The Animal Image in the Work of Selected Contemporary Artists

by

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Introduction

I propose, in this thesis, to examine the ways in which the animal image is employed in the work of a selection of contemporary artists. A primary interest in Dorothy Cross's work led to a realisation that, despite being a problematic image, associated with cliches, stereotypes and out-dated artistic traditions, the animal seemed to be appearing in the work of other postmodern artists as well as Cross, such as Damien Hirst, William Wegman, Helen Chadwick and Mark Wallinger. This observation initiated an inquiry into what human concerns and prejudices are being reflected by representations of the animal. In examining these issues, it became clear that some of those concerns and representations are only deemed acceptable by certain circles of the art fraternity, if they relate to certain, specific, postmodern agendas.

When artists choose to use an animal image in their work, they immediately open up the possibility of a huge variety of responses to that image. Human responses to animal images, symbols and animals themselves, are notoriously inconsistent and ambivalent; we sentimentalise them one minute and demonize them the next.

I aim to show that, as a source of pleasure and affection, the popularity of the animal representation in popular culture has meant

that the animal, in art, has come to be viewed as the most kitch of all subjects. But it's simultaneous ability to provoke hatred, contempt and fear means that the animal image can be employed in the framing and expression of contemporary ideas about human identity.

It will become apparent that, treated carefully so as to control it's connotations, the animal image is being manipulated by postmodern artists, who recognise it's timeless ability to address the strong anxieties, interests and longings common to most people in our society.

In the first chapter, I will illustrate that both the positive and the negative connotations prompted by the animal image, are an amalgamation of archetypal symbolism and of common knowledge of the animal sign. This knowledge operates within the system of common-sense consciousness and stereotypes. Steve Baker's book, Picturing the Beast, was particularly useful here, in clarifying this complex mesh of contemporary connotations. The postmodern artists' manoeuvring around these connotations is taken into account, and we begin to see how the animal image is being successfully extricated from it's past, and employed in the art of the present. Julia Kristeva's writing, particularly her theory of the abject, was of particular interest in this context.

Chapter Two examines the post-structuralist challenges to the Enlightenment and it's legacy, and the repercussions for the animal in art, with particular reference to Otto Rank's writing.

In Chapter Three, I will look, in more detail, at Dorothy Cross's

employment of the animal, particularly in the piece entitled Amazon, from her Udder series. Some of the rich, metaphorical possibilities of the animal image are charted, within Cross's referencing of feminist texts and psychoanalytic theory, in her on-going exploration of female sexual identity and power.

Chapter One

> "Animals quite obviously cannot and do not.....represent themselves to human viewers. It is man who defines and represents them, and he can in no sense claim to achieve a true representation of any particular animal; it merely reflects his own concerns."(Mullan & Marvin,1987, p.7)

What place does the animal hold in our contemporary imagination? The aim of this first chapter is to enquire into the symbolic and rhetorical uses of the animal in the contemporary collective state of mind, and within the everyday life of the culture. Any investigation of the animal in contemporary art has to take into account how meaning is arranged around that image, what the animal signifies to the artist and the viewer. As Roland Barthes wrote, "All images are polysemous. They imply, underlying their signifiers, a floating chain of signifieds." (Barthes,1977, p.39). Any enquiry must, therefore, acknowledge the symbolic status of the animal in common-sense consciousness, as well as in the art-historical traditions of animal symbolism.

J.C.Cooper, in his book, Symbolism-the Universal language describes the timeless, ahistoric nature of symbols, as opposed to signs, "Signs are concerned with ordinary life; symbols contain an inner archetypal meaning, leading to higher realities." (Cooper,1982, p.7). The

main symbolic function of animals, as far as Cooper is concerned, seems to be to aid man in coming to terms with his animal nature. They symbolise the emotional and instinctual life in man, primitive urges that must be transcended before the spiritual realms can be entered. This explains why, in so many legends, myths and stories, animal monsters must be killed or tamed before the goal is reached. On the other hand, animal helpers in dreams and stories represent the 'sixth sense' or intuitive wisdom that man can call on when his reason alone will not suffice. Friendships with animals are symbolic of the Golden Age, of Paradise and of re-entry into that state. Animals are also symbols of fertility. (Cooper,1982, p.52)

What is immediately apparent from this simple summary is the inherent dualism in the way man makes sense of the animal. Leaving aside, for the moment, it's link with fertility, the animal seems to serve two functions. It becomes the focus and manifestation of two, clear-cut human concerns; firstly, man's anxiety about his own so-called 'animal' nature, and secondly, his desire for a lost state of imagined 'oneness' with nature, a nostalgic yearning for a lack of self-consciousness and innocence. The animal serves man as both his friend and his enemy, it represents both a threat and a source of pleasure. Both of these concerns are universal; they have been represented by the animal in art and religion down through the ages, and we shall see that they are still manifesting themselves today, in both popular

representations of the animal and in contemporary art.

I propose that any analysis of how the animal symbol operates in contemporary art, must begin from the premise that these archetypal meanings operate in conjunction with the influences drawn from shared cultural knowledge, which include the generalities of popular stereotypes. As Baker points out,

> "Our attitudes, our prejudices and indeed our sympathies are all filtered through or clogged up in this thick, but transparent mesh (or mess) of history, culture, public opinion and received ideas." (Baker,1993, p.10)

For several reasons, traditional animal symbolism is becoming more unstable and unintelligible to the modern viewer. It could be argued, for example, that national animal symbols like the British Bulldog and the American Eagle, are becoming redundant as meaningful symbols because the nationalist values they represent are losing ground; the very things they symbolise are losing their centrality or are changing definition. Every country and culture has a completely different set of historically constituted meanings available for use by the contemporary artist, but this will be of little help to the viewer who is unfamiliar with a particular artist's work, in determining the meaning of a piece. The historical origins of animal symbolism can offer no reliable guide to what an animal sign means in the present.

Another factor acknowledges the reality that, "Today, for the

average person, a symbol is an empty thing, little more than a sign conveying no other meaning than its outward appearance suggests. " (Cooper,1982, p.7). Norman Bryson, in his discussion of meaning in Renaissance painting, in his book, Vision and Painting: the Logic of the Gaze , makes a point of distinguishing between the two different ways of reading any visual image. The iconographic codes of an image need to be learned, while, what he calls "the codes of connotation - pathognomics, physiognomics and dress." (Bryson,1983, p.68) are comprehended automatically. The viewer scans the image for clues, reading facial expression and bodily posture,

> "Recognition of a Nativity, a Betrayal, a Madonna enthroned, is taught and learned as a specific skill to be applied to images. The codes of connotation, by contrast, operate within the general social formation."
> (Bryson,1983, p.68)

Any viewer, whether or not they possess the necessary skills for reading historically constituted symbols, will relate to an image in this way. The success of William Wegman's colour photographs of his wiemaraner dogs, Man and Fay Ray, can be related to his use of these codes of comic effect, connotations, contemporary references, stereotypes and cliches. Wegman plays on the kitchness and banality of the animal image in contemporary society, whilst at the same time sending up the narcissm and seriousness of some Conceptual art.

