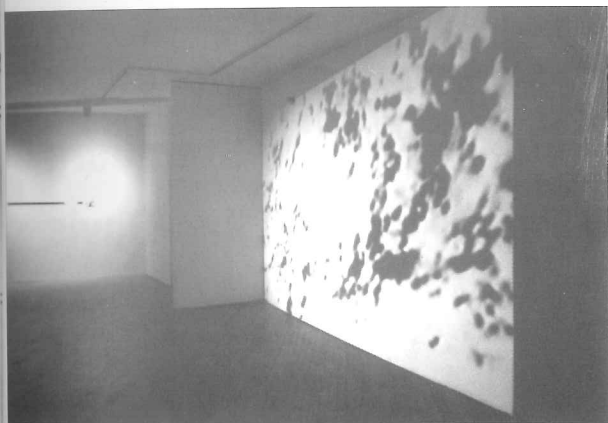


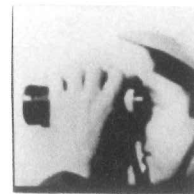


**Theatres of Perception:  
The Filmworks of Barbara Sternberg  
and the Paperworks of Rae Davis**

Barbara Godard



**pulse.scan.fold.**, consisting of film and media works by Barbara Sternberg and folded paperworks by Rae Davis, was exhibited at Gallery 101 from September 5 to September 27, 1996.



How does our angle of perception historically and subjectively affect the way we can inhabit our bodies? That question has preoccupied Barbara Sternberg in her seven publicly shown films. She has engaged in a self-reflexive exploration of the film medium, of the processes of seeing and a meditation on temporality. Differences in camera action, or in angle of perception, constitute movement between segments in her films foregrounding the work of framing as a central formal and thematic concern. An angle of perception is a take on the world, as she says: "We observe and in observing, shape. That's what cinema does well, shifting the angle of vision as the camera moves around an object getting at different angles of it which a still photo can't get at.... In film you can bring all of these different angles of vision or perspectives together, spread over time. And of course, the reality is shaped in this constructing".<sup>1</sup> Rae Davis emphasizes the importance of framing as construction as she turns the entire gallery into an installation which spreads the different angles of perception out over space. Intervening incisively with a cut in the wall to join the two separate rooms of Gallery 101, she sets up an apparatus and establishes a position for viewing in conjunction the diverse art works of

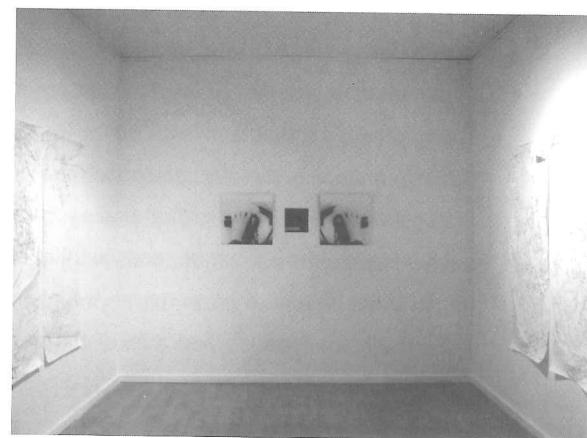


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these two artists. In forcing a shift in perspective on the filmwork in the main gallery from the peephole in the small projects room and on the paperwork in the projects room from the slit in the main gallery, Davis initiates cross-dialogues between the mediums that destabilize boundaries and multiply the interpretative possibilities for the images. The overlapping of apparently divergent modes of expression constitutes a repetition which, excessive, moves beyond the boundaries of either mode. In this essay, I want to extend the criss-crossing to read each artist's work through the filter of the other artist's work. The dynamic interaction of this crossing will ramify the frames for viewing and hence the implications of the work.

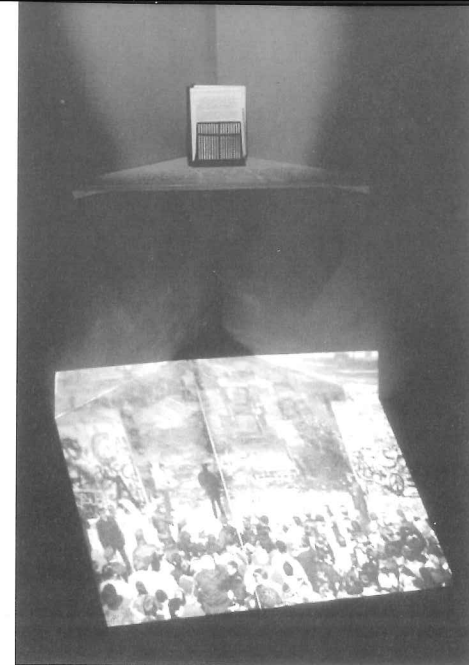
Such multiplication accentuates the aesthetics of proliferation connecting the two artists' theatres of perception. For despite the differences in medium and their divergent histories as artists, Sternberg and Davis share a pleasure in the play of shifting angles that makes images move. The installation actualizes this logic of multiplicity, of unfinalizability. From the square peephole cut into the wall of the projects room where Davis' paperworks hang, the binoculars which frame the hole (stills from Sternberg's **Through and**

**Through**, 1992) look out toward video images of waves from Sternberg's film **Beating** (1995) projected onto the wall of the main gallery. Black and white, with negative and positive reversed, they surge, their movement invoking the natural world. From the narrow slit in this room, an opening for observation or shooting, the framing binoculars are inverted and turn inward to discern obliquely the neural folds of Davis' **4x4**, black on white paper pinned against a white wall in the projects room. The binoculars are a metaphor for escape, for a movement beyond, as well as for surveillance. Under a more searching look, the water in the video rises as well as falls, while the neurons take on the aspect of cartographers' lines. Evocative of everyday occurrences or familiar objects seen in a glance, these images are subject to treatment, to repetition and superimposition which combine them differently in alternate assemblages and rhythms. This has been a strategy in all of Sternberg's films and has been extended

