I am the author of the thesis entitled Feminist Poetics: Symbolism in an Emblematic Journey Reflecting Self and Vision submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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FEMINIST POETICS: Symbolism in an Emblematic Journey Reflecting
Self and Vision

BY ELAINE d'ESTERRE

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Arts

April 1999
I certify that the thesis entitled *Feminist Poetics: Symbolism in an Emblematic Journey Reflecting Self and Vision*

submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis in whole or in part has not been submitted for an award, including a higher degree, to any other university or institution.

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DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

DISPOSITION OF THESIS

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Signed

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Name  ELAINE d'ESTERRE

Date  ...1.11.99……………………………………………………………………………………………………
Table of Contents

List of Illustrations vii
List of Plates viii
Abstract ix
Summary xi
Acknowledgments xiii
Introduction xiv

PART 1 Minoan Symbolism and European Oil Painting

CHAPTER 1 The Migration of Symbols and their Relation to Beliefs and Iconography 1
Relevant Symbols and Meanings 1
The Keyhole as a Private Symbol 1
Feminist Epistemology in Relation to Minoan Antiquities 8
Symbols and Minoan Relics 9
Symbols and Greek Myths 15
The Medusa Myth 16
Male Dying God Symbolism 17
Conclusion 18

CHAPTER 2 Symbolic Meanings In European Oil Paintings 21
Symbols, Gender and Vision 21
Women: Vision and Disguised Symbols 21
Men: Vision and Disguised Symbols 24
Conclusion 28
CHAPTER 3 The Transposition of Minoan Symbolism into European Oil Paintings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emblem</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegory</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PART 2 FEMINIST POETICS: ICONOGRAPHY AND TECHNIQUES

CHAPTER 4 Iconographical Code and Vision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emblems of Self and Vision</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Omnipotence and Omnivoyance</em></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emblems of Shared Vision</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mother and Daughter</em></td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emblematic Journey</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision and Context</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision and Inheritance</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision and Perspective as a Symbolic Form</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes and Wounds</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision: Control and Hierarchy</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emblem and Allegory</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision and the Senses</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision and Desire</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Vision: The Male Gaze or Symbolic Death in the Adyton</em></td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 5 Formal Considerations and Techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Analysis of a Painting</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Format</em></td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Line</em></td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tone</em></td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Colour</em></td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Composition</em></td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Symbolism in Paint
Alice Neel
Wendy Stavrianos
Susan Norrie
Jenny Saville
Scopic Regimes
The Gaze and Glance
Outline of my Process
Illusioism
Space and Time
Light, Dark and Contrast
Composition
Method
Journals
Canvas
Hanging and Sequence of Paintings
Conclusion

Conclusion

Endnotes

References

Bibliography
List of Illustrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Knossos Labyrinth (Palace of Minos)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Theran Adyton Fresco</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Hagia Triada Sarcophagus</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pillar Crypt</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The Ring of Nestor</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Minoan Funerary Shrine, 1100-1000 BC</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Minoan Snake Goddess, 1500 BC</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Title Page of the <em>Orbita Probitatis</em>, 1603</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Albrecht Dürer, <em>Self-Portrait</em>, 1500</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Artemisia Gentileschi, <em>Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting</em>, 1630</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Diego Velázquez, <em>Las Meninas</em>, 1656</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Master of the Holy Kinship, <em>The Mass of Saint Gregory</em> (Cologne; ca. 1500)</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Marcel Duchamp, <em>Etant Donnés</em>, 1966</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Journal depictions of Minoan antiquities, 1993</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Journal depictions of poetic symbols</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The Original Sudarium, preliminary sketches from journal, 20-6-94 to 3-10-94</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Plates

Studio Research - Elaine d'Esterre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plate Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The Face and Horn, 1994, oil on canvas</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Another Menstrous Eye 1, 1994, oil on canvas</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Another Menstrous Eye 2, 1994, oil on canvas</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Snake/Paint, 1994, oil on canvas</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Les Dentata, 1994, oil on canvas</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>False Dentata, 1994, oil on canvas</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Homage to Artemisia Gentileschi, 1994-95, oil on canvas</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The Original Sudarium, 1994-97, diptych, oil on canvas</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The Thread in the Labyrinth, 1994-97, diptych, oil on canvas</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The Eye Ritual, 1995-96, diptych, oil on canvas</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>About the Witch, 1995-97, triptych, oil on canvas</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Gaze in the Labyrinth, 1996-97, oil on plywood</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>The Visionary Thread, 1996-97, oil on canvas</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Interior Column, 1996-97, oil on canvas</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Behind the Mask of Medusa, 1996-97, suite of three, oil on canvas</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>The Face and Horn, 1994, pen and ink, charcoal and pastel</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>The Visionary Thread, 1995, underpainting</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Interior Column, 1996, underpainting</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The plates from numbers 1 to 15 are situated in Chapter 4 in their intended hanging sequence.
Abstract

My thesis titled *Feminist Poetics: Symbolism in an Emblematic Journey Reflecting Self and Vision*, consists of thirty oil paintings on canvas, several preparatory sketches and drawings in different media on paper, and is supported and elucidated by an exegesis. The paintings on unframed canvases reveal *mise en scènes* and emblems that present to the viewer a drama about links between identities, differences, relationships and vision. Images of my daughter, friends and myself fill single canvases, suites of paintings, diptychs and triptychs. The impetus behind my research derives from my recognition of the cultural means by which women’s experience is excluded from a representational norm or ideal.

I use time-honoured devices, such as, illusionist imagery, aspects of portraiture, complex fractured atmospheric space, paintings and drawings within paintings, mirrors and reflective surfaces, shadows and architectural devices. They structure my compositions in a way that envelops the viewer in my internal world of ideas. Some of these features function symbolically, as emblems. A small part of the imagery relies on verisimilitude, such as my hands and their shadow and my single observing eye enclosed by my glasses. What remains is a fantasy world, ‘seen’ by the image of my other eye, or ‘faction’, based on memories and texts explaining the significance of ancient Minoan symbols.

In my paintings, I base the subjects of this fantasy on my memories of the Knossos Labyrinth and matrific symbols, such as the pillar, snake, blood, eye and horn. They suggest the presence of a ritual where initiates descended into the *adyton* (holy of holies) or sunken areas in the Labyrinth. The paintings attempt a ‘rewriting’ of sacrality and gender by adopting the symbolism of death, transformation and resurrection in the *adyton*. The significance of my emblematic imagery is that it constructs a foundation narrative about vision and insight.

I sought symbolic attributes shared by European oil painting and Minoan antiquity. Both traditions share symbolic attributes with male dying gods in Greek myths and Medusa plays a central part in this linkage. I argue that her attributes seem identical to both those of the dying gods and Minoan goddesses. In the Minoan context these symbols suggest metaphors for the female body and the mother and daughter blood line. When the symbols align with the beheaded Medusa in a patriarchal context, both her image and her attributes represent cautionary tales about female sexuality that have repercussions for aspects of vision. In Renaissance and Baroque oil painting Medusa’s image served as a vehicle for an allegory that personified the triumph of reason over the senses. In the twentieth century, the *vagina dentata* suggests her image, a personified image of irrational emotion that some male Surrealists celebrated as a muse. She is
implicated in the male gaze as a site of castration and her representation suggests a symbolic form pertaining to perspective. Medusa's image, its negative sexual and violent connotations, seemed like a keystone linking iconographic codes in European oil painting to Minoan antiquity.

I fused aspects of matrific Minoan antiquity with elements of European oil paintings in the form of disguised attribute gestures, objects and architectural environments. I selected three paintings, Dürer's *Self-Portrait*, 1500, Gentileschi's *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting*, 1630 and Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, 1656 as models because I detected echoes of Minoan symbolism in the attributes of their subjects and backgrounds. My revision of Medusa's image by connecting it to Minoan antiquity established a feminist means of representation in the largely male-dominated tradition of oil painting. These paintings also suggested painting techniques that were useful to me.

Through my representations of my emblematic journey I questioned the narrow focus placed on phallic symbols when I explored how their meanings may have been formed within a matricentric culture. I retained the key symbols of the patriarchal foundation narratives about vision but removed images of violence and their link to desire and replaced it with a ritual form of symbolic death. I challenged the binary oppositional defined Self as opposed to Other by constructing a complex, fluid Self that interacts with others. A multi-directional gaze between subjects, viewers and artist replaces the male gaze.

Different qualities of paint, coagulation and random flow form a blood symbolism. Many layers of paint retaining some aspects of the Gaze and Glance, fuse and separate intermittently to construct and define form. The sense of motion and fluidity constructs a form of multi-faceted selves.

The supporting document, the exegesis is in two parts. In the first part, I discuss the Minoan sources of my iconography and the symbolic gender specific meanings suggested by particular symbols and their changed meanings in European oil painting. I explain how I integrate Minoan symbols into European oil paintings as a form of disguised symbolism. In the second part I explain how my alternative use of symbolism and paint alludes to a feminist poetic.
Summary

Candidate: Elaine d'Esterre


Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisor: Dr. Frances Devlin Glass

My thesis Feminist Poetics: Symbolism in an Emblematic Journey Reflecting Self and Vision, consists of an exhibition of paintings, drawings and an exegesis. My research investigates how the integration of Minoan symbols into European oil painting could influence aspects of women's representation 'in art.' I reclaim from Greek mythology key symbols that involved a Minoan goddess or priestesses and an ancient ritual in the Labyrinth about resurrection. I integrated them into my oil painting as disguised symbols because they suggested metaphors for the female mind, body and vision.

My aim was to find a foundation narrative about self, vision and insight. I sought an alternative to the way women's images, violence and violent blinding were subtexts to resurrection and vision. In the Western canon these capacities pass from father to son.

I depict significant others who share my emblematic journey. My vision, which is transmitted from mother to daughter, also includes friends or colleagues. In this way I expand narrow focusses on phallic symbols, the hierarchy and control of the gaze and the symbolic form of perspective. I use qualities of oil paint, its vehicles and multi-layering, to amplify the images of disguised symbols.

In the first part of the exegesis I argue that a different symbolic code within the iconography of oil painting may change some aspects of women's representation and its links to desire and violence. However, I utilise elements of three particular European oil paintings because they retain in their imagery suggestions of Minoan symbolism. Part 2 is centred on analysing the positions of disguised symbols in relation to figures as
attribute gestures and objects. Their meanings augmented by particular paint applications and formal and technical considerations, suggest a feminist poetic.