Wegman's work can be viewed as part of the postmodern challenge

Illustration no.1

William Wegman, Heels,1981,

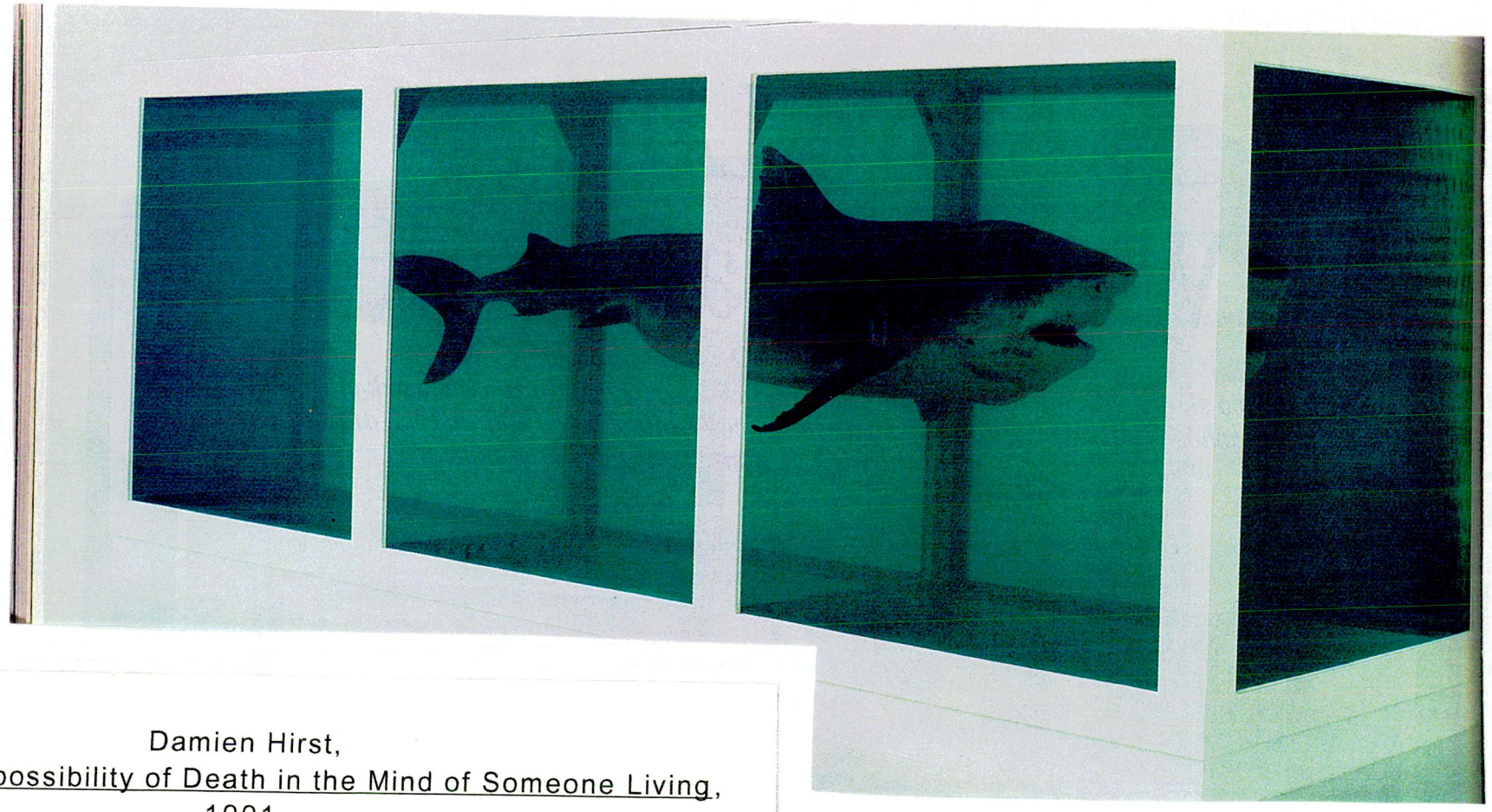
Polaroid colour photograph, 24" by 20".

to artistic elitism, and its attempts to bridge the gaps between high and low culture. A recent review of a group show called Bunnies, illustrates this postmodern deployment of irony and parody

> "Bunnies - unlike the 'death of painting,' the 'rebirth of abstraction,' or the 'return to figuration' - are rarely the conceptual framework for a group show. Bunnies are thought to be cute, huggable, cuddly; even the word, which rhymes with 'funny' and 'sunny', connotes something infinitely friendlier, happier, goofier than art, which almost never aspires to cuteness and only infrequently allows itself to be touched, let alone cuddled."
> (Seward,1995, p.43).

Damien Hirst, however, engages with the concept of the popular-symbolic on a less humourous level, in a way which relates to Baker's definition of the term, stereotype. He sees the function of the stereotype as being, " to cover a world historically produced with the mantle of the universal and the permanent." (Baker,1993, p.28).

Hirst's skill, (some might say his only skill) is what is called in the music business, 'cross over'; that is, his ability to make an impact beyond a single target, in this case the established gallery going audience. The work that has made him such a controversial figure amongst both the public and the critics contains dead animals; a bisected cow with its calf suspended in formaldehyde, and the maggots, decomposing cow's head and bluebottles in A Thousand Years.



Damien Hirst,
The Phyical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living,
1991,
glass, steel, silicone, shark in fomaldehyde solution, 7 by 21 by 7 ft.

Illustration No.2

My aim here is not to discuss whether or not Hirst's work constitutes great art, but rather what it is that gives his images the power to provoke the strong reactions that it does.

There is no doubt that shock is almost a formal element in this work. It is employed in the on-going exploration of universal hopes and fears, including the classic artistic themes of love and death. His use of certain animals stems from the belief that, "Rather than be personal you have to find universal triggers. Everyone's frightened of glass, everyone's frightened of sharks, everyone loves butterflies." (Dannatt, 1993, p.61). Like all generalisations, there is more than a grain of truth in this statement. The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living, whilst simultaneously operating on other levels, blatantly exploits a fear of sharks which is shared by many people, and which for some, borders on the phobic.

Dorothy Cross, in an interview with Richard Pine, discusses the dangers of using the image of an animal which, through it's portrayal in popular films like Jaws, has become a cultural cliche. She says that, for her, in Ebb, the motif of the shark represents an ambiguous mixture of sexual threat, excitement and death. But she is also aware that, because of the other connotations which link it to the popular, it could be regarded as "a rather heavy-handed, obvious joke." (Pine, Irish Times, 12/9/88).

Hirst's attitude takes full advantage of the stereotypical position

that the shark holds in contemporary culture. The success of the piece depends on our being in the same room as a real,16 ft. tiger shark, towards which most of us will have a prejudiced reaction of fear and fascination, and the fact that we will relate that emotion to the title of the piece. Similarly, Hirst can safely count on the fact that, when confronted by the living and dead butterflies in In and Out of Love, we, the audience, will probably feel pleasure tinged with sadness, and be struck by the ephemeral nature of life. They are simple, economic devices, and some would argue that it is not enough to merely present, in a gallery, the creature that induces fear or delight, without any apparent artistic or aesthetic intervention. But for me, the pieces work on this instinctive level. The appeal of the work to common-sense consciousness ties in with Hirst's aim to make work that appeals to as many people as possible,

> "Art has got to stand up to everything else and if it can't, then it doesn't work, I think. That's why it has to be multi-layered, because if you have an idea of an audience then it has to communicate with everybody....You want to make work that is timeless and universal."
> (Wilson,1994, p.9)

Hirst's use of the cow, in pieces like Mother and Child Divided has proved more controversial. These comments in an interview in Flash Art, about his recent work at the DAAD Berlin show, go some way to illustrate his unsentimental, pragmatic approach to this animal.

