

rethinking art's histories

SERIES EDITORS

Amelia G. Jones, Marsha Meskimmon

Rethinking Art's Histories aims to open out art history from its most basic structures by foregrounding work that challenges the conventional periodisation and geographical subfields of traditional art history, and addressing a wide range of visual cultural forms from the early modern period to the present. These books will acknowledge the impact of recent scholarship on our understanding of the complex temporalities and cartographies that have emerged through centuries of world-wide trade, political colonisation and the diasporic movement of people and ideas across national and continental borders.

Also available in the series

Art, museums and touch Fiona Candlin

The 'do-it-yourself' artwork: Participation from fluxus to relational aesthetics
Anna Dezeuze (ed.)

The face of medicine: Visualising medical masculinities in late nineteenth-century Paris
Mary Hunter

After the event: New perspectives in art history Charles Merewether and John Potts (eds)

Photography and documentary film in the making of modern Brazil Luciana Martins

Women, the arts and globalization: Eccentric experience
Marsha Meskimmon and Dorothy Rowe (eds)

Flesh cinema. The corporeal turn in American avant-garde film Ara Osterweil

*After-affects|after-images: Trauma and aesthetic transformation
in the virtual feminist museum* Griselda Pollock

*Vertiginous mirrors: The animation of the visual image
and early modern travel* Rose Marie San Juan

The paradox of body, building and motion in seventeenth-century England
Kimberley Skelton

The newspaper clipping: a modern paper object
Anke Te Heesen, translated by Lori Lantz

Screen/space: The projected image in contemporary art Tamara Trodd (ed.)

Art and human rights: Contemporary Asian contexts Caroline Turner and Jen Webb

Timed out: Art and the transnational Caribbean Leon Wainwright

Performative monuments: Performance, photography, and the rematerialisation of public art
Mechtild Widrich

Otherwise

Imagining queer feminist art histories

Edited by Amelia Jones and Erin Silver

Manchester University Press

- 16 In the back of my mind was also Brigid Brophy's tart observation: The danger to most poetic prose is that tomorrow's breakfast will intrude uninvited and thereby create bathos. Brigid Brophy, introduction to Elizabeth Smart, *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* (New York: Vintage, 1966), xvi. As interlocutor, though Brophy probably had no opportunity to make a gift of her text, she doesn't seem to have adopted the habit: none of the Brophy novels I see on my shelf have dedications. The dedication of Smart's book reads: 'to Maximiliane von Upani Southwell.'
- 17 Selected book dedications, collection of the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archive, Los Angeles. The last dedication is from Jill Johnston, *Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973). Johnston's daughter didn't, by the way, turn out to be a lesbian. The full title of Cage's book is *Silence: Lectures and Writing* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961).

On the site of her own exclusion: strategizing queer feminist art history

7

Dore Bowen

They know the operative secret of this illusion of lack; they bring us face to face with the evidence that such lack is not truly lack but that it is energy without power, the castration of castration, something we can desire and enjoy. Without them we would not ever learn anything we do not already know.

Guy Hocquenghem, *The Screwball Asses*, 1973

With one language we cannot speak. With one religion, we cannot listen. Without you, we cannot even remember.

Yael Bartana, *and Europe will be stunned*, 2007–11¹

Before celebrating the union of feminist and queer art history it is apt to scrutinize the marriage first and send presents later. While feminism is aligned with lesbian and gay politics in seeking liberation from oppressions based on gender and sexual identity, queer theory challenges the norms that constitute these identities. This distinction is important for the topic of this volume, since to pose the question of a queer feminist art history is to encounter the difference between history based on identity versus history based on the deconstruction of identity and, following this, the difficulty in bringing these two together. At the same time, I argue here that these two approaches shed light on one other, just as third wave feminism, through historical distance, illuminates second wave feminism.

This essay seeks a common ground for queer theory and feminism on the site of pleasure, a vexed but overlapping area between these two approaches to sex and gender. This essay imagines what this encounter might look like by using the film trilogy *and Europe will be stunned* (2007–11) by Israeli-born artist Yael Bartana as a methodological inspiration, and claims this act as a queer feminist visual practice. Similar to Bartana's trilogy, which pictures the return of Jews to Poland, it employs two fantasies drawn from the work of French gay activist Guy Hocquenghem to force an encounter between feminism and queer theory on the very ground that excludes their union.

Possible pleasures

In her 1975 essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' British film theorist Laura Mulvey analyzes the presence of female figures in conventional narrative film. Parallel to the way in which, in an influential 1971 essay, American art historian Linda Nochlin examined the factors that work against women's artistic achievement, Mulvey probes the factors that thwart the development of dynamic female characters.² And just as Nochlin finds that although there are women artists in history there are few *great* women artists, Mulvey finds that although there are female figures in narrative cinema there are few *active* female figures. Hollywood cinema, she argues, splits the psychoanalytic labor of looking into active/male and passive/female: the woman is image; the man is bearer of the look. The woman, in other words, is the fetish *for* the look.