By demonstrating in my paintings that women’s representations and aspects of vision can change, I conclude that male-dominated European oil painting can expand some of its terms of reference.
Acknowledgments

I thank my lecturers at the University of Ballarat who encouraged my inquiry into symbols and their relationships to figurative images. Sally Miller and Allan Mann helped me with a proposal for an overseas travel award. This enabled me to visit the museums, relics and ruins of Crete to investigate women's images which seemed devoid of violence in the Minoan era. I thank the organiser of The Vic TV Visual Arts Travelling Award, Anne Saunders. Also Georgia Revis who allowed me to live at her house at Mirsini on the island of Crete and whose advice about the local conditions and customs was invaluable. Thanks are due to my daughter, Natalie Utmar who was my photographer and companion on the trip. Without this background the paintings and their exegesis may not have come to fruition.

I would like to thank the women who consented to be represented as subjects: Loris Button, Lois Howard, Sally Miller, Carole Moschetti, Natalie Utmar and Debra Watkins.

Ron Quick has been my principal and associate supervisor. My thanks to Ron for his guidance relating to formal and theoretical issues. He organised 'intensives' at the Warmambool campus, studio visits and encouraged me to undertake the colloquium process.

Fellow artists and feminists Debra Watkins, Lyn Connellan, Carole Moschetti and Tania Lienert have supported and questioned my ideas that contributed to further clarification. My principal supervisor was Dr. Frances Devlin Glass whose knowledge and guidance in the areas of women's spirituality in pre-history and feminist critiques were invaluable. An exemplar of patience and constructive criticism and enthusiasm, she piloted me through the difficulties that I encountered writing the exegesis. She encouraged me to present papers and exhibitions of my paintings at conferences. Everyone concerned with the production of my thesis and exegesis has contributed to my understanding of how a positive alternative to the narratives of propitiatory violence in the Western canon can be challenged.
Introduction

My research investigates women's representations and attributes that derive their meanings from Minoan symbols. My aim was to represent aspects of identities and differences encompassed in an emblematic journey that commented on vision. In an exhibition of thirty oil paintings, preliminary drawings and their exegesis Feminist Poetics: Symbolism in an Emblematic Journey Reflecting the Self and Vision, I introduce the viewer to these concerns. I develop several themes and incorporate them into an allegory about vision, based on a poetic of death and resurrection. However, my terms of reference are not Christian but relate to a pre-Christian Minoan goddess in the environment of the Knossos Labyrinth. The first theme deals with self-representations and how they relate to the position of the viewer, the second with shared visions between colleagues, and the third addresses the transmission of vision through a mother and daughter line of inheritance or matrilineage.

The context for this metaphorical representation of vision, a descent into darkness, is the adyton (holy of holies) area of the Labyrinth (Evans, 1899-1900; S. Marinatos, 1941; Nilsson, 1950; N. Marinatos, 1984, 1993; Castelden, 1990) where initiates face a symbolic death and resurrection. This allegory uses particular Minoan matrastic symbols that refer to the female mind and body. These symbols form emblematic images in my early paintings. Later they develop into an allegory where figures with attribute gestures, objects and architectural elements function as disguised symbols. I give seemingly straightforward images, ulterior meanings (Cassidy, 1993: 6).

The paintings hang loosely in a sequence. In the exegesis, I explicate how the early paintings refer to entering the space of a keyhole that metaphorically conveys aspects of the Labyrinth as well as a type of vision. The later works refer to the activities that may have occurred in this architectural environment. Symbols and signs depicted on figurines and within images of rituals in the Labyrinth do not retain their iconic forms. The changed forms as disguised symbols are still reminiscent of their ancient origins when I transfer them into a contemporary cultural context. I play out an allegory about vision and its relationship to women's representation, depicting images of canvases situated within studio backgrounds.

The impetus behind my research derives from my recognition of the cultural means by which women's experience is excluded from a representational norm or ideal. Lacanian theory, especially the 'mirror stage', privileged sight over the senses as the way in which an individual subject gained her/his sense of imaginary bodily unity. The effect of this theory was to sideline any discussion of the materiality of women's bodies. Women's supposed closeness to nature in art was also problematic because in this way the female image functioned as a vehicle for allegory about the Other.
My interest in the subject of vision was not to place vision, as sight, in opposition to materiality. I sought to integrate aspects of vision with the material body. Could I construct images which represented a self that was not defined by vision alone, but neither be a self that was defined totally by referring to the body?

Luce Irigaray thought that the process of privileging sight and the use of mirrors had the effect of flattening the shape and volume of women's images. This effect could change by the use of a speculum. The result was a reflection, an illusion of volume that incorporated the female body (1985a). This indication of volume as a form would represent the material body more accurately than the flattened and distorting mirror image.

According to Irigaray, the symbolic and imaginary form of the male body determines the subject and women are still inscribed as being what men are not. This understanding explains the limited repertoire of images: the femme fatale, the virgin, mother and the nymph. Irigaray draws on what is repressed in psychoanalytical theory, such as the link between mother and daughter, to recuperate a bodily symbolic language which patriarchy seeks to occlude (Irigaray, 1991: 43). Margaret Whitford describes Irigaray's strategy by the term 'poetics of the body' (Whitford, 1991: 173). In my paintings, I seek to develop a new and modern allegory and emblems about aspects of sight, vision and the specificity of a woman's body. By appropriating matrific Minoan symbols I suggest metaphors for the female mind, body, a blood line and matrilineage that may serve to recuperate a symbolic language. In this way, the women whom I portray are not defined by their relation to male kin. The mother-daughter relationship is one of my foci.

Irigaray's descriptions of bodily characteristics provided me with some visual and painterly metaphors because her definitions, and some characteristics of the oil painting medium, shared similar qualities. I use these metaphors as starting points to investigate the representation, especially in paint, of the female body and its 'disgusting' and abject fluids (Douglas, 1966; Kristeva, 1983).

In my language of painting, I construct female forms symbolically by using opaque paint to allude to solidity, semi-opaque and semi-transparent paint to approximate fluidity and washes and glazes to refer to liquidity. I construct images (with attention to their volume), visually and formally where the still solid areas of the forms dissolve gradually into fluid, moving, random areas of the image.

My methodology seeks to connect imagery and the matrific meanings of ancient Minoan symbolism to male-dominated European oil painting. My research focussed on reappropriating ancient symbolic language, and transpose aspects of it into my work, I visited the museums in Crete that displayed Minoan antiquities, and then the ruins in which they were found. I combined visual memories and records in my journal with
mental images that occurred from reading texts about certain rituals, and this synthesis was the foundation on which I based my allegory. I found symbolic attributes and gestures within the tradition of European oil painting that resembled Minoan symbols and signs. Disguised matrific symbols are transposed from their context into European oil paintings as parts of small areas around figures and objects.

There were commonalities between architectural elements in both traditions. The sense of stillness in Las Meninas, by Velázquez, the compositional elements and low subdued tones and receding atmospheric space were visual stimuli that triggered my memory and seemed reminiscent of the Labyrinth. The symbols encoded in my images of eyes, hands, paint, brushes, palettes, doorways, mirrors, horns, pillars and columns, keyholes and dark passages originating from Minoan antiquities and frescoes associated mostly with the adyton area, are present in the Knossos Labyrinth.

In many European oil paintings, images of symbolic objects that often referred to antiquity were integrated into compositions as figurative gestures, attribute objects and architectural elements. In Velázquez's Las Meninas, 1656, there is an image within an image of a painting called The Rape of Europa on the rear wall. It is Arachne's tapestry situated within a painting called The Fable of Arachne. The Greek myth about Europa links her to Crete and to Zeus who was born on the island, on Mt Dikte. The image of the Labyrinth in Cesare Ripa's handbook, Iconologia, a source of iconography and iconology may have been the model for Velázquez's composition as both images share common features.

In my paintings, one central element is the keyhole. It is a device I use to link Minoan symbolism to European oil painting. This linking image combines figurative and architectural elements. Its head-like shape of the aperture and 'neck' resembles the format of a portrait figure. The keyhole as an architectural element, also functioned as a window or an entrance to a dark interior. This 'portrait' image and its integration into a complex of attributes derived from Minoan symbols, was my principal concern during the construction of the early compositions.

I wanted to develop the image of the keyhole, extend its function to represent aspects of both an allegory and my subjectivity. The only faithful representation of 'reality' on these imaginary heads in the early paintings is the image of one of my eyes. The other eye transforms into a disguised symbol relating to aspects of Minoan symbols or rituals. The eyes in the first suite of paintings attest to this procedure. An eye in each painting depicted symbolically in red, black and white refers to matrilineage. In Another Menstruous Eye 2, 1994, a symbolic eye painted on my palette obscures the 'real' eye. A horned rectangle drawn over the painted eye refers to an element of funerary architecture.

My focus was not on portraiture per se but on symbols and self-representation combined with depictions from memories synthesised with images gleaned from relevant
texts. I developed this visual material into oil paintings by using aspects of automatism to produce unexpected juxtapositions of fantasy and 'reality'.

Historicism, allegory and narrative content embraced by postmodern deconstruction critiques a position within the master narrative of a male version of history or religion without offering an alternative that facilitates women's stories. Rather than explore how women are represented I investigate how I may be able to change aspects of representation.

My style of painting had been a process of selection and rejection similar to that of many women artists influenced by Surrealism. I selected and retained many techniques of chance or automatism like decalcomania, frottage and drawing with my eyes closed, grattage, fumage and found images that I re-aligned with paintings, drawings, prints, and dream images. However I did not consider these automatic processes as ends in themselves but the raw material of the unconscious to be interpreted and ordered into paintings to augment a wider meaning. I suggest a connection between the world of the mind and emotion linked to a vision emanating from both body and mind.

Artists involved in André Breton's Surrealist movement produced images that functioned as self-portraits which aimed to reveal self-knowledge. By linking individual representations of Freudian unconscious to a collective fantasy of woman as muse, they sought to acquire a way into the irrational, using it as a means for social and cultural revolt. The manifestation of this romantic, sexual fantasy meant that when actual women were depicted they were portrayed as a male version of an ideal woman or muse.

In one sense all Surrealist paintings are self-portraits, their sources internal rather than external, their imagery indistinguishable from the structure and functioning of their creator's minds, their goal self-knowledge but very few of those by male artists contain recognisable self images (Chadwick, 1985: 66).