> "What is the most alive thing and the most dead thing?

It is the cow, because it is traditionally the most slaughtered animal....Cows are like the Coke cans. They are mass-produced. Their individuality is taken out of them." (No.178, Oct.94)

There is no doubt that there are some people who share Hirst's opinion on the object status of the cow in our culture, implied in this quotation. But the cow is not such a predictable or reliable sign as the butterfly or the shark. It possesses another archetypal connotation of motherhood, which immediately imbues it with a more complex and emotive status. Mother and Child Divided obviously acknowledges this association, linking it, I believe, with the maternal in Kristeva's concept of the abject, which I will refer to later on. But in other pieces, like the one mentioned above, from the DAAD Berlin Show, Hirst has obviously chosen to ignore this connotation. The point I wish to make here is that reactions of outrage to some of Hirst's work illustrate the fact that the animal image is a complex and unpredictable one.

Dorothy Cross also appropriates the image of the cow in her Udder series, but she seems to consider and deal with these connotations in a more sensitive manner. In her choice of quotation in the introductory page to this series, in the Bad Girls exhibition catalogue, she acknowledges the simultaneous and interwoven operation of the archetypal symbolic with the popular symbolic role of the cow. The first part of the quotation hints at the mysterious otherness of the creature, and her historically constituted role as a sacred aspect of all

mother and moon goddesses. "The darkest place in the world is the inside of a cow." (I.C.A.,1993, p.20). It is unclear as to whether Cross is the author of this particular statement, but it seems unlikely that it has been written by W.W.Swett, the author of Dairy Husbandman, Division of Dairy Cattle Breeding, who continues, "A dairy cow takes about three years to develop into a milking cow and prove her worth as a producer."(I.C.A.,1993, p.20). I will deal with the wider issues involved in Cross's work in more detail in chapter three. But for now the example goes to illustrate firstly, the attempted reduction of the power and mystery of the animal in contemporary culture, and secondly, the fact that, despite this, certain animals still address profound concerns in the human consciousness.

John Berger's essay, "Why Look at Animals", the opening piece from his 1980 collection, About Looking, has many relevant points to make in connection with an exploration of contemporary attitudes. His concern is to show how historical knowledge shapes our understanding of the altered status of the animal in the present. For Berger, the shift to the modern 'mentalite' happened at the start of the Nineteenth century, when in the early stages of industrialisation, " animals were used as machines" (Berger,1980, p.11) and were later regarded as raw material in the manufacturing process of food production.

He stresses the effects of urbanisation in this reduction of the animal, and compares the powerful symbolism of the pre-industrial past,

when man invested the animal with power, secrets and difference with what Baker terms "the modern urban symbolic". (Baker,1993, p.113). Berger sums up this shift, in a powerful phrase, "Animals first entered our imagination as messengers and promises and now exist as meat or leather or horn. " (Berger,1980, p.2).

He then goes on to identify two other ways in which, he believes, our inauthentic, contemporary relation to the animal is characterised. Firstly, through the family, in the form of pets, Disney films and Beatrix Potter books, and secondly, as spectacle, through zoos, game reserves and wildlife photography.

Berger's idealisation of the rural and his view of the inauthenticity of contemporary, urban culture is problematic, but his essay provides a useful insight into the interconnection of real and symbolic issues within human dealings with animals. It begins to help us to uncover and identify what concerns are being reflected by certain popular, contemporary representations of the animal.

Steve Baker places particular emphasis on the issue of pleasure when dealing with high-street manifestations of the visual animal representation. I believe too, that it is this issue of pleasure that lies at the heart of the formation of prejudices that exist in the art world towards the animal image.

There is no doubt that images of animals, in the form of children's toy's, talking animal characters in films and books, and Athena greetings

cards and posters provide many people, every day, with an enormous amount of pleasure. In Baker's view, these representations reflect a desired reality of nature, an aestheticised and romantic image of the wild where the animality of the real animal is implicitly denied. They seem to evoke a kind of lost Eden, an idyllic state of peaceful, harmonious escape. The danger is that this myth of the animal, constructed to conform to our aesthetic preferences, is turned into a kind of fetish object. (Tester,1991, p.172)

Baker refers to this simplification and sanitization of the animal as "disnification." (Baker,1993, p.174). He clarifies the term by drawing a parallel with a complaint sometimes levelled at Disney films which involve the retelling of traditional fairy tales. These stories have been identified, from a psychoanalytical perspective, as aids to mastering developmental conflicts on the child's journey towards maturity. Disney films, however, through their trivialising and sanitising of these fairy tales, drain them of this mythological richness and psychological depth. Similarly, the disnification of the animal image presents, " a preposterous Athena print world of cuddly co-existence with even the wildest of animals; 'Boy or Girl plus Leopard'- it's what's called the 'Aaah' factor." (Baker,1993, p.181)

The notion of neotony plays a large part in the 'Aaah' factor, and accounts for the popularity of certain living animals, as well as the creation of a certain type of preferred representation. Elizabeth A.

Lawrence describes the condition,

> "Roundness is the essence of the neotenous configuration - round heads, round cheeks. short rounded limbs, and plump, rounded bodies characterise juvenile forms in both man and animals." (Lawrence,1986, p.65)

This physical configuration prompts a positive, human parental care response to the 'cuddly' object. Lawrence notes that doll and toy manufacturers grasped this 'cuteness' principle a long time ago, as did Walt Disney. It also explains the huge popularity of certain living animals, like the giant panda, whose overall shape corresponds to that of the teddy bear.

Baker expands this theory of pleasure in order to make some interesting observations about the relationship between these popular representations of the animal and the animal image in art. He firstly identifies the existence of what he calls 'the discriminating eye', that is, the professional eye of the serious art critic or art historian, and then goes on to note the disdain with which this 'discriminating eye' views the type of coffee-table art publication devoted to the subject of 'animals in art'. As a subject for art they seem to be regarded as a serious or proper field of enquiry, only if the animal itself is not the main focus of interest:

> "Athena prints and greetings cards brimming with cute images of cats exhibit and provoke a greater interest in their subject matter (despite the stereotyped form of their representation) than does the work of the few animal artists who usually escape snobbish disapproval. The general

> public's fascination with animal images is in this sense the sign of their lack of discrimination.The serious cannot countenance the popular, and only the popular can countenance the animal." (Baker,1993, p.193)