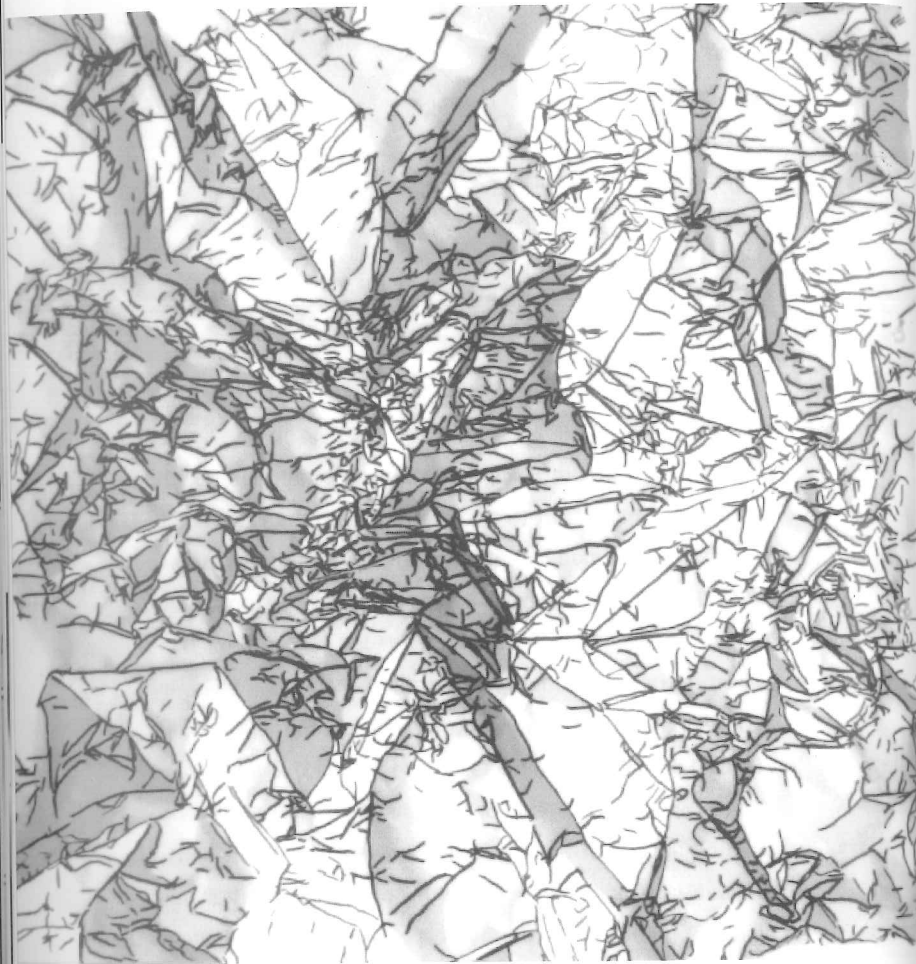


in this exhibit to works throughout the main gallery space and between the two galleries. The innovative effects of such recombination are evident in the main gallery where images related in idea and form to Sternberg's films are projected in a variety of ways: a slide of the Berlin Wall onto the floor, two strips of four stills from a film-in-progress hang on the wall, two TV screens present short video loops: **What Do You Fear** featuring birds, fruit, leaves, accompanied by human sounds such as laughter, kissing, **Let Us Never Cease Thinking** with voices repeating Virginia Woolf's sentence over images of the stock exchange, children in the park, and other urban sites. Working scripts from **Beating** and other films fixed to the back of a free-standing wall, which serves as a screen for projection, complete this installation for the screening of three programmes of Sternberg's films. In the space of reversal created by the intersecting sightlines of the two rooms in the installation, inside and outside are a matter of different lightings, different folds, within different combinations of signs; that is, a matter of (com)position—selection, distribution and ordering—for the inscription of a subject.

**pulse.scan.fold.** brings together the work of two women who have long pursued their artmaking in different media independently in what is a new direction for each of them. Rae Davis brings to her work with paper forty years of activity in performance as director, performer and designer where she constructed settings bringing bodies in movement together with spectators. Gesture and installation remain key elements of the new paper works which hang on the wall, although the location and role of the spectator have been transformed. The convergence with Davis' work marks a new