The gaze of many male artists and viewers, saw the image of a woman as a 'representation' of the source and object of male desire: muse, his mediator with nature and the unconscious, embodiment of _amour fou_ and emblem of revolution that was part of the Surrealist doctrine against which women struggled (Orenstein, 1973, 1982; Hubert, 1984; Chadwick, 1985; Kaplan, 1988; Raaberg, 1991: 2). The image of woman in the Surrealist creative process was that of the _femme-enfant_, the naive woman child. Her supposed spontaneous innocence, uncorrupted by logic and reason, brought her into closer contact with the intuitive realm of the unconscious so crucial to male Surrealist ideology. In the _Second Sex_ Simone de Beauvoir pointed out that women defined by men as 'Other' rather than 'Self' had no space as real women. "Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as an Other" [1949] (1953: 9).
I identified with women artists' ambivalence about their association with aspects of the Surrealists' ideology. They depicted themselves as recognisable people rather than as a muse of male sexual fantasy (informed by sado-masochism) even though the subject of the work was not the self-portrait *per se*. The female artist's subconscious, states of transition or metaphysical journeys was conveyed by background information, characters involved in theatrical and mysterious rituals, hallucinatory and organic landscapes and strange architectural constructions, based on myth, occult and hermetic ideas. Alternatively, Frida Kahlo depicted the drama of her experience of being born as a way to challenge the categorisation of woman as muse. Remedios Varo characterised herself as a woman with a delicate heart-shaped face, long, sharp nose and a thick mane of hair.

Like Varo, I integrate images of identity into emblematic journeys. However, Varo invents journeys where the main character bears her features. For example she transformed traditional male mythical heroes into female form, creating a female Minotaur, who holds a magical key before a mysterious floating keyhole in *Minotaur*, 1959 (Kaplan, 1988: 215).

The mental journey of the Surrealists conceptualised by the metaphor of the hero's advance into the Labyrinth and conquest of the Minotaur was revised by Rita Kerrn-Larsen and Edith Rimmington. The metaphor of descent into the depths of the sea was sea, surrounding the unconscious with a watery bath capable of giving birth to works of art rather than to goddesses of love. Descending into the sea was compared to descending into the unknown behind the mirror. In *Spejlets Revers*, 1936, Kerrn-Larsen depicts a female figure descending a staircase behind a broken mirror. Another dream-like figure crosses the liminal space into a seascape. The lower steps transform into ripples that 'grow' into seaweed. An island on the horizon-line is a triangular shape that she repeats. The shape when repeated above the horizon-line suggests clouds. The combination of celestial and chthonian metaphors was a characteristic of Minoan images. Kerrn-Larsen used academic studies of nudes to help anchor in reality the flow of images that arise from the unconscious (Chadwick, 1985).

My keyhole image and the broken shape of Kerrn-Larsen's mirror both function as metaphors indicating a rite of passage. In these transitional spaces I enact an emblematic journey.

Varo omitted the violence of Theseus from her painting when she depicted herself as the Minotaur. Like Varo, I also contest the violence of foundation narratives, such as those of the dying god, demi-god and hero or anti-hero. Instead, in my allegory, the mother and daughter, as agents, symbolically link flesh and blood to vision. In this way they function as personification of vision.

In *The Visionary Thread*, 1996-97, I construct pictorial elements where the line of the gaze through this dark space flows in many directions, as snake-like menstrual blood
from the column and paint from the palette. This metaphor relates to the female body rather than the blood of fleshly mortification and violence, signifying resurrection and metaphorical line of vision. In my allegory about vision, the thread of blood becomes the thread of light and the lines of vision. In Thread in the Labyrinth, 1996-97, red paint in the first panel becomes red light in the second panel.

I use time-honoured devices derived from narrative genre painting. In this format, encoded symbolism loses its literal representation and I represent objects in a poetic form echoing the Minoan past. I combine fantasy with 'reality' by retaining aspects of the maniera style as did Varo and later Paula Rego. Aspects of Baroque illusionism such as naturalism, Caravaggio’s style of chiaroscuro (which influenced Gentileschi and Velázquez) catching a moment in time, engaging with the presence of the viewer, are some characteristics of the period I employ. The pictorial devices placed within mise-en-scènes with symbolic meanings are the image of the mirror, doorways, columns, reflections and paintings within paintings. Mirrors and doorways are figurative and literal entrances to the Labyrinth. Paintings within paintings reinforce messages the artist conveys throughout the composition. This device used by Paula Rego in Joseph’s Dream, 1990, subverts representations of male authority by revising the allusion to Biblical tradition in the title and suggest narratives about women’s transcendence.

I refer to painters from the past in order to integrate the content of Minoan symbolism into the format of oil painting. Three paintings facilitated my transformation of symbols into disguised symbols, from their status as religious symbols into secular attributes. I integrate the wide-eyed gaze of some Minoan goddesses into an image of an omnivoyant type of gaze. An oil painting that characterises this gaze is Dürer’s Self-Portrait, 1500. I portray another symbolic attribute shared by several Minoan goddesses, that of upraised arms, and find a parallel in Gentileschi’s Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting, 1630. My model for a space evoking the sunken area of the adyton in the labyrinth at Knossos is Velázquez’s Las Meninas, 1656.

Exegesis

The exegesis is in two parts. The first consists of three chapters that focus on the migration of symbols and their relation to beliefs and painting. On one hand I select particular symbols and investigate their negative functions in women’s representations in European oil painting. On the other hand I find common denominators between Minoan and European imagery in three oil paintings. I use these elements to establish my content in the forms of emblem and an allegory. The different fluid properties of various mediums, the vehicles carrying oil paint, augments their disguised poetic symbols.
In Chapter 1, I identify particular Minoan symbols and suggest that their gender-specific meanings pertain to a process of resurrection. When they attribute a male figure, such as Dionysos, they suggest resurrection through blood and violence. When attributed to Medusa, they function as cues in a cautionary tale about female sexuality.

Chapter 2 deals with this subject-matter related to European oil painting. I elucidate how traces of disguised symbols augment themes about vision, using representations of women as signs or vehicles to carry male allegories where images of violence and bloodshed are preludes to the inheritance of vision from father to son.

In my research I considered the following questions. Could I use Minoan symbols as disguised symbols in oil paintings? Could they subvert the foundation narrative of the dying god and the visual implications of this drama? Could I challenge the authority of the father and son drama linking violent bloodshed, fleshly mortification and vision? Could a symbolic death, an alternative visual metaphor, suggest a dramatic cultural context? Could this drama where I retain the key symbols of the narrative, be the source of another metaphor relating to the artist's mental process?

The focus in Chapter 3 is on three European oil paintings. They serve as inspirational models- (emblematic, allegorical and genre painting), to develop, in a sequence, my revised iconographic code. Rather than totally cast away male-dominated oil painting, I utilise some of its elements that suggest Minoan imagery.

In Chapter 4, I describe how my oil paintings relate as a sequence. I revise the narrow readings of phallic symbols and how they contribute to the male gaze and position of the viewer, eye and vision allegories, spatial and painterly metaphors.

Chapter 5 deals with formal and technical procedures demonstrated by several artists whose application of paint creates forms of symbolic language. The layering of paint, mark-making and properties of different vehicles influence the way materials construct forms in space to amplify their meanings. My journal entries show how I transform aspects of literal representations into poetic imagery.

In conclusion, my research demonstrates how references to non-violent bloodshed metaphorically link the senses to vision within a cultural context. I challenge Western culture's use of violence and its outcomes. The interference of another, usually male person (Perseus) as an agent who uses violence as an instrument, depends on the presence of a persecuted victim (Medusa) to metaphorically construct Women as Other by defining her as the source of the abject or apotropaic. I make references to the same symbols in their earlier context as another mirror of the self. I depict an autonomous representation of women's images that modifies the binary oppositional characteristics of the Self and Other.

The construction of an omnipotent romantic male artist as suffering god, loses its cultural mystification, sense of isolation and dramatic role as an Other because it eclipses
woman as the Other. The symbolism associated with both, expanded by reclaiming Minoan symbols, is reflected in my use of attributes and oil paint. Self, in my re-definition becomes selves where different aspects overlap partially with the 'Other'. The fluidity and viscosity of paint, associated with my modifications to the Gaze and Glance, reflect and augment my symbolism and iconographic code.
PART 1

MINOAN SYMBOLISM AND EUROPEAN OIL PAINTING

CHAPTER 1

The Migration of Symbols and their Relation to Beliefs and Iconography

In Part 1 I discuss the origin of my painting's content, its meaning and why this focus becomes relevant to oil painting. I use particular symbols as threads that migrate through time from the Minoan period to the Baroque to link motif, allegory and cultural meaning within my emblematic images.

In this chapter I explain why I select a specific group of Minoan symbols associated with the Knossos Labyrinth (Palace of Minos) (fig.1) and the attributes of a female deity. They consist of the snake, pillar, blood, horn and entrance. I interpret them as signs symbolising a gender-specific process of resurrection. This interpretation based on images from the Theran Adyton Fresco (fig.2), the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus (fig.3) and architectural features in the Knossos Labyrinth, such as pillar crypts (fig.4) and adyta, projects through their imagery, a combination of a chthonian and celestial metaphor. Within this environment, architectural features act as a screen to control vision, the amount of light and the number of people who can see images of a ritual about bloodshed.¹

Later, in Greek myths, these symbols accompany images of men or women in what could be described as a war of the sexes where violent narratives and gestures seemed the norm. Images of bloodshed in myth and Minoan images differ. I observe how they function in relation to Medusa because her image suggests a metaphor explaining women's situation in visual culture. Then I contrast this drama with a male version where the key symbols remain in the narrative.

I retain these key symbols in addition to an image of a keyhole symbol throughout my paintings because they constitute symbolic and visual elements to construct my foundation narrative or emblematic journey. The image of the keyhole marks a metaphorical position where emotional, theoretical and visual ideas converged.

Relevant Symbols and Meanings

The Keyhole as a Private Symbol

I enlarge the small keyhole symbol situated on the horizon-line of my landscapes
The palace of Knossos, (plan C. Iliki).

Fig. 1 The Knossos Labyrinth (Palace of Minos), ca. 1930-1380 BC
Fig. 2 The Theran Adyton Fresco, 1500 BC

Above: sketch of the south wall, ground floor, room 3, Xeste 3

Below: tentative reconstruction of room 3 showing the pictorial program on both floor levels
Fig. 3 The Hagia Triada Sarcophagus, ca. 1400 BC
Fig. 4 Pillar Crypt, ca. 1930-1600 BC
containing figures. I situate my face and neck within its aperture in the first suite of paintings as I turn away from the bright light. My reflections on death and its relation to Minoan beliefs is the impetus.