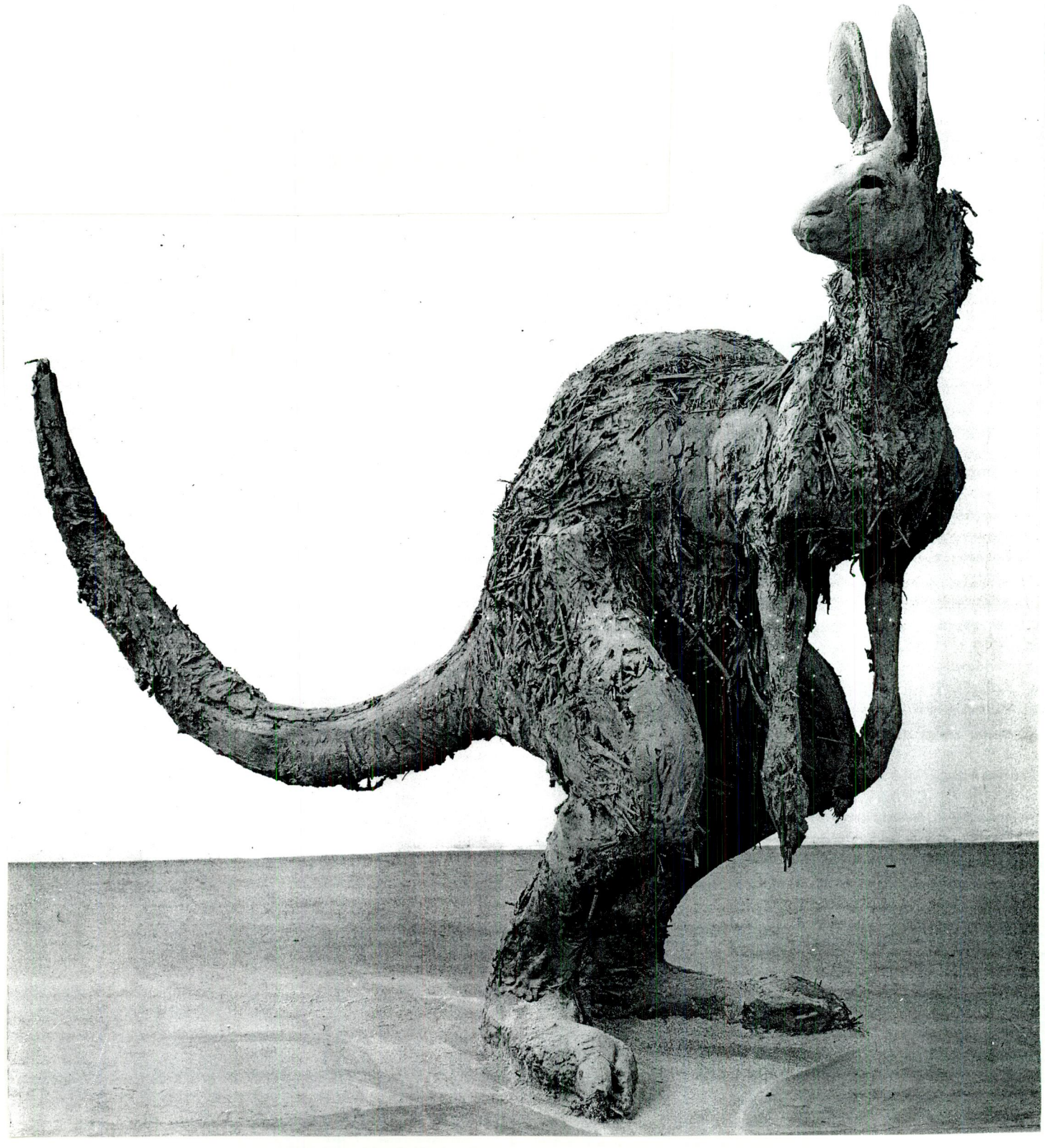
I think this comment accurately sums up the dominant cultural view that the subject of animals is essentially trivial, childish and sentimental, and that they are an inappropriate object for serious critical attention. I will use the example of contemporary animal sculptor, Nicola Hicks, to further explore this theory of art world discrimination, because I believe that there is a denial of the animal in certain manifestations, and that it is linked with an attempt to avoid 'contamination' by the popular.

I propose that work which does contain animal imagery, and is taken seriously, is accepted only because it aligns itself with a specific and narrowly defined agenda. This agenda includes unspoken restrictions on how the animal body is presented, as well as the issues with which it is associated. Because of the way the animal is displayed in Cross's or Hirst's work, for example, there is little danger that a bisected calf or a dried udder skin will generate Baker's dreaded 'Aaah' factor. The deconstructive, critical thrust of postmodern art and the current emphasis on the body, identity, sexuality and the abject means that work which employs the animal image in an engagement with these issues, stands a far greater chance of being accepted than work which falls into the category of 'celebratory'.

Nicola Hicks graduated with an M.A. from the Royal College of Art in 1985. She makes life-size sculptures of animals out of straw and pigmented plaster. In a recent interview in Arts Review UK, David Lee observes that, despite exhibiting and selling her work widely, she has experienced a "curious lack of recognition in the 'serious' art fraternity".(Lee,1993, p.44). Hicks herself seems, understandably, frustrated and disillusioned by the fact. "I seem to be able to affect people fairly directly and yet I am very aware that many important curators have a huge resistance to my kind of work." (Lee,1993, p.44). During the course of the interview, a number of salient points are raised, which may help to pinpoint the basis of this prejudice.

> "In the end it is to her disadvantage that she is perceived as a mere 'animalier' at a time when to be such is considered old-fashioned.....But the strangest irony is that nowadays it is real creatures-dead sharks (Hirst), grazing sheep (Menashe Kadishman) etc - which get into galleries, but not sculptures of them."
> (Lee,1993, p.44)

The art of the animalier could be said to be the beginning of the celebratory tradition of animal art. It flourished in the 19th century with the rapidly growing interest in exotic animals, fostered by the newly established zoos and benefiting from expeditions to European colonies around the world. Artists were encouraged to sketch, paint and sculpt in zoos; Antwerp, for example, had built-in studios and exhibition



Nicola Hicks, Sand Dream 1,1990,

plaster, straw, pigment, 70"high.

Illustration No.3

spaces. The great practitioners, Barye, Rembrandt Bugatti and Francois Pompon, enjoyed huge popular success with their naturalistic , observational studies.

Although Hicks draws from memory, and the accuracy of the physiological details of her subjects is not paramount, she does share a common artistic concern with the animaliers of the past, to represent the beauty of beasts, their movement and expressions. She attempts to avoid sentimentality through the roughness and vitality of her style of representation, and claims that the animals are really metaphors for human emotions, "All my work is about me, my experience of the world and the human condition". (Lee,1993, p.44). But at the end of the day, what is presented is the life-like, life-size figure of an animal; it may be painted blue and possess a mysterious title like, Into the Citadel, but this does not seem to distinguish it clearly enough, for the 'discriminating eye', from those popular representations which are more concerned with the animal itself, than with the aesthetic seriousness of the image.

She describes her work as instinctive rather than intellectual, and it is this decision not to engage with specific, deconstructive concerns, together with the fact that her work cannot be inserted into any political discourse, requiring no previous knowledge of Freud, Lacan or post-structural theory, for example, that accounts for her work being dismissed as old-fashioned by certain critics. There is a sense of

humour inherent in her work but, unlike, for example, Mark Wallinger's appropriation of the traditional style and techniques of racehorse painting, there is very little irony in her reference to the tradition that she draws from. There is no obvious acknowledgement, for example, (although Hicks herself would undoubtedly be aware of the fact), that the animalier's art can be understood to be linked, historically, with a period when captured wild animals served as "simultaneous emblems of human mastery over the natural world and of English dominion over remote territories." (Ritvo,1987, p.209).

The observation that sculptures of animals in galleries seem to have been replaced by the real creatures, is in my opinion, one of the most interesting points raised in the Hicks interview. It is not a new phenomenon. In 1969, Jannis Kounnellis installed twelve live horses in Galleria L'Attico in Rome. His use of live animals and birds in the late sixties was seen as his stressing the need for art to be involved with real life, and the horse piece, in particular, was seen as a statement against the 'chic' atmosphere of the gallery system.