In conclusion, Mulvey proposes that feminists battle the 'voyeuristic-scopophilic look' crucial to traditional filmic pleasure by destroying it. As she famously writes: 'It is said that analyzing pleasure, or beauty, destroys it. That is the intention of this essay.'³ While Mulvey models the act of destroying pleasure by analyzing it she also offers a second route – namely cinematic praxis. Experimental cinema, Mulvey argues, refuses to suture narrative cinema's three looks – that of the camera, that of the viewer, and those of the characters – into the film diegesis by eschewing conventional editing techniques, thus liberating the camera's look and cultivating a film audience capable of 'passionate detachment.'⁴ In both cases – theoretical analysis and experimental cinema – the artist/writer is intent on destroying the sexism inherent to conventional film.

At a curious moment in the essay Mulvey acknowledges that the cinema 'offers a number of *possible* pleasures.'⁵ What possible pleasures might she be referring to? While Mulvey argues that the primary viewing pleasure in 'patriarchal society' works against women's agency – and thus the bulk of her text is concerned with destroying it – she also suggests that feminists might construct 'a new language of desire'⁶ without discarding the past and the historical forms of oppression that make this new language unlikely.⁷ On this topic, two passages stand out as worthy of attention. The first is Mulvey's statement that the film form contains within its shifting look 'a perfect and beautiful contradiction.'⁸ This contradiction is expressed in the way the film form shifts the emphasis of its look between voyeuristic sadism (which demands a story) and fetishism (which involves a timeless and self-sufficient displacement of the female figure on to the fetish). Since narrative film contains these two mechanisms, the castration threat posed by the female fetish figure 'endangers the unity of the diegesis and bursts through the world of illusion as an intrusive, static, one dimensional fetish.'⁹ A second feminist pleasure is suggested in Mulvey's statement that there is 'a beauty in its exact rendering of the

frustration experienced under the phallogocentric order. It gets us nearer to the roots of our oppression.'¹⁰ Thus, pleasure might be derived from analyses that champion 'feminine' modes of expression while simultaneously exploring the devalorization of these modes.¹¹ These remarks can be seen as anticipating later developments in feminism, particularly sex-positive psychoanalytic analyses and affect studies.

Given Mulvey's suggestive remarks, and her call for a 'new language of desire,' why is 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' remembered as taking a decidedly antagonistic position in relation to pleasure?¹² That the essay was mobilized in debates that took place in feminist circles in the late 1970s and 80s very likely contributed to its troubled legacy. The 'pornography wars,' as these debates came to be known, created sharp cultural divisions between second wave feminists and the emerging sex-positive queer movement.¹³ And as opposed to 'essentialist' feminism, queer theory championed the performativity of gender, the mutability of desire, and unorthodox sexual practices.¹⁴ Consequently, for most queer theorists then, as now, Mulvey exemplifies essentialist, heteronormative feminism and her refusal of traditional filmic pleasure is understood to have been a misguided and self-defeating weapon against the male gaze.¹⁵

Is there a common ground between feminism and queer theory? In a 2009 essay titled 'Feminism's Queer Theory,' Annamarie Jagose reflects on the vexed relationship between queer theory and feminism, claiming that the two discourses are 'braided' and therefore implicate one another. According to Jagose, a thorough analysis of either 'requires a return to the controversial analytic separation of gender and sexuality that has been prominently theorised as key to distinguishing between feminist and queer theoretical projects.'¹⁶ After discussing the various positions within and between feminist and queer theory, and the exhaustion and commodification of theory itself, Jagose concludes by recognizing, despite crucial differences, 'the partial overlaps and shared ventures of queer and feminist projects.'¹⁷ While in agreement on the mutual implication of queer theory and feminism, art historian Amelia Jones takes a less conciliatory approach to the history of this relationship in a 1992 essay titled 'Feminism, Incorporated: Reading "Postfeminism" in an Antifeminist Age.' Here, Jones argues that an erasure has been inflicted by postfeminism, which distances itself from second wave feminism by erasing its particularity while universalizing it as 'one postmodernist strategy among many.'¹⁸ Jones adds a second and, I believe, more serious erasure to her list – that inflicted by second wave feminism on itself. Notably, Jones finds Mulvey's 'feminist anti-fetishism,' which bespeaks bodily control and the denial of pleasure, to be potentially complicit with the patriarchal prohibition of women's pleasure.¹⁹

Advocating the use of fictional tools, Jones suggests that contemporary scholars play out the polymorphous female pleasures within feminist theory

Possible pleasures

In her 1975 essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' British film theorist Laura Mulvey analyzes the presence of female figures in conventional narrative film. Parallel to the way in which, in an influential 1971 essay, American art historian Linda Nochlin examined the factors that work against women's artistic achievement, Mulvey probes the factors that thwart the development of dynamic female characters.² And just as Nochlin finds that although there are women artists in history there are few *great* women artists, Mulvey finds that although there are female figures in narrative cinema there are few *active* female figures. Hollywood cinema, she argues, splits the psychoanalytic labor of looking into active/male and passive/female: the woman is image; the man is bearer of the look. The woman, in other words, is the fetish *for* the look.