This symbol was developed twenty years ago in response to the death of a friend. The shape of a tombstone seemed as a mirror. I conflated these two rectangular shapes with trees on a hill. The position of the tree in front of the rectangle then changed to a geometrical shape. The foliage became circular and the trunk became vertical. Both shapes merged to form a keyhole.

Coincidentally, Sicilian neolithic tombs, closed by a pair of slabs that functioned as a door, combined to form a conventionalised image of the goddess. Gertrude R. Levy called the anterior stone bearing the shape of the Mediterranean horned altar the 'gate of horn', a precursor to the Minoan symbol (1948: 131). My keyhole is a poetic device that conflates the doorway emblem alluding to 'inner' and 'outer' space formed into a unified image. Its usual position in my compositions is in the area where the mythic background images join the contemporary foreground narrative; it serves both formal and metaphorical purposes. In one diptych The Original Sudarium (pl.8), I reversed this pattern and placed the myth in the foreground and the image of myself painting, in the aperture space, forming part of the background.

The transformation of the literal images of the tree and tombstone (originally situated in a landscape with a dynamic turbulent sky like the one depicted by El Greco in View of Toledo) into a symbol, eluded me for some time but the mystery unravelled eventually. This type of sky that dramatically focussed the action where the earth and sky met, and joined by the stark tonal treatment of the buildings 'running' along the horizon, sutured the sky to the earth. The rectangular shapes of the buildings fused the vegetation into a rectangular structure and then into a rectangular keyhole symbol. It appears on the horizon in The Original Sudarium. I experienced this type of temporal passage and identification when I visited Knossos in Crete (1993), Vezelay in France (1980) and Mount Lyell in Tasmania (1967).

This imagery evokes deeper associations that relate to an early encounter with death. The entrance and wound are like the entrance to the ruin and Labyrinth at Knossos that functions metaphorically as the keyhole. The 'ruin' is the scar that remains. This fear revisited me as I watched my mother die. My dreams that helped to overcome the terror and sadness of this situation, contained symbolic images that were reminiscent of Minoan ones even though I was unaware of their existence at the time. The images consisted of my passage through a tunnel, up a stairway, towards an opening, as well as passing down through the interior of a tree. The imagery of labyrinths, sacred trees like in the Ring of Nestor (fig.5) and snake tubes were a visual language related to relics of an ancient religion that resonated with my dream language. The keyhole symbol functioned in two ways. Firstly it indicates the presence of a liminal space. Secondly it transforms
Fig. 5 The Ring of Nestor, ca. 1500 BC
into a portrait figure encompassing the first meaning. I metaphorically identified with and attached both meanings to features of the architectural environment of the Knossos Labyrinth. Two features of this environment are the anteroom and adyton. The first acts as an interface controlling the flow of people between the focal point of the adyton and the outside world. A pier and door (polthyron) form a flexible screen. This extraordinary Minoan invention, multiple doorways separated by piers, suggests a control of visual access, light, air and people. The room can be turned into an open porch or a dark box-like space. The latter constitutes a setting for a ritual that makes use of drama viewed from loggia on the upper story. Both adyton and polthyron disappeared with the fall of the 'palaces' suggesting they represented a form of ideological expression (Marinatos, 1993: 84-87).

In the first suite of paintings the shape of the keyhole enlarges to accommodate my head and neck. Turning from the small keyhole on the horizon to an inner space, figuratively and metaphorically I emphasise the image of my eyes, hands and implements. I develop an emblematic journey from the process of creating ideas and painting as a drama reflected by an ancient ritual within the Labyrinth.

_Feminist Epistemology in Relation to Minoan Antiquities_

My approach has been to look beyond the patrilineal symbolic sources of Greek myth into part of its Minoan pre-history as a guide to the representation of female protagonists as role models with symbols. Sir Arthur Evans began his excavation of the Labyrinth at Knossos in 1900 and, although he called the ruins _The Palace of Minos_ (fig.1), he emphasised its religious functions based on the worship of the many manifestations of a goddess. According to Evans, this deity and the Eteocretans may have come from Anatolia. Elements from the iconography of Egyptian deities, such as Hathor and Isis, as well as Anatolian aspects of imagery may have been Minoan sources (1926). This period is problematic for art historians, archaeologists, anthropologists and classical mythologists because cultural conditioning narrowed the focus of inquiry to interpret information in male-defined terms. Prior to Evan's work, Sir James Frazer's emphasis on dying gods (Frazer, 1951) had effectively occluded the existence of not only dying and resurrecting female deities but also multivalent female deities (Devlin Glass, 1997: 74-75). As well as having earthly manifestations these deities had heavenly and underworld aspects (Wolkstein and Kramer, 1983). The mother-right that Bachofen [1861] (1967) saw as characteristic of a low stage of human development turned out to be quite the opposite by the evidence in Evan's excavations.²

Although feminist epistemology and hermeneutics have only recently emerged as new discourses, both Jane Ellen Harrison (1912) and Gertrude Rachel Levy (1948) drew attention to the gender blindness of their contemporaries in the area of comparative
mythology and religion. They demonstrated how the original matricentric culture of early
Greek culture survived into the historical period. Harrison defined the difference between
matrilineal and matriarchal society in that woman was "the social centre not a dominant
force" [1912] (1963: 494). She expresses outrage at the appropriation of birthing
functions by men in the myth of Athena as well as Apollo's trivialisation of matricide. He
claimed that the mother is no longer a parent. This new family structure where children
belong to and inherit from the father if they are born in wedlock, is spelled out in
Aeschylus's Oresteia (1953: 500-1). Furthermore Harrison claimed that northern
invaders displaced a harmonious matrilineal culture [1912] (1963: 490-92). This theme
continued in Gimbutas's work (1989, 1991). The language Linear A, not deciphered by
scholars, adds to the difficulties of interpreting the Minoan antiquities because it was the
language of the original Cretans. Linear B, deciphered in 1952 by Ventris (1956) and
described by Chadwick (1960), is closer to the Mycenaean language; an era in which
patriarchy was ascendant.

There are tensions in what Garrard and Broude call the 'litany' of art history.
Luomala points out that scholars interpreted the art of Bronze Age Crete and Egypt
through patriarchal filters and were gender-blind to the relationships between figures in
the iconography (1982). Architect Vincent Scully (1962), on the other hand, saw that the
siting and design of palaces in Bronze Age Crete, as a mode of spatial organisation,
related to the symbolism and imagery of the Stone Age Great Goddess. The positions of
stars, mountains and architecture combine to create a ritual whole (Kerényi 1976).
Cashford (1991) have all extended the interpretations of the relationship between
iconography and a religion where a female deity was prominent.

Symbols and Minoan Relics

In two paintings in my first suite, I allude to aspects of the deity with upraised arms. This
manifestation imitated by a figure in a Minoan funerary shrine, 1100-1000 BC (fig.6),
makes this gesture of epiphany. The image on the vessel is that of a head at a window. I
conflate this image with mine as the head at the keyhole. I combined this representation of
a deity with upraised arms with a figurative version where she held life-like snakes.
According to archaeologist Nanno Marinatos:

The snake is a potent religious symbol because it evokes different, and sometimes
contradictory, associations. Although Freudians like to regard it as a phallic
symbol, its significance is certainly much wider ...primates have an
instinctive fear of snakes...The connection of serpents with the earth and/or the
underworld is another important component which may be coupled with the
fact that serpents change skin and are dormant in winter, appearing in the late spring from the earth. Thus a snake is a terrifying creature coming from the underworld, but it has at the same time positive connotations of renewal. It is no accident that in Egyptian religion serpents combine all these different functions—guardians, creators, underworld guardians, mediums of renewal, monsters to be overcome. In folklore, the snake has the ability to restore life to the dead (Marinatos, 1993: 157-58).

Known as the Snake Goddess, 1500 or 1600 BC (fig.7), these symbolic attributes are associated with the drama of a ritual gesture.

There are several similar figurines (faience and ivory) displaying ritual attire that consisted of a head-dress, sometimes tiered, and ritual gestures where snakes in various positions attributed the deity. The figures could be priestess or goddess, although the goddess was often identified with the priestess who represented her (Neumann, 1955: 118). All wear a tight, open bodice exposing bare breasts that suggest nurture or mourning. One faience shows a caduceus-like image of intertwined snakes on her belly, suggesting that the goddess, whose womb gives forth and takes back life, is experienced as unity.

The other Snake Goddess, 1500 BC, is holding a snake high in each hand with the ritualised gesture of upraised arms, a statement of divinity. A lion cub that sits on her head-dress harks back to sculptures of lions situated on either side of a Goddess of the Animals in Anatolia, Sumeria and Egypt. The net pattern on her skirt, a design descended from the Palaeolithic and Neolithic, suggests that perhaps she is the weaver of the web of life. In the following suites of paintings where I introduce the activity of painting, I refer to the gesture of the upraised arms.

The eyes of these two goddesses are trance-like, presenting the viewer with an almost mask-like expression. This gaze outward and downward, almost through the viewer, is simultaneously inward. The oracular snakes and gaze of the Minoan Goddess figurines are involved in the descent into the Labyrinth where symbolic death as a religious ritual is linked with creative production (Graves, 1955; Dietrich, 1974; Castledon, 1990a; Baring and Cashford, 1991; Gimbutas, 1991; Marinatos, 1984, 1993). This type of gaze represents the moment when I look away from what I observe before I touch the canvas or paper.

The Snake Goddess may be a manifestation of the dark side of a goddess like the Sumerian Inanna who harrows hell in order to know death, and voluntarily, but in fear, enters the underworld through seven gates (like the dark hole of the Eleusinian mysteries) hoping to find the place where creativity resides. Inanna's descent into the underworld, her death and unceremonious hanging from a hook, and her resurrection, appears to be the original dying and resurrecting god story. The body and blood of the Goddess, like
Above. Fig. 6 Minoan Funerary Shrine, 1100-1000 BC
Below. Fig. 7 Snake Goddess, 1500 BC
the mid-winter sun 'descended' into the earth only to re-emerge in spring. Inanna's transformation, is similar to that of the crops in the short Sumerian spring and to the three days of ritual death that corresponded with the three days of the dark moon (Wolkstein and Kramer 1983).