For R.H.Fuchs, writing in the catalogue for Kounnellis's exhibition at the Van Abbemuseum in 1981, the artist's choice of the horse, in this particular piece was, more importantly, a comment on the altered status of this particular animal in the history of art. Fuchs observes that horses were once the pride of art, an expression of nobility, strength, pride and beauty. "In the history of art the horse occupies an aesthetic

position second only to the image of man." (Fuchs,1981, p.32). From the bronzes on the portico of San Marco in Venice to the dying horse in Picasso's "Guernica", they have been present throughout the history of art. But now, here they are, "captured in a gallery, only memories of glory, as pathetic as Delacroix on his little cloud. Homeless art, as out of place as the 'Ciminiera'." (Fuchs,1981, p.29).

Fuchs suggests then, that Kounnellis's horse piece was a comment on the redundancy of traditional symbolism, on the changing role and expectations of the art object and an acknowledgement of the need for a simultaneous development in the forms of artistic representation. Photographer Martha Rosler makes a similar comment in her book, Three Works, on the "impoverishment of representational strategies", and their powerlessness "to deal with the reality that is yet totally comprehended-in-advance of ideology." (Rosler,1981, p.79).

The avant-garde's role has always been to challenge official or sanctioned culture and to employ destabilising strategies in order to achieve a dislocation of thought and disruption of reading in the viewer. The postmodern artist's agenda embraces these avant garde ambitions; the postmodern critique of representation, the challenging of artistic elitism to bridge the gap between high and low culture and the use of marginal and transgressive strategies to shock and subvert, are all time honoured avant garde objectives. The use of real animals, dead or alive, as opposed to traditional representations of them, ties in with this

agenda.

Despite Nicola Hicks's rejection of the traditional sculptural material of cast bronze, in favour of the inherently less valuable and more vulnerable plaster and straw, the form of her work still refers back to the modern period, when the authority of the work rested on the universality that modern aesthetics attributed to a particular form of the representation of vision, in this case, the three dimensional representational sculpture.

The use of the animal corpse, hide or body parts, by artists such as Helen Chadwick, Cross and Hirst, challenges traditional forms of representation and at the same time registers a desired distance from the universal, humanist values that the animal has symbolically represented in the past; universalising assumptions about truth, beauty and nobility on one hand and the primitive, uncivilised, and animalistic on the other. If the postmodern is "a restructuring of modernist assumptions with something larger, fuller, more true." (Jencks,1992, p.11), what could be more true, more irrefutable than the actual object itself? Representations can only ever be the creation of substitutes, and the post-structuralist operation has exposed the agendas behind representations that claim to represent an authentic, true vision of the world. The power and authority of a visual symbol depends on it being distant, unembodied and self-contained, a sealed, perfect container. By exhibiting a corpse or part of the opened body, the immediate, physical

reality of the animal's body is emphasised; it's primary nature and it's vulnerability cannot be denied, and it's symbolic status breaks down. Elaine Scarry observes that, "It is as though the human mind, confronted by the open body itself (whether human or animal) does not have the option of failing to perceive it's reality." (Scarry,1985 p.126).

Hirst's use of the animal corpse, as well as serving his aim to attain a kind of realism, allows him to deal metaphorically with his chosen themes of the transitory nature of human life and the cycles of birth, death and decay. For Hirst the idea of displaying a human being in formaldehyde would not work, because the shock factor would be too great; the piece would lose all metaphoric status. In Hirst's work, the animal acts as a stand-in for the human being. The animal is unique in occupying this position, of at once being close to man, and strange to him. Yet an animal has no conception of it's own mortality, which is presumably why it succeeds as a metaphor for Hirst. Being confronted by an animal, rather than a human corpse means that we cannot escape confronting the concept of death, but that it is not too horrific for us to deal with. Because of the distance that the animal puts between us and the dreaded state of being, Hirst believes that the art work will allow us space to conceive of it's meaning. "I like metaphor, people need to feel distanced. You can look at a fly and think about a person, but if you look at a person who's dead, you start to be aware that death isn't there." (Dannatt,1993, p.62).

Hirst's use of the animal image in this exploration of death, along with Cross's employment of the cow in her examination of sexuality and female power, seems to be part of the contemporary artistic concern with the theme of materiality, "....the consent of life in the body, the reconciliation - momentarily as it may be - with the necessity of physical existence in a physical world." (Jameson,1983, p.10). Otto Rank, whom I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 2, observed from his studies of the animal image in art and religion through the ages, that the animal represents, "the connecting symbol of the return to earthly life."(Rank,1989, p.136). This archetypal identification of the animal with man's materiality has already been noted by J.C.Cooper, so it would seem logical that contemporary artists should return to the animal, when dealing with issues concerning the physical body.

Anthropologist Richard Tapper notes the negative and demeaning connotations associated with this metaphoric or symbolic role of the animal. It is man's demonization of the animal; the flip side of his dualistic thinking.

> "Sometimes certain animals are idealised - used as models of order and morality in animal stories and myths .... the animals are treated as agents and social beings, with motives, values and morals, and differences between them and people are implicitly denied. By contrast, animals are sometimes represented as the Other, the Beast, the Brute, the model of disorder or the way things should not be done. Animals are ideal for both of these purposes...."
> (Tapper,1988, p.51)

This tendency to think dualistically is expressed in binary oppositions such as human:animal, culture:nature, subject:object, civil:savage. I will deal with the connotations of power and domination inherent in these distinctions in the next chapter. But here I would like to concentrate on their purpose, from an anthropological perspective, as part of a continuous process of self-definition, in which the identity of the self is defined in opposition to an animal other or an animalised other. I believe that Julia Kristeva's contribution to this area of thought, within her theory of the abject, plays a substantial part in the appearance of the animal image in some contemporary art.

> "The abject confronts us, on the one hand with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of animal. Thus, by way of abjection, primitive societies have marked out a precise area of their culture in order to remove it from the threatening world of animals or animalism, which were imagined as representative of sex and murder."
> (Kristeva,1982, p.12)

Taking up a symbolic position as a social and speaking subject entails the expulsion of the unclean or disorderly elements of corporeal existence, that which is considered dirty or anti-social. To establish and maintain identity, the human being must differentiate itself from the 'other', which for Kristeva, comes in two distinct and threatening forms, the mother's body and the animal body, both of which threaten the

boundaries of the self. I will refer to the power of the maternal again in relation to Cross's work, but here my concern is with the animal threat, which, to the human subject represents chaos and bestiality.

Confrontation with the abject, in the form of certain foods, bodily waste or the signs of sexual difference, produces a deep unease or disgust in the subject, and requires some mode of control or exclusion to keep it at a safe distance from the symbolic and it's orderly proceedings. This is the social function of the rituals and religious practices which require a distinction between the sacred and the profane.

For Kristeva, the most horrifying example of corporeal waste is the corpse, "The corpse, seen without God and outside of science is the utmost of abjection. It is death meeting life, the abject." (Kristeva, 1982, p.3). The motives of those artists, like Hirst, who choose to use the corpse, or other examples of the abject, in their work can seem unjustifiably pessimistic and pointless. But Kristeva's conclusions about the dynamic possibilities of the abject can, perhaps, provide an insight. "Abjection is a resurrection that has gone through death (of the ego). Is is an alchemy that transforms death drive into a start of life, of new significance." (Kristeva,1989, p.15).

For Elizabeth Gross, abjection, "is an insistence on the subject's necessary relation to death, to animality, and to materiality, being the subject's recognition of and refusal of it's corporeality."(Gross,1990,

p.89). Historically, this explains the anxiety, latent or explicit, about any form of behaviour which threatens to transgress the fragile boundaries between man and the animal. Hairiness, nakedness, mental instability, physical infirmity and lack of control are all examples of behaviour which is viewed as being sub-human, unnatural and threatening to the firm boundaries of ordinary, civilised society.