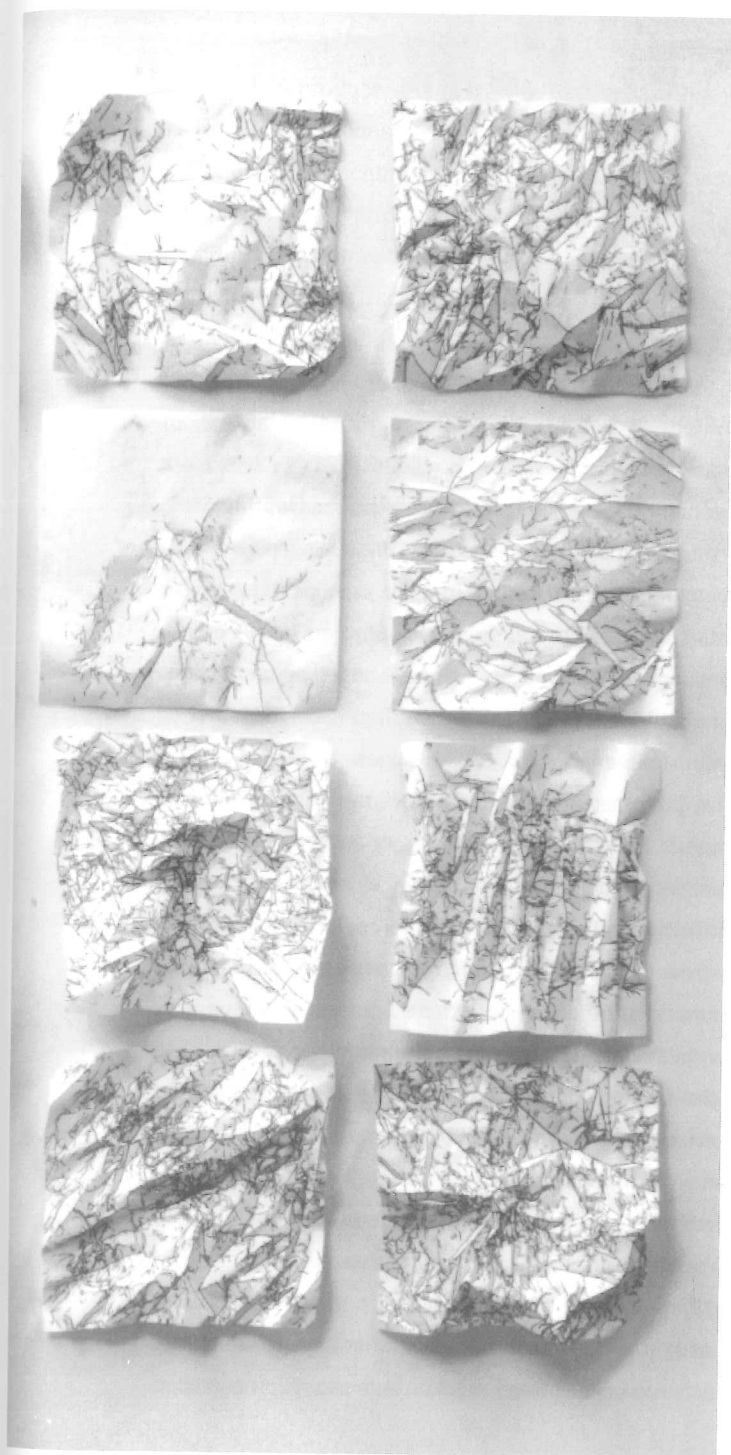
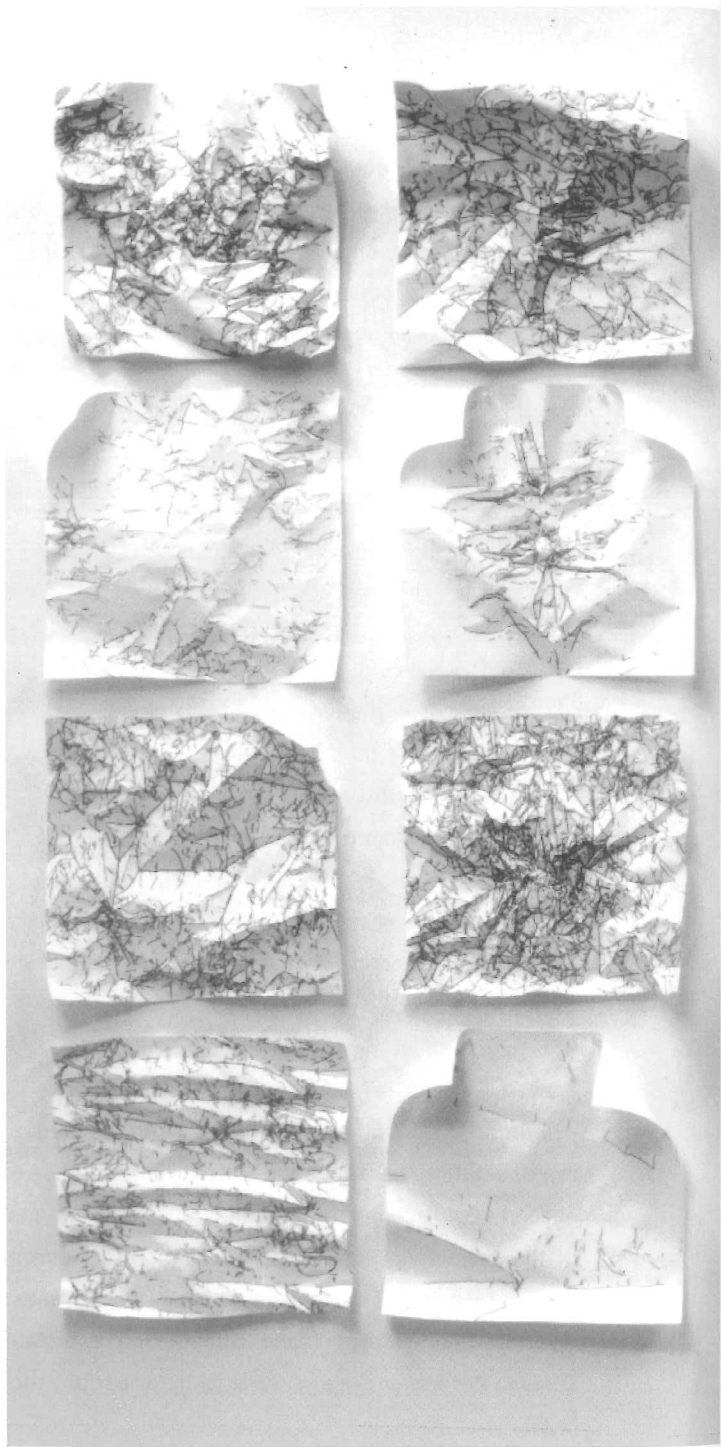


direction in Barbara Sternberg's work, not only the turn to installation but a shift to a more lyric, intimate and painterly use of the film medium in **Beating**, as well as an increased technical complexity and darker vision. Her continuing interest in the incremental shifts in visual images through the operation of repetition from different angles of viewing conveys a concern with motion as embodied time, time as it is lived and felt in bodies as rhythm. That concern is transposed into three dimensional terms in Davis' paperworks, self-organizing structures which extend the generation of rhythm in space. The crushing of paper against her body initiates a motion traced in folds whose subtle distinctions of gesture and body part are amplified by the varied rhythms of the paper's unfolding, weighted down by gravity. This kind of cross-referencing of process plays out the transformative possibilities in Sternberg's film images where one image begins to move into another, a play on twice-told tales, on ready-mades, shifting perspectives, the generation from one



print to another print that produces blurring, movement, change. The process in Davis' work might be thought of as the "butterfly effect" where a slight shift sets in motion chance interactions that produce unforeseeable transformations. In this, it concretizes Sternberg's interest in temporality as the intersection of evanescent yet repetitive (quotidian) detail and the cyclical monumentality of the infinite expansion of space-time.