This description may be connected with other images that suggest aspects of ritual descent, including funerary rites. Images on the Theran Adyton Fresco (Marinatos, 1984: 73), the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus (Harrison, [1912] 1963: 158) and the Ilium coins (Harrison, 1963: 164) all depict women as the protagonists in rituals depicting the flow of blood from bull's or cow's heads, horns, pillar/tree and images of 'woman' as pillar. Blood, poured as a libation over the law inscribed on the pillar and traces of red pigment in pillar crypts were evident in the excavated ruins of Thera and the Knossos Labyrinth (Harrison, 1912; Marinatos, 1984; Castleden, 1990a, 1990b). Only one sunken adyton area in the Labyrinth had facilities for bathing, meaning that it could have been associated with an initiation before further ceremonies commenced. Ascending and descending stairs, rooms with central pillars, multiple doorways and pillars inscribed with the double axe suggests that small groups of initiates walked through and down into a sacred space.

Marinatos postulates a sequence of ritual actions beginning downstairs in the chthonic area of the pillar crypt where offerings would be directed to these powers or the dead. A procession may lead upstairs to the celestial column placed above the pillar in an upper shrine. Celestial manifestations of the deity referring to life, although antithetical to the chthonic referring to death, are united in this ritual. The dead in the underworld, like the seeds, renew. The column and pillar mark the spot where the deity appears (1993: 96-98). Blood libations assist the regeneration.

The initiates may have confronted an epiphany of a goddess. A frequent gesture portrayed in sculptures appears to be the attitude of upraised arms. According to D. O. Cameron it was an imitation of the 'horns of consecration' symbol (1981: 10). The gesture of the upraised arms and the serpent are suggestive of symbols of regeneration. The hand was a sign of the sloughing of skin whose symbol was the plane tree. The image of five pointed leaves resemble a hand. Snakes sloughed-off their skins and trees shed leaves (in comparison with the phases of the moon, the skin, horns, and the menses of women) (Graves, 1955, 1: 197, 2: 289) and suggest a goddess's presence in her role with the gift of renewal. Symbols associated with goddesses are the pillar/tree, snake, horns, double axe and blood in libation vessels. They can be interpreted as metaphors for the female body. Dorothy O. Cameron, an Australian artist, accompanied James Mellart to Çatal Hüyük in 1961 and noticed the similarity of the organs of reproduction to the shape of the bucrania, so prevalent in the imagery in Anatolia, Egypt and Crete (Gimbutas, 1989: 244).

Other goddess figurines display the symbols of the 'horns of consecration', birds, discs and upraised arms. Another sculpture of a Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms,
wears a poppy-head tiara. Goddesses with the Upraised-Arms (Peatfield, 1994: 19) were also depicted between double axes that resembled butterfly wings, that are often read as an allusion to the soul. Mellaart's interpretation of this gesture displayed by the Anatolian predecessor of the Minoan deities, four millennia earlier, was that it was an indication of birth (1962: 6). Her transcendent capacities are not divorced from her physical functions.

One sculpture could represent symbolically a visual language with symbols associated with the deity displaced onto objects. A state of transcendence represented by doves sitting on top of three pillars that allude to death and the underworld integrate visually 'in union'. In a carved image in a stone seal, she stands on a mountain peak, flanked by two lions, and with a raised arm holds a small pillar saluted by a male worshipper. As a mountain deity, worshipped in peak sanctuaries, her manifestations in the Labyrinth could connect with the Throne Room. The throne, flanked by griffins and made of material that look like the rock surface of a mountain, faces south toward Mt Jouktas. From the Central Court, aligned almost in a north south direction, the viewer looks south through a large 'horn of consecration' to the mountain on the horizon.

The Labyrinth with a Central Court also contained many sanctuaries, the Snake Goddess Sanctuary, the Throne Sanctuary, the Cupbearer Sanctuary, the Late Dove Goddess Sanctuary to name only a few. When adyton areas with descending staircases of varying lengths, an initiation area, pillar crypts, the Tripartite Shrine, rooms and stairways with central columns, light wells and horns of consecration are linked together, they support some interpretations of the Labyrinth's functions. The Tripartite Shrine was designed to be the visual and religious focus for the Central Court. It links the public rites of the open court with the private, esoteric rites of the Snake Goddess Sanctuary (Castleden, 1990a: 83). Situated on the inner western wall of the Central Court the red light of the setting sun reflecting from the opposite wall would bathe the scene in mystery. Like the sun's metaphorical descent into the earth, the initiates with their goddess could descend the stairs into the Labyrinth. Doorways and pillars simulate cave entrances and stalagmites both engraved with double axes or, alternatively, small sculptured axes inserted into the door jamb, linking them with the sacred, ritual processions or dances.

I interpret part of this symbolic program as a reference to matriliney because the symbols seem to refer metaphorically to the presence of a blood as a life force. On the lower section of The Theran Fresco is a blood spattered column, and 'horns of consecration' toward which three young girls process. The young girls are on the north wall moving toward the altar on the east wall. An initiate would face this mural as she descended into the dimly lit adyton area. Marinatos interprets the central figure depicted in the fresco as an image of the trials of the initiate. The other two accompany her. The oldest girl brings a necklace to the altar and the first in line, a pre-initiate turns toward the others holding a veil. Veiling was practiced during many mysteries, including the
Eleusinian ones. In this mixture of narrative and ritual, the central figure sits on a rocky outcrop attending to her bleeding foot. The positions of her image, beneath the visible goddess image on the above floor, suggests her importance. A crocus flower fallen next to her shows that she was engaged in flower gathering before the accident. As a rite of passage, it consisted of the seclusion of female initiates walking barefoot in rocky countryside. This excursion to collect blooms for the goddess was a festival to the deity (1993: 208).

There is an equivalence suggested between the blood trickling down the horns of consecration between animal sacrifice, blood libation and human wounding. The myths of Persephone (picking flowers before her rape) and Eurydice (bitten by a snake on her foot while collecting flowers) resonate with the main theme of this Bronze Age ritual. In this ritual, the initiate may have to be scratched to simulate the suffering of the vegetation goddess. The young girls at the sanctuary of Artemis were similarly scratched but on the neck.

The polarity between renewal of life and death is expressed visually on the fresco by the juxtaposition of blood and flowers. This is visible both on the altar and on the wounded girl who is adorned with plants. Blood evokes ideas of sacrifice and death, flowers of life and regeneration. After this stage of the ritual in the adyton, the initiate ascended the steps to the upper floor where she faced the image of the goddess seated on her tripartite platform supervising crocus gathering. She was situated in a typical Minoan landscape of a dreamworld: lush landscapes, ducks, a fowling scene and women carrying floral offerings (Marinatos, 1984: 73-84).

Other antiquities suggest a female blood-line of matriliney. Red ochre placed in burials suggest a connection with rebirth by metaphorical return to the womb. The collection of blood from a bull on the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus, placing the blood libation between pillars with double axes indicate its sacred nature and metaphorical link to life and death. The eyes of the Bull's Head Rhyton, a libation vessel possibly linked to blood sacrifice, had a lens of rock-crystal, painted on the underside with red for the pupil, black for the iris, and white for the rest of the eye. The crystal is set in a surround of red stone to give a frighteningly blood-shot effect. (Higgins, 1967: 162). The initiands may metaphorically see as if they were the red eye, that 'sees' both symbolic and actual death.

An image suggesting transcendence of the soul depicted on the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus is that of the Goddess in her griffin-led chariot painted on a blue background conveying the person's soul skyward. Worshippers of this deity see not only her positive sky and earthly manifestations but also properties and capacities that take vision into an underworld through rituals of descent where initiates could face the fear of death. The three spheres of influence connect harmoniously: sky and dove, mountain and pillar, earth, underworld and snake.
I depicted the sequence of my painting process in stages based on aspects of this Minoan ritual. The first suite focusses on the eye's gaze, the second introduces the way the hand and eye interact and the third the introduction of disguised Minoan symbols. Fourthly, three diptyches and two triptyches address the formation of my foundation narrative about descent into the underworld as a metaphor for insight and its transmission from mother to daughter. My emblematic journey continues in the last paintings where I extend my use of flowing paint to metaphorically stand for flowing blood which amplifies and augments the meanings of disguised symbols. They allude to my allegory where I personify the link between vision and the senses.

Chthonian mystery and funerary rituals, while appearing female-focussed, do include male figures. As officials they participated in the procession painted on the reverse side of the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus. Another procession with what appears to be an official or priest and a group of men is part of a relief on Rhyton of the Harvesters, 1,500 BC. There are several other scenes with both male and female figures but the main point is that they do not appear in confrontations. Both appear in situations projecting social and economic power. A battle between the sexes seems absent.

Symbols and Greek Myths

Emblems, allegories and narratives in European oil painting draw on Greek myths as a source of imagery. In Greek myths the focus on male activities, war, rape, capture, killing and daring escape, are the stories of heroes in which female figures function as props. In part of these narratives attention focusses on disguised symbols. Symbols that were once part of a religion practiced in the Labyrinth, migrate into narratives about different aspects of vision. Theseus rescues the children imprisoned in the Labyrinth, who were sent as a tribute from Athens to be consumed by the Minotaur. Ariadne who provides him with a thread as a means of escape from the maze-like Labyrinth (after he kills the Minotaur), leaves Knossos with Theseus who then left her on Naxos.

The Snake Goddess, her eyes and gazes, her snakes and upraised arms, disappear from iconography but these gestures and her attributes and symbols like the snake, pillars, double axe and horns remain, but accompany other gods and demi-gods as their attributes. As female figures depicted with their original symbols like those of the Snake Goddess, they tend to be seen as apotropaic and used to construct cautionary tales confirming the moral order of male-dominated society. The story of Medusa linked her to the underworld. Later, after her decapitation, she possessed a dangerous gaze which turned men to pillars and froze their blood. The meanings attributed to the Labyrinth and underworld change gradually; they become sites of punishment and the irrational and perhaps the model for Plato's cave.
The Medusa Myth

What did the image of Medusa denote? Interpretations are many and varied. Originally, as one of the three Gorgons, she possessed boars' tusks, a lolling tongue and double wings that curved back on themselves to resemble fins, alluding to an upper and underworld manifestation (Barb, 1953, 1966; Phillies-Howe, 1954; Feldman, 1965). Bee wings and a snake coiffure connect her meanings to ancient masks (mid-fifth millennium, BC) found at Varna in Bulgaria. The fusion of images of life and death is a sign of regeneration (Gimbutas, 1989: 206, 200).