In conclusion, Mulvey proposes that feminists battle the 'voyeuristic-scopophilic look' crucial to traditional filmic pleasure by destroying it. As she famously writes: 'It is said that analyzing pleasure, or beauty, destroys it. That is the intention of this essay.'³ While Mulvey models the act of destroying pleasure by analyzing it she also offers a second route – namely cinematic praxis. Experimental cinema, Mulvey argues, refuses to suture narrative cinema's three looks – that of the camera, that of the viewer, and those of the characters – into the film diegesis by eschewing conventional editing techniques, thus liberating the camera's look and cultivating a film audience capable of 'passionate detachment.'⁴ In both cases – theoretical analysis and experimental cinema – the artist/writer is intent on destroying the sexism inherent to conventional film.

At a curious moment in the essay Mulvey acknowledges that the cinema 'offers a number of *possible* pleasures.'⁵ What possible pleasures might she be referring to? While Mulvey argues that the primary viewing pleasure in 'patriarchal society' works against women's agency – and thus the bulk of her text is concerned with destroying it – she also suggests that feminists might construct 'a new language of desire'⁶ without discarding the past and the historical forms of oppression that make this new language unlikely.⁷ On this topic, two passages stand out as worthy of attention. The first is Mulvey's statement that the film form contains within its shifting look 'a perfect and beautiful contradiction.'⁸ This contradiction is expressed in the way the film form shifts the emphasis of its look between voyeuristic sadism (which demands a story) and fetishism (which involves a timeless and self-sufficient displacement of the female figure on to the fetish). Since narrative film contains these two mechanisms, the castration threat posed by the female fetish figure 'endangers the unity of the diegesis and bursts through the world of illusion as an intrusive, static, one dimensional fetish.'⁹ A second feminist pleasure is suggested in Mulvey's statement that there is 'a beauty in its exact rendering of the

frustration experienced under the phallogocentric order. It gets us nearer to the roots of our oppression.'¹⁰ Thus, pleasure might be derived from analyses that champion 'feminine' modes of expression while simultaneously exploring the devalorization of these modes.¹¹ These remarks can be seen as anticipating later developments in feminism, particularly sex-positive psychoanalytic analyses and affect studies.

Given Mulvey's suggestive remarks, and her call for a 'new language of desire,' why is 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' remembered as taking a decidedly antagonistic position in relation to pleasure?¹² That the essay was mobilized in debates that took place in feminist circles in the late 1970s and 80s very likely contributed to its troubled legacy. The 'pornography wars,' as these debates came to be known, created sharp cultural divisions between second wave feminists and the emerging sex-positive queer movement.¹³ And as opposed to 'essentialist' feminism, queer theory championed the performativity of gender, the mutability of desire, and unorthodox sexual practices.¹⁴ Consequently, for most queer theorists then, as now, Mulvey exemplifies essentialist, heteronormative feminism and her refusal of traditional filmic pleasure is understood to have been a misguided and self-defeating weapon against the male gaze.¹⁵

Is there a common ground between feminism and queer theory? In a 2009 essay titled 'Feminism's Queer Theory,' Annamarie Jagose reflects on the vexed relationship between queer theory and feminism, claiming that the two discourses are 'braided' and therefore implicate one another. According to Jagose, a thorough analysis of either 'requires a return to the controversial analytic separation of gender and sexuality that has been prominently theorised as key to distinguishing between feminist and queer theoretical projects.'¹⁶ After discussing the various positions within and between feminist and queer theory, and the exhaustion and commodification of theory itself, Jagose concludes by recognizing, despite crucial differences, 'the partial overlaps and shared ventures of queer and feminist projects.'¹⁷ While in agreement on the mutual implication of queer theory and feminism, art historian Amelia Jones takes a less conciliatory approach to the history of this relationship in a 1992 essay titled 'Feminism, Incorporated: Reading "Postfeminism" in an Antifeminist Age.' Here, Jones argues that an erasure has been inflicted by postfeminism, which distances itself from second wave feminism by erasing its particularity while universalizing it as 'one postmodernist strategy among many.'¹⁸ Jones adds a second and, I believe, more serious erasure to her list – that inflicted by second wave feminism on itself. Notably, Jones finds Mulvey's 'feminist anti-fetishism,' which bespeaks bodily control and the denial of pleasure, to be potentially complicit with the patriarchal prohibition of women's pleasure.¹⁹

Advocating the use of fictional tools, Jones suggests that contemporary scholars play out the polymorphous female pleasures within feminist theory

and practice, and by 'flamboyantly asserting the [disturbing effects of the female sex] at its most overtly indexical moment ... perform what Freud describes as an uncanny effacing of "the distinction between imagination and reality." According to Jones these fantasies might be employed to analyze pleasure and its ideological effects.²⁰ In this way Jones urges feminist scholars to use fantasy in order to produce pleasure (and fetishizing pleasure at that) and, in a roundabout fashion, analyze the ideological effects of this pleasure. Through this double maneuver such practices, she claims, 'enact, rather than repress, the pleasure they take in images.'²¹

Since a close reading of 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' reveals that a feminist praxis contains possible pleasures that parallel those championed by queer theory, might there be a common ground for queer theory and feminism on the site of pleasure – a site feminism has been roundly criticized for neglecting? This essay explores this possibility by examining images produced by Guy Hocquenghem in the 1970s. These images do not fit the model put forth by either feminism or queer theory, but serve as a link between the two. In the end, and despite the odds against doing so, it is proposed that it is here, via Hocquenghem's images, and on the uneven playing field of pleasure, that feminism and queer theory might meet.²²