There is here a common connection between Sternberg and Davis with a line of feminist experimental work deriving from Gertrude Stein's investigations into perception, relativity and intensity. Stein suggested that her ability to do "the only real literary thinking" of the century was because, as a woman, she related not to a historical tradition but "to a particular way of seeing".<sup>2</sup> It is composition, she writes in "Portraits and Repetition",<sup>3</sup> that changes from generation to generation, generation or a making visible incremental differences as movement. Repetition is inevitably imperfect so that the constellations of images and discourses are constantly undergoing revision, producing difference, change. Stein, a writer often quoted in Sternberg's films, provides the text for the sound track of **Opus 40** (1979) in which a voice repeats her words about repetition as knowing while the screen presents images of the repetitive work in a foundry. The screen splits, the film loops and moves into a meditation on representation as repetition—the twenty-four frames per second of projection time—as the voice fades into the sound of the projector. Repetition here is work, production, and time, a measure of movement. Stein's concern with rhythm and intensity as syntax and composition stimulated Rae Davis in her assemblage of Stein texts for performance, **Pink**





**Melon Joy. Gertrude Stein Out Loud** (1974), to explore changeability, movement in every direction. Just as Stein used trivial domestic conversations with irrelevancies, interruptions and asides organized into blocks or paragraphs representing an action to explore the creative act as becoming, Davis selected pieces for performance based on perceptions of pace and intensity in Stein's writing. She focussed on repeated images, groups of sentences, to develop "word clumps, patterns of sound, then small events complete with gesture".<sup>4</sup> Discarding her first inclination to centre the performance on "objects/environments" of settings and strong thematic images for movement, the performance became decentred, taking its form from the energies produced by the performers in the act of performing. Space was generated from movement. This strategy of embodied yet dispersed energies created connections supporting manifold meanings. Performance as a dynamic, fluid process or event undoes notions of the substance of characters and the fixity of spatio-temporal coordinates associated with traditional discourses of theatre as mimetic representation.

Favouring in her performances a collage/assemblage technique combining fragmentation with repetition and accu-

mulation to produce intensity, Davis connects this work on the expressive possibilities of systems through constant variation to her continuing interest in quantum science with its theories of relativity and indeterminacy and its focus on qualitative movement and the role of human subjectivity in the constitution of facts. Art and science are both products of human imag(in)ing: transforming scientific ideas into emotionally and sensorily engaging forms has been her project, as it was Stein's. In place of a vision of the world as singular, objective, consistent, she has created a multiplicity of unpredictable and inconsistent universes related randomly or through a grammar of rhythm (intensity). One of the voice tracks of Sternberg's **Transitions** (1982), a quote from a physics text on time and motion, underscores her similar concerns with embodied time and with art as event rather than representation. Rhythm is central to Sternberg's project, orchestrating her editing: rhythmic rather than thematic blocks determine cuts. Rhythm is also what she shoots—bodies moving, waves lapping, light flickering—and is accentuated in her camera action as in the horizontal movements of **Tending Towards the Horizontal** (1988). Through the concern with mobility, with layering, with the multiplicity of images assembled non-oppositionally, ambiguously (as in the exhibited video excerpt from **Beating** with the hand consoling? repulsing? a fallen body), Sternberg too reaches out to the vaster systems of the universe, to something larger than the self she qualifies as "excess" in a contemporary mode of the sublime. No transcendental strains mark this embracing of the whole: rather it is a move to complicate with a dense web of fragments. As Sternberg says, "I shy away from the monumental." Differences do not divide but intersect, ramify, generate over and over like

"rhizomes".<sup>5</sup> Sternberg's insistence on everyday detail and on process that does not incorporate or exclude but exfoliates and transforms renders this network contingent. It has affinities with Davis' acceptance of contingency in the construction of a performance from particular embodied positions. Like reality, where universes are constituted by individual artists and scientists according to an ever-changing model of potentialities subject to the constraints of chance and necessity imposed by perspective, Davis' performance texts and installations invite the spectator to participate actively as the creator of what is observed. The texts themselves focus consciously on how they are assembled and organized, on the particularities of each constituent and on how these bodies, voices, life histories, including that of Davis, relate to each other and, dynamically, to the physical environment of the performance/installation.

Where Davis explores the interaction of observational point and environment in her emphasis on the spatial, Sternberg is concerned as well with the complexities of temporality, of living fully in the instant while also living with a sense of its historical import. Film performs memory work through its means of recording and saving, of externalizing, which Sternberg uses to testify and to memorialize. Memory as an act prefigures the self appearing to itself as the other speaking within and before the self and so it is also a technique of internalization. This double movement of exteriorizing and interiorizing is enacted in her use of clips from "home movies" that, externalizing the project of subjective recovery, perform the transformative work of "home movies" as Sternberg, echoing Jonas Mekas, conceives of them, mov(i)es to bring the spectator "home to where the soul



resides." This is an internalization which implicates the spectator emotionally in political questions, especially those of gender and ethnicity. Sternberg's project has been to explore the particularities of her way of seeing, her femaleness, her Jewishness, her Canadianness, living at a specific moment in history. **Through and Through** (1992), a title from a line of Gertrude Stein's, focusses on the emergence of 'I' in relation to 'she,' a working out of identity-in-the-feminine as a relational process to another woman. This process is simultaneously exteriorizing and internalizing, both the estab-





lishment of a social relation and the formation of a subject. Images from the banal flux of the everyday are interrupted by staged dramatic sequences where the interchange of dialogue highlights conflicts and fears to address the question of how we are positioned by the force of historical necessity. Central to this meditation on subjectivity-in-relation is the focus on the contingent perspective of the filmmaker in a printed line appearing on the screen: "Anne Frank died in March, 1945. I was born March 24, 1945." 'My' life is closely related to the life of another woman who is caught up in cataclysmic events of world history. The personal connects to the global. That 'I' can live and have a future is determined by the birth date. That such mass extermination might come again is considered in the dramatic sections where a character comments in the dialogue that "at times my life seemed not my own." The film constitutes an inclusive disjunctive synthesis, in Deleuze's terms, the and of the present moment of enunciation linking the either/or of past and future. Past and future: and/or. The future itself, though, is an either/or.