In art, the notion that the world of nature can symbolise the origins of our own destructive instincts has a long and colourful history, the theme of animal savagery in Romantic art, from Stubbs through to Delacroix, is just one example. The development of psychoanalysis this century, and the appearance of archetypal animal symbolism in the interpretation of dreams within both Jung and Freud's work, provided a new perspective for artists from which to produce images of animals, intended to be shocking and subversive.

The Surrealists were heavily influenced by Freud's writing on the interpretation of dreams and sexuality in the unconscious mind. They celebrated man's animal instincts and viewed sexuality as the life and death force, underlining the links between sexuality and violence, between birth and death. Dorothy Cross's adoption of surreal strategies, particularly in the Udder series, is clearly influenced by the work of artists like Meret Oppenheim. The concerns addressed in Oppenheim's work, as we shall see later, are very much shared by Cross; her comments on so-called 'civilisation' and it's value systems, the

questions she raised about the presence of the 'wild' in the 'civilised', and the focus of her work on the containment and ordering of female sexuality.

As we have seen, the animal image has always possessed the power to provoke strong reactions of pleasure and hatred in the human viewer. The post-structuralist reappraisal of the negative connotations of terms such as animality and the body has meant that, within certain strict, aesthetic limits, the subject of the animal can escape it's connotations of kitchness and return to the world of 'serious' art.

Chapter Two

"A regal soul, inadvertently surrendering to the crab of lust, the octopus of weak mindedness, the shark of individual abjection, the boa of absent morality and the monstrous snail of idiocracy".
(Lautreamont in Kristeva,1982, p.163.)

As I touched on in Chapter 1, I believe that it is a reappraisal of our attitude towards man's 'animality', that partly accounts for the renewed use of animal imagery in contemporary art. In this chapter, I will attempt to briefly examine the historical constitution of these negative connotations, within the universalising assumptions of humanism. The post-structuralist challenge to the body:soul dichotomy, and other binary oppositions, and the current emphasis, particularly in sculpture, on the body, materiality, the abject, sexuality and identity, are all part of this critique of the Enlightenment and it's legacy.

"Writers as diverse as Lyotard, Irigaray, Deleuze, Derrida and Foucault are concerned to challenge the ways in which the body has been relegated to a subordinate or secondary position, relative to the primacy of the mind, consciousness or reason. Each is committed to a non-reductive materialism.... which, rather than mere brute physicality, also includes the materiality of discourses as well as psychical drives and unconscious processes."
(Gross,1990, p.88)

I will draw attention to the connection between man's dominant attitude to actual animals, and his patriarchal attitude towards those other elements that he wishes to dominate and marginalise. That is, the qualities in himself that he considers contemptible, and those members of society that he considers inferior. As the archetypal cultural 'other', that stands in opposition to mind and culture, the animal, in Cross's work for example, represents that other culturally marginalised figure of woman. Author, Ursula Le Guin, comments on the continued existance of this attitude, "In literature, as in real life, women, children and animals are the obscure matter on which civilisation erects itself, phallologically." (Le Guin,1990, p.10)

Postmodern thought works to expose the systems of power that operate behind representational systems, and shows how they collude to maintain the illusion of human identity, centrality and superiority. "The researches of psychoanalysis, of linguistics, of anthropology have 'decentered' the subject in relation to the laws of it's actions, or the play of it's mythical and imaginative discourse" (Foucault,1981, p.33)

The human:animal opposition is just one part of a larger, coherent set of rhetorical oppositions that operate within the culture and can be traced back, as a basic classificatory system in Western thought, at least to Aristotle. Anthropocentric binary distinctions, such as edible:inedible, useful:useless were used to categorise animals in mediaeval and later bestiaries, and it is clear that the function of these

distinctions was not neutral, but guided by a need to maintain the distinction judged necessary between animals and humans in order to advance the theory of human uniqueness and cultural superiority. Laura Mulvey has observed that in most forms of human power relations where one group dominates another, there is a common representational pattern, "the oppressed are linked to nature (the body) and the dominant to culture (and the mind)".(Mulvey,1987, p.11)

Craig Owens makes the link between the Enlightenment on the one hand and representation and mastery on the other, by relaying Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer's treatment of nature in their Dialectic of Enlightenment,1944. "What men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it and other men." (Owens,1992, p.347).

The nature:culture opposition also, of course, entails assumptions about gender inequality. Patriarchal discourses and practices defined women and femininity centrally in terms of reproductive function, equating them with the body and perceiving them as somehow closer to nature than men. Marina Warner outlines this ancient pattern of associations, "Woman was mother and matter, and matter was volatile, dangerous, passive, opposed to spirit and often judged the inferior principle." (Warner,1987, p.251). This is a matter which I will deal with in relation to Dorothy Cross's work but, for now, it serves to illustrate the history of the denial and marginalisation of the material body in Western culture, the emphasis placed on the soul or mind and the

repercussions of the Enlightenment project on those unfortunate enough to be marginalised.

Similarly, the 'animalistic' qualities in man, the base bodily functions and appetites of what Russian author and theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin, calls the 'grotesque body', (Bakhtin,1984, p.303) were increasingly patrolled, and the range of acceptable behaviour carefully and narrowly defined, within the 'civilising' process. The body was constituted as alien, a prison or cage from which the soul, mind or will struggled to escape, consciousness was perceived as being in constant conflict with appetite. The Enlightenment ideal, the Nietzchean 'Uebermensch', transcended the dark cave of man's unconscious, animal nature into the light of pure reason, truth and controlled consciousness.

Otto Rank, writing in the 1930's, was an associate of Adler, Jung and Sigmund Freud. He was a psychologist and poet, novelist and playwright. His book Art and Artist, is a general exploration of human creativity, based on his knowledge of psychology, anthropology and general history. The chapter, "Microcosm and Macrocosm", is of particular interest to us, in the light of the contemporary post-structuralist critique of the Enlightenment and it's legacy, because it clearly illustrates the inherent assumptions, their influence on the history of art and, in particular, the part played by the animal in that history.

Rank traces the development of what he calls the, "self-elevating"

process in the human being and society, "the higher self's triumph over the lower." (Rank,1989,p.163). He does this through a study of art, religion and mythology, which he believes are all products of the human urge to create. He notes, in particular, the immense part played by the animal in the history of religion and art of all times and people. The varying attitudes of man towards the animal at different culture stages, "serves as one of our most enlightening fossil guides to the reconstruction of the history of man's rise from creature to creator - which means from religion to art." (Rank,1989, p.144).

The animal, from materialistic totemism right into spiritual Christianity, in Rank's opinion, remained the connecting symbol of the return to earthly life. He traces the development of the human concept of the soul, from the animalistic idea of rebirth to the spiritual principle of immortality; man's rise "from the culture of the belly to that of the head." (Rank,1909, p.156). The basic idea of 'chthonian' creation - based on an animal analogy - preceded that of the supernatural heavenly creation. The earth's interior, corresponding to the female abdomen, was perceived as the centre of creation and consequently was conceived as the belly of an animal. Later, the whole body came to be the (earthly) underworld and the head or consciousness/will/spirit became heaven, which eventually became identified with man, just as the earth had been with woman/mother.