In 7th century BC in Crete, her depiction holding cranes and geese, betrays her identity as the 'Mistress of Wild Things' or Potnia Theron, later known as Artemis (Homer, 1951; Phillies-Howe, 1954; Chadwick, 1957; Burkert, 1977). She is also Hekate whose temples and altars stood at gates, entrances or in front of houses in ancient Greece, not unlike images of Minoan goddesses. Hekate appears to have had many powers in pre-history. Artemis and Hekate represented the beginning (young life) and end (death) of the lunar cycle. Life energy was denoted by the two hissing snakes around her girdle (similar to that of the Snake Goddess). The triple aspect of Hekate that refers to the three phases of the moon, depicted as a composite image of her as a triple goddess emerging from a column, is called a Hekateia. Her attributes are the snake and moon (Harrison, 1912: 408) and are thought to be of Libyan origin- on one hand, as a Queen who was beheaded by the Argives (Graves, 1961: 244), and, on the other, an Amazon serpent goddess representing female wisdom, destroyer and an underworld manifestation of the triple goddess called Neith, Ath-enna or Athena (Walkers, 1983: 629). Athena gave the healer, Asclepius, two phials of Medusa's blood: blood from the veins of her left side raised the dead, while from the right side, destruction was instant (Graves, 1955, 1: 175).

Graves thought that Medusa was a goddess of matriarchy prior to the establishment of Greek patriarchy and was an emblem of mother-right. Medusa met her fate at the hands of Perseus. Medusa's mask was depicted in the pediment of the temple of Artemis at Corcyra, 580 BC. Her mask attested to her underworld connections because it hung in workshops near kilns and forges. It was an emblem on warrior's shields as well as being reflected on the shield of Athena. Medusa's head constituted part of Athene's aegis. The aegis was originally a magic goatskin garment with horns that terrified the enemy. Zeus gave it to Athena, as fatherly gift, to be worn over her shoulders. Athena used Medusa’s head to do the warmongering work of the patriarchy.

A property of this mask, always facing the viewer, cause the blood of the recipient of the gaze to freeze and turn into a pillar (Homer, 1951: 8, 349). Medusa's power is now the magic behind the flashing eyes of Athena in her warrior, warmongering mode (1951: 5, 738). In a variation of this motif the image of Medusa being lodged in the
pupil of Persephone also points to her underworld connections (Vernant, 1990: 191). Odysseus at the entrance of the underworld says:

Sheer panic turned me pale, gripped by a sudden fear that dread Persephone might send me up from Hades' Halls some ghastly monster like the Gorgon's head
(Homer, 1946) 1964, Odyssey xi: 188).

The blood of Medusa was the subject of plays like Ion and the story of Polydictes, a cautionary tale alluding to the symbolic and real usurpation of mother-right by father-right (Warner, 1985: 113). The role of mothers is not completely supressed: Medusa's head on Athena's shield, acknowledges it, but relegates it to a secondary position. "Medusa's head represents the womb as patrimony" (1985: 114).

In their Minoan ritual context, the symbol of the eye, snake and pillar suggest an association with the flow of blood and its link to sight and the female body. The face and eyes of the goddess and the initiates in the underworld of the Labyrinth and blood are central to resurrection in funerary rituals. When these images integrate with figures like Medusa in Greek myths they change their positions and meanings as signs of regeneration and resurrection. When they accompany male figures, the distortion increases. In a male context, death and birth align in narratives about dying gods.

**Male Dying God Symbolism**

These narratives are problematic on different levels. The redemptive blood flowing from bodily openings (in Dionysos, Oedipus, Orpheus, Narcissus and Jesus or the warrior) can occur only through extreme violence because father-gods demand bloodshed from their sons as a mark of filial piety. Some acquire the ability to parturitate: Zeus (Athena from his head and Dionysos from his thigh) and Adam (Eve from his rib). Perseus and Marduk extend these capacities with weapons, cunning and violence. Perseus decapitates Medusa and Marduk splits Tiamat in half; both acts reverse the meaning of death and birth. Metaphorically they become 'midwives' of Medusa and Tiamat, who 'give birth' and are 'delivered' of Pegasus and Chrysaor and the Cosmos. The female figures are 'umbilical cords' that are cut in order to deliver the new patriarchal cultural ideology of father-right.

During this process of cultural change, symbols that were once the province of female deities become attributes of male gods and demi-gods. The Double Axe or Labrys, perhaps the most prevalent Minoan symbol (associated with goddess figurines, the Labyrinth or Hall of the Double Axe, and religious rituals) was very rarely depicted in male hands. Chrysaor was born in the flow of blood issuing from his mother's neck (Medusa) and his name, according to Vermeule (quoting Chadwick and Ventris) should
mean 'possessor of the gold double axe' (Vermeule, 1981: 141). The snake, pillar, column or tree, and eye symbolism are adopted by Zeus, Hermes, Dionysos and Jesus as attributes. Zeus abandoned them when he assumed his Olympian manifestation. These symbols then became associated with Chthonic son gods. Hermes, the psychopomp and Zeus's messenger to the underworld, assumes the attribute of the pillar placed at entrances. Dionysos's presence manifests to the Maenads by his mask placed on top of a column. Blood on the column is also an attribute of Jesus who, like Dionysos, was associated with the horned animal as the lamb of God and in Dionysos's case, the bull of heaven.

The upraised hand became bloodied as its image underwent patriarchal mutations into the five bleeding holes of the crucifixion. The figure hung on the tree/pillar included other dying gods or demi-gods such as Pentheus, Dionysos and Marsyas. I agree with Bettelheim and Walker who proposed that male blood-letting rituals were designed to appropriate symbolically menstruation and parturition (Bettelheim, 1962; Walker, 1983).

The holy 'blood of life' used to be feminine and real; now it is masculine and symbolic (1983: 644).

The mythology of Aristotle's interpretation of Medusa is constructed around mirrors and menstruation. His idea was that menstrual blood is infused into the eyes, transforming the pupils into a bloody mirror and implies that whatever is reflected in them is bathed in blood and mirrors absorb this reflection as a cloud of blood (Kuryluk, 1991: 164). In the construction of this mythopoetics, female blood, eyes and mirrors align in imagery that represents, in Kristeva's term, a site of 'abjection' (Kristeva, 1982: 4).

Conclusion

My aim is to contribute to an evolving culture of symbols by retaining aspects of their meanings through changing their forms. I do not transfer Minoan images and symbols into oil painting directly. Instead of depicting an image of a snake held aloft by a goddess, I depict my hand holding aloft a brush or alternatively, a hand with snake-like veins and wrinkles.

Wendy Stavrianos also alludes to images in European oil painting, and symbols and images from Minoan antiquity; she refers to Velázquez's paintings of the sumptuous regalia worn by the Spanish royal family. In Pagan Mantle, 1992-93, she combines an image of a ruff with a horned head-dress by juxtaposing the horn with the corrugations in the ruff. Images of her dresses resonate with the Minoan fish-scale ritual dress of goddesses or priestesses. She juxtaposes symbolic attributes on her figures with symbols in the background to amplify their meanings. The horn in her imagery is a female attribute
that revises phallic interpretation. In *Arrival in Harvest Light*, 1992-93, (Cree, 1996), the horn in the shape of upraised arms on the main figure and in a smaller version of the same figure are found in Egyptian, Minoan and Mycenaean figurines. She juxtaposes the horn-shaped arms of the main figure with the horn-shaped quarter moon.

Minoan symbols could indicate that menstrual blood is a natural, non-violent shedding of blood. In my imagery this blood signifies a line between mother and daughter that is symbolic and based on a physical reality. A son cannot pass on flesh and blood. In the Eleusinian Mysteries, Demeter's determination not to lose her daughter Persephone through rape suggests a last stand against the tide of patriarchy and women's loss of cultural power. Athena's power in contrast affirms the new culture. By helping Perseus, instructing him to use his shield as a mirror to avoid Medusa's deadly gaze, she undermines her own franchise. Originally a triple goddess, Athena punishes Medusa who as her underworld manifestation, not only loses the meaning of her symbols, she loses much control of the underworld and now the symbols and Medusa's head as a mask and eyes are weapons of destruction. Death of a woman (Medusa) seemed linked to the removal of her symbolic attributes along with her procreative legitimacy and power to rule. The removal of these functions rendered them abject or degenerate.

Death of a male son god or demi-god (now with symbolic attributes or disguised symbols, for example the red eye and foot of Oedipus) became part of a purification narrative. When the mortification of their flesh and blood metaphorically purified their vision, their followers, through the scapegoat, could see the deity and remove the iniquity of incest (Oedipus) or atone for sins by partaking in a sacramental meal of their body and blood (Dionysos, and later Christ).

I sought to remove meanings in Greek myths from my emblematic journey about vision. A Minoan ritual in which the initiate symbolically faces the fear of death is my alternative dramatization. I retain simultaneously the key symbols of the ritual and their encoded version in a foundation narrative in some of the sources European oil painting.

I personify the Snake Goddess because of her link to rituals suggesting a link between death, the female body and vision. Her gaze simultaneously inward and outward possibly reflects the ritual in the *adyton* and my process of vision. The image of this type of gaze stands for my integration of dream and memory as a way of constructing images.

The self I sought to project is not that of the totally objective observer. It combines a self, that while observing, is implicated in both and object. Images of my brush, hands and shadow attest to this strategy, showing that I make my emblematic journey represent an aspect of my identity. Red paint and red light in *The Visionary Thread*, 1996-97 (pl.13), connoting the presence of viscous fluid and light from interior and exterior sources, metaphorically refers to aspects of self-identity. In Grosz's words: "this is a rewriting of the Oedipalized body..." (1994: 202). As neither metaphorically solid or liquid, it is an identity that has aspects of both which overlap, intertwine and
flow in different directions without ossifying into the oppositional gender identities represented as solid (male self identity) or liquid (female uncontrollable identity). I retain some solid forms that partly dissolve, including viscous fluid forms and some liquid areas of paint, part of which solidifies.

In my paintings I retain images of dark symbolic spaces and complex lines of vision as a reflection of the architectural environment in the adyton. This space envelops my figures. The keyhole resembles passage through the screened anteroom of the adyton. Only the image of one of my eyes looks outward, the other turns inward and merges into the symbolic Minoan red eye. The keyhole and my image merge to form a composite portrait-like figure. Images of red paint and red light stand for a blood line between the images of women—mother and daughter and colleagues. Themes including these symbols integrate into an emblematic journey about vision aided by my memory of the ruins of Knossos.

I reappropriate the symbols as a way to contest the position of the dying gods, the narrow focus on phallic meanings and the ways in which both affect aspects of European oil painting. I depict the content in my paintings clearly by using elements of European oil painting. However, I examine carefully how Medusa's image, her symbols and their meanings, integrate into oil painting so that I can change their meanings.
CHAPTER 2

Symbolic Meanings in European Oil Painting

Images and symbols of vision are central to my paintings and are an important component of my understanding of the European oil painting tradition. This chapter seeks to explicate this connection.