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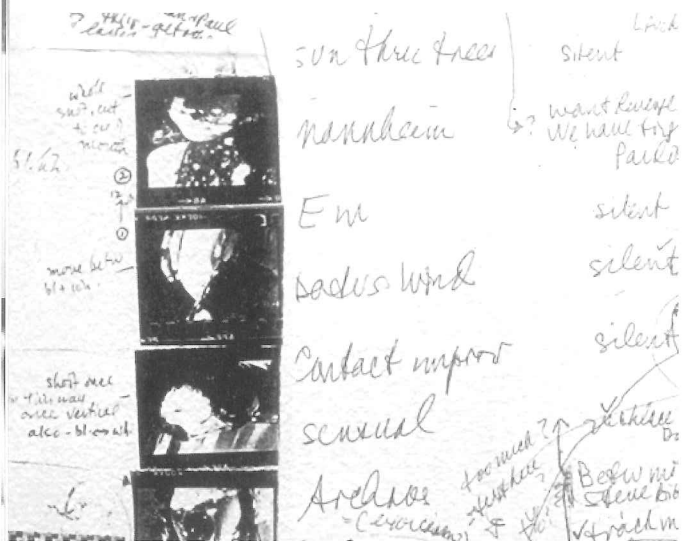
**Beating** extends this meditation on the subject's responsibility to history. It responds with the pulse of living, with the intermingling of pain and pleasure, of cries and laughter, in a theatre of sensation. "Where are your scars?", asks **Beating**. Those tattooed by patriarchal oppression and Nazi annihilation are examined in this film which probes how pain is remembered—or forgotten—by scarring the raw film. The answers are marked more by doubt, interiority and urgency than in Sternberg's earlier work. A film that veers to the negative—negatives are refilmed in high contrast film to heighten the blackness of the image—**Beating** interrogates

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history's oppressions and erasures from the personal perspective of a Jewish woman born in Canada. Less interested in situating this perspective in a dynamic relation to space, to images of wandering and return in a 'recognizable' landscape than in her previous films, Sternberg minimizes the documentary impulse which guided her camera in long pans of streetscape or landscape in **Tending Towards the Horizontal** and other films marking a certain exteriority, a scanning of a distant horizon. Concerned more with relating to the temporal moment of the fiftieth anniversary of the discovery of the unspeakable horror of the Holocaust from the perspective of a woman, now fifty, **Beating** is ordered by the inner rhythms of memory, organized by a personal mythology, as an emotional autobiography as well as a public testimonial. Cutting and montage are foregrounded in the frenetic shifting of the images. Movement here is a perspective of time. Fragments of images from Sternberg's previous films, images of her aging parents in everyday rituals such as walking and eating, body parts—vagina, ass, penis—are intercut with sepia-toned images of barbed wire, of Jews tortured in prison camps, and with coloured images of European statues. Does the creation of beauty inevitably involve such horrific violence? Do monumental artworks always reify/annihilate women's bodies? History is conceived as construction, as the continuously reopened break between the multiplication of the visible, the beautiful, and the barbarity of its hidden side, in what Buci-Glucksmann calls "baroque reason" with its logic of contradiction, not analogy, and its mathematics of the curve or fold.<sup>6</sup>

The superimposition of images plays out the paradoxical intertwining of hate and love which the film explores explicit-