A new language of desire

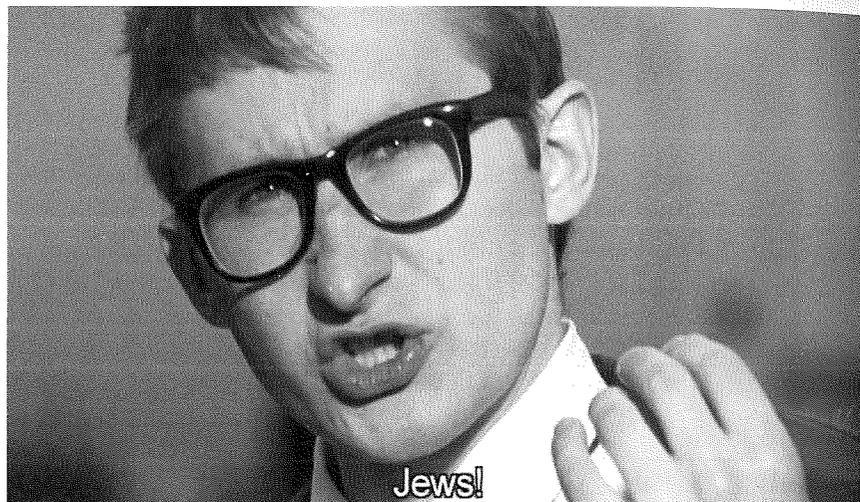
A participant in the gay and lesbian rights movement in the 1970s and 1980s in France, Guy Hocquenghem championed a literary and queer theory of desire while participating in the political struggle. Biographer Bill Marshall questions Hocquenghem's precise position in his milieu, asking, '[i]f Hocquenghem is not "gay" as such, is he "queer"?' Marshall ultimately responds affirmatively; for even though queer theory had yet to emerge in full bloom in the 1970s, Hocquenghem's work can be read, pace Michael Moon, as 'queer theory *avant la lettre*.'²³ However, while scholars like Marshall recuperate Hocquenghem for queer theory, it is not clear that he was *either* queer *or* gay. Due to this interim position he was able to examine the gay and lesbian identity-based political movement in relation to the intoxicating intellectual environment ushered in by an emerging queer theory, represented primarily by the work of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault. For his part, Deleuze conceptualizes Hocquenghem's position and body of work – produced before his AIDS-related death in 1988 – as taking the form of a spiral.²⁴ This description is apt, for Hocquenghem tunnels into the binary that posits gay and lesbian-feminist identity on one side and the poststructuralist theory of the subject on the other.

Below I examine two fantasies by Hocquenghem. The first is from a 1973 text entitled, in English, *The Screwball Asses*. His fantasy emerges from the ashes

of a political movement he was an active member of – the *Front homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire* (FHAR). Hocquenghem blames the collapse of the movement on the discord that emerged between lesbians and gay men and, in an effort to address this division, proposes a fantasy that challenges gay men to embrace non-phallic forms of desire while daring lesbians to organize their pleasure around something other than the refusal of phallic power: he imagines that the two make love. Second fantasy: a scene from the 1978–79 film *Race d'ep: Un siècle d'images de l'homosexualité*, with text by Hocquenghem, who co-directed the film with French filmmaker Lionel Soukaz. In the final section of the film a gay French man (played by Hocquenghem) and a straight American businessman meet in a bar in Paris, wander the streets, and part at sunrise. While the first fantasy is textual and the second filmic, both depict a tender yet awkward encounter of ostensible opposites and both, I argue, are productive for reworking the relationship between queer theory and feminism. For in both fantasies Hocquenghem challenges the definition of pleasure as resting on consummation or deprivation, union or disunion. Rather, seeming opposites – those who are positioned at odds by cultural, gender, or sex norms – embrace, albeit tentatively. I'd like to suggest that, thought allegorically, these fantasies give flesh to queer theory and feminism as characters, and these characters as lovers existing side by side rather than fusing or following one another, thus contributing to Mulvey's 'new language of desire.'

The method employed here – using fantasy images to rethink the relationship between feminism (here, lesbian feminism) and queer theory – is inspired by a penchant in contemporary art of the past decade or so for creative historiography.²⁵ In particular, Yael Bartana's *and Europe will be stunned* is a source of inspiration for my articulation of a meeting of queer theory and feminism on the field of pleasure. This film trilogy revolves around the activities of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP), a fictional political group that calls for the return of Jews to Poland after the exterminations of the Second World War. Bartana pictures this narrative by introducing events and symbols that defy the historical facts while simultaneously evoking the emotional reality of a complex history that continues to haunt the present.²⁶ The symbol of the JRMiP, for example, is a Polish eagle over a Star of David.