For Rank, Greek philosophy and art represented the ultimate stage

of man's cultural development. "Thus the victory of the artistic (aesthetic) over the Dionysiac-animalistic (goat) and it's advance to the divine Apollonian." (Rank,1989,p.56). From his study of art, from ancient Oriental to Greek culture, he formulated a principle of form which ran parallel with and supported his developmental theory. For Rank the complete works of the great Modernist sculptor, Rodin, perfectly illustrate this development of the principle of form, which he called "aestheticising extroversion" (Rank,1989,p.155). He claims that we see in the form and content of what is represented, first, man growing out of "the womb of the earth", then his emancipation from the animal (Rodin's "Female Centaur"), and finally, in the "expressive portrait busts, the crystallisation of the purely spiritual, released not only from the mass of earth, but from the body itself." (Rank,1989, p.163)

Post-structuralist theory has inspired challenges to discourses such as these, which were crucial in the intellectual formation of Modernism. The impossibility of universal theories and grand narratives, and the mistaken commitment to the notion of a transcendent truth, have produced a postmodern belief that it is no longer possible to think of history as having a specific direction.

The critique of hierarchical, binary oppositions is just one of the closed and hegemonic ways of thinking addressed by postmodernism. The directive of postmodern cultural practice is to deconstruct, undermine and disrupt the dominant discourses which uphold tradition in our

culture. Linda Hutcheon identifies these discourses as, "the universalising assumptions of humanism ....The familiar humanist separation of art and life (or human imagination and order versus chaos and disorder)....."(Hutcheon,1992, p.79). The re-appraisal of the position of the animal, as an image in art, can be seen to emerge more clearly within the context of this post-structuralist critique.

Chapter Three

"...and each stroke of his tongue ripped off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and left behind a nascent patina of shining hairs. My earrings turned back to water and trickled down my shoulders; I shrugged the drops off my beautiful fur. "
(Carter,1979, p.67)

Dorothy Cross is no stranger to the use of animal imagery. In Ebb, the fish and shark images arose from references to Jung's symbols of the unconscious and Cross's own personal dream imagery. Her most recent work, exhibited at the Kerlin Gallery, employed small dried snakes. The Udder Series was inspired by something Cross saw in a Norwegian museum; a cow's udder made into a sieve.

"It was the shock of the utilitarian, other life of it .... it's about giving the udders another life and of course it's a joke because in the South of Ireland we mispronounce 'other' because we don't have a soft 'th'. It's an overlap of becoming something 'udder''.
(Cross in Bad Girls Catalogue,1994, p.6).

A taxidermist in Dublin provides the udders which Cross then stretches over saddles, shoes, silver dishes, beer bottles and other assorted objects. The most striking thing, visually, about the way Cross uses the udders is, that the large size of the cows teats gives them a

strong resemblance to penises, as reviewer Luke Clancy observed: "....making them fortuitous ready-mades for Cross's Lacanian exploration of the uncertainty of sexual identities and the relation of the phallus to servitude and power." (Irish Times, 24/2/94).

Cross's use of this ambiguous imagery represents the body yet avoids declaring gender. The phallic confusion rejects any fixed reality in the area of sexuality and gender, of feminine as passive, weak and subordinate, and masculine as aggressive, rational and omnipotent. "Perpetual flux defies categorisation and definition." (Chadwick,1994, p.38).

Cross's work is strongly influenced by psychoanalytic theory and the objects of it's enquiry, the unconscious and sexuality. Psychoanalytic theory emphasises the unreliability of fixed, preconceived ideas grounded in biology and the fact that 'male' and 'female' are not reducible to what appears as anatomical features. Lacan's re-reading of Freud posits sexuality as a psychic construction, rather than a physiologic reality. This is supported by feminist writer, Jacqueline Rose:

> "The unconscious constantly reveals the failure of identity. Because there is no continuity of psychic life,so there is no stability of sexual identity, no position for women (or for men) which is simply chieved."
> (Rose,1986, p.90)

The humour of Cross' work is also reminiscent of some of the

French feminist theorists, such as Helene Cixous, who mock the idea of the authority of the phallus. Cross's confusing of the breast with the penis, suggests that the power of the phallus is not absolute and that, in fact, it only assumes its power in relation to the concept of the 'feminine'. In Lacanian thinking, the phallus is considered distinct from it's anatomical referent, the penis, and is a linguistic concept of power, regardless of sex. But Jane Gallop in her book, Thinking through the Body, points out the difference between the theory and the practice:

> "The penis is what men have and women do not; the phallus is the attribute of power which neither men nor women have. But as long as the attribute of power is a phallus which can only have meaning by referring to and being confused with the penis this confusion will support a structure in which it seems reasonable that men have power and women do not." (Gallop,1988, p.127).

Her book, which has been an influence on Cross's work, deals with what the European philosophical tradition calls ' the mind/body problem' and how this, as we have already seen, has resulted in the attempt to render the body invisible, to dominate it "by reducing it to the mind's idealising categories rather than treat it as a site of knowledge, a medium for thought." (Gallop,1988, p.6). For Gallop, the separation of the phallus and the penis in Lacanian theory exemplifies this mind/body split.

> ".....disembodying the phallus and making it transcendental.... the disembodied phallus is the lynch pin of

Dorothy Cross, Amazon, 1992,
tailor's dummy and cow skin, 63" high.
Illustration No.4

the move that raises maleness, a bodily attribute, to the realm of the spirit, leaving femaleness mired in inert flesh." (Gallop,1988, p.8).

Dorothy Cross's provocatively physical images, which combine the breast and the penis and position them as equally powerful, challenge the authority of the phallus in a patriarchal society. They emphasise that the theory is only a construction, it is not concrete and absolute but is open to re-evaluation. "Freud's theory is a myth, a story of a story - the subject's narrative structuring of him or herself. It stops, it fails, it needs retelling another way' (Mitchell,1984, p.311).

Amazon, the piece in which I am particularly interested, is a dressmaker's mannequin, a slim wasted female torso supported on a three legged stand. Brown and white cow hide covers the torso, which swells into one single breast. The once soft, hairy surface is dry and hard, like armour, but at the same time the breast evokes associations of pregnancy and motherhood, nurturing and sustenance. As the catalogue from The Powerhouse, at the Douglas Hyde Gallery, says, "Amazon is confusing in it's assertiveness, claiming 'masculine' power while refusing to surrender 'feminine' fecundity." (Hutchinson,1993, p.98 .)

Cross has dealt with the subject of the mother before, in the Matriarchal series and in Ebb, where she referenced the Jungian archetype of the Great Mother. In the Udder series, she employs the image of the cow, possibly the quintessence of motherhood in the

popular imagination. Roger Albert sums up the ambivalent connotations that are possibly triggered by the image of this animal in the mind of the viewer, "...her reliability, gentleness, infinite patience and mindlessness exemplify the virtues most valued in the maternal role" (Albert,1995, p.34).

Cross's use of the real skin of the cow brings us face to face with the misogynistic cultural attitudes which associate woman with nature, and the patriarchal reduction of 'feminine' to 'mother'. In historically constituted symbolism the cow represents the productive power of the earth, and is an aspect of all mother and moon goddesses, symbolising nourishment and abundance. In Amazon, Cross's juxtaposition of animal skin with the human torso, suggests the negative, contemporary connotations of this aspect of female experience and the cultural devaluation of the maternal.

In both Stabat Mater and Women's Time, Julia Kristeva acknowledges the oppositional structuring in which 'feminine' is aligned with the erotic realm, fecundity and nature and is encoded as the 'other' to culture and philosophy. Allison Finley, in her essay on Kristeva's writing, notes Kristeva's observation that culture idealises motherhood, as that which is most 'natural'. "There is a systematic idealisation of motherhood in the controlled role of nostalgic reminder of a more 'primitive' age, as opposed to the complex sophistries of it's own networks. (Finley,1990, p.60).

Writers like Kristeva and Jane Gallop claim the subversive potential of the site of motherhood, standing as it does, on ".... the threshold of nature and culture; the woman as both mother - guarantor of the community and other, the polymorphic, orgasmic body, laughing and desiring." (Kristeva,1977, p.118). The reference to the mythical, athletic warriors in the title of Cross's piece echoes this potential power of the feminine.

Within her writing, Kristeva acknowledges feminism's ambivalent attitude towards motherhood. She suggests that any work dealing with the subject has to take a middle road between outright rejection and a blanket celebration, which doesn't take into consideration it's constraints. As Dorothy Cross's work illustrates, any concern with female power must entail consideration of this important but potentially treacherous area. The age old connections, which bind 'woman' and her reproductive powers to Nature, have to be acknowledged and negotiated carefully if the patriarchal reduction of woman to mother is to be avoided.

Cross's use of the actual skin emphasises the material reality of the animal, and reminds us of the fact that it was once alive. There is no escaping the brutal devaluation of the cow's symbolic status and her everyday reduction to meat, leather or horn. At the same time, connotations of the physical, female 'grotesque body' operate to undermine the cultural idealisation of motherhood.

It seems to me that Amazon, in particular, plays on Kristeva's concept of the "monstrous feminine" (Kristeva,1980, p.92), which is her psychoanalytic account of why the maternal body can be the object of horror. This feeling is based on the fear of reincorporation into the mother, as well as the fear of her generative power. In becoming a subject, with defined boundaries of identity, the child has to separate from the mother's body. As a result of the trauma of separation the maternal body becomes 'abject' - an object of threat and horror.

There is no doubt that Amazon produces a feeling of unrest and disquiet in the viewer. According to Roger Malbert's essay, in the Fetishism Catalogue, "Mannequins are a prototype of the uncanny, an article of furniture in human form." (Albert,1995, p.94). The notion of the uncanny, theorised as a category of art, derives from Freud who used the German word, 'Unheimlich' meaning 'disquieting' to suggest the disruption of the familiar by apprehensions of 'otherness'. The Surrealist's strategies of fusion and displacement to undercut form and function, no doubt derive from Freud's observation, and here, similar strategies perfectly serve Cross's originally stated purpose, "to give the udders another life." (Bad Girls Catalogue,1994, p.6).

The further addition of the 'otherness' of the animal skin serves to increase the uncanny feeling, and takes it's lead from Meret Oppenheim, who first took advantage of the power of animal hair to unsettle, invite and amuse. Le Dejeuner en Furrier of 1937 - the teacup, saucer and

spoon covered in Chinese antelope hide - makes an economic visual pun on the twin themes of food and sex, and the 'civilised' suppression of female sexuality. Her Project for sandals, a high heeled shoe with furry foot and toes, and her design for a pair of bear-paw gloves, complete with claws, are all playful references to "the beast within", a kind of female alter-ego, identified by Marina Warner in From the Beast to the Blonde. (Warner,1994, p.184). Oppenheim's drawings and sculptural pieces acknowledge the existence of this alter-ego, who is free from the confines of civilised society,and inhabits an animal world of sensuality and savagery, where the conventional hierarchy of values is turned upside down. The Surrealists believed, in the manner of post-Freudian optimism, that the liberation of sexual energy would lead to wider freedom and fulfilment. For both Oppenheim and Leonora Carrington, who also explored animal metaphors in her writing and art, the beast symbolised desire, creativity and self-expression; a manifestation of female personal power, easily crushed by convention. As Marina Warner writes, in her observation of the metamorphosis of the heroine into animal form in fairy tales:

> "The stories express the difficulty experienced by young women entering sexual life in a social context where the pattern of sinful woman is Eve, who had carnal knowledge and was fatal to humanity, and the pattern of goodness is Mary, the Virgin." (Warner,1994, p.355)

Cross's work always contains an awareness of the power of the

Church in Irish society, of Christian theology's systematic idealisation of motherhood and the establishment of the Virgin as 'paradigmatic' mother. Cross's Pieta , with the tip of the Virgin's head moulded as a nipple, acknowledges Mary's continued importance for the devotional needs of communities, in that she represents the fantasy of the totally good mother with the nourishing breast, whilst at the same time attempting to bring her back down to earth and ground her in some kind of material reality.

The association of desire, as an instinct, with the animal is an age-old one, as we have seen, with all the attendant negative connotations of 'regressive' nature, and the inferior and despised aspects of humanity. Cross's exploration of female power and potency is part of the move, started in the late sixties by female artists, to relocate the female body as a sexual subject. Because the dominant culture of patriarchy has already defined and situated the female body, within it's oppositional categories, the task of redefining the feminine is fraught with difficulties and contradictions. By appropriating an already defined image or metaphor in this context, like the animal, one's intentions can be easily misunderstood. There is a thin line between employing this image in order to criticise it, and being seen to be subscribing to the very same set of dominant values that one is aiming to undermine. This is the danger that artists like Dorothy Cross, who employ animal imagery in the realm of female sexuality, face.

To successfully relocate the female body as a sexual subject, artists like Cross, Helen Chadwick and Cathy de Monchaux and writers like Kristeva and Gallop have developed the strategy of attempting to place the body on a par with the mind, thus achieving a new balance, where neither one takes precedence. In Thinking Through the Body, Gallop urges women "....to enter the realm of critical thought and knowledge without becoming disembodied spirit, universal man: to make connections between academic work and memories, sexuality and dreams." (Gallop,1988, p.7)

With Amazon, I believe Cross succeeds in fulfilling all of Gallop's criteria. The piece makes an immediate impact on a visceral, physical level with its connotations of animal 'otherness', and sustains the viewer's intellectual interest through its textual references to late feminist and post-Lacanian theory and it's use of Surreal strategies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it would appear that those contemporary artists, who employ animal imagery in their work, seem to approach the subject in two ways. But at the heart of both, lies the recognition and acknowledgement of the animal qualities in humans.

The first, exemplified by Wegman and Wallinger, involves a head-on confrontation with its connotations of kitchness, in order to comment ironically on those existing values and structures in society, which divide the elite from the popular.

The second approach acknowledges and exploits the animal's ability to disturb our sense of identity and is used by artists like Hirst and Cross, to provoke a dislocation of thought and disruption of reading in the viewer. Female artists, such as Chadwick and Cross, further employ the animal in a more specific challenge to the limitations of gender stereotypes, which link woman to nature and the body.

Taking the animal image as a starting point from which to examine the mentality of a society and focusing, in particular, on the relatively tiny minority of that society whose primary interest is art, has been a fascinating exploration. But I am aware that it has necessitated looking at several large and complicated issues from a relatively limited

perspective. The subject of postmodernism is a hugely complex and constantly shifting movement, but I have chosen to focus on only isolated areas, in order to clarify my argument. Similarly, my interest in the subjects of feminism and psychoanalysis has had to be strongly focused, and related to the matter in hand.

It remains to be seen how the image of the animal will fare in the future, whether it will disappear underground again, or adapt and survive as the focus and concerns of contemporary art alter and develop. As an avid viewer of both contemporary art and animals, I will be watching with interest.

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