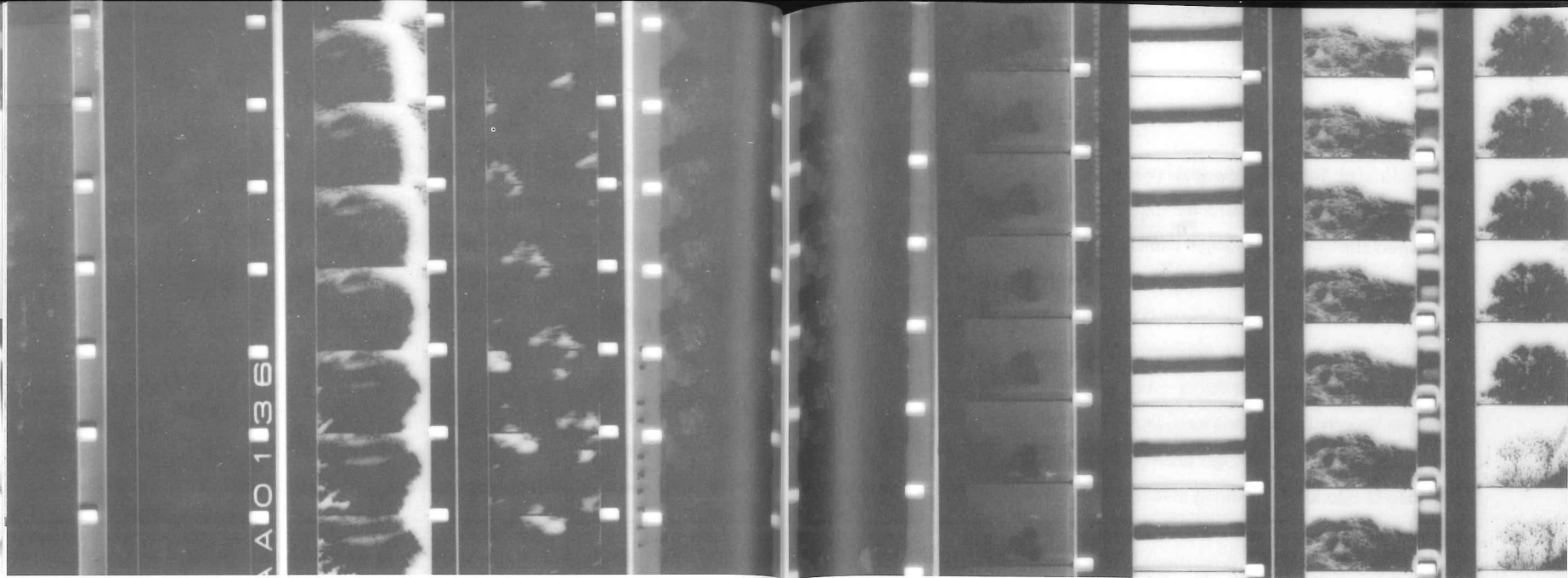




ly in the voice-over collage from feminist and Jewish theorists. A quotation from Virginia Woolf focusses on such confounding of opposition in the "erratic" quality of "reality," the fleeting image that touches, attaches and makes permanent, found now in "a scrap of newspaper," now "walking beneath the stars." "That is what is left of past time and of our loves and hates." Is a "burst of laughter," Sternberg quotes Hélène Cixous, the way to "emerge from death," to "shrug off old lies," and launch oneself into the unknown, to take one's pleasure in uncertainty, undecidability? Is it this life of the body persisting—"stupid insensitive life" in its "absurd regularities" of waking and sleeping, as a citation from Hannah Arendt observes—what continues beyond the trauma of history's persecution of the Jews to elide distances in time and space, to make the horror "fade away into nothing"? Can the banal moments of the bodily, the local, the familial, interrupt and transform the trajectory of history as violence and oppression? Can the individual subjective vision produce creative transformations of the human condition? What is

the response-ability of the artist? Of the woman? These are the larger aesthetic/political questions **Beating** addresses in pursuing the problematics of **Through and Through** to construct a useable past. How can one see one's own life as historically contingent, positioned as a woman and a Jew, between the Holocaust and the millenium? Even as the urgency of these questions, of their rhythm in the intercutting of images, quickens from Sternberg's earlier films to intensify the effect of the transience of the image, the film explores memory as an opening, a multiplication of possibilities, generative of other images and other potentialities. The project of recovery is memorialized in the scratches and exposures imprinted on the film and externalized for the spectator's gaze and new potential meanings. In the logic of the baroque, fold upon fold, fold between fold (in-fold) stretches to infinity.

The rhetoric of temporality in **Beating** takes issue precisely with the gendered distribution of memory which has operated in an opposition between life-writing (women's domain) and history (public sphere), between interiorizing subjective idealization and externalizing institutional inscription, identified by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*. She lamented the absence of "mothers to think back through" occasioned by the lack of history and writing by women authors to be found on the library shelves. Women have been excluded from history, confined to the present moment (to forgetting) and to the personal. Mnemosyne (or Memory), though, was the mother of the Muses. Memory is problematic for women who have, in the Western philosophical tradition, been positioned contradictorily as both forgetting and memory in opposition to Truth. How can a woman re-member when she is



68 the very site of memory? Memory is the gap that needs recovery and the action of re-calling, both the fact of signification (object of memory) and the act of signification that promises to bring it forth. Bringing forward a legacy, memory is a performative that carries out its work in the very activity of externalizing or re-calling. Memory as interiorization, though, has been since Freud the 'normal' work of mourning for the gap, the loss, a movement or introjection of the body and voice of the other. The mother's body is the one introjected. It inaugurates a process of splitting and transference or substitution of a bundle of affects which is bound up in the process of symbol formation, of identity formation, itself caught up in the Oedipal complex and sexual differentiation. Not acknowledged as loss, and hence object available for a play of substitution and transference productive of subjectivity in the psychoanalytic model, this absence induces melancholy and abjection. The individual is situated in maternal territory prior to the violence of the separation of body from

body (the focus of **A Trilogy**, 1985), caught up in the repetition compulsion, an endless substitution or doubling as defense. Psychoanalytic anamnesis or remembering, in its rush to closure with the singular and bounded ego fixed in the centre of its object-relations, focusses on the object of memory, to re-cover it and effect the separation of body from body, of interior from exterior. This it does through the intervention of the third term, the masculine term, requisite for access to language and to representation in the dominant psychoanalytic model.

How to get beyond this narration of foreclosure, of erasure, of sublation, to the other woman, to engage the other within as another woman? 'I' as 'she.' To constitute woman as a subject in history. This is the question that Sternberg takes up following Woolf. She eschews psychoanalytic anamnesis with its project of fixing identity. What is needed is another relation of self and other, of inside and outside (a primary

emphasis of **Tending Towards the Horizontal** as well as **Beating**), where these are not fixed in binary opposition between the feminine as the vanishing point guarantor of masculine signification, but are, like the Möbius strip, moveable sites along the same surface serially differentiated by a curve or shift in angle of perception. Inside and outside are a matter of different takes. A change in frame folds in what is usually left out and exposes out at the very heart of within. Instead of the sign arising only in the gap, in the silence or interiority, requiring discovery in the alethic interpretation of a theological moment of Truth, meaning is constructed through the superposition or concatenation of signifiers, jostling, proliferating and serially combining. Memory work is the art of combination and reordering in the anamnesis of creative in(ter)vention favoured by Sternberg. The coterminacy of inscription or exteriority and of interiority undoes the hierarchy privileging the spirit over the letter, of absent origin over moment of recall. Attention to the work of re-membering, as the effect of a repetition which is an ordering by another woman, reflexively highlights the material work of linking, of doubling, of folding, and so opens up other potentialities, logics other than identificatory. A change is needed to make visible the labour of woman propping up the work of sublation, the economy of truth as violation; a change, however, which is not a break, produced by the intervention and sublation of a third, but a shift in angle of viewing that makes visible different perspectives around the one. Contraries meet and cancel each other out in an inclusive disjunctive synthesis (Deleuze and Guattari) with no unifying hierarchy. Meaning is not a matter of separation into different parts of parts but of differences dividing interminably into ever-smaller folds.

