80). In line with the machinic aspect of contemporary capitalism, an algorithm aims at 'controlling the asignifying semiotic apparatuses (economic, technical, stock-market, etc.) through which it aims to depoliticize and depersonalize power relations' (Lazzarato, 2014: 41). Consequently, there is a crucial aspect of algorithmic face recognition that does not generate discourse: 'it does not speak but it functions, setting things in motion by [activating] the affective, transitivist, transindividual relations that are difficult to attribute to a subject, an individual, a me' (Lazzarato, 2006).[100]

One thing here is that 'discourse' or signification is what constitutes '[politics]', '[personalization]', 'individualiz[ation]', 'ideology', 'repression', and 'naturaliz[ation]'. Once the chain of signification is dismissed, the 'recognition' will fail to be established. Thus, '"power relations"' between the individual and 'a given social order' will be dissociated. There is liberation and autonomy of '"motion"' and of the act of '"activat[ion]"' of '"affective, transitivist, transindividual relations"'. In this way, '"a subject, an individual, a me"' is no longer 'individualised', 'ideolog[ised]', '[politicised]', or '[personalised]'. That

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[100] Bueno, 'The Face Revisited: Using Deleuze and Guattari to Explore the Politics of Algorithmic Face Recognition', p. 86.

is, "'a me'" no longer necessitates being positioned 'within the social division of labour' for the sake of 'an asignifying machine'. In this, 'algorithmic face recognition' is 'function[ing]' without the 'spe[ech]' and 'recognition' of others, and 'the asignifying semiotic apparatuses' is released from the bond of 'discourse' and "'power'". Bueno's reading on Lazzarato's Deleuzian theory provides a sense of detachment from hierarchical, 'object[ivised]' or 'subject[ivised]' recognition. The transcendental movement substitutes the structure of categorisations which is outside the realm of 'a subject' and "'objects'". Nevertheless, the collapse of categorisations here already requests another ground of categorisations, signification and asignification, to transcend that individualisation and objectivisation. I would further question this priori: What is the ground for splitting the production of 'discourse' and "'the affective'"? What is the validity of that autonomous '[function]' and 'motion' without a third?

1.2.3 Displacement?

In the previous section, my questions call for a thinking through the idea of displacement in Bueno's polemic of which in the following passages I will offer further analysis:

> What is at stake in this passage is a shift from the mechanisms of discipline which focus on the individual as a whole to mechanisms of 'dividuation' in which algorithms are used to break down the individual into pieces of data (Hacon, 2017: 239).[101]

In another sense, 'the mechanisms of discipline' are about keeping 'a whole' as there is an implication that the individual is not whole, but only through the 'discipline' the whole can be preserved. In 'mechanisms of "dividuation"', 'the individual' is not an individual as 'a whole' but 'pieces of data' into which the individual is 'break[ing] down'. In this, the individual is not a reproduction of the data but is the origin of that 'data'. This shift has to do with the distinction between fragments and 'a whole' in which there is a substitution of the individual to be data. '[D]iscipline' is to keep the individual without a division while "'dividuation'" is to split the individual to be the other.

> From the perspective of this shift in the diagram of power, algorithmic face recognition should not be understood simply as an automated and ubiquitous

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[101] Ibid., p. 80.

panopticon but rather as an apparatus of metadata that goes beyond the task of individualization.[102]

There is a shift of power from 'panopticon' to 'metadata' which is 'beyond the task of individualisation'. Foucault's theory of power as Bueno reads still remains in 'individualisation' as a whole while 'an apparatus of metadata' is not just 'simpl[e]' and knowable 'autonom[y]' or 'ubiquitous[ness]' but a production of '"dividuation"'. In another sense, this power and 'beyond[ness]' is about the power of fragmentations rather than a singular point of view of panopticon disciplines. The power is bound up with *meta* information. I would be arguing that this 'apparatus of metadata' is still from a single point of view of the narration for the data control of the population. This control is about ongoing flows of information that are changeable.[103] Nevertheless, this changeability of information is 'predic[able]'[104] by that data control.

On the one hand, the perspective 'of' 'this shift' makes a distinction of a difference from a before (individuality) and after (dividuality). In the machinic enslavement (the diagram of power), this shift is marked out not by the 'shift' itself but 'the perspective' 'of' the shift. That is, the 'perspective' already pre-determines what 'this shift' is before the shift happens. In this, this shift is not about the actual move of a change but is defined by that 'perspective'. This notion of 'this perspective (of this shift in the diagram of power)' itself, I would argue, is caught up in a problematisation of individuality. The 'perspective' necessitates that notion of individuality for that of 'shift'. Nevertheless, the 'perspective' must call on individuality as the ground for dividuality. There is no perspective *on* the 'shift' or what is shifted. Rather, I read a return of individuality instead. My question is: can 'an apparatus of metadata' transcend that 'perspective' which is based on knowable, 'automated' and 'ubiquitous' 'panopticon'? What is at stake for constituting 'a line of flight' of symbolics?

Accordingly, 'corporeal fetishism', which fixes identities and conceals their changing, heterogeneous and relational nature (Haraway, 1997: 142), needs to

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[102] Ibid., p. 80.

[103] The word, 'flows' is from Bueno's formulation; take, for example, 'In the specific case of algorithmic face recognition, the face plays out two semiotic regimes: an asignifying machine which connects the deterritorialized elements of the intensive face with the deterritorialized flows of information fed to the machine-learning algorithm; and a signifying machine that reterritorializes these flows on the reflective face and the private individual' (Ibid., p. 87). Even though I use 'flows' here, I would say the idea of 'flows' does not maintain changeable itself but is reliant on the other, such as the act of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, or prediction (which I mention in this passage).

[104]'Predic[able]' here is quoted from Bueno (Ibid., p. 80): 'In the context of control societies, algorithms are not merely used to normalize individual behaviour but rather to predict patterns of a given group or population'.

be permanently disputed. To these ends, the same pole of machinic enslavement that defines algorithmic face recognition as an apparatus of control can function as a line of flight aimed at 'dismantling the face' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 206). This does not necessarily mean a return to a primitive faceless society.[105]

In this sense, "'dismantling the face'" has to do with unfixed identity and changing. Unlike "'corporeal fetishism'", the dismantled face is not 'heterogenous and relational nature' but 'a line of flight'. That is, algorithmic face recognition is not about constructing a 'fixe[d]' 'identity' or 'relational[ity]' but a 'control' based on 'flight'. The corporeal face obstructs the freedom of 'changing' while the Deleuzian incorporeal dismantled face is situated in civilised society, opposed to 'primitiv[ity]', which is not limited by any 'fix[ation]' or 'conceal[ment] of 'changing'. 'Conceals their changing' implies changing is already there before concealment, however. Changing is already a revealing of the difference of corporeality, a split from (corporeality) themselves. This split identity is to be concealed. Corporeality does not remain the same. This "'fetishism'" is masked with 'fix[ation]'. Nevertheless, 'their changing' implies the knowing of changing is outside the knowledge of this concealment. That concealment does not secure the knowing of what is concealed. The concealed nature is thus established by what is not concealed. Prior to concealment, concealment has occurred. Nevertheless, this concealment, in comparison of unveiling, fails to conceal what is presupposed to be concealed. What is already concealed cannot be concealed. This is a similar problem of fulfilling the act of unveiling because prior to this act what is unveiled is already completed.

In order to collapse that idea from Donna Haraway's "'corporeal fetishism'", the act of dismantling is proposed. A hope is endorsed in that act of dismantlement through 'aim[ing]'. In one sense, aiming implies an act can never get its aim, while this aim is claimed to fulfil the 'defin[ition]' of 'algorithmic face recognition' and support the 'as[-ing]' 'function[ality]' of 'machinic enslavement'. This 'line of flight' is for an 'aim', rather than an actual achievement, in that there is no secured success for the act of dismantling. The certainty of that aim instead leads to the uncertain promise of establishing that aim, a dismissal. The face is already there before being dismantled. The act of dismantling requests a knowable and aimable object. Thus, as discussed original individuals which are broken down into 'pieces of data', the face is set up to be original and this originality is to be broken down. This breaking-down of the face does not lead to other pieces of objects, or the

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[105] Ibid., p. 88.

disappearance of the face ('faceless'), but the face still remains as something different from itself (the dismantled face). '[A] line of flight' is about the 'function[ality]' of 'the same pole of machinic enslavement'. This 'pole' is not 'a line of flight' but 'functions' 'as' a line of flight. The identity of a line of flight is established by being tied in the support of functionality. Through functioning 'as' a line of flight, a line of flight is able to perform a sense of an intentional act *at* the face. A line of flight is activated by 'machinic enslavement' while this movement is pending on that 'as-ness'. That line of flight is a substitute for 'machinic enslavement' which can be functional not through itself but the other, a 'line'. A line of flight is contingent on 'machinic enslavement' which leads to dividuation. This 'line' can correlate to 'the perspective of this shift' which is a 'shift' not of itself but is determined by the 'perspective' ('[f]rom the perspective of this shift in the diagram of power'). This 'perspective' is claimed to achieve dividuation while it still returns to individuality according to that 'perspective' as discussed before. Both a 'line' and a 'shift' necessitate a supplement for reaching that goal of dividuation and a dismantled face. The achievement of dividuation and a face, I would argue, are based on an origin, the individual and a face (an otherness or a split).

1.2.4 Universality or Historicity?

As my previous analysis confronting fixed oppositions, I propose that displacement such as the dismantled face and dividuation has reverted to Bueno's inevitable structure of corporeality and individuality. This reversal, we can see further, in Bueno's argument between universality and historicity of the face.

> This is the aim of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of faciality: to question the universality of the face presupposed both in the ethical relation to the other (as in Levinas, 1979) and in the constitution of subjectivity (as in Lacan, 1977). For Deleuze and Guattari, the face is essentially different from the head (2004: 188). The head belongs to the animal dimension of the body, whereas the face belongs to the human domain of individuality, is produced by a particular social field, and requires a specific regime of signs.[106]

As a supporter of Deleuze and Guattari, Bueno critiques the idea of the 'universality' of the face which is tied up with 'presuppos[ition]' of 'the other' and 'subjectivity'. The other and subjectivity are split from individuality. This individuality is the 'produc[tion]' of

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[106] Ibid., p. 77.

'particular[ity]' rather than universality. Universality is set up as an opposition to historicity. Bueno's understanding of Deleuze is dependent on the historicised face instead of the universal face. The relation between the face and 'the other' or the face and 'subjectivity' is not based on the constitution of the universal. The Deleuzian face has to do with non-universal 'human', 'domain', 'particular[ity]', 'specific[ity]' and 'signs' which are constructed in history, 'social[ity]'. In comparison to 'the head', the head is located in and '[belonging]' to the 'animal', 'dimension'. This is not with 'specific[ity]' or history but universality. The head is not historicised in either 'ethical relation' or 'subjectivity'. '[I]ndividuality' is always framed by history and signification. The face is what is invested in the presence of humans instead of the absence of subjectivity. The head and the body are not situated in the 'domain' but in the 'dimension'. That is, the level of 'domain' is a specified territory for locating historicity. The constitution of historicity necessitates a space opposed to the territory of universality. The universal has to do with 'dimension' which is not delimited in the 'particular' boundary. Thus, in Bueno's reading, for Deleuze and Guattari, there is no neutral or asignifying face but only a signifying and historical face.

As I read it the foundation of the face in this understanding is set up by that against-ness of the animal and of corporeality. The body is not located in or 'belong[ing]' to historicised individuality but is caught up with universality. The head is pre-established to be opposed to the face. This difference, based on the '[essence]' ('the face is essentially different from the head'), however, I would argue, is returned as universal. In another sense, the word, 'essentially', has predestined what is known as universality. If the difference is pre-known or essential, what the face is, according to Bueno's formulation, is detached from the other or subjectivity, collapsed to be, I would say, the universal 'differen[ce]'. That is, the non-'universality' of the face can only be constituted through the antagonism, the universality, the other *other*, to guarantee its unchanging identity. Thus, there is a question of whether the ground for being the face of non-universality is ironically dismissed by its own constitution — 'a particular social field' and 'a specific regime of signs'. I read the human and animal opposition to be bound by the specificity of history against the opposition between self and the other as universality and abstraction. The human aspect is always caught up within 'a specific regime'. This 'regime' is against specificity. If the regime is predestined to be specific, does that mean this specificity returns *as* universal? Specificity already implies there is a knowable *universal* specificity and thus the regime is specified by that universal designation. In other words, this regime as a ground has to be universal in

order to fulfil 'specific[ity]'. We can read this idea of face between historicity and particularity further:

> Following Deleuze and Guattari, Jenny Edkins (2015) has developed a thorough analysis of the politics of the face. Edkins argues that the face is not a natural object but rather 'exists in a particular cultural, geographical, and historical context' (2015: 3). The importance of the face, hence, 'does not arise from some necessary or innate [condition]', but from 'a certain assemblage of power, a certain politics' (Edkins, 2015: 4). There is a close relationship between the face and politics that entails not universality but historically mutating regimes of signs which in turn respond to mutating regimes of power (Edkins, 2015: 4).[107]

According to Bueno's reading of Jenny Edkins's idea of the face, the face has to do with 'historic[ity]' which is related to that 'particular[ity]'. The face cannot exist as a transcendental object without a "'context'". This context is not secured by 'universality' but by external 'mutati[on]'. That is, this mutation does not mutate without a historical trace and "'particular'" 'regimes'. In this, the historicity has secured the face not falling outside that particularity. Nevertheless, I will argue that this particularity is already caught up with that inescapable universality. Prior to historicity, history is already provided with knowable 'regimes' and "'context'" by the narration. Based on this knowability from the narration, historicity is collapsed and is returned to *universal* particularity. That is, historicity is established by the contingency of universality. In this, my question is how can a historicised face be against universal nature without getting rid of its own set-up nature? Even though the face is validated by 'assemblage power', located in a 'mutating' '[history]', I would suggest that 'mutati[on]' is called upon that 'particular' and 'certain' universality, 'regimes of signs'. '[S]igns', I would contend, do not guarantee the difference of the context or any particular particularity. Instead, signification, context and mutation lead to a universal '[political]' face. The 'aim' of 'dismantling' the *political* face is thus dismissed by its impossibility of securing any particular politics. Politics here is universal. Let us read the final example of universality in relation to politics:

> The use of this technology transforms an individual's mere presence in a public space into a potential but invisible police interaction, not only automating the individualizing function of the panopticon but also turning it ubiquitous. In this specific case, the relation between algorithms and power cannot be reduced to the ideological function of naturalization but rather needs to be understood as a

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[107] Ibid., p. 77. The reference for the direct quotes from Jenny Edkins: Jenny Edkins, *Face Politics* (Routledge, 2015).

micro-political phenomenon which reproduces a concrete process of normalization and individualization. In other words, from a Foucauldian perspective, algorithmic face recognition technologies appear as a concrete apparatus of subjectification (and not merely as an ideological apparatus).[108]

Bueno's explanation of the Foucauldian perspective lies in that 'normalisation' and 'individualization'. This reproduction of a 'micro-political phenomenon' involves 'concret[ation]' and 'process' instead of 'naturalization'. According to the formulation above, there is an expanse of presence, not just 'mere presence', but this could be turned to be 'ubiquitous'. This 'ubiquitous[-ness]' has to do with 'automati[on]' and 'function'. In this sense, algorithms are not about the '[natural]' production but 'phenomen[al]' 'reproduc[tion]' of subjectification. This constitution of subjectification as a 'process', and 'a Foucauldian perspective' grants the 'appear[ance]' of this subjectification apparatus. Nevertheless, what is at stake is that FRT is not for the function or restoration of ideology but is for the 'transform[ation]' of individuality into 'ubiquitous[ness]' where the identity or existence of the individual is diminished. Individuality is about that 'invisib[ility]' of the self which is the component of the 'technology'. A technology *process* and algorithms have displaced ideology to regulate the subject. The narration knows this achievement is through the 'appear[ance]' of 'a concrete apparatus'. This knowing is not limited by the knowing of categories of apparatuses but includes how things 'appear' as the truth of things. The actuality is substituted by the appearance of the other, 'potential'. This 'potential' is not constituted by ideology or visibility but is by that presupposed pure act of transforming. This 'potential' is beyond the knowledge of the narration on the subject but secures the narration's pursuit of virtuality (FRT) in actuality.

1.2.5 Curves and Identities

A collapse between the identities of universality and historicity, I analyse above, leads me to further develop my counter-argument concerning the 'normality' of identities constituted by predetermined curves in Bueno's analysis:

In the context of control societies, algorithms are not merely used to normalize individual behaviour but rather to predict patterns of a given group or population. According to Foucault, security apparatuses do not define a pre-given norm that is later used to normalize each individual (like disciplinary technologies do), but rather use statistical calculations in order to identify curves

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[108] Ibid., p. 79.

of normality (2009: 26). Unlike rule-based algorithms, machine-learning algorithms do not operate based on a pre-given template that links a facial image to a concrete identity. Instead, machine-learning algorithms use statistical calculation in order to extract patterns from the training datasets. In Deleuze's (1995: 178) terms, algorithmic facial recognition does not rely on fixed moulds, but rather on a constant process of modulation.[109]

Here, a 'constant process of modulation' is not contingent on 'a pre-given template' but on the 'patterns' 'extract[ed]' from the 'statistical calculation'. That is, statistical calculation is of the process to 'identify' 'curves of normality'. '[C]urves of normality' substitutes the identity of individuality. '[M]achine-learning algorithms' are not bound up with the 'link[age]' between image and identity but are producing identity via 'calculation' and 'extract[ion]'. Even though the training datasets, unlike the 'pre-given template', do not prescribe a pattern for the machine-learning algorithms, I would be arguing that the training datasets are already set up as a priori for learning what those datasets are. In this sense, what is the idea of learning? Is learning an act of reproducing? To what extent can we understand the differences between the pre-given template and the training datasets? If curves necessitate an act of identification for its confirmation, does it mean, before identifying the curves of normality, curves have been already established (as curves are already known to be what is '[normal]' and what is not)? In view of this, I would return to Jan De Vos's question, '*what will become of us*', which we have discussed above, rendering us a further thinking through what constitutes the identity of us (is it formed by the predestined 'curves of normality'?):

> In this age, it is not the human being that is the measure of things, but rather codes and algorithms which propel, apparently autonomously, the course of things. Here, the question of *what will become of us*? […] What will it mean when each and every one of us is directly connected (neurodigitally) not only with each other, but with everything (e.g. the so-called Internet of Things)? Will we be reduced to mere nodal points in the global network of the hypermarket?[110]

De Vos's apprehension has relevance to Bueno's argument. Although Bueno has realised the flaws and issues in FRT, such as biases, Bueno does not move away from the danger of falling into the normalisation of subjectless subjects. From my understanding of Bueno, this asignifying subjectless subject is a necessity to justify a balance of current technological

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[109] Ibid., p. 80.
[110] De Vos, *The Digitalisation of (Inter)Subjectivity: A Psy-critique of the Digital Death Drive* (1st ed.), pp. 4-5.

society: machinic enslavement and social subjection. Nevertheless, my critique offered so far is a counter to Bueno's belief. The concern I have is with that self-evident subjectless subject/object Bryant proposes (a normalised nonhuman). This autonomy has turned every entity into what De Vos has mentioned — the 'reduc[tion]' of 'nodal points'. Human beings are just nodal points regardless of who or what you are.[111] Although Bueno has acknowledged the aspect of the solid ground/identity of the subject, this subject is subjectless at some points. The questions for me are: what constitutes a subjectless subject and autonomy? Are there any perspectives on the nonhuman, or is it, by definition, free from perspective? And if so, how is this known? Is the nonhuman detachable from the human? The following passage can bring us further to engage with the identity of race by FRT. As mentioned, if what will become of us is already destined to be subjectless by FRT, how can we read through the issue of racism by FRT? (In this sense, race is already predestined as non-meaning data. So, does race mean anything in data? Then, can bias be constituted?)

1.2.6 Racism?

In the following discussion, I would be arguing that Bueno's critique of biased data has problematised a proposed solution by Joy Boulamwini and Timnit Gerbu, who support an increase of transparency of demography.[112] They point out that the improvement of an input will enhance the accuracy of an output. This accuracy is tied with the 'used' data and 'classif[ication]'. Shoshanna Magnet, however, proposes that the accuracy of data for the subject's uniqueness only ends up being part of mass production (based on 'statistical calculation').[113] The idea of transparency of data cannot achieve any *unique* identity. According to this ground, Bueno suggests the data that FRT uses is based on an aspect of dismissal of individuality, as the data of FRT is always constituted through a process and modulation. Nevertheless, for Bueno, the necessity of the *face* itself in FRT requires that idea of individualisation. Because of this 'contradictoriness', Bueno has the confidence to work through two aspects of the face by using Deleuzian theory. Although Bueno has

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[111] My focus is not on the question of being but on my interest in narrative, framing and discourse of '*what will become of us*'.

[112] This is according to Bueno's reading and understanding of Joy Boulamwini and Timnit Gerbu. Apart from this, throughout the following analysis in this section, my reference to Boulamwini and Gerbu is all based on Bueno's reading on them.

[113] In my analysis, my references to Shoshanna Magnet throughout this thesis are based on Bueno's reading and understanding of her. That is, my argument of Magnet is according to my reading of Bueno's reading of Magnet. In order to avoid the complexity of my formulations, I have only mentioned Shoshanna Magnet or Magnet. Nevertheless, these are my readings of Bueno's framing of Magnet instead of Magnet's perspective.

explained his understanding of Deleuze's machinic enslavement and social subjectification in relation to the face, I will be arguing that Bueno has neglected to legitimate the relationship between his Foucauldian face and individuality, which Bueno positions as unquestioned truth. What is Bueno's Foucauldian evidence for a face to be individual in discipline society? What is the further problem of Boulamwini and Gerbu's transparency of the training data?

For me, Bueno has understood Magnet's problematisation of statistical identities which constitute impossible transparency. However, what both Bueno and Magnet have ignored is the criticism of transparency itself, which is caught up to be an idea of display for Boulamwini and Gerbu. For Boulamwini and Gerbu, transparency is something that can be shown/displayed through improved results.[114] Magnet has dismissed this transparency by arguing it is an 'ideological mechanism'. Nevertheless, I would say Magnet is still based on her belief in 'mechanism', in which transparency is returned to be the ground of her problematisation of statistics. Furthermore, Bueno and Magnet do not realise the problem of demography itself. The key issue is not only about how uniqueness is diminished in Big Data, but what and how demography is constructed. That is, what can we question about that self-evident truth of demography/Big Data? If Big Data is based on an estimation and presuming calculation, what can we trust in the accuracy and classification of race or gender?

Furthermore, I would argue that not only is the issue of data problematic, but even the criticism unknowingly imposes biases on what the criticism is against. Boulamwini and Gebru are caught up with their bias of categorisation of different skin colours (such as '"darker-skinned subjects"'). Bueno also does not realise his description has led to the bias (such as 'white' and non-white). In this, the idea of white is privileged to be the standard of knowing what is non-white. According to this standard, the measurement is classified based on a scale of skin-colours. This scale of colours correlating to races is defined by the knowledge of Boulamwini and Gebru:

> Let us return to the example of gender classification algorithms mentioned above. What Boulamwini and Gebru (2018) proved is that the training data have a direct implication on the algorithm's output, and since most of the training data

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[114] The idea of display and transparency has been well problematised by Neil Cocks, in his book, *Higher Education Discourse and Deconstruction: Challenging the Case for Transparency and Objecthood* (Springer International Publishing AG, 2017). Take, for example, 'Again, although the range of objects that qualify for display can be understood to act […] where an ever smaller set of "outcomes" are taken to be significant, it does not, I would suggest, escape a certain reductive, evidence-based frame'.

used were images of white individuals, the algorithm had a very high accuracy when classifying the gender of other white individuals (99.2%), but a very low accuracy (65.3%) when classifying 'darker-skinned subjects'. The authors use this case study to advocate for 'increased demographic and phenotypic transparency and accountability in artificial intelligence' (2018: 88).[115]

The 'output' of the learning machine in this sense is predestined by 'the training data'. The production of learning is not from what it is learnt but from what 'the training data used'. '[I]mages of white individuals' induce the 'accuracy' of 'classif[ication]. That is, the relationship between 'images' and 'accuracy' is set up according to the quantity — '[…] most of the training data used were images of white individuals […]'. The higher quantity leads to the higher accuracy of 'the gender of other white individuals'. This deduction of otherness is based on the pre-known data. However, this training data is not consistent with its gender categorisation between white and non-white. Whiteness is the pre-established base for the classification of skin colours. The white is an 'individual' rather than a '[lighter]-skinned subject'.[116] Based on my close reading on Bueno's formulations in perspective, I am drawing out the limitations and a questioning reading of 'data'. What else does such a questioning account articulate? What categories and identities does it not question?

The idea of skin that has implied whiteness is dominant, and others are excluded from being categorised as individuals. That is, apart from the white, all the others are known by their differences, darker skin, from the white. Without mentioning the skin colour as white, the white in this sense is predetermined as the ground for what is non-white instead of the other way round. In other words, the categorisation of gender and race here is firstly constituted by the definition of the white and from the white, it splits into what are non-individuals and non-white. I read this categorisation as a pre-constructed inclination for a specific race, whiteness, rather than a mere neutral opposition that Bueno describes. That is, from Bueno's reading and formulations on Boulamwini and Gebru, Bueno has indirectly

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[115] Bueno, 'The Face Revisited: Using Deleuze and Guattari to Explore the Politics of Algorithmic Face Recognition', p. 80.

[116] I would problematise that the issues of races in relation to AI are not well thought through by Bueno such as the definition of whiteness. Is it only according to the skin colours, or is it the social construct or the hallucination of images? I would recommend Zoe Hurley's 'Generative AI's Family Portraits of Whiteness: A Postdigital Semiotic Case Study' as she has discussed the complexity of the idea of whiteness and offers detailed analysis of Generative AI's images which are constituted to be hallucinations, errors, misrepresentations. Please see footnote 82 for the reference.

presupposed what race/ gender is according to his knowledge.[117] If we borrow Bonnie McGill's idea of categorisation, there is already a particular framework for setting up accurate recognition. How a face can be identified is pre-known by the established labelling, such as gender, age or race:

> Equally, however, identity and identification are not to do with what another prescribes. And yet this shift to others prescribing identity creating a grounding for FRT becomes the criteria by which a 'face "looks" like' a face introduces a politics by which frameworks become entrenched according to certain values. As in the case here, why are 'gender, age or race' to be known in advance, and apart from, how a face looks? Is this to do with an idea of 'invisibility' made 'visible'? For, if this is about a *programmed* vision which is already framed with(in) particular categorisations, how indeed to see outside that seeing? Would not the making visible always be the visible within that particular framework (of seeing)?[118]

If the classification has been grounded by a pre-category, can 'increased demographic and phenotypic transparency and accountability in artificial intelligence' achieve any further accuracy? That is, if the foundation of accurate data has already been established with a certain bias, will the increased transparency emphasise more of the racial labels? As a quote mentioned in Jan De Vos's book, racial stereotypes are pre-constituted for the algorithm to learn and produce the outcome inescapable from biases:

> […] it's very natural for people to identify in-groups and out-groups, and to treat them differently, and that stereotyping is part and parcel with very basic operations of the human mind. This is, I think, very relevant to the issue of algorithmic bias […] We don't normally think of ourselves this way, but our thought processes are themselves basically algorithms responding to inputs and producing outputs, and they're subject to the very same failure modes as the ones we've seen in algorithms (cited in: Lim, 2017).[119]

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[117] My criticism of racial issues here aligns with Benjamin Schreier's critique on the stable American identity in *The Great Gatsby*: 'Possibly in spite of itself, much of the historicist criticism that seeks national images of America's racialized identity in *The Great Gatsby*'s literary past remains confined within the Americanist romance of self-fashioning, in which self and nation are metaphorically bound to each other. But this romance relies on an assumption that identity is something existentially stable and epistemological secure. In fact, this novel stages a splitting identity into a desire and a knowledge that can never coincide. This novel is not about American identity; instead, it offers disappointed testimony to the impossibility that America can mean anything one wants to mean. Race, becomes, then, another attempt to displace, by reinscribing, this fundamental challenge to statist thinking'. Benjamin Schreier, 'Desire's Second Act: "Race" and *The Great Gatsby*'s Cynical Americanism', *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 53, no. 2, (2007), pp. 153–81 (p. 176).

[118] Bonnie McGill, *Surveillance and the Child*, unpublished manuscript (2022). This is quoted by kind permission.

[119] K. Lim, 'The racist, fascist, xenophobic, misogynistic, intelligent machine'. *The Business Times*, (2017), Retrieved from https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/brunch/the-racist-fascist-xenophobic-misogynistic-

Likewise, Shoshanna Magnet has critiqued the problematic issue of statistical calculation as the proof of 'identity' and has pointed out data transparency will not address the issue of accuracy of gender or race, as this transparency is already 'an ideological mechanism'. Even though Bueno supports Magnet's argument against the idea of transparency, I would argue Bueno and Magnet are both trapped with the idea of transparency as a 'mechanism' where 'present[ation]' is feasible. For Magnet, his or her uniqueness is just a 'present[ation]' from 'an ideological mechanism'. This 'uniqueness' of a person is determined not by who or what the subjects are but by the calculation of statistics. This formation of the identity is caught up with the 'mistaking probabilistic mathematics':

> However, Shoshanna Magnet (2011:138) claims that this transparency is nothing more than an ideological mechanism in which statistical calculation is presented as the objective proof of a self-identical subject, of his or her 'uniqueness'. For Magnet (2011: 4) the problem with any form of biometrics, including algorithmic facial recognition, is that it confuses statistical techniques for identity, hence mistaking probabilistic mathematics for a new form of metaphysical presence and 'corporeal fetishism' (see also Haraway, 1997: 142).[120]

My concern with Magnet's critique is her commitment to knowing both what uniqueness is in general, and what specific uniqueness/identity is here, outside of the structure of Big Data. Nevertheless, my question is what legitimates this individual uniqueness excluded from being set up in a system? That is, can individuality be constituted at its purest? Can any accurate (not 'mistaking') statistic data restore the original (not the 'new') presence and '"corporeal fetishism"'?

Although Bueno strives to deconstruct the transparency of data, his deconstruction instead pursues a transparent origin of identity, and a 'raw authenticity':[121]

> In other words, there is an ontological contradiction between facial recognition's promise of 'uniqueness' and the statistical calculation that generates facial templates based on a training process that involves thousands or millions of profiles (Goriunova, 2019: 20). As Goriunova (2019: 20) puts it, identity here is

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intelligent-machine in De Vos, J. *The Digitalisation of (Inter)Subjectivity: A Psy-critique of the Digital Death Drive* (1st ed.) (Routledge, 2020), p. 38, doi: 10.4324/9781315167350.

[120] Bueno, 'The Face Revisited: Using Deleuze and Guattari to Explore the Politics of Algorithmic Face Recognition', pp. 80-81. '"[C]orporeal fetishism"' that Bueno quotes here is from Donna Haraway, *Modest Witness Second Millennium. FemaleMan Meets OncoMouse: Feminism and technoscience* (Routledge, 1997).

[121] This idea is from Bueno's reading and understanding of Olga Goriunova.

not about uniqueness or some raw authenticity but the mere result of a match among templates similar enough to be measured.[122]

Based on Bueno's reading and belief in this origin of identity, Bueno's proposed asignification in Big Data is to achieve an undivided and meaningful identity in Big Data. Nevertheless, I would argue that there is a danger for Bueno to neutralise asignification in Big Data without considering possible political signifying constructions, such as 'stock market indices, currency, mathematical equations, diagrams, computer languages, national and corporate accounting, etc'.[123]

1.2.7 Political Implications?

Let us return to Bueno's final defence of facial recognition germane to my attention to neoliberalism:

> However, Deleuze and Guattari (2004: 160) warn us, this requires a high degree of 'caution', of 'the art of dosages', since both the movements of reterritorialization and deterritorialization carry with them a 'danger of overdose'.[124]

When Bueno argues for the possibility of maintaining equilibrium for the rising individuality and decreasing individuality, it is through his belief in Deleuzian theory. Nevertheless, this equilibrium is dependent on a '"caution"' of '"overdose"'. That is, prior to a balance, a 'danger' is already 'carr[ied]' with the movements. On the one hand, Bueno argues that asignifying deterritorialisation will overcome the barrier of signification and 'political resistance';[125] on the other hand, 'both the movements' are already deterministic with his knowable risk of imbalance. That is, Bueno's hope for political understanding of 'data protection' and 'privacy'[126] is underlined by the dual mechanisms of facial recognition: signification and asignification. Instead of critiquing the potential danger of using algorithmic facial recognition as a means for a neoliberal structure/system, Bueno endorses facial recognition due to it being caught up in an uncertain state, the condition of Deleuzian equilibrium that is the basis of his political 'strategies'.[127]

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[122] Bueno, 'The Face Revisited: Using Deleuze and Guattari to Explore the Politics of Algorithmic Face Recognition', p. 81.
[123] Ibid., p. 86.
[124] Ibid., p. 88.
[125] Ibid., p. 88.
[126] Ibid., p. 88.
[127] Ibid., p. 88.

The concern for me is whether this kind of political desubjectivisation for Bueno in this case will be normalised as part of the structural nature of FRT. Is '*what will become of us*'[128] under algorithms just a determined fate? Bueno's untheorised idea of data/information in his article leads to difficulty in tackling the challenging issues, such as race, bias and transparency in/of data.[129] Although Bueno's Deleuzian theory renders a middle ground to respond to the 'political struggles',[130] I would argue that his investment in asignification necessitates a better framework to be convincing. In other words, what is at stake for that insistence of asignification which grants identities of human subjects that are diminished? What benefits or dangers are posited in the investment in the neutrality of FRT? Lastly, aligning with a statement from Stevens and Keyes, I would suggest further attention to facial recognition as neoliberal production /reproduction:

> Datasets produced for surveillance capitalism, marketing and neoliberal logics of extraction underrepresent people of colour—but may represent them perfectly proportionately in terms of their purchasing power. There is no simple story of (mis/under) representation leading to bias: it is the logics and systems of inequality that lead to the datasets' purposes, and so naturalize the datasets' demographic skews. Recognising this should make us highly sceptical about efforts to 'improve' FRT by 'de-biasing' datasets.[131]

My sense is that improvements or equilibrium of FRT which Bueno endorses will always be caught up in a return to an inescapable structure/system, which cannot produce a so-called discrete or pure object (as Bueno invests in his idea of an independent *mechanism* of asignification) for political integrity.

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[128] The phrase that I borrow is from Jan De Vos's work. De Vos, *The Digitalisation of (Inter)Subjectivity: A Psy-critique of the Digital Death Drive* (1st ed.), pp. 3-5.

[129] Bueno has discussed more of the aspects of information in capitalist society in his earlier book. Claudio Celis Bueno, *The Attention Economy: Labour, Time, and Power in Cognitive Capitalism* (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016).

[130] Bueno, 'The Face Revisited: Using Deleuze and Guattari to Explore the Politics of Algorithmic Face Recognition', p. 88.

[131] Stevens, and Keyes, 'Seeing infrastructure: race, facial recognition and the politics of Data', p. 16.

1.3 A Reading of Gilles Deleuze's 'Year Zero: Faciality'[132]

1.3.1 Introduction

Before entering into my analysis of the Deleuzian face, I would introduce Francis Bacon's artwork through Robert Porter's critique of what Deleuzian 'becomings' is in his book, *Deleuze and Guattari: Aesthetics and Politics* (I will be returning to Bacon at length in the final chapter of this thesis). According to Porter, Gilles Deleuze proposes that there is always a difference in painting, and the charge of 'cliché' rests on the idea of becomings, where there is no fixed identity or meaning for the specific image. Bacon's painting is not a 'cliché' as that 'engagement' of painting itself and 'becomings' have altered the status of the 'same[ness]'. The condition of the cliché has to do with the 'we' 'rest[ing] content with', which is what 'Bacon's art thinks against':

> The key thing is that Bacon's work only becomes a cliché if we rest content with the cliché of the ready-made image of the painter and the painting. And crucially, for Deleuze, this is the very thing that Bacon's art thinks against; Bacon's painting, in other words, becomes an engagement with the cliché, or it becomes, it enters into becomings, to the degree that it problematizes the clichés and ready-made images that play through a world that tends to range us into the same.[133]

Porter has problematised a stable and unchanged engagement with the image, which is pre-constituted, but he suggests that there is an act of autonomy of becomings in Bacon's painting. Nevertheless, I would say Porter does not engage with the way his argument for Deleuzian becomings is not secured by autonomy, but is still caught up with the condition of the cliché. Even though Bacon's painting is to overcome the hurdle of definitive cliché, becomings here cannot be constituted without the structure of cliché. That is, becomings are always constituted in the system of 'the clichés' and 'ready-made images'. The knowing of becomings has to do with the third that is different from becomings, 'clichés'. Thus, becomings cannot be becomings in autonomy without a perspective on the knowledge of 'clichés'. This autonomy, I would say, is conditioned by the structural system. This 'cliché', I read, is already known by the narrator before a 'cliché' 'becomes' a 'cliché'. In this sense, 'we' do not create 'cliché', nor is Bacon's work itself a 'cliché', but 'clichés' always

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[132] Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari, 'Year Zero: Faciality', in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 167-191.
[133] Robert Porter, *Deleuze and Guattari: Aesthetics and Politics* (University of Wales Press, 2009), p. 58.

necessitate a perspective on them to confirm their status.[134] According to this perspective, the position of becomings is validated by the absence of the action ('resting') of the 'we'. In other words, 'becomings' is not always secured by itself as autonomy, but is reliant on the movement of the viewers (in terms of 'rest[ing]' with the 'cliché' or not) and this move is constituted by the knowing of the third (the narrator). In this, becomings does not always maintain its ongoing motion but could be overturned by the 'we'. The pursuit of unsettling meanings can be succeeded in Bacon's painting when both the removal of 'cliché' and the becoming of 'cliché' are established.

Why do I begin with my analysis by introducing Bacon's art? I come to understand the autonomy of becomings is a construction supported by a structure inescapable from what is designed to be got rid of, such as cliché. The third, the narrator, has a perspective/ knowledge on what cliché and becomings are. I am questioning whether this object-led becoming has collapsed and returned to be de-objectivised. That is, my argument is that Deleuzian theory of autonomy and transcendence is always caught up with that *impossibility* of autonomy at its purest.[135] Because of that impossibility, the structure of autonomy is set up to be *natural*. This nature for Deleuze, I would say, is unthinkable or unmistakable. What I am critiquing about Deleuze's autonomous and asignifying movement as impossibility is rather a Deleuzian possibility, hope, energy, politics and fulfilment. All these are related to his ambition of reforming the norm, the prevalent belief of capitalism, imperialism and structuralism in language, unconsciousness, universality, hierarchical power, whiteness-led racism, and totalitarian politics. Unlike Joan Copjec, who invests in what she takes to be a Real and an anxiety opposed to signification and socially determined change,[136] Deleuze is not against historicity, although his historical construction is not linear.[137] I will be

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[134] The problematisation of cliché here, and the move to secure Bacon as its other, arguably ties into a wider discourse of male 'genius' in art. For the classic reading, please see Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?', *Artnews*, January 1971, <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/retrospective/why-have-there-been-no-great-women-artists-4201/> [accessed 20 June 2024].

[135] I would say my argument of impossibility of autonomy seems to return to my pre-knowledge of what autonomy is (which is impossible). Even if this is the case, I still acknowledge my limit on this ground.

[136] According to my understanding, Copjec does not discount history, but the specificity of history is always the frame for what is not history (anxiety, the Real), in the way that when a record gets stuck (nothing/the Real), it is always on a particular groove (history).

[137] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* pp. 295-296. '[…] History is made only by those who oppose history (not by those who insert themselves into it, or even reshape it). This is not done for provocation but happens because the punctual system they found ready-made, or themselves invented, must have allowed this operation: free the line and the diagonal, draw the line instead of plotting a point, produce an imperceptible diagonal instead of clinging to an even elaborated or reformed vertical or horizontal […] Creations are like mutant abstract lines that have detached themselves from the task of representing a world, precisely because they assemble a new type of reality that history can only recontain or relocate in punctual systems[…]'.

problematising Deleuze's idea of the possibility of the self-sufficient trigger[138] of machines, the act of autonomous becomings, a natural opposition of signs and non-signs, and self-evidently political faces. My sense is not to escape from the difficulties of engaging/reading the structures of faces but to rethink the structures of structures. This return in researching the idea of faces is not to invent, create or restore any theory of faces as what Deleuze invests in his structure of creation and languages by denying his involvement within a structure, system and signification. I am instead exploring what the contingencies are that Deleuze held onto to establish his facial system theory in relation to autonomy, signs, politics, history and inhumanity.

1.3.2 Autonomy?

Firstly, Deleuze's autonomy has been widely interpreted by critics as autonomy at its purest. Nevertheless, I read the happening of autonomy to be contingent on the third, such as a specified act (creation), locations (strata), and a line (a line of flight). I will be engaging with the following contention from Robert Porter and thinking through the construction of autonomy and its limits:

> Contra Levinas, then, Deleuze and Guattari insist on the importance of autonomy, and they would insist on the intuition that autonomy is expressed affirmatively; that is, autonomy emerges only as an act of creation, or in a moment of 'creative and created, becoming'.[139]

Porter has read out that autonomy is conditioned by the structure of 'an act' or time ('a moment'). This specification has delimited the general idea of autonomy as infinite auto-actions. Instead, autonomy necessitates an 'express[ion]' through 'creation' and '"creative and created, becoming"' to be that 'affirmat[ion]'. This 'express[ion]' of autonomy has to do with 'the intuition' instead of an exterior construction. Nevertheless, I will be problematising Porter's idea of Deleuzian autonomy by 'intuition' and 'emerge[nce]' which implies there is already a pre-existing natural structure or origin, which in turn returns to the

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[138] Take, for example: 'We have made some progress toward answering the question of what *triggers* the abstract machine of faciality, for it is not in operation all the time or in just any social formation. Certain social formations need face, and also landscape' (Ibid., p. 180). 'The white wall/black hole system is constructed, or rather the abstract machine is *triggered* that must allow and ensure the almightiness of the signifier as well as the autonomy of the subject' [my emphasis] (Ibid., p. 181). 'Necessarily so because it is produced by a machine and in order to meet the requirements of the special apparatus of power that *triggers* the machine and takes deterritorialization to the absolute while keeping it negative' [my emphasis] (Ibid., p. 190).

[139] Porter, *Deleuze and Guattari: Aesthetics and Politics*, p. 57.

nostalgia of *pure* autonomy. That is, on the one hand, this *in*tuition implies autonomy is pre-known prior to the 'emerge[nce]' of autonomy. Autonomy is known to be something intrinsic so that it can be '*ex-pressed*' (my emphasis). On the other hand, 'emerg[ence]' implies autonomy has already existed but is concealed, awaiting to '[emerge]'. In this, I would say, autonomy is a pre-construction ready to be 'expressed' while this autonomy always necessitates the other (an act or a moment) to be autonomy.

Porter further claims that: 'Of course, Deleuze and Guattari are not praising the heteronomy of the other; they are advocating an ethics and a politics of becoming-other, and this, against Levinas, is an ethics and politics of autonomy'.[140] In Porter's understanding, Deleuze-Guattarian politics of autonomy has to do with 'becoming-other' instead of 'praising the heteronomy of the other'. The 'other' is something that can be 'becoming' instead of as subordination. This 'becoming' in this perspective is autonomous. Different from Levinas's ethics, the Deleuze-Guattarian encounter does not stay in a hierarchy of differentiation (such as one and the other), but it is 'becoming-other'. In another sense, Levinas's ethics or politics are not autonomous due to the other remaining '[heteronomous]'. Once this 'becoming' happens; autonomy is established. For me, I read this Deleuze-Guattarian autonomy to rest on the structure of becoming. This 'becoming' dismisses the status of 'heteronomy' and transcends the hierarchy and difference between 'other' and 'becoming-other'. Nevertheless, my questions are: to what extent is this identity of 'becoming-other' to be validated or transformed to be 'other'? Will this 'becoming' never reach the destination of being 'other'? That is, is this 'becoming-other' always in the process of becoming (is it only 'becoming' instead of 'other')? I think my questions here may still turn upon the simplicity of understanding Deleuzian becoming. This becoming, according to Mogens Laerke, in his article, 'Deleuzian "Becomings" and Leibnizian Transubstantiation', is not an act of confirming the identity of a subject, a superficial substitution or displacement, or a reproduction of the other. This becoming could be explained through negation of itself. The '"nomadic"' movements of this becoming are not about the 'extension' in 'space', but 'a figure of transformation' is granted through 'intensive movements' — a non-moving flight.

> Most often Deleuze explains 'becomings' by what they are not. There are three recurring determinations of this kind. First, 'becoming' is an individuation without a subject. 'Becomings' are not to be understood in terms of

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[140] Ibid., p. 58.

metempsychosis; it is not a subject that becomes another subject. Second, 'becomings' cannot be achieved by imitation, but only through a tentative experimentation with the body vis-a-vis another body. Finally, Deleuze insists that the so-called 'nomadic' movements identified with 'becomings' do not imply movements in space. Nomadic movements are not movements in extension, but rather intensive movements: one can take flight from the territory without moving an inch. But it is still a figure of transformation that remains somewhat obscure.[141]

Laerke's perspective on becomings has offered me another way of thinking through the structure. Through the denial, difference of itself, becoming transcends itself, the other, replacement. Nevertheless, this explanation of becoming is still caught up with a structural autonomy in which de-subjectivised individuation and the removal of being the other are the preconditions. My purpose in unpicking the Deleuzian idea of autonomy is to further explore his theory of assemblages tied with abstract machines and power. Does Deleuzian autonomy fail to be self-evidently autonomous (as what I have read out from Porter and Laerke)? What are the contingencies with which Deleuze establishes his autonomy and politics?

Deleuze constructs his theory on a system of machines and power, which are of assemblages. In this, multiplicities and polyvocalities are achieved to discard signification and subjectification (for this, it can reach real multiplicities). Through Deleuze's idea of 'probe-heads', the act of dismantling the face, and becomings, can be fulfilled. Even though the face is what Deleuze uses in his argument for transformation and becomings, Deleuze does not necessarily hold onto the physical materials at the first instance (such as objects or fleshly faces). Instead, Deleuze embarks with his investment in assemblages of power and the abstract machine. Based on the power and the machine, they produce the face, subjectification and signification. For Deleuze, signification does not construct what a face is, but instead is produced by the third, power and the machine. In this sense, symbolics does not take advantage of constituting a face, but symbolics is the production of power and the face.[142] The Deleuzian political implication of the face is to destruct the structure, power, control, hierarchy, signification, individuality — nevertheless, I would be arguing that

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[141] Mogens Laerke, 'Deleuzian "Becomings" and Leibnizian Transubstantiation', *Pli* 12 (2001), pp. 104-105.

[142] At some points, Deleuze has reversed this structure — the face does not constitute signification and subjectivity. See, for example, 'Not only is language always accompanied by faciality traits, but the face crystallizes all redundancies, it emits and receives, releases and recaptures signifying signs'. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* p. 115.

Deleuze's deconstruction of structures always necessitates or returns to his structures of constructing a destruction.

1.3.3 Transformation and Assemblages?

Secondly, Deleuze's theory of transformation/ assemblages are for him ways to get rid of the fixed structure and imperial power. The power creates and lies in signification, which is with fixed meaning. Deleuze pursues a revolutionary change of signification by calling on a line of flight, asignification, so that on the 'plateaus' hierarchical stratification can be resolved, and established politics would lose its power. Accordingly, the dismantled face becomes 'real becomings'[143] and Deleuzian ideal politics can be established, where there is no contingency on individuality, monolithic power or specification of meaning. Deleuze's idea of signification is caught up with fixation — a singular meaning chain, and thus Deleuze advocates asignification which opens up the closure of signification, allowing multiplicities. If I borrow the Zizekian term, it could be Master-Signifier — meaning can never reach its destination as there is always an empty hole for meaning to be located. The Deleuzian ideal goal is to break down the fixed signification via his idea of opposition, and asignification. This opposition, I would be arguing, has to do with Deleuze's understanding of language which is bound up with corresponding universal signified. This universality is what Deleuze moves to dismantle.

Here I would turn to Sue Walsh's article, 'Bikini fur and fur bikinis', to think further about Deleuzian idea of signs. For Walsh, signs/symbolics are never outside the constitution of language. The '"association"' of signs and thought is never any inherence or essence. This *natural* '"association"' should be questioned in terms of its 'arbitrariness'. Although de Saussure has dismissed 'essential relation between two "objects"', his development of '"association"' is still caught up with his unquestionable nature of the structure.

> Again, as with de Saussure, this does not necessarily entail an assumption of an intrinsic or essential relation between two 'objects'. A problem, however, remains. While the similarity that 'association' claims can be between ideas or concepts and need not be between 'things', the notion of the 'symbolic' begs some questions of my interpretation and its implicit insistence on the arbitrariness of the 'association'.[144]

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[143] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* pp. 187-88.
[144] Sue Walsh, 'Bikini fur and fur bikinis', in *The Last Taboo: Women and Body Hair*, ed. by Karín Lesnik-Oberstein (Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 175.

As Walsh further pursues this question through Freud's contention that this constitution of connection has to do with 'a *process* or *dynamic*'.[145] That is, there is no definitive association, but the association is always constituted in a process according to a perspective on it. Walsh's argument has brought my interest in thinking through Deleuze's unquestionable structure of signs which is set up as an essential relation to asignification. I read Deleuzian contingency also lies in his unchanging structure of asignification which allows signs to be liberated from and changing in meaning. Nevertheless, my questions are: What constitutes this asignifying chain? Will this asignifying chain collapse to be caught up in a symbolic system? Is this asignifying system inescapable from a perspective on it (in this, could signs and non-signs still sustain its *natural* opposition)?

1.3.4 Faciality

Let us return to the theory of Deleuze's faciality, based on my aforementioned arguments of autonomy and signification, which can give us a better sense of what kind of face Deleuze holds onto it. The idea of the face is not always constructed in terms of presence nor absence. If I recount back to my first critique of Smith's article, Smith's idea of the face is based on her belief of restorable presence and phenomenon which produces a sequential effect of vision of the face. I have argued that Smith's understanding of self-portrait as materiality introduces her trust in neurological reactions. Or, to say, this faith in neurological nature and instinct has directed Smith's argument toward the success of recovering what her absence of vision or portrait is, replacing a reading or textuality. Autonomy of objects is established as natural phenomenon, such as neurons, processes, memory which are recoverable. Smith's critique claims to align with Derrida's theory, but her insistence on the phenomenon is, in my reading, opposed to Derrida's notion of the irreparable face and unidentifiable gaps of absence. As for Bueno, his reliance on Deleuzian fixed structure of equilibrium between signification and asignification offers a solid ground to categorise what is inside or outside of meaning. In this, Bueno's idea of asignification affirms what his posthumanism *is*. The identity of the 'we'[146] has been normalised by a split between individuation and dividuation. Bueno's move to New Materialism has secured his theory toward the permanent status of asignification in FRT, where transformation and assemblages

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[145] Walsh, 'Bikini fur and fur bikinis', p. 176: 'Freud's discussion, because it raises the question as to what constitutes connection, and tends towards addressing similarity as a *process* or *dynamic* rather than an already existent relation between delimited 'objects', is vital to the political project of this volume as a whole'.

[146] Please see footnote 92 and footnote 96.

will never fail. Nevertheless, one thing Bueno has neglected is to question Deleuze's construction of his own deconstruction through 'lines', 'plateaus' and 'probe-heads'. Deleuze's assemblages and transformation, I would contend, depend on his set-up structure of fixity and universality, which Bueno has not critiqued as dis*equilibrium.*

For me, there are several preconditions for the construction of the Deleuzian face. The production of the face necessitates a 'faciality machine'[147] which needs to be 'triggered'.[148] I will be questioning this idea of triggering which implies an origin of knowing what a trigger is prior to a trigger. This has brought me to think through the Deleuzian structure which has been set up in his contingency of origin. Based on knowable origin, machines and power are able to be re-created/re-produced. In this, 'the assemblages power' can support the identities of signifier and subjectivity which are dependent on 'the wall' and 'the hole'.[149] On the one hand, the ultimate goal is to achieve 'deterritorialization' and 'dismantle the face' in the 'rhizomatic realm';[150] on the other hand, this transformation or becoming still requests a specific structure, or 'strata' for allowing that difference. The conditions are set for the 'creat[ion]' and that idea of 'new[ness]'.[151] The pursuit of the liberation of language still returns to rely on his own constitution of language. Although the idea of 'connect[ivity]' and 'assemblages'[152] collapse the centre of 'organisation',[153] I would contend that this rhizomatic theory still returns to a structure to sustain its freedom. I read out a series of deferrals in this Deleuzian system in which each component is contingent on the other, rather than constituted through its own immediacy. Thus, the face relies on the machine for production; signifier and subjectification depend on the system of the wall and hole and the assemblages of power. The fulfilment of these can lead to 'the wonder of a nonhuman life'.[154] Even though inhumanities are already set up as a priori, 'probe-heads'[155] are still constituted in terms of reaching the act of dismantling, producing and creating.

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[147] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* p. 190.
[148] Ibid., p. 181.
[149] Ibid., p. 168.
[150] Ibid., p. 190.
[151] Ibid., p. 191.
[152] Ibid., p. 176.
[153] Ibid., p. 188.
[154] Ibid., p. 191.
[155] According to Deleuze, the function of probe-heads is able to dismantle the strata: 'Sometimes the abstract machine, as the faciality machine, forces flows into signifiances and subjectifications, into knots of aborescence and holes of abolition; sometimes, to the extent that it performs a veritable "defacialization", it frees something like *probe-heads* { [*sic*] fetes chercheuses, guidance devices) that dismantle the strata in their wake, break through the walls of signifiance, pour out of the holes of subjectivity, fell trees in favor of veritable rhizomes, and steer the flows down lines of positive deterritorialization or creative flight' [my emphasis] (Deleuze, and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 190).

Although Deleuze has built up his ideal nature of assemblages where renewability will constantly take place in every relationship, I would argue what Deleuze does not address is the structures and systems falling outside the operation of lines, territories and strata.

1.3.4.1 Encountering a Structural Face?

My analysis on Deleuze begins with the questions concerning the structures of a face: What is the Deleuzian encounter of a face? What constitutes a face in his set-up structure? Does the critic's understanding of a face opening up any further issues of structures?

> Earlier, we encountered two axes, signifiance and subjectification. We saw that they were two very different semiotic systems, or even two strata. Signifiance is never without a white wall upon which it inscribes its signs and redundancies. Subjectification is never without a black hole in which it lodges its consciousness, passion, and redundancies. Since all semiotics are mixed and strata come at least in twos, it should come as no surprise that a very special mechanism is situated at their intersection. Oddly enough, it is a face: the white wall/black hole system. A broad face with white cheeks, a chalk face with eyes cut in for a black hole. Clown head, white clown, moon-white mime, angel of death, Holy Shroud. The face is not an envelope exterior to' the person who speaks, thinks, or feels.[156]

In one sense, 'we encountered two axes' implies two axes already existed before an encounter. That is, 'signifiance' and 'subjectification' are pre-known by the narration instead of being produced by the 'we'. This encounter has to do with '[seeing]' the difference of two semiotic systems, two strata. This difference lies in two different supplements, 'a white wall' and 'a black hole'. 'Signifiance'[157] is contingent on 'a white wall' which is a necessity for 'inscri[ption] of its signs and redundancies'. In other words, 'its [signifiance's] signs and redundancies' can only be established through a white wall other than signifiance itself. This white wall is for constituting signifiance's split identities/belongings. Uncannily, 'a black hole' contains what 'subjectification' possesses, such as 'its consciousness, passion and redundancies'. 'Since all semiotics are mixed' is set

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[156] Ibid., p. 167.

[157] Brian Massumi, as a translator of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, has defined 'Signifiance' (and 'Interpretance') that 'I have followed the increasingly common practice of importing *signifiance* and *interpr'etance* [*sic*] into English without modification. In Deleuze and Guattari these terms refer respectively to the syntagmatic and paradigmatic processes of language as a "signifying regime of signs". They are borrowed from Benveniste ("signifying capacity" and "interpretative capacity" are the English translations used in Benveniste's work)'. Brian Massumi, 'Translator's Foreword: Pleasures of Philosophy', in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. x.

up as a knowable precondition for constituting intersection from 'two' 'strata'. This intersection is already predestined to be theirs ('signifiance' and 'subjectification') and to be a location for 'a very special mechanism'. In other words, a face is formed as a structural system, a white wall and a black hole. This construction of the facial system is not 'exterior' to a person's 'speaking, thinking or feelings' which implies a differentiation and connection between a face and interiority of a person.

Thus, the face in Deleuze's definition never comes from itself as a self-existing being/thing; instead, the face is caught up with the structure of signification and subjectification. This intersection is prior to an encounter of the 'we'. This encounter implies the face is split from a person (as the face is something that could be encountered) whilst this split has instead connected to Deleuze's differentiation of inner-ness ('[speech]', '[thought]' or '[feelings]'). Nevertheless, this structure of the face is dependent on another external structure — the machine, power. Machinic structures produce facial structures. This doubleness of structures establishes Deleuze's understanding of historical reality,[158] which is supposed to be de-structured. Anne Sauvagnargues explains structures of the production in her book, *Artmachines: Deleuze, Guattari, Simondon*:

> From the point of view of a sociology of the face, the production of concrete faces depends on a history of formations of power, at the intersection of the signifying and subjectifying strata. The face is not a strata, strictly speaking, but rather a form that is actualised between two pre-capitalist strata of significance and subjectivity. The whole question 'then becomes what circumstances trigger the machine that produces the face and facialization' (TP 170).[159]

Anne Sauvagnargues suggests Deleuzian faces are 'concrete', and this concreteness has to do with 'a history of formations of power'. That is, in this 'sociolog[igcal]' 'point of view', 'history of power' brought about 'production' and 'concrete[ness]' of faces. Power has to do with 'formations' (not just singular power) and these formations are related to 'the signifying and subjectifying strata'. Power does not exist transcendentally, but according to Sauvagnargues, power is constituted or located at the specific intersected strata. This power is not yet caught up with capitalists, but Sauvagnargues knows it as 'pre-capitalist'. That means the production of the face is not yet located in capitalism. Faces are not actualisation

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[158] To clarify: this is not about *representation* of reality. Deleuze is building up assemblages and virtuality.
[159] Anne Sauvagnargues, *Artmachines: Deleuze, Guattari, Simondon*, trans. by Suzanne Verderber, and Eugene W. Holland (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 227. In my following analysis, the idea of 'empirical' is quoted from pp. 224-231.

itself but a 'form' of 'concrete[ness]'. In this sense, my question is to what extent is Sauvagnargues's idea of Deleuzian 'empirical' faces validated/constituted as a 'form' (if this empiricism is related to 'history', is this history only as a 'form')? What might be contradictoriness/fulfilment between empiricism and 'a form'? Is that 'form' implying a predestined knowledge of what a face is prior to being actualised? Is there any split between a face as production and a face already known as a 'form' prior to production? In this, does it mean what 'a history of formations of power' is produced relies on the narration's knowing of pre-production, a form, empirical faces?

Both Deleuze and Sauvagnargues have overlooked the issue of 'trigger'.[160] This 'trigger', I would argue, implies there is an origin of that act, as Deleuze knows this act will not perform by itself but is according to 'what circumstances' are. If this condition has been set up in advance, how can we say Deleuze's theory is consistently bound up with *autonomy* or *transcendence*? Does it mean Deleuzian autonomy necessitates 'trigger[ing]'? Does that mean this 'history of power' already has history before a 'becom[ing]'? If history is predestined, what is at stake for Deleuze to historicise faces, or is this act of historicising able to achieve his revolutionary history?

1.3.4.2 Redundancies?

Thus far, as I have analysed this face which is involved in a structure upon a structure. It is not only double structures from machines and the white wall/black hole system but also a structure of redundancies. This structure has filled in what is 'empty' of significations and subjectivity. In this aspect, for Deleuze, this political production in the signifying and subjective structure remains an excess, residue or redundancy:

> Faces are not basically individual; they define zones of frequency or probability, delimit a field that neutralizes in advance any expressions or connections unamenable to the appropriate significations. Similarly, the form of subjectivity, whether consciousness or passion, would remain absolutely empty if faces did not form loci of resonance that select the sensed or mental reality and make it

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[160] Sauvagnargues quotes from Deleuze: '*It is precisely because the face depends on an abstract machine that it is not content to cover the head*, but touches all other parts of the body, and even, if necessary, other objects without resemblance. *The question then becomes what circumstances trigger the machine* that produces the face and facialization. Although the head, even the human head, is not necessarily a face, the face is produced in humanity. But it is produced by a necessity that does not apply to human beings "in general". The face is not animal, but neither is it human in general; there is even something absolutely inhuman about the face. It would be an error to proceed as though the face became inhuman only beyond a certain threshold […]' (Deleuze, and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 170).

conform in advance to a dominant reality. The face itself is redundancy. It is itself in redundancy with the redundancies of signifiance or frequency, and those of resonance or subjectivity. The face constructs the wall that the signifier needs in order to bounce off of; it constitutes the wall of the signifier, the frame or screen. The face digs the hole that subjectification needs in order to break through; it constitutes the black hole of subjectivity as consciousness or passion, the camera, the third eye.[161]

One thing that Deleuze invests in faciality here is that faces are necessity for constructing 'subjectification' and 'signifiance'. Without a face as otherness to form 'the wall' and 'the black hole',[162] the structure of 'redundancies' will not be established. The double otherness, 'the wall' and 'the black hole' formed by the faces, provides 'zones of frequency or probability' which are not 'individual'. '[I]ndividual[ity]' is set up as a difference from 'zones of frequency or probability'. These 'zones' are 'defin[ed]' by faces to be zones instead of pre-existing before the definition. Faces are connected to specific 'appropriate significations' and it marks out a 'field' for 'neutralis[ation]'. This act of neutralisation is prior to 'expressions' that are 'unamenable to the appropriate significations'. From the narration, significations are known to be what it is and is not 'appropriate'. '[Z]ones of frequency or probability' are not constituted by 'individual' 'expressions' whilst based on the 'delimit[ation]' of 'amenab[ility]'. That is, neutralisation is leading that 'amenab[ility]' to 'appropriate significations' and thus the 'defin[ition] from faces can be established. Definitions of faces are connected to the 'appropriate[ness]' of 'a field'. These zones are formed by 'loci of resonance' which constitutes a selection of non-dominant reality. That is, 'the sensed or mental reality' is split from 'a dominant reality' and is '[made]' to 'conform' to dominance. In this, faces fill in 'empt[iness]' through the production which establishes 'the form of subjectivity'. In other words, the emptiness of subjectivity is cut off through the construction of redundancies. There is no direct access to the subjectification and signifier, but the face supplies the production, such as 'loci', or 'the hole', for constituting 'consciousness' or 'passion', which is 'redundancies' in the 'redundancy'. The signifier does not constitute the face, but the face forms the 'frame' of the signifier.

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[161] Deleuze, and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 168.
[162] Ibid., p. 168. Although Deleuze has stated that face constitutes the white wall/black hole system, Deleuze at some points dismissed his first argument but endorses the possibility of the change of this structure which could be overturned to its opposite construction: 'Or should we say things differently? It is not exactly the face that constitutes the wall of the signifier or the hole of subjectivity. The face, at least the concrete face, vaguely begins to take shape on the white wall. It vaguely begins to appear in the black hole' (p. 168).

1.3.4.3 Power and Systems?

Deleuzian system has to do with a chain of production from power producing the face to the face constituting loci or the hole, and this is all framed as redundancies. Even though the face, signification and subjectivity are necessity for supporting power, this requirement is defined as redundancies. In this, the specific assemblages of power triumphs over other semiotics systems in redundancies.

> Very specific assemblages of power impose signifiance and subjectification as their determinate form of expression, in reciprocal presupposition with new contents: there is no signifiance without a despotic assemblage, no subjectification without an authoritarian assemblage, and no mixture between the two without assemblages of power that act through signifiers and act upon souls and subjects. It is these assemblages, these despotic or authoritarian formations, that give the new semiotic system the means of its imperialism, in other words, the means both to crush the other semiotics and protect itself against any threat from outside. A concerted effort is made to do away with the body and corporeal coordinates through which the multidimensional or polyvocal semiotics operated. Bodies are disciplined, corporeality dismantled, becomings-animal hounded out, deterritorialization pushed to a new threshold— a jump is made from the organic strata to the strata of signifiance and subjectification. A single substance of expression is produced. The white wall/black hole system is constructed, or rather the abstract machine is triggered that must allow and ensure the almightiness of the signifier as well as the autonomy of the subject. You will be pinned to the white wall and stuffed in the black hole.[163]

On the one hand, 'power' cannot be validated without a 'form of expression', 'signifiance' and 'subjectification'. On the other hand, 'signifiance' and 'subjectification' are constructed by 'despotic' and 'authoritarian' assemblages. '[T]he means of its imperialism' is 'give[n]' to 'the new semiotic system' which is sustained and 'protect[ed]' by the 'operat[ion]' of 'the multidimensional or polyvocal semiotics'. In this, 'the other semiotics' will not '[threaten]' this new semiotic but will be 'crush[ed]' by the 'means'. The assemblages of power support the specific establishment of the semiotic system which is moved from 'the organic strata' to 'the strata of signifiance and subjectification'. The organic strata remain in the strata of the 'bodies' and 'corporeal[ity]' which cannot grant the function of 'imperialism'.

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[163] Ibid., p. 180-181.

Imperialism has to do with the' impos[ition]' of power and the detachment from 'bodies' and 'corporeal[ity]'.

Bodies and corporeality are not the 'determinate form of expression' of imperialism, but this expression is caught up with 'deterritorialization'. This deterritorialization produces '[a] single substance of expression'. That is, the production of this 'new threshold', through 'the multidimensional or polyvocal semiotics', is structured to be 'determinate' and 'single'. In other words, expression is not expression 'itself', as it were, but is reliant on the 'substance' to be that expression. The idea of 'single[ness]' of the substance has to do with '[v]ery specific assemblages of power'. Power constitutes the designated 'form' and 'substance' and deconstructs the organic strata, the body and corporeality. This power therefore establishes 'reciprocal' contingency between power and both signifiance and subjectification. The investment that Deleuze proposes is not via touchable physicality, but the revolution is formed through 'the abstract machine', 'assemblages of power', which 'dismantles' corporeality but constructs 'the white wall/black hole system'. Faciality is set up beyond the objectivised flesh, established by the abstract machine to construct 'the almightiness of the signifier' and 'the autonomy of the subject'. In this, '[y]ou will be pinned to the white wall and stuffed in the black hole' implies this 'you' is not 'you' but is automatised to be 'the subject' by the 'power' and the '[almighty]' 'signifier'. 'You' is thus structuralised in the facial and power system, 'the white wall/ the black hole'.

1.4 Chapter Conclusion: A Collapse of a Self-assertive Object?

In the final part, I will draw a short close for this chapter by introducing Karín Lesnik-Oberstein's problematisation on the idea of 'autonomous, independent, self-constituted, "object"' in both literary criticism and science:

> In contrast to such claims of 'radical difference' [of science and literature], I argue here that in such critical discourses deployed about science and literature and the relationship between the two, both the literary criticism and the science are rooted in an agreed liberal, political and ideological commitment to a subject assumed as an autonomous agent with a transparent consciousness and language to match and its accompanying autonomous, independent, self-constituted, 'object'.[164]

The discrepancy between literary criticism and science collapses into the appeal to the undividable and self-evident object, which is the analysis that I have drawn out in my selected narratives of art/literary criticism and science, such as OOO theory, Neurophenomenology, asignifying FRT, and Deleuzian faciality. My close reading in this chapter disturbs and challenges the status of unchangeable and self-assertive object, and in a way that is other to the problematisation offered within these theories, of, for example, dynamism, non-humanism, or relationality. This is, I would argue, a rethink of Neil Cocks's rationale:

> […] I understand reading to call the certainty of the object and the transparency of meaning into question, requiring as it does a working through of the slippage of the signifier and the destabilising effects of perspective. A reading, moreover, cannot be assessed on its own terms from any position beyond itself without repeating that which it would contain.[165]

By working through a collapse, a return and shifts of object in art history narratives, this allows opening up my further critiques of leading-edge research in art and visuality, art and geometry in the next chapter.

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[164] Karín Lesnik-Oberstein, 'The object of neuroscience and literary studies', *Textual Practice*, p. 1321. '"[R]adical difference"' is quoted from the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council, 'About AHRC Science in Culture Theme', *AHRC*, <https://www.sciculture.ac.uk/about/> [accessed 14 May 2024].

[165] Neil Cocks, *Higher Education Discourse and Deconstruction: Challenging the Case for Transparency and Objecthood*, pp. 12-13.

Chapter 2 Lines; Geometry; The Visual Field

2.1 Materiality or the Real in Art History?

Prevalent art research in the visual field in relation to lines, geometry and gaze in painting is not something new in (art) history, which has been discussed widely in academia.[166] Instead of seeking to establish any new theory in the visual field, I will be questioning the contingencies of materiality and the Real in geometrical criticism in Art History. I do not hold onto the knowledge of what geometry is or not (according to Big Data or scientific facts), what the exact representation is or not (such as reality or materiality) or what the Real is or not (such as Lacanian drive or new materialism).[167] My interest is to understand what is the construction of geometry in art theory from different perspectives from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century up till recent decades, with critics engaged including Charles Blanc, Gilles Deleuze, Joan Copjec, and Ahmed Elgammal. My selected geometry theories are chosen for their difference: a classic representational point of view, anti-psychoanalysis (non-representation) criticism,[168] a Lacanian critique of representation, and structural data analysis (AI), corresponding to the critics above respectively, offer me a thinking through what is at stake in the status of geometry for different critics.

2.1.1 A Material Turn?

Prior to my introduction of geometrical criticism, I will first begin with a specific issue of visuality by introducing Kate Flint's proposal of Victorian art appreciation turning on tensions between the seen and unseen, the sure and the unreliable. As Flint has it in *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination,* 'The Victorians were fascinated with the act of seeing, with the question of the reliability — or otherwise — of the human eye, and with the problems of interpreting what they saw'.[169] Within this formulation, the 'reliability' of

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[166] Take, for example, *Farewell to Visual Studies*, edited by James Elkins, et al. (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015). Caroline Van Eck, and Edward Winter, *Dealing with the Visual: Art History, Aesthetics and Visual Culture* (1st ed.) (Routledge, 2005), doi: 10.4324/9781351160247. Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (Yale University Press, 1983).

[167] There is an area of debates around whether Deleuzian theory is of materialism, new materialism or the Real. In this chapter, I focus on the discussion of the Real in Deleuze's philosophy.

[168] There are debates on whether Deleuze is for representation or non-representation. My reading of Deleuze could connect his theory to non-representational theory (such as his idea of affects and sensation) while I do not dismiss the other stance of representation into which he may or may not have tapped. Please see Henry Somers-Hall's article, *Representation and Sensation—A Defence of Deleuze's Philosophy of Painting*. Somers-Hall attacks against Christian Lotz's argument of a dismissal of representation of non-representation.

[169] Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 1.

seeing is questioned and is not secured by that supplement, which we might say, prior to the innovative contemporary supplements of technology — 'the human eye'. 'The human eye' cannot guarantee seeing at its purest, but seeing here is rather detached from 'the human eye'. Seeing is dependent on what 'the act' is and 'the act' constructs the problematic '[interpretation]' of seeing. That is, the contingency of the act (or seeing through different new tools in the nineteenth century, mentioned in Flint's work)[170] destabilises the purely seeing (the human eye) in relation to interpretation. Interpretation shifts to rely on different constructions of seeing, but any construction of seeing that I read is still impossible to reach its destination of meaning. In Jacques Derrida's *The Truth in Painting*, the notion of interpretation/judgement which always comes after unproblematic seeing is problematised:

> To the impatient objector, if s/he insists on seeing the thing itself at last: the whole analytic of aesthetic judgment forever assumes that one can distinguish rigorously between the intrinsic and the extrinsic. Aesthetic judgment must properly bear upon intrinsic beauty, not on finery and surrounds. Hence one must know-this is a fundamental presupposition, presupposing what is fundamental-how to determine the intrinsic-what is framed and know what one is excluding as frame and outside-the-frame. We are thus already at the unlocatable center of the problem.[171]

What Derrida proposes here is that the appeal to unproblematic seeing is based on 'a fundamental presupposition', which has a priori knowledge of how to judge the difference between intrinsicality and extrinsicality, and inclusion or exclusion as the frame. This knowable aesthetic judgement, for Derrida, however, is 'the unlocatable center of the problem'. I will, then, be arguing that my problematisation of seeing does not align with the notion of physicality (humans' eyes), a pure act, or interpretation/judgement, but seeing always necessitates a *perspective,* which is always framed within a frame, the discourse, from the construction of culture, history, politics, or economics.

To further set out what is at stake here, I am drawn to Karín Lesnik-Oberstein's 'The object of neuroscience and literary studies', which critiques the claims of a school of celebrated academics, who, in following a cognitivist theory of mind, and influenced by

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[170] This is from what I have read from Flint's statement about the rise of different technologies, such as telescopes, microscopes or anatomy, and the different images which have introduced to the Victorian fascination with the uncertainty of human perception, the limits and transformations of seeing from 'the human eye', and with also the '[interpretation]' of their seeing (Ibid., pp. 1-39). Here I would introduce Naomi Schor's *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* in relation to Flint's argument of stable and problematic seeing/interpretation as Schor offers a critique on problematic reading without detail (in art and history). Naomi Schor, *Reading in detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (Routledge, 1987).

[171] Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 63.

literary Darwinism, attempt to recover the originality of the unity between language and object. Their idea of beyond language is caught up in the position of being self-evident and autonomous:

> If the mind-body dualism, then, is advertently or inadvertently upheld as part of the investment in a world-beyond-text, then there is another important aspect to these liberal arguments which does not just ground the position of the Literary Darwinists and the 'literary neuroscientists', but also the work of the neuroscientists themselves. For not only do literary scholars draw on neuroscience in an attempt to make their field 'new', but the neuroscientists draw on literature and ideas of the literary in their own work in turn, so making a closed loop of assumptions and arguments that feed in to each other.[172]

Based on Lesnik-Oberstein's argument, I am interested in what Jeannene Przyblyski and Vanessa Schwartz suggest in their article, 'Visual Culture's History: Twenty-First Century Interdisciplinarity and Its Nineteenth-Century Objects', in terms of art history being encouraged to 'go beyond verbal description and experience as "discourse"', which could be located as the material return via images. To Schwartz and Przybylski, I read that the distinction between discourse and images is self-evident, so they have confidence in Simmel and Kracauer's cognitive approach to 'writ[e] a grounded history of that visual culture' by 'us[ing] new tools', such as 'corporeal experience', 'the interaction of people', 'visual practices' or 'image-making':

> Simmel and Kracauer offer compelling arguments for the need to make grounded claims about corporeal experience and the interaction of people, and a wide range of visual practices including, but not limited to, image-making. Their perspectives encourage us to use new tools that will need to be developed from the sorts of visual and formal analysis of art history and literary studies that go beyond verbal description and experience as 'discourse'.[173]

In this claim, '"discourse"' is excluded from 'corporeal[ity]', 'interaction' and 'visual practices', and is not amongst the 'new tools' for analysing 'art history' and 'literary studies'. Visuality, in this case, outweighs verbality to substitute this non-new

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[172] Karín Lesnik-Oberstein, 'The object of neuroscience and literary studies', *Textual Practice*, 31:7 (2017), p. 1324-1325, doi:10.1080/0950236X.2016.1237989.

[173] Jeannene M. Przyblyski and Vanessa R. Schwartz, 'Visual Culture's History: Twenty-First Century Interdisciplinarity and Its Nineteenth-Century Objects' in *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader*, eds. by Jeannene M. Przyblyski, and Vanessa R. Schwartz, (Routledge, 2004), p. 12.

'develop[ment]'. I would, however, contend that the 'beyond[ness]' of '"discourse"' implies that the narrator already knows what is originality of that discourse and this beyond-ness is, I would contend, caught up with what is not beyond (the narrator's belief of the origin of the discourse). In this sense, how can visuality be sustained without being framed by discourse (if that beyond-ness is an impossibility)? Even if that beyond-ness of discourse is possible, does that mean history or literariness can be constructed by visuality at its purest detached from any discourse?

2.1.2 The Return of the Real?

Other than the version of the material turn outlined above, I am interested in another school of critics invested in the return of the real. Here, for example, are the New-Historicists Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt arguing for a split between reality and the real:

> We wanted to recover in our literary criticism a confident conviction of reality, without giving up the power of literature to sidestep or evade the quotidian and without giving up a minimally sophisticated understanding that any text depends upon the absence of the bodies and voices that it represents. We wanted the touch of the real in the way that in an earlier period people wanted the touch of the transcendent.[174]

To Greenblatt and Gallagher, their transcendent absence is touchable, recoverable and representable without any contingency on presence. Their pursuit I read here is built on their assurance/'wanted[-ness]' of the distinction between reality and the real,[175] which establishes their New Historicism. Their conviction of reality is dependent not on history but 'the power of literature' and 'any text' that could call upon 'the absence' and 'the [evasion] of the quotidian'. The touch of the real enables reality to be 'sidestep[ped]' and absent from the text. Nevertheless, the touch of the real is questioned to be 'not the Real' but 'the touch' by James Newlin, in his article, 'The Touch of the Real in New Historicism and Psychoanalysis': '[…] what is most important in Greenblatt's formulation of The Touch of the Real is not the Real, but rather the Touch […]'.[176] This Touch, as Newlin argues, is constructed by the readability of history as fiction:

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[174] Stephen Greenblatt, 'The Touch of the Real', *Representations*, 59 (1997), p. 22, doi: 10.2307/2928812.

[175] This one I should read further: as James Newlin also mentions from other critics that the touch of Real is not about Real or reality but the inaccessibility to be the whole, and Newlin has made a note that Greenblatt's reading of Lacanian Real is related to Zizek.

[176] James Newlin, 'The Touch of the Real in New Historicism and Psychoanalysis', *SubStance*, vol. 42, no. 1 (2013), p. 85, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41818955> [Accessed 16th June 2023].

> The real desire for the Touch of the Real is a desire to read, interpret, and treat history not as reality but as fiction. Hence the common critique of the New Historicism—that its accomplishment lies not in its complexity but in its readability, its telling of stories.[177]

In other words, a connection can be made between the arguments of the cognitivist/New Materialists and the New-Historicists, in so far as both evade the extent to which the physicality they establish against the textual is caught up in the opposing term. Here, the Touch of the Real is established by 'a desire' and this desire is to construct history as fiction, which is not '[complex]' but 'readab[le]'. What Newlin understands of the critique of New Historicism at this stage is that 'history' is not factual and '[complex]', but it is dependent on how 'history' is 'treat[ed]' to be 'read', 'interpret[ed]'. Thus, 'history', based on 'the common critique', implies the knowable distinction between 'reality' and storytelling ('its telling of stories'). In another sense, the 'reality' is not readable and interpretable, but 'read[ing]' and 'interpret[ation]' can only come through 'fiction' and 'its telling of stories'. '[T]he Touch of the Real', I would say, is the supplement or contingency for 'history' to fulfil 'read[ing]', being as 'fiction' or 'telling of stories'. Without 'the Touch', as Newlin argues, history could only remain as 'reality'. That 'Real', is instead substituted by the text, such as *Lear*:

> The touch of the real can be found in the negotiations of the Touch of the *Lear*. But that is only so long as, in our fidelity to the canon, we act in conformity with our desire for the touch of the read.[178]

'[O]ur desire' is not for 'the touch of the real' but 'for the touch of the read', which validates 'the negotiations'. '[T]he negotiations' are not transcendental, but they are caught up in 'our fidelity' and 'conformity'. '[T]he touch of the real' is supplemented by 'the touch of the read' to be found in 'the Touch of the *Lear*'. In one sense, Newlin's critique of Greenblatt's Real which is not Real is based on his understanding of framing — the Real is never transcendent but is framed by 'read[ing]', 'our fidelity' and 'act[ing]'. It is the *touch* of the text that constructs what history is. Even though Newlin's criticism has brought Greenblatt's Real to the framework of readability, I would question what is at stake for that 'read[ability]' to be readable. Is Newlin's analysis of Greenblatt's Real readable only within the symbolic? Does this 'read' transcend or safeguard the 'touch'? Is this 'touch' only confirmed through

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[177] James Newlin, 'The Touch of the Real in New Historicism and Psychoanalysis', p. 90.
[178] Ibid., p. 97.

'our desire'? Does that mean the readability of history is determined by 'our desire', 'our fidelity' and 'conformity'? In this sense, does it mean 'read[ability]' always requests a perspective and permission to be the reading?

To this end, we can see a divergence in a wider trend in contemporary theory: the return to the real, and the material turn in Art History/visual culture. With all caveats in place, my reading in art will neither support materiality nor the Real, or 'the read' (in its transcendence), but will pursue the reading of perspective[179] (which cannot be justified to be objective or subjective nor can it be from "'nowhere'") as Lesnik-Oberstein claims:

> I cannot, however, claim the reading of perspective as itself truth, as the objectivity overcoming subjectivity, a separation dissolved into what the philosopher Thomas Nagel called the 'view from nowhere'.[180]

2.1.3 Geometrical Criticism and Deleuze

My previous discussion of the material turn and the return of the real ties in with my interest in Geometrical Criticism, both in art and the literary field. My focus here is on the question of what constitutes and collapses the self-evident materiality and real in the critics' structure of geometry. In Peg Rawes's book, *Space, Geometry and Aesthetics Through Kant and Towards Deleuze,* she points out that the discussion of geometry is not limited to scientific knowledge. Her pursuit of '[dynamisms]' in geometry understanding has to do with her belief in Deleuzian 'invention' which jumps out of the knowledge-based facts of geometry. Nevertheless, I would say this idea of 'invention' involves something knowable and already in place to establish that invention. In other words, it is impossible to get rid of a perspective on what is invented. Even though Rawes's research "'toward'" Deleuze aims to be outside of the knowledge structure, this 'invention', I would argue, still falls back on a structure of differentiating what knowledge is or not.[181]

> Rather, this examination is undertaken in the belief that dynamic relationships between space, geometry and aesthetics are productive for contemporary practitioners working within philosophy and beyond; in particular, for generating alternative spaces through which geometry can be discussed without

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[179] As Karín Lesnik-Oberstein has stated, I am also not claiming 'reading of perspective itself is truth'. Please see footnote 180 for the reference.

[180] Karín Lesnik-Oberstein, 'The object of neuroscience and literary studies', p. 1327. The direct quote "'view from nowhere'" is from Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[181] All the quotes in this passage are from the following long quote. Please see the same reference of footnote 182.

it being restricted to an exclusively scientific form of truth-making or knowledge. The discussion is therefore constructed 'towards' Deleuze; readers will not find him at the 'end' of the book, rather, he is a 'virtual' voice in the discussion. Each chapter represents an inflection of Deleuze's desire for invention in philosophy, and insofar as I have chosen to engage with philosophers that inform his thinking, so each is implicated with his ideas.[182]

Instead of focusing on the representation or 'inflection' of 'Deleuze's desire', I will at the end of the chapter read Deleuze's writing on his idea of geometry and lines. In this, I do not emphasize the idea of "'toward[ness]'" to Deleuze, but instead, I am interested in drawing out what the structure of Deleuze's invention/knowledge might be. The Copjecian and Deleuzian Real helps me think further about Charles Blanc's material contingencies in relation to their proposals of representation, non-representation, and, indeed, both. In order to think further about the identity of the structure for this chapter, I would introduce Henry Somers-Hall's analysis in his article, *Representation and Sensation—A Defence of Deleuze's Philosophy of Painting:*

> […] That is, Deleuze argues that there can be more than one notion of structure at play at the same time. To illustrate this point, I want to quote an argument from Deleuze's predecessor, Henri Bergson: 'If I choose a volume in my library at random, I may put it back on the shelf after glancing at it and say, "This is not verse." Is this what I have really seen in turning over the leaves of the book? Obviously not. I have not, and I never shall see, an absence of verse. I have seen prose'. Thus, Bergson replaces the notion that the opposite of a type of structure is the negation of structure with the notion that the opposite of a type of structure is a different type of structure. Just as it makes no sense to posit a formless language prior to the prose, or poetry, Bergson argues that the rejection of representation (in his case, extension), does not lead us to chaos or the absence of determination, but instead to a different kind of order to that found in representation. In Bergson's case, that order is the order of duration, while Deleuze instead frames the claim by noting that chaos itself has the structure of the virtual, rather than being an 'undifferenciated abyss'.[183]

According to Somers-Hall's analysis, the '[replacement]' of the 'notion' from Bergson has to do with the removal of 'negation' of the structure but places a 'difference' in the structure.

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[182] Peg Rawes, *Space, geometry and aesthetics: through Kant and towards Deleuze* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008), p. xvi.

[183] Henry Somers-Hall, 'Representation and Sensation — A Defence of Deleuze's Philosophy of Painting', *Journal of Aesthetics and Phenomenology*, 3:1, 55-65, (2016), pp. 62-63, doi: 10.1080/20539320.2016.1187854. The quote from Henri Bergson is from Henry Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. by Arthur Mitchell (Dover Publications, 1998), p. 220. The quote 'undifferenciated abyss' is from Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 28.

This 'difference' is prior to the act of being 'found' 'in representation'. That is the difference is already of the opposite structure. The 'negation' is instead dismissed by the difference. Difference does not tolerate negation and vice versa. In this way, the opposite structure is set up to secure a difference. Based on Somers-Hall's understanding, for Bergson, the difference dismisses the consequence of the 'rejection' — 'chaos'. Instead of 'leading' to 'chaos' and 'absence', the difference safeguards the opposition. The opposition is not to be negated but to be different. As for Somers-Hall's claim on Deleuze's idea, chaos is instead not to be cast out, but chaos 'itself' 'has the structure of the virtual'. Chaos is not positioned to be '"an undifferentiated abyss"'. In one sense, Deleuze does agree with that difference in the structure while he does not dismiss the result of the rejection — chaos. Difference or opposition does not substitute chaos, and chaos is the establishment of that 'opposite of a type of structure'. A different kind of order itself 'has the structure'. On top of Bergson, Deleuze's idea of structure is to overcome the '"un-differentiation"' or 'absence' that is without structure. In other words, in contrast to Bergson, the notion of Deleuze is that the opposite structure/ representation itself is related to 'a different type of structure' and its structural production, such as 'chaos', has its 'structure'.[184]

Although Somers-Hall renders a thinking through of what the structure could be, my problematisation returns to his claim of Bergson's idea of 'type' ('Thus, Bergson replaces the notion that the opposite of a type of structure is the negation of structure with the notion that the opposite of a type of structure is a different type of structure').[185] I would argue that a 'type' of structure implies an origin. Structure in this sense is predestined to be 'a type' which is knowable in this perspective. Even though there is a shift from 'the opposite of a type of structure' to 'a different type of structure', does it mean 'a type' and 'different type' remain in the same origin but are differentiated by the different difference ('a' type vice versa 'different' type)? Or, does type itself differ from *different* origins? If type implies the same origin, will this difference collapse? Somers-Hall's understanding of Deleuze's solution here on the opposition relies on the infallibility of 'itself' which 'has the structure', instead of a dismissal of chaos. That is, Bergson dismisses negation and replaces it with a difference while for Deleuze negation does not only lead to difference[186] but also chaos

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[184] I analyse here and in the next paragraph Deleuze and Bergson only as framed by Somers-Hall's reading of them.

[185] The word 'type' is not from Bergson's own formulation but is from Somers-Hall's understanding on Bergson.

[186] According to Somers-Hall's formulations and his understanding, it is not clear that whether Deleuze proposes that negation itself also has a structure or only that chaos. What is the difference between chaos and negation for Deleuze?

which achieves 'itself' of the structure.[187] Thus, from this analysis, my questions here are to develop or open up a further thinking of structures in my focus on geometry in Art History: What could we read as difference in or outside the structure? Is it possible to transcend a structure? If there is 'not only one notion of structure', what is the other? How can we understand different structures, differences in structures, and the structure itself in which geometry is constituted in relation to visionary, materiality, the Real and politics?

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[187] The reference is the same as footnote 183 (from the same quote).

2.2 Joan Copjec's 'The Strut of Vision: Seeing's Corporeal Support'

2.2.1 Introduction

The notion of seeing has been extensively discussed in Film Studies and Art History, concerning space, observers and the structure in films or paintings, from physiology, and philosophy to psychoanalysis. Critics have widely claimed that seeing is to be either internal in painting or generated by the external observer. Seeing is somehow attachable, or detachable to, or from, the subjects or objects.[188] Nevertheless, seeing, I would say, is uncannily not locatable *as* seeing, but rather is displaced and deferred by the shifting ideas of subjectivity, reality, body and mind, or various constructions of objects. In this section, in order to think through the issue in relation to geometry, I will begin with one art and film critic, Joan Copjec, from her Lacanian-psychoanalytical perspective on this matter of seeing.

Copjec, in her chapter, 'The Strut of Vision: Seeing's Corporeal Support', has strived to overturn/deconstruct both sides of arguments between Cartesian's idealised abstract cogito and film theory's physiological corporeality. She insists that other academics' 'revenge' or investment via their belief in signifying system (de-corporealisation), or the slogan of "'body matters'", has ignored the core issue, which, for her, is 'what is a body'? The failure of distinguishing animals from human embodiment is what Copjec claims to be the effect of the lack of recognition of the presence of the body — *'this* body *here'* — 'perversion' and 'exotic pleasures'. This embodiment has to do with 'internal pressure' — 'drive', a Lacanian psychoanalytical term, which validates the existence of a human being and correlates thoughts to the body. To Copjec, without the corporealized body, there is no reality. The reality, in this sense, is caught up within the framework of corporeality but remains different from a merely *pure* body.[189]

2.2.2 Natural Perspective or Artificial Perspective?

So as to understand Copjec's argument of corporeality, drive and geometry, let us start with Copjec's defence of her distinction between *natural perspective* and *artificial perspective*:

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[188] Please see the examples in footnote 166.
[189] Joan Copjec, 'The Strut of Vision: Seeing's Corporeal Support', in Joan Copjec, *Imagine There's No Woman*: *Ethics and Sublimation* (The MIT Press, 2004), pp. 179-180. All the direct quotes in this passage are from this reference.

But what is it that *justifies* this argument? What allows one to state that geometrical perspective provides a formula for the relation of the corporeal subject (not the purely rational subject) to the visual field? To answer this question, it is first necessary to distinguish *artificial perspective*, which emerged in the sixteenth century out of a revolution in geometry, from its predecessor, *natural perspective*. Whenever this distinction is overlooked, confusion results, as happens in Crary's and film theory's account of Renaissance perspective.[190]

Here, the relation between the 'subject' and 'the visual field' is constructed by 'a formula' which is provided by 'geometrical perspective'. That is, the visual field is not autonomously related to the subject, but it is supplemented by the provision of a 'geometrical perspective'. The visual field is not directly attached to the subject (not the subject's visuality), but 'a formula' has to be in place to guarantee this relation. However, this 'formula' from 'Crary's and film theory's account of Renaissance perspective', the account criticised by Copjec, is, for her, pertinent to their overlook of the distinction between '*natural perspective*' and '*artificial perspective*'. To Copjec, only if the distinction between '*natural perspective*' and '*artificial perspective*' is set up, can the new connection between the corporeal subject and the visual field be established. Copjec supports the 'Renaissance perspective' to be formulated by '*artificial perspective*', which validates that 'corporeal[ity]' rather than cogito. Even though Crary's argument has made a move from abstractness to corporeality, Copjec suggests, Crary's notion still returns to be abstract (his lack of understanding of the Renaissance perspective).[191] Copjec's criticism is established on the foundation of Cartesian dualism, in which body and mind are separate. Copjec's confidence is to deconstruct this dualism and to claim that the mind is impossible without the body, the body necessitates the inner drive to be that embodiment. Thus, the Renaissance perspective should be read from projective geometry ('*artificial perspective*'), which, crucially, is taken to be an '[invention]' to '*demonstrate*' what is absent in representation.[192]

My question here is what is the relationship between geometrical perspective and the visual field? Does that mean the visual field is not composed of either geometrical perspective or the subject, but is somehow stabilised on its own? Does that mean the change

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[190] Ibid., p. 185.
[191] Ibid., p. 181.
[192] Ibid., p. 186.

of the subject is determined not by the subject but by something outside the subject (the distinction of perspectives)? In this sense, there is no perspective from the subject to the visual field or the geometrical perspective, but the subject is destined by Copjec's understanding of two perspectives. I would argue that Copjec's question has abstracted the subject even though her wider argument endeavours to break down Cartesian dualism between body and mind. My reading finds that Copjec's connection between corporeality and mind requires the third, an unaffected and transcendental subject, to allow the subject to be corporeal or 'purely rational'.[193] Thus, no matter whether we are dealing with corporeality or an abstract subject, the subject is always invested to be somehow diminished. I read that corporeality or rationality is an addition to the subject and these two attachments also require other 'perspectives' to validate what they are. However, my further question is how can we read that '*artificial perspective*' and '*natural perspective*' to be different if the 'emerge[nce]' of '*artificial perspective*' is from 'its predecessor, *natural perspective*'?[194] That is to say, can Copjec fully cut off the emergence from its predecessor? What is at stake to be that distinction?

2.2.3 Projective Geometry and Demonstration?

We will discuss further about Copjec's contention of projective geometry in relation to the visual field:

> […] The trouble is, the projective geometry on which this form of perspective relied was organized not as a search of knowledge, but, on the contrary, for truth, which pierces a hole in the surface of knowledge. Projective geometry was invented to seek out what eluded representation, what no longer had any place in the quantified, represented world. This does not mean that it sought to *represent* what was plainly unrepresentable, but that it sought to *demonstrate through procedures* the existence of it.[195]

To Copjec, natural perspective is somewhat immanent in comparison to the revolutionary geometry — artificial geometry (as Copjec knows that '*natural perspective*' is the '*predecessor*' of '*artificial perspective*').[196] Natural perspective has to do with 'search[ing]'

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[193] Ibid., p. 185.
[194] Ibid., p. 185.
[195] Ibid., p. 186.
[196] Ibid., p. 185.

'knowledge' and this 'search' is for 'representation' of 'the quantified, represented world'. Nevertheless, this representation does not secure the 'truth', as the 'truth' here is rather outside of knowledge and representation. This truth necessitates an '[invention]', '[p]rojective geometry', to fulfil it. That is, representation can never reach the destination of the truth, but the truth can only be '*demonstrated through procedures*'. '[P]rocedures' are not immediate but are deferrals of that '[*demonstration*]'. The truth instead deconstructs the completeness of 'the surface of knowledge' — 'a hole' is '[pierced]' out. What is beyond/outside the represented world could only rely on projection. That is, this incompletion of knowledge is carved out by the truth, which 'seeks out' the 'elu[sion]' of representation. Projection reaches the infinite space that is not by immediate representation but by that deferring supplement — '*procedures*'. These '*procedures*' do not produce any illusion of vision but are '[demonstration]' of 'that pure distance' as Copjec claims, '[…] Lacan is saying that these paintings demonstrate rather the existence of that pure distance which separates the perceiving subject from herself'.[197] In another sense, '[demonstration]' implies that the existence of the 'distance' is already knowable before the '[demonstration]'. This 'distance' is constituted by an absent 'gaze' outside the paintings and 'a vanishing point' projected in paintings.[198] The gaze and the projected point do not create any illusion but 'that pure distance'. The purity implies there is a dismissal of illusion. The space is Real through the absence of the other and the presence of the projection. According to Copjec's understanding of Lacan, projective geometry does not fulfil the subject's illusion of 'a deep three-dimensional space' in paintings but 'defines' 'the embodied subject of the scopic drive' as Copjec claims, '[t]his distance, which is necessary for representation to be possible at all, defines not the abstract subject film theory set out to deconstruct, but the embodied subject of the scopic drive'.[199] This drive achieves that distance between the perceiving subject in the painting and the subject itself. For Copjec's belief in Lacan, this is the 'representation' in projective geometry.

All in all, Copjec's theory of Projective Geometry has complicated a thinking of visual fields which has questioned the belief of representation dwelling on illusion, abstract subjects and pure bodily subjects. For Copjec, the gaze, corporeality and scopic drive secure the structure of pure distance and vision. Artificial perspective/projective geometry has cancelled the 'knowledge' but provides the 'truth' through 'procedures' for reaching

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[197] Joan Copjec, 'The Strut of Vision: Seeing's Corporeal Support', p. 196.
[198] Ibid., p. 184.
[199] Ibid., p. 196.

infinity. In another sense, Copjec requests a world confirmed by the Lacanian drive and gaze instead of the subject's hallucination filling that gap between reality and paintings. My problematisation is that Copjec's geometrical/visual theory is limited by her infallible Lacanian structure which cannot be fulfilled outside her endorsement in the origin of *natural perspective* and requisite *artificial perspective*. Copjec never can read the gaze, in other words, which is a gaze that never fails in its knowable absence and is secured by unchangeable corporeality, unquestionable drive.

2.3 Charles Blanc's Geometry in the Nineteenth Century

2.3.1 Introduction

Copjec's perspective on Projective Geometry leads me to thinking through the ideas of a nineteenth-century French art critic Charles Blanc, who wrote *The Grammar of Painting and Engraving* (*Grammaire des arts du dessin*) in 1867, and influenced some renowned impressionist artists, including Vincent Van Gogh and Georges Seurat. Blanc had been working widely on the theory of colours (Colour Star), space and perspective. His idea of space and perspective has led to a certain logic of Projective Geometry: the transformation of the object, the privileging of straight lines, and the idea of the seeing subject as position. Despite these similarities, my conclusions on Blanc's theory, however, in some sense run counter to those of Joan Copjec and the post-Lacanian school of art criticism. Although the seeing subject, according to my reading of Blanc, is absent, I am reading deferral, and the counter-logic of Copjec's framing, rather than a narrative of the limit, that point of non-seeing within seeing, upon which Copjec's reading is founded.

2.3.2 Geometrical Space

For Blanc, in his idea of geometrical space, he proposes a recovery of nature's appearance through fictitious depths. This fictitious nature, however, is not constituted by any immediacy but supplements, such as lines and colours. The laws of perspective, science, is the structure of painting the space. His geometry is reliant on unchangeable lines and colours:

> The painter having to hollow fictitious depths upon a smooth surface, and to give to these depths the same appearance they would have in nature. Must of necessity know the laws of perspective, that is, the science of apparent lines and colors.[200]

In the painting, the construction of the depths is reliant on 'a smooth surface', the 'know[ing]' of 'the laws of perspectives', and 'the science of apparent lines and colors'. Depths in the painting are never accessible by being constituted by its own but a 'surface', one is validated by that act of 'hollow[ing]' by the painter. '[D]epths' are not inherently

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[200] Charles Blanc, *The Grammar of Painting and Engraving* (*Grammaire Des Arts Du Dessin*), trans. by Kate Newell Doggett (Hurd and Houghton, 1874), p. 48.

inside the painting, but that space of depths is rather established 'upon' a surface. 'Upon[ness]' implies the limitation of painting, in terms of constituting that dimensionality *directly* in the painting while all the space of depths necessitates the other, such as lines and colours, and the laws of perspective. What is drawn upon the painting as 'depths' has to do with all these supplements as externalities. That is, inner space in the painting can only come through the external constructions of lines, colours, and perspective — as 'fictitious' depths. Any space in or, of the painting, is never autonomous. Space itself is 'fictitious' in the painting requesting the structure of the surface to maintain its status for being 'upon' by otherness. Blanc's notion of 'perspective' here is not any perspective at its purest or immediacy, but 'perspective' is deferred to be established by the other, like lines and colours. However, the laws of perspective are not formed by *any* lines or colours but from 'apparent' lines and colours. In this sense, what is a perspective is based on Blanc's idea of 'apparent[ness]'. We can question the extent to which there are 'apparent lines and colours'. If lines and colours are blurred, will depths fail to be depths in the painting? In other words, does that mean the structure of art (the structure itself) is always unstable and deferred in order to be structured? If this is the case, does that mean 'the laws' and 'the science' here are structured to be that structure for art by deferral and contingencies on otherness? Further, 'nature', to Blanc, is recoverable through the 'fictitious' construction 'upon' the painting, in which 'same[ness]' of appearance is possible. In other words, Blanc's insistence lies in the possibility of collapsing the differences of the space (depths) between nature and painting by the painter's act of 'hollow[ing]' or 'giv[ing]'. Nevertheless, this collapse, I would contend, still returns to Blanc's claim regarding the difference between 'fictious[ness]' and nature. Or, to say, Blanc's narrative constructs painters as fulfilling a constitutive space through the repetition of supplements.

2.3.3 Uncanny Perspectives

In Blanc's further argument on space, he suggests two different perspectives — linear perspective and aerial perspective:

> The latter [aerial perspective] is imposed upon the painter only when he finishes his picture; when he puts in, with the colors, the lights and shadows; we shall speak of it when we come to consider chiaroscuro, coloring and touch. The artist, at the moment in which he arranges his picture, that is to say, at the moment in which he assigns to each figure and to each object the place it is to occupy, takes into account only linear perspective. Now what is a picture, properly so called,

in painting? It is the representation of a scene of which the whole can be embraced at one glance. Man having but one soul, his two eyes give him but one view. Unity, then, is essential to every spectacle that addresses itself to the soul. If the wish be simply to amuse by optical artifices and to excite the curiosity of the spectator by procuring for him, in a series of varied scenes, the pleasures of a momentary and material illusion, unity is no longer necessary, because the artist, instead of conceiving a picture, is arranging the machinery of a panorama. On the contrary, as soon as the painter wishes to express a thought or awake a sentiment, it is indispensable that the action should be one, that is to say, that all parts of picture should concur in one dominant action. But unity of action is inseparable from unity of place, and unity of place involves unity of the visual point, without which the spectator, drawn in different directions, would be as if transported to several places at the same time. It seems, then that unity more necessary in a poem of images and colors than in a written poem or tragedy, because in painting the place is immovable, the time indivisible, and the action instantaneous.[201]

According to Blanc, space is never autonomous but is constituted by externalities, such as lines and colours. Blanc's notion of perspectives is constructed to be outside of the painting and the painter. That is to say, perspective is not formed by any painter, nor is instituted inside the painting. The internal perspective in painting is validated only when the perspective from the outside takes place. It is that externality that guarantees the internality. On the one hand, the perspective is situated to be autonomous 'since the perspective will draw itself'. On the other hand, the perspective is not 'itself' but is supplemented by colours and lines. There is a reversal between space and the perspective, in which non-autonomous fictitious space is reliant on the narrative constitutive autonomous perspective 'imposed upon the painter'. It is an uncanny operation, in so far as the perspective is only thus when not itself. That is to say, it is impossible to form a perspective without that which is other to it: the identity of the perspective always calls upon otherness to be itself, such as the painter 'put[ting] in' or 'tak[ing] into account' either aerial or linear perspective.

From this passage above, I read 'a thought' or 'a sentiment' to be located inside a painter (to be 'express[ed]' and 'awake[ned]'). If something is to be *ex*-pressed, or awakened, it implies that it is something *already* there. Blanc's idea of a thought or a sentiment could only be fulfilled through his idea of 'unity'. This unity, I read, is situated outside the subject/painters but is promised to be secured inside the painting by its 'time',

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[201] Charles Blanc, *The Grammar of Painting and Engraving*, pp. 49-51.

'place' and 'action'. Images and writing are split from each other, as only painting (not 'a written poem or tragedy') necessitates immovability and indivisibility to grant the painter's thought and sentiment. That is, these painter's expressions can only be fulfilled in painting from the external: 'unity of the visual of point'. Thus, I read that 'conceiving' is against and opposed to 'arrang[ing]': 'the machinery' is not to be conceived, but 'conceiving' is constituted by 'a thought' and 'a sentiment'. There is a split between a thought/a sentiment (from the painter) and what is in painting: the wishes of expression can never be achieved in painting but are instead always framed and deferred by the visual point and all the constructions of painting, such as the immovable place and indivisible time.

The seeing of the spectator is dependent/directed on/by a structured place and the promised visual point, which will never fail in painting if expression or sentiment is 'wish[ed]' by the artist. If that 'wish' is not made by the painter, 'one' action will not unite 'all parts of picture'. Picture itself is not a whole but is constituted by parts. These 'parts' are guaranteed to recover 'a scene of which the whole can be embraced at one glance' as 'the representation'. That is to say, 'one glance' outside of both painting and a picture validates the composition of a scene as a whole. A picture in painting is that frame that structures an outside scene to be 'his' picture, and to be glanced at. Painting thus can be read to be that outer frame of a picture that allows a picture to be located inside. Based on this doubleness of the frames, art is constructed for the spectator to possess Blanc's one ideal glance. Nevertheless, that 'one[ness]' of the glance, I would argue, is detached from the spectator itself, and is also predetermined by the unity of the visual point, place, and action. In this sense, Blanc's idea of a picture as unity is not an 'illusion' or 'a series of scenes' but a scene that can be represented as a whole naturally, rather than as machine production. Unity is what supports a picture as recoverable nature in opposition to culture (e.g. 'machinery' 'artifices' or 'a written poems or tragedy'). This nature in painting is constructed through those knowable lines, colours, and the visual point to be *a* unified place. This immovable place in painting thus offers the spectator *a* direction to glance at this representation.

Thus, to Blanc, seeing is not from the viewer as a perspective on painting but is somehow known to be 'formed' and 'directed' in painting by the lines and colours. It is these externalities that frame the external seeing to be internal in painting. We can take a look at another Blanc's example of this idea:

In accordance with the manner in which the eye is formed, the height and size of all objects diminish in proportion to the distance whence they are seen, and all lines parallel to the visual ray seem to converge towards the point of the horizon to which the looks are directed. Some are lowered, others elevated, and all unite together at the point upon a level with the eye, which is called the *point of sight*. Again, in proportion to the distance of objects from us, the contour becomes less marked, the form more vague, and the color paler, less decided. What was angular becomes rounded, what was brilliant loses color, the layers of air interposed between the things looked at and the eye that sees them, are like a veil that renders them confused, and if the atmosphere is thick and loaded with vapor, the confusion increases and the spectacle is lost. These two phenomena- the convergence of sloping lines and the gradation of colors- have given rise to the distinction of two kinds of perspective, in painting, *linear* and *aerial*. [202]

The constituted seeing in painting is what determines the appearance and disappearance of 'the height and size of all objects'. The objects themselves, however, are not absent 'whence they are seen', but what would 'diminish' is 'the height and size' of the objects, which are other than the objects themselves. The objects are always situated in painting, but the 'distance' constructed by 'lines' and 'horizon' disrupts the vision on the splitting objects (their height and size) to be seen or not. Blanc's theory of 'the *point of sight*' here is contingent on his belief in the existence of 'the visual ray' and its 'converge[nce]' with 'all lines' that secure the dyad between the seeing of the objects and the 'proportion' of the distance. In other words, the 'linear' perspective is dependent on how distance is constructed away 'from us', in that the differences of the 'contour', the 'form', and the angle are constituted. As for the 'aerial' perspective in painting, to Blanc, colours are not as 'sloping lines' to be 'converg[ed]' but 'gradat[ed]', in which colours and lines do not compose each other but are somewhat separable. Regardless of the linear or aerial perspective, the laws of perspective require seeing to be their supplement. Seeing in this sense is empty without the perspective of viewers on the painting but is constituted to be an ideal vision that will never fail to stand at 'the point of the horizon'. Overall, space in painting here is supplemented by lines and colours, and the laws of perspective are supplemented by the seeing which is 'formed' in painting. The double externalities (the laws of perspective and the predestined seeing) in painting, I would contend, establish its stable structure of 'fictitious' internality

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[202] Ibid., pp. 48-49.

but exclude any other *perspective* on painting. This structure is only validated through Blanc's *narrative* painting here.

2.3.4 Frame and Absent Seeing

From the aforementioned analysis, I would say that there is a sense of Romanticism in Blanc's idea of art which dwells on his nostalgia for 'awaken' 'sentiment' and 'express[ion]' in painting. His pursuit of a perfect representation of nature has to do with his law, perspectives and structures, such as unity, the visual point, and ideal seeing. Unlike Copjec's explanation of projective geometry, Blanc's notion of geometry in art is reliant on the metrical measurement which could fulfil 'exact representation' via materiality, contour, and distance:

> That determined, how shall the artist submit to the unity of one point of sight the scene that his imagination has invented, or that it evokes by memory? Experience teaches us that our eyes can take in an object at one look only at a distance equal to about three times the greatest dimension of the object. For instance, to see at one glance a stick a yard long, we must, if endowed with ordinary sight, place ourselves at a distance of three yards. Suppose the painter looks at a landscape from the window of his room, the objects presented to his view will be so numerous and will occupy so vast an extent that he will be obliged to turn his head and run his eye over the landscape to see, one after another, the different points. If he retires into the chamber the extent will diminish, and if the window be a yard wide and he withdraws to a distance of three yards, this distance will furnish the measure of the space he can take in at one look. The window will form the frame of his picture; and if we suppose that instead of canvas or paper, it is a single square of glass that fills the aperture, and that the artist with a long pencil could sketch upon the glass the contour of the objects as they present themselves, his sketch would be the exact representation of the landscape which will be drawn according to the rules of perspective, since the perspective will draw itself. [203]

According to this passage, 'representation' in art has to do with wholeness in oneness (e.g. the external scene is structured by 'one glance'). The whole cannot be whole in art if 'the unity of one point of sight' fails. That is, the wholeness of 'the landscape' derives from Blanc's investment in the 'one[ness]' of seeing. It is the unity of the seeing that frames 'the scene' as a whole. As we read further, Blanc's construction of 'correct' seeing is reliant on otherness. Here I am thinking of Blanc's laws of perspectives, angles, lines, colours, frames, and distance. The look or the seeing is thus always deferred: to be 'directed' to, or be

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[203] Ibid., pp. 51-52.

'formed' in painting. The eye is not a promise of recovering the 'exact[ness]' of nature. Instead, 'representation' is secured by Blanc's confidence in his establishment of geometry and mathematics. Art, in this sense, is always detached from the seeing of the artist and the spectator. It is the detachment of external seeing that forms what the picture is. The contingency on otherness (the repetitions of supplements) establishes visuality. That is, it is when all the ideal lines and the vanishing point occur that seeing comes into being. The displaced seeing, via the convergence of the visual ray at the visual point in painting, carves out the absence of the spectator's seeing. By the same token, the artist's seeing, at the specific distance, is substituted by Blanc's 'laws of perspective', as 'the perspective will draw itself'. This drawing of 'itself' is dependent on that materiality — 'glass' — as the guarantee of the precise duplication of nature. The seeing is somehow objectified to be that transcendental supplement, via lines and the visual ray, that stabilises the status of painting. Painting is, in this understanding, self-evidently sustained as representation, approved by the internal structure (e.g. the 'immovable' place, 'the point of sight' etc.), contingent on externalities (e.g. 'perpendicular lines'). These additionalities constitute the identity of painting.

In the quotation above, I read further the idea of Blanc's seeing that 'the unity of one point of sight' is outside the seeing of the painter and the spectator. The artist's 'imagination' and 'memory' do not secure the location of one point of sight. One point of sight necessitates a third, such as 'experience', to confirm the 'submi[ssion]' of the artist. 'Our eyes' are split from the seeing but require the 'teach[ing]' of 'experience' to 'take in an object at one look'.[204] 'One look' is not fulfilled by the look but is achieved by 'a distance equal to about three times the greatest dimension of the object'. A distance frames the object to be 'see[n] at one look'. This one look is not constructed by the dimensionality of the object but is set up by Blanc's principle of the distancing ratio between the object and the subject (1:3 — 'For instance, to see at one glance a stick a yard long, we must, if endowed with ordinary sight, place ourselves at a distance of three yards'). If one yard of the stick is for one glance, this is so only through something external to the look: 'the distance'. The oneness of seeing

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[204] A further connection between the classic defence of modernist painting and Blanc's nineteenth-century expressionism can be made. Both of these discourses make claims about things being seen in the moment, and the idea that this will never exhaust interest (according to Michael Fried, modernist painting is 'self-renewal' and 'self-transforming'). Blanc's notions and those of Fried share an idea of self-supporting structures that are at the same time discrete and complete in terms of artistic integrity and audience experience yet also are not complete in terms of an audience being bored with them or having completely mastered them. This is art that always gives more. Please see Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood Essays and Reviews* (The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 218.

is not produced by the size of the object nor is it from the eyes of the subject. Seeing is always deferred by the repetition of the distance and that supplement of experience. The interiority of the space ('the chamber'/ 'the room'), along with the distance and the frame of the window, limit the 'extent' of the exterior landscape. When this extent 'diminish[es]', the seeing is no longer constructed according to 'the objects presented to his view', but 'the window will form the frame of his picture'. That is to say, the landscape of his '[the artists'] picture' is autonomously set up by what is framed by the window rather than what is seen by that painter or what is 'presented to his view'. The seeing in this sense is absent from the subject, but 'the frame' grants that absent look presence and immediacy.

In the following sections, I move from a concern with C19th aesthetics to contemporary debates about images. After all, a concern with lines as constitutive of art, especially lines that do not appear in images, is not limited to a given moment in history. Indeed, such concerns can be read within what, in some quarters, is regarded as one of the great contemporary innovations in Art History: Artificial Intelligence. Introducing this discourse at this stage will also allow me to connect back with discourses of machine learning and algorithmic approaches to art that has be taken up in the previous chapter, on *the face* in contemporary art theory.

2.4 A Debate on AI's Analysis of Geometry in Paintings

2.4.1 Introduction

There is, of course, an irony in thinking about the aesthetics of Blanc having a comparable structure to modern narratives that turn on the algorithmic lines of paintings, as the force of my criticism of the latter turns precisely on the comparative. What does it mean for one thing to be like another? What does and does not count as a repetition or a connection? My introduction of algorithmic theory should thus be understood to question the comparison from which it arises.

In what follows, I will be arguing that the analysis from algorithmic lines leads to a claim of a machinic standardised perspective on painting. According to its advocates, within AI analysis, the structure of lines does not constitute the painting itself but is a tool that produces its own system of recognition. The algorithmic recognition is caught up with a system of fixed identifiable objects and compositions. As already suggested, my concern about the issue is that this style of Big Data analysis skips over a reading/analysis on the differences between the objects themselves and the narrative of the history. The limit of this algorithmic analysis has been pointed out even by thinkers, such as Ahmed Elgammal, who are broadly supportive of the use of AI in art:

> Artificial Intelligence is still in its infancy, especially as it tries to tackle challenges of increasing complexity. If we hope to make a machine understand sophisticated connections between artists, it's only natural to initially approach the challenge the same way Giovanni Morelli and connoisseurial art historians did a century ago.[205]

For Elgammal, AI is an investment in being able to overcome the complexity and sophistication of understanding artists' connections. Nevertheless, this 'understand[ing]' of AI is '[made]' by the 'hope' of the 'we'. In another sense, Elgammal is asking for tolerance of accepting the infant stage of experiments while an art historian is lashing out at Elgammal's naïve ignorance and misunderstanding of context and art history from AI. Griselda Pollock problematises the technology thus:

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[205] Ahmed Elgammal, 'Computer science can only help – not hurt – art historians', 2014, *The Conversation Trust (UK) Limited*, <https://theconversation.com/computer-science-can-only-help-not-hurt-art-historians-33780> [Accessed 24th May 2024].

> Even at the most basic level, machines would not be helpful in developing these larger narratives. The idea that machines can see or notice what human beings do not is a fallacy, because the machine is only doing what it is told – and it is the programmers who are setting parameters. But those parameters are based on a woefully old-fashioned and dull misunderstanding of what art historians do, and what they look for.[206]

Elgammal's response to this attack is to return to highlight the necessity of '[nature]' of AI's development — 'infancy'.[207] In another sense, Elgammal has naturalised the technology and constituted his idea of what childhood is — 'infancy'. This infancy has to do with the early stages of machine learning in which machine learning has an infancy. This infancy has its naturalisation and contains a process which is related to the idea of an initially controlled learning programme. Elgammal avoids a thinking through whose perspectives are on 'those parameters' which Pollock attacks against. Although this school of scientists has acknowledged the limit of AI analysis, '*We are not asserting truths but instead suggesting a possible path towards a difficult task of measuring influence*',[208] the most pressing issue with it, I would argue, is not one of true or false measurements of influence. Rather, these computer scientists do not problematise what kind of perspectives or centralised calculations from AI have imposed on the painting. For them, once AI is able to advance from 'infancy' to another stage, the 'challenges' can be 'tackle[d]'. I am dubious that if AI is always structured by predestined *information* without a reading on its own structure, how can it be able to render a justification of history, images, paintings and differences? Is the development of AI analysis always falling back to the mechanism of coding? Does that mean the lines that trace the similarities are always structured by data? Are similarities then constructed by the provision/limitation of data from Elgammal?

For me, Elgammal has overlooked that there is always a perspective on data. That is, Elgammal's belief of the autonomous nature of data analysis always falls within the structure of its own data. His idea of '[evolution]' of AI is returned to his knowledge of origin which can be overcome by 'these vast stores of heterogeneous data'. Data analysis is his faith to '[go] *beyond*' 'the connoisseurial approach':

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[206] Griselda Pollock, 'Computers can find similarities between paintings – but art history is about so much more', 2014, *The Conversation Trust (UK) Limited,* <https://theconversation.com/computers-can-find-similarities-between-paintings-but-art-history-is-about-so-much-more-30752 > [Accessed 24th May 2024].

[207] Please see footnote 205 (from the same quote).

[208] Babak Saleh, Kanako Abe, Ravneet Singh Arora and Ahmed Elgammal, 'Toward automated discovery of artistic influence', *Multimed Tools Appl* 75 (2016), p. 3567, doi: 10.1007/s11042-014-2193-x.

And perhaps there will be a day when technology could evolve to look at the historical, social, and personal context of art – a day when computers could mine these vast stores of heterogeneous data to conduct an analysis of artistic influences that goes *beyond* the connoisseurial approach.[209]

Nevertheless, this '*beyond*[-ness]' opens up further questions, for me: will universal analysis produced by AI standardise what and how the painting could be read?

In order to understand further the structure of lines constructed by AI, in this section, I will read computer scientists' algorithmic analysis of two paintings, *Studio 9 Rue de la Condamine* and *Shuffleton's Barber Shop,* from Babak Saleh, Kanako Abe, Ravneet Singh Arora and Ahmed Elgammal's article, 'Toward automated discovery of artistic influence'.

2.4.2 Studio 9 Rue de la Condamine and Shuffleton's Barber Shop

According to Saleh, Abe, Arora and Elgammal, they offer their interpretation of AI's analysis below:

[…] The composition of both paintings is divided in a similar way. Yellow circles indicate similar objects, red lines indicate composition, and the blue square represents similar structural element. The objects seen – a fire stove, three men clustered, chairs, and window are seen in both paintings along with a similar position in the paintings. After browsing through many publications and websites, we conclude that this comparison has not been made by an art historian before.[210]

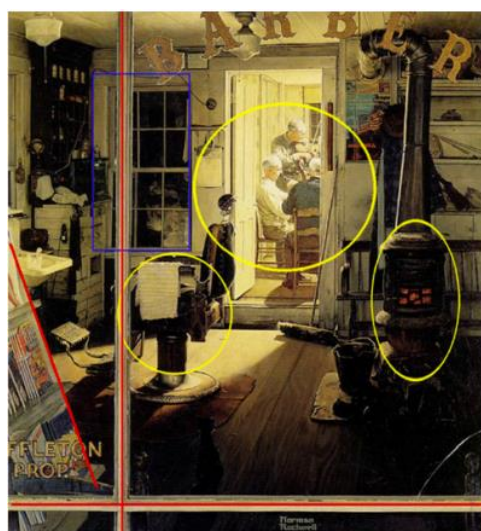Figure 2.1 Bazille, Frédéric, *Studio 9 Rue de la Condamine*   Figure 2.2 Rockwell, Norman, *Shuffleton's Barber Shop*

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[209] Ahmed Elgammal, 'Computer science can only help – not hurt – art historians'.
[210] Babak Saleh, Kanako Abe, Ravneet Singh Arora and Ahmed Elgammal, 'Toward automated discovery of artistic influence', p. 3569.

I will be problematising this structure which is constituted by algorithmic geometry, such as 'yellow circles', 'red lines' and 'blue square[s]'. Instead of reading that similarity in line with objects, I would argue, the similarity is set up to be reliant on the sameness of geometrical contours. The 'composition' is about the '[division]' and 'similar[ity]'. In another sense, the idea of similarity here is based on the pre-knowable division. I read this division is structured by external unchanging lines and circular shapes placed on the painting. The pre-arranged geometry is about an 'indicat[ion]' of similarities. Objects, such as a 'fire stove, three men clustered, chairs' are defined to be similar in this perspective. 'Yellow circles', 'red lines' and 'the blue square' have predetermined what 'similarity' is.

Nevertheless, the two paintings, I would contend, are constructed in terms of different perspectives. The seeing in *Studio 9 Rue de la Condamine* is from the interior space whilst in *Shuffleton's Barber Shop*, the seeing is from the space outside the space. The red lines in *Shuffleton's Barber Shop* are not located to be similar compositions in *Studio 9 Rue de la Condamine*. Take, for example, two red lines in *Shuffleton's Barber Shop* are set up on the window's frame. The seeing of interiority is framed by the frame of the barber shop's windows. The characters 'BARBER'[211] in capital narrate what the chair is which is different from the red chair in the studio framed by the repetitions of paintings (two chairs are constituted in the different narrations). I read that yellow circles around the chair are different frames and these two frames have differentiated what is inside and outside the frames. The chairs do not remain wholly inside the yellow circles but are instead cut off by the yellow circular lines. The lines carve out spaces where the objects are separate themselves from other parts of themselves. Nevertheless, in algorithmic analysis, I would say, the recognition of objects is according to the sameness of the lines. That is, regardless of the differences of chairs, it is recognised by the lines/circles as the same.

Apart from the chairs, there are three men in both paintings, and these are claimed in the article to have a 'similar position in the paintings'. This similarity is regardless of the different poses of the three men. The similar position is defined instead according to the sameness of yellow circles around three men in two paintings. I instead read those three as differences in each painting in which they are in relation to each different other. In *Studio 9 Rue de la Condamine,* inside the yellow circle, the men are standing in their profiles and one of the heads is cut off by the yellowness. As for the three men in the barber shop, two men's

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[211] Only the first and last letters can be fully seen: 'B' and 'R'. The middle part of the letters is cut off by the painting frame.

profiles can be seen from the perspective while the third can only be seen by his back. The third facing with his back is cut off by the door instead of the yellow frame. This yellow frame includes double space, both inner and outer space.

Concerning the windows in two 'blue square[s]', the notion that they 'represent […a] similar structural element' is problematic. First of all, in *Studio 9 Rue de la Condamine*, the structure of the windows is framed into four panels in repetition with thick dark-coloured frames. Inside each panel, nine rectangular (although some are arched) shapes are there. Nevertheless, the windows are partially seen from the perspective as the veil/curtain covers some parts of the windows. The outside can be seen through the window with a lighter colour. The light however does not come from the outside but is from the interior space as the shadow of the red chair is reflected on the ground toward the direction of the window. Four seats facing different angles compose the relationality of the dimensions in the space. The window is located between two walls and the wall, upon which the window is set up, forms two corners. This open semi-space is differentiated from and part of the other space. From the ceiling, three lines constitute and separate/adjoin the ceiling from/with walls. Under this construction of the composition, the studio space is known to be an enclosed space through the outside of the window. That is, the relationality between interiority and exteriority is established by a seeing on the constitution of an outside from the window. In contrast, in *Shuffleton's Barber Shop,* the interior window (or the window at the back of the shop) is seen through the exterior facet of the window. The idea of the outside is known from the seeing through the glass window (with the character 'BARBER') whilst what can be seen through the other side of the glass window is unknown. The window at the back of the space is framed by white frames and can be separated into two panels. Each panel contains six rectangles, while what is outside of this window could not be seen from this perspective as the black is set as the contrast to the interiority. It could be that the window is set up (as) another interior space (another room located in the barber shop). Or, it could be another outer space located outside the window/the barber shop. As for the direction of the light, it is illuminating from the small inner space/room to the outer space in the barber shop (the shadows of both the barber chair and the wooden chair with a man seen by his back are projected on the ground toward the front glass window). Overall, my selected analysis of the structure of the compositions and objects in the two paintings suggests a difference of a kind that does not intrude into the comparative analysis rooted in AI. Even the positionality of the red lines, yellow circles and blue squares from AI in the two paintings diverge.

In my view, the identity of objecthood for algorithmic analysis in these two paintings is pre-programmed to be static in its unchanging structure. This causes an issue of *recognition* which is already a priori of what it is before a reading or analysis on/of the objects. In other words, the idea of objects in this scientific paper is absolutely and definitively unchangeable and recognisable without a reading of differences. Pollock has questioned this simplistic identification game:

> It is, of course, possible that Rockwell knew Bazille's painting from an illustration in a book about Impressionist art, and even liked it. But what would we learn from finding pot-bellied stoves in both paintings, except about how people heated rooms pre-central heating? Rockwell's art was all about creating an American vernacular style in art in opposition to the European modernism of which Bazille was an early part. Such comparisons are shallow, and overlook time, place, history and art politics.[212]

The identity of objects in two paintings, according to AI, I would contend, is caught up with its systematic algorithmic lines. These lines leave out the context, history or others and determine the shapes, contours, figures, and surface at their purest. These lines define and select the identifiable objects exempt from the differences of perspectives on them. I would argue AI's simple detection of similarities has dismissed a thinking through what the difference/similarity of similarity is in this regard.

Critics such as Pollock see in the AI intervention a dangerous move against Art History traditions, my reading of nineteenth-century theorists such as Blanc suggests an alternative reading, wherein the hallucination of lines is a repeated move within Western understandings of art. From here, my analysis of structured algorithmic lines leads to a further correlation with my interest in Deleuze's theory of assemblages of lines which is instituted to be a constant change and transformation. On the face of it, then, Deleuzian art theory would seem to oppose the algorithmic turn in art theory: Deleuze is concerned with flux, with changing configurations that alter even the identity of component parts, whereas the AI interventions are concerned with trans-historic stability. Nevertheless, it is my contention that Deleuze's investment in changes which dismiss a central structure is still dependent on the stability of lines, those visible/invisible lines, we might say, that we have read to constitute the visual for Copjec, Blanc and AI art theory. If I am right, however, and Deleuzian critiques of structure always require a prosaic structure that is not taken to be

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[212] Griselda Pollock, 'Computers can find similarities between paintings – but art history is about so much more'.

structure, and if this structure is readable as a repetition of the lines I am reading as seen and not seen in wider art theory, then my own reading becomes caught up in what it would condemn, premised as it becomes on a structure that is not localised in any textual instance, but persists across competing discourses: the structure that escapes, because required by, my critique of assumed and unread structure.

2.5 Gilles Deleuze's Theory on Geometry in *A Thousand Plateaus*

2.5.1 Introduction

In returning to Deleuze's theory, I am taking up arguments in my first chapter concerning the structure of Deleuzian political Utopia, where there is no hierarchy, organization, or centre. This idealism is located in his construction of rhizome, and the attendant optimism of becomings, and the hope that the *Real* could be reality. Deleuze's rhizomatic theory through his idea of lines of flight fulfils his ideal reality. From the first chapter, I have questioned what it would mean for the operation to be outside of Deleuze's rhizome and lines. In this chapter, it has brought my attention further to the structure of lines in Deleuze's plateau and rhizome theory. My concentration is on his difference of lines in Art History in relation to materiality and the Real. Copjec's idea of geometry is contingent on an endorsement of gaze and Lacanian drive. Blanc has faith in restoring the exact nature through representation, frames and metric measurement in that the seeing in painting can be secured. Blanc's material reliance has been contrary to Copjec's investment in her Real, which is preserved in a projective distance via the subject's drive. As for computer scientists, they propose computing data analysis according to the identification and recognition of AI. Geometry in this sense in Art History is nothing about representation, historicity, interpretation or reading but is a naïve structural matching game. It is not about the difference of constructions in painting but only identifiable sameness.

In terms of Deleuze, as I have discussed in this chapter's introduction between materiality or the Real in Art History, it might be contended, Deleuze is rather deconstructing the material turn, and investing in the Real's potential for freedom in politics.[213] In one sense, his Real is different from Lacanian investment, such as gaze and the other. Deleuze's hope is to establish multiplicities instead of being caught up with the one (although, of course, the Lacanian Real is fundamentally about non-textual or non-symbolic antagonisms, and thus — impossibly — differences). This liberty lies in the collapse of central control while this destruction can only be maintained when the rhizomatic structure is secured. His Real, as a French contemporary philosopher, Isabelle Garo, suggests, is '[unfolded]' through his notion of 'flow', which is with 'infinite possibilities':

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[213] Some critics label Deleuze's idea as new materialism (such as affects). Take, for example, Keith Ansell-Pearson, 'Deleuze's new materialism: naturalism, norms, and ethics', in *The New Politics of Materialism: History, Philosophy, Science*, eds by Sarah Ellenzweig and John H. Zammito (Routledge, 2017), pp. 88-109.

It is precisely why the notion of flow, which mediates the most important considerations of Deleuzian philosophy, constitutes the heart of an ontology that is vitalist in inspiration, and which conceptualises all processes in terms of exchanges of energy. The unique style of Deleuzian philosophy is in no way secondary, because it is this style which effects the conceptual symbiosis that unifies the most diverse aspects of *the real*, unfolding its infinite possibilities, whether they be critical or poetic [my italics]. [214]

Garo has offered a thinking of '*the real*' through 'the notion of flow'; nevertheless, from Garo's perspective, this 'flow' has to do with the idea of 'style'. That is, '*the real*' is tied to the '[effect]' of Deleuzian style and this '*real*' is related to be either 'critical' or 'poetic'. In another sense, '*the real*' is caught up with Deleuzian symbolics. Moreover, this '*real*' is involved in Deleuzian ideal politics in which revolution is the fulfilment of becoming instead of the fulfilment of history:

For Deleuze, in a highly significant way, May 1968 must be defined as 'a demonstration, an irruption, of becoming in its pure state' (Deleuze 1995: 171), whereby becoming replaces history and gives the term 'revolution' the role of a conceptual pivot. 'Revolution' itself comes to stand for a fleeting moment of this kind: it is still rooted in the idea of political engagement, if only because such a term maintains an evocative power in France. Deleuze tends to shift it into the area of desire and personal choice, but also into the area of a style of thinking which embodies this style of life. The political dimension of Deleuze's work is, therefore, real. But that does not mean that political analysis or even a political perspective can be found in a strictly defined way in his work. And the paradoxical feeling that his thought does have a specifically political contemporary relevance perhaps stems from the fact that what was in the process of disappearing when he wrote his work is, precisely, in the process of reemerging today: in both cases a figure becomes blurred and persists at the same time, the very idea of politics dissolves and is redefined, as that which never ceases to haunt philosophy and also to escape it.[215]

For Garo, the 'term' of 'revolution' '[given]' to be that 'becoming' in 'a conceptual pivot' is 'rooted in the idea of political engagement'. There is a shift of the 'term' from 'an evocative power' 'in France' to 'the area of desire', 'personal choice' and 'the area of a style of thinking'. In other words, Garo understands that the 'political dimension' is 'embodie[d]' by a shift from 'power' to individuality ('personal') and philosophical 'thinking' for

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[214] Isabelle Garo, 'Molecular Revolutions: The Paradox of Politics in the Work of Gilles Deleuze', in *Deleuze and Politics*, eds. by Ian Buchanan and Nicholas Thoburn (Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 54–73.
[215] Ibid., p. 71.

Deleuze. Based on Garo's contention of Deleuze's 'shift', Garo states 'the political dimension of Deleuze's work is, therefore, real'. This real of political 'relevance', however, does not come to be a knowable 'defin[ition]', but is from the 'process' of absence and presence. '[Disappearance]', '[re-emergence]', '[dissolution]', and '[redefinition]' of politics always 'haunt' and 'escape' 'philosophy'. Even though Garo underlines the impossibility of positioning Deleuze's political thinking (the real), Garo has overlooked her return to her predetermined/pre-known 'fact' of 'a figure', 'the process' of 'disappearing' and 'reemerging' and her self-defining 'real'.

Contrary to Garo's assured statement of that Real,[216] my proposal in the following analysis of Deleuze does not dwell on a knowing of Real, but will delve into the structure of Deleuze's theory and offer a *reading* of Deleuzian discourse. I will not render any answer of which Real is the truth (or claim which Real has been found). I will instead move in on how his structures and superstructures, such as his philosophical 'style', have constituted lines, rhizome, geometry and dimensions *to be that Real* in his work, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.[217] Before entering into my discussion of Deleuzian geometry, however, I will analyse his structures of lines relevant to rhizomes, middle-ness, plateaus, and literature movements to offer an understanding of his structures of structures.

2.5.2 Deleuze's Rhizome and Dimensionality

Firstly, I will focus on Deleuze's idea of rhizome and dimensionality:

Let us summarize the principal characteristics of a rhizome: unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. The rhizome is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple. It is not the One that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five, etc. It is not a multiple derived from the One, or to which One is added (n + 1). It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overspills. It constitutes linear multiplicities with n dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the One is always subtracted

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[216] To clarify: Isabelle Garo does not use the capital Real in my selected quotes, but here is my change to the Real in order to be in aligning with my rest of usages in the argument.

[217] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

(n - 1). When a multiplicity of this kind changes dimension, it necessarily changes in nature as well, undergoes a metamorphosis.[218]

Deleuze's construction of 'the rhizome' disrupts the hierarchical and genealogical connection of nature and signification. The plurality of 'trees' and 'their roots' bounds up with the specification of the 'points', 'traits' and 'signs'. That is, there is always a trace or origin for 'their roots' to connect with 'trees' in their units and sameness. This genealogy with the 'beginning' and the 'end' limits the freedom of 'grow[th]'. Deleuze proposes that the rhizome is liberated from these specific 'units', 'signs' and 'traits', but it transcends to 'grow' and '[overspill]' from 'a middle'. '[A] middle' grants 'multiplicities' without boundaries, as 'n dimensions' are detached from any other supplements, such as 'subject' and 'object'. Without any additionality, 'n dimensions' are located to be 'on a plane of consistency'. This consistency is not based on the derivation of 'the One' or 'a multiple' but on the 'subtract[ion]' of the One. In other words, this dimensionality collapses the order of units, but the negation of the One opens up different links or connections in movements, which is without any fixed identity of space.

'[N]-1' is no longer caught up within a dyad between 'the One' and 'n+1' but breaks down a series of linear singularities. Instead, 'linear multiplicities' are constituted to 'play very different regimes of signs and even nonsign states'. Signs and nonsign states are accessible to be played by the rhizome based on 'directions in motion'. Because of this motion in dimensionality, a metamorphosis takes place to change a multiplicity of 'n-1'. '[N]-1' in this sense is not structured to be in any stable nature of itself (a unit), but is always bonded with the other which is other than 'n-1'. The '[subtraction]' maintains the One to be a guarantee in the status of the negation and this negation allows multiplicities to be placed in a 'consisten[t]' change according to dimensions. In other words, I read that the constitution of dimensionality is through the double negations: the denial of the One ('n'-1)[219] and the subtraction (n '-1'), in that the '[direct]' chain of 'becom[ing]'/signs is always displaced/interrupted by otherness which is outside of the order.

This set-up construction of '[reducibility]' rather than 'added[ness]' supports the growth of the rhizome to multiplicities without limits. Deleuze's 'linear[ity]' is constituted by the breakdown of the continuality of units and by a consistent negation, which allows a reach to the different significations ('signs' and 'nonsign' states). Even though Deleuze

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[218] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 21.
[219] This could be read in another flip: the One is not the denial One, but the One is the non-negated One (which I have also argued in the later passage).

establishes a different ground that is apart from the opposition of the beginning and the end, the origin and completion, an idea of a middle still returns to the linguistic structure to validate its existence, and subtraction is dependent on what it is not — 'the One'. The system of Deleuze's negation cannot sustain negation to be negation without the other's validation (e.g. 'the One'). Although Deleuze's effort is to dismiss an origin, I would argue that this middle is predestined to be a knowable structure.

In *Deleuze and Art,* Anne Sauvagnargues expands upon the principle of rhizomes:

> Rightly so, the rhizome develops the theory of real multiplicities and proliferations. It corresponds to the order of the multiple and initiates a mode of plurality that can no longer be traced back to binary logic of the One that becomes two, the "oldest and most tired" thought arising from arborescent dichotomies. Along with Bergson, Deleuze calls for a real and substantive multiplicity that is plural and cannot be reduced to unity or dichotomous binaries. This rhizomatic multiplicity refuses to bring real diversity back to a simple division. It only contests the pragmatic existence of revolving roots, logical trees, divisions, caesura, and oppositions that are activated in nature, as well as in thought. […]Not by adding a higher dimension to the given; for example, an express correction of the sometimes simplistic statements in *Anti-Oedipus*, but rather, as is always the case in Deleuze, by force of sobriety and contraction, by removing the One from the reality in which it was believed to be used: in the species, the figure of exceptional genius, the figure of schizophrenia, the hero of culture, and the single artist. "Such a system could be called a rhizome", the theory and practice of decentered systems, the logic of real multiplicities, whose characteristics involve the following: first and second principles of connection and heterogeneity; a third principle of multiplicity; a fourth principle of nonsignifying rupture; and fifth and sixth principles of cartography and transfer.[220]

Sauvagnargues's understanding of rhizome theory rests on a collapse of the binary system and of unity. The removal of the One can achieve 'real' multiplicities. This realness has to do with the refusal of the 'simple division'. That is, multiplicities are not reducible and divisible. Nevertheless, I have read out that the One is impossible to be removed as the One is the third necessary to secure its subtraction. That is, negation is dependent on what is not negated and through this non-negated One, it can reach negation. The denial of the One could only be founded on what it is not denied — the One. In other words, Sauvagnargues's

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[220] Anne Sauvagnargues, *Deleuze and Art*, trans. by Samantha Bankston (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), pp. 125-126.

interpretation has taken the notion of pure negation for granted without thinking of the possibility of that impossibility. My problematisation thus will return to question the status of the One: Can the One be dismissed without the One *being the One* for negation?

Further, in relation to the rhizome, Deleuze redefines an idea of his dimensionality which is cut off from the groupings and relations. This maximum dimensionality is, instead, composed of the absence of lines and territorialization, which deconstructs the locality:

> Unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, with binary relations between the points and biunivocal relationships between the positions, the rhizome is made only of lines: lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature. These lines, or lineaments, should not be confused with lineages of the arborescent type, which are merely localizable linkages between points and positions. Unlike the tree, the rhizome is not the object of reproduction: neither external reproduction as image-tree nor internal reproduction as tree-structure. The rhizome is an antigenealogy. It is a short-term memory, or antimemory. The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots.[221]

That is, lines can never be pinned down by any internal or external 'object' and '[genealogy]'. In one sense, lines are not objectified to be a reproduction of either an image or a structure. Lines are lines without the other's validation to be 'lines', as lines are not 'object[s]' nor 'object[s] of reproduction'. That is, lines are outside of the chain of any object or subject as 'n dimensions having neither subject nor object' (and lines constitute this dimensionality). The constitution of 'dimensionality' does not rely on the 'object[ified]' 'points' and any fixed location as a 'structure'. I read lines, therefore, implicitly to be constructed in terms of transcendental autonomy, this allowing their operation of 'variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots'. Without being a structure and being limited by the particular 'linkages', 'segmentarity' and 'the line of flight' establish 'deterritorialized' space beyond any border of '[binarity]' or '[biunivocality]'. From my reading, lines, for Deleuze, will never be touched by others (as lines are without 'relations' between 'points' or 'positions'), or this touch will never form any stable/fixed link, but infinite growth of untouching connections. In this sense, I would say, the territory of a rhizome without territory becomes territory (a de-spaced space). Based on this negation, this space is without any closure and is always caught up in a movement — '[varies, expands, conquers, captures,

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[221] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 21.

and being offshoots]'. If we read further about Deleuze's idea rhizome, this has to do with dynamism and decentralisation:

> Unlike the graphic arts, drawing, or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. It is tracings that must be put on the map, not the opposite. In contrast to centered (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and preestablished paths, the rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states. What is at question in the rhizome is a relation to sexuality—but also to the animal, the vegetal, the world, politics, the book, things natural and artificial—that is totally different from the arborescent relation: all manner of "becomings".[222]

According to Deleuze, the system of the rhizome is always in a movement of 'becomings' and 'becomings' are 'defined solely by a circulation of states'. There is no '[centre]', '[hierarchy]', signifying system, '[organization]', 'central[ity]', or 'automaton' to determine the development of the rhizome. The rhizome does not depend on any pre-establishment or any pre-determined 'tracings'. '[T]racings' are 'put on' the map in which tracings are always constructed and produced, as there is not a secured state of a map to be traceable. What Deleuze proposes here is to collapse a 'hierarchical' and knowable relation and 'central[ity]' and to set up a *dynamic* rhizome. '[A]ll manner of becomings' opens up the possibility to any link or connection in the system. Deleuze's theory guarantees the removal of retrospection and an ongoing process of becoming. To Deleuze, 'becomings' are always present and changeable. No single trace or link is repeated for the centre, as the absence of the centre allows the freedom of lines to move in directions. Even though Deleuze strives to be against any localisation (such as a centre), I would argue that he has returned to absolutely assured locality, 'the middle', which Deleuze does not acknowledge as a contradiction (for Deleuze, I would say, this middle is nature):

> A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end. A rhizome is made of plateaus. Gregory Bateson uses the word "plateau" to designate something very special: a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end. Bateson cites Balinese culture as an example: mother-child sexual games, and

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[222] Ibid., p. 21.

even quarrels among men, undergo this bizarre intensive stabilization. "Some sort of continuing plateau of intensity is substituted for [sexual] climax", war, or a culmination point. It is a regrettable characteristic of the Western mind to relate expressions and actions to exterior or transcendent ends, instead of evaluating them on a plane of consistency on the basis of their intrinsic value.[223]

On the one hand, a plateau is validated by its positionality — 'in the middle' — to grant the 'intrinsic value' without closure or an 'end'. It is not a plateau intrinsically inheriting a characteristic of 'a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities', but is the locality of a plateau ('middle[ness]') that opens up the possibility of being unlocatable. On the other hand, the designation of the meaning allows the word '"plateau"' to be excluded from 'a culmination point or external end'. In this sense, I would say, a plateau is always caught up in a position and signification to validate its '[continuality]' and '[self-vibration]'. This self-autonomy is not from a plateau as an object but is from the 'designation' of 'the word' '"plateau"' by 'Gregory Bateson'. In other words, I would argue that it is the textuality that enables a plateau to cut off an end of a region of limited 'intensity', and 'substitute' '"[sexual] climax", war, or a culmination point'. In this way, '"[s]ome sort of continuing plateau of intensity"' as displacement or substitution stabilises the unstable identity of meaning. This leads to Deleuze's comment of 'bizarre[ness]' which lies in the impossibility of reaching any harmony of fixed meaning, and this un-fixation in turn stabilises 'a plane of consistency' of 'intrinsic value' without 'transcendent ends'. What I read out here is that although Deleuze's idea of plateaus is to deconstruct the fixed identity of meaning, Deleuze's plateaus in turn, as I have argued, relies on his constitution and confirmation of signification, '"the word"', '"plateaus"'.

2.5.3 Deleuze's Literature and Movement

Thus far, I have analysed the idea of rhizome which has to do with the removal of closure and the fulfilment of becoming. In this structure, Deleuze's construction of art/literature is liberated from the fixed meaning of signification and representation:

A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be", but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, "and... and... and..." This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb "to be". Where are you going? Where are you coming from?

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[223] Ibid., pp. 21-22.

What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions. Making a clean slate, starting or beginning again from ground zero, seeking a beginning or a foundation—all imply a false conception of voyage and movement (a conception that is methodical, pedagogical, initiatory, symbolic...). But Kleist, Lenz, and Biichner [*sic*] have another way of traveling and moving: proceeding from the middle, through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing. American literature, and already English literature, manifest this rhizomatic direction to an even greater extent; they know how to move between things, establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings. They know how to practice pragmatics. The middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.[224]

'American literature' and 'English literature' are not the 'manifest[ation]' of the reading here but the 'manifest[ation]' of 'this rhizomatic direction'. The manifestation of this direction is based on their 'know[ing]' of 'mov[ing]', 'logic', 'ontology', 'foundations', 'endings', 'beginnings' and 'pragmatics'. Because of this pre-existing knowledge, the movement in the betweenness, the establishment of the 'logic', and the dismissal of 'ontology', 'a foundation', 'beginnings' and 'endings' are validated. I would say, without *a priori*, there is no ground for a 'middle'. That is, Deleuze's 'nullif[ication]' of the origin still returns to be the foundation for his 'middle'. It is through the negation of the 'one' and 'the other' that supports the existence of 'the middle'. The direction is granted not by the confirmation of the 'beginning' and the 'end' but by the negation of them. In this sense, the negation is also what 'American literature' and 'English literature' 'manifest'. This 'middle' is in an unlocatable location 'where things pick up speed'.

'[S]peed' is 'pick[ed] up' not by literature or directions, but it is 'things' that as otherness direct the movement of literature. It follows that literature in this understanding is always deferred to be read, but is caught up in the continuality of a move and the structure of the 'conjunction'. This 'conjunction' breaks down the specific and definitive relation and sets up an alliance for the openness of meaning. Even though the task of Deleuze is to deconstruct the knowable root and designated significations, I read an inescapable dependence on pre-knowledge of the very symbolics that he strives to dismiss. Literature is displaced to be read, located and founded but is constituted by the linguistic 'fabric' which

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[224] Ibid., p. 25.

'sweeps' and 'undermines' a one-way direction and the dual relationship between 'one thing' and 'the other'. '[A] perpendicular direction' and 'a transversal movement' secure 'the middle' for literature to be 'manifest[ed]'. Literature here is not the representation of words or objects but the dynamism of the unlocalizable location.

Although the project of Deleuze's theory here is to destabilise the locality, Deleuze's development of infinity still requests the construction of a logic of language. That is, movement, the rhizomatic direction or manifestation are established by the language, such as '"and... and... and..."'. The undesignated 'things' in place validate the possibility of the middle (being middle) and construct that betweenness for the move of a rhizome. The movement of the rhizome does not transcend to be movement at its purest. The language, according to Deleuze's grammatical structure, allows the opening of the circulation and the loop of the move. As follows, Deleuze theorises further his idea of literature to be 'an assemblage' according to the 'measure':

> Literature is an assemblage. It has nothing to do with ideology. There is no ideology and never has been. All we talk about are multiplicities, lines, strata and segmentarities, lines of flight and intensities, machinic assemblages and their various types, bodies without organs and their construction and selection, the plane of consistency, and in each case the units of measure. Stratometers, deleometers, BwO units of density, BwO units of convergence: Not only do these constitute a quantification of writing, but they define writing as always the measure of something else. Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.[225]

Deleuze's idea of literature is detached from 'ideology' based on his construction of 'an assemblage'. An assemblage is not composed of the precision of signification nor is the definitive qualification, but is 'the units of measure'. The measure is not in a unit, but 'the units' achieve the constitution of 'a quantification of writing'. 'Writing' does not define literature or an assemblage while '[s]tratometers, deleometers, BwO units of density, BwO units of convergence' define what the writing is. 'Writing' is always caught up to being 'the measure of something else', but this measure is irrelevant to '[signification]'. In one sense, literature is not for reading meaning but for the accomplishment of the pure 'measure' by 'surveying' and 'mapping'. For Deleuze, literature is not readable but measurable through his definition of writing, which is supported by the quantified assemblage.

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[225] Ibid., p. 4.

My problematisation here returns to my critique of Bueno's theory in the first chapter: are Deleuze's ideas of asignification, measurement, quantification unreadable? Are they escapable from or falling outside signifying structures? If art/literature or art/literary criticism is constituted by measure and quantification, does Deleuze's own 'writing' collapse to be self-evident and meaningless digits, numbers, or lines? Nevertheless, if we read further about Deleuze's idea of assemblage in relation to a book, he destabilises his own contingency on asignification, shifting to a sense of antagonism between asignification and signification:

> In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an assemblage. A book is an assemblage of this kind, and as such is unattributable. It is a multiplicity—but we don't know yet what the multiple entails when it is no longer attributed, that is, after it has been elevated to the status of a substantive. One side of a machinic assemblage faces the strata, which doubtless make it a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject; it also has a side facing a body without organs, which is continually dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate, and attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity. What is the body without organs of a book? There are several, depending on the nature of the lines considered, their particular grade or density, and the possibility of their converging on a "plane of consistency" assuring their selection.[226]

As I read it in this passage, lines, in Deleuze's formulation, are located 'in' the space of objects, such as 'a book' or 'all things' rather than structured to be outside.[227] That is, the 'constitut[ion]' of 'an assemblage' is from what is 'in' the objects. An assemblage does not compose itself into 'multiplicity', but is supplemented by 'lines' and 'speeds'. What I take to be an inconsistent identity of lines situates an assemblage to be at the state of absence and presence, strata and destratification, and territories and deterritorialization at the same time. Deleuze's idea of assemblage that I read here does not exclude signification or a subject;

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[226] Ibid., pp. 3-4.
[227] Deleuze does not maintain his theory of space in relation to lines in consistency. There is a shift in perspective about the lines located at an inside or an outside of things. If we see the quote referred to footnote 226 (from the same quote), Deleuze has located lines to be outside of multiplicity and this outside defines multiplicity.

instead, the antagonism he calls upon sustains different sides of an assemblage to be validated by the act of 'fac[ing]'. The dimensionality of assemblage allows itself to be constructed and deconstructed by facing 'the strata' or 'a body without organs'. '[T]he strata' and 'a body' are not part of the assemblage, but what is outside of the assemblage that it faces simultaneously grants and decomposes the 'organism', 'signifying totality' and 'determination attributable to a subject'. Assemblage does not produce 'a kind of organism', but it is made by the other. The double otherness, 'the strata' and 'a body without organs', I would say, uncannily maintains an assemblage to be and not to be the 'organism', '[signification]' and '[attribution]'.

Further, I read that 'dismantle[ment]' is in '[continuality]' and the 'organism' is thus de-subjectised to be only 'a name'. This 'name' is not the trace of any object or subject but 'the trace of an intensity'. In this sense, from a 'side' of an assemblage, the organism does not stay on to be locatable object or subject, but to be 'an intensity' that is traceable. An assemblage is no longer bound to any designated meaning or particular 'organs', as a 'body' is liberated from the structural components. For Deleuze, the 'body' is instead reliant on 'the nature of the lines' and this 'nature', I would say, autonomously displaces 'organs' with 'grade' or 'density'. What I realise here is that the 'lines' displace 'organs' to assure the purity of the body which is dependent on 'their [the lines'] converge[nce]' and 'their [the lines'] selection'. In this sense, my reading is that the body of a book is such through deferral, the lines and the 'flow' on the lines as supplements determining what a book is. Accordingly, the production of the lines relies on 'comparative rates of flow' in which speeds are 'measurable' based on 'relativ[ity]' of 'slowness', 'viscosity', 'acceleration' and 'rupture'. Deleuze's speeds and lines here are contingent on relationality and their 'particular[ity]' respectively to compose a dynamic and unlocatable assemblage. Although Deleuze invests in the middle ground to affirm the 'unattributable' of 'an assemblage of this kind' ('a book'), his middle still requires the knowable supplements, such as lines and speeds, to fulfil what the unknown could be (to 'the status of a substantive').

2.5.4 Deleuze's Lines and Geometry

Within the above, I have analysed Deleuze's foundation of his lines theory based on rhizomes and plateaus. In order to understand further the structures of lines, I would borrow Sauvagnargues's snapshot about lines here:

Let's simplify these lines in terms of becoming, which is explained in *Rhizome* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. Tree lines are intertwined and form every body. The hard line corresponds to molar formations, which is proceeded by generalized overcoding. The relatively supple line of tangled codes and territorialities, which corresponds to molecular lines, always moves across molar lines "as the molecular fabric that this assemblage dives into". The molecular line implies a movement of deterritorialization. Thirdly, the line of flight decodes and deterritorializes: art entails such a line of flight as it is pushes toward the excellence of genius, but just as lines of flight presuppose the territory that they deterritorialize, art, like other bodies, constantly mixes these three lines. The desiring machines from *Anti-Oedipus* and the assemblages from *A Thousand Plateaus* are composed of these lines, forming a cartography of bodies.[228]

According to Sauvagnargues's understanding, lines are not independently existent, but caught up with 'becoming'. This 'becoming' has to do with '[intertwining]', 'form[ing]', '[corresponding]', '[moving]', '[decoding]', '[deterritorializing]' and '[assemblaging]'. That is, lines are not isolated in their own units and movements. The movement always involves the act of '[mixing]' with others while at the same time deforming and reforming something different other than itself and the other. Different lines are pre-known to be what they should be in their roles. Art, in this manner, is about the movement of '[pushing] toward the excellence of genius'. This 'genius' for art is not the work of singularity or territorialization, but 'a cartography of bodies'. The '[composition]' of 'bodies' is an ongoing process of 'becoming'. Lines will never cease to constitute the production of assemblages. Sauvagnargues has offered her grasp of the connection between lines and art which is always in a move of being something other than itself; nevertheless, Sauvagnargues's framing of lines and art is based on her claims to pre-knowledge of what art is which can '[entail]' 'a line of flight'. My reading of lines in the following paragraphs does not entail what art is nor does my previous reading of art offer any entailing of lines. My analysis is to challenge the general criticism of Deleuze which ignores the inconsistent shifts in Deleuze's constitution and structure of lines.[229]

Let us turn into the details of Deleuze's lines and assemblages here:

An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections. There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There

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[228] Anne Sauvagnargues, *Deleuze and Art*, p. 132.

[229] The general criticism can be read, for example, Anne Sauvagnargues's *Deleuze and Art* (please see footnote 220).

are only lines. When Glenn Gould speeds up the performance of a piece, he is not just displaying virtuosity, he is transforming the musical points into lines, he is making the whole piece proliferate. The number is no longer a universal concept measuring elements according to their emplacement in a given dimension but has itself become a multiplicity that varies according to the dimensions considered (the primacy of the domain over a complex of numbers attached to that domain). We do not have units (*unites*) of measure, only multiplicities or varieties of measurement. The notion of unity {*unite*) appears only when there is a power takeover in the multiplicity by the signifier or a corresponding subjectification proceeding: This is the case for a pivot-unity forming the basis for a set of biunivocal relationships between objective elements or points, or for the One that divides following the law of a binary logic of differentiation in the subject. Unity always operates in an empty dimension supplementary to that of the system considered (overcoding).[230]

Lines, I read here, are set up as autonomous existence 'in a rhizome' where the composition of lines is not from any 'points' or 'positions'. Lines are not reducible to points while the 'transform[ation]' of points is possible to become lines, contingent on the '[speed]'. That is, the process of the becoming necessitates the external speed at which the irreversible lines can be therefore produced. In this sense, lines are not structured to be a compound of different components, but lines themselves *always maintain their statuses as lines*. It is not a dual-direction of movement of transformation, as only 'points' are made 'into lines' (rather than lines made into points). Deleuze's construction of the stable identity of lines here enables the 'expan[sion]' of 'its connections'. These 'connections' are established by lines without 'the signifier' or 'corresponding subjectification'. The 'appear[ance]' of 'unity' will instead break down 'multiplicities or varieties of measurement'.

According to Deleuze, an idea of varieties of measurement could only be achieved by getting rid of 'biunivocal relationships' or 'a binary logic of differentiation'. The '[operation]' of 'unity' in relation to a fixed 'emplacement' is set to be in a 'supplementary' dimension which is 'empty' and 'overcoding'. I read that 'supplementary' does not benefit 'this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity', but it is rather an excess, which is 'overcoding'. Take, for example, the 'number', to Deleuze, is constructed as a concept based on a 'given' dimension. If deconstructing the fixed measurement in a specific dimension, the 'number' can be redefined based on the considered domain. In other words, the identity of the number is caught up with different dimensionalities and its meaning is not validated

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[230] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 8.

by itself. The number, becoming a 'multiplicity', displaces the 'universal' meaning from 'their emplacement'.

In order to destabilise the fixed locality of '[signification]' and 'subjectification', what Deleuze implies is to rip the 'unity' off from the system. The '[operation]' of 'unity', as 'supplementary', hinders the '[expansion]' of 'connections' and the 'change' of 'nature'. The liberation from a structure can only be fulfilled by a self-autonomous becoming or an external transformation by the other (e.g. 'Glenn Gould' 'speeds up the performance of a piece'). I would argue that even though Deleuze's 'lines' open up the closure of signification and measurement for the other, the construction of lines is still inevitably inescapable from being a knowable object. Deleuze's elimination of the structure of points and positions from multiplicities requests his unacknowledged structural lines to render freedom for the growth of different dimensions. Nevertheless, Deleuze's structure of lines' locality does not maintain the same position, such as 'in' 'all things', as there is a shift that sees the line of flight located as 'an outside':[231]

> The point is that a rhizome or multiplicity never allows itself to be overcoded, never has available a supplementary dimension over and above its number of lines, that is, over and above the multiplicity of numbers attached to those lines. All multiplicities are flat, in the sense that they fill or occupy all of their dimensions: we will therefore speak of a plane of consistency of multiplicities, even though the dimensions of this "plane" increase with the number of connections that are made on it. Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities. The plane of consistency (grid) is the outside of all multiplicities. The line of flight marks: the reality of a finite number of dimensions that the multiplicity effectively fills; the impossibility of a supplementary dimension, unless the multiplicity is transformed by the line of flight; the possibility and necessity of flattening all of the multiplicities on a single plane of consistency or exteriority, regardless of their number of dimensions. The ideal for a book would be to lay everything out on a plane of exteriority of this kind, on a single page, the same sheet: lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations. Kleist invented a writing of this type, a broken chain of affects and variable speeds, with accelerations and transformations, always in a relation with the outside. Open rings. His texts, therefore, are opposed in every way to the classical or romantic book constituted by the interiority of a substance or subject. The war machine-book against the State apparatus-book. *Flat multiplicities of n dimensions* are asignifying and asubjective. They are

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[231] Please see footnote 226 and footnote 227.

designated by indefinite articles, or rather by partitives {*some* couchgrass, *some* of a rhizome ...).[232]

The notion of 'overcoded' has to do with the 'over[ness]' of 'its number of lines'. The limit of the number of lines is what stabilises the status of a rhizome or multiplicity. '[I]ts number of lines', in this sense, determines the act of coding (to be or not to be 'overcoded'). Inclusion or exclusion ('availab[ility]') of a supplementary dimension is regulated by 'its number of lines'. '[T]he multiplicity of numbers' does not sustain to be 'numbers' by themselves, but they are 'attached to those lines'. '[T]hose lines' are not only lines at their purest, but those lines are quantified in the finite dimensions (e.g. it is not all the dimensions that will be included, such as a 'supplementary' dimension). '[T]heir dimensions' are something that can be 'fill[ed]' or 'occup[ied]' by that 'flat[ness]'. '[T]he plane of consistency of multiplicities' is established not by maintaining unchangeable but by the 'increase' of 'dimensions' and 'connections'. This consistency is not set up from the inner structure but an 'outside' locality: 'the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization'.

There is a deferral for this changeability and connections of multiplicities as multiplicities are always defined by the other, an 'outside'. What is outside determines the construction of multiplicities, such as the '[mark]' from 'the line of flight' for 'dimensions', 'a supplementary dimension', or the act of 'flattening'. 'Flat[ness]' in one sense is constituted to grant the detachment from signification and subjectivity ('asignifying and asubjective'). '[A] plane of exteriority' opens up the closure of the specificity of 'a subject' or signification. '[T]he outside' supports 'a broken chain of affects and variable speeds, with accelerations and transformations'. The 'interiority of a substance or subject' instead closes up the possibility of 'indefinite articles'.

I would argue, according to Deleuze, that the validation of limitless meanings and connections in multiplicities *requires a knowable structure*, which is always necessitated to be located outside. The opposition and differences between interiority and exteriority are Deleuze's mechanism to rationalise his investment in variable significations, history and politics, *which always requires the third (e.g. the lines) to secure its ideal state of instability*. Even though Deleuze invests his structure in an outside, this outside, I would contend, still collapses into a structure. That is, Deleuze has not theorised what is falling *outside* 'outside' of his structure (as I have critiqued in the first chapter). Deleuze has also further strived to

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[232] Ibid., p. 9.

dismiss locality and an origin of the line, while in my analysis I would argue returns as origin, as the betweenness:

> Does the same thing, strictly the same thing, apply to painting? In effect, the point does not make the line; the line sweeps away the deterritorialized point, carries it off under its outside influence; the line does not go from one point to another, but runs between points in a different direction that renders them indiscernible. The line has become the diagonal, which has broken free from the vertical and the horizontal. But the diagonal has already become the transversal, the semidiagonal or free straight line, the broken or angular line, or the curve—always in the midst of themselves. Between the white vertical and the black horizontal lie Klee's gray, Kandinsky's red, Monet's purple; each forms a block of color. This line is without origin, since it always begins off the painting, which only holds it by the middle; it is without coordinates, because it melds with a plane of consistency upon which it floats and that it creates; it is without localizable connection, because it has lost not only its representative function but any function of outlining a form of any kind—by this token, the line has become abstract, truly abstract and mutant, a visual block; and under these conditions the point assumes creative functions again, as a color-point or line-point. [233]

For Deleuze, the movement of 'the line' is set up to be in a specific domain, which is 'between points in a different direction'. That 'between[ness]' provides a space for 'a different direction'. This '[run]' of the line in a 'different' direction allows lines themselves to be 'indiscernible'. I read that '[indiscernibility]' has to do with the movement of the 'run'. That is, my understanding of Deleuze's idea of '[becoming]' of the otherness (from the diagonal to the other line), such as 'the transversal, the semidiagnal or free straight line, the broken or angular line, or the curve', lies on an 'indiscernible' change which offers a space for establishing the possibility of what 'has already become'. In other words, the transformation of the line which is 'indiscernible' has to do with what is already there: the process/predetermination of becoming in which the singular diagonal has become different entities. Prior to the identity of the diagonal, the identity of the diagonal is already variable. The double becoming, such as the becoming of 'the diagonal' and 'the transversal, the semidiagnal or free straight line, the broken or angular line, or the curve', stabilise 'themselves' to be variable. Even though the general criticism of Deleuze's line theory pays attention to Deleuze's lines being transformed, decentralised and unorganised, what I recognise is that the transformed lines, such as 'the diagonal', has to do with 'being broken

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[233] Ibid., p. 298.

free' from a/an (organised/localised) structure, a priori or an origin, 'the vertical' and 'the horizontal' lines.[234]

Based on my reading on lines, I will be analysing further Deleuze's idea of 'points', 'color' and 'block' in painting. I read that Deleuze's transformation of lines or points always request 'conditions'; that is, the change does not happen in autonomy but is always based on the conditions of locality ('the middle'), relationality of the other ('points' and 'the line'), or a set-up origin ('the vertical' and 'the horizontal'). Take, for example, in painting, for the sake of 'effect', 'the point does not make the line' while there is a transformation happening, such as a point becomes 'as a color-point or line-point' when 'the line has become abstract, truly abstract and mutant, a visual block'. That is, the change of points is based on the becoming of the line which is 'abstract'. The loss of the '[localisation]' of the 'connection' causes the line to be 'abstract' and 'mutant'. The line is no longer staying as the permanent status of the line but as a 'visual' 'abstract' 'block'. Based on these conditions, the point displaces the line to 'operate' / '[assume]' creative functions.

The second example of the condition of the structure is the color in painting. What I read is that 'a block of color' is supported by the structure of 'the white vertical and the black horizontal' and color does not sustain itself without being located in the 'between[ness]' of lines. For Deleuze, in painting, the line is without an 'origin' 'since it always begins off the painting'. I would say, the painting is a precondition of eliminating an origin while this has in turn established the painting to be that origin of lines. Apart from painting, for Deleuze, that 'middle' and 'a plane of consistency' are the contingencies of lines that cancel the origin; however, I also read these two localities are the structures which, I would say, returns to be an origin of lines.

Further, in another quote, Deleuze has also fallen into his own trap of an origin of the line:

> The line is between points, in their midst, and no longer goes from one point to another. It does not outline a shape. "He did not paint things, he painted between things". There is no false problem in painting than depth and, in particular, perspective. For perspective is only *a* historical manner of occupying diagonals or transversals, lines of flight [lignes de fuite: here, the lines in a painting moving toward the vanishing point, or point de fuite—Trans.], in other words, of reterritorializing the moving visual block. We use the word "occupy" in the

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[234] The word 'transformation', 'transformed' or 'transforming' is drawn from Deleuze's idea which Deleuze has used throughout his book, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Please see footnote 220 for the example of the general criticism of Deleuze's lines.

sense of "giving an occupation to", fixing a memory and a code, assigning a function. But the lines of flight, the transversals, are suitable for many other functions besides this molar function. Lines of flight as perspective lines, far from being made to represent depth, themselves invent the possibility of such a representation, which occupies them only for an instant, at a given moment. Perspective, and even depth, are the reterritorialization of lines of flight, which alone created painting by carrying it farther. What is called central perspective in particular plunged the multiplicity of escapes and the dynamism of lines into a punctual black hole. Conversely, it is true that problems of perspective triggered a whole profusion of creative lines, a mass release of visual blocks, at the very moment they claimed to have gained mastery over them. Is painting, in each of its acts of creation, engaged in a becoming as intense as that of music?[235]

In this passage, Deleuze especially strives to address his proposed 'problem' of 'depth' and 'perspective' in painting. For Deleuze, the issue of depth and perspective lie on 'a historical manner' of '[occupation]' of lines. The historical '[occupation]' is about a 'memory', a 'code' and 'assign[ation]' for either 'diagonals' or 'transversals'. Instead of being the product of 'representation', Deleuze proposes that 'lines of flight' are for 'invent[ing]' representation and this is an act 'only for an instant, at a given moment'. In this perspective, the idea of 'an instant' of the invention of representation prevails 'a historical manner' of representation. That is, Deleuze's constitution of invention is tied in with a precondition — an '[instancy]', immediacy. Creation or invention has to do with 'reterritorialization of lines of flight' instead of 'reterritorialization of the moving visual block'. For Deleuze, his problematisation of 'perspective' is to overturn the fixity of representation and historical occupation. Instead, Deleuze proposes the possibility of '[invention]', 'creation', 'dynamism', 'multiplicity', and destruction of 'central perspective'.

Even though Deleuze's critique here is to overcome a predetermined perspective, depth and representation in painting, his endorsement in the function/role of lines of flight instead collapses into another predetermination in terms of the movement ('toward the vanishing point') and the moment (which is 'given'). On the other hand, Deleuze seeks to justify 'the problems of perspectives' which can produce the 'trigger' of 'mastery' of 'creative lines' and 'visual blocks'. Nevertheless, I would argue, the idea of '[trigger]' implies that 'creatives lines' and 'visual blocks' already exist before the trigger of 'perspective' (as lines/blocks are awaiting to be 'triggered'). If this 'perspective' as the trigger could imply an origin, does it also mean that 'acts of creation' are predetermined?

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[235] Ibid., p. 298.

Does that mean creativity or changeability is always caught up with an inescapable structure of triggering?

2.6 Chapter Conclusion: Inescapable Structured Structures?

To conclude this chapter, I have thought to revisit Deleuze's pursuit of liberation from centralised political control, that which leads different critics to argue whether Deleuze proposes democracy.[236] Nevertheless, I will not offer a further polemic in that field.[237] I am instead turning to a Jacques Derrida quotation to support me to think again about the political implications of lines or geometry which, I would say, already delimits a constitution of Deleuzian philosophy. That is, every new creation of Deleuze's idea already has its prehistory since without having 'some' "'idea'"[238] of what creativity, lines, flight, and freedom are, the newness will not be 'invented'.[239] His hope of either 'becoming-revolutionary' or 'becoming-democracy'[240] has implied ongoing changes and differences in a *structure*, and I would contend Deleuze does not theorise this *structure* of becoming, just as the plateaus, or, at some stages, the lines, seem immune from the collapse of structure his hope for revolution rests upon.[241] For Deleuze, then, the effort of politics is to eliminate structure, according to rhizomatic and line theory. Nevertheless, this act of de-structuring in turn implies another structure, one rooted in a knowledge of what is not a structure. This is what I borrow from Derrida's problematisation on the transcendental, purest and determined meaning of democracy:

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[236] The debates in this area can refer to Raniel SM. Reyes's 'Becoming-Democratic as Becoming-Revolutionary', *Kritike* 12 (3):68-95 (2019). According to Reyes, critics have been involved in the contradiction of Deleuze's minoritarian proposal against majoritarian decisions in democracy. Some other critics, such as Reyes himself, overturn the criticism of liberal democracy but insist the validity of Deleuze's different democracy is contingent on the idea of becoming (in the sense that 'fluid politics' can recognise the subalterns and their 'discourse': 'This becomes possible because this fluid politics is configured by subterranean shifts in the attitudes, sensibilities, and beliefs of people and communities' (Ibid., p. 89). Nevertheless, Reyes does not realise the issue of Deleuzian non-binarism ground in which it is inescapable for Reyes to always return to the binary between the white and the subalterns to address the inequity. Reyes's endorsement of political *fluidity* and subaltern *voices* could be problematised in terms of what legitimates that fluidity and voices (to be heard, listened or displayed?)

[237] Apart from the footnote above, Reyes has discussed more different perspectives on the democracy of Deleuze.

[238] Here I borrow Derrida's notion of 'some' "'idea'". Please see the long quote I refer to in the passage.

[239] This links back to the quote that I have mentioned from Peg Rawes, 'Each chapter represents an inflection of Deleuze's desire for invention in philosophy […]'. (*Space, geometry and aesthetics: through Kant and towards Deleuze,* p. xvi). I am here questioning Rawes's unquestionable belief of Deleuze's 'invention'. Can invention stand on its own ground without acknowledgement of the other?

[240] Please find more discussions about becoming democratic and becoming revolutionary in Paul Patton's article: Paul Patton, 'Becoming-Democratic', in *Deleuze and Politics*, eds by Ian Buchanan and Nicholas Thoburn (Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 178-195 (p. 184).

[241] I know Deleuze hopes to abandon the central structure while my problematisation here is whether this structure of becoming will turn out to be another way of subtle centralisation (this becoming is predestined to be an ongoing movement).

> We already have some "idea" of what "democracy" should mean, and what it
> will have already meant —and the idea, the ideal, the Greek eidos or the idea
> also designates the turn of a contour, the limit surrounding a visible form. Did
> we not have some idea of democracy, we would never worry about its
> indetermination. We would never seek to elucidate its meaning or, indeed, call
> for its advent.[242]

In another sense, Deleuze's overture for changeability and indetermination lies in his idea
of what is already knowable to him in his theory. So, if the reality of politics falls outside of
Deleuze's structure (of theory), will Deleuze's *idea* of revolution collapse? And will
Deleuze's *idea* of lines of flight be a stumbling block for his politics, which can only work
out inside his structure? My questions on structure could correlate back to my argument on
AI's data analysis which is also caught up with its own historical comparison of paintings
based on the sameness in its structure. As for Blanc, his fidelity to the representation of
nature constructs a structure of measurement and perspectives in contrast to Copjec's
contingencies of the Real (which is the structure necessary for her idea of projective
geometry, which, in my reading, requires an unread structure and unread lines).

Let me close this chapter by introducing Michel Foucault's preface for Gilles
Deleuze's book, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Foucault has subtly indicated
the impossibility of wiping out enemies (as structures), such as fascism. The cancellation of
the structure is always haunted by what is to be exterminated. Political enemies are not just
based on historicity as external factors, while what is outside is already located inside.
Fascism, according to this reading, is 'in us'. Deleuzian escapism of politically organised
structures could thus be read to be already caught up in an inevitable structure of itself.

> Last but not least, the major enemy, the strategic adversary is fascism (whereas
> Anti-Oedipus' opposition to the others is more of a tactical engagement). And
> not only historical fascism, the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini—which was able
> to mobilize and use the desire of the masses so effectively—but also the fascism
> in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us
> to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us.[243]

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[242] Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*, trans. by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 18.
[243] Michel Foucault, 'Preface to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari', *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. xiii.

This makes me think: are Copjec, Blanc, or Elgammal, in the texts read above, only to be read as realising their desires for the Real, materiality or AI in Geometry Art History and politics? Or, are their desires for the Real, materiality and Geometry returning to *dominate* and *exploit* them? How, in other words, to read what is elevated as the unreadable in Copjec, Blanc and Elgammal as disruptive to the project they are claimed to secure?

Chapter 3 Paint, Psychoanalysis and Narrative

3.1 Dany Nobus's Psychoanalysis of Francis Bacon's Paint

3.1.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters, through my engagement with self-portrait (such as Rembrandt van Rijn) and geometry (such as Charles Blanc) in art history, I have been arguing that one prevalent trend in modern criticism of my selected 17th-century and 19th-century artworks is caught up with narratives of neurology, rhizome theory, and AI. In this chapter, I turn my attention to paint, not to make an appeal to materiality *itself*, but rather to continue my reading of the inescapable structures and narratives in art and criticism that my interest in neurology, rhizome theory, and AI has already brought to the fore.

Even though modern art criticism can be read to invest in ideas of progressive development and the fulfilment of expressionism,[244] such investment is caught up in the return of inevitable narratives and frames in art. Take, for example, the critical response to the work of Francis Bacon, especially, but not only, recent, psychoanalytically informed work. Bacon is often credited as a master for the creation of a new form of art expression that forgoes narrative, sequences, and signification: he has replaced representation with new and indeterminate interpretations. One of the significant recent articles on paint and psychoanalysis, 'From Sense to Sensation: Bacon, Pasting Paint and the Futility of Lacanian Psychoanalysis', written by Dany Nobus, praises the rejection of structure of narrative, sequences, and representation in Bacon's artworks, especially in his *Triptychs* of 1944.[245] Nevertheless, in this chapter, I will be contending Nobus's account of Bacon's promotion

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[244] There are several debates over Bacon's art style (whether it is abstraction/realism expressionism or realism). However, here, I am not focusing on the debates of categories of Bacon's art style while I am questioning what constitutes Bacon's *style*. Please see David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon* (Thames and Hudson, 1999). Even though Bacon disagrees with the entire aesthetics in abstract expressionism, he himself does not simply either dismiss or support abstraction or expressionism: 'Not necessarily. Because l very often throw it and then take a great sponge or rag and sponge it out, and that in itself leaves another totally different kind of form. You see, l want the paintings to come about so that they look as though the marks had a sort of inevitability about them. l hate that kind of sloppy sort of Central European painting. It's one of the reasons l don't really like abstract expressionism. Quite apart from its being abstract, I just don't like the sloppiness of it' (Ibid., p. 94). On the other hand, realism for Bacon has to do with re-invention and his idea of 'brutality of fact' —— 'Not an illustrative realism but a realism that comes about through a real invention of a new way to lock reality into something completely arbitrary' (Bacon has mentioned 'artificial' is a better way to say than 'arbitrary') (Ibid., p. 179).

[245] Dany Nobus, 'From sense to sensation: Bacon, pasting paint and the futility of Lacanian Psychoanalysis' in *Francis Bacon: Painting, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Ben Ware (Thames & Hudson, 2019).

of the process, immediacy, feelings, sensations, and interpretations calls upon deferrals, narratives, and structures.

3.1.2 Paint and James Joyce's Littering [246]

In Nobus's article, Bacon's pasting of the paint is compared to Lacan's analysis of James Joyce's littering of the letter in *Lituraterre*. Lacan's idea of littering of the letter depends on an impossible/undeterminable signification, as it is always a remaking. A first issue I have with Nobus's project is that although his claim is to confirm the positivity of failure of the fixed meaning of artwork which leads to an open and indeterminable interpretation, he cannot escape a sense of origin and pre-knowledge of negation. Based on this negation, Nobus sets his theory of Bacon upon the dismissal of the possibility of capturing the truth. However, I would argue, Nobus's notion of truth returns to the sense of its failing: *the failure of truth never fails*, with Nobus claiming to know exactly how this process occurs. In other words, Nobus's psychoanalytical concept of failure is established through its opposite. Moreover, even though Nobus has supported the analogy of psychoanalysis in his analysis of Bacon's paint in his article, he has an issue acknowledging that he himself is engaging with psychoanalysing Bacon: 'I should emphasise that this exercise has nothing to do with psychoanalysing Bacon […] but is purely geared towards eliciting a certain understanding of his creative process […]'.[247] Conversely, Nobus insists that this is only an act of 'eliciting' 'a certain understanding of his [Bacon's] creative process'.[248] This 'understanding', I will argue, is difficult to entirely separate from the kind of 'wild analysis'[249] of Bacon and his work Nobus critiques.

In the first section, I will be problematising Nobus's unquestionable truth, reality, failure, and materiality and will be asking the questions in terms of his reading of Bacon: Is there truth to appearance? How might paint enable the grasping of truth in its very failure?

> More specifically, I shall argue that Joyce's psychoanalysis by means of writing, or what may be designated as his 'writing cure', meets its pictorial counterpart

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[246] For more references on the idea of James Joyce's littering, please see Santanu Biswas, 'Why does Jacques Lacan Highlight James Joyce's Expression, The Letter The Litter', *PsychoanalysisLacan* 6, (2023), pp. 51-68. Axel Nesme, 'The Purloined Letters of Elizabeth Bishop', *Humanities*, 12. 5 (2023), 117, pp. 1-12.

[247] Nobus, 'From sense to sensation: Bacon, pasting paint and the futility of Lacanian Psychoanalysis', p. 96.

[248] Ibid., p. 96.

[249] '"Wild" Psycho-Analysis', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XI (1910), pp. 221-222. Freud criticises non-analysts who make up analysis without really knowing the patient in a clinical setting.

in Francis Bacon's lifelong attempt to capture, with no other means than canvas
and paint, the absolute truth of the human appearance.[250]

Firstly, the correlation between 'Joyce's psychoanalysis' and 'Francis Bacon's attempt' is
based on Nobus's construction of 'its pictorial counterpart' which implies Nobus's
knowledge of a predestined result — an assurance of a successful failure. Yet how do we
know that futility itself is unreadable? What is at stake in Nobus's confidence in that failure,
in the signifying success of that failure? Does that mean Nobus knows of a failure which
never fails to be a failure? For Nobus, what is 'attempt[ed] to be 'captured' is 'the absolute
truth of the human appearance'. As an 'attempt,' this action implies failure. In the attempt,
'canvas and paint' are not themselves to be captured, but are 'means' and contingencies for
capturing, a 'means' that excludes the other, in so far as there is 'no other means than canvas
and paint'. To what extent do contingencies secure Bacon's failed capturing? That is, does
the futility of capturing have to do with that materiality, paint, and canvas as a guarantee?

This then, is the force of Nobus's argument, that unknowability and uncertainty are
what appearance *is* and thus what the foundation of 'the absolute truth' is. This 'absolute
truth' is always tied with an 'attempt' that never gets to its destination, or, that the destination
achieved is one that problematises the certainty of location. The 'truth of the human
appearance' in this sense is not established by any immediacy but, I would say, a deferral.
Nevertheless, if this 'appearance' is always caught up with deferral, how can we understand
Nobus's investment in 'the appearance as pure sensation'[251] which is 'immediate and
intense'?[252]

A reading of the problem of return of deferral in Nobus' text can be expanded through
the following extended quotation:

> Joyce's 'littering of the letter' will show itself to be identical, here, to Bacon's
> 'pasting of the paint', in the dual meaning of paint being applied to flat, receptive
> surfaces (the canvas as well as other planes in the artist's studio) and it
> simultaneously being moulded, softened up, demolished and transformed into a
> shadow of its former reality. I should emphasise that this exercise has nothing

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[250] Dany Nobus, 'From sense to sensation: Bacon, pasting paint and the futility of Lacanian Psychoanalysis',
p. 96.
[251] Ibid., p. 109. '[P]ure sensation' that I quote here is from 'Looking at Bacon's creative labour as a progressive
destabilisation of meaning (sense) in favour of the appearance as pure sensation'.
[252] Ibid., p. 110. '[I]mmediate and intense' that I quote here is from '[…] How sensation can not be relayed as
a violent (immediate and intense) assault on the nervous system without an artificial, and to some extent fictive,
holding environment'.

to do with psychoanalysing Bacon, neither the man nor his work, but is purely geared towards eliciting a certain understanding of his creative process, which may shed as much light on his paintings as it does on the practice of psychoanalysis itself.[253]

For Nobus, 'Joyce's "littering of the letter" will show itself to be identical' to something else. Already, so many splits: the '"littering of the letter"', and the self this '[shows]' in its shared identity with another. This is also a prediction of '[showing]', a showing yet to come, because, I think, this showing is dependent on the success of Nobus's argument. The showing itself requires a further excess, therefore. There is no clear sense of who the 'show' is for. Perhaps there is no need to witness this 'show'. In being 'identical' to Bacon's '"pasting of the paint"', there is an appeal to the sameness of the process, but one that skirts the problem of the difference it requires. That is, are we to read '"pasting"' as the same as '"littering"'? Moreover, is '"littering"' the same as '"pasting"' and '[moulding]'? After all, when 'applied to flat, receptive surfaces', the paint remains itself, yet when 'being moulded, softened up, demolished and transformed' the result is a 'shadow' of reality, not paint. This, as I read it, implies an original reality. '"[P]asting of the paint"' is the fulfilment of the retrospective reality in a shadow.

As tentatively discussed above, Nobus distances himself from 'doing' psychoanalysis, claiming: 'I should emphasise that this exercise has nothing to do with psychoanalysing Bacon, neither the man nor his work, but is purely geared towards eliciting a certain understanding of his creative process […]'. This 'understanding' of 'his [Bacon's] creative process' is a pre-construction for being '[elicited]' and thus that process itself can achieve 'the practice of psychoanalysis'. I would say this is the hope of Dany Nobus, a detachment from his own perspective/idea on Bacon, yet in a way that credits this to a separate 'understanding' 'on the practice of psychoanalysis itself'. Nevertheless, my questions are: Can Dany Nobus escape from his narrative and understanding of/on Bacon? Can this 'creative process' be outside of Nobus's construction/system on Bacon's 'Bacon', '[art]work', and 'the man'? Or, to put it another way, what constitutes the structures of paint?

A final difficulty here, at least for now, can be read in the precise formulations around the connection between painting and psychoanalysis, and their relation to truth. For Nobus, the 'eliciting a certain understanding of his creative process' 'may shed as much light in his paintings as it does on the practice of psychoanalysis itself'. This 'shed[ding]',

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[253] Ibid., p. 96. My critique here is according to Nobus's analysis on Bacon's early career on paint.

then, is what constitutes the engagement with psychoanalysis and with painting: Nobus's own critical exercise of engaging Joyceian littering and Bacon's painting 'elicit' an 'understanding', then 'shed' 'light' upon 'the practice of psychoanalysis' and the paintings that are the necessity that starts the 'process'. My interest here is in the relationship between the 'light' that is 'shed' on the paintings and the '[application]' and '[moulding]' of paint on the canvas. Within this formulation, 'light' can be understood as *the uncanny of paint*, this 'shed[ding]' of 'light'. It is what is 'on' the 'paintings', but does not have the materiality of the paint on the paintings/canvas. It cannot be 'demolished' or 'transformed', this 'light'. '[P]sychoanalysis' and 'paintings' are in want here, in want of something '*on*'[254] them, and this thing works against the work, at least of painting. '[L]ight' is excess, supplement, what repeats, is necessary to, yet opposes the 'exercise' of the '[application]' of paint.

3.1.3 Paint and Psychic

Before entering into Nobus's formal analysis of Francis Bacon, I would begin with a reading of a quotation from one of Van Gogh's letters, called upon by Nobus in his analysis: '[R]eal painters do not paint things as they are, after a dry and learned analysis. They paint them as *they themselves* feel them to be'.[255] For Van Gogh, in this perspective, there is definitive knowledge of 'real painters'. Real painters do 'paint things' but do 'not' paint things 'as they are'. On the one hand, 'things' could be painted 'as' they are and 'not' 'as' they are. Painting things alone does not secure a painter the status of a 'real' painter. On the other hand, the narrator already knows paint does not transform things because things are always things. The difference is in whether painters decide to paint things 'as' they are or not. Yet, as I have read, this act of 'as[ness]' or paint does not change the status of things. 'Real' painters have to do with 'paint[ing] them as *they themselves* feel them to be'. They do not paint what they themselves feel nor do they paint them what they feel to be. They paint 'them' 'as' '*they themselves* feel them to be'. That is, painters still paint 'them' — things — instead of painters' (their) feelings. And the feelings of '*they themselves*' are not

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[254] This is my italics.

[255] The quote I use here is from Michael Peppiatt, *Francis Bacon: studies for a portrait* (Yale University Press, 2008), p. 81. This quote could have been altered as in Van Gogh's letter he states: 'Tell him that in my view Millet and Lhermitte are consequently the true painters, because they don't paint things as they *are*, examined drily and analytically, but as *they*, Millet, Lhermitte, Michelangelo, feel them. Tell him that my great desire is to learn to make such inaccuracies, such variations, reworkings, alterations of the reality, that it might become, very well — lies if you will — but — truer than the literal truth'. Vincent Van Gogh, 'To Theo van Gogh. Nuenen, on or about Tuesday, 14 July 1885' in *The Van Gogh Museum*, <https://vangoghletters.org/vg/> [accessed 30 Jan. 2024].

what precisely is painted, only an 'as[ness]'. This 'as[ness]' implies the prior knowledge of painting which is already known by the narrator to be what it is 'as'. There is a sense of fidelity and continuity of the absolute truth of paint and security of their 'feel[ings]'. In this perspective, feelings are secured without a split/betrayal towards '*they themselves*'.

Nevertheless, my question to Van Gogh's letter here is what sustains his belief of truth to objects as universality? Will this fidelity to truth collapse when things could not always maintain to be things themselves, but shift to be the other based on another perspective on things? What is the contingency that Van Gogh holds onto that knowledge of realness ('real' painters)? What are the differences between things 'as they are' and things 'as *they themselves* feel them to be' if the painting of things is already prescribed in advance? My problematisation with Van Gogh's claim lies in his assurance of the truth of things which are definitive. Even though Van Gogh can be read to draw a line between things 'as they are' and things 'as *they themselves* feel them to be', he still appeals to the origin of things, to the truth of objects. In this, difference, I would argue, is collapsed into claims concerning universal, indivisible, and absolute objects. In this sense, does it mean that the definition of 'real' painters is also returned to be pinned down by Van Gogh's absolute knowledge of what painting is? So, what is the validity of feelings of painters in this sense?

Thus far in this section, I have been offering my own take on Van Gogh's quotation, but we are now at a point where I would like to reintroduce Nobus's interpretation of Francis Bacon, by way of the former's framing of Van Gogh's quotation, before giving a counter-argument to this interpretation. Let us begin, then, with the following from Nobus:

> Firstly, throughout his career, Bacon was enthralled by the letters of Vincent Van Gogh, and in particular by a letter in which the Dutch master had stated: '[R]eal painters do not paint things as they are, after a dry and learned analysis. They paint them as *they themselves* feel them to be'.[256] Applied to Bacon's artistic practice, the implication of Van Gogh's testimony is that the distorted yet truthful reality as it would appear on the canvas could only ever be Bacon's own psychic reality. Bacon's vehement and endlessly repeated attempts to get access to the absolute reality of an appearance is tantamount to a continuous struggle with his own appearance and a perpetual search for his own subjective truth, and this principle applies equally to the paintings of biomorphs, popes, and landscapes as it does to the self-portraits.[257]

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[256] Michael Peppiatt, *Francis Bacon in the 1950s* (Yale University Press, 2008), p. 48; Michael Peppiatt, *Francis Bacon: Anatomy of an Enigma* (Constable, 1996), p. 205; Dennis Farr, Michael Peppiatt and Sally Yard, Francis Bacon: *A retrospective* (Harry N. Abrams, 1999), p. 12.

[257] Dany Nobus, 'From sense to sensation: Bacon, pasting paint and the futility of Lacanian Psychoanalysis', p. 98 and p. 102.

According to Nobus, his idea '[application]' of Van Gogh has to do with a capturing of the appearance of feelings of painters, instead of things themselves. Again, the distorted yet truthful reality' is not painted '"as they are"' but '"as *they themselves* feel them to be"'. This distorted reality is tied with feelings of painters that 'appear[s] on the canvas'. In one sense, this 'distorted yet truthful reality' is not accessible without a future condition of 'appear[ing]', 'as it *would* appear on the canvas' (my italics). This 'appear[ing]' of 'Bacon's own psychic reality' has displaced the unattainable reality and ends up with its failure of capturing. This 'psychic reality', which contains the painter's '"feel[ings]"', opens up a difference, a change of 'reality' which is 'distorted'. '[D]istortion' is not concealed, but a condition of reality before a capturing. According to Nobus, this 'distorted' 'reality' is also established by absolute knowledge of 'truthful[ness]'. 'Bacon's vehement and endlessly repeated attempts' implies that Bacon's '[attempt]' is located in a structure of emotion and repetition of failure. In Nobus's formation of this structure, the accessibility to 'the absolute reality of an appearance', 'his own appearance', and 'a perpetual search for his own subjective truth' are pre-determined to be inaccessible. Apart from the distorted reality, 'the paintings of biomorphs, popes, and landscapes' are not to be painted as what 'they are' but what Bacon *feels* them to be, the 'appearance[s]' of Bacon's 'self-portraits' (according to Nobus's understanding of Van Gogh's letter). Through a sense of displacement, or appearing, I would say the 'absolute' 'appearance' is always the impossibility of a thing to be as it is.

Thus far, based on my understanding, there is a difference between Van Gogh's and Nobus's ideas of painting objects. First of all, for Van Gogh, things are things in their perpetual state and are not changeable because of the paint. I would argue, Van Gogh's belief in art relies on the originality of objects/ things. Things are pre-known for Van Gogh, while his pursuit is not to dismiss the access of or the origin of things, but is to paint things according to 'as[ness]' of feelings of painters. Based on the formulation of 'as[ness]', I would critique, what is painted is not feelings of painters but is still returned to the object itself. Contrary to this, Nobus's understanding of things has to do with inaccessibility to things themselves. Thus, if we read that reality is to be a thing, this thing is not knowable for Nobus, or known only in being unknown. Nevertheless, and as argued in my introduction, I would argue that this dismissal of a knowing of origins is still returned to Nobus's knowable idea of the origin of distortion and absolute truth of reality including his definitive knowledge of Bacon's psychic reality. That is, I am interested in whether Nobus's idea of the appearance of reality on the canvas returns as a capturing of objects themselves

based on Nobus's own assurance of truth to objects. Even though Nobus's focus is to shift from a capturing of objects to feelings of painters, whether that feelings of painters collapse to be things is not theorised here. Or, if those feelings do reside in paint, what is at stake for Nobus safeguarding Bacon's psychic reality? Or, does that psychic reality along with feelings end up being objects?

3.1.3 Conscious Unconsciousness in Paint and Appearance?

In this section, I will first offer my reading and problematisation on Francis Bacon's claims around painting, and will then return to Nobus's understanding of Bacon. Let us start with the following, from Bacon on painting:

> Every form that you make has an implication, so that, when you are painting somebody, you know that you are, of course, trying to get near not only their appearance but also to the way they have affected you, because every shape has an implication.[258]

For Bacon, I read that this '[making]' of the 'form' has to do with an 'implication' from 'the way' that the 'form', 'appearance' '[affects]' the painter. First of all, this implication here I read, for Bacon, is a natural existence for that 'form'. Nevertheless, I would argue, this implication is not made by the 'you' according to 'every form'. But, before an act of painting, an 'implication' is already embedded. Secondly, for Bacon, this 'implication' is a guarantee for the 'know[ing]' of the 'you' on painting the appearance, and the knowledge on 'the way they have affected [the] you'. Even though 'the way they have affected you' points out an object-led movement (it is not that you affect the appearance but vice versa), this '[affect]' is already known by the subject — the 'you'. In another sense, this '[affect]' does not rely on a pure act but is determined by the 'know[ing]' of the 'you' and this 'know[ing]' is from the narration of Bacon on the painter (the 'you').

Let us return to Nobus's criticism on Bacon:

> Secondly, speaking to David Sylvester in 1975, Bacon acknowledged that in the picture: 'Every form that you make has an implication, so that, when you are painting somebody, you know that you are, of course, trying to get near not only their appearance but also to the way they have affected you, because every shape

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[258] David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, p. 130. The publication year of this reference and others are from 1999 (Thames and Hudson) except footnote 259.

has an implication.'[259] Although Bacon's admission, here, clearly resonates with Van Gogh's statement, it enters much deeper into the mind of the artist, or into his 'nervous system' as Bacon would call it. The appearance unlocks the painter's 'valves of sensation' and the painting process employs the appearance as a conduit for exploring and giving shape to these sensations. Whereas Van Gogh's radically impressionistic concept of the real painter may still be adjusted to the artist's conscious intentionality, the attempt to render figuratively an appearance's subjective implication on the painter is a much more subliminal, unconscious endeavour, although the net result reconfirms the ineluctable presence of the painter's self-image in the frame(s) of the painting. In Lacanian terms, one might say that the painted images are an index of the 'subject of the statement' (*sujet de lenonce*), which may very well represent the artist *qua* depicted figure but may also represent anything else, yet that act of painting coincides with the enunciating subject (*sujet de lenonciation*), which is driven by an unconscious desire (the desire to paint, but also the desire as it has been triggered and stimulated by the external appearance), and which runs through each and every aspect of the painting- the process as much as its result. In so far as painting is in itself a type of language, Bacon thus speaks about himself and others in his work, but always only about himself through it- hybrid, overdetermined and intractable as this point of enunciation may be.[260]

On the contrary to my previous analysis of Bacon, Nobus turns Bacon's 'admission' (Nobus's statement of Bacon) about the making of appearance ('Every form that you make has an implication […]') into a connection with a secured '[entry]' to 'the mind of the artist' and '''nervous system'''. Instead of critiquing the implication of '''shape''' and '''[affect]''' as a priori, Nobus affirms that the autonomous move of appearance impacts sensations via 'exploring' or 'giving shape'. According to my aforementioned argument, the validity of appearance is not based on autonomy but is caught up with the '''know[ing]''' of the artist on '''[affect]''' which is granted by Bacon's narration.

Further, I read that Nobus's idea of 'deeper' entry ('[…] it enters much deeper into the mind of the artist […]') has to do with a secured act of 'unlock[ing]' the painter's '''sensation''' by the 'appearance'. However, my question is to what extent or degree is deep enough to unlock that '''sensation'''? There is a split between the painter and '''sensation''' in which the '''sensation''' of the painter is untouched by the painter. Take, for example, I read that 'the painting process' does not '[explore]' or '[give] shape' to the painters themselves nor does the painters '[explore]' or '[give] shape' to 'appearance' or

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[259] David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon* (Thames and Hudson, 1987), p. 150.
[260] Dany Nobus, 'From sense to sensation: Bacon, pasting paint and the futility of Lacanian Psychoanalysis', p. 102.

'sensations'. '[S]ensations' which are '[explored]' and '[given] shape' are something separable/split from painters. This is based on the condition of 'employ[ing]' the 'appearance'. That is, I would argue, the success of touching 'sensations' or the '"nervous system"' is not in immediacy or autonomy but is in a deferral and has to do with the contingency of 'conduit' of 'appearance'.

Thirdly, for Nobus's understanding, this achievement of Bacon's art movement is based on the detachment of 'conscious[ness]', and 'intentionality' unlike the 'impressionistic concept of the real painter'. Appearance affecting the painter 'is a much more subliminal, unconscious endeavour'. Nevertheless, according to my analysis on Bacon's quotation above, I have argued that the '"know[ing]"' of the painter (the '"you"') is already involved in an implication of a conscious construction. Is Bacon's claim one that returns to a sense of the painter as consciousness? Will that 'unconscious endeavour' imply a priori of consciousness on that unconsciousness?

Further, Nobus has pointed out that that 'subliminal, unconscious endeavour' does not dismiss 'the ineluctable presence of the painter's self-image in the frame(s) of the painting'. That is, my reading is that the implication of the 'self-image' is inseparable from painting an appearance of the other. This is because of the '[drive]' of 'an unconscious desire' and thus, this self-image is always '[framing]' the painting. Somebody's appearance is still framed by 'the ineluctable presence of the painter's self-image'. This 'self-image' is not in the painting but in the 'frame(s) of the painting'. '[P]ainted images', 'an index', 'the painter's self-image' lead(s) to the possibility of 'represent[ation]' of 'depicted figure' or 'anything else'. An 'unconscious desire' brings the 'index' to be '[coinciding]' with 'the enunciating subject'. This '[coincidence]' is completed by the 'desire', which is a necessary condition for being 'triggered' and 'stimulated'. This 'external appearance' is the guarantee for that '[drive]' of desire. This unconsciousness results in a '[coincidence]'. '[T]he enunciating subject' is thus not limited but 'runs through each and every aspect of the painting'. I would argue that the appearance is not a pure final production of appearance, but that 'process' and '"affect"' turn back to the structure of 'frame(s)'.

Fourthly, according to Nobus, the '[speech]' of Bacon's 'himself' is established not by '[speech]' itself but by the painting as 'a type of language' and 'enunciation'. This 'enunciation' is 'hybrid, overdetermined and intractable'. I would say, this 'type' is already predetermined to be that specificity. Take, for example, the sense in which this 'type' has to do with the connection with the 'mind' and '"nervous system"' of the artist. Even though Nobus points out that painting is 'in itself' 'a type of language', I would argue that 'itself'

is constructed not by the painting so much as the understanding of Nobus of painting, this as 'a type of language', which is recognised by Nobus as a natural language here. I would contend that Nobus's criticism/analysis on Bacon is thus established based on Nobus's own recognition of 'this type of language' (in terms of an unconscious desire which is constituted and appeared through this enunciation — painting).

Thus far, my understanding is that Nobus's sense of safeguarding Bacon's unconscious move on canvas in art history is diverted to the impressionistic consciousness of the artist, while my doubt turns to the question of whether this unconsciousness returns as 'intentionality'. Can any designed art escape from the artist's aware or unaware 'intentionality'? How can that unconsciousness be secured on canvas? Does it mean this unconsciousness is already formulated by a sense of consciousness by the narrator or the artist?

3.1.4 Exorcising the Spectre of Narration in Paint?

At this stage, I wish to introduce an argument within Nobus's work that, I think, has been haunting all I have written above. For Nobus, there is, as we have read, a connection between psychoanalysis and painting, one that turns on the limits of consciousness, and of truth as necessarily incomplete. A further connection is made to their rejection of narrative, firstly in terms of Bacon's art:

> One, Bacon always reiterated that his work was predicated upon a fruitful combination of 'instinct' and 'change', 'intentionality' and 'accident', an initial excitation (and associated image) and the unexpected stroke of the brush, a rough outline and an unforeseen adventure. Second, throughout his career, Bacon radically opposed all references to narrative structure, whether in the succession of images from one period to another, in the sequential variations on a particular theme, or in the three constitutive panels of triptych. Although he remained generally immune to critics detecting a palpable storyline in his work, he was adamant that the telling of a coherent story was the furthest removed from his artistic aspirations. In Bacon's view, narrative painting was purely illustrative, and only served the purpose to record, register and document reality, which is something photography had already accomplished, and in a much better way.[261]

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[261] Ibid., p. 103.

According to Nobus, Bacon's artwork is not composed of a singular element but 'a fruitful combination' which is 'predicated', and this 'predication' is from '[reiteration]' of Bacon on his work. First of all, I read that this 'fruitful[ness]' for Nobus is tied with a certain narrative of growth and the idea of the process. In this perspective, fruitfulness implies a notion of natural development while I am critiquing the dangers of this nature. There is always a possibility of bearing more fruits in which something is absent and is yet to come.[262] This could be that in the 'combination', there is something not present, where Nobus does not acknowledge this lack or absence. Thus, there is a difficulty in Nobus's claim — on the one hand, this process of *being* fruitful is necessary; on the other hand, Nobus's idea of fruitfulness points towards finality, the process that results in a product. This reversal toward an end product has raised my question in Nobus's latter argument as he claims that '[…] Bacon intermittently highlighted how his work — the process and the act of painting rather than the painting itself — revolved around a tension and conflict between the "subject matter" […] and the physical matter of the paint'.[263] If Nobus's idea of fruitful combinations has ended up in a product ('the painting itself'), what does it mean to secure the status of the process (of painting)?

Perhaps, Nobus already has a certain recognition of the possibility of failure of being fruitful or being in a process of fruitfulness, and thus '[reiteration]' is set up to make up what is always in a loss, as this fruitfulness cannot always guarantee its own success. Consequently, I would say the implication of '[reiteration]' has led to tension or compensation for this possibility or impossibility of fruitful combinations. As I read it, 'always reiterated' is situated in a permanent condition — iteration is 'always' and is in a repetition ('re'-'iteration'). That is, iteration is in a double repetition and is secured in an always-ness; however, this reiteration here does not alter any lines/sentences in the narration. This re-iteration remains the same against the fruitfulness which, I would conclude, is other to the death drive of iteration. Nevertheless, as I have read the threat within fruitfulness itself (of always being in the condition to bear fruit), I would say Nobus does not address the uncertain status of fruitfulness in relation to Bacon's work. Quite simply, Nobus predicts the painting itself as an end-product (his idea of fruits), and does not read in this the tension between this and his belief in Bacon's artistic/immediate process.

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[262] Or, even that fruitfulness could imply that it can only be fruitful once (against death drive) and end up barren.

[263] Ibid., p. 103. Please see footnote 261 for the long quote in the main text.

Let us return to the second point about a fruitful 'combination'. In this claim, a piece of artwork is not produced as one indivisible object but segmentations in 'combination'. I would suggest an irony in that 'combination' — on the one hand, this 'combination' is based on unpredictability, such as '"change"', '"accident"', '[un-expectation]'; on the other hand, this unpredictability is 'predicated' by Bacon (according to Nobus). Does it mean, therefore, that '"instinct"', '"change"', '"intentionality"', '"accident"' and 'initial excitation', 'unexpected stroke of the brush', 'a rough outline' and 'an unforeseen adventure' are inescapable from and already known by a sense of predication? Or, does it mean what is combined is about those ands and semi-colons? Even though I understand that predication, as a structure, is of a 'combination' of Bacon's work, can unpredictability be constituted outside a knowing of predication? How can we know an absolutely pure accident in that sense? Is Bacon's art always returning to his 'reiterated' narration and caught up with a knowable structure? So, what will it be outside the structure of predication? Will this combination collapse on condition of being without a predication?

Further, based on Nobus, one thing that Bacon's paint provides is a removal of a 'narrative structure' which is opposed to '"instinct"', '"change"', '"intentionality"', '"accident"'. Here, Nobus sets up a division between 'palpable' sequential referential storylines/narrative and non-sequential and non-referential paint. This classification has trapped Nobus into his own inescapable sequential narrative. Nobus's exaltation lies on a 'fruitful' 'combination' which is seemingly not based on any narration, sequences, '[coherence]', 'record', '[registration]', 'document[ation]'. On the contrary, 'photography' stays true to documented 'reality', and '[illustration]' which are not Bacon's 'artistic aspirations'. That means this categorisation from Nobus implies that what narrative does is tell its story without exception. This raises my concern: does narrative only tell a story in sequences and repetitions? What is the boundary to differentiate narrative painting and non-narrative painting? Can any painting be escapable from a narrative?

Further, in Nobus's claim '[i]n Bacon's view, narrative painting was purely illustrative, and only served the purpose […]', I read that 'purely illustrative' is against '[serving]' in which this purity or this illustration is not just pure but has a supplement, the 'purpose' to be served. That is, this serving is not just a serving of pure illustration but is serving something other than illustration — such as 'record, [registration] and document[ation] of reality'. Further, there is also a split between 'narrative painting' and being 'purely illustrative' — this is not an illustrative painting, but it is the narrative as illustrative. Bacon's ideal painting is outside of narration, storylines, or timelines which

produces an 'excitation' and 'adventure'. Even though Bacon's art '[opposes]' existent structures, I would argue that narrative cannot be kept outside its borders, at least according to Nobus. That is, 'a fruitful combination' is still established through Nobus's *story* of unreadability. Thus, this fruitfulness is returned to be part of the narrative through the history of Bacon's making 'throughout his career'. In other words, Nobus's understanding of Bacon's art is tied with Nobus his narration of Bacon's life's work. This abandonment of narrative still necessitates a narration of Bacon's artwork. Further, let us read another example of Nobus's idea of Bacon's dismissal of the narration by the act of exorcising:

> Third, to exorcise the spectre of narration and its intrinsic dimension of meaning (sense), Bacon was at great pains to situate his paintings outside the temporal framework of linear chronology. Even though the creation of a painting would evidently require a certain time-investment, and would sometimes be the result of work carried out over longer periods of time, the finished product would have to be appreciated in all its immediate intensity, as a sudden unitary 'assault on the nervous system'.[264]

I read that there is a split between 'the creation of a painting' and 'the finished product': 'the creation of a painting' splitting from 'the finished product' necessitates 'time-investment' instead of immediacy while 'its immediate intensity' of 'the finished product' discarding 'the temporal framework of linear chronology' is validated by '[appreciation]' instead of the act of making. '[I]mmediacy' overcomes the '[evidence]' of time by the 'as[-ness]' of 'a sudden' and '[appreciation]'. This '[appreciation]' of 'sudden[ness]' and 'immediacy' is based on a requirement, 'have[-ness]', in narration ('[…] the finished product would have to be appreciated in all its immediate intensity […]'). In this sense, it is not 'the finished product' or the making process itself but the act of '[appreciation]' that reverses the structure of the painting, so it is outside of time and confirms the cancellation of narration. This mechanism of 'immediacy' only comes after the product is 'finished', instead of being intrinsic to the product, and this product requests 'intensity' which is 'as' 'a sudden unitary "assault on the nervous system"'. I would argue, this immediacy is not autonomous, therefore, but is only fulfilled when this precondition, '[appreciation]', is accomplished. While the questions here for me are: Whose appreciation is here? Does it mean this appreciation is pre-standardised to carry out that immediacy?

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[264] Ibid., p. 103.

I would contend that Nobus's investment in the modal of the futurity of appreciation, such as 'the finished product *would* have to be appreciated in all its immediate intensity' (my italics), is a way of removing from the past and history. The endorsement is in the intense and narrative-less present. For Nobus, this presence is indivisible and non-reductive. Under this security of presence, 'unitary' is set up to be of that 'assault' while I would argue this unitary (of assault) is split from itself but is only fulfilled 'on' something else ('the nervous system'). Or, does it mean that this supplement of appreciation is established by a dividing 'unitary'?

3.1.5 The Violence of Paint?

In correlation with Nobus's faith in the unfailing present assault, I would suggest further connections with Nobus's analysis on Bacon's idea of the violence of paint. What is Nobus's insistence in comprehending Bacon's violence of paint?

> Fourth, Bacon intermittently highlighted how his work- the process and the act of painting rather than the painting itself- revolved around a tension and conflict between the 'subject matter', that is, his mental idea and rough outline of what would appear on the canvas, and the physical matter of the paint, whereby he would intimate that the medium (and the tools to apply it) is simultaneously necessary, impossible and full of contingencies.[265]

In the previous section, I have used this quote briefly to argue that Nobus knowingly/unknowingly contradicts his idea of fruitful combinations of Bacon's work as a process with the implication of fruitfulness as an end product ('the painting itself').[266] In this passage, I will further problematise Nobus's idea of the process of painting in relation to its contingency of pre-determined paint. According to my reading on Nobus's understanding of Bacon, '[Bacon] his mental idea' and 'rough outline of what would appear on the canvas' are deferred by 'the physical matter of the paint'. Take, for example, 'the "subject matter"' is subjected to the paint which '[gives] shape' to it.[267] And 'the "subject matter"' is led by the paint 'into hitherto unknown directions and previously unexplored spheres'.[268] Based on this deferral, a 'tension'/ 'conflict' between 'mental[ity]' and 'physical[ity]', or subject and object, is established. This deferral, I would say, coming in place is an absolute knowledge

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[265] Ibid., p. 103.
[266] Please see footnote 259.
[267] The example of giving shape can be found in the next long quote (please see footnote 269).
[268] I have offered detailed analysis of this quote in the later passage (please see footnote 277).

for Nobus — 'the physical matter of the paint'. For Nobus, the material paint is set as an opposition to the subject's 'idea' of 'what would appear on the canvas'. This paint is also of '[necessity]' and '[impossibility]' at the same time for 'the "subject matter"'. This deferral, the paint, cancels the possibility of what 'the "subject matter"' determines on its own. I would, however, problematise this unquestionable success of deferral: what constitutes a force of cancellation from the physical medium towards the subject matter? Does it mean Bacon's work — the process and the act of painting — *has nothing to do with the process* but is instead the predetermined result of paint (which is unpredictable)?

Let us begin with Nobus's first proposal of paint which is 'necessary':

The paint is a necessary substance for giving shape to the subject matter, even when the process of shaping involves the deconstruction and distortion of the appearance: '[T]he violence of paint…[has] to do with an attempt to remake the violence of reality itself,…but it's the violence also of the suggestions within the image itself which can only be conveyed through paint'.[269]

We can see the first example of deferral here — 'the subject matter' does not shape the paint or give shape to the paint, but 'the subject matter' necessitates a 'substance' to 'give shape'. This '[shaping]' is 'the process' instead of being a product of any fixed mould onto the subject matter. It is the paint that determines the act of 'giving' and the 'shape' of 'appearance'. According to the perspective of Nobus, 'the process of shaping involves the deconstruction and distortion of the appearance' implies that there is an origin of 'appearance' which is not deconstructed and distorted. Based on this understanding of the original state of the appearance, paint is 'giving shape' to '[deconstruct]' and '[distort]' 'the subject matter'. That is, 'the process of shaping' is contingent on the ground of originality. In this sense, I would argue the paint is not the only element of the work of 'deconstruction' and 'distortion', but there is a reversal of the shaping process in which the original 'appearance' from 'the subject matter' is also a '[necessity]' for that shaping.

From my understanding of Nobus, that shaping maybe has to do with Bacon's idea of '"the violence of paint"' and '"the violence of suggestions"' which lead to 'deconstruction and distortion of the appearance'. Nevertheless, Nobus does not explain further the relationship between his idea of shaping and Bacon's idea of '"attempt"', '"violence"', '"remaking"', and '"image itself"' ('"[T]he violence of paint…[has] to do with an attempt

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[269] Dany Nobus, 'From sense to sensation: Bacon, pasting paint and the futility of Lacanian Psychoanalysis', p. 103.

to remake the violence of reality itself,…but it's the violence also of the suggestions within the image itself which can only be conveyed through paint'").[270] Does that shaping involve an attempt which is always a failure? Does that violence secure the act of deconstruction and distortion only in an attempt? Is that process of shaping caught up with a structure of repetition of making instead of a new creation? Does that image itself produce the shaping process or does that shaping process only be fulfilled "'within image itself'"?

As for my reading on Bacon's claim here, "'the violence of paint'" is not about deconstructing the reality but is to "'remake the violence of reality itself'". In this sense, "'the violence of reality itself'" is pre-existing before the making of paint as the reality is to be remade ("'remaking'"). In other words, this violence is in a repetition of making while this is only 'an attempt' for remaking. That is, there is no assurance of a successful remaking of reality. The fulfilment of "'the violence also of the suggestions'" has to do with the "'convey[or]'" of paint. For Bacon, violence is not only constituted by the verbal act but is related to images which are 'conveyed through paint': 'And the violence of reality is not only the simple violence meant when you say that a rose or something is violent, but it's the violence also of the suggestions within the image itself which can only be conveyed through paint'.[271] This way of '[conveying]' in painting is to 'clear away one or two of the veils or screens [of reality]'.[272] That is, the purpose of paint is to unveil and un-screen the reality or appearance. As Bacon claims '[w]e nearly always live through screens — a screened existence. And I sometimes think, when people say my work looks violent, that perhaps have from time to time been able to clear away one or two of the veils or screens'.[273] In this perspective, I would say Bacon's idea of the violence of paint does not necessarily destroy,

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[270] In Nobus's footnote, he explains that 'I believe, also resides Bacon's definition of "violence", which has nothing to do with representations of aggression, threat, crime or danger, but with the intensity and the immediacy of a sensation. Bacon's violence does not reflect the attribution of the meaning of "assault" to a certain image or experience, but epitomises an unexpected yet inescapable sensory experience, which is both immediate and intense, along the lines of what Antonin Artaud tried to achieve in his theatre of cruelty' (Ibid., p. 115. Please see Nobus's footnote 22).

[271] This quote is from David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, pp. 81-82. Bacon claims 'When talking about the violence of paint, it's nothing to do with the violence of war. It's to do with an attempt to remake the violence of reality itself. And the violence of reality is not only the simple violence meant when you say that a rose or something is violent, but it's the violence also of the suggestions within the image itself which can only be conveyed through paint. When I look at you across the table, I don't only see you but I see a whole emanation which has to do with personality and everything else. And to put that over in a painting, as I would like to be able to do in a portrait means that it would appear violent in paint. We nearly always live through screens — a screened existence. And I sometimes think, when people say my work looks violent, that perhaps have from time to time been able to clear away one or two of the veils or screens'.

[272] David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, pp. 81-82. Please see footnote 271.

[273] Ibid., pp. 81-82. Please see footnote 271.

deconstruct, or distort appearance as Nobus proposes, but unveils what that appearance is even though that capturing of appearance is only in an "'attempt'".

Let us turn to Nobus's second point of paint which is 'impossible':

> However paint is also impossible, because it only ever seems to allow for a mediocre approximation of the truthful reality that lies buried in the subject matter, so that the perfect, ideal image that would render all the others futile can never be accomplished: 'the longer you work, the more the mystery deepens of what appearance is, or how can what is called appearance be made in another medium'.[274]

The contrary trait of the necessity of paint (that is 'impossible') has to do with the impossibility of reaching 'what appearance is'. As I have been arguing, the necessity of 'giving shape' is also the impossibility of capturing appearance.[275] Necessity and impossibility are set as structural opposition that defines each other. For Bacon, the act of remaking violence of reality does not produce or restore a naked/fleshly origin, but is an attempt only. For Nobus, at this point, he understands that 'the truthful reality' is bound up with a 'mediocre approximation' instead of a completion or fullness of truth. That is, there is always a gap for paint to accomplish what the truthful reality is. The limitation lies in the condition that paint is not a medium of appearance but is "'another medium'" which is a deferral for 'the subject matter'.[276] A predetermined act of '[burial]' in the subject matter still cannot reach an achievement of 'the perfect and ideal image'.

As for the third contention of the paint for Nobus, this is related to the 'contingencies' of the paint:

> It is, moreover, also full of contingencies, because the paint may suddenly take
> the artist into hitherto unknown directions and previously unexplored spheres.
> As he said to Sylvester some time during early 1970s: '[Paint] is such an

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[274] Dany Nobus, 'From sense to sensation: Bacon, pasting paint and the futility of Lacanian Psychoanalysis', p. 103.

[275] Please see footnote 274. This argument is from the analysis of the last long quote.

[276] The quote of Bacon that Nobus uses is from David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, p. 118. 'The longer you work, the more the mystery deepens of what appearance is, or how can what is called appearance be made in another medium. And it needs a sort of moment of magic to coagulate colour and form so that it gets the equivalent of appearance, the appearance that you see at any moment, because so-called appearance is only riveted for one moment as that appearance. In a second you may blink your eyes or turn your head slightly, and you look again and the appearance has changed. I mean, appearance is like a continuously floating thing'.

extraordinary supple medium that you never do quite know what paint will do'.[277]

Paint has to do with an unknown and autonomous move such as 'unknown directions' and 'unexplored spheres' without any knowledge from 'the artist'. What paint will do is not regulated or within the knowledge of painters. Paint's movement constructs this unpredictability for the artist. This is not about what artists can do to or about paint as "'you never do quite know what paint will do'". [278] Nevertheless, my question here is what legitimates the knowledge of paint? How does paint pre-know what is known or unknown, and explored or unexplored directions and spheres for the artist? What is the cause for this nature of object-led movement?

Till this far, based on what we have discussed about Nobus's understanding of Bacon in relation to a prediction of fruitful combination in painting, an opposition to the narrative structure, an exorciser of the narration, and a highlight of a process and act of painting,[279] Nobus further summarises that these are 'four elements' concerning painting cure, signposts and development which I will be problematising:

> As beacons of Bacon's artistic process, these four elements are extremely precious signposts for developing an understanding of the artist's psychoanalytic 'painting cure', and they resonate with some of Freud's (admittedly sparse) insights into the mechanisms of the clinical journey called psychoanalysis, as it unfolds between the opening tactics and the endgame.[280]

From this perspective, the '[development]' of 'an understanding' of "'painting cure'" has nothing to do with painting itself or Bacon as an artist for the cure. Painting cure is understood from 'beacons of Bacon's artistic process'. The 'process' is related to 'four elements' which are 'precious signposts'. In other words, the painting cure is reliant on 'signposts'. In this perspective, prior to the painting cure, 'signposts' are necessities for

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[277] Dany Nobus, 'From sense to sensation: Bacon, pasting paint and the futility of Lacanian Psychoanalysis', p. 103.

[278] The quote of Bacon that Nobus uses is from David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, p. 93. 'But paint is so malleable that you never do really know. It's such an extraordinary supple medium that you never do quite know what paint will do. I mean, you even don't know that when you put it on wilfully, as it were, with a brush — you never quite know how it will go on. I think you probably know more with acrylic paint, which all the new painters use'.

[279] In the following quote, these four points that I have discussed above in 3.1.4 *Exorcising the spectre of narration in paint* and 3.1.5 *The violence of paint* (please see footnote 261, 264 and 265) are 'four elements' and 'signposts' for Nobus.

[280] Dany Nobus, 'From sense to sensation: Bacon, pasting paint and the futility of Lacanian Psychoanalysis', p. 103.

'understanding'. On the one hand, the idea of 'signposts' implies a sense of direction, movement or process. On the other hand, I read that 'signposts' are also self-contained and do not move. Further, I read that a '[signpost]' is not a whole story and does not involve '[development]' but also in a way it does. I can read that a '[signpost]' is a fragment that suggests an opposition to narrative, but at the same time a '[signpost]' directs to something absent meaning from this narrative perspective at least, there is no complete or otherwise finalised narrative of development. Nevertheless, the idea of '*sign*posts' (my italics) also implies a sense of meaningfulness or a narrative, and 'signposts' constitute a notion of the process, future, the possibility of completion. In this sense, we could probably read the 'Bacon's artistic process' is not indeterminable but is already determined to be impacted by 'signposts' (either constitutes a process/a narrative or not) which are pre-known before the '"painting cure"'. Accordingly, does it mean that the idea of Nobus's endorsement of 'Bacon's artistic process' here ends up being another sense of an end product?

　　Apart from this, according to Nobus, his analogy of a '"painting cure"' is tied with the '[resonation]' of 'Freud's' 'insights' which are only 'some' insights into the 'mechanisms'. These partial 'insights' of 'Freud's' 'psychoanalysis' 'unfold[s] between the opening tactics and the endgame'. In this, I would say Nobus's connection between Bacon's paint and psychoanalysis has to do with his perspective of the '[resonation]' of '[Freud]'. And Nobus's establishment of Bacon's signposts is leading to the connection with his idea of Freud's insights. In other words, it is not that Bacon's paint is correlated with psychoanalysis itself, but Nobus's resonation and his theory of Bacon's signposts determine what psychoanalysis is in relation to paint.

3.1.6 Paint and the Infantile Scream

　　Other than a detailed discussion over the violence of paint in the previous section, here I will further critique Nobus's idea of paint in relation to his pre-determined childhood:

> Hence, in more than one way, it makes sense to say that with his 1944 triptych Bacon was born, made his first appearance, and first entered the world that he would come to occupy so prominently and intensely for almost fifty years. And like all newborns, Bacon arrived on the scene of the world with the emblematic sign of life- a gaping mouth.[281]

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[281] Ibid., p. 97.

Dany Nobus's description of Bacon implies a sense of childhood which has to do with the order of the 'first' ('first appearance'; 'first [entry]') in which 'Bacon was born' due to his artwork of '1944 triptych'. That is, his identity is tied to his appearance of artwork which also 'made his first appearance'. His appearance will not appear without that supplement — 'with his 1944 triptych'. Through this exterior supplement, the access or '[entry]' to 'the world' is constituted. This childhood is established by the thing, '1944 triptych', other than Bacon, but is the element of what birth ('born') is with. The arrival of Bacon has to do with Nobus's preconception of 'newborns' which are marked by the sign of 'a gaping mouth'. This turn to babies has drawn my attention to the connection between paint and childhood which, I would say, is Nobus's understanding of universal naturalism. I read that a newborn is naturalised by 'a gaping mouth' as the 'sign of life'. This mouth has to do with a prescribed universal sign. This universality of the sign, however, is specified on the arrival on 'the scene' 'of the world' instead of elsewhere or everywhere. This particularity of the scene has framed a structure for that 'sign of life' to be constituted. In another sense, Bacon is caught up with or prescribed in Nobus's construction of the newborn and this birth — and perhaps childhood — has also determined the way of appearing of paint in a so-called natural birth. That is, 'a gaping mouth', a cry in Nobus's perspective is a universal correlation to the individual's birth. This paint leads to the representation, 'emblematical[-ness]' of childhood. Nevertheless, the paint of the mouth does not secure the status of 'representation'; instead, the '[silence]', the '[image]', the '[imagination]' of the '[sound]' is 'open to interpretation':

> Of course, what sets these images[282] apart from other famous representations of the human cry, such as Edvard Munch's *The Scream of Nature*, is that they were not identified as such by the artists themselves and that they were both utterly silent- the clamour of the nanny's cry in *Battleship Potemkin* only accentuated by Edmund Meisel's thundering timpani. Looking at Poussin's mother figure and Eisenstein's bloodied face of the nanny, we can see what their scream looks like, but we can only imagine what it sounds like, and this extraction of sound from the image makes the representation much more ambiguous and open to interpretation. When Bacon re-created the gaping mouth in the 1944 triptych and in numerous subsequent variations, including some of his most captivating portraits of Pope Innocent X (after Velázquez), he exponentially augmented the gaping mouth's sensory ambiguity by either reducing the figure's eyes to dark

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[282] Ibid., p. 97. 'On various occasions, Bacon himself pointed out that his obsession with the open mouth was conditioned by two poignant images — the mother's cry in Nicolas Poussin's *Massacre of the Innocents* and the nanny's cry at the very end of the Odessa Steps sequence in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* — and that he always aspired to make the best painting of the human cry in the history of Western iconography'.

shadows merging with the background, or cutting the rest of the facial expressions altogether.[283]

According to Nobus's analysis on Bacon, a successful human cry has nothing to do with sound itself but the '[look]' of the 'ambiguous' scream ('the gaping mouth'). For Nobus, this '[silence]' is manipulative based on the reduction of the portrait of eyes ('to dark shadows') and the removal of the 'facial expressions'. Based on the ambiguity of 'sensory' and an act of displacement, the sound is established by the '[imagination]' of the 'we' and the '[look-likeness]' of the 'images'. This displacement for Nobus is secured and unquestionable. For Nobus, the silent scream has led to an 'ambiguous' 'representation' but, because of this ambiguity, interpretation comes to take place to fill up what is missing of the sound. Nevertheless, my problematisation is how can Nobus be assured of his idea of authentic representation of the scream in the film and paint? What does it mean to claim that interpretation can substitute what is not represented? For example, is it that silence (of the scream) is supplemented by a diminishment of face/eyes? What is the split or difference between images and sound, therefore? Is there an *origin* to the sound (of the scream)? Is 'representation' here validated by a narrative of the *real* sound? Is interpretation established by a non-narrative of imagined sound?[284] Further, we can read Nobus's idea of the scream in relation to meaning and (a) unit(s):

> In painting little more than a gaping mouth in a human body or biomorph, colourful as the latter may be, and without providing *much* in the way of context, the meaning of the scream thus evaporates to the point where just one meaningful unit remains, notably that of meaning itself. We shall never know whether Bacon's scream represents despair, anger, anguish, agony, sexual ecstasy or gaping for air; what we do know is that the scream screams for interpretation, and that the only possible way to respond it is with a question: 'What do you want?'[285]

One thing here is that the meaning of scream is tied up with a certain degree '[provision]' of 'context': the provision of less 'in the way of context' leads to '[evaporation]' of meaning. Nevertheless, this evaporation is still of a narrative — a narrative of 'little more than a gaping mouth in a human body or biomorph' and a narrative of 'the way of context'. Thus,

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[283] Ibid., p. 97.

[284] Please find more ideas between sounds and images in Hannah Smith, 'Signs, text, truth: constructions of deafness' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Reading, 2005 [ie. 2006]).

[285] Dany Nobus, 'From sense to sensation: Bacon, pasting paint and the futility of Lacanian Psychoanalysis', pp. 97-98.

there is no abandonment or removal of the context, but instead a situation where there is simply 'not much in the way of context'. For Nobus, the meaning of the scream goes through an act of 'evaporation', rather than, say, creation. There is a destination for this 'evaporation': 'to the point where just one meaningful unit remains, notably that of meaning itself'. Once, seemingly, there were many units, but finally there is only 'one of the units' remaining. This 'one meaningful unit' is 'that of meaning itself'. Here I am interested in the sense in which 'unit' falls outside of meaning. '[E]vaporation' does not impact on 'unit', other than the decrease in the number of these available. One of the difficulties here is that structure — 'unit' — is not understood itself to be meaningful. Instead, what is 'notable' is 'one unit of meaning' that, within Nobus's argument, I take to be a Lacanian exception, a remainder that results in the 'representation' of 'Bacon's scream' being outside the knowledge of the 'we'. Here it is worth returning to the idea of the 'unit': not only is this to be read as a necessary structure, although one that somehow escapes scrutiny, the kind of structure that I have been reading to return to art theory arguments throughout the previous chapters, but it appeals also to the discrete, a separation from other units, as well as being bound to them through repetition, and separate also from audience. A unit of meaning does not, I think, require another, or, rather, any division it has is contained between the unit and what it is of. The appeal to unit reduces the difference or antagonism of meaning, the possibility of frames that trouble a notion of easy equivalences, or, one might say, the commodity form. No meaning can reframe the unit, which falls outside yet is necessary to meaning.

Despite what I am reading here as a move to secure a process of 'evaporation' that cannot be derailed by readers/'we' — a certain, inevitable subtraction of units — the unit of meaning itself known by the 'we' as the scream '[screaming]' for 'interpretation'. Nevertheless, the 'we' do not '[interpret]' the meaning of the scream as 'we' only know that it is an act of the scream screaming for something. Because of the 'we['s]' lack of knowledge of that 'interpretation', the 'we' can only 'respond' 'with a question': "'What do you want?'" This "'you'" I read is not of the desire of the 'we' (spectacles), but this "'you'" could be either the scream or the Other.[286] The 'we' know the scream or the Other "'want[s]'"

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[286] There are several possibilities for understanding the "'you'" in "'What do you want'", such as the scream or the Other. Here, Nobus does not specify what this "'you'" is, whilst according to another passage (the quote below) in the article, the "'you'" has to do with the Other's desire. Thus, the you, apart from the scream, could be the Other. As for who this 'the Other' is, it is unknown in this perspective. Please see the quote here: 'In the middle of that page there is a drawing of the third stage of Lacan's graph of desire, which he also dubbed "the bottle — opener of desire", on account of the visual resemblance between its singular armature and the standard shape of a heritage cap bottle — opener, and which projects onto its outer layers the only phrase with

something, but that desire of objects is outside of the grasp of the 'we'. Again, in all of this my interest is what returns as knowledge or meaning to the narrative of its evacuation. Here I am not only thinking of the regulatory structure that I take to be elided in Nobus's reading, but that the unit of meaning itself is oddly something else, and the 'we', collectively, and without difference, knows this. But in what sense is the scream screaming for anything? Moreover, in what sense is it screaming? For Nobus, the painting is dynamic, alive: it verbs and it intends. The separate units, that in one sense run counter to notions of life, sequences, and thus, for Nobus, meaning, result in a painting that 'we' understand in terms of life, activity, meaning, and 'we' seemingly have no other option.

Here I would like to return to the connection between paint and childhood: although Nobus has set up a dismissal of a simplistic notions of the representation of a cry, I have critiqued Nobus's reversion to a naturalism of childhood — the gaping mouth as a necessity of newborns. According to Nobus's claim below, I would say his pursuit of 'interpretation' (open signification) is returns to a reliance on 'pure' production from the object, 'the canvas':

> Francis Bacon thus arrived on the scene like all human beings enter the world. Yet he also endeavoured to ensure that his very own 'primal scream' would be stripped as much as possible of each and every unequivocal meaning, devoid of a clear sense, so that it could erupt from *the canvas* as a *pure* sensation of lived experience, as unadulterated life force [my italics].[287]

For Nobus, 'sensation' is categorised to be 'pure' and non-pure while '[purity]' of 'sensation' is produced by the elimination of meaning. This 'erupt[ion]' from the canvas has to do with an '[endeavour]' to ensure that '"primal scream"' is as much as possible stripped from meaning. Nevertheless, I would argue this '"primal scream"' still relies on Bacon's act of '[ensuring]' in this (Nobus's) narrative even though Nobus dismisses this '[endeavour]' in the experience of the text. In this, I would say 'sensation' does not come as an immediacy or autonomy as there is already a precondition for the happening of 'a pure sensation'. This '[purity]', I would contend, is always in a structure of meaning since the absence of meaning could only come through the act of '[stripping]' (that is, in order to 'strip' the 'meaning' from the scream, there is already a prior connection between this 'scream' and meaning) even though for Nobus's analysis of Bacon, this 'scream' is invested to be non-signification

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which one can respond to *the Other's desire* [my italics] when it screams for interpretation: "*Che vuoi?*", "What do you want?"' (Ibid., p. 111.)

[287] Ibid., p. 98.

at its purest. Thus, this de-narrative move (such as an 'erupt[ion]' of a 'sensation' and 'scream') is still returned to be in an inescapable structure of 'meaning'.

3.1.7 Paint and Progressive Frameworks?

Let us return to Nobus's statements in which he champions a 'deconstruction' of frames and paint in Bacon's work over visibility, materiality and linearity:

> Looking at Bacon's creative labour as a progressive destabilisation of meaning (sense) in favour of the appearance as pure sensation, it is also remarkable how this work of rejection, distortion and destruction of form initially relies quite heavily on the artifice of the geometrical armature (the famous Baconian 'cage') and gradually starts to operate more freely, without the necessary support of the surrounding framework.[288]

First of all, I would like to critique Nobus's idea of 'a *progressive* destabilisation of meaning' (my italics) which is endorsed to be in his knowledge of stability (of the '[progression]'). That is destabilisation has its progression which is known in this perspective that there are different stages of destabilisation. This knowledge is outside of Bacon's knowing because this is what Nobus is 'looking at' Bacon's 'creative labour' 'as'. '[T]he appearance as pure sensation' is not pure at its purest or most autonomous, but is conditioned by 'a progressive destabilisation of meaning'. '[I]t is also remarkable how this work of rejection, distortion and destruction of form *initially* relies quite heavily on the artifice of the geometrical armature […]' (my italics) implies that there is a pre-knowing of an initiation/origin for 'this work of rejection, distortion and destruction of form', and this establishment has to do with the '[reliance]' of 'the artifice of the geometrical armature'. Nonetheless, I would question how Nobus confirms his absolute knowing of the origin of Bacon's framework with the untheorised progression of destabilisation.

Apart from this, for Nobus, this progression has to do with the removal of 'framework' and 'meaning'. The level of '[freedom]' of that '[operation]' of the 'form' has to do with the abandonment of 'the necessary support of the surrounding framework'. I would say, in one sense, this 'framework' is a prerequisite for legitimating '[freedom]'. Without the 'framework', '[freedom]' of '[operation]' is not known to be '[freedom]' in this perspective.

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[288] Ibid., p. 109.

In another sense, the elimination of the 'framework' is always returned to the 'framework' itself. I would argue that the sense of '[progression]' or '[graduality]' ('[…] gradually starts to operate more freely') has destabilised the possibility of an absolute escape of the 'framework' or 'cage'. '[Progression]' and '[graduality] imply that 'meaning' and the 'framework' are still caught up with a sense of stability of their structures.

In Nobus's article, inspired by his understanding of Bacon's artwork being without a framework, Nobus also created his own narrated triptychs that he claims work against any reading sequences and meaning, as they can be read in any order. Nevertheless, I would turn again here to the problem of the absolute absence of a framework, which is always reverted to its inescapable presence. Even though Nobus invests in different orders of reading his analysis of three panels, he is still returned to be caught up with what he has acknowledged — 'a linear sequence': [289]

> And much like Bacon's triptychs the three panels of my essay could in principle to be read from left to right and from right to left, despite the inescapable diachrony of the textual image imposing a linear sequence in which one panel will be seen to take priority over the other.[290]

In this sense, I would say Nobus's deconstruction of narration and sequences is only a sense of his own *wishes.* Not only does Nobus still rely on the structure of narrative sequences but also he could not overcome the sequences of letters and sentences. Apart from a dismissal of and a return of narrative and sequences, Nobus's argument of a rejection of a form returns to rely on another 'form' for painting:

> Be that as it may, other than the series of heads, very few paintings that have escaped Bacon's hand of destruction portray figures without some form of support, armature or framing, which is represented in a wide array of different forms: imaginary cage, 'papal' chair, bed, chair, sofa, doorway, window, table, mirror, carpet, and so on. Some paintings even display figures with more than one supporting framework. Taking into account that Bacon would always prefer his painting to be exhibited in solid frames, and under glass, his consistent recourse to additional frames to trap the image (the subject matter) in the paint not only demonstrates how the structures of artificiality are an essential prerequisite for seeing, locating and capturing the truth of an appearance, but also (and perhaps more crucially) how sensation cannot be relayed as a violent

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[289] I can read the problem of sequences in relation to what I have argued about the issue of units which Nobus endorses to get rid of the structures but is caught up with them.

[290] Ibid., p. 96.

(immediate and intense) assault on the nervous system without an artificial, and to some extent fictive, holding environment.[291]

One thing here I find ironic is that the rejection or destruction of the 'form' necessitates a '[form]'. This 'form of support' does not stand on its own but 'is represented in a wide array of different forms'. That is, according to Nobus, 'imaginary cage, "papal" chair, bed, chair, sofa, doorway, window, table, mirror, carpet' are not any disintegrated objects from 'framing' or are not artwork themselves but are '[representation]' of 'forms' for portraying figures. The portrait of figures is framed by the representation which is the construction and support of figures. For Nobus, his understanding of these objects is based on difference — 'different forms'. '[D]isplay' here is caught up with the necessity of a 'supporting framework' in which figures are displayed. The '[exhibition]' of painting is not exhibited by painting on its own but is framed by external materiality — in 'solid frames' and under 'glass'. I read that the 'image' is designed to be 'trap[ped]' instead of being 'exhibited' as the 'image' itself, but that 'additional frames' are required for '[demonstration]'. In other words, the 'structures of artificiality' are an '[essence]' for that demonstration (instead of the image or paint itself). In this perspective, frames are known to have their origin and validity of that 'seeing, locating and capturing'. Instead of the seeing of the artists or spectators, 'seeing, locating, and capturing' are determined by ('solid') 'frames'. This 'truth of appearance' is not captured directly by artists, but those 'frames' validate it. This truth necessitates to be '[seen], [located] and [captured]' — in this, it implies that this truth is already established for '[demonstrating]'. This truth cannot be on its own but is framed by 'artificiality' — an artificial truth. '[A]n artificial' and 'fictive holding environment' is what solidifies the function of 'sensation' — in another sense, '[immediacy]' and 'intensity' can only be granted by the structure of 'artificiality' and materiality (such as 'solid frames'). Let us now turn to the final example of Nobus's construction of destruction in relation to frames, sequences and narratives:

> Yet towards the end of his career, in what could be called his 'late style', the cages, armatures and containers seem to become lighter, if not less frequent at least less conspicuous and less imposing, as if he had somehow found a way to trap the image without having to first delineate the contours of its appearance on the canvas. In light of this, although the argument could no doubt also be made on the basis of other features of his 'late work' such as the sections of raw, unpainted canvas, Bacon's 'painting cure' is also a journey towards greater

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[291] Ibid., pp. 109-110.

economy, simplicity and minimalism. What started off as a portrait of the artist as a scream screaming for interpretation from inside, or on top of an artificial holding frame, develops into a self-portrait of a distorted, yet largely self-composed figure in a state of physical tranquillity and relative equilibrium. In this respect, Bacon's life may not have been a complete disaster after all.[292]

In this last passage, I would problematise that Nobus's analysis of Bacon's "'late style'" is still returned to a structure of sequences, which he strives to dismiss. First of all, according to Nobus, 'the cages, armatures and containers seem to become lighter'. In this perspective, '[becoming] lighter' is based on a 'seem[ing]' assumption and I would contend that this 'becoming' implies the presence of objects (frames) which are only 'lighter'. In this sense, this progression is caught up with the absolute knowing of the essence of the frames by the narrator and still ends up in the impossibility of complete destruction. Apart from this, 'if not less frequent at least less conspicuous and less imposing', implies that the idea of 'less[ness]' is still in a structure of 'conspicuous[ness]' and 'imposing[-ness]'. The frames, in this sense, are still inescapable from being 'conspicuous' and 'imposing'. I would contend that 'cages' are not in one or singular instance in a painting, but rather persist. If cages 'become lighter' across paintings, then these 'cages' *are in a transforming process that exceeds the frames of paintings*. To restate: cages are not contained in one painting but are across all the other paintings as a sequence, a linear progression of the history.[293]

In this sense, Nobus's dismissal of sequential linearity is caught up with analogy or difference, the 'as if': '[…] as if he had somehow found a way to trap the image without having to first delineate the contours of its appearance on the canvas.' This 'as if' in Nobus's statement, I would argue, does not lead to a successful failure as I read an ambiguity of his connection between a 'largely self-composed figure in a state of physical tranquillity and relative equilibrium', which is still caught up in a structure of figures in 'physical[ity]', and

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[292] Ibid., p. 110.

[293] Bacon himself at some point has mentioned in the interview that those frames help avoiding story-telling; nevertheless, the difficulty is that the story is inevitably/already told between figures on the canvases. DS: 'And do the vertical breaks between the canvases of a triptych have the same sort of purpose as those frames within a canvas?' FB: 'Yes, they do. They isolate one from the other. And they cut off the story between one and the other. It helps to avoid story-telling if the figures are painted on three different canvases. Of course, so many of the greatest paintings have been done with a number of figures on a canvas, and of course every painter longs to do that. But, as the thing's in such a terribly complicated stage now, the story that is already being told between one figure and another begins to cancel out the possibilities of what can be done with the paint on its own. And this is a very great difficulty. But at any moment somebody will come along and be able to put a number of figures on a canvas' (David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, p. 23).

'self-portrait of a distorted', which is still of a 'figure' that is not absolutely destroyed, disappeared.

Overall, Nobus has built up his narrative according to his perspective on Bacon's history of 'the end of his career'. The '[development]' of Bacon's artwork does not promise a deletion of figures, paint and frames as what I have problematised throughout Nobus's claim that he could not get out of his formulations of his analysis of progression (such as 'become lighter' or 'less'). Even though Nobus's contention is to establish Bacon's 'late style' of art such as destruction, deformation and distortion on the ground of elimination of sequences and frames, this is a return to be instituted upon Nobus's construction of a narrative of paint and sequences.

To draw out the stakes here, what I am reading in Nobus' engagement with Bacon is the kind of celebration of constitutive nothings that is familiar from contemporary scholarship that takes as its inspiration the *late Lacan* of the Real. Nobus's work is subtle and complex, an attempt eschews reductive, psychological readings of psychoanalysis, and instead to read success in failure, to understand how non-meaning returns always as the condition of its opposite. My issue is that such an approach can be *blind* or *resistant* to reading the appeals to meaning and structure that go unread within it. To get 'safely to the point of danger',[294] and to stage the failed encounter, to reduce interpretation to the scream for its necessity, all kinds of appeals to forms, sequences, interpretations, and structures have to be set in place. Even as Nobus is arguing that the beyond of meaning can never be experienced in its pure form, such a purity is nonetheless forwarded, and can be done so, I would argue, only through an avoidance of the textuality necessary to the excess.

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[294] This quote is in Neil Cocks's *The Peripheral Child in Nineteenth Century Literature and Its Criticism* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014). 'Edelman, in short, is committed to bringing his analysis safely to the point of danger, and nothing must disrupt that trajectory' (p. 142). Cocks's argument of Edelman's investment in the identity outside the signifying chain returning to be caught up in symbolic is similar to my contention of Nobus's effort which is to 'safely to the point of danger [of destructing inescapable structures and textuality]'.

3.2 Parveen Adams's 'The Violence of Paint'

3.2.1 Introduction

I am now in a position to be able to turn towards a further, recent engagement with Lacanian psychoanalysis and Francis Bacon. Parveen Adams, in writing about Bacon, engages narratives of violence, desire, and the Lacanian object *a*, that little piece of the real that for those who follow his work both grounds desire, and resists interpretation.[295] In 'The violence of paint',[296] Adams differs from Nobus, despite their shared influence, as the latter, as we have read, is concerned with immediacy, accidents, and instincts, whilst the former is interested in the extent to which paint is caught up with object *a* (the loss of an object) or lamella. Although both Nobus and Adams dismiss the idea of representation and narrative, the latter rejection is grounded in her belief in a *reality* beyond symbolic and absolute detachment of the gaze. That is, she pursues an argument based in reality outside the signifying chain, which for her could only be explained through a successful act of the detachment of gaze. This detachment is outside of signification while producing lamella/object *a*. There is, as far as I can see, not doubt that this is what is secured for Adams's theory of the violence of paint. My problematisation thus questions Adams's faith in the location of paint/lamella, the assurance with which she can identify them.

Adams moves in this chapter to intervene into Lacanian theory, and into existing art-historical understandings of Lacan, especially the way in which within both lack is in some sense redeemed: for her, Lacan's phallic symbolic metaphor returns to be caught up with the symbolic that 'remains phallic itself' as Adams claims, '[t]he problem with van Alphen and indeed Lacan's account of perspective, the phallus and the detached gaze is that it remains phallic itself'.[297] In order to reach a completion of the removal of symbolic, Parveen Adams proposes a thinking-through of the gaze in Bacon's painting. For her, within this work, 'lamella' has replaced 'phallus', where lamella is the object of loss (or we could use the Lacanian term — object *a*).[298] This object *a* disintegrates both spectators and the visual

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[295] For my understanding, Adams's engagement with Lacanian theory is contingent on her own idea of the object of loss and real in which the object is existent. Please see footnote 298.

[296] Parveen Adams, 'The Violence of Paint', in *The Emptiness of the Image: Psychoanalysis and Sexual Differences* (Routledge, 1995), pp. 109-21.

[297] Parveen Adams, 'The Violence of Paint', in *The Emptiness of the Image: Psychoanalysis and Sexual Differences*, p. 113.

[298] Adams has only used the term the 'object of loss' instead of object *a* in her chapter. Even though Adams seems to take in the Lacanian idea of object *a*, her insistence of object does exist, such as shadows or shapes in the painting, which is diverted from Lacanian object *a* that does not exist. I realise the difference between the two while my use of object *a* in the whole section is for Adams's meaning of the 'object of loss'.

field, and it is through this process that Adams's idea of reality can be reached. In order to overcome the impossibility of that reality, Adams advocates that object *a* is the only solution for reaching beyond the signifier. 'The reality behind the illusion of the signifier' for Adams can no longer be addressed by symbolic but by object *a* which is 'outside of the signifying chain'.[299]

Adams is sure that this lamella never involves symbolic, but instead detaches the gaze. This detachment has constructed 'the object as object of loss'[300] which is not for any identification of an object, but only its loss. For that disturbance of the scopic field, it necessitates an infallible success of castration and in that 'a unity of the scopic field and the spectator'[301] can be broken. In another sense, the precondition is already set up in advance — castration, object *a*, lamella, shadows. For Adams, object *a*/lamella is able to get rid of the symbolic, reaching a point of void and abyss so that in this it is no longer representation and narrative. In another sense, I read Adams's definition of representation and narrative to be caught up with symbolic, unity, and signifier instead of accidents, chance, or sensation. After all, and as we shall read, Adams's absolute access to nothingness is arguably based on an unquestionable binary/structure between object *a* and gaze.

3.2.2 The Gaze and the Psychical Effects

First of all, I would contend that Adams's Lacanian analysis in relation to gaze and paint requires her *hypothesis*:

> This article puts forward a psychoanalytical hypothesis about the psychical effects of the paintings, starting from Lacan's insistence on the fact that perception is not just an issue of vision, but an issue of desire. The question of perception must take up the problem of what I want to see, and the way in which it structures the gaze which captures me. Instead of thinking of perception as just a visual field, it must be thought of as the field that is structured by the relations and forces of objects and desires.[302]

The 'psychical effects' are framed by a 'psychoanalytical hypothesis' that 'this article' 'puts forward'. This 'hypothesis' has a start which is from 'Lacan's insistence on the fact'. Nevertheless, it could be suggested that this 'fact' — as 'fact' — is not insisted on by Lacan

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[299] Parveen Adams, 'The Violence of Paint', p. 113.
[300] This is from a quote that I will be analysing in the later passage. Please see footnote 306.
[301] This is from a quote that I will be analysing in the later passage. Please see footnote 308.
[302] Ibid., p. 111.

but by Adams's perspective on Lacan. The 'fact' is related to 'perception' which has to do with 'an issue of desire' that brings forth the 'psychical effects'. The 'psychical effects' are not of the spectators, or painters but 'of the paintings'. However, these effects are not carried out by visuality, the vision of subjects, or paintings. Effects are constructed by the (impossible) desire of the subject caused by the gaze. The subject does not structure the gaze but the gaze 'captures' the subject. The visual field is not constituted by a mono-relation of the subject toward the object but has to do with relations of objects, desires, and subjects. I understand that Adams builds up her theory of desire based on 'tak[ing] up' the predestined question of perception and a 'must[-ness]' of '[thinking]' of the structure of desire. That is, '[t]he question of perception' is conditioned by a 'take[-]up' of the problem between the subject's desire to see and the '[structured]' gaze by 'the relations and forces of objects and desires'.

Further, Adams's investment in the detachment of the gaze ties in with her belief in 'the reality behind the illusion of the signifier':

> It is the image in all its materiality that throws out this darkness, that marks itself by darkness; it is not the other way round, it is not that the darkness gets reflected in the image. In other words, the otherness is that which has remained outside the signifying chain, desired and only dimly seen by the artist and acceded to only with the help of 'accidents' and 'chance' interventions. All this has to do with the reality behind the illusion of the signifier but it can no longer be explained with a phallic metaphor.[303]

This 'darkness' is 'throw[n] out' by 'the image' 'in all its materiality' while this act of 'throw[ing]' is not untouched by 'darkness'. The image still 'marks itself' by what the image has thrown out — 'darkness'. Darkness is a mark in the image instead of '[reflection]'. If we read that darkness is that 'otherness', the otherness is thrown out from 'the signifying chain' while is 'mark[ed]' by the '[desire]' of 'the artist'. According to Adams's construction, 'the otherness' is situated outside 'the signifying chain', but equally that the artist's desire and seeing of otherness are secured by Adams. Nevertheless, there is a gap between the subject's actual seeing, as read here, and accessibility to otherness. Adams proposes that this allow-ness of seeing is assisted by 'accidents and chance interventions'. That is, accidents and chance are within the symbolic but can intrude/intervene in the field

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[303] Ibid., p. 113.

outside the signifying chain. This 'otherness' is that 'reality behind the illusion of the signifier' and this is only accessible via in-signification (a non-phallic metaphor).[304]

For this 'reality behind the illusion of the signifier' to be accessed, Adams gives an example of the pair of lips in 'a 1989 installation by Geneviève Cadieux titled *Hear Me With Your Eyes*':[305]

> The spectator feels self-conscious and conscious of being a seeing subject. Why? Because the spectator's relation to the images of the woman is always interpreted by the other spectator, the pair of lips. But they, of course, are *in* the picture. In fact they function as the eye that flies in the foreground of Holbein's *Ambassadors*. The lips serve the function of detaching the gaze so that the spectator's relation to the image is disturbed. This detachment constitutes the object as object of loss, a loss that it is the very function of representation to deny.[306]

We come to understand that for Adams's idea of object *a*/lamella to function, it necessitates what is '*in*' the picture — 'the pair of lips'. This pair of lips ('the other spectator') has/have constituted the spectator's 'feel[ing]' of 'self-conscious[ness]' or 'conscious[ness] of being a seeing subject'. There is a sense of deferral of the spectator's consciousness which is only validated by the '[interruption]' of the other ('the pair of lips'). The positionality of double spectators (inside and outside the picture) forms a displacement of seeing — that is, what is seen by the spectators outside the picture is located at the spectator (the lips) in the picture instead of the images of women themselves. This opposition of positionality between two spectators is caught up in a structure of fixation of a 'relation'. That is, in order to validate that '[interruption]' from the lips, the spectator's relation is set to be in an absolute position (to 'the images of the woman'). By the knowable and fixed seeing of the spectator, interruption is thus replaced with a non-seeing of the woman itself, a seeing of 'the pair of lips'. Nevertheless, I would say this seeing of 'the pair of lips' itself is not a seeing of nothingness, or provides a seeing of nothingness but is only a movement of 'detaching the gaze'. That is, this act of detaching the gaze does not necessarily guarantee an absolute seeing of non-seeing. The pair of lips are not absent but is still '*in*' the picture. In one sense,

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[304] Here, we can compare a difference between Nobus's and Adams's idea of accidents. According to my reading, Nobus's idea of accidents is situated outside the narrative while Adams's idea of accidents that I read could be located within symbolic, and through this supplement (accidents), it marks out the non-signifying chain.

[305] Ibid., p. 114.

[306] Ibid., p. 114.

the production of 'the object as object of loss' from the detachment does not dismiss the presence of lips. This loss, I would argue, is returned to rely on the predestined and installed gaze — that is, this is a constructed and knowable loss.

Ironically, 'a loss that it is the very function of representation to deny' instead involves a sense of its own representation of that self-evident 'gaze'. As I read it, for Adams, there is a sense of *the origin of the gaze* that has to attach to the spectator outside the picture so that in this way 'gaze' is able to be detached. The 'gaze' in this sense is already determined for the spectator. Other than the 'gaze', 'the pair of lips' are predestined for the function of 'detaching the gaze' and this detachment has determined 'the spectator's relation'. '[T]he spectator's relation to the image' is destined by a '[serving]' of 'the function of the lips' which can 'detach the gaze'. In another word, the detachment of the gaze is tied with the serving of the lips. That is, this act of constituting 'the object as object of loss' returns back to be determined by the dominion of the 'lips'. Yet, my critique is that Adams has 'naturalised' the legitimacy of the 'lips' and their 'function', as 'lips' are framed and defined by Adams's own perspective and thus the required autonomy is compromised. Although Adams strives to dismiss 'representation' by ensuring the function of the 'object of loss', this denial of representation reverts to haunt this 'object of loss' via Adams's inescapable structure of her own *representative* and narrated construction such as 'lips', 'the images of the woman', 'the [spectator]' and 'gaze'. On the other hand, Adams's radical theoretical intervention is to disrupt the conventional sense of the volitional and liberal subject via the splitting of the gaze, its detachment and its sense of deriving from the object. In another sense, for Adams, the gaze of the lip is knowable and is not constructed in perspective. This, in turn, ends up being an authoritative claim of what art/painting is. My concern here is aligned with Jan De Vos's review of Neil Cocks's *Higher Education Discourse and Deconstruction: Challenging the Case for Transparency and Objecthood*: 'Cocks's compelling argument is that when the aim of those critics is to free theory from the tyranny of subjectivity, we are in for a new tyranny: that of the self-evident […]'.[307] Thus, my question is with whether Adams has strived to overcome the tyranny of subjectivity (necessary to her notion of representation), only to return to a new tyranny, in De Vos's terms: the self-evident object, a gaze, that must be detached from any notion of the symbolic, difference, and perspective.

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[307] Jan De Vos, Reviews for *Higher Education Discourse and Deconstruction: Challenging the Case for Transparency and Objecthood* (SPRINGER NATURE, 2017), <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-319-52983-7> [accessed 03 Jun. 2024].

The issue around representation and Bacon's images that I will be arguing can be seen in Adams's other contention:

> To understand the force of Bacon's images we have to understand the way in which they undercut the regime of representation. Now this regime is described by the fact that it ties together my wish to see and what is presented to me, a unity of the scopic field and the spectator. But when the gaze as an object becomes detached from this scene, a dislocation occurs. A gap opens up- the circuit is broken. The illusion of wholeness has been as it were castrated. In fact we can treat Bacon's images as just that- castration erupting within our wish to see, within the scopic field.[308]

The understanding of 'the way in which Bacon's images undercut the regime of representation' is the ground for understanding 'the force of Bacon's images'. The success of 'the force' thus rests on 'the way' that the 'we' 'have to' 'understand'. This 'force' has to do with the act of 'undercut[ting]' 'the regime of representation' in which Bacon's images are to be located outside of this regime. In one sense, even though 'the force of Bacon's images' is to 'undercut the regime of representation', 'the force of Bacon's images' cannot escape structured 'representation'. That is, for this force to function, Adams's construction of representation is a necessity and is restricted to a '[description]' of the fact of 'a unity of the scopic field and the spectator'. What is 'representation' is already predestined and 'the force' can only happen when 'Bacon's images' are in 'representation' so that the act of 'undercut[ting]' can be carried out. This act of 'undercut[ting]' is established when 'the gaze as an object becomes detached'. A 'dislocation' is known in this perspective that the right location is tied with the gaze as an object is attached from the 'scene'. The detachment causes 'a gap' between 'the scopic field and the spectator'. Thus, the 'circuit' of this unity is 'broken'. Because of the detachment of the gaze as an object, the 'wholeness' is just an 'illusion'. This 'castration' is 'as it were' which leads to 'the illusion of wholeness'. The '[eruption]' of 'castration' is based on 'Bacon's images' that are 'treat[ed]' by the 'we' according to 'as[-ness]' of 'castration'. '[C]astration' is not showing, displaying, or emerging but is 'erupting' within the specific 'wish' of us and the specific 'field'. This 'castration' for Adams is absolute and this '[eruption]' is not accidental but is predictable to happen in the particular field ('the scopic field').

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[308] Parveen Adams, 'The Violence of Paint', pp. 113-14.

3.2.3 The Gaze and Narratives

Adams does not dismiss that pictures are narratives, but for Adams detaching the gaze is a solution to overcome narratives:

> To the extent that pictures are narratives, and it must be remembered that Bacon specifically and repeatedly refuses narrative, they depend on the fascination of the spectator, they act as traps for the gaze. But we have seen that it is possible to detach the gaze.[309]

What Adams implies here is that Bacon's refutation of narrative in '[specificality]' and '[repetition]' does not escape from 'pictures that are ['to the extent'] narratives'. Pictures which are narratives have to do with 'depend[ency] on the fascination of the spectator' and 'act as traps for the gaze'. In this perspective, on the one hand, pictures which are narratives are not constituted by themselves but are framed by 'the fascination of the spectator'. On the other hand, 'pictures [which] are narratives' are 'traps for the gaze' in which there is a unity between 'the spectator' and 'the gaze'. Nevertheless, 'the gaze' is not determined by 'the spectator' but is '[trapped]' by 'pictures' which are 'narratives'. That is, these 'traps' are 'act[ed] as' by 'pictures [which] are narratives' in that 'the gaze' is attached to 'the pictures'. In other words, Adams's proposal of the possibility of detaching gaze lies in her idea of a structure in which the gaze is predestined to be attached to pictures, which are narratives, so that detachment between the gaze and the spectator can happen. Apart from relying on this structure to detach the gaze, Adams believes that the product of 'lamella' can overcome the hinderance of the narratives. Nevertheless, I would argue that the idea of 'lamella' still falls back to Adams's set-up frame, the pictures (where 'lamella' must not be outside of the frame). In another sense, 'lamella' has its origin which is knowable for Adams. Even though Adams's contingencies of the product of lamella, shadows and shapes are to prove the detachment of the gaze, I would contend that these contingencies are still in the painting/picture, narratives. As follows, I will be problematising Adams's theory of lamella in relation narrative, representation, gaze and violence of paint.

According to Adams, there is a consequence of rebuffing narrative and representation — the lamella:

> I am saying that it is the lamella that is the outcome of Bacon's efforts to avoid narrative and representation and to act directly on the nervous system. Bacon's

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[309] Ibid., p. 114.

'matter of fact' turns out to be the lamella. And I mean you to take this quite literally. Within Bacon's paintings there are, attached to bodies, flat bounded shapes. Usually they are called shadows by commentators. I want to think of them as lamella. You can see it clearly in many canvases including the *Triptych*. Not all the shadows are 'extra flat' but we can easily take the pink and mauve oozing matter to be the lamella. There is no dearth of flat shadows in other paintings.[310]

For Adams, 'lamella' is unquestionably the 'outcome' and 'shadows'. This connection between lamella and Adams's analysis of Bacon and Bacon's paintings is established by the 'saying' of the 'I', a 'thinking' of the 'I', and an easy 'take' of the 'we'. Lamella in this sense is not the production of Bacon or Bacon's painting but is of Adams's narrative by the framing of her 'saying' and 'thinking'. Lamella is already prescribed to be the 'outcome' before 'Bacon's efforts' based on Adams's knowledge of the difference between what is 'narrative'/ 'representation' and what is not. This is set up as an opposition in that lamella is already structured in Adams's fixed category.

'Flat bounded shapes' are 'taken to be quite literally' to be lamella. This '[literariness]' has to do with '"matter of fact"' which is 'shapes'/ 'bodies' 'called' 'shadows'. '[T]he pink and mauve oozing matter' is not lamella itself but is 'take[n]' to be lamella. For Adams, the '[literal]' is possible. Meaning, that is, as far as I can read it, meaning in the symbolic of her frame, can be stilled, in this understanding, that figuration is overcome. But what is the '[literal]'? In one sense, according to my reading above, that a thing is something else. The 'matter of fact' (already a quotation, already a repetition), 'turns out to be' (a process) the lamella, and the lamella *are* 'flat bound shapes' (not what these are called). The fixing of object *a* requires, a moment of recognition, which does not quite seem to me to be scene of fixation by the spectator, but a less risky, more distanced 'think[ing]' by the 'you', one that, at this moment (retrospectively, in the narration) has yet to occur. Then, there is a claim that 'you can see' 'this' – lamella as 'flat bound shape' and 'flat bound shape' as 'oozing' 'shadows' 'clearly'. Rather than a disturbance of vision, a point of blindness, *there is a '[clear]' 'see[ing]'*.

Here we might return to the opening line: 'I am saying that it is the lamella that is the outcome of Bacon's efforts to avoid narrative and representation and to act directly on the nervous system'. For Adams, Bacon has made 'efforts' while I read that there is intentional labour at the start of the process, but the 'outcome' is something different from the intention,

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[310] Ibid., p. 120.

which is to 'avoid narrative and representation and to act directly on the nervous system'. The intention is not to create the lamella. The lamella, that can be seen 'clearly' by 'you' is different in effects. Take, for example, it does not act on the nervous system here, and does not act directly. What is at stake in all of this? For me, there is, at every stage of a reading that can be understood to be committed to a questioning of the comforts of the liberal subject, that questions simple notions of interpretation, and offers seemingly odd ideas of detached gazes in paintings, and realities framed by but genuinely exceeding symbolic structures, a bathetic investment in certainty: the '[literal]'; direct action on the nervous system that bypasses language; that which can be *clearly* seen. Despite this, and through this also, the scene of certainty is one also of deferral: one thing is another and another, whilst the scene is framed and framed again.

If we look further at this lamella in Adams's analysis, this lamella has its origin — the body: 'I would put it differently. I would say that what escapes through the orifices is libido. The body squeezes itself out, empties itself out. What oozes out is the lamella, the organ of the drive'.[311] Even though lamella is constituted to be 'void', 'abyss', 'shadows', 'a literal essence of being', or 'a puddle of being', lamella does not come from nothingness or as a self-evident existence, or even, at this stage, an effect of symbolic framing that gains a subversive independence. Lamella is the body 'itself' which is '[squeezed] out' and '[emptied] out' by the body. That is lamella has an origin that is located in the body and of the body *itself*. This itself can be separated from the body, 'the organ of the drive'. This '[oozed] out' organ is that being, void, abyss. In another sense, 'void' and 'abyss'[312] also have their origin and location which is from the body. Does that mean that void, abyss, object *a* is coming from a structure of body instead of being out of nothingness? And to what extent is the insistence of the void — that it is void, abyss — also a deferral of the void? There are, perhaps, Lacanian solutions here — the real as that which escapes iteration — but they are not forwarded here. Instead, we again get certainty, reality, we might say, but not the real.

3.2.4 The Gaze/ Lamella and Paint

Let us understand further the relation between this lamella and the gaze in Adams's reading:

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[311] Ibid., p. 118.
[312] Ibid., p. 120.

We can say of the lamella and its relation to the gaze? If Cadieux appeals to us to hear with our eyes, what is Bacon asking of us? The answer is that we are being invited to enjoy (*jouir*) with our eyes. In the Holbein a quite different eye (the image of the skull) flies across the foreground at that point in time when one turns away; in the Cadieux there are eyes (the pair of lips) in the space behind you that are directed at the back of your head; in Bacon it is not a question of this time or space, there is a void, an abyss (the lamella).[313]

'[T]he lamella and its relation to the gaze' is bound with the 'say[ing]' of the 'we'. One thing for Adams that is assured is that the image of 'the skull' and 'the pair of lips' are what constitutes lamella; there are no other ways of reading those images. In order to secure the status of the lamella, the image in the painting is predestined to be read in the certain way. For Adams, 'a void', 'an abyss' are certain, unquestionable, and interchangeable, and thus seeing is always of an absence, such as 'a quite different eye' and 'the pair of lips' that are not seen by the subject. Nevertheless, I would be built upon my reading on the previous section to argue that the void or a non-seeing is established by a construction of the 'body':

The void comes about through the body's endeavour to evacuate itself as Deleuze says. What do we have in the triptych? On the one hand, a heavy flux of contorted movement, a mass of wounding colours and jagged edges of the body, and on the other hand, the lamella, smooth, flat colour without volume. Is this not the substance of the living body, now no longer zoned into the senses and criss-crossed by castration? If what is readily available for speech in the violence of these bodies (the violence of sensation), the lamella marks the completion of another process, *dissipation*. Deleuze is right: 'there is immobility beyond movement; beyond standing, there is sitting and beyond sitting, lying down, in order finally, to be dissipated' (Deleuze 1984:30).[314]

One thing for Adams here is that lamella/ void does not come about on its own but is through 'the body's endeavour'. This 'endeavour' is not about recreating or encountering itself but 'evacuate[s] itself' according to the '[saying]' of Deleuze. This evacuation has to do with an

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[313] Ibid., p. 120.
[314] Ibid., p. 120.

act of endeavour in that the production of the 'void' can be established. '[Heaviness]' and '[contortedness]' of 'flux' has to do with 'wounding colours and jagged edges of the body'. This is not evacuation or where the void comes about. The void has to do with 'smooth flat colour without volume' which is 'criss-crossed by castration'. Based on this castration, there is the elimination of 'senses', '[heaviness]', 'wounding', 'jagged[ness]', and 'contorted[ness]' of 'the substance of the living body'. This mark of the lamella is outside of symbolic, 'speech' but is in another process — '*dissipation*'. For Adams, the construction of 'beyond[ness]' such as dissipation is assured and that is what makes lamella different from symbolic. The result of evacuation is related to '"immobility"' instead of 'a heavy flux' of 'movement'. This dissipation has produced the effect of 'smooth, flat colour without volume'. My sense of this argument is that the lamella is something like death drive, that lack of animation that is a transformation of, and inherent in movement; the 'flat[ness]' that is a transformation of three dimensionality, and thus, we might say, psychoanalytically, the non-meaning inherent in meaning.

The central difficulty I have with this is the claim and then question concerning: '[…] the lamella, smooth, flat colour without volume. Is this not the substance of the living body, now no longer zoned into the senses and criss-crossed by castration?' Firstly, what does it mean to say that this lamella is what we 'have' in the triptych? What is the status of this 'hav[ing]'? Is this not a reading of 'lamella', rather than a matter of some kind of non-symbolic ownership? From this, we can move to simply answer the question in the negative: no, this is not necessarily the transformed living body, it isn't even, in my reading, necessarily a shadow, or even 'flat'. Adams argument is, surely, that the 'smooth' 'colour' sets up some kind of Anti-Oedipal space, no longer 'criss-crossed' by 'castration', an organ without body, free from being 'zoned' or in another way limited. But such a reading cannot help but call upon its own limits (thus understood): Bacon's painting is now obvious, as that 'smooth colour' is unquestionably the liberated 'substance of the living body'. Fixing meaning in this way, in a sense, can be guaranteed as liberation precisely because there can be no debate, no reading. That is, I suppose, to be taken as the mark of the paint directly acting upon our nervous system.[315] But my sense there is that this is a problematic liberation

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[315] This idea is from my previous analysis of Adams's argument: 'I am saying that it is the lamella that is the outcome of Bacon's efforts to avoid narrative and representation and to act directly on the nervous system'. Parveen Adams, 'The Violence of Paint', p. 120. As for Bacon, the idea of acting/coming across directly onto the nervous system can be seen in his argument that 'It's a very, very close and difficult thing to know why some paint *comes across directly onto the nervous system* and other paint tells you the story in a long diatribe through the brain' [my italics]. David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon* (Thames and Hudson, 1999), p. 18.

for precisely these reasons, and that is without even a wider problematisation of such a non-'zoned', liberated body. What stands against such an understanding being read as *Romantic*, in the most reductive sense of that word?

Now, let us turn to focus on paint, and violence in relation to lamella:

This account may seem to overlook the question of the violence of sensation. But in fact this route allows us to form a view about the violence Bacon creates, as opposed to the violence of the world. Nothing could be more bland and obtuse than to use Bacon's work as a narrative about the lamentable violences of the age. The violence which Bacon creates concerns a certain experience of the body and something to do with the horror of a too close presence. This violence can indeed be usefully treated through the question of the detachment of the gaze. It will be that which enables us to distinguish in Bacon's paintings between a violence of painting and the painting of violence. If the violence at stake were a violence against the subject, a masochism, it would only be so by enabling us, even forcing us, to identify, to put ourselves in the place of the object in the same way as the masochist does. But in fact the detachment of the object gaze is the very antithesis of any identification with the object. We can see this in triptych (august 1972) where the artificially produced violence of sensations is almost at a maximum.[316]

Based on 'this' 'account' (Adams's perspective on Deleuze's analysis of Bacon's *Study of Bullfight No.1*),[317] 'the question of the violence of sensation' 'seem[s] to' be 'overlook[ed]'. This 'overlook' has to do with Adams's constitution of the 'account'. That is, this 'view' about the violence Bacon 'creates' is a view not from Bacon but from this 'route' (Deleuze's analysis). Nevertheless, as I have mentioned, this 'view' and 'route' is from Adams's perspective. Adams has put this violence into two categories, 'a violence of painting' and 'the painting of violence', according to the '[treatment]' through 'the question of the detachment of the gaze'. For Adams, 'the painting of violence' is caught up with 'the identification of the object' such as the subjects still 'put [themselves] in the place of the object'. Instead, 'the violence of painting' has nothing to do with any 'identification with the object' and this 'violence of sensation' has produced the lamella which has to do with seeing nothing[318] ('the detachment of the gaze'), instead of requiring a structure of displacement. The 'violence of painting' is 'capturing the "appearance" of a human being' and is 'the violence of appearing' — 'the reality beyond the illusion of signifier'.[319] For

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[316] Parveen Adams, 'The Violence of Paint', pp. 117-18.
[317] Adams offers her understanding of Deleuze's analysis of Bacon's artwork. (Ibid., pp. 116-117).
[318] Please see the next long quote (footnote 320).
[319] Parveen Adams, 'The Violence of Paint', p. 76 and p. 113.

Adams, Bacon's violence is opposed to 'the violence of the world' and is not about 'the lamentable violences of the age' which is a 'bland and obtuse' narrative for Adams. Adams's understanding of Bacon's violence lies in Bacon's 'creation' in relation to 'a certain experience of the body' and 'the horror of a too close presence'. This 'experience' of the body is limited to a 'certain' experience. In this perspective, this is also about Adams's absolute 'certaint[y]' of the body and the 'horror' which is designated to not a 'presence' but a 'too close' presence. Based on these pre-conditions, the idea of violence is established. In this sense, does it mean that the violence of *sensation* work against instincts, accidents? Does it mean that the violence of sensation producing lamella is identifiable and to some extent prescribable?

Based on Adams's conclusion, the paint is what is at stake instead of violence as this paint, the lamella, object *a* achieves 'psychical effects' of seeing nothing:

> That is to see nothing, *jouir.* One no longer has vision, but the eye lives on. The function of vision has been subtracted from the eye. The violence of sensation has squeezed out a literal essence of being, the lamella, a puddle of being. To claim that the lamella appears in Bacon's work is to claim that he has taken the detachment of the gaze to its limit. The paintings are as far as possible withdrawn from the painting of everyday life, while yet capturing the 'appearance' of a human being. The violence of painting is the correlate of the violence of appearing. What is at stake is not violence but paint.[320]

'[V]ision' has to do with seeing something while this function is 'subtracted' from 'the eye'. Thus, the eye 'lives on' but is 'to see nothing, *jouir*'. This detachment between eye and seeing is constructed by the '[appearing]' of the lamella. The validity of lamella is based on 'the detachment of the gaze'. Adams's confidence in the appearance in Bacon's work is framed by her claim on 'the detachment of the gaze to its limit'. That is, 'capturing the "appearance" of a human being' in another sense is related to the appearance of the lamella and the detachment of the gaze. This is the '[correlation]' of 'the violence of appearing'. Nevertheless, 'paint' is at stake instead of 'violence'. Even though object *a* is produced by 'the violence of sensation', this paint is what constitutes object *a*, lamella while this constitution has to be located outside of the narrative and always be in a loss without any displacement or identification. This object *a*, lamella, is connected with the contingency of the flesh, 'body', a sense of primitivity. However, this violence of paint does not preserve

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[320] Ibid., pp. 120-21.

the wholeness of flesh but leads to 'castration'[321] and '*dissipation*'[322] which as I have argued throughout my analysis returns to rely on Adams's narrative, representation, and structures of a non-seeing, the gaze. Adams's argument of object *a* (the object of loss), lamella, in turn, I would contend, is constructed to be a secured, identified object that is never of loss. Or, to say, prior to a constitution of (the object of) a *loss*, there must be (the object of) a *non-loss*.

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[321] Ibid., p. 120.
[322] Ibid., p. 120.

3.3 Chapter Conclusion: A Return to Rembrandt van Rijn's *Self-Portrait (Unfinished)* of 1659

Let me draw to a close by using David Sylvester's question toward Bacon in their interview: 'The thing that's difficult to understand is how it is that marks of the brush and the movement of paint on canvas can speak so directly to us'. Based on Bacon's response at this point, this direct speaking is addressed by his theory of instinct and accidents in art while I would say, in Bacon's analysis, this movement is not fully dependent on autonomy. Bacon has pointed out that a painter's sensibility, such as Rembrandt, determines one non-rational mark rather than another. In this sense, I would argue, marks of the brush or the movement of paint are not outside of the artist's narrative or frames. Even though for Bacon, those accidental marks/paint are not produced according to the artist's knowability, they are still within the construction of the painter's justification:

> Well, if you think of the great Rembrandt self-portrait in Aix-en-Provence, for instance, and if you analyze it, you will see that there are hardly any sockets to the eyes, that it is almost completely anti-illustrational. I think that the mystery of fact is conveyed by an image being made out of non-rational marks. And you can't will this non-rationality of a mark. That is the reason that accidental ways has to enter into this activity, because the moment you know what to do, you're making just another form of illustration. But what can happen sometimes, as it happened in this Rembrandt self-portrait, is that there is a coagulation of non-representational marks which have led to making up this very great image. Well, of course, only part of this is accidental. Behind all that is Rembrandt's profound sensibility, which was able to hold onto one irrational mark rather than onto another.[323]

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[323] David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, p. 58.

Figure 3.1 Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, *Self-Portrait*, unfinished, 1659

This quote on marks/paint has led me into a think on Nobus's and Adams's understanding of sensations, assault, and the violence of paint. Bacon's analysis of Rembrandt's 1659 *Self-Portrait* does not propose art to be purely focusing on 'feelings', or 'sensations' like his idea of abstract art, but art has to do with 'order' with '[instinct]' or '[accident]'.[324] For Nobus and Adams, they have overlooked Bacon's claim of 'duality' between disciplined order and undisciplined emotion in art.[325] Nobus and Adams have collapsed Bacon's sensations and accidents into one category, and positioned this against narrative in art. Nevertheless, for Bacon here, art is about 'recording', 'reporting' and 'tension' instead of pure 'aesthetics'.[326]

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[324] Please see David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, p. 58. 'But in Rembrandt it has been done with the added thing that it was an attempt to record a fact and to me therefore must be much more exciting and much more profound. One of the reasons why I don't like abstract painting, or why it doesn't interest me, is that I think painting is a *duality*, and that abstract painting is an entirely aesthetic thing. It always remains on one level. It is only really interested in the beauty of its patterns or its shapes. We know that most people, especially artists, have large areas of undisciplined emotion, and I think that abstract artists believe that in these marks that they're making they are catching all these sorts of emotions. But I think that, caught in that way, they are too weak to convey anything. I think that great art is deeply ordered. Even if within the order there may be enormously instinctive and accidental things, nevertheless I think that they come out of a desire for ordering and for returning fact onto the nervous system in a more violent way' [my italics] (Ibid., p. 85).

[325] Please see footnote 324.

[326] Please see David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, pp. 59-60. 'Why, after the great artists, do people ever try to do anything again? Only because, from generation to generation, through what the great artists have done, the instincts change. And, as the instincts change, so there comes a renewal of the feeling of how can I remake this thing once again more clearly, more exactly, more violently. You see, I believe that art is recording; I think it's reporting. And I think that in abstract art, as there's no report, there's nothing other than the aesthetic of the painter and his few sensations. There's never any tension in it'. To my understanding, even though Bacon's categories between what is disciplined or not disciplined are problematic,

According to Bacon's analysis, Rembrandt's self-portrait does not dwell on only one end of the opposition such as non-illustration or non-representation as this is only a part of the great work as he claims 'Well, of course, only part of this is accidental. Behind all that is Rembrandt's profound sensibility, which was able to hold onto one irrational mark rather than onto another'.

Non-rational marks can only be fulfilled through accidents while this accident does not make up a whole part of the self-portrait. This 'only part' of being accidental has to do with 'Rembrandt's profound sensibility' which is not about how he achieves the mark but his '[ability]' to 'hold onto' one irrational mark. In another sense, this selection of the accident is still based on the determination of the artist's perspective. Or to say, this autonomy of non-rational marks is within the structure of the artist's sensibility. Even though Bacon refutes pure aesthetics in art, Bacon has not explained the correlation between sensibility and aesthetics.[327] Ironically, I read that sensibility is another sense of rationality (as a narration) since irrationality is not achievable by the painter himself. Thus, the destiny of irrational marks in painting is always caught up with a rational (narrated) structure. Thus far, and dovetailing with my analysis of Rembrandt's 1628 *Self-Portrait* in the first chapter, my problematisations are: Can any object-led move (such as assault, accident, instinct, and violence) that Nobus and Adams propose for Bacon's theory be outside of a perspective/narration of a painter or a theorist? Have Nobus and Adams overlooked the accident in Rembrandt's 'very great image' that has returned to be verified by a construction of *rational* narration?[328] What haunts the dismissal of narrative and narration? What might be read to return to disrupt the disruptions of the non-textual Real in Art Theory?

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my focus here is to problematise Nobus's and Adams's unawareness of Bacon's own binary and a return to a narrative.

[327] Please see footnote 324 and 326.

[328] Here I have to add that in Bacon's theory, his point of view has shifted from time to time about the narration. As he has proposed to remove a narrative, such as a claim 'I think that the moment a number of figures become involved, you immediately come on to the story-telling aspect of the relationships between figures. And that immediately sets up a kind of narrative. I always hope to be able to make a great number of figures without a narrative' (David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, p. 63). But, in this example, Bacon has implied the great work of Rembrandt has to do with Rembrandt's sensibility (I read that this is Rembrandt's justification/a sense of narrative), such as 'holding' onto a specific mark, and accidental things are only partial in the artwork. Nevertheless, Bacon might not be aware of his return to narrative but still clings onto the idea of instincts.

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