The metamorphosis and re-integration of the pagan gods into Christian narratives were gradual processes that evolved from literary sources during the Middle Ages (Seznec, 1973). Iconography of the oil painting tradition aligned images from Roman antiquity in the Renaissance and ancient Greece in the Baroque with Christian morality tales.

Symbols, Gender and Vision

Images of Medusa and Eve are implicated in the subtext of vision linked desire to death. I suggest that images of dying gods metaphorically linked death to vision. The viewer firstly linked desire to death and thereby experienced gratification, and then linked death to vision as a way to experience 'resurrection'. The female figures not metaphorically associated with resurrection consequently forego vision.

The male artist, modelling himself on the subtext of the dying god narrative, could metaphorically conceive and give birth to forms through both avenues. I see the dark, so-called feminine side of this process as a type of a masquerade that is insinuated into the dying god story. The 'effeminate' son-gods of Greek and Christian myth 'give birth' by violent death and resurrection which is a cultural phenomenon that Ehrenzweig calls the "hidden order of art" [1967] (1993). I argue that this a form of iconographical appropriation that occludes women of what is an exclusively female power, that of giving birth.

Women: Vision and Disguised Symbols

Medusa’s image functioned as an emblem in the Renaissance and Baroque periods in allegories illustrating narratives devoted to the triumph of reason over the senses. As a result the female image is forced to carry male allegory. In 1554, Cellini’s Perseus and Medusa was extremely sexually explicit. He depicted her as a supine, headless female of titillating sexual fantasy and, though mutilated, hers is a voluptuous corpse writhing with energy and desire. With legs and arms bound around a pedestal it lies ready, open and waiting beneath the towering Perseus (Ewen, 1991: 11). This image encapsulates male
desire in a fantasy about control in order to overwhelm women. In one sense the image of her mask could be seen as a female 'Vera Icon'.

Placed next to Donatello's sculpture *Judith and Holophernes* (with its beheaded male), it implies misogynist politics rather than functioning as a companion piece. *Perseus and Medusa* was removed from its location thirty years later and replaced by more overtly political sculptures depicting rape (Even, 1991: 11). Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia*, a handbook of iconology published in 1593, interprets her image as the triumph of reason and virtue over the senses and Cellini’s Medusa sculpture for the Loggia dei Lanzi can be interpreted as an iconographic representation of this ideology.

Caravaggio painted himself as Medusa depicted on a wooden shield in Medusa's *Head* which was made for Cardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte. The source of his imagery is based on a description of Medusa's apotropaic effigies in the *Hyppnerotomachia Poliphili* by Colonna (taken from the facade of the Temple of Fortuna and also from the Sanctuary of Venus) and a bronze relief on the reverse of a large cameo known as the *Tazza Farnese* 2nd century BC and perhaps from a Leonardo tondo (Poseq, 1989: 170-4). I understand the conflation of a male face with an emblem of the senses as a way to valorise the senses over reason. This visual metaphor, reversing Ripa's definition, was an option unavailable to the female artist.

Oil paintings based on Old Testament stories by Hans Baldung Grien epitomise the link between vision, death and sexuality. In *Death and the Woman*, 1518-19, the woman's garment separates to reveal her naked body, vulnerable to the figure of Death's groping hands. Death's kiss, more like a bite, is the trigger that will open the garment for the phallic gaze. The male viewer can see, but, Death can touch and taste the woman. Sex links with repulsion as the viewer's desire simulates the position of the corpse raping the woman from behind so that he bites her, as Adam bites the apple (Koerner, 1993: 292-316). This painting may have influenced *Adam and Eve*, 1531-33, where Adam hides behind Eve so that his penis is hidden while Eve's (lack of one) is quite visible but emphasised by a mimetically triangular sheer cloth placed over her sex. If the penis is hidden, the phallus is everywhere; as an erect tree, Adam's hand is in front of where his penis would be and the apples simulate the shape of the scrotum (Schor, 1997: 15). This painting reinforces the notion that death has a specific origin in Adam's trespass. He is blamed for the viewer's death, pointing to a historical and human cause. Adam looks at the viewer as though he were looking into a mirror, thereby conflating death with desire and sex with the abject woman. After all, theologically, it was her fault, so Eve is blamed for The Fall and the mortality of humanity. The links between the artist's gaze and the figures in the painting and their conflation with the viewer's gaze points to the existence of their shared cultural values that are present at a historical moment. Another affirmation of these instances, when the metaphors for vision and procreation co-join, is through the utilisation of symbolic attributes. The emblems of mirror and lamp, were painted as
attributes to female figures and the image of woman they metaphorically conveyed was one of passivity. The lover of Butades, the image of the personification of drawing, directs her hand in some paintings and her gaze in others, to draw an outline around the shadow of his head (Derrida, 1993).

In *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, Edgar Wind describes the images and stories that were models adopted by artists of the time:

The first and original meaning of mysteries, which is exemplified by the festival of Eleusis, is that of a popular ritual of initiation. In it the neophytes were purged of the fear of death and admitted into the company of the blessed, to which they were bound by a vow of silence (Wind, 1958: 1).

The mysteries were invoked figuratively by the Neoplatonists such as Pico, Landino, and Ficino as though they, seen through the eyes of Platonic philosophers, Plutarch, Porphyry and Proclus, were supposed to have been influenced by this oracle of ancient wisdom (1958: 7). Pico conflated Cabbalistic thought and pagan mysteries in an attempt to align them with Christian theology (1958: 21). In the *Hypnerotomachiana Poliphilli*, for example, Venus pictured as a *mater dolorosa* is nourishing her infant son with tears. The parts of the mysteries that were invoked focussed on Dionysos accompanied by his follower Marsyas rather than Demeter. To obtain the 'beloved laurel' of Apollo, the poet must pass through the agony of Marsyas (a death associated with Dionysos). The words of Lorenzo de Medici also apply here: "The way to perfection is by this road" (1958: 174). There is no mention of the female pair of Goddesses (Demeter and Persephone) as the original protagonists of the Eleusinian mysteries. Instead, Psyche suffers ordeals in her quest to regain the love of her male partner Amor. She descends to Orcus and the Styx before she rises to heaven. The female road to the Medicanean perfection appeared to be about regaining a man's love rather than adopting the Apollonian dictum of "know thyself".

Another interpretation of these interesting tensions is seen in a painting by Sebastiano del Piombo called *The Death of Adonis*, also influenced by Colonna's popular romance called the *Hypnerotomachiana Poliphilli*. It is a story about initiates where obelisks and sacred buildings and symbols of Egyptian wisdom mark the stages of initiation (Gombrich, 1972: 104). Towards the end of this story (*Hypnerotomachiana*) there is a sacred grove dedicated to Venus/Aphrodite. The painting depicts the activity within. Venus had taken a bath amid a rose bower and run barefoot to the aid of Adonis who had been attacked by a jealous Mars. She pricked her foot on a rose thorn and Cupid collected her blood in a shell (the original story by Aphthonius) and transformed the rose into its red colour by pointing to it. The shell was once a Minoan symbol of the underworld. The image of the bleeding foot also echoes Minoan origins. These
meanings, eclipsed by the dying Adonis, change the woman's role to connote the source and the reason for male conflict.

Men: Vision and Disguised Symbols

When describing the authorship of sight or who controls the gazes from within the frame and the interaction between these gazes and the viewer, Meike Bal draws our attention to the Old Testament stories, which Rembrandt used as a sub-text, to convey the male artist's relationship to vision. In these narratives about sight, such as Tobias Curing his Father's Blindness, 1636, sight, or the apparent lack of it, is the condition of inheritance of identity. Both types of characterisation of the son's behaviour, whether accepting of the father's authority on a personal level (Tobias) or rebellious in a political drama (Samson), eventually meet the father's approval within the family or within the tribe. This subtext becomes a narrative about the capacity of the artist to represent vision in re/presentation.

The state of blindness conflates the passing of identity and inheritance from father to son. This preoccupation with death, insight and inheritance valorises sacrificial wounds, such as the blinding of Samson or St. Paul, who act in the drama as son-figures whose subjection to violence will be rewarded by father-figures. Meike Bal points out that a son-figure is undergoing this wounding as in the case of Rembrandt's The Blinding of Samson (fig.8), which she interprets as an allusion to separation from the mother in the psychoanalytical sense (Bal, 1991: 305). I would add that the images of symbolic wounds appear to allude to gynaecological functions. Samson is in a prone position and is being approached by a phallic instrument that appears between his legs. The drapes of the tent drawn open, double as if it were a vaginal opening. The great effort, required for this 'birth' of insight constructed by the artist, is where all the figures engage to confine Samson in this 'labour'. In The Blinding of Samson, 1636 by Rembrandt, this prostrate figure sees light from above, as a phallic spear, which blinds him. In this portrayal of wounds as 'eyes' and as poetic vanishing-points, vision and insight involve an exchange of gazes where the viewer 'becomes' Samson. Looking toward the light at the opening of the tent, the viewer sees Delilah turning away and holding Samson's snake-like hair. This gaze, from eye to opening, conflates insight with perspective as a symbolic form within the narrative structure of the composition. Another example is Caravaggio's The Incredulity of St Thomas, 1601.

Male artists often modelled themselves on the subtext of the dying god narrative, whether Christian or pagan, perhaps as a form of votive. Marsyas of Greek myth was flayed alive when he lost the music competition to Apollo. Michelangelo appropriated the image of Marsyas's skin as soul, depicted in the Last Judgement. He depicted himself as the flayed skin and the image of God as the victorious Apollo. Like Marsyas he must lose
the competition, but, as a creator, he challenges God. Rather than piety, Michelangelo is
defiant as a creator and mocks the 'skinning' to which divinity submits humanity. The
artist's hide functioned as a combined metaphor created from the memories of Marsyas,
Pan and Dionysos.

An alternative earlier tradition supplied a metaphorical source of generation. In the
Theogony, the poet Hesiod described night and chaos or the chasm as the generator of
the world (1988: 6). The binary constraints of the terms of Aristotle's argument meant
that night could not be a principle. Arch-Platonist Michelangelo saw his work not as ideas
but as conceptions that entered his mind in dreams or at night. Leonardo also contradicted
the theory of ideas and reason whose psychological positions he considered to be at the
centre of the brain. He preferred the idea of fantasy and intellect to be central (Moxey,

These were stories with a subtext that denoted the artist's creative reflexivity and
'inner sight' engaged in the process of looking (Bal, 1991: 286-360). The violence of
castration and penetration as a poetic underpinning feeds into the dying god or demi-god
story. It promotes the idea of the male artist-as-god, in the guise of the painter, which is
an allegory of the imitation of Christ (Freedberg, 1989: 186-7). This type of image is
seen on the title page of the Orbita Probitatis; The Activity of the Painter as an Allegory of
the Imitation of Christ (from J. David, Verdicus Christianus Antwerp, 1603) (fig.9).

The quest is another metaphor for insight, epitomised by the story of Odysseus.
The Oedipus story is both a quest and dying god narrative. Mulvey explains the structure

The story of Oedipus's life moves through stages (from victim to royal child, from
wanderer to hero-king, from defilement to catharsis, from sanctification symbolic
authority) that span the chasm separating Laius from Theseus (1989: 198).

He, like Odysseus, overcomes female temptations and obstacles made manifest in
the forms of degenerate goddesses; the Sphinx, the Sirens and Scylla. The other side of
the story is his blinding and eventual apotheosis during which time his daughter Antigone
accompanies him. Later, Antigone, who buries her brother in accordance with matrilineal
custom, is herself buried alive in a cave for disobeying Creon.

These allegorical paintings and sculptures as emblems provided several original
models depicting the nature of vision, the identity of its ownership and its inheritance.
The idea of vision passing through time from father to son, places the possessors of
vision in a historical context. This historical context is part of a wider context. It is like a
top layer of a soil overlaying others that begins in the bedrock of myth and religion. The
symbolic roots, like threads, link these layers and place them in a philosophical or
ideological background to produce emblems.
Above. Fig. 8 Rembrandt, 1636, *The Blinding of Samson*

Below. Fig. 9 Title Page of the *Orbita Probitatis*, 1603
The image of Medusa is also about blindness, but differs from the blindness represented in Old Testament paintings of subjects and those based on Greek mythical ones. There is no resurrection or apotheosis for Medusa. The image of her body is objectified and sexualised. Furthermore, this appropriation of a narrative for women artists accounts for the limited repertoire of oil painted depictions of woman. Images such as temptress, _femme fatale_, witch, or passive mother or virgin, became the norm. Departure from the norm was considered unusual or exceptional.

Woman is portrayed as a follower in a male drama (Antigone). The mythic role model for this behaviour, seen in the stories and depictions of Dionysos, the effeminate women's god, and his companions the Maenads, becomes the exemplar for secular narratives.

These positions illustrate the difficulties women artists encounter in a canon which is structured by oppositional categories that are hierarchical and asymmetrical. The structure contains value judgements that not only privilege one side over the other, but also conflate values with gender, forms, ideas and biology. The metaphorical language of the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle was founded on the known biology of the day. Semen, not considered material, contained the spark, breath, soul and fire of heaven and was hot, the perfect form, and analogous to art. Women were aligned with the elements of water and earth and coldness and therefore could not turn their blood into semen. Matter became associated with evil, disintegration and death and Christian writers saw nature and matter as feminine.

The male artist, like God, could improve on nature by purifying forms in nature, thereby distancing nature from matter (Summers, 1994: 399). According to Summers this reasoning gave way to the artist-as-god in the modern era (1994: 401). The mind's own formative faculties or consciousness imposed the form of vision on subject/matter or culture on nature by the spirits, wills, drives or desires of artists and writers who conveyed the manifestation of this masculine potential. Fantasies, imagination and the senses were seen to be in the lower realm of matter and the feminine.

The 'feminine' appropriated by male artists for birth impersonation elevates the representation of flesh and blood into male culture. Austrian artist Herman Nitsche re-enacts Catholic narrative and ritual and blends its tableaux of suffering with a Dionysian theatre of excess, chaos and violence. He impersonates Christ as a sacrificial animal, and imitates his manifestation as Man of Sorrows, reminiscent of depictions where blood on his draped cloth falls near his penis as if it were bleeding. As Nitsche says:

Many of the theatre actions are like births. And birth is like a crucifixion and resurrection together. There is blood and meat, and pain and then comes the newly born child, and he cries and begins to live...I want to celebrate existence (Kozloff quoting Nitsche, 1975: 37)
In a symbolic way, the artist as dying god largely eclipses woman and becomes a personification of regenerating nature and culture. The emblem of recyclable Nature metaphorically embodies Dionysos who according to Kerényi is the archetypal image of indestructible life (Kerényi, 1976). Woman portrayed through the figures of Eve and Medusa (in their patriarchal representations as wife and helper) personifies matter and death. She has no autonomy or vision, is 'born' of man, because she is a convenient source of blame, guilt and punishment for man's imaginary loss of immortality (Eve). In the words of Simone de Beauvoir, "to have been conceived and then born an infant is the curse that hangs over [man's] destiny, the impurity that contaminates his being. And, too, it is the announcement of his death" [1949] (1953): 136.

Conclusion

The image of woman functions as a site and a sight but never as a seer. Cindy Sherman represents herself as both subject and object. Sherman reiterates the construction of historical and stereotypical femininity in her Untitled Film Stills in the late 70s. She stands outside her impersonations of actresses in B-grade movies where she shows the viewer how gender and difference deconstruct. To paraphrase Craig Owen: Sherman's photographs function as mirror-masks that reflect back to the viewer, presumed to be male, an image of his desire to fix woman in a stable identity. Although her photographs are self-portraits, she never appears to be the same person or even the same model. "While we can presume to recognise the same person, we are forced at the same time to recognise a trembling around the edges of that identity" (1992: 499). Broude and Garrard suggest she may be raising the question of whether an authentic female identity can ever slip free of the stereotypes. At the same time, Sherman's involvement is with the stereotype, and not with the possibility of creating an original female self-image (1992: 20).

Sherman criticises women's metaphorical position in culture by using her image to function as a mirror-mask. It incorporates the presence of the male gaze because all her attributes read as phallic symbols. Symbols relevant to issues around women's representation, as a site of castration, are those associated with the image of Medusa. For example, a mirror image in Untitled Film Still # 2, 1977 functions as a symbol of vanity. Sherman points to her neck, a gesture that signifies the conflation of decapitation with castration in accordance with the Freudian understanding that links sight with the plight of Medusa. Her image and attributes become phallic symbols (Freud, 1920-22: 273-4).

Extrapolating from Freud's The Medusa's Head, Mulvey states that there are three aspects to the fetished image of woman. Firstly, the image of a woman plus a phallic substitute, secondly, her image minus a phallus but punished and humiliated, often by a woman with a phallus and lastly, woman's image as a phallus (Mulvey, 1973:...
13-16). Sherman's image meets the criteria for the second category because her image is regarded as a source of vanity and self-absorption.

In my paintings I revise the way figures of Eve and Medusa provide conduits for male vision emanating from their desire and ideas about death. Medusa's death and the dying gods both form metaphorical links to a vision where insight is passed from father to son. My paintings retain the key symbols of these narratives but I place them in a context where I emphasise interactions and vision between women. In False Dentata, 1994 (pl.6), Homage to Artemisia Gentileschi, 1994-95 (pl.7), The Eye Ritual, 1995-96 (pl.10), The Original Sudarium, 1994-97 (pl.8) and Interior Column, 1996-97 (pl.14), I focus on mother and daughter images.

In The Original Sudarium, I devise images to suggest a link between a female blood line and vision. The image of the red cloak doubles as a line of blood, joins mother to daughter. It passes from the daughter through pillars at the entrance of the Labyrinth and then through a large keyhole to the red cloak. An imprint of the daughter's face as if a 'Vera Icon' remains on the cloak, signifying the birth of vision. Vision and blood need not link to violent death. Vision and blood are not 'purified' by a sacrifice. The mother's vision is bloody, visceral and chthonic. In my head dress I replicate the horns of the image of a goddess found on a seal. It aligns with the transcendent and celestial signified by the small keyhole image on the horizon standing against a golden sky. The image of myself at my easel in the distance, depicted through the large keyhole, contrasts with the pillars and my daughter.

Symbolic death and a ritual where an initiate descends into the adyton, functions as an alternative resurrection narrative that is a metaphor for vision. Flesh, blood and vision are not mortified in the hope of salvation by a saviour, rather, my own ritual descent to face symbolic death is my alternative emblematic journey. In About the Witch, 1995-97 (pl.11) and Behind the Mask of Medusa, 1996-97 (pl.15), the subject matter and composition deal with the vision of artists who are my colleagues. Each person's gesture suggests her path to vision. All paths are bathed in a red light entering the labyrinth-like studio that highlights edges of images with red paint signifying a non-violent source of poetic inspiration and shared vision.

Images of eyes caught in a moment of self-reflection mirror the flowing material qualities of paint, thereby, linking form to content, are depicted in The Thread in the Labyrinth, 1994-97 (pl.9), The Visionary Thread, Gaze in the Labyrinth, 1996-97 (pl.12) and Interior Column, 1996-97.
CHAPTER 3

The Transposition of Minoan Symbolism into European Oil Paintings

I place myself in an ambivalent position when I stay within the confines of European oil painting. On one hand, illusionist painting displays many negative gender related aspects in its iconographic code. The symbolic content from both visual and literary sources retains inherited meanings from antiquity combined with Christian morality tales. On the other hand, traces of matrastic Minoan symbolism lie behind some of these myths, images and traditions. The patriarchal ideology encoded in symbolic contents used by artists plays a part in the way imagery is constructed. The devices of perspective and chiaroscuro attest to a particular way of seeing. If I want to change the way that images are seen through these devices I need to question how they, as elements of oil painting, convey visual interactions between viewer, subject and artist.

The aim to connect my temporary personal experience to a past cultural context entails changing the way symbols read in iconography. Paintings in the Renaissance and Baroque demonstrate an ideological position about society’s concern with aspects of vision and how vision could be portrayed allegorically as the triumph of reason over the senses. In the twentieth century, the male Surrealists’ visions epitomised a reversal where they valorised the triumph of emotion over reason and rational thought. Women’s lives and images served as signs but not symbols in both symbolic quests. While illusionist painting has these negative aspects it retains many useful elements that aid my revisions.

I observed early depictions of emblems, allegories and genre narratives about vision. My strategy is similar to that of Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington, Frida Kahlo, Wendy Stavrianos and others who returned to styles of painting where images, rendered in a specific style, could illuminate symbolic forms relating to their individual concerns. Carrington and Varo explored hermetic magical paths and developed a common pictorial language derived from realms of domestic life transformed to resemble alchemy, the fairytale and the dream (Zamora, 1992; Chadwick, 1991; Haynes, 1995: 26-32). Kahlo accessed pre-Columbian matrilineal images and some Stavrianos imagery