**Beating** focusses reflexively on how it is shot and assembled, attending explicitly to whose assemblage it is, of how this putting together relates to Sternberg's life and work. The logic of contradiction, of paradox (the oxymoronic transitoriness of eternity) works through her manipulation of the raw film which she uses like a canvas to experiment with its material possibilities—scratching, erasing, bleaching, hand processing, cutting, bipacking positive and negative images, and refilming them all in a variety of film stocks on an optical printer—to foreground film as light, as energy. The technique of shooting itself, where the single frame shot gives rise to an instantaneity and immediacy, transmits an intense energy, whose motion is slowed through refilming to connect the discrete segment/moment and suggest simultaneity. This produces an illusion of cosmic duration to counterpoint the loss and struggle of the evenemential. A pulsing effect is produced where the active energy of the projector's light is rendered perceptible. Manipulation of positive and negative images produces rapidly alternating silvery and black variants of the same image, the dark/light contrast intensified by orthochromatic black and white film. Flickering is also produced by filming an image from a wall projection. The image on the screen pulsates like a strobe light, its energy rhythmically irradiating the room. This foregrounds the film's logic of paradox when the light comes from the screen not the projector. Multiplicity and instability are also produced through the editing. Emotional intensity is conveyed in the complex sequencing of passages ranging from three to twelve minutes duration in which the rivetting strokes of the camera in single framing shift to more open superimposition of images, ebbing to a single long shot on a motionless figure or to a sustained white or black screen.

In counterpoint to these rhythmically bound series of visual images, the sound-track alternates readings of densely-layered theoretical texts with voices in dialogue and with a variety of sounds both human (moaning, laughing, crying, panting, gurgling) and natural (water running, thunder, hammering) and with silence. The density of sensory impressions and the rapidity of shifts between these series gesture toward the eternal even as they emphasize the transitory. Such superimposition of divergent intensities locates the splice or cut in a larger context. This reminds the viewer that time is perception and perception changes between frames, between a moment and its memory. Here the body as presence or absence (located in a voice) is negotiated over the cut or embedded in the frame, a moving site. In this universe of flux and flow there is no closure. Instead, **Beating** folds back on itself to simultaneously suggest repetition and potentiality, keeping in play the disjunctive synthesis of past and future in the present that passes and so establishing a virtual past as foundation even as it plays out the un-folding of time, the pure and empty form in which it unfolds and folds-in. A hand writes "I forgive myself. I forgive you" as a negative image, black on a white board. Reversing itself, the hand moves backward progressively erasing the letters to leave a white board on which "Beating" appears in black, inverting the opening image of the film where the handwritten word appeared shimmering, white, on a black screen to the counterpointing sound of thunder or fire works or guns. Power, in struggles against violence, death, and love, in an embrace of difference, remains ambiguously equivoiced.

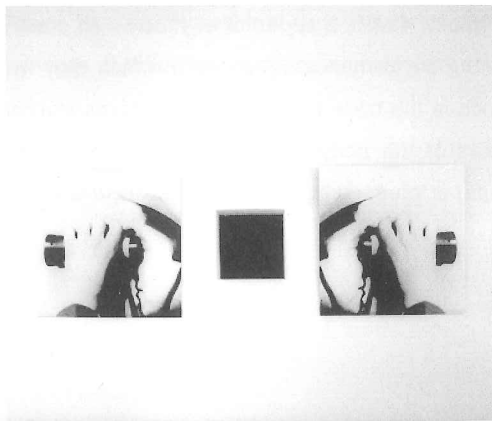
Where Sternberg explores the infolding and refolding of time, Davis actualizes the drapery which is, for Deleuze, the char-

acteristic baroque trait of fold upon fold, of the fold in-between, two-dimensionally in pleated wall hangings.<sup>7</sup> Rather than the heavy folds of cloth omnipresent in baroque paintings, Davis' material has been the more fragile medium of paper, vulnerable to the operations of chance, in her folding, and of necessity, in the law of gravity, which combine in the unfolding within the three-dimensional gallery space. In these paperworks, Davis brings together the specificity of performance with its gathering and dispersion of energy in the constitution of subjectivity and of installation with its assemblage of disparate elements holding fields of energy together. Her works make explicit the way they relate to the body, especially to the artist's body, but also to the spectator's body, to each other and to the physical environment of the installation in the gallery space for whose walls they were specifically made. In this, she extends her earlier explorations of the interaction of observational point and environment over time as well as space. Time for her as for Sternberg is conceived as both recording and becoming. Like performance, these works begin with the body-in-motion delineating space. This is, however, a solitary performance with Davis performing a number of different systematic gestures, carefully recorded in a verbal document, as well as memorialized in the folds of the paper which are subsequently subjected to her externalizing gaze.

The installation is the trace of this performance, rather than performance itself. **4x4** is a series of eighteen inch squares positioned in the performance sequence in which they were produced. Each is the trace of a series of gestures involving a different part of the body. A number of the folds were made by the paper pressed against the face. One was even

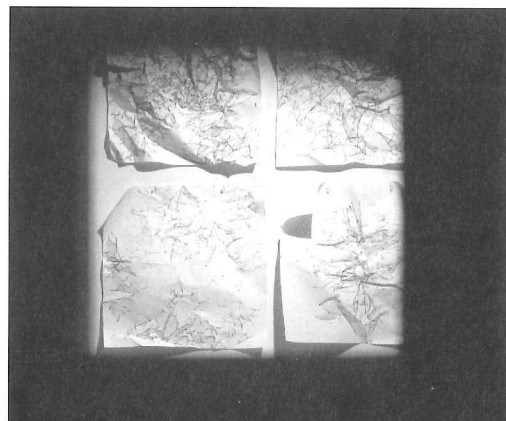
crushed inside the mouth. Others were folded by the hands in a series of movements actualizing a continuous line of variation. Subsequently, Davis took up the role of spectator and reworked the folds, curve upon curve. Black pen was used to make the folds more visible and emphasize the body's traces. Its scars are externalized. **3x1** is a group of three pieces of paper each five feet long by one foot wide all crushed at the same time with a continuous folding movement along the body. Unfolded on the wall, these play out the repetition and displacement in that certain lines appear in similar positions with different intensities, as is the case of the double line near the middle, clearly visible in all three. The constraints for the experimentation with **1x3** are different in that each of the three panels of the same size was folded with a different gesture against a different part of the body—legs, shoulders. The play of chance connecting the folds by resemblance is lessened here, a disjunctive synthesis being produced through the similarity of the dimensions of the paper as well as by the positioning on the wall where they are joined by the pictorial convention of the triptych in the observation of the spectator.