In the first film, *Mary Koszmary* [*Nightmares*], the JRMiP movement's leader, played by Polish intellectual and activist Sławomir Sierakowski, calls for 3.3 million Jews to return to Poland from the site of a decrepit amphitheater; as he speaks young pioneers stencil the numerical figure on to the amphitheater grass (Figure 7.1). In the second film, *Mur i Wieża* [*Wall and Tower*], pioneers build a kibbutz-like structure in a Warsaw suburb. While the construction seems to refer to a kibbutz, it also evokes an extermination camp tower and an Israeli settlement, all at the same time. We see a flag ceremony and Israeli settlers struggling to learn Polish, while a mysterious coda suggests that beneath this



7.1 Yael Bartana, *Mary Koszmary (Nightmares)*, 2007, one-channel Super 16mm film transferred to video, duration 10:50 minutes, from the trilogy *and Europe will be stunned*.

nationalist impulse lie strange bedfellows. Ultimately, barbed wire is attached to the settlement wall and a Hebrew sign placed out front that reads 'Welcome Kibbutz Muranow.' Part three, *Zamach [Assassination]*, opens after the JRMiP leader has been assassinated. At his funeral the movement is united behind a diverse crowd carrying placards, while a caricatured monument of the leader is installed on the plaza. However, old antagonisms resurface and Rivka – a figure representing exterminated Jewish Poland – haunts the commemorative scene. 'My name is Rivka,' she muses on the soundtrack, 'who was murdered and buried anew, who was disinherited, who was moved, breathless, from the mass graves of Auschwitz ... I am the ghost of return, the return returning to herself.'²⁷

Although Bartana's JRMiP movement is riddled with paradoxes, at particular moments the film clearly visualizes the movement as reversing the Zionist nationalist project. For instance, one scene includes the sound of the Polish national anthem and phrases from the *Hatikvah*, the national anthem of Israel, played backward, while depicting men and women enthusiastically erecting a home in Poland. Here, it is as if Zionism is a backward-looking woman, and she is at work building a kibbutz upon the site of her own exclusion. Over the course of the three films a number of such implausible events are visualized. There is a strange temporality at work in these scenes, as if the bottom has fallen from modernism's forward-thrusting jet, which stalls mid-air before an impending crash. This temporal suspension allows Bartana

to introduce symbols and events that conflate seeming oppositions (e.g., past and present, Polish and Jewish, kibbutz and settlement) and thus the trilogy enacts, as Jones advocates, 'an uncanny effacing of "the distinction between imagination and reality,"' while also 'forcing fantasy to take responsibility for its ideological (in this case fetishizing) effects.'²⁸

If Rivka haunts the union of Poles and Jews by symbolizing the historical legacy of a violently divided history, pleasure haunts the union of feminism and queer theory. This figure is torn between feminism's (perceived) rejection of pleasure, postfeminism's 'discovery' of it in light of feminism's (perceived) prior rejection and, alternately, the theoretical reconfiguration of the pleasuring and pleased subject in queer theory and activism. Thus, while pleasure haunts the relationship between queer theory and feminism it is, like Rivka at the funeral of the JRMiP leader, uncertain of its place between competing ideological camps.

As does the leader of the JRMiP movement in the opening scene of *and Europe will be stunned*, Hocquenghem extends a call to those whose departure he is dedicated to reconciling – a call that will initiate a process that probes the roots of this division. In an act of identification with a subject-position not his own he writes, '[e]ven if one single lesbian exists, I wish to lie at her side, like someone on the point of fainting, like a future woman.'²⁹ This generous and poetic gesture is stifled, however, by the fact that, according to Hocquenghem, a prohibition separating language and sex divides the revolution of which he is a part. He notes, for example, that sexual revolutionaries speak about sex openly but can only experience it in the dark corners to which heterosexuals have consigned it. And in relation to the two genders that participate in the FHAR, men and women speak to one another but do not touch. According to Hocquenghem, if gay men 'get closer' to the bodies that refuse them – namely the bodies of lesbians – the prohibition that separates words and sex might be challenged, and only then might gay men comprehend the feminist critique of phallic violence and not 'crystalize on their particular specificity.'³⁰ It is these impediments to the FHAR community that Hocquenghem seeks to understand and thus, as he writes, 'all research on desire should be research on non-desire, on what blocks desire.'³¹

Citing the results of the divisions that fray the FHAR, Hocquenghem writes of gay men who cannot bear the thought of making love to women while they seek their own femininity; he writes of queer activists who advocate 'circuits' of desire but cannot bear the thought of sentimentality, love, or couples; he writes of lesbian feminists who reject the phallus while advocating for gender equality; he writes of queers, lesbians, and gay men who stand together politically while refusing to acknowledge the other sexually. It is this final contradiction that results, according to Hocquenghem, in the dissolution of FHAR:

I refuse to speak of feminine homosexuality that I do not understand and of which I could only produce a fatally masculine theory. And all queers can say the same. This is why the FHAR sank beneath the weight of the phallus. This is why the FHAR felt it necessary to vent its bile upon male society, speaking to the authority to which it naturally belonged. This is why the lesbians fled.³²

That 'the lesbians fled' illuminates for Hocquenghem what unites and separates lesbians from gays (who he positions on the opposite side of the phallus from lesbians) and queers (those who exist outside the phallic model entirely). Ultimately, however, the confrontations among lesbians, gay men, and queers provide another route to pleasure. For although Hocquenghem privileges a non-covetous, polymorphous definition of desire – a queer desire – he is equally interested in the encounter between partners who inhabit seemingly incompatible positions in the structure of desire:

If ... in the embryonic couple formed by a fag and a lesbian, the woman could feel—extravagantly or miraculously, by itself or among other complex movements—the welcoming of a male body that is forgetting its gender, and if she persisted in her refusal, then we could no longer attribute a political alibi drawn from the situation of the social body to this retreat.³³

Like Bartana, Hocquenghem exploits semiotic slippage to craft symbols that speak across an abyss, in this case, the gendered divide of pleasure. He writes of a *male body that is forgetting its gender* and a *lesbian who persists in her refusal*. As in the meeting of Poles and Jews in *and Europe will be stunned*, he fantasizes an encounter that challenges that which seemingly separates identities. However, Hocquenghem is not, in the last analysis, interested in transcending such oppositions, but in mining the divide that forges and separates identities in order to inspire a self-revelatory form of engagement. And even Deleuze is not immune from this analysis. Writing of the popular notion of desire put forth by Deleuze and Guattari in their influential *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972), Hocquenghem notes that it is 'so fashionable that we use it to cover up tenderness in desire' while, on the other hand, he criticizes gays and lesbians for heteronormativity.³⁴ Hocquenghem's notion of non-desire in desire is a response to the impossibility of transcending such contradictions. Consequently, he seeks a notion of pleasure that acknowledges the obstacles to its own fulfillment. To this end oppositional partners are useful; the obstacles posed by each for the other summon a new ground of pleasure and, as a result, new alliances. Here, there would then be no need for a political alibi for love, no separation between speaking and sexing bodies, no refusal of the phallus or insistence on it. Opposites would meet and forge a form of engagement that has yet to be imagined: a male body forgetting its gender greeted by a lesbian who persists in her refusal.³⁵

In *Race d'ep: Un siècle d'images de l'homosexualité*, a 1979 film Hocquenghem co-directed with Lionel Soukaz, viewers are similarly treated to the meeting of seemingly oppositional identities on the tentative ground of pleasure. In the fourth and last part of the film, after a filmic recreation of gay male visual history – after Wilhelm Van Gloeden's beautiful Sicilian boys pose for his camera, and Magnus Hirschfeld names and categorizes homosexuality after the sexual liberation of the 1960s – it is autumn 1980 and we are in a bar called the Royal Opéra in Paris (Figure 7.2). Why does the American wander into a gay bar on rue St. Anne? Why does the local engage him? On the film's soundtrack each character tells the story of this chance meeting, but from a distinct point of view. To begin, the American explains that he is on his way from Singapore back to Detroit. He sells agricultural machinery. He has one night in Paris. The image track shows the two meeting and leaving the bar. The evening will entail walking (including mounting a fence to a cruising site where nothing happens, or everything happens, back out on to the walkway along the Louvre, into the public toilets, and back out again) and talking. The French man explains his views of gay integration (he is against it) and the American comes to the conclusion that 'he wants to remain a troublemaker.'³⁶ The encounter includes both speech and touching. The American man is nonchalant; the French man is excited and nervous.

The film's color sequences are recalled, intermittently, in black-and-white still images shown in succession. At the end of the film these black-and-



Lionel Soukaz and Guy Hocquenghem, *Race d'ep: Un siècle d'images de l'homosexualité*, 1979, 16mm color film, duration 90 minutes.



7.3

Lionel Soukaz and Guy Hocquenghem, *Race d'ep: Un siècle d'images d'homosexualité*, 1979, 16mm color film, duration 90 minutes.

white stills are photographs floating in the Seine river, suggesting that this encounter will become a memory, a more meaningful memory, perhaps, than the trumped-up account of the evening as delivered by the French character to a friend by phone the following day (Figure 7.3). In his account of the evening – which, as the film script directs, is delivered in a hysterical tone – the French man relates a host of fabricated details to his silent listener, including an episode of lovemaking at the Intercontinental hotel, another in the bushes, and yet another in the *pissoir*: ‘We finished with champagne in his room. And for the rest, you would like to know, you slut. That excites you.’³⁷ By contrast, the American concludes with these thoughts:

When I left him on the bank, without having done anything of course, I hailed a taxi to *les Invalides*. I felt a bit ashamed. The sun had risen. Paris had become a postcard again. In a few hours I was going to greet my wife and kids. Him, he left only an odor of ash of cold cigarettes. And then I felt tired from having walked for nothing, having spoken for nothing, from having elicited his secrets and emotions. Yet when I return to Paris I avoid the avenue de l’Opera in the evening.³⁸

Clearly, these characters retain their distinct desires – the French man for a butch top (who better to fulfill the part than a married American businessman?) and the American for an experience apart from his heterosexual married life (and where better to find it than in a gay bar in a foreign country?). And each takes something entirely different from the evening together. This encounter does not produce an orgasmic consummation of intersecting desires but, rather, a confrontation with another subject whose desire is not quite met or returned, and this oblique angle allows for the refraction of each subject’s aim, resulting in a new language of desire.

Conclusion

Each of Hocquenghem’s fantasies described above pictures a utopian scenario that thwarts its own realization.³⁹ Might such fantasies alter our definition of pleasure from that of consummation to the enjoyment of contradiction? This final point returns us to Mulvey’s observation in ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ that conventional film relies on a contradiction, and that this contradiction is productive. According to her account, the illusion of screen depth and narrative progression are at odds with the timeless two-dimensional space of the fetish. At the same time, the true power of the fetish is contained by the realism of conventional film. Likewise, Hocquenghem’s strange couplings seem in many ways to be incompatible while each partner allows the other to experience the refusal and non-desire essential to a certain kind of pleasure. What we gain from such fantasies is the sense that pleasure can be revolutionary, even while conflicted, or as a result of its conflict. This sense is also suggested in the manifesto of Yael Bartana’s JRMiP movement: ‘We shall be strong in our weakness.’ Rather than serving as a haven or, alternately, a type of ironic distancing, such contradictions lay the ground for the emergence of a queer feminist art history.

To conclude, what kind of marriage results from the union of queer theory and feminism and what does it mean for art history? As the scenarios described above suggest, it is a rocky one. For, although feminism and queer theory are often grouped together they are distinct, and each brings something unique to art history. Queer theory brings an interest in deconstructing sexual norms while feminism engages with issues pertaining to women’s oppression, particularly as these play out in the visual realm but also, as Nochlin makes clear, in terms of the economic support necessary to participate in this arena. Together they challenge one another, just as Hocquenghem’s lesbian feminist, in *The Screwball Asses*, challenges and is challenged by her gay male lover, and just as the excited French character in *Race d'ep* challenges and is challenged by his straight American acquaintance. This essay finds these points of partial disconnect to be fruitful. However, both queer theory and feminism agree on

two points. Whether it is conceived of as a fetish or a means of liberation, visual pleasure is integral to both: this includes the pleasure involved in making and looking as well as the pleasure of reading and interpreting texts.⁴⁰ Secondly, both agree that art history is, or ought to be, an engaged, critical practice. This essay suggests that this engagement call upon the imagination, and that the art historian step into the river of meaning constructed by the works and practices she describes. It is in describing, analyzing the ideological effects of, and taking enjoyment in images that a queer feminist art history takes shape as an affectively engaged method of inquiry. And art history will be stunned.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to Lionel Soukaz for permission and Stéphane Gérard for images from *Race d'ép: Un siècle d'images de l'homosexualité*, and to Macarena Dupouy and Floor Wullems at the Annet Gelink Gallery for permission to reproduce the image from *and Europe will be stunned*. For encouragement and comments, thank you Amelia Jones and Erin Silver. Finally, to Ásta and Þóra.

Notes

- 1 In *and Europe will be stunned* these words are spoken by the leader of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP), played by Sławomir Sierakowski, in the opening sequence, and later throughout Yael Bartana's film trilogy. Sierakowski, who is a Polish activist and intellectual, wrote the text for his part in the film. As noted below, the JRMiP is a fictional activist group invented by Bartana.
- 2 Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' *Screen* 16.3 (1975), 6–18; and Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?,' *ARTnews* 69.9 (1971), 22–39.
- 3 Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure,' 8.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 8 (emphasis mine).
- 6 *Ibid.*, 6.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 8. The full passage reads, '[t]he satisfaction and reinforcement of the ego that represent the high point of film history hitherto must be attacked. Not in favour of a reconstructed new pleasure, which cannot exist in the abstract, nor of intellectualized unpleasure, but to make way for a total negation of the ease and plenitude of the narrative fiction film. The alternative is the thrill that comes from leaving the past behind without rejecting it, transcending outworn or oppressive forms, or daring to break with normal pleasurable expectations in order to conceive a new language of desire.'
- 8 Mulvey writes that 'woman as representation signifies castration, inducing voyeuristic or fetishistic mechanisms to circumvent her threat. None of these interacting layers is intrinsic to film, but it is only in the film form that they can reach a perfect and beautiful contradiction, thanks to the possibility in the cinema of shifting the emphasis of the look.' *Ibid.*, 17.

- 9 *Ibid.*, 18. Of the scholars who analyzed the castration threat posed by the female fetish, Teresa de Lauretis was among the first to claim that feminist cinema need not necessarily destroy visual pleasure; rather, it might be 'narrative and Oedipal with a vengeance.' Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 157.
- 10 Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure,' 7.
- 11 Mulvey's focus on experience can be seen as foreshadowing recent feminist interest in affect theory. For more on this, see Anu Koivunen, 'An Affective Turn? Reimagining the Subject of Feminist Theory,' in *Working with Affect in Feminist Readings: Disturbing Differences*, ed. Marianne Liljeström and Susanna Paasonen (New York: Routledge, 2010), 8–28.
- 12 Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure,' 8.
- 13 See Lisa Duggan, 'Making It Perfectly Queer,' in *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture*, ed. Nan D. Hunter, 10th anniversary edition (New York: Routledge, 2006), 149–64.
- 14 Judith Butler writes, '[t]he identity of the feminist subject ought not to be the foundation of feminist politics, if the formation of the subject takes place within a field of power regularly buried through the assertion of that foundation. Perhaps, paradoxically, "representation" will be shown to make sense for feminism only when the subject of "women" is nowhere presumed.' Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 6.
- 15 For example, Brian Bergen-Aurand writes that queer film theory emerged out of a combative engagement with the 'heterosexual assumptions of Mulvey and other film theorists.' Bergen-Aurand, 'Queer Theory/Queer Cinema,' in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory*, ed. Edward Branigan and Warren Buckland (New York: Routledge, 2014), 385.
- 16 Annamarie Jagose, 'Feminism's Queer Theory,' *Feminism & Psychology* 19.2 (2009), 164.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 172.
- 18 Amelia Jones, 'Feminism, Incorporated: Reading "Postfeminism" in an Anti-Feminist Age,' in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones (London: Routledge, 2003), 322. Jones's essay was originally published in *Afterimage* 20.5 (1992), 10–15.
- 19 Jones writes, '[i]n the Mulveyan "feminist anti-fetishism" or "Puritanism of the eye," where visual seduction is seen to be necessarily complicitous with male fetishism, female pleasure is simply ignored. In this way, Mulvey's theoretical negation, of female pleasure seems complicitous with its denial by patriarchy.' Jones, 'Feminism, Incorporated,' 326; Jones is citing Emily Apter in the quoted phrases; see Apter, 'Fetishism and Visual Seduction in Mary Kelly's *Interim*,' *October* 58 (1991), 97.
- 20 Jones, 'Feminism, Incorporated,' 326.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 In defense of 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' Judith (Jack) Halberstam writes, '[w]hile Mulvey's essay created much vigorous debate in cinema studies on account of its seemingly fatalistic perspective on gender roles and relations, the messenger in many ways was being confused with the message. Mulvey was not *creating* the gendered dynamics of looking, she was simply describing the

- remarkably restricted ways in which spectators can access pleasure.' Judith (Jack) Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 83–5. For a thorough review of the reception of Mulvey's essay, see Mary (Mo) White, 'From Text to Practice: Rereading Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" Towards a Different History of the Feminist Avant-Garde,' unpublished PhD thesis, Loughborough University, 2007.
- 23 Bill Marshall, *Guy Hocquenghem: Beyond Gay Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 91.
- 24 In his introduction to Guy Hocquenghem's *L'Après mai des faunes*, Gilles Deleuze pens an elegant description of Hocquenghem's argument as a spiral: 'Hocquenghem talks about a transmutation from one order to another as though it were an intensive continuum of substances: "There is no intermediary between man and woman, or the universal mediator is one part of a world transferred into another as one moves from one universe to another, parallel to the first, or perpendicular, or diagonal; or rather it's a million displaced gestures, transferred characteristics, events..." Far from closing itself in on the identity of a sex, this homosexuality opens itself up to a loss of identity, to the "system actualizing non-exclusive connections of polyvocal desire." We see how the tone has changed at this precise point on the spiral: the homosexual is no longer demanding to be recognized, no longer takes himself to be a subject deprived of his rights ... The new homosexual is about being in such a way that he can finally say: nobody is homosexual, it doesn't exist. You treat us like homosexuals, OK, but we're already elsewhere.' Gilles Deleuze, 'Preface to Hocquenghem's *L'après mai des faunes*,' in *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1951–1974* (Los Angeles: Semiotexte, 2004), 287.
- 25 Distinct from re-enactments that seek to ritualistically repeat past events, creative historiography introduces fictional events into the historical narrative. For a brief history of re-enactment, see the curatorial essay by Inke Arns, 'History Will Repeat Itself: Strategies of Re-enactment in Contemporary (Media) Art and Performance,' http://www.agora8.org/reader/Arns_History_Will_Repeat.html (accessed 25 May 2014).
- 26 In his review of Bartana's project Joshua Simon writes, '[h]er films not only suggest the transformation of Zionist images so as to harness them for the struggle against the occupation—she also suggests a fiction through which one can re-enter history.' Joshua Simon, 'Re-activating histories,' *Artes Mundi* 4 (2010), 29.
- 27 Yael Bartana, *Mary Koszmary* (2007), from the trilogy *and Europe will be stunned*, a one-channel Super 16mm film transferred to video, duration 10:50 minutes.
- 28 Jones, 'Feminism, Incorporated,' 326.
- 29 Guy Hocquenghem, *The Screwball Asses*, trans. Noura Wedell (Los Angeles: Semiotexte, 2010), 66. This essay was originally published as 'Les culs énerguemènes' in *Recherches* 12, *Trois milliards de pervers: grande encyclopédie des homosexualités* (March 1973).
- 30 *Ibid.*, 59.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 64.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 66.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 68.

- 34 *Ibid.*, 63.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 68.
- 36 Guy Hocquenghem (text by Hocquenghem, film in collaboration with Lionel Soukatz), *Race dép: Un siècle d'images d'homosexualité* (Paris: Editions Libres-Hallier, 1979), 185–6. Unless otherwise noted all following translations are mine.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 188–9.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 189.
- 39 On this topic Hocquenghem writes in a text co-authored with René Schérer, '[u]topia is not something to be anticipated, a simulation of what is to come. In suggesting or hinting at possibilities outside of the realm of the probable, it reorients the real, deters the real from limiting itself, closing in on itself. But at the same time, it forbids its own realization.' René Schérer and Guy Hocquenghem, *Pari sur l'impossible: études fouriéristes* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1989), 7.
- 40 For a wide range of practices, both visual and textual, inspired by queer theory and feminism, see *Art and Queer Culture*, ed. Catherine Lord and Richard Meyer (London: Phaidon, 2013).