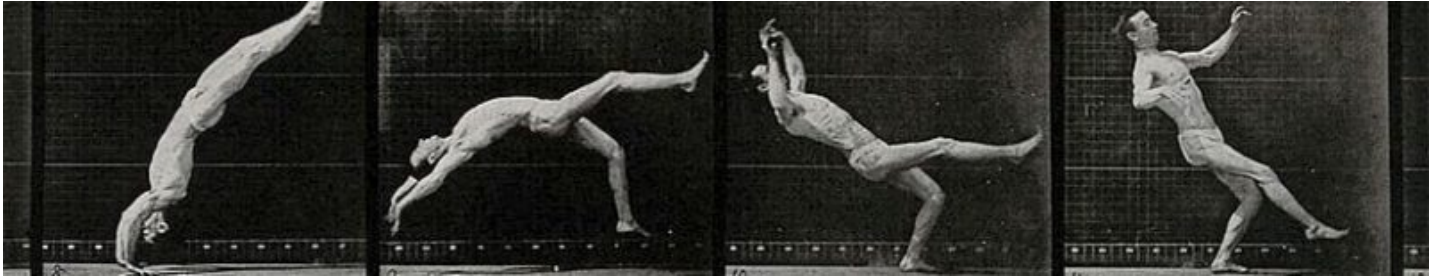


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About

Gender forum is an online, peer reviewed academic journal dedicated to the discussion of gender issues. As an electronic journal, *gender forum* offers a free-of-charge platform for the discussion of gender-related topics in the fields of literary and cultural production, media and the arts as well as politics, the natural sciences, medicine, the law, religion and philosophy. Inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier in 2002, the quarterly issues of the journal have focused on a multitude of questions from different theoretical perspectives of feminist criticism, queer theory, and masculinity studies. *gender forum* also includes reviews and occasionally interviews, fictional pieces and poetry with a gender studies angle.

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Detailed Table Of Contents

Editorial	1
Simone Celine Marshall: Perspectiva, Perspective, and the Narrative Frames of <i>The Assembly of Ladies</i>	3
Efrat Biberman: "You never look at me from the place from which I see you"	24
Myra Mendible: Visualizing Abjection: Gender, Power, and the Culture of Humiliation	36
Brian Curtin (Review): Jon Binnie: <i>The Globalization of Sexuality</i>	55
Miriam Wallraven (Review): Felicity A. Nussbaum: <i>The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century</i>	59
Susan de Gaia (Review): Carol P. Christ: <i>She Who Changes: Reimagining the Divine in the World</i>	64
Jennifer Law Sullivan: Caroline Bland and Máire Cross: <i>Gender and Politics in the Age of Letter-Writing, 1750-2000</i>	68
Mary Kennan Herbert: "Bethesda Hospital," "Small Craft Warnings," "Wartime Years in St. Louis," "Not Your Usual Weekend at the Beach"	72
List of Contributors	80

Editorial

1 **Imagendering** examines visualizations of gender and gendered forms of visualization, a thematic concern that will be continued in **Imagendering II** later this year. This first issue presents target essays which focus on the creation of visuality through poetic means in a fifteenth-century poem, on psychoanalytic and feminist theories of the gaze as exemplified by visual art, and the gendered politics involved in public humiliation as mediated through recent American TV programmes.

2 Simone Celine Marshall's article "Perspectiva, Perspective, and the Narrative Frames of *The Assembly of Ladies*" examines an anonymous fifteenth-century secular love poem which presents its narrative from a woman's point of view. *The Assembly of Ladies* emphasizes the unusual gendering of its perspective by drawing on two contemporary visual theories. *Perspectiva*, the medieval theory of optics, and linear perspective are used to highlight that the female voice is located outside of the narrative frames of the poem. This exclusion represents, as Marshall argues, the marginalization of the female voice in the literary process of the time.

3 In her essay "You never look at me from the place from which I see you," Efrat Biberman investigates the Lacanian notion of the gaze, its implications for the visual field, and the connection between the gaze and sexuality. Biberman offers a critical assessment of Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema," arguing that Lacan's category of the gaze on which Mulvey claims to draw is radically different from other concepts of vision, Mulvey's included. Through her examination of psychoanalytic theory of the gaze and Mulvey's feminist take on it, Biberman offers an entirely different way of conceptualizing relations of looking. She advocates a concept of the gaze which assumes asymmetrical relations of looking and exemplifies her innovative theory with samples from visual art.

4 In "Visualizing Abjection: Gender, Power, and the Culture of Humiliation," Myra Mendible tackles episodes of public humiliation; episodes which have become common in the American media. Drawing on social psychology, feminist theory, cultural studies, and international relations, Mendible theorizes the politics of humiliation. She analyses the ideological functions of these episodes, such as the meaning of humiliation as media commodity, its impact in shaping the popular imaginary, and its structural relation to gender, pleasure, and desire.

5 The fiction section of **Imagendering** presents three poems by New York-based poet Mary Kennan Herbert. Reviews deal with recent monographs by Jon Binnie, Carol Christ,

Felicitas Nussbaum as well as an essay collection edited by Caroline Bland and Amáire Cross.

Perspectiva, Perspective, and the Narrative Frames of *The Assembly of Ladies*

By Simone Celine Marshall, University of Sydney

Abstract:

This article focuses on an anonymous fifteenth-century secular love poem that, unusually, presents its narrative from a woman's point of view, and subsequently gender becomes a defining issue throughout the poem. Certain key episodes suggest the presence of several narrative frames that draw attention to the gendering of the text, which the poem emphasises by drawing significantly on two particular forms of visual theory, *Perspectiva* and linear perspective. I will argue here that several features of each theory are used in *The Assembly of Ladies* to suggest that the female voice is located outside of the narrative frames of the poem, asserting that the female voice is always marginalised and excluded from the literary process.

1 *The Assembly of Ladies*¹ is an anonymous fifteenth-century secular love poem that adheres closely to conventional poetic structures, but throws these conventions into relief as it presents the narrative from a woman's point of view, a rare occurrence for poetry of this period (Barratt, *Women's Writing* 2-7). The immediate effect of a female narrator is to draw attention to the way gender is presented within the poem, and subsequently gender becomes a defining issue throughout the poem (McMillan 27, Barratt, *Assembly* 1-3). Within the poem there are certain key episodes, which, I will argue, suggest the presence of several narrative frames that draw the reader's attention to the gendering of the text. *The Assembly of Ladies* is able to emphasise the narrative frames by drawing significantly on two particular forms of visual theory, *Perspectiva*, that is, the medieval theory of optics, and linear perspective, as employed by painters in the production of visual images. I will argue here that several important features of each theory are used in *The Assembly of Ladies* to create the impression that the female voice is located outside of the narrative frames of the poem. The purpose behind the advancement of gender as a fundamental issue in *The Assembly of Ladies* is to assert that, in the attempt to inscribe the female voice into literature, the female voice is always marginalised and excluded from the literary process.

2 The narrative begins in September with the narrator wandering through a garden maze with her companions: four ladies (with the narrator describing herself as "I, the fifth, simplest of all") and four gentlewomen. The narrator also mentions that they are accompanied by a number of knights and squires, one of whom asks the narrator why she is in the maze. She is rather evasive in her answer, but the inquisitive knight pressures her to explain. She relents and begins her tale, which is the recounting of a dream that took place on a previous occasion

¹ All references to *The Assembly of Ladies* are taken from Boffey (195-231).

in the same maze. In her account, the narrator, the four ladies, and the four gentlewomen negotiate their way through the maze on a spring afternoon. The narrator reaches the central arbour of the maze before her companions, and sits down to wait for them. On falling asleep, she dreams of a woman, Perseveraunce, who summons the narrator and her companions to an all-female assembly to be held by Lady Loiaulte at her castle Pleasaunt Regarde. The narrator sets off with Perseveraunce as her guide, and journeys for most of the day before arriving at a hospital. Here she is met by a gentlewoman who provides her with the appropriate attire for an audience with Lady Loiaulte, a blue dress. She arrives at Pleasaunt Regarde and, with the arrival of her companions, likewise in blue, they attend the court of Lady Loiaulte. Each woman presents a bill of complaint against unfaithful lovers, although the narrator is rather reticent to do so and requires some persuading. Lady Loiaulte defers her judgment on the bills until another date, and the women leave, content to have been heard. The narrator awakens from her dream and writes the events down. The inquisitive knight commends her on the tale and asks what she will call it. Her reply: "La Semble des Dames."

3 A basic analysis of the narrative frames of *The Assembly of Ladies* can be shown as follows:

1. Lines 1-28 - 2.00 o'clock on a September afternoon
2. Lines 29-77 - an afternoon in the maze, perhaps in springtime
3. Lines 78-735 - the dream vision
2. Lines 736-739 - awakening in the arbour of the maze
1. Lines 740-755 - discourse with the inquisitive knight
4. Line 756 - direct address to the audience

There are four clearly defined frames within *The Assembly of Ladies*. The first is the September setting in which the narrator is confronted by the inquisitive knight, and the second is the narrator's account of her and her companions' previous attempt to negotiate the maze. The most substantial frame is, of course, the recounting of the dream, indicated as frame three. The poem then reverts back to frame two in which the narrator awakens from her dream but is still, presumably, in the arbour of the maze and thus still recounting the tale to the inquisitive knight. With the inquisitive knight's speech, the poem shifts back to the first frame of the September setting. The final, fourth, frame exists only in the final line of the poem, although its existence at all suggests that perhaps, in retrospect, it encompasses the entire poem. This frame performs perhaps that most important function of all the narrative frames because this frame directly addresses the reader and requires the events of the poem to be judged by the reader.

4 The structure of the narrative frames, however, is frequently interrupted and there are numerous moments when, it will be argued, the narrator shifts momentarily from one frame to another. The shifting from one frame to another, I would suggest, is an indication of the narrator's inability to express herself fully within any one single frame. The narrator shifts between frames frequently in an attempt to make herself understood, yet these shifts do not succeed and result, instead, in emphasising her marginalisation within the poem.

5 *Perspectiva*, the name given to the works of several natural philosophers concerning theories of light and vision, will be considered here for the way that theories of light and vision promoted an apparently contradictory means of knowing and understanding the visible universe, as explained thoroughly in the works of David C. Lindberg. The study of *Perspectiva* encouraged learning about the universe through experience and experiment, yet the result of such investigations, while the basis for our modern scientific method, simultaneously demonstrated the limitations of such investigations (Holley 3-29). *Perspectiva* created a means of knowing the world but also revealed how much more there was still to know. It is primarily this contradiction that will be investigated here as the acknowledged limitations of knowledge are paralleled in the framing narratives of *The Assembly of Ladies*.

6 Theories of linear perspective similarly operate apparently to reveal visual truth in painting, yet here, too, perspective can be shown to conceal and limit sight.² Linear perspective is also strongly associated with linear narrative, and here an examination of the relationship between the visual and verbal means of expression will reveal that the limitations of visual perspective are also found in verbal perspective. In both visual and verbal expression, the frame is a device used to signify the limitations of knowledge.

7 This investigation will show that, while both *Perspectiva* and perspective attempt to advance methods of understanding the world, both methods simultaneously reveal their own limitations. Both *Perspectiva* and perspective offer significantly flawed ways of understanding the world - flawed because each method inherently draws attention to its incompleteness. The flaws of both of these methods of understanding are a signal to the role of the narrator, who is unable to express herself fully within the narrative frames of the poem, indicating that the narrative frames are, themselves, a flawed method of understanding.

² Significantly, few early theorists seem to have been aware of the limitations of linear perspective, or if they were, they chose to ignore the issue. Leon Battista Alberti appears not to have considered the limitations in his work *De Pictura* (1435), as did Lorenzo Ghiberti, despite drawing directly on the works of Vitruvius, Alhazen, Peckham, and Bacon for his manifesto on painting. Antonio Manetti, in his commentary on the Life of Filippo Brunelleschi, carefully side-steps potential difficulties by only using examples that comply completely with the rules of perspective (White 113-34).

8 *The Assembly of Ladies* draws together the theories of *Perspectiva* and perspective to signify the limitations of knowledge in a poetic context. Through the presence of the narrator, the poem considers these ways of knowing in a gendered context. By using *Perspectiva* and perspective to signify the limitations of knowledge, *The Assembly of Ladies* is able to align the limitations of knowledge with the limitations of female participation in literature. *The Assembly of Ladies* uses the female narrator to suggest that methods of knowing, such as *Perspectiva* and perspective, are inherently masculine. The limitations on such ways of knowing, the poem asserts, signify the limitations on female participation in the literary process. Just as *Perspectiva* describes the limits of physical vision, and perspective describes the limits of painting, *The Assembly of Ladies* asserts the limits of literary participation.

The Narrative Frames of *The Assembly of Ladies*

9 The first frame that the reader knowingly encounters in *The Assembly of Ladies* is the 2.00 o'clock September afternoon setting in the maze. The first stanza of the poem offers three significant examples of the literary use of *Perspectiva* and perspective, one that refers specifically to *Perspectiva*, one that refers to perspective, and a third that suggests a literary melding of the two visual theories into a literary form. The stanza is as follows:

In Septembre, at falling of the leef,
The fressh season was al to-gydre done
And of the corn was gadred in the sheef;
In a gardyn, abowte tweyne after none,
There were ladyes walkyng, as was ther wone,
Foure in nombre, as to my mynde doth falle,
And I the fift, symplest of alle. (1-7)

10 Specifying the autumnal season is a clear indication of time existing outside the bounds of the poem. An autumnal setting is unusual although not unheard of, and there are several other examples of medieval poetry that specifically use the autumnal setting to convey a sombre tone, such as Ashby's "Reflections on a Prisoner" and Hoccleve's "Complaint." At this point, however, it is pertinent to consider the way that the opening of the poem can be likened to a visual image and the way that the reader's eye is specifically directed by the narratorial voice. It is useful to consider this portion of the poem in relation to Meyer Schapiro's suggestion that the frame or boundary of a text "is like a window frame through which one glimpses only a part of the space behind it." (241). Schapiro's window frame, which is similar to Leon Battista Alberti's "quidem mihi pro aperta finestra est ex qua historia contueatur," [an open window through which the *historia* is seen] (54), suggests that what the viewer sees in an image is only a portion of a wider scene, the rest of the action is taking

place just outside of our range of sight. Moreover, if we could step closer to the window, even pass through it, we would be able to take in the wider scene. An excellent example of this effect can be seen in an illustration from folio 12 of the British Library Harley MS 4425, which accompanies the text of *Le Roman de la Rose*. In this painting, the edges of the image are cut off by the picture frame. On the left of the picture some of the people are only partly visible, and on the right the pathways in the Garden of Deduit continue beyond the edge of the picture frame. Thus when we look at this scene, we must fill in mentally other details about the garden. The frame of the picture acts as a window frame to the events taking place. Our view is physically limited to this scene, but mentally we can look around the edges of the frame to see the rest of the garden.

11 In literary terms, the same can be seen in *The Assembly of Ladies*. The September setting in *The Assembly of Ladies* is not unlike the view through the window. Just beyond the sight of the viewer are the other months and seasons of the year. It is even possible that the narrator invites us to peer around the edges of the frame when she says "The fressh season was al to-gydre done"(2). Just out of view is the "fressh season;" it has now passed but it seems sorely missed by the narrator. The "view," then, of the beginning of *The Assembly of Ladies* is strictly limited to the September setting, but the narrator ensures that we are aware of the previous summer. The reader's point of view is defined by the limitations imposed by the narrator. Linda Tart Holley utilises this feature of visual perspective in her analysis of several Chaucer texts; she states that the key to understanding visual theory is to note that "perspective asserts limitation" (7). Here in *The Assembly of Ladies* the narrator directs and limits the reader's eye to the September setting.

12 The narrator, however, is even more specific about the setting beyond establishing the season and month. The poem begins specifically at 2.00 o'clock in the afternoon. Reference to such a specific time of day indicates the importance of time in this poem, and the passage of time. The "fressh season" has passed, the morning, too, has passed, all before the poem has even begun. The importance of the reference to such a specific time of day would indicate that the narrator does not refer to the passing of time in a vague, generalised manner. Time, in *The Assembly of Ladies*, is a quantifiable, measurable concept. The ability to measure, or to take the measure of a subject suggests a means of knowing that subject. As Holley states: "Action gains meaning when it is measurable" (28), that is, the ability to measure allows one to come to an understanding about a subject. The concept of measurement as it appears in *The Assembly of Ladies*, particularly the measurement of time, can be compared directly to concepts found within medieval *Perspectiva*. Roger Bacon states clearly the correlation

between physical measurement, that is, geometry, and knowledge of the natural world:

Nam proculdubio tota rerum sapientia veritas jacet in sensu literali, ut dictum est, et maxime rerum geometricarum, quia nihil est nobis as plenum intelligibile, nisi figuraliter ante oculos nostros disponatur. (234)

[For without a doubt the whole truth of things in the world lies in the literal sense and especially of things relating to geometry, because we understand nothing fully unless its form is presented before our eyes.]

13 For Bacon, understanding the world, the "tota rerum sapientia veritas," can only be achieved through "geometricarum," through physical observation and measurement.³ For *The Assembly of Ladies*, then, the specific reference to the time of day, in addition to the reference of the season and the month, indicates the narrator's need to measure and quantify the world that she inhabits, the world of the poem. The reference to the time of day at the outset of the poem allows both the narrator and the reader to measure and, therefore, to understand how the action of the poem is situated in relation to other seasons, months, and times of day.

14 It seems unusual that the narrator requires a means of measuring and judging her circumstances as this is, after all, her own narrative. This would suggest that the narrator is in a state of some confusion and seeks a means to understand her world. The narrator's apparent confusion has been noted by other scholars, in particular John Stephens and D. A. Pearsall, and is certainly displayed by her erratic behaviour at the assembly of Lady Loiaulte. The narrator's failure to understand her surroundings brings to light similar failings in *Perspectiva*. Holley says:

For medieval scientists, theologians, and artists, visual theory offered a mode of knowing. The geometric conceptions of linear perspective offered a model of moral order and human perfection and brought God into the focus of man. (33)

Yet, as has already been noted, one of the primary features of *Perspectiva* is its limitations. A common image in medieval painting is the depiction of God as a master architect (Beckett 52), yet because God is the ultimate creator, any attempt by man to imitate this will always fall short:

In spite of the pleasure of discovering ways to measure origins and limits of force, realization of the limitation of finite measurement, compared to God's infinite vision, was humbling. (Holley 25)

The Perspectivists would never completely understand the world through measurement. Despite seeking to understand the world, *Perspectiva*, like the narrator of *The Assembly of*

³ Bacon preferences sight over all other senses, suggesting: "sed non possumus experiri que addiscimus nisi per visum. Si autem allegemus et tactum et olfactum, tunc induimus bestialem sapientiam." [but we cannot experientially test what we thus learn except through vision. However, if we adduce taste, touch, and smell as counter-examples, we are adopting a conception of wisdom applicable to animals.] (Lindberg, *Roger Bacon* 4-5).

Ladies, succeeds only in defining its limits (Grinnell 144).

15 The narrator of *The Assembly of Ladies* imitates verbally the concept of space and time found in both *Perspectiva* and perspective in the first stanza of the poem. The narrator uses a construction similar to the periodic sentence used by Chaucer in the opening to the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* (Muscatine 94-5). The technique verbally paints a picture of the scene in which she, herself, takes part. Yet it is noticeable from the first stanza of the poem that the order in which the narrator introduces elements into the scene is significant. The first element is the month, September, which is emphasised by the image of the "falling of the leef." Just outside the scene is the "fressh season," then a rural reference is made to the corn "gadred in the sheef." Thus far, the month and its visually recognisable features have been described and contrasted with the previous summer season, but as yet we do not know what is to occur within this scene. The delay is lengthened further with the narrator specifying "In a gardyn, abowte tweyne after none," narrowing both the setting and the time frame, as if directing our line of sight to a particular portion of the wider painting. The verbal echo between the opening line "In Septembre" and line 4 "In a gardyn" is the verbal equivalent of painting from the outside of the frame towards the centre. The background features of the setting are established before any central detail is supplied. It is only after describing this wider view of the scene, then narrowing the view to 2.00 o'clock in a garden, that we learn the garden is peopled: "There were ladyes." And finally, in the fifth line, a verb to indicate action, the ladies are "walkyng" through the garden. Although only five lines have passed, the sense of delay is remarkable. Yet this is not all. The narrator further specifies there were four ladies, then finishes the stanza by stating "And I the fift, symplest of alle." The narrator has further refined the image to specify the exact number of women, and then completes the image by drawing the reader's eye to rest on herself, as a verbal indication of both time and space.

6 The narrator, of course, continues to populate the scene in the subsequent stanza. We learn there are four gentlewomen, and also many knights and squires:

Of gentil wymmen foure ther were also,
Disportyng hem everiche after theyr guyse,
In crosse aleys walkyng be two and two,
And som alone after theyr fantasyes.
Thus occupied we were in dyvers wise,
And yit in trowth we were nat alone:
Theyr were knyghtis and squyers many one. (8-14)

The gentlewomen are verbally removed from the presence of the ladies, suggesting a separation between the two groups of women. The women do, however, form a unified group when compared with the men. The knights and squires are introduced in the final line of the

second stanza. The narrator uses the rhyme royal structure to emphasise the separation between the men and the women. The women are constructed by the *a-b* portion of the stanza, while the men interrupt with the *c* rhyme. Spatially, there is an initial sense of separation between the two groups of women, yet with the introduction of the men into the scene, the women become characterised as a single unit. The spatial relations demonstrate the impact of the men on the women.

17 Stanzas three and four concern the direct speech between the narrator and the inquisitive knight. This is a further narrowing of focus in the poem; having begun with the wide view of the month and season, narrowed to 2.00 o'clock in a garden, the view now is extremely intimate. The intimacy of the conversation between the narrator and the inquisitive knight is emphasised by the wider setting. The reader takes the measure of the narrator and the inquisitive knight in comparison to the surrounding garden in an attempt to understand the scene. A visual example of this occurs in Jean de Wavrin's *Chronicles of England* (c.1450), in which a man and woman are depicted in a garden sharing a meal (Gousset 86). The garden is enclosed, emphasising the intimacy of the scene, yet to one side it is possible to see far into the distant countryside, where there are castles, ships, and perhaps a joust about to take place. Thus, in this scene, the intimacy between the man and woman is measured against the scene in the background; the intimacy is quantifiable.

18 The impression of intimacy between the narrator and the inquisitive knight, created by the way the two characters are spatially related to their surroundings, leads the reader to expect and hope for a personal revelation of some sort.⁴ The knight, too, seems to hope for a personal revelation from the narrator. As the inquisitive knight questions the narrator about her pale complexion, the impression is that the knight is, himself, seeking to understand the narrator. The narrator's physical appearance is registered as an indication of her inner state of mind, which is, at the very least, discontented. Returning to Bacon's suggestion that "*nisi figuraliter ante oculos nostros disponatur*" [we can understand nothing fully unless its form is presented before our eyes] (Burke 234), we are reminded of the precedence given to sight as a way of knowing not only external phenomenon, but also internal phenomenon. By visually examining the external state of the narrator, the inquisitive knight is able to know, as if seeing into, her internal state.

19 The preferring of sight referred to by Bacon, however, presents the reader with some difficulties. It is possible for the reader to consider the first frame of *The Assembly of Ladies* as a complete unified entity, which the narrator has populated "by measure:" all of the people

⁴ Perhaps compare this to Dunbar's "The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo" in which the narrator is an eager voyeur, waiting for the personal revelations of the three women (Dunbar).

can be compared and measured against their surroundings and each other. But the difficulty presented by the narrator is that she has alluded to the fact that this is not the complete picture. Just around the edges of the frame there is another world, and the limited view we have through the viewing window indicates that the reader's judgment ought, somehow, to include what is not visible. This is, of course, an impossible task, but the narrator constantly reminds the reader that our view is always limited. In this way the narrator of *The Assembly of Ladies* demonstrates her desire to express more than she has been able to, but it also demonstrates her inability to do so.

20 In the second frame of *The Assembly of Ladies* the narrator describes the spring afternoon in which she and her companions walked through the maze and became hopelessly lost. The narrator eventually reaches the centre of the maze but must wait there for her companions, and while waiting, she falls asleep. The stanza that begins the narrator's tale is full of references back to the first frame of the poem. She says, "my felawship and I" entered "this mase;" she does not need to explain who her companions are, similarly, "this mase" is the same one that she and the inquisitive knight are, presumably, standing in. There are other, less obvious, verbal echoes of the first frame as well. As with the first stanza of the poem in which we had "[i]n Septembre"(1) and "[i]n a gardyn"(4), here we have "in an after none"(29). The language is similar and the time is similar. The similarity of the first and second frames to each other seems to be a deliberate invitation from the narrator for the reader to confuse and blur the distinctions between them, and certainly there is scholarship that has inadvertently confused the two frames (Stephens 134). Visually, this is not unlike a picture that contains two images. The images are each independent narratives, but they have a reciprocal relationship with each other. Each picture refers to the other while still maintaining its own autonomy. A visual example of the interrelationship between framed images occurs in a painting of the Annunciation, by Giovanni di Paolo, c. 1445 (*Annunciation* 77). In this painting, there are two separate narratives, on the left is the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, and on the right is the Annunciation to the Virgin. The two visual narratives are presented as though occurring within the same location, yet the two scenes are still sufficiently separated for one to understand them as separate narratives. While maintaining their respective frames as separate visual narratives, the scenes interact with each other. The Annunciation to the Virgin can be seen as the rectification of the sins of Adam and Eve, and so her narrative has a direct impact on the scene of Paradise. Similarly, the scene of Adam and Eve has a direct impact on the Annunciation scene insofar as it generates the need for the Annunciation. A further interaction between the scenes can be seen with the representation of

God in the painting. Situated in the top left corner of the painting, He appears to watch both scenes simultaneously. There are direct lines of perspective visible that emanate from God to both of the scenes depicted beneath him.⁵ The gaze of God ensures that both scenes interrelate, even though they are depicted as separate narratives.

21 Similarly, in *The Assembly of Ladies*, the first two narrative frames interact. The first frame creates the space and necessity for the second frame, and second frame directly refers back to the first frame. The effect of the interaction between the frames is to create the sense of several narratives occurring simultaneously.⁶ Just as the first frame refers to events just out of the reader's view, the second frame requires the reader to consider both frames together. The impression given is that the narrator's story is somewhat larger than it first appears. Various events are shown to the reader, but we are made aware that there are still other frames to consider that contribute to the meaning of the text. The interaction of the narrative frames creates a sense of textual instability and fluidity; the narrator is able to, and does, slip from one narrative to another and as she does so, she invites the reader to consider the narrative frames that lie beyond the immediate view. As the narrator mentions to the inquisitive knight, the second frame is set in "this mase," a phrase that indicates she has already verbally jumped from the second frame to the first.

22 The most dramatic image in the second frame is the maze and this can be seen to function as an example of the measured world (Kern 207-236), and in *The Assembly of Ladies* the maze can be regarded as a tortuous route through the social world of the women. While the maze functions to draw a comparison between textual mazes and textual confusion, here, in this instance, it is possible to supplement that analysis to consider the maze as an obstacle to a quantifiable knowledge of the world.

23 The maze exists within both the first and second frames of the poems, and in each instance the women walking through it are apparently doing so at random. In the first frame the narrator says:

Disportyng hem everiche after theyr guyse,
In crosse alleys walking be two and two,
And som alone after theyr fantasyes. (9-11)
In the second frame she says:
To passe oure tyme in to this mase we went

⁵ The depiction of God's point of view is clear in another example of the Annunciation, by Jan Van Eyck (c. 1434-36). In this painting the words of Gabriel to the virgin, "Hail, thou art full of grace" emerge from his mouth in the direction of the Virgin. The Virgin's reply, however, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," is written upside down, as if to be read by God above.

⁶ As a comparison, consider Chaucer's "The Second Nun's Tale" in which the Nun retells the story of St Cecilia. Just as Cecilia's Christian life is contrasted with Roman pagan life, so too the Nun contrasts the chaste life of St Cecilia with the less-than-noble behaviour of the pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. In this way the frame of the story of Cecilia interacts with the frame of the pilgrimage.

And toke oure weyes yche aftyr other entente. (32-3)

The two descriptions of the way the women negotiate the maze suggest their movement is random and unplanned. I would suggest, however, that there is a subtle indication of orderliness within these descriptions. The women wander "everiche after theyr guyse," which seems to suggest that they walk according to their already established desires. Similarly, in the description from the second narrative frame, the women walk "yche aftyr other entente," (33) again suggesting that they move according to an internal desire.

24 The pattern of movement of the women within the maze can be seen as a highly structured and organised activity, but their goal is not necessarily to reach the centre of the maze before anyone else. The "entente" of the women in the maze is to take the measure of their surroundings. The women move around the maze so they may come to know it because, according to Bacon, "nisi figuraliter ante oculos nostros disponatur" [we can understand nothing fully unless its form is presented before our eyes] (Burke 234). The obstacles encountered by the women are in relation to their position and location in the maze. The narrator says: "Som went inward and went they had gon oute" (34); here the women investigate the boundaries of the maze and their own relationship with those boundaries. The maze is a stable object in which the women move; their position is determined in comparison to the stability of the maze.⁷ Pearsall also notes a possible pun in the language on the word *went* (Pearsall 154, Stephens 132). The spelling of the second use of *went* in this phrase is unusual, it is more commonly spelled *wende(n)*, to mean *thought*. This unusual spelling suggests that the narrator is drawing attention to words of motion, and to suggest that the women in their attempt to take the measure of their surroundings are unsuccessful in doing so.

25 Some of the women "stode amyddis and looked al aboute" (35), that is, they remained motionless and surveyed the maze as if seeking a vantage point. These women seem to be attempting to measure the landscape and to inter-relate the objects they see within that landscape. This is similar to the way the narrator initially populated the first framing narrative, by gradually adding people so that the reader may understand the relationships between those people. Yet here in the maze the women are not succeeding because the maze does not allow them a wide viewpoint. All they see are a confusing series of twists and turns of which they cannot take the measure.

26 The narrator describes some of the women in the maze as "ful fer behynde" but no

⁷ Kern notes that the uni-cursal maze requires no effort on the part of walker, one arrives at the centre of the maze at the will of the architect. We do not know with certainty whether or not this maze is uni-cursal, but the movement of the women in the maze and their subsequent confusion, would suggest they are working in opposition to a greater force than their own (Kern 316).

worse off than the rest, indicating their measurable position in relation to the other women. These women who are "behynde" do not learn anything about their surroundings, they learn only about their relationship with the other women. Notably some of the women are described as "mased in theyr mynde" so that any direction is acceptable to them, "both est and west"(39). Despite being "mased," the women continue to struggle without result. Only a few of the women become so enraged with their lack of success that they "stept over the rayle." These women abandon any attempt to gain knowledge of their world through measuring it; they break the rules and therefore will not succeed. This points to the likelihood that the women do not seek the centre of the maze, as those who step over the boundaries will surely reach the centre first. These women seek to understand their world, which involves surveying and measuring it, but whatever they do their success is always limited. In seeking to understand their world, the women also seek to understand themselves in relation to the world, as suggested by the narrator when she says of them: "they sought hem self thus to and fro" (43). Of course, this means that the women sought a route through the maze, but it also suggests that the women really do seek themselves in the maze. The maze can be seen as a metaphor for the world and the movement of the women in the maze is an attempt to determine and judge their place in it by examining and observing its features.

27 We know from theories of *Perspectiva* that early scientists sought "a way of knowing by explaining the way we see" (Holley 24), and in this regard it is possible to consider that the maze in *The Assembly of Ladies* signifies knowledge through observation, but then determines the observation process to be faulty. Since theories of *Perspectiva* preferred the observations of the eye above any other sense and even above what the mind knew to be true, reliance solely upon visual observation required the eye to be held accountable for the truth (Holley 43). Holley says of the early Perspectivists, "to be able to explain the force of light by measuring it was to reveal the structure of the created universe by experience" (24); experience and visual observation came to be regarded as a means to understand the world. Yet observation was sometimes faulty. As painters knew, one could paint a picture using linear perspective in which only one side of a building was visible, but the picture required the observer to provide mentally the other three sides of the building to create the truth of the picture (Edgerton 27-8). In this sense, sight was faulty because it only allowed one to see one side of the building. This was not the truth of the building; the mind had to supply the missing walls. In *The Assembly of Ladies* the maze represents visual truth as a way of knowing the world. The eye may attempt to determine the best route to take through the maze, but the result will be confusion because the eye cannot see around the twists and turns of the maze.

To negotiate the maze successfully one must be open to alternative ways of knowing, which is analogous to suggesting there are other narrative frames in *The Assembly of Ladies* that contribute to the meaning of the poem. Just as the frames of *The Assembly of Ladies* indicate other narratives and frames just beyond our view, so, too, the maze indicates that sight alone is insufficient for negotiating the maze.

28 The third narrative frame, the narrator's dream, is complex and cannot be examined fully here. It is useful, however, to note some particular features of the dream that relate specifically to the theories of the *Perspectiva* and perspective, and which throw light on the gendered position of the narrator. The narrator's journey to Pleasaunt Regarde is a significant portion of *The Assembly of Ladies*, which can be seen as drawing on the theories of both *Perspectiva* and perspective.

29 Unlike the first frame of the poem, where the time of day is carefully specified, in the dream there is only a vague sense of time impacting upon the action. The character of Diligence explains to the narrator that travelling to Pleasaunt Regarde will be "'A dayes journey,' quod she, 'but litel lesse'"(214), but despite the lack of specificity about the time of day, there is always a sense of urgency that pervades the entire dream. The time of day may not be actually stated as it is in the first frame, nevertheless time must not be wasted. Diligence urges haste when she says:

Wherfor I rede that we onward dresse,
For I suppose oure felawship is past
And for nothyng I wold that we were last. (215-17)

Diligence does not explain why they must hurry, but fears that the other women in the company have overtaken them, although how this could have occurred is not explained. In the second frame, the narrator clearly arrives at the centre of the maze before the other women, therefore why, suddenly, in the third frame one should suppose the other women are further ahead is unclear.

30 At a certain point in their journey, the narrator suggests to Diligence that they stop for a moment:

'Nowe lete us rest,' quod I, 'a litel space,
And say we as devoutly as we can
A Pater Noster for seynt Julyan.' (222-24)

It would seem that the sense of urgency has been lost, but then Diligence replies:

'With al myn hert,' quod she, 'I gre me wele;
Moche better shul we spede whan we have done.'(225-26)

The sense of urgency has not been forsaken at all; the delay is tolerated only so that it may result in still greater speed! The need for urgency is never explained and actually results in the narrator and Diligence arriving before the other women. Speed is certainly identifiable as a measurable concept, a way of knowing the world, but in this instance it seems to be a folly. There is no obvious benefit from such haste; it does not result in a better understanding of the world, and perhaps foreshadows the events to come in the poem.

31 The narrator and Diligence encounter a hospital along the route to Pleasaunt Regarde in which a gentlewoman known to the narrator is waiting with the narrator's blue dress. This is perhaps one of the most unusual events in the poem, as the gentlewoman has suddenly appeared without any introduction and is apparently fully informed of the narrator's journey. The gentlewoman explains:

'I herd Perseveraunce,
How she warned youre felawes everichone,
And what array that ye shal have upon.' (236-38)

32 The appearance of the gentlewoman is a patent shift between narrative frames. Perseveraunce had appeared to the narrator within the third frame of the dream, and miraculously, all of her companions have now been transported into the dream as well, including this particular gentlewoman. It is not stated, however, if this gentlewoman is one of the four mentioned at the beginning of the poem as part of the narrator's "felawship," and after dressing the narrator in her blue dress, the gentlewoman disappears as suddenly as she has arrived. Even the narrator is surprised, saying her presence is a "mervaille" (234), a word that elicits connotations of a supernatural world. A supernatural world would be difficult to argue in this instance, but it does seem relevant to note that the word "mervaille" is another reminder of the multiple narrative frames functioning simultaneously in *The Assembly of Ladies*.

33 On arrival at Pleasaunt Regarde, the narrator discovers her companions have not preceded her and she sits and waits for them to arrive. She notes carefully the dress of Contenaunce, but a significant break occurs in the description that hints at the existence of a narrative frame which, so far, has not been considered. The narrator notes Contenaunce's motto: "The whiche saide thus, as my penne can endite, / *A moy que je voy*, writen with lettres white"(308-09). Scholars have noted with some criticism that the poet of *The Assembly of Ladies* frequently uses proverbs and tags in constructing the second part of a line of verse (Lewis 251). Pearsall also notes:

The handling of the verse in AL is assured if monotonous. The author knows well how to economise in effort by the use of tags and tautological expressions, how to spin out a thought to the end of the stanza, and how to find rhymes in an easy way. (64)

In this example, the poet has added the expression "as my penne can endite" to the end of line 308, which could well be regarded as no more than an attempt to complete the line and provide an appropriate rhyme, certainly the description of the dress is not aided by the reference. This is, however, an example of another framing narrative operating underneath all those discussed so far. Until this point in the poem there has been no reference whatsoever to the narrator being the author of a poem - this is revealed only at the end of the poem. The narrator-as-poet is a frame that can be seen to encompass the entire poem, acting as a meta-frame in which all the other frames exist. The narrator, then, reveals here for the first time that she is the authority behind the poem. The narrator uses the theories of linear perspective to display each scene before the reader, but that view is controlled and directed by her; our view is limited. Similarly, the narrator uses the theories of *Perspectiva* to control our ability to measure and understand the world. This meta-frame will be examined in greater detail shortly, but it is significant to note that the example in line 308 is not isolated. Throughout the presentation of the bills of complaint the narrator shifts between describing the oral presentation of the bills to describing the bills as written documents, a shift that occurs so frequently it is hard to consider it an error.

34 The internal walls of Pleasaunt Regarde are covered with engraved images of Cupid's martyrs. These stories are, of course, very obvious examples of frames within frames. The stories of the women are intended to signify the way women's voices are stifled in literature; these stories are literally stifled behind the covering of umple. One of the reasons given for the covering of the pictures, however, is particularly significant and unusual. The narrator states:

And bicause the wallis shone so bright
 With fyne umple they were al over-spreddde
 To that entent folk shuld nat hurt theyr sight. (470-72)

35 According to Holley, both Witelo and Grosseteste made several claims for an association between light and the soul, and even went so far as to suggest that people with a mental affliction should not look at bright light (165). The inference is that light penetrates to the soul and will harm the viewer if he or she does not have the capacity, knowledge, or strength to bear it. Chaucer uses this suggestion in *Troilus and Criseyde* when Pandarus departs from the bedside of Troilus and Criseyde:

For aught I kan asprien,
 This light, not I, ne serven here of nought.
 Light is nought good for sike folkes yen! (III, 1135-37)

Holley notes that Chaucer draws together both light and narrative in this instance, equating Pandarus' narrative-like effort to bring Troilus and Criseyde together with the effect of light on the soul. At this point in the poem, neither is appropriate. Pandarus' story draws to its climax, he must depart from the scene for to remain would be harmful, just as the effect of light on a sick person (Holley 85). The implication of light being harmful is that light is regarded in *Perspectiva* as a source of truth. To look at a bright light when one is mentally ill is to risk the revelation of this state in the viewer. By covering the pictures with umple, the truth that the pictures contain will not be able to harm anyone; in fact, the pictures become benign and totally ineffectual.

36 The third frame of *The Assembly of Ladies* is certainly the most substantial frame of the poem, and would seem to be the easiest for the reader to judge because it is so clearly defined by the dream. Yet here, too, the reader has difficulty passing judgment because so many events are seemingly without meaning or reason. We cannot understand the need for urgency by Diligence and the narrator, indeed their haste provides no obvious benefit. The sudden appearance of the gentlewoman and her equally sudden disappearance is not explained and creates an overlap between the second and third narrative frames. Our attempt to measure and judge the third frame will be an impossible task if we remain restricted by the boundaries of the frame. The narrator, through her erratic behaviour and her shifts from one frame to another, indicates to the reader that the only way to judge the poem is to shift from one point of view to another. By traversing the several narrative frames, the narrator points to the presence of other frames and other worlds just beyond our view. To be able to judge the poem and to measure and understand the worlds presented by the narrator successfully, the reader must abandon the restrictive, limiting frameworks, or at least be prepared to shift from a single point of view to multiple points of view in order to discern the concept that the narrator is attempting to show.

37 The final three stanzas of *The Assembly of Ladies* shift through several frames in quick succession. In lines 736-42, the narrator awakens into the second frame in which she is still in the arbour at the centre of the maze, but what is particularly peculiar is she then says:

With that anon I went and made this booke,
Thus simply rehersyng the substaunce
Because it shuld nat out of remembraunce. (740-42)

The reference to having written her story down is a shift into another frame, that of the first frame in which she is speaking to the inquisitive knight. The narrator explains to him that she wrote the story down, but it is particularly significant that she says she rehearsed the "substaunce" of the story "because it shuld nat out of remembraunce." To have used the word

"substance" suggests that she rehearsed the main points of the tale only; some details were omitted as insignificant. She has tailored the story to suit her own purposes, she has not attempted to memorise accurately all that occurred in the dream.

38 The inquisitive knight responds immediately to her, suggesting the story was told very well since it was of "none encombrance" (746) for him to stand for such a long time listening to her. The story's apparent benign impact is what the knight applauds. Yet even the inquisitive knight's language is somewhat confusing. He indicates he has been standing listening to her story, yet he then asks "what ye the booke do cal" (748); suddenly the story is a written document. The narrator responds to tell him the book is called "La semble de Dames" (752), a punning title in which the word *semble* may mean *assembly* or *semblance*.⁸ The narrator even seems to invite the inquisitive knight to consider the pun when she asks: "How think ye that the name is?" (753), but the joke is lost on him, he replies simply that the title is "Goode, parde!" With a little confusion between the oral and written status of the story, the narrative frames have worked in reverse order in the final stanzas. The dream has reverted to the arbour, which in turn reverts to the maze and the knight.

39 The final line of the poem, however, raises further issues about the narrative frames in *The Assembly of Ladies*. "Red wele my dreame, for now my tale is done" (756), are the narrator's final words, but they are not addressed to the inquisitive knight, whom she has already dismissed. The final line of the poem is a new frame altogether, although it was briefly mentioned earlier in this article. The final line of the poem is addressed directly to the reader, so that we now know (if we had not already guessed) that the poem we are reading is the very same "booke" that she has written; *The Assembly of Ladies* is the text she was "rehersyng" "because it shuld nat out of remembraunce" (742). The effect of the final line is that it appears as a challenge to the reader. Having mocked the inquisitive knight for his inability to understand her pun on the title of the book, she now challenges the reader to understand the title, and to understand the book. The poem may be entitled *The Assembly of Ladies*, but we are to understand it as "the semblance of ladies;" the narrator encourages the reader to uncover the falsities within the text, the elements that do not seem logical and indicate that the truth of text is more likely to lie in what has been omitted from the narrative. The reader cannot possibly judge the poem because it does not conform consistently to the limitations of the narrative frames, but rather shifts through and between the frames. The narrator rather nonchalantly says she simply included the parts she could remember, but she always remembers to point out that there is more to this story than what is immediately

⁸ The *MED* contains entries for the word *semble* in two forms, as a noun: "The gathering together of persons for a particular purpose" and as an adjective: "similar, the same, in like manner" (*Middle English Dictionary*).

visible. Just around the edges of the frame is another story, but the poetic conventions do not allow us read it.

Conclusions

40 *Perspectiva* and perspective can both be seen to advance methods of visually understanding the world, but both methods simultaneously reveal their own limitations because each method inherently draws attention to its incompleteness. The narrator's gender causes the reader to consider *Perspectiva* and perspective as masculine and to correlate social conventions with literary conventions. Just as *Perspectiva* describes the limits of physical vision, and perspective describes the limits of painting, *The Assembly of Ladies* asserts the limits of literary participation for women, indicating that the new mode of expression sought by the narrator cannot be achieved within masculine literary conventions.

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"You never look at me from the place from which I see you"

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Abstract:

In this paper I examine the Lacanian notion of the gaze, its implications for the visual field, and the connection between the gaze and sexuality. Prevalent contemporary theories of art, based on Laura Mulvey's article on visual pleasure and narrative cinema, assume certain relations between a male gaze and a female object of observation. The point I suggest exploring is the problematic way in which Mulvey bases her argument on the psychoanalytic theory of Freud and Lacan. I wish to point that Lacan's category of the gaze on which Mulvey claims to draw is radically different from other concepts of vision, Mulvey's included. Yet, I offer this category of the gaze not in opposition to Mulvey's claims, but as a totally different way of conceptualizing relations of looking. This way of conceptualization, based on Lacan, makes it possible to elucidate a concept of a gaze which assumes relations of looking which are asymmetrical by definition. My presentation will be accompanied by examples from visual art.

1 Before her lover's departure abroad, the daughter of Butades the potter asked the young man to stand by the wall, lit his face with a lamp and drew an outline of his projected profile. With this act, she strove to preserve the image of her lover, whom she might not see anymore, to turn the remains of a faded memory into a material sign which would remain inscribed on the wall even when the lover's memory has perished. Pliny's account of the story adds that at a later time, she asked her father to create a ceramic relief based on the projected image so that the image would become a substantial object (336). This is the myth of the moment of the invention of painting, which inspired many painters throughout history. Last year, the Israeli painter Yitzhak Livneh exhibited a painting based upon a projection of one of the paintings inspired by this myth. In doing so, Livneh in effect repeated the act of Butades's daughter, in what became a pictorial expression of statement about the art of painting and perhaps also about the painter's love.

2 How might we understand the act of Butades's daughter? It would seem that her little story demonstrates something about the power of love and about the connection between love and sight, and show the embodiment of both in a work of art. This way of thinking about the myth would emphasize the beauty of the relation between love and sight. However, one might think about the same myth as addressing several problems regarding the nature of the act carried out by Butades's daughter, an act whereby she turns the lover's image into an object she can possess.

3 While the story of Butades's daughter demonstrates the ambiguity of the connection between love and sight, current discussions of this connection in relation to art produced in Western culture carry less flattering connotations. Many discussions of art since the seventies

maintain that the relation between sight and sexuality as embodied in the visual field throughout the history of Western culture is (frequently, and at least till the middle of the twentieth century) based upon an equation wherein the male observer is endowed with a sovereign and active gaze. His object of observation, which is given to his sight, is the passive female figure, presented as an object of his sexual enjoyment. This state of affairs determines the mode whereby the female figure is represented, and the woman's sexuality is not her own but meant to satisfy the male observer's needs. This paradigm, in various articulations, appears in many discussions of art. Suffice it to mention in this context John Berger, Mieke Bal, Charles Bernheimer, among others.

4 Feminist theory of art is naturally one of the salient domains from which this paradigm arises. Linda Nochlin, Rosika Parker, and Griselda Pollock exemplify only some such theories. Thus, Nochlin claims that the term "erotic art" always relates to erotic art for men. All the images of this genre are meant for satisfying the desires and needs of a male observer. Even when dealing with the representation of lesbian sexuality, like in Gustav Courbet's *Sleep*, the figures' design is supposed to please a specific male observer, the one who commissioned the painting. Hence, whether the erotic object is a mundane feminine object or a bodily organ, in the context of sexual pleasure, it is always the question of a male artist creating a feminine image for male pleasure (138). Similarly, Parker and Pollock, who examine various paintings of the nineteenth century representing feminine nudes, claim that despite the many differences of style, composition, and ideological attitude these paintings present, in all of them the feminine figure is presented in a state of loss of control (116). This position allows for the derivation of voyeuristic pleasure from the image of the female body. In all of these paintings the feminine figure is represented as an object for a male spectator who is positioned outside the picture and who possesses it. The paradigm of a sovereign and possessive male gaze echoes even in artworks subverting it, striving to undermine male hegemony or suggesting alternatives to it (Parker and Pollock 126).

5 This concept of the gaze is sharply articulated in Laura Mulvey's famous article about the visual pleasures Hollywood cinema offers (Mulvey, "Visual pleasures"). Mulvey demonstrates how the concept of the male gaze constitutes the visual field in which the feminine figure acts as the object of pleasure for that gaze. Although Mulvey's discussion addresses motion pictures and not paintings, it seems relevant for interpreting visual images in general. Mulvey herself applies her paradigm to works of the American sculpturer Allen Jones, showing that the conceptual move she offers is relevant not merely for cinematic images ("Fear" 6-13). According to the different writers I mentioned, the state of affairs

wherein the power to control and govern is attributed to a male observer, is a direct by product of relations of power characteristic of western society. Pollock claims that art is not simply a mirror of reality but a means of mediating and representing social relations by means of sign system. In order for a sign system to gain significance, it must address a skilled reader. The system itself thus allows for the forging of connections that underpin patriarchal ideology (Parker and Pollock 119). In what follows, Pollock turns to Mulvey, who claims to base her concept of the gaze upon the writings of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan.

6 The discussions quoted above indeed demonstrate a current state of affairs in society and I do not intend to contest their fundamental position. Yet, I wish to point to two problematic aspects of these discussions. One of these arises when the concept of the "gaze" used in these discussions, which over the years has almost come to gain the status of a cliché, becomes totalized to such a point that it is used as almost the only tool for describing relations of looking at pictures. Another problem arises from the anchoring of this concept of the gaze on the psychoanalytical discourse of Freud and Lacan. Because this concept of the male gaze has become a touchstone of critical cultural studies, and is being based upon such widespread and proven assumptions, these assumptions are often accepted without examining their specific theoretical sources. The point I suggest exploring is to what extent these claims about the male gaze can indeed be derived from psychoanalytical discourse. Does the concept of the possessing male gaze, even if precise and accurate for describing relations of power governing Western culture, really stem directly from Freud's and Lacan's discussions? After showing how, in my view, Freud and Lacan refuse such an interpretation, I would like to suggest the relations of seeing which Lacan's concept of the gaze offers, and the radical difference between it and other concepts of sight. The concept of the gaze I wish to offer is not posited as an opposition to Mulvey's claims but would attempt to present totally different relations of looking. Mulvey's discussion and her concept of the gaze will serve to indicate the distance between her concept of gaze and the Lacanian gaze and will make it possible to elucidate a concept of a gaze which assumes relations of looking that are asymmetrical by definition. At the end of my discussion I will return to the myth of Butades's daughter who strives to preserve the reflection of her lover's image, and propose a Lacanian reading of the exchange of gazes that takes place there.

7 I will begin with Mulvey's article about visual pleasure and narrative cinema. Mulvey analyzes the modes by which the Hollywood cinema of the fifties creates visual pleasure for the spectator, in order to expose "how the fascination of film is reinforced by pre-existing patterns of fascination already at work within the individual subject and the social formation

that have moulded him." ("Visual Pleasures" 14). In other words, film projects and reveals structures of gender difference which determine certain kinds of imaginary and erotic modes of looking. These structures, she argues, gain their theoretical basis from the psychoanalytical discourse of Freud and Lacan.

8 Film, according to Mulvey, offers several sorts of pleasure. One of them is scopophilia, the pleasure in looking, one of whose embodiments is voyeurism. She relates this pleasure to the way in which Freud describe the drive to look, as it appears for instance in children's behavior. Freud, she argues, associates this pleasure with treating other people as objects for the child's controlling gaze ("Visual Pleasures" 16). Freud does indicate that the impulse for looking can appear in the child as a spontaneous sexual manifestation and that these children may "develop a lively interest in the genitals of their playmates." ("Three Essays" 192). Beyond the pleasure in looking, film offers another aspect of scopophilia, which is narcissistic in nature. This aspect stems from the way in which film posits a realistic human world for the spectator's view, and brings about a kind of looking that involves identification with the world viewed. Mulvey associates this procedure with Lacan's essay about the mirror stage, and the major point she borrows from Lacan is the way looking involves identification and the constitution of subjectivity. Film, Mulvey argues, is analogous to the mirror stage: in both cases the subject is confronted with a whole coherent image, which is not correlative with the way s/he perceives her-/himself; in both cases an external image constitutes subjectivity; in both cases it is an ambiguous procedure that involves attraction and fascination alongside despair and frustration. According to Mulvey, self-oblivion, which is also characteristic of watching films, activates a pre-subjective stage such as the moment before recognizing the mirror image.

9 Film hence posits two opposed aspects of pleasurable structures of looking: the first stems from exploiting an other person while watching her as a sex object, and relates to sexual instincts. The second is about identification with an image, and relates to ego libido. In both cases these are formal structures, devoid of any intrinsic meaning, that gain their significance only while attached to a certain idealization.

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. (Mulvey, "Visual Pleasures" 19)

10 The feminine figure thus has a double role: as an erotic object for the fictional male figure and as an erotic object for the spectator, who gains possession of the feminine figure by

identifying with the male protagonist. These two forms of pleasure originate out of the need to pacify the anxiety aroused in the male subject when confronting the feminine figure who threatens castration (Mulvey, "Visual Pleasures" 21). The male gaze directed at the female figure, Mulvey claims, constantly circles around her lack of a penis. This absence raises castration anxiety. The male unconscious finds two ways to confront that anxiety. One is the total disavowal of castration, involving transforming the represented figure into a fetish, expressed in the cinematic world in the image of the goddess movie star. The other way to confront castration anxiety is repeating the act which had caused the trauma of castration anxiety. This would be cinematically manifested in investigating and punishing the female figure.

11 Mulvey's discussion raises two problems: first, it flattens relations of looking into no more than relations of power expressed in one way, ignoring the many other aspects and expressions of these relations. Is it possible to reduce the diverse aspects of seeing into the one dominant form, which Mulvey posits? Another question relates to the way in which Mulvey bases her argumentations upon the psychoanalytical discourse of Freud and Lacan. Focusing on the connection between Mulvey and the psychoanalytical discourse reveals a number of inconsistencies. For example, Mulvey hinges her conceptual move on the image of woman's lack of penis that arouses castration anxiety, and at the same time argues that coping with this anxiety leads to the reinforcement of relations of power that turn the woman's image into an object. As I will show, while Mulvey assumes that the sovereign male gaze is the outcome of castration anxiety and the attempt to deal with it, the relation between the gaze and castration according to Lacan, as developed in his *Seminar XI*, is quite different. The gaze does not result from castration or a way of confronting castration. Instead, castration is embodied in the gaze as an object of lack. Another example of the problematic connection between Mulvey and Lacan is the way she anchors her turn to Lacanian discourse in Lacan's paper about the mirror stage. Although one can explain cinematic identification according to Lacan's mirror stage, this is only one aspect of Lacan's concept of seeing. A different example for the problematic relation between Mulvey and Lacan stems from the subject-object relations she describes, and their relation to vision and sight. Again, Mulvey's concept is opposed to Lacan's concept of the gaze: the gaze according to Lacan is not a narcissistic extension that may possess or objectify the other, but is itself an object, an object that is always lacking.

12 I will now turn to explaining these arguments according to Lacan's discussion of the gaze in *Seminar XI*. Lacan's concept of the gaze will show that unlike Mulvey, who assumes a

sovereign and unified male gaze, Lacan, in thinking about the gaze presents an ambiguous way of seeing, flickering between the mode of seeing and the seen object, enabling the emergence of an unpredictable image which cannot be read by a priori interpretive models.

13 The basic assumption Lacan posits concerning vision is that there is a fundamental split between the eye and the gaze. Seeing consists of two aspects, which act simultaneously: a complete and coherent vision, and a vision characterized by immanent lack (*Seminar XI* 73). The idea behind this distinction between two different aspects of seeing is implicitly articulated already in Freud's paper about the disturbance of vision of 1910 ("Disturbance of Vision" 209-218).

14 Freud argues that sexual pleasures do not stem solely from the sex organs. Other body parts can function in favor of sexual instincts, and at the same time, fulfill other functions. Thus, the mouth serves for eating and communicating by speech, as well as for kissing. Similarly, the eyes are not merely occupied in perceiving the external world but also characteristic of objects, which lead to their being chosen as objects of love, because of their charm ("Disturbance of Vision" 216). But, Freud continues, it is hard to serve two masters: "the closer the relation into which an organ with a dual function of this kind enters with one of the major instincts, the more it withholds itself from the other. This principal is bound to lead to a pathological consequences" ("Disturbance of Vision" 216). This procedure can be seen regarding the eye and the act of seeing. Given the sexual factor of looking, the sexual pleasure that looking entails acts against the excessive demands of the ego instincts. In such a case, a general disturbance of the relation between the eye and the act of seeing and the ego might occur. The ego may lose its control of the organ that will henceforth serve only the repressed sexual instinct. The ego, in reaction, would refuse seeing at all once the sexual interest in seeing has become so salient. In this sense, a disturbance of vision can be considered as a punishment for forbidden seeing. At this point Freud mentions the story of Lady Godiva, in which the town's people hid indoors in order to make her task of riding naked bearable, save one, who peeped through the shutters and was punished in becoming blind ("Disturbance of Vision" 217).

15 Even this short article shows how one cannot easily derive the concept of the oppressive male gaze from the Freudian discourse: Freud posits a complicated apparatus of relations between seeing and double instinct systems which do not necessarily cohere, and this complexity can be expressed in several manners. Freud indicates the way in which this intricacy might block the caprices of the scopophilic gaze. However, the distance between Mulvey and psychoanalytical discourse is reinforced in light of Lacan's development of the

concept of the gaze. While Freud emphasizes the way by which a disturbance of seeing stems from a collision between two systems making use of the same organ, the eye, Lacan develops this double function of the eye and shows its profound implications. Lacan would express this double function as the split between the eye and the gaze. The function of the eye is embodied in relations of representation in their traditional articulation, as they appear out of theories of art, relations by which an image stands for an object, while geometrical space organization enables turning the three-dimensional object into a two-dimensional image. In these relations, hence, each point of the image corresponds to a point of the represented object. But in order to explain the gaze, Lacan assumes a much more complicated state of affairs (*Seminar XI* 91).

16 The gaze according to Lacan results from relations of representation. According to his claim "In our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it - that is what we call the gaze" (*Seminar XI* 73). The gaze does not determine or constitute a certain mode of representation. Instead, it is the product of a mode of representation, that something which cannot find its place within relations of representation and cannot be embodied by them. While relations of representation assume correspondence between an object in the world and an image that stands for this object, the Lacanian gaze is that part which representation cannot address. Another difference between Mulvey and Lacan arises from the relation between the viewer and his object of contemplation. Mulvey, like Sartre, assumes mutual relations between the two, even if unequal: the one who looks sees his mate; the one who is being looked at feels shame (in Sartre's case) or de-subjectification (in Mulvey's). In both cases, however, the spectator acts directly upon his object of looking, who responds to the look. Lacan offers a radically different constellation.

17 Lacan tells the story of how he once accompanied a group of labor-class fishermen from Brittany. Lacan joined them during his vacation as a young Parisian intellectual. One day, as he was sailing with the fishermen, one of them, named Petit-Jean, noticed a sardine can floating on the water, reflecting the shimmering sunrays. Petit-Jean turned to Lacan, laughing, and said: "You see that can? Do you see it? Well, it doesn't see you!" (*Seminar XI* 95). Petit-Jean found this incident very funny, but Lacan was not amused at all. The can, according to Lacan, did see him, but from a place which Lacan would never be able to grasp. This enigmatic little story, which many interpreters have striven to decipher, addresses several aspects of the gaze according to Lacan, to which I will now turn.

18 The glittering sardine can demonstrate the split between the looking eye and the gaze.

The reflected light avoids seeing the can itself, despite the fact that the can enables that light to be reflected. Between the can and the light, there are paradoxical relations of allowance through avoidance and vice versa. The can enables the glitter, which prevents seeing the can as a can. The fact that the sardine could look at Lacan means that Lacan turned into a picture, seen by someone or something who looked at him from another place, a place over which Lacan had no control. Similarly, Lacan turned into a picture for these fishermen, but was out of place there. Petit-Jean, as a wretched fisherman, looked at Lacan from another place, from a different field of vision that Lacan could not grasp. Lacan saw that he would never be able to perceive from the place from which Petit-Jean was looking at him. In this sense, he saw that there was something he would never be able to see, in the same way that the shimmering sunrays enabled to see a dazzled vision.

19 The story of the sardine can exemplifies how the gaze of the looker turns back at him from an unexpected place. As Lacan says:

[A]t the scopic level, we are no longer at the level of demand, but of desire, the desire of the Other [...] the relation between the gaze and what one wishes to see involves a lure. The subject is presented as other than he is, and what one shows him is not what he wishes to see. It is in this way that the eye may function as *objet a*, that is to say, at the level of the lack. (*Seminar XI* 104)

Lacan distinguishes between need, demand and desire. Need is instinctual in nature, like hunger. Since the baby cannot articulate his need accurately, his way of expressing the need is crying for the attention of the caretaker to feed him. Since the other is the one who fulfills the baby's need, the need gains another meaning; besides satisfying hunger, it is a proof for that other's love. While need can be fully satisfied, it is impossible to completely satisfy demand: a residue which is not provided for will always remain. This remainder constitutes desire. Hence desire is the gap between need and demand. Or, desire is the surplus created when need is articulated by means of demand. Since need does not overlap with demand, but demand relates to something else, which arises out of designating and fulfilling the need, an unsatisfied cleft between them will always remain. Desire has one object, which Lacan calls object a. The object is not what desire is oriented towards. It is desire's cause. Object a is represented by partial objects of partial drives: the breast, the faeces, the voice and the gaze. Lacan claims, "[m]an's desire is the desire of the Other." This argument bares several implications. First, desire is essentially the desire of the Other. Desire means to be the Other's object of desire, to be that something which the Other wants. Furthermore, desire is the desire for recognition by the Other. Second, the subject desires through the Other and from her/his point of view. What turns an object to an object of desire is not any intrinsic character of that

object, but the fact that the Other desires it. Third, desire is always a desire for something else, since I cannot desire what I already have (Evans 37-38).

20 The gaze is one of the partial objects representing the object cause of desire, *object a*. This is the object of the act of seeing, or the object of the scopic drive. But it is a special kind of object, an object that is always lacking, and its presence appears only when it is lost, while the subject supposes that the other possesses it. Contrary to the gaze Mulvey assumes, a gaze that stems from an inter-subjective relationship between a subject and a concrete other, the Lacanian gaze is the subject's object of lack. According to Lacan, "the gaze I encounter [...] is not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other" (*Seminar XI* 84). The subject perceives the gaze as the other's object cause of desire, and that's why he claims: "Man's desire is the desire of the Other" (*Seminar XI* 115). In other words, Lacan assumes that the gaze is the Other's cause of desire, always remaining unsatisfied and ungraspable for the subject. The significant point for Lacan is that the gaze as an object of lack does not respond and fulfill desire, but causes it.

21 Lacan argues that in the dialectics between the eye and the gaze there is no coincidence, but a lure. Thus he claims: "when, in love, I solicit a look, what is profoundly unsatisfying and always missing is that — you never look at me from the place from which I see you. Conversely, what I look at is never what I wish to see" (*Seminar XI* 103).

22 In other words, to be seen by the Other means to acknowledge the gaze as a blind spot. The field of vision includes something which I can never fully grasp. This discrepancy, the fact that there is never a correlation between what I see and what I wish to see exists in love relations and makes them possible. A similar structure appears in relations of seeing a picture. In *Seminar X* Lacan claims that love means giving the Other what I lack. I love with what I lack, I give my lover that which I do not have (*Seminar X* 95). A similar procedure occurs in seeing, and that explains Lacan's claim that in the scopic field, the relation between the gaze and what one wishes to see involves a lure. The subject is presented differently from what s/he is, and what one shows him/her is not what s/he would like to see. That is, the seeing of the gaze is equivalent to giving a lack; a seeing that shows what cannot be seen. The seeing of the eye enables the gaze as that which the eye excludes.

23 As mentioned earlier, the gap between Mulvey and Lacan is most pronounced in the articulation of castration and its relation to sight. Castration according to Lacan is the inevitable outcome of desire, since it guarantees the preservation of desire, the fact that the desire can never be fully satisfied (*Seminar X* 274). In the beginning of his discussion of the gaze Lacan connects it with castration anxiety, arguing that the gaze is presented as a lack that

constitutes castration anxiety (*Seminar XI* 72-73). In what follows he continues

The gaze may contain in itself the *objet a* of the Lacanian algebra where the subject falls, and what specifies the scopic field and engenders the satisfaction proper to it is the fact that, for structural reasons, the fall of the subject always remains unperceived, for it is reduced to zero. In so far as the gaze, qua objet a, may come to symbolize this central lack expressed in the phenomenon of castration [...] it leaves the subject in ignorance as to what there is beyond the appearance. (76-77)

24 That is how Lacan explains the way in which the gaze essentially stands for a lack, a blind point in the field of vision. While relations of representation assume a specific image standing for a given meaning, the Lacanian gaze stands for something that can never be represented.

25 Lacan demonstrates the gaze as a lack representing castration by Hans Holbein's painting of 1533, *The Ambassadors*. The painting shows two male figures standing in front of several objects as books, musical instruments, and a globe. Apparently, this is a group portrait obeying the pictorial conventions of its period. The objects relate to the tradition of the *vanitas* paintings, and combining the figure with these objects supposes to emphasize the ambassadors' upper class. In the bottom of the painting one can see an anamorphic disc, painted from a different perspective, from an angle that does not cohere with the other pictorial details and the painting's worldview. When the observer looks forward at the painting, he sees the ambassadors' figures at their best while the disc seems meaningless. When he looks at the disc from its side, according to its correct perspective, he sees in it a skull, but then he cannot see the figures of the ambassadors accurately. As Lacan claims: "At the very heart of the period in which the subject emerges and geometrical optics was an object of research, Holbein makes visible for us here something that is simply the subject as annihilated - annihilated in the form [...] of castration" (*Seminar XI* 88-89). In other words, as long as the frontal figures of the ambassadors confirm the subject's sovereignty of the field of vision, the anamorphic skull signifies the opposite and subverts the subject's dominance and control. The skull does not represent simply castration but the two different concepts of space, perspective and anamorphosis, which can never correlate. It hence exemplifies the lack inherent in the visual field. The act of representation itself cannot describe that lack but the lack emerges as its product, as something that is inevitably constructed to into it. The anamorphic skull indicates the possibility of someone who sees me from an unknown place, someone whose gaze I can never grasp.

26 Going back to Mulvey may show the distance between her use of the term castration considering vision and Lacan's discussion. The gaze, in a way, stands for castration and cannot be seen as its outcome. The gaze cannot overcome castration or even respond to it

since the gaze itself is an object of lack, an object that motivates an unsatisfied desire. The significance of Lacan's concept of vision for the visual field is that relations of seeing are particular in nature and can never be predicted. These relations, of which representation is only one aspect, cannot be exhausted using a determinate a priori interpretive model whatsoever. Such an interpretive model may explain the seeing of the eye, but not that of the gaze.

27 As I mentioned before, some people regard the act of Butades's daughter as the invention of painting. The interesting point is that beyond the connection between the love relation and seeing which Butades's story conveys, painting, if we follow this source, was not invented by creating an original independent image, but actually out of an act of representation, by tracing the outlines of a projected image on the wall. It is precisely this act of reproduction, of restoration, that is the birthplace of painting, and it is from here that the gaze may arise. At this point I suggest returning to Butades's daughter and her lover as painted by Livneh. Livneh, in recent years, projects images from art history onto a canvas, which he then paints as monochromatic areas of colors. The new painting preserves something of the original image, but loses small details and hence achieves a different impact on the beholder. The peculiar lighting increases this impact, by the limited color spectrum that Livneh's paintings render. This kind of light enables seeing but at the same time shows its limits. Its effect is like entering a room after being exposed to a dazzling light. Livneh's act, in a way, overlaps with the act of Butades's daughter: in both cases the inevitable failure of the act of tracing and reproducing is what makes the painting possible; this is the undeciphered secret of painting that lies in any act of painting. Like Livneh, so Butades's daughter knows that even if she will inscribe her lover's image as accurately as possible, or precisely by doing so, her lover will see her from a place she will never be able to conceive. All she can do is keep trying to capture his fleeting image.

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Visualizing Abjection: Gender, Power, and the Culture of Humiliation

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Abstract:

Episodes of real people enduring humiliation have become a staple in American television programming; these include talk shows, where episodes of humiliation have already motivated retaliatory murders; TV news broadcasts, where images of humiliation function as weapons of war; and "reality shows," where contestants set themselves up for public humiliation to earn cash awards. Integrating insights gleaned from social psychology, feminist theory, cultural studies, and international relations, this project theorizes the politics of humiliation to explore the consumption and meaning of humiliation as media commodity; its impact in shaping the popular imaginary; its structural relation to gender, pleasure and desire; and its ideological function in reinforcing social hierarchies.

"The essence of non-violence is found in the non-cooperation with all forms of humiliation." — Mahatma Gandhi

1 Humiliation is generally recognized as one of the most compelling and damaging of human emotions, often cited as a motivating factor in a range of interpersonal and international conflicts. Yet it has, surprisingly, generated less critical attention than its importance would suggest. Feminist theorists have contributed to our understanding of the ways that language structures and naturalizes masculine privilege, while cultural critics have rightly situated culture at the heart of any systematic analysis of power relations. Yet these have not shown a commitment to theorizing the politics of humiliation, despite the fact that their concerns coincide with such a project. As William Ian Miller argues, humiliation has "had virtually no scholarly life" and is rarely examined on its own terms (131-2). Most of the research to date has been confined within disciplinary boundaries, emerging primarily from psychology or sociology departments; the former have tended to focus on the subjective experience of humiliation, the latter on its role in social dramas. But as mediated forms of humiliation play a more pervasive and persuasive role in transnational news and media signification, the need to situate the concept of humiliation at the forefront of feminist cultural criticism becomes increasingly urgent.

2 This paper theorizes the politics of humiliation as it functions within a variety of cultural narratives and representations, exploring its current role in constituting, articulating, and enforcing unequal power relations. My analysis considers and extends current research to explore the concept of humiliation as implicated in cultural practices that perpetuate and "naturalize" women's subordinate status. Energized by a feminist ethics, the discussion builds on critiques of power that highlight the role of gendered dichotomies in structuring and sustaining hierarchical privilege. Integrating insights gleaned from social psychology, cultural

studies, and international relations theory, I explore the consumption and meaning of humiliation as media commodity; its impact in shaping the popular imaginary; its structural relation to gender, pleasure and desire; and its ideological function in performing and constituting cultural identity.

3 The concept of humiliation certainly merits more intense critical scrutiny; spectacles of humiliation are all the rage in US popular cultural production and consumption. Given the US's transnational media clout, this trend has broad implications not just domestically but abroad as well. Acts of humiliation are prevalent in cultural phenomena ranging from "Reality TV" programming, where it passes as a form of mass entertainment, to inter-group conflicts, where competing spectacles of humiliation confirm W.T. Mitchell's assertion that images are now "weapons of war" (21). The word "humiliation," rooted in the Latin *humus* or dirt, denotes a "putting down," a spatial metaphor that links the concept etymologically to existing social hierarchies. The concept thus offers an especially suggestive terrain for cultural explorations of power relations, for as Miller reminds us, the "precise experience of many of our richest emotions [...] is in various ways influenced by and dependent on the social arrangements that elicit them and the vocabulary used to express them" (xi). My animating claim in this essay — that images and metaphors of humiliation are gaining cultural currency and that this signals a threat to women — advocates for the primacy of this concept in any core evaluation of women's rights and social status. While the concept of humiliation coalesces a variety of concerns that cannot be fully explored in this paper, I hope to encourage further research into the ways that humiliation is structured in psychosocial terms that privilege and enforce hegemonic masculinity. Towards that end, I raise several interrelated questions: What ideological conditions set the stage for acts defined as "humiliating"? How do cultural attitudes towards human rights, equality, and honor affect the subjective experience of humiliation? And to what extent is humiliation a gendered concept, functioning within existing social hierarchies that both perpetuate and "naturalize" female subjugation?

4 For the purpose of this discussion, I borrow Raymond Williams' view of culture as signifying practices, that is, as a complex body of forces that produce and express shared meanings. While culture registers a set of normative standards that regulate and socialize us within given contexts, my usage assumes that it is always a contested terrain, as groups and interests resist, negotiate, or vie for power. In suggesting that humiliation is gaining cultural currency, I mean to signal a process whereby acts deemed socially repulsive — such as humiliation — assume a kind of normalcy, as they are made familiar, commonplace, and predictable. It is my contention that such an acculturation process is suggested by the routine

pleasures afforded television viewers via immensely popular "reality" genres, many of which market humiliation as a prime commodity. In the US context, episodes of real people enduring humiliation have become a staple in television programming; these include talk shows, where episodes of humiliation have already motivated two retaliatory murders; TV news broadcasts, where videotaped images of humiliation fuel intercultural hostilities and function as powerful signifiers; and of course reality shows, where contestants set themselves up for public humiliation to earn celebrity status and cash awards. This is not to imply a simplistic causal relationship between, say, watching *Are You Hot* on a regular basis and condoning the humiliation of women. What I am suggesting is that the attitudes that inform our collective identities — as citizens or as members of a group — are keenly shaped by a network of cultural rituals, customs and relationships.

5 Neither do I mean to equate the horror of humiliation as weapon of war with the petty humiliations produced for reality TV shows; I do, however, insist on the centrality of this concept in contemporary interplays of power and their supporting technologies, be they situated as popular pastimes, national mythmaking, or ideological conflicts. Energized and informed by a feminist ethics, this approach seeks to understand how humiliation is encoded into practices of cultural production and consumption that construct the feminine, in Sandra Bartky's words, as a "socially inferiorized body" (9). In *Femininity and Domination*, Bartky stresses the need for a political phenomenology of the emotions. In particular, she calls for feminist research that examines the emotions of self-assessment, which include humiliation, to theorize their role "both in the constitution of subjectivity and in the perpetuation of subjection" (98). This paper aims to contribute to such a project.

6 Humiliation is always an act of disempowerment; it is a compelling motivator of collective behavior, a profoundly damaging emotional experience, and one of the most persuasive of disciplinary tactics. Its prevalence reflects the extent to which a society tolerates or supports systems of group-based dominance. Thus I am not surprised that Avishai Margalit's much debated study, *The Decent Society*, sets humiliation at the forefront of a political ethic. Margalit argues simply that decent societies are those whose institutions do not humiliate people and whose citizens do not humiliate each other. His argument presupposes an ideal of universal human rights independent of individual achievement or status, a society where the dignity of individuals relies solely on the fact that they're human beings. In Margalit's definition, humiliation involves dehumanization, treating human beings as if they

were "merely things, tools [...] or inferior humans" (121).¹ Concerned primarily with institutional humiliation (conducted through agents of State authority), Margalit emphasizes mutual respect not just as a moral obligation but also as a practical necessity. His analysis stresses the subjective experience of humiliation, that is, the extent to which the victim can reasonably consider his or her self-respect injured (9).

7 In contrast, several researchers stress the inter-subjective structure of humiliation and the power relations it enacts. In her book, *Shame in Context*, Susan B. Miller differentiates humiliation from shame by noting, "humiliation involves being put into a lowly, debased, and powerless position by someone who has, at that moment, greater power than oneself" whereas shame involves "a reflection upon the self by the self." That is, we believe we deserve our shame because of some moral failing or lapse in judgment, but we never believe we deserve our humiliation; it is always forced upon us (42-5). Frederick Schick supports this distinction, claiming that shame involves the failure to meet up to some standard or expectation and only entails humiliation if exposed. While we can feel humiliated without having done anything to warrant censure or blame, Schick contends that humiliation is always *done to us*, i.e. we are made *passive* and *conscious* recipients of the act. Just as importantly, perpetrators must be aware of and derive satisfaction from imposing the humiliation — not because of any benefits it yields, but simply because it issues from their will (132). This interaction is unique to humiliation: the perpetrator's smug sense of superiority — or gloating — is integral to the process. Schick explains that gloating involves a judgment of "relative standing," that is, I recognize my situation or condition as superior to another's. But while such judgment may lead to gloating, it isn't the gloating itself. Only when the judgment leads me to "feel pleased with myself" is it actually gloating — and only then is the interpersonal cycle of humiliation complete. Schick thus identifies a symbiosis of humiliation: it is a two-way street from cognizant victim to gloating perpetrator.

8 Schick's analysis suggests that perpetrators derive a kind of pleasure from humiliating others, a pleasure rooted in the exercise of power. Similarly, Donald C. Klein has coined the term "humiliation dynamic" to emphasize this inter-subjective process, but instead of a two-way street, Klein discerns a "triangle of humiliation" which includes a third party — a "witness" who observes the humiliation and agrees that the act is indeed degrading. This complicates Schick's assertion that the perpetrator's pleasure results simply from the willful

¹ This emphasis on the respect owed human beings regardless of social standing echoes Immanuel Kant's assertion that "a man cannot be used merely as a means [...] neither can he act contrary to the equally necessary self-esteem of others [...] he is under obligation to acknowledge, in a practical way, the dignity of humanity in every other man" (*Metaphysics* 255).

exercise of power, for the witness (intentionally or not) allows the perpetrator to make a display of his dominance. A private conquest may gratify the perpetrator's ego — but a public spectacle of his conquest transforms the act into a political statement.

9 How the statement is interpreted, however, depends on broader ideological and structural conditions. Prevailing views of human dignity, equality, and honor shape the witness's role in these social dramas, as do attitudes towards the victim's social, racial, or ethnic grouping. Klein's triangle suggests that the witness serves as a kind of social barometer, gauging the extent of the perpetrator's breach in accordance with existing norms and expectations. The witness's role is context-dependant: it is contingent upon the degree to which the society tolerates humiliation and on the status accorded its constituent groups. In rigidly hierarchical societies (often characterized as "honor societies") the consistent maltreatment of "inferior" groups reflects and reinforces the status quo: members of the oppressed group are expected to stay in their "rightful place" and to accept institutionalized humiliation as "legitimate." For example, bowing and prostration may function as standardized social gestures that distinguish the "honorable" from the subordinate. Steven Lukes' description of "ascriptive humiliation" is in line with this model of social dominance: subalterns are ascribed devalued traits that socially construct them as "'normal' bottom of the heap people."

10 It thus follows that Klein's "witness" would display a higher level of tolerance for humiliations directed against individuals belonging to low-status groups whose position is seen as evidence of their intrinsic inferiority. It also follows that perpetrators would need to indulge in much harsher measures to elicit a shocked response from witnesses acculturated to ascriptive humiliation as social ritual. As a discursive process, ascriptive humiliation produces not only a subordinate body (marked by physical gestures and behaviors) but also a consciousness of the self as inferior. Stripped of dignity and self-respect, socially inferiorized bodies can be routinely subjected to dehumanizing treatment and violence. Cultural hierarchies enforced through ascriptive humiliation tend to foster a moral climate in which atrocities become possible and even justifiable. Jonathan Glover's extraordinary book, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*, explores the psychosocial processes behind various atrocities such as genocide, massacres, and ethnic cleansings. The dehumanizing effects of humiliation are evident throughout the pages of Glover's study, which includes chapters on Nazism, Stalinism, the My Lai massacre, Hiroshima, and Rwanda. One account describes the British colonial massacre of peaceful Indian protestors in 1919, when General Dyar ordered his military to fire into the crowd killing up to 1000 people and

wounding hundreds more. Glover sets the stage for this tragedy by describing the ritual humiliations that helped to enforce colonial rule: Indians had to "salaam" if they passed a European on the road, that is, dismount, lower their umbrellas, and step aside. Those who failed to show proper respect were publicly humiliated; they were made to rub their noses in the dust and gravel, kiss the boots of their superiors, or touch the ground with their foreheads (23). General Dyer himself had previously issued a "crawling order," whereby Indians using a particular lane had to squirm along on their stomachs (23). Glover argues that it would have been more difficult for General Dyer to order the massacre "if the Indians' protective dignity had not already been violated" (24). When we lose our widespread disposition to respect another's humanity by indulging in their ritual humiliation, Glover concludes, we lose "a powerful restraint on barbarism" (23).

11 But this restraint is problematized by a humiliation dynamic that not only empowers the perpetrator but often the witness as well. There is an implicit relationship between voyeuristic pleasure and spectacles of real violence, abuse, and humiliation; in a sense, viewers become crucial co-producers of new realist modes that are increasingly familiar in both television news and entertainment media. In *Seeing Things*, John Ellis contends that contemporary technology documents historical events — war, genocide — in ways that foster new forms of social involvement. The presence of the camera creates a power relationship between actor, event, and spectators, which in Ellis's view, is dependent upon the presence of mediated witnesses. He describes this process as follows:

The feeling of witness [...] is one of separation and powerlessness; the events unfold, like it or not. They unfold elsewhere [...]. So for the viewer, powerlessness and safety go hand in hand [...]. [O]f course, the act of witness is nevertheless powerful. It enables viewers to overlook events [...]. [A]t the same time [...] individuals [...] become accomplices in the events they see. Events on screen make a mute appeal: "you cannot say you did not know." (11)

Ellis argues that the position of witness is at once distanced and involved, though nonetheless complicit. Watching television is a way of bearing witness to events in ways that differ from other media relationships: television's domesticity makes "witness into an everyday, intimate and commonplace act" (36). It offers a vicarious thrill and sense of empowerment. To treat this audio-visual experience as a form of witness, Ellis contends, "is to realize that it offers a distinct, and new, modality of experience" (11).

12 This "modality of experience" produces a consensual relationship between the spectator and mediated spectacles of humiliation, for even as we cringe at or decry the acts we witness we do not often turn away. The spectator identifies both with the camera and with what it sees; this emotional split produces what Robert Stam calls the spectator's

"schizophrenically fissured psyche." Stam argues convincingly that television in general — and TV news in particular — triggers a fictitious sense of superiority in the viewer, who as the "protected witness" to even the most horrifying events taking place virtually anywhere around the world, experiences an exhilarating empowerment. As Stam puts it, even in peacetime television "flatters and reaffirms our sense of power, turning us into armchair imperialists, audio-visual masters of the world" (102). Stam's analysis of this power dynamic relocates Klein's humiliation triangle in broader psychosocial processes of media production and consumption. Klein's witness confirms the existence of moral boundaries even as s/he witnesses their temporary dissolution; were the witness not to deem the act humiliating — as having breached a shared code of conduct — the perpetrator would be denied satisfaction. But Stam's "witness" is not just a social marker, a necessary yet passive component in the humiliation triangle, but a co-producer of the event and its significance.

13 In his recent book, *Cultural Criminology and the Carnival of Crime*, Mike Presdee posits a similar collaboration in the convergence of cultural and criminal practices. Presdee draws on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnival as transgression, arguing that as contemporary life becomes more regulated and restrictive, citizens seek a vicarious yet "safe" thrill as spectators of criminal or transgressive behavior. In Presdee's view, this process affords the citizenry a cathartic "second life" lived out in the interstices of ordered societies. A chapter on what he calls "humiliation television" focuses on programs such as *Blind Date*, where participants divulge the most intimate flaws and secrets of their partners:

What are their weaknesses, how can we laugh at them and strip them of their dignity? Embarrassment and humiliation are the name of the game and participants play it with a vengeance to the enjoyment of the crowd and the viewing 'public' [...]. (70)

Presdee contends that these public displays allow us to transgress "without remorse, without punishment and without sanction"; in the privacy of our homes, we are given license to "play at being deviant, at being collectively evil, and to share a collective thrill that stands outside of reality" (73-4). Unaccompanied by moral debate or remorse, humiliation is thus appropriated into the repertoire of culturally inscribed pleasures, desires, and consumption practices that structure everyday life. The heart of his argument — that these practices create the "social context in which crime comes into being and is played out" — supports my assertion that where cultural practices are concerned, familiarity breeds not contempt but acquiescence.

14 As Presdee's analysis suggests, humiliation has become an entertainment commodity produced specifically for our consumption. RTV contestants and viewers alike generally understand that moral weaknesses, body flaws, and intimate betrayals offer the most thrilling

evidence of "reality" in the genre. As *New York Times* writer Alessandra Stanley puts it, "humiliation is the unifying principle behind a successful reality show" (11/20/2002). We might disavow our complicity as co-producers of RTV and other spectacles of humiliation by blaming the phenomenon on the "bad taste" characteristic of so-called "low culture." Since aesthetic judgments are rarely divorced from judgments about class, those with the power to ascribe cultural value function as arbiters of "good taste"; aesthetic hierarchies thus serve to reinforce social and class differences, and to safely dissociate "them" — the proverbial "vulgar masses" — from "us." The usual suspects — spatial metaphors equating popular culture with the inferior, the debased — abound in such critiques, many of which seem to assume that "popular" culture resides in a world apart and below "real" culture, pandering only to the quirks and peccadilloes of a barbarous segment. But these positions ignore the extent to which RTV narratives depend upon an existing network of "shared meanings" for structure and affect. When female contestants on *Joe Millionaire* or *For Love or Money* compete publicly for the male prize — and the financial boon he bestows — broader economic and gender relations set the stage for such a contest. The "reality" in Reality TV stems not from its lack of a script or professional actors (most people know that what they see on these shows is edited, mediated and not truly "spontaneous"), but from the ways its various scenarios mirror the underlying logic of our social order.

15 In a course on popular culture that I taught recently, I posed the question, do competition-based reality shows in which women are judged as "hot bodies" or exposed as "gold diggers" further normalize expectations of "female behavior"? I was surprised at the casual acquiescence with which female students in particular insisted that shows such as *For Love or Money* and *Joe Millionaire* simply reflect reality, since women really are ruthless when vying for male attention and more likely to betray a friend than men are. They rejected the notion that these reinforce a systemic humiliation of women. This attitude is especially troubling, as it suggests the kind of entrenched thinking that condones humiliation under certain conditions and for certain "kinds" of people. It recalls Lukes' "ascriptive humiliation" idea, with women in this case attributing to their own gender traits and behaviors that warrant their humiliation. We must remember that our sense of injury increases the more we presume ourselves worthy of respect regardless of race, gender, or other variables. When oppressed persons internalize the negative qualities ascribed to them and do not recognize these as cultural constructs, they remain locked into a "generalized condition of dishonor" that

circumscribes their capacity for autonomy, self-respect, and social agency.² As Bartky reminds us, "As long as their situation is apprehended as natural, inevitable, and inescapable, women's consciousness of themselves, no matter how alive to insult and inferiority, is not yet feminist consciousness" (14).

16 We have noted that the televisual experience conforms to the structure of Klein's humiliation triangle with the viewer implicated in the power relations enacted. But theorists such as Fredric Jameson, Robert Stam, Richard Dyer and others remind us to also look at the ways that a popular medium constitutes itself as a "projected fulfillment of what is desired and absent within the status quo" (Stam 122). Given that sixty-four percent of those who declare themselves avid viewers of reality TV are women, what does the genre offer women that is "desired and absent" in their own experience? In a survey conducted for *Psychology Today*, Steven Reiss found that reality TV fans place a very high value on both revenge and competition; yet most prominent among the attitudes expressed by fans surveyed is their desire for prestige and status (Sept-Oct, 2001). We could argue that women's exclusion from the highest levels of political and social power makes them more likely to seek access through voyeuristic fantasies of empowerment. But access to this desired status and honor is granted to women who play by the rules of an old game. The competition-based RTV genre is structured by two dominant gender ideologies, the beauty myth (*Who Wants to Marry a Multimillionaire*, *The Swan*, *Joe Millionaire*) or the "iron man" (*Fear Factor*, *Survivor*, *Boot Camp*). The prototypical "feminine" candidate wins in the former paradigm; the latter category does grant women an equal opportunity to prove their mettle — if only by showing themselves capable of eating as many live insects as the next guy.

17 But these acts do nothing to challenge — and indeed reinforce — a masculinist ethic associated with dominance over others, physical displays of power, and control of an opponent. Consider Salman Rushdie's remarks about the RTV phenomenon: "What is gradually being reinvented is the gladiatorial combat," Rushdie contends. "The TV set is the Coliseum and the contestants are both gladiators and lions; their job is to eat one another until only one remains alive. But how long...before 'real' lions, actual dangers, are introduced to these various forms of fantasy island, to feed our hunger for more action, more pain, more vicarious thrills?" (qtd. in Lamb 13). Rushdie's comments may seem unduly alarmist, but let us turn our attention to recent world events, particularly the ways that war is imitating art — or at least, reality television. The reciprocity Presdee identifies between cultural and criminal practices is especially germane given the media's increasing role in the technologies of

² Hussein Abdulahi Bulhan, *Franz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (New York: Plenum Press, 1985), p. 122.

militarism and warfare. That torture and humiliation occur in the course of armed conflicts and war is not news; but these have tended to occur in the shadows, shrouded in secrecy and hidden from public scrutiny. Yet so — called "new wars" produce competing spectacles of humiliation and graphic violence specifically for mediated consumption. As TV news spectators, we are now called upon to "witness" the real-life pleadings of human beings about to be murdered on camera. These grainy images, videotaped for the express purpose of showcasing terror, seem a curiously morbid reflection of postmodern culture's narcissistic relationship with the camera. As weapons of war, they hit their targets the moment we see them — for what political aim would they serve without the viewer's unwitting complicity? Here the humiliation triangle has its most profound implications, structuring intergroup conflicts and implicating all of us in a grim drama of postmodern war.

18 Similarly, the widely circulated images of naked Iraqi prisoners enduring all kinds of humiliation and abuse have fueled opposition and undermined US legitimacy abroad. Then what could have prompted participants to film and photograph themselves in the act? Following the release of photos and videos, the Union-Tribune reported the reactions of various experts, many of whom cited the prevalence of humiliation in contemporary popular culture, especially reality shows. Kevin Howley, a communications professor at DePauw University in Indiana, noted the prevalence of humiliation in contemporary popular culture, especially in reality shows. "The perpetrators of the degradation," he noted, "find perverse pleasure in all of this. It helps reinforce feelings of superiority over those being abused or humiliated. It is the thrill of exercising power over another individual or group with little fear of retaliation or retribution" (Union-Tribune May 13, 2004). Mary Spio, a magazine editor who had served in the Air Force during Desert Storm, claims to have heard fellow patrons at a bar laugh out loud when the pictures were shown on TV.³

19 But what of the fact that the most publicized images featured female soldiers as perpetrators of sexual humiliation?⁴ Does the prominent display of women in these photos

³ Others interpreted these images through a gender-prescribed set of lenses. The widely popular radio celebrity Rush Limbaugh applied a kind of "boys will be boys" logic, downplaying the significance of these acts by comparing them to any "typical" college fraternity hazing. Best selling author and conservative commentator Anne Coulter blamed the torture on women's more vicious nature: "This is what women are like. Men are better at engaging in combat while behaving in an honorable way" (KABC, Al Rantel Show, May 5, 2004).

⁴ Three of the torturers, Megan Ambuhl, Lynndie England and Sabrina Harman, were women. The Brigadier General in charge of Abu Ghraib, Janis Karpinski, and the top U.S. Intelligence Officer charged with reviewing the detainees' status, Maj. General Barbara Fast, are also women. Capt. Carolyn Wood of the 519th Military Intelligence Battalion led the unit in charge of interrogations at the Bagram Collection Point in Afghanistan where two prisoners died in December 2002 while under interrogation. She subsequently headed the Interrogation Coordination Element (ICE) at Abu Ghraib, where she was allegedly "involved in intensive

reposition them as emerging players in a new military and social order, or does it reenlist women's bodies as signs and message bearers for the patriarchy? By reading this humiliation dynamic as an inevitable consequence of feminism, we bind feminist politics to a masculinist ethos of domination and conquest; we also obscure the actual power relations in which these images are rooted. We should note that women's real progress towards self-empowerment and equality are often thwarted by cultural and social responses that "defensively reinvent" the sign of woman (MacDonald 220). Ironically, the sign of woman as dominatrix belies her place within a militarized power structure, for even as women assume leadership roles in the military, they have yet to achieve equal status or respect. An article in *The Observer* reported last year that one in ten women cadets at West Point, the US's most prestigious military academy, has been raped or suffered sexual assault (June 8, 2003). Also consider that within the past two years, US women soldiers have filed at least 112 reports of sexual misconduct against their male counterparts in Iraq, Kuwait, and Afghanistan. As Linda Burnham puts it, "Iraqi prisoners made to wear women's underwear. Those who battled for women's equal right to serve should take heed. Degradation and weakness are still equated with the female in this man's army."⁵ This gendered equation is enforced through a variety of social and bodily constraints; men and women who violate or challenge its laws expose themselves to ridicule, disdain, ostracism, or worse.

20 These images of disempowered brown male bodies and dominant white women evoke sexual and racial meanings deeply inscribed in our national psyches. Thus we might ask why women figure so prominently in this humiliation triangle at precisely the moment when masculinism is most vigorously deployed in the service of militarism and nationalism. Zillah Eisenstein has argued that this gender reversal actually reinforces an existing masculinist/racialized hierarchy. "Just the sex has changed; the uniform remains the same," she writes. "We see women abusing men which protects sexual hierarchy and opposition but in reverse [...]. acting in a heterosexist hierarchical and punishing system of power."⁶ In this

interrogations of detainees, condoned some of the activities and stressed that that was standard procedure" (Higham, Stephens, & White, Washington Post, 5/23/04).

⁵ For an online copy of the *Denver Post's* special investigation of sexual abuse in the US military, go to <http://www.denverpost.com>. Their series "Betrayal in the Ranks" offers a detailed investigation of the sexual abuse of women in the US military. For a report on rapes and assaults of Navy personnel, see "Navy Women's Study Group, 1990: An Update Report on the Progress of Women in the Navy" (Washington, D.C.: Chief of Naval Operations, 1991). The report found that only about 1 out of 10 female soldiers who were raped actually reported it.

⁶ Eisenstein remarks on what he sees as revealing word choices in press coverage of Abu Ghraib, particularly the use of the word "humiliated" rather than "tortured" or "raped." She writes, "Men who are raped and sexually degraded are 'humiliated' because they are treated like women; they are forced to be women — sexually dominated and degraded. Men who are naked and exposed remind us of the vulnerability usually associated with being a woman."

revised gender narrative, brown men are disempowered and "effeminized" by white women, Eisenstein concludes, while concurrent reports on the abuse and rape of Muslim women prisoners have remained muted.

21 To what extent is humiliation a gendered concept, functioning within existing social hierarchies that "naturalize" female subjugation? Founded on a basic binary opposition, masculine and feminine, gender structures and enforces a system of unequal power relations. It differentiates and divides men and women, drawing its boundaries through polarized categories, such as mind/body and culture/nature, which relegate the female body (and by extension, racial or ethnic others) to a contingent, inferior status position. It can even be said that the primary ideological effect of gender is the normalizing of female subordination: binary oppositions are deeply imbricated in a patriarchal value system, as these enforce a hierarchical partitioning whereby the "feminine" side corresponds to the inferior or powerless position (Moi, 1997: 110). Carol Cohn explains that "Once the gender-coding takes place — once certain ways of thinking are marked as masculine and feminine, entwining metaphors of masculinity with judgments of legitimacy and power — then any system of thought or action comes to have gendered positions within it [...] [and] it becomes extremely difficult for anyone, female or male, to take the devalued position, to express concerns or ideas marked as 'feminine.'"⁷ As a pervasive and powerful means of social control, gender both produces and restricts subjectivity; its dualisms inform not just our social interactions and values, but also our emotional responses. We are "wired" so to speak, emotionally, by our place within language and social convention. Thus emotion studies are shifting away from a focus on interiority, i.e. on emotion as a universal psychobiological process that retains essential meanings across cultures, towards a relativizing strategy that seeks to understand emotion as a sociocultural construct. This approach explores how emotion is modulated by broader cultural discourses, which are in turn shaped by local power structures and relations. Recent work in particular has noted the ways that power is thoroughly entangled in emotion discourses, establishing, asserting, challenging, or reinforcing power or status differences (Abu-Lughod, Lutz 14). Given the primacy of gender dichotomies in structuring our psychological, social, and corporeal exchanges, further research is needed to explore the discursive formation of humiliation as a gendered emotion, and in particular, its deployment by nation-states to evoke fervent nationalism or militarism.

22 Catherine Lutz has argued that the category "emotion" has consistently been associated with the female, that is, qualities used to define the one are also applied to the

⁷ Carol Cohn, "War, Wimps and Women" in *Gendering War Talk*, Ed. Miriam Cooke and Angela Woolacut Princeton UP 1993 pp. 227-246.

other. For example, as an analytic concept in the West, emotion, like the female, is typically identified as natural rather than cultural, irrational rather than rational; it is embodied, uncontrollable, and hence dangerous (69). Lutz contends that this network of associations sets the female in deficient relation to her "rational" male other, and explicitly and implicitly draws links among women, subordination, and rebellion (69). Most relevant to our analysis is Lutz's finding that lay discourses on emotion, which most often revolve around the control or management of emotion, "is also a narrative about the double-sided nature — both weak and dangerous — of dominated groups" (70). Lutz maintains that in Western societies emotion, identified as a kind of body disorder, becomes a crucial indicator of problems with social control and is thus likely to emerge in discourses about social subordinates. Lutz concludes that because "emotion is constructed as relatively chaotic, irrational, and antisocial, its existence vindicates authority and legitimates the need for control." By association with the female, emotion discourses justify distinctions between men and women and especially men's hierarchical privilege (87).

23 Such research can lead the way to a deeper understanding of the politics of humiliation, both as an emotion of self-assessment experienced within normative frameworks, and as a discursive means of social control aligned with existing gender hierarchies. Michel Foucault's work reminds us that discursive forces fabricate human subjects "according to a whole technique of forces and bodies" (217). Humiliation is one of the techniques through which institutions and nations construct docile bodies; through acts of humiliation, groups dramatize their superior status over their subjects or a conquered people. Sexual humiliation involves a semiotics of the body: relations of domination and subjugation are made manifest in acts of emotional and physical violence. It shares with physical torture the ability to render our body the enemy, to make of it a dreadful stage on which the taboos of a society are enacted against our will. In this sense humiliation literalizes and performs the feminine as abject body, as "what must be expelled or repressed by the subject in order to attain identity and a place within the symbolic" (Grosz 88). Abjection represents a disavowal of those aspects of the self that one finds repulsive, which pose a threat to the boundary between self and other, masculine and feminine. In a social and cultural ambiance in which females occupy a lower status position and hold an unequal share of power, humiliation, like violence, is "gendered masculine in the dishing out but feminine on the receiving end" (I. Miller 55). The perpetrator's self-aggrandizement increases in tandem relation to his victim's disempowerment, enacting a psychodrama of power in which the feminized other is forcefully differentiated and repressed. Deployed as objectification and dehumanization, humiliation is

implicitly rendered an act of feminization regardless of the sex of the perpetrator. I believe that this threat of being "made woman" — this threat of humiliation — is the subtext that underwrites a history of State-sponsored violence and intercultural hostilities.⁸

24 These various cultural exchanges — both as mediated reality and institutional practice — are intimately bound to the vestiges of honor societies — male-dominated hierarchies in which the grand narratives of masculinity are consistently re-enacted through both symbolic and bodily exchanges. Perhaps, as William Miller has proposed, the notion of "honor" is not dead, just moved to the back regions of consciousness — dragged out of the shadows on occasion "for use by nation-states to justify hostility" (x). Mary Kaldor's chilling analysis of recent mass slaughters around the world, including Rwanda, Kosovo, and East Timor, contends that a new kind of war has emerged, an admixture of war and organized crime that is fought for political goals using terror and other tactics outlawed by international agreements. She concludes that "What is involved in 'new wars,' is a reversion to more 'traditional' constructions of masculinity" in part a response to feelings of disempowerment. In her view, this is a byproduct of globalization and modernization; as global economic systems, shifting demographics, and emergent human rights projects destabilize traditional boundaries and hierarchies, a reactionary and violent backlash has gained momentum. Kaldor calls attention to the massive human rights violations that accompany these conflicts, a warning echoed by social psychologist Evelin Gerda Lindner.

25 Lindner, who has contributed the most extensive cross-cultural research to date on humiliation as a motive for war, argues that modern societies are transitioning from strict hierarchical orders founded on male honor to new, universal human rights models. Honor societies involved what Lindner calls "legitimate" violations of honor, that is, they were highly structured societies in which certain groups recognized and maintained their "rightful place." In such contexts, acts of humiliation were seen as part of a system in which males defended or preserved honor, kept order, or taught "lessons to underlings." Post-human rights or "dignity societies" are those in which universal human rights principles are espoused and institutionalized; in these contexts, deprivations or inequalities that were legitimate before are now deemed illegitimate. Ironically, in post-human rights societies humiliation is more likely to become a motivating force in genocides, ethnic-purges, and wars ("Lessons"). Lindner warns that those who preach human rights "had better become more aware than they are now

⁸ Karen Horney's groundbreaking work, "The Dread of Woman," published in 1932, argued that the male dread of woman was not, as Freud argued, the threat of castration but of humiliation — the threat which the mother poses to the boy's masculine self-regard.

that they intensify feelings of humiliation...when they overlook the fact that reality does not follow ideals" ("Lessons").

26 Perhaps, as Lindner suggests, we are indeed balanced precariously between conflicting social orders. On the one hand, we seem bound to familiar hierarchies, locked in a weary two-step of binary oppositions that divide and contrast us. On the other, a community of nations has officially declared that our right to dignity is not contingent upon our physical strength, greater wealth, or social status — but simply on the fact of our humanity. Stripped of its justificatory narratives — of its legitimacy even as a precursor of fame, that ultimate postmodern status symbol — humiliation cannot thrive. Meanwhile, like all transitional epochs, this one has its challenges. As boundaries shift and erode and rationales for inequality are disputed and defied, some evoke the sureties of a past where everyone knew their place, where the rules of the game did not change with the players. Nationalist pride or patriotism; the allure of fame or guilty pleasures; the need to identify with power and not victimization, all pull us in contradictory moral directions and urge our complicity. Stern hierarchies die hard; be assured that their accompanying cruelties and humiliations will not dissipate simply because more women make it to the top rungs. Gender, after all, is a social construct, not a biological determinant. It is not enough for women to achieve positions of authority and leadership alongside men; we must be prepared, as Barbara Ehrenreich puts it, not "just to assimilate into the institutions that men have created over the centuries, but to infiltrate and subvert them" ("Abu Ghraib"). I would suggest that such a project begins with an uncompromised commitment to a human rights ethic — an ethic that must inform all of our organizational and social practices, inter-subjective relationships, and cultural exchanges. I would further maintain that Gandhi's deceptively simple appeal for "non-cooperation with all forms of humiliation" in fact offers a succinct and far-reaching directive for women. In our collective struggle to eliminate violence and injustice, let us begin by refusing, unequivocally, to cooperate with all forms of humiliation.

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Jon Binnie: *The Globalization of Sexuality*. London: Sage, 2004

By Brian Curtin, Raffles Design Institute, Bangkok

1 "I've heard that desire arrived in Asia with the tempest" wrote cultural critic and novelist Lawrence Chua. Rolling in with storm clouds, he asks us to imagine, sexual desire was accompanied by whispers of "homosexuality is an import from the West" or "gay men are an abomination against Islam." These whispers, and more, echo in the contemporary postcolonial imagination (34).

2 A central risk of discourses on globalization and postcolonialism is the denial of interrelationships between local histories, desires and identities as monolithic notions of Western influence and Americanism can weigh down intellectual thought. The important question for a promising title *The Globalization of Sexuality* is the extent to which Jon Binnie effectively critiques such notions and, further, imagines alternative ways of theorizing.

3 Binnie's book claims an intervention in prevalent discourses on globalization with questions of sexuality and nationalism. Broadly, the heteronormativity of writing on globalization is at issue. In fact, Binnie's book can be more accurately described as moving in the opposite direction, he intervenes in prevalent discourses on sexuality and nationalism with questions of globalization. For readers who like interventions to be high on opinion *The Globalization of Sexuality* reads as a? dense set of references into which Binnie inserts somewhat low-key points of views that consistently risk disappearing. Further, the book is, on the one hand, expansive but, on the other, the title delivers far less than one might imagine; for a concern with globalization his central reference points are oddly with Europe, America and Australia. The British Binnie puts his interest in "theorizing the spatial politics of sexuality" and "the transnational basis of sexual cultures" to time spent as an exchange student in Denmark (5-6). He approvingly cites Robert Holton's interest in globalization as the result of migration from Britain to Australia (5). Arjun Appadurai's writings on globalization are not cited, or the Hong Kong academic Ackbar Abbas or Peter A. Jackson's work on queer sexualities in Thailand. Writing from Bangkok, where entrenched notions of the Other generate any number of tensions within a globalizing, tourist-based economy, *The Globalization of Sexuality* reads as an academic exercise with a very limited purview.

4 Underscoring the central tenet of the book - that the relationship between sexuality, nationalism and globalization is under theorized - the chapters proceed from a sketch of the necessity for issues of the transnational for sexual politics, a plea for the recognition of a variety of sexual cultures, the problematic of parochialism in addressing different geographies

within Europe as well as non-western perspectives, to the issue of narrow disciplinary frameworks. His chapter "The Nation and Sexual Dissidence" explores the state regulation of sexuality and how gay and lesbian sexuality may be both excluded and included in discourses of nationalism. Further, the importance of different constructions of both sexuality and nationalism within different nation-states (and, for example, the effect of criteria for integration to the EU) are checked. In a chapter purportedly concerned with the heteronormativity of literature on globalization, Binnie in fact merely notes the absence of discussions of sexuality in certain books but, more usefully, takes apart Dennis Altman's preeminent writing on sexuality and globalization. Correctly, Altman's insistence on the global Americanization of gay cultures is recognized for reinforcing what he claims to deconstruct. Further, "The Economics of Queer Globalization" adds a materialist slant on queer theory in order to undermine assumptions of global homogenization, as sexual identities, communities and cultures are subject to uneven production and development. A section on cyberspace and technology succinctly summarizes key arguments and perspectives. Other chapters and issues explore the politics of migration and tourism, AIDS and urbanism and gay identity.

5 In this reviewer's mind, the chapter "Queer Postcolonialism" is the most notable. Here Binnie offers a set of critiques that have an applicability which serves the implications of the title of his book very well. Namely, the universalism of postcolonial discourses in the academy, inherent in terms like diaspora and hybridity, the problematic relationship between modernity and models of development, and issues of agency and desire in terms of the local performance of ideas which initially emerged from economically developed countries. Such ideas suggest Binnie's view is broader than is otherwise demonstrated but here, as elsewhere, he merely offers correctives to existing theories. So, for example, his critique of a focus in postcolonial theory on the diaspora, insofar as such a focus devalues the state in globalization, doesn't produce a substantial discussion of how other relationships (between the nation, the subject and the global) can be imagined. Later Binnie challenges the Americanism of terms like 'queers of color' or the term 'queer' but it is somewhat part of the problem to then point to, only, European political scientists as examples of a more expansive, if not alternative, point of view (147).

6 In the final analysis, however, *The Globalization of Sexuality* is an important testament to how the supposed neatness of a term like globalization can be undermined. Binnie's taking to task of the American biases of lesbian and gay studies' work on national

identity and queer globalization is necessary and the book will be useful for anyone seeking a contemporary set of references, albeit partial, for all the issues sketched.

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Felicity A. Nussbaum: *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003

By Miriam Wallraven, University of Tübingen

1 What is "normal"? What delimits humanity? Are women, judged according to the Biblical Fall, deficient human beings? Where can people with black skin be situated in a world increasingly influenced by extensive travel and the building of the empire? Are they comparable to white Europeans at all? How should people with disabilities such as muteness, blindness, or lameness be treated? Are they less human for their aberrant features? Such questions and many possible answers discernible in literary and cultural representations of human difference in eighteenth-century England are discovered and discussed in Felicity Nussbaum's study *The Limits of the Human*. In her detailed analysis, she investigates visual arts, in addition to canonical as well as lesser-known novels and plays. Her focus on women writers proves to be particularly revealing since femininity and the image of the "anomaly" of being a writing woman turn out to intermingle with other anomalies the study considers, such as disability and disease. Nussbaum shows that all anomalies turn out to be closely intertwined with ideas of femininity and masculinity as well as race. What was considered "normal" in the eighteenth century? The answer is far from clear, since Nussbaum shows that "normalcy" is necessarily a shaky, contested and altogether frighteningly unfathomable phenomenon. Some reasons for the lack of definite delimitations include the changes in national identity connected with travelling, the slave trade and gender roles as well as changes in political climate. Working with authors such as Behn, Burney, the Bluestockings, Shaftesbury, Sterne, Johnson or Equiano, Felicity Nussbaum demonstrates the connections and intersections between interpretations of corporeal features that were perceived as aberrant.

2 At first, the structure of the book gives the impression that clear-cut definitions and analyses might be possible: part 1 is entitled "Anomaly and Gender," while the heading of part 2 is "Race and Gender." However, Nussbaum's thought-provoking treatment of these phenomena shows their interconnectedness in the area of gendered, national, racial or bodily identity: "It is not simply that each of these differences transmogrifies into one or the other clearly identifiable form, but rather that the various kinds of difference interrelate to complicate prevailing ideas about the cultural meanings of normalcy and of humankind" (1). For this reason, the working definition of "anomaly" includes very different irregularities or

deviations. Gender features prominently in the study, since, as Nussbaum argues "[a] central subject of this book is also the characterization of a defective and racialized femininity that paradoxically energizes an imperial England as it struggles to demarcate the limits of the human through women (2)."

3 The introduction therefore focuses on gender and especially on both marvellous and monstrous tales dealing with women's innocence and national integrity. In the eighteenth century, Nussbaum argues, *Othello* represents the idea of "racialized monstrousness" (4) and in particular addresses issues of gender. For this reason, *Othello* and its reception appear throughout the book under various headings. The threat that *Othello* implies for political and national identity formation is made even more "real" by the increasing numbers of freed slaves who entered England later in the eighteenth century. Nussbaum investigates the troubled relationships between travel, empire and nation, "real" racial encounters and their treatment in literature.

4 Travel not only brings anxieties about race and differences in human appearance to the fore; it also fosters attempts at classifying and controlling gender conceptualizations. And not only femininity features as a characteristic index of the level of civilization, but masculinity also becomes an object of concern:

[T]ravel accounts to other parts of the globe make possible and necessary the conceptualization not only of a racially marked femininity, but also a racial masculinity and effeminacy, and a reconciliation of other anomalous beings to definitions of a gendered humankind. As with femininity, the degree of effeminacy within both sexes was regarded, perhaps less obviously, to reflect the state of civilization in England and elsewhere. (9)

Thus, Nussbaum also addresses fears of European men who are thought to violate the ideal of masculinity "at home": eunuchs, castrati and unmanly figures characterized as foppish or exaggeratedly feminine. Women, on the other hand, are always perceived as flawed by the "fair defect:" the monstrosity which accompanies all women after Eve's fall. Desdemona thus embodies a special form of this "fair defect" - a longing for black men, which in itself is seen as a sign of racialized femininity. The savage, even if he turns out to be a noble savage, shares the same fundamental defect as Eve who is also always flawed. The problem caused by this defect was regarded as severe indeed: "the fair daughters of Britain's" responsibility to reproduce also made them responsible for the preservation of a "race" and a nation from degeneration.

5 The first part of the study begins with the concept of defective femininity and looks at texts by Aphra Behn and Eliza Haywood. The Aristotelian and Galenic models of woman as a defective version of man is surely the most persistently influential theory in the eighteenth

century. Behn and Haywood, Nussbaum shows, are also concerned with views of femininity as defective. Behn's two tales of defect, *The Dumb Virgin* and *The Unfortunate Bride: Or, The Blind Lady a Beauty* show the disquieting potential of being feminine and at the same time dumb or blind. Nussbaum's textual analysis works out the two sides of these double monstrosities: "At one level these doubly defective women stand in for all femininity; at another level they represent women who defy femininity, women writers" (27). Eliza Haywood, on the contrary, is fascinated with the deaf-mute prophet and fortune-teller Duncan Campbell who was famous from 1710 to 1730. Haywood, among others, tries to understand and benevolently present what was perceived as "a freak of nature." Campbell was not an infantilized and passive being, but made his living by writing - again, a parallel to the monstrous image of the writing woman comes to mind.

6 Chapter 2 is concerned with issues of effeminacy and femininity. Here, the author explores how "feminized and effeminate bodies are perceived as corporeal indicators of national values, interests, and anxieties" (18). Both Sarah Fielding's *David Simple* and Elizabeth Montagu's literary relationship to Samuel Johnson centre around gendered anomalies: the manly woman and the man of feeling. Changing understandings of effeminacy have to be taken into account for understanding the connection of gender anomaly and its threat to the nation: particularly by the mid-century, the term "effeminate" refers to both selfish luxury and sexual excess. Several other characteristics, seen as altogether dangerous, make this term an ultimate threat, because "eighteenth-century effeminacy is not confined to the sodomite, the homosexual, the heterosexual, the aristocrat, the foreigner, or even to men" (73).

7 In chapter 3, entitled "Odd women, mangled men: the bluestockings and Sterne", Nussbaum argues that for the Bluestockings anomaly became a foundation on which to build an intellectual community. Additionally, masculinity in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* centres around the defective body: the characters are presented as maimed, mutilated and twisted. Nussbaum argues that "The allure of the irregular and discomfiting characters in the book is not unlike the perverse fascination aroused in peering at cabinets of curiosities and other exhibits of human defect enjoyed by an English public during this time" (105). However, the display of defective masculinity (where the defects are acquired by accidents or heredity) leads at the same time to a total silencing of the women characters in the novel, for whom their organ of reproduction is an aspect that fundamentally defines their sexual nature and justifies their exclusion and devaluation.

8 Chapter 4 deals with the consequences of smallpox - a disease especially feared by

women for its disfiguring effects and dealt with in many literary texts at the time. Frances Burney's *Camilla* (1796) is a central text in this regard, since smallpox and deformity are the main issues in this novel. In discourses on smallpox, the scars are regarded as "visible marks of feminine defectiveness, inadequacy, and inferiority" (118). However, in texts by women writers it becomes obvious that smallpox as well as other disfiguring diseases and deformities on the one hand ruin women's prospects of marriage and thus an ideal of womanhood, but on the other hand make it possible to escape from traditional femininity and enable women to express themselves differently in their work and lives. One example of this is the character Eugenia in Burney's *Camilla*, who represents a position that is not confined by traditional notions of femininity.

9 Referring back to the book's general outline, Nussbaum in part one convincingly shows that broken, twisted, deformed or other anomalous bodies are employed by various authors for exploring alternative femininities and masculinities. Part two focuses on the intersections of race and gender. Definitions of race are *en vogue* in the eighteenth century, since debates about race attempted to define boundaries between humans and animals and between normal and deviant. Particularly Linnaeus's influential *Systema Naturae* (1735) proposes the concept of "complexion" as visible and invisible marker of difference. Despite these attempts at definition, Nussbaum shows in detail that the whole of the racial discourse and its subsequent cultural practices remain inconsistent and shift throughout the eighteenth century. Of course, racial intermixture awoke special interest and anxieties in England itself, and even more so after the abolition of the slave trade when more freed slaves came to England. Nussbaum attributes special importance to Sarah Scott's *Sir George Ellison* and to Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688). The title of this chapter, "Black women: why Imoinda turns white," deals with the reasons of changing Imoinda's complexion from black (in Behn's *Oroonoko*) to white in Thomas Southerne's successful tragedy *Oroonoko* (1695). This adaptation as well as several others reveal complex dynamics of gender and race.

10 Chapter seven revolves around the connections between masculinity and race. Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* and Ignatius Sancho's *Letters* were published before abolition became the law in England and yield interesting results: black manhood is established by its negation: "not being a boy, not being a beast or monster, not being effeminate or a woman" (211). This poses a difficult challenge indeed in the face of racial representations by characters such as Othello or Oroonoko.

11 In the final chapter, "Black parts: racial counterfeit on stage," Nussbaum discusses the history of black roles in British dramatic repertoire. The most interesting time in this respect

was the period between the white and all-male Shakespearean stage and the appearance of the first black male actor (Ira Aldridge) in the 1820s. During this period, a white actor embodying blackness could at the same time share some of its fascinations but also control its effects and define its presentation. Nussbaum convincingly shows in her analysis that "[w]hite actors in blackface reassured their audiences that race is merely constructed and as easily removed as masking, washing, or smudging, to reveal an ineradicable whiteness within" (230).

12 The "Coda: between races" ultimately makes clear the development of attitudes towards race in the long eighteenth century. Whereas in travelogues, notions of normalcy situate monstrous and aberrant beings in foreign parts of the world, by the end of the eighteenth century the anomalous moves closer to home. Women's defects and deviant masculinities such as effeminacy now come to be blamed for new social insecurities and national fears. Hence, it is only during the last part of the eighteenth century that concerns about interracial mixture and miscegenation become public.

13 A summary of the study that would do justice to Nussbaum's detailed textual analysis is almost impossible, as might have become clear. Although the book is coherently structured, the merit of the study is that it does not give easy answers or neat generalized theories of aberration and normalcy, but instead invites the reader to convince her/himself of the complexity of central questions of identity by following the author into a maze of cultural insecurities and concerns. Nussbaum emphasizes that her study deliberately attempts to bring together a large variety of differences instead of focusing only on one anomaly or deviance. This also enables the reader to access different genres (travelogue, romance, drama, satire, novel) and visual representations, since Nussbaum also "reads" frontispieces and pictures. In this way, the study is not only a literary one, but approaches the topic from a wide range of social and cultural angles. *The Limits of the Human* convinces by its complex textual analysis and intricate close reading which leads to stunning and thought-provoking results.

Carol P. Christ: *She Who Changes: Reimagining the Divine in the World.*

New York: Macmillan, 2003

By Susan de Gaia, University of Southern California, USA

1 Carol Christ's latest contribution to feminist theology, *She Who Changes: Re-Imagining the Divine in the World*, thoughtfully and courageously challenges traditional western concepts of the divine. Written in the clear and personal style we have come to expect from this author, the book explains Christ's philosophy of religion and that of Charles Hartshorne, contrasting their process views with misogynist trends in traditional western religious thought. Christ demonstrates that, embedded in traditional western discourses about God, anti-female, anti-body concepts surface, while a process view of "Goddess/God"-her term for the divine as both female and male-aligns itself with feminism, and can support the moral and political goals of feminists of all faiths. The book is organized around "six theological mistakes" identified by Hartshorne in *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (1984): God's absolute perfection and immutability, God's unsympathetic goodness, God's omnipotence, God's omniscience, immortality after death, and infallible revelation. The six mistakes are part of traditional western understandings of God, according to which, Christ suggests, God is depicted as an old white man with a long white beard, whose power to punish seems more important than his ability to love, and who offers eternal life after death in exchange for suffering and righteousness. In contrast, Christ offers a process view of Goddess/God as exerting power with, not power over, as the divine soul of the physical universe whose purpose is enjoyment, and whose enjoyment is increased as the enjoyment of individuals in the world (including every atom and every organism) is increased.

2 The six theological mistakes are introduced in the context of Christ's own encounter with them as a graduate student in the 1970s. As a student at Yale, Christ sought to challenge masculinist assumptions within theology, but her efforts were rejected by her all-male professors. The theologians she was assigned to read, her professors, and her fellow students (all male) seemed to assume that "God was absolutely separate from the world, absolutely powerful, and absolutely untouched by relationships" (29). In addition, traditional theology devalued vulnerability, weakness, and women, viewed non-human life as without feelings, and excluded all of nature, except humanity, from God's salvation. Through a close examination of the six theological mistakes, Christ shows the entrenchment of anti-female, anti-body, and anti-world concepts within them, and concludes that "only clarity and vigilance will protect us from unconsciously or unwittingly slipping back into familiar

patterns as we re-imagine God" (33). Her goal is not to replace a male with a female image of God; she uses the term "Goddess/God" to indicate the possibility of imaging the divine as both female and male. But because transcendence is associated with masculinity in western thought, imagining God as female requires us to not only re-image symbols (which she addresses in Chapter 9), but to re-think concepts as well.

3 In contrast to the anti-feminist bias within classical theism, Christ argues, process philosophy is implicitly feminist. Classical theism is dualistic; it associates the rational soul of man with "the unchanging immortal realm of (a male) God, while woman is identified with the body, nature, and death," valuing the former and devaluing the latter (199). But process philosophy values "change, embodiment, relationship, sympathy [. . .], creative freedom, enjoyment, and power with rather than power over" (202). According to process philosophy, the divine is both fully related to the changing world and changes along with it. "Goddess/God" is *She Who Changes* because "the world or the universe as a whole" is the changing body of Goddess/God (68). In contrast to classical theism, which views God as perfect, unchanging, and radically different from the world, process philosophy understands that the human soul cannot exist without a body, nor can the soul of Goddess/God exist separately from the changing world. Because process philosophy views Goddess/God as changing, it answers the theological question of human freedom differently than classical theism. According to the latter, the idea that God is all-powerful leads to the conclusion that everything that happens is according to God's will, an idea which makes "a mockery of human freedom" (39). In the process view, "all is in Goddess/God" (66). Like the cells of the human body which feel and have a will of their own, and which "operate to a greater or lesser extent apart from our conscious will in the processes of sleeping and waking, digestion, healing, and illness" (57), individuals within the body of Goddess/God may act both according to their own will and in response to the whole of which they are a part. This relationship is called *co-creation*.

4 Although Goddess/God changes in one way, She is unchanging in another, since She will always exist and always "be creatively and lovingly related to a world." Hartshorne calls this dual nature of Goddess/God *dual transcendence*. Thus Goddess/God "is different from all other beings in the universe" (67). She is different from human beings, for example, because we can choose to rape, torture, and kill one another, while Goddess/God is always sympathetic, loving, and good. Does this mean that Goddess/God is merely a passive observer of our choices and experiences? Without absolute power, how can Goddess/God comfort us? How can She bring justice to those who do wrong? According to process philosophy,

Goddess/God exerts power with rather than power over, persuading us to right action, and encouraging us to co-create a world that will bring the most enjoyment to the most individuals (which includes animals, plants, and all of nature). Goddess/God's unchanging sympathy and presence can comfort us; She is always with us, feeling our feelings and responding to them. The traditional view of God as omnipotent also creates the unanswerable question of whether a God who allows evil to exist can be all-good. Christ asserts that this question is misplaced. Goddess/God did not create or cause evils such as the Holocaust, the spread of AIDS, hunger, and rape; "It makes no sense to blame Goddess/God for things that are either inherent in the world or caused by individuals other than Goddess/God" (99). This means it is our responsibility to stop creating and causing suffering: Goddess/God "cannot alleviate it without our help" (97).

5 The theological mistake of eternal life after death may be the most important one for feminists to understand, since the denial of finitude is also a denial of the changing body, which Christ identifies as not only anti-female but matricidal as well. She explains that "Dualistic traditions reject not only the female body through which we enter the physical world but the physical world itself, the earth that was known as the body of Goddess" (201). In contrast, process philosophy's view is that there can be no life after death, since life exists only within the body. This leads to the conclusion that "this life is meant to be enjoyed" (115). This is so, despite the fact that we are born into structures that limit the possibilities of enjoyment. Christ's claim that we are meant to enjoy life may be her most radical one, she says, as it contrasts sharply with pervasive teachings of selflessness, hard work, reward after suffering, and the like. Certainly, the idea that pleasure might be holy is radical. But Christ makes clear that what she means by holy enjoyment is pleasure felt and shared with other individuals (human and non-human), and something that is "not compatible with lack of concern and compassion for others" (126).

6 The sixth theological mistake, infallible revelation, Christ associates with the quest for certainty in a changing world. This quest, Christ says, can be found in followers of religions ranging from the most conservative to the most liberal. In contrast, process philosophy's acceptance of the realities of embodiment and embeddedness within the world leads to the conclusion that all knowledge is fragmentary and relative. According to process philosophy, it is always a mistake to "submit our wills to authorities in exchange for intellectual, moral, or spiritual certainty" (144). Process philosophy contrasts with religions that claim infallible authority in texts, inspired individuals, or tradition as a whole, and with western philosophies, psychologies, sociologies, theories and methods that claim eternal truths. Instead, process

philosophy asserts that since "all thinking comes through the body, there can be no infallible truth in philosophy. There can only be approximations limited by class, race, power, gender, sexual, historical, and other perspectives" (158). Christ compares process thinking with deconstruction, noting that, although they are in agreement on the fragmented nature of all knowledge, process philosophy does not assume that "all relationships are based in the will-to-power" or that "we can know 'nothing' about reality" (214).

7 Finally, process philosophy "acknowledges the potentially tragic character of life on earth" (172-73). Not only do human beings harm each other, in wars, for example, and in creating and maintaining unjust societies and institutions, but they are also destroying forests, polluting water and air, and causing the extinction of numerous species of plants and animals. So, what can we do? For Christ, reflection on philosophical ideas can "help us to become conscious of the potential or actual political and moral consequences of ideas" (14). The implication is that ideas within traditional theology that are anti-female and anti-life may be reasons for the state of the world today. At the end of chapters 2 through 7, Christ asks whether the theological mistakes of classical theism are grounded in a rejection of embodied life that begins with rejection of the female body. In Chapter 8, "Restoring the Body and the World," she answers, "yes."

8 This book demonstrates, successfully in my opinion, that a feminist process paradigm can help root out these mistakes. *She Who Changes* challenges traditional images and concepts of God, which even now, Christ writes, "are inspiring both acts of terrorism and preparations for wars of revenge," and "are fueling campaigns to control female sexuality around the world" (228). The book is written in easy to understand language, and speaks to spiritual feminists of all faiths who seek ways to counter masculinist assumptions about God. With considerable analytic acuity, it claims that process thought can be a useful tool for developing alternative understandings of the divine and Her/His relationship to the world. Such alternative views should, according to Christ, embrace life, value both female and male, and support an understanding of human freedom that promotes the acceptance of human responsibility for making the world what it is.

Caroline Bland and Máire Cross: *Gender and Politics in the Age of Letter-Writing, 1750-2000*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004

By Jennifer Law Sullivan, Oakland University, USA

1 Caroline Bland and Máire Cross's compilation should find its place on the bookshelves of literary critics, historians, and anthropologists as it points out the ever present relevance of letters by both men and women in the field of gender studies. In their introduction to the work, Bland and Cross explain why the epistolary form is so closely linked to politics and gender and credit Rebecca Earle's (ed.) work, *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter Writers 1600-1945*, as an influential predecessor to studies in this genre. They write that while letters have very specific rules concerning openings and closings, they nevertheless "allow a free form within" (5). The lack of regulations concerning the body of the letter allowed the writer to broach delicate subjects like gender and politics. The essays included in this collection examine letters as historical artifacts and take into account both writers and readers, what is written and what is left unwritten, and the socio-historical context.

2 *Gender and Politics* is divided into two chronological sections: 1750-1850 and 1850-2000 and the book as a whole reads logically and coherently. Clare Brant's article on the tribunal of the public in eighteenth-century England sets the tone for this compilation, illustrating the very public versus private issue that is at the heart of both epistolary and gender studies. By appealing to the public at large for vindication of perceived injustice, writers of these sorts of letters were forced to take into account two different sorts of readers: the addressee and the readers of the paper in which their letters would later be published. Brant argues that the tribunal of the public was directly linked to patriarchy and nationalism in that the complainants almost always called upon the rational and manly nature of the readers. In this sense, an appeal to the tribunal of the public was not an appropriate medium for women.

3 The next three essays address women's roles in French society as seen in Diderot's letters, the letters of a woman who took up a correspondence with Rousseau, and the letters between the Marquis and Marquise de Sade. Ursula Yvonne Roberts discusses the contradiction between Diderot's philosophy and his treatment of his daughter. Diderot is exceptional in his attachment and close relations to his daughter, Angélique. Letters to his friends and mistress indicate a sympathetic understanding of the difficulties and hindrances women must face due to motherhood and marriage. His belief in biological determinism, though, causes him to support the unsurprising views of a "typical" eighteenth-century father

and *honnête homme* who is concerned with marrying off his daughter and instructing her on how to keep her husband from straying. Anne-Françoise Gilbert's chapter brilliantly chronicles the efforts of an anonymous woman to break down Rousseau's definitions of womanhood and create a space of dialogue that defies "the emerging gendered boundaries of public and private spaces" (51). Gilbert posits that Henriette, by engaging Rousseau in a discussion of the learned female aesthete, forces him to see her as a thinking woman and thus contradict himself. David McCallam shows in his essay that the Marquise de Sade uses the impersonal pronoun *on* in her letters to her imprisoned husband to speak of political events. McCallam argues that she uses this device to show her "womanly ignorance" of the complex political happenings. However, as the year goes by, she seems to adopt the pronoun *on* so as to protect her letters from censorship. Moreover, she uses the pronoun to voice her dissatisfaction and disagreement with the philosophies espoused in her husband's work *Aline et Valcour*. Eventually it becomes clear that the Marquise's political views differ vastly from her husband's and by discussing what "one" thinks and does at this time in history, she finds her own beliefs and philosophy. These three essays flow nicely one into the next as they address the emerging role of women thinkers in France who, although forced to couch their beliefs in literary trickery, clearly demonstrate a rebuttal of the status quo.

4 In chapter six, Edith B. Gelles analyzes the letters of Abigail Adams which were first read in 1840 for their literary value and then, during the second wave of feminism (1970s), read for inspiration. The first lady's letters to her husband helped clarify her own views of life and politics. The lack of censorship in her letters allowed her to become a voice and an advocate for women's rights. This lack of censorship is echoed in the next chapter of this work, where Jane Rendall examines how the letters exchanged between three radical women (Robina Craig Millar, Eliza Fletcher and Matilda Wilson) drew upon the influences of the American and French revolutions in forming their political views. These women constantly interwove their political views with their personal lives and familial roles, illustrating again the fluidity of the boundary between public and private spaces.

5 The final chapter in this section, "The Correspondence of a 'Sister in Humanity'" comes from editor Máire Cross. Cross highlights how political activist Flora Tristan uses terms of sisterhood in her letters to appeal for political support. Her use of the words "sister" and "humanity" in the closings of her letters illustrates her connection to socialism and the idea that humanity was a "sacred cause" (105). What is unique in Cross's study is that for the first time we see an analysis of Tristan's combination of religion and politics in her letters that underscores the intense emotional tie that Tristan had to her political cause.

6 The second part of the book takes us into the latter half of the nineteenth century, and we nonetheless see the same issue of public and private spaces reappear. Christa Hämmerle examines the complex rules of petitioning letters in Austria. She points out that it is difficult to determine the identity of the writers of these letters since the rules themselves were created by men. She reminds us of the incomplete view of history given by letters due to the lacunae inherent to the genre.

7 The next three chapters take us back to France for the Paris Commune, the Dreyfus Affair, and the turn of the century. Siân Reynolds's essay expertly illustrates the connection between political and private life through the letters written to and from the members of the Allemane family. The mothers were forced to write letters on behalf of their sons - Jean and François - who had been deported to New Caledonia. The sons wrote letters to their mothers and orphaned children, and Jean wrote to his fiancée. The role of censorship played a direct role in their communication and further highlighted the effect of multiple unwanted readers on their writing. David H. Walker's essay recounts the friendship of André Gide and Eugène Rouart during the Dreyfus Affair. While it is unclear why this essay has been included in a work on gender politics, the letters between these two homosexual men nonetheless provide a fascinating indication of differing reactions to the Dreyfus Affair. In James Smith Allen's essay on Céline Renooz, we encounter a perhaps mentally deranged woman who attempts to recreate her image - rewrite herself - through letters so that she will be accepted and appreciated after her death.

8 In chapters 13-16 we return to England and a broader political agenda. Krista Cowman's essay cleverly reconstructs Eleanor Keeling Edwards's political doings through the letters she received. Cowman's analysis underscores the importance of interpreting that which is not said in letters and the glimpse of history that these letters offer. June Balshaw's discussion of two young militant suffragists shows the at times life-threatening difficulties that were imposed on an activist's personal life for his/her choice to speak out against injustice. Katharine Cockin also addresses women's suffrage in her essay on the British actress Ellen Terry and her daughter, the director Edith Craig. Cockin expertly and insightfully argues that Terry's letter-writing style was akin to her stage performances and the natural extension thereof. Even though Terry is often criticized for her lukewarm reaction to suffrage, she nevertheless lived the life of a free woman as witnessed in the physical flamboyance of her handwriting and word choice in her letters. Lesley Hall, in her essay on the feminist socialist Stella Browne, points out that Browne's letters to three different women all illustrate her personal investment both in the women addressed and the politics discussed

therein by highlighting Browne's personal investment both in people and ideology.

9 Chapters 17 and 18 speak to letters written by German women during World War II. Editor Caroline Bland's essay - perhaps the best in the collection - discusses the complexity of gender roles in National Socialist Germany as seen in the letters of a young girl caught between city and country, fascism and patriotism. Bland explains that the gender ambiguity is due to ambivalent doctrines that encouraged Aryan women to procreate even outside of marriage while at the same time returning women to the domestic sphere and more traditional roles. Joanne Sayner in her essay of Elisabeth Langgässer's letters teases out the often contradictory elements of one woman who is both Jewish and Catholic as seen in the published compilations of her letters. Each editor - her husband and her daughter - presents Langgässer in a different light and each compilation receives differing reviews that reflect the ambiguities at work in the letter-writer and editors alike.

10 In the final essay in this work Margaretta Jolly illustrates the importance of feminist letters during the shift from second- to third-wave feminism. She clearly proves that the feminist letter's role of "desiring education" is still present and necessary and must remain both loving and didactic for feminism to continue to grow.

11 While some may find the collection a bit too Eurocentric, on the whole, the essays present a unique perspective into the connection between letter-writing and gender politics. Letters from famous philosophers and novelists mix nicely with those from political activists and unknown "average" people to create a work that is very insightful, a pleasure to read and an impressive addition to the fields of gender and epistolary studies.

**"Bethesda Hospital," "Small Craft Warnings," "Wartime Years in St.
Louis," "Not Your Usual Weekend at the Beach"**

By Mary Kennan Herbert

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Bethesda Hospital

That hospital in St. Louis
is no more. I was born there,
"slightly asphyxiated" dutifully
typed on the birth certificate.
I might have been lost,
one less St. Louisan. Luckily,
Dr. Riley and his team of
very focused nurses, March 22,
pulled me through the Gateway
to the West. One of them
gave me a slap, insisting
that I live. I was delicate,
I resisted, but life must go on,
including mine. Bethesda
is gone now, that shrine
where I first took breath,
the bright room where others
said she's far from dead,
she's a keeper. It's gone.
Here my parents first looked
at me, a new thing to brook
trepidation and wonder.
They thought Bethesda would
always be there for babies,
for nurses, for the guys
who mopped the floors,
but no, it's gone, ripples
in the Pool at Bethesda, stirred

a last time by the Angel.

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Small Craft Warnings

The park guide on our lobster boat outfitted for tourists
told us we could spend ten minutes on Cranberry Island,

Greater or Lesser, I cannot remember. It was drizzling,
a gray day with July fog right on schedule. Close sepia

currents slapped at the hull while the guide told us
interesting anecdotes about Maine's water color islands.

You slept through it all, rocked by Down East wavelets,
while I stared at fishermen's shacks scarred by weather.

Paint peeled off long ago, scoured by wind and water.
But that's the pleasure of discovery. We spent an afternoon

observing the eternity of entropy, or the other way around.
At low tide, I could smell our need for redemption.

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Wartime Years in St. Louis

(originally published in ["Kultura i historia," Poland](#))

Sidewalks in the older neighborhoods were often of bricks
laid out in a herringbone pattern. In our neighborhood to the west,
we made do with cement slabs, bumpy for my roller skate wheels,
but considered more modern, superior to the sleepy paths we

might have taken had we lived on the other side of Kingshighway
(or the Berlin Wall, if this story sounds unfamiliar). Around the world,

pride of geography is instilled into the very young, along with meals
we were told to not waste, because children were starving in painful places

far, far to the other side of Kingshighway. "They get so hungry, they scrape
their fingernails along the cracks in the table top, to get at the crumbs,"
my mother told us. Step on a crack, break your mother's back. Nursery
ditties were applied even to the sidewalk, that portion of the planet

under my control if I could master the wheels on my feet. With scraped
knees from many a fall, I skated with caution to avoid disasters of all kinds,
especially encounters with Nazis or even fearsome hungry kids
with their flinty fingernails and harrowing bones. Echo, echo.

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Not Your Usual Weekend at the Beach

I.

I look down at my mid-life hands
to see them shaking like September leaves,
like cliches fluttering in the offshore winds,

wrinkled flags heeling before a nor'easter
slamming into our sanctuary on the sand.
All night the grommets banging against

the flag pole tell me to shape up or ship out.
The host's house groans through many storms,
little comfort in the last visit of late summer.

We will all die, I think, as I turn over
a soiled pillow case, a new leaf, always.
Or try to, the next morning. Silvery air

surrounds us as I pick my way across

a rumpled beach, calling to distant friends,
drowned out by surf and gull cries, of course.

They don't pay attention. "Lots of shore plants
are edible," our hostess remarks, pointing to
green, green staffs of life. Unbearable beauty.

"Lighten up," says a guest. My toddler daughter
sleeps in a borrowed bed, and I guiltily hurry
to check on her safety. Lighten up. "I don't

want any more children," insists a lady in our party.
Her legs are tan and flecked with sand. "If he
insists on another child, I shall leave him."

The old anemometer on the Queen Anne porch
shows wind speed picking up again, The needle
quivers. I note an old prie-dieu in a guest bedroom

where assorted teen-agers lounge in wet suits,
perusing moldy comic books found in a seaman's
chest. Still, sunlight insists on gilding the walls.

Perhaps this storm will move away from us
this afternoon. Perhaps we can plan a picnic.
Perhaps, embarrassed, I should kneel and pray.

II.

Heaven at the beach offers interesting vistas.
Sea glass and razor clams cut my feet here
in revisionist history, here in a summer-filled

Paradise. This weekend is like a board game
we play on foggy days, a collage of blues.

Sailboats out there look like cut-outs salvaged

from a scrapbook we cannot not throw out,
something to add to the sea chest someday.
Te Deum. At dusk, the storm returns or changes

its mind, regains its strength and stubbornness,
as we gather by the fireplace for stiff drinks
and fragments of recycled conversations.

Scrooge McDuck or Superman? St. Paul or
Martin Luther? Augustine or Allah? Name
your poison. Rain or shine, we need closure.

Reeds bend low before the blow, compliant, safe
beneath the salty howlings of the whale-path.
"My parents endured the Hurricane of '38

not far from here," reports a houseguest,
dumping wet sand from his J. Crew cuffs.
Next, are you ready for the arrival in oilskins,

our leader bearing beer and lobsters? A good
time had by all, swimmingly, in macabre synergy
of Disney and Stephen King. I am homesick.

My child demands attention. I want the same.
It's a shaky flirtation between water and land.
I don't know. I cannot remember. The sunlight--

too bright, and a great black-backed gull
blocks my view of the happy ending. Note,
this is a woman who ignores meteorological

warnings, theological markers, and signs
of a failing marriage. Blessings! My daughter
is getting too hefty for me to carry. Icons

become too heavy to lift. High tide scoops up
pebbles like small dolls and lightly (lighten up!)
tosses them into exquisite new patterns. Amen.

III.

This house full of war stories and stained glass,
glasswort, half-empty glasses in the den,
is a mirror limned by the sea gods, naked, fast

asleep by October. Awkward stacks of sheets
and old blankets smelling of summers past
are returned to the closets, all askew on shelves

darkened until next April. There I had found
a damp swimsuit on the floor, forgotten,
brazen reminder of lapsed belief or newfound

joy. Someone's, surely. I can hear surf
in every room, I can hear the Atlantic churning
just beyond those windows framing our future.

This house on a tranquil bay was their third.
The first and second had different vistas
elsewhere, far from the sea, wooded slopes

and new mown fields worthy of Reynolds.
I walk past peeling portraits, curling photos,
and feel the pain of loss, obviously, ghosts

waving their Prayer Books and cameras.

Yet no, time is not passing, it's not passing.
The edges of the waves make a hissing sound

as they curl up over the detritus of seaweed
skirting the edge of the world. My child
will grow up to romp on some other beach,

while I squint into the sun to see her running
along the edge of that sun-splashed sea,
ever farther from me, while I touch my cheeks

to feel the beginnings of the sun's revenge.
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I watch surfers
plunge into the symbolic foam and rise again.

Sin swims, floats, dives, drowns, and rises
again. On country weekends in a more recent
decade I cobble together poems and read

Lowell. I'm thinking of our first weekend,
together, frozen. I was always Little Nell
looking in, my nose against some Dickensian

window, looking in, or looking out. Suddenly
my thoughts change direction like that flock
of sandpipers you see in a movie about

the broken hearts of summer, every summer.
This is a screen memory, like the requisite
old, warped screen door between us.

This is an endangered vacation house
on a slippery slope, sliding into an Edwards
sermon. Oh foolish architect. Hurricanes

can erase everything, including my poem
wadded into an angry ball. You may see it
floating on the tide, bobbing on the surface

along with beads of diesel oil, feathers,
an old oar with gooseneck barnacles, buoys
and gulls of our tense memories. You

slept through the storm. You have that
ability to sleep and survive. Wind-driven
rain hammers at the window frame. Droplets

slide over the sill into this room in this house,
then baptize the expensive but aging rug
marked with dog pee and these foolish tears.

Over a bedroom door someone had placed
a Crucifix. I had to mention it, I had to
find closure. We need it, I want it.

List of Contributors

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