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The spectator's role in actualizing the performance is highlighted through the binoculars and the peephole which synecdochally image the work of the gaze in its probing of dark interiors, externalized here on the walls as lines constituting a body's surface for the viewer's interpretative work. Repeating Davis' work as spectator, the gallery viewer engages in a double movement of infolding and unfolding, of unfolding as folding in; that is, of explication as implication, reading herself into the paperworks and of constituting her 'self' through them. Scrutinizing the ambiguous lines—are these massings of dark lines magnetic fields? mountain peaks? cities? tattoos? intense neural synapses? choreographical notations?—the viewer becomes aware of her own performance in the gallery space, manipulating the images to produce representations of geophysical, corporeal or mental space. Indeed, it is the very boundaries between inner and outer which are called into question here, as in Sternberg's films, for they are different twists within the same Möbius strip, different turns in the gathering and dispersing of energy. The installation provides the environment for this realization of the viewer's own creative fiction making. Con-

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sequently, the process of infolding difference within itself in Davis' gestures generates an intensive quantity of energy that explicates or unfolds that difference as an extensive quantity and physical quality, a process which the spectator's viewing repeats in a line of variation. Intervening between the chance of the fold, the chance glance or angle of perspective, is the law of gravity, the necessity that determines the ultimate state of the fold within the installation, as the weight of the paper hanging produces a further unfolding and refolding over time. Time as both repetition and potentiality is manifest in these self-organizing structures.

Davis' installation prolongs over various phases the work of performance and so defers the constitution of identity. Performance is the manipulation of the fragmented body perceived as a site of desire, of displacement and fluctuation it seeks to liberate, and with the manipulation of space so that it becomes fluid in a continuous present and transformed into event from which the subject emerges. Such work with the installation space makes tangible the play of the imaginary that positions subjects in the scene. Through a play of repetition, spaces are constructed for the projection of different postures of desire. Subjects in process construct themselves through projection into different objects necessitated by their libidinal economies, emerging from this 'event' transformed. The play of desire in performance is not constrained by an assumed subject position, but moves in a destabilized, infra-symbolic zone. Incessant play and displacement of positions of desire constitute theatricality, according to Feral.<sup>8</sup> The performer as subject is catalyst for the passage of desire. Seeking not to say something, but to set in place a series of relations among subjects through

the play with a variety of objects, performance poses a deterritorializing gesture, forcing an opening that reorients relations of centre and frame, foregrounding the process through which 'I' is constituted in relation to 'she' in the individualizing processes of intension and extension. What unfolds in this reworking of the trace of gestures is a gathering, performing and dispersing of energy—a becoming.

Life lines? Or ley lines? The ambiguity of these black lines draws attention to the fashioning processes of all pictorial work with landscape which, as Simon Schama points out, etymologically entails an act of occupation enabled by an activity of "formidable human engineering".<sup>9</sup> In her logic of contradiction, folding outside in and inside out, Davis reveals the way in which landscape is a construction not only of memory but also of becoming. In her paperworks, topography is granted the unpredictability of human beings. Indeed, the black lines between the folds on the white paper had their beginning in the black traced on the life-lines of Davis' hand in her earlier performance piece, **Taking the plunge** (1985). From these tattoos on the body, lines have ramified onto paper, exteriorizing and dispersing the energy of body in space. Space as embodied energy. A body is not a form, but a complex relation between differentiated speeds or intensities in which fluidity is given cohesion by the pressures of the environment (Deleuze), in the present instance, by the constraints of the physical installation that envelop in a process of complication.

The coming together of the filmworks of Sternberg and the paperworks of Davis is not the end but one in a series of joint projects—the next of which is **Surge** (1998)<sup>10</sup>—exfoliating



from Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*.<sup>11</sup> In their consideration of the way in which an object is modified in relation to the angle from which it is viewed, of space-time as a function of lived relations informing the viewing, their projects resonate with both Irigaray's formulation of a "mechanics of fluids"<sup>12</sup> attentive to a subject-in-relation within a web of contingencies producing a differently embodied subjectivity in a becoming-woman, and Deleuze's rhizomatics, pursuing the order of the series or differing plateaux of intensities, a myriad of proliferations inducing variation, transversal movements, metamorphoses.

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**Notes:**

1. Barbara Sternberg with Barbara Godard, "Shifting Realities: An Interview" *Tessera* 13: 1992, p. 62.
2. Gertrude Stein, *The Geographical History of America; or the The Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995).
3. Gertrude Stein, "Portraits and Repetition" in *Gertrude Stein: Look at Me Now and Here I Am*, ed. Patricia Meyerowitz (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967).

4. Goldie Rans, *Being and Doing: Rae Davis; Work. (1959-1986)* (London, Ontario: London Regional Art Gallery), 1986, p.20.
5. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie tome 2: Mille plateaux* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1980).
6. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *La raison baroque de Baudelaire à Benjamin* (Paris: Galilée, 1984).
7. Gilles Deleuze, *Le Pli: Leibniz et le baroque* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1988).
8. Josette Feral, "Performance et théâtralité: le sujet démystifié" in *Théâtralité, écriture, mise en scène* (Montréal: HMH, 1985), pp. 125-139.
9. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Knopf, 1995), p. 10.
10. Rae Davis and Barbara Sternberg, **Surge**. Art Gallery of Windsor, Dec. 5, 1998 - Jan. 24, 1999.
11. Barbara Sternberg's **Midst** (1997) is another facet of this project.
12. Luce Irigaray, *Speculum de l'autre femme*. (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1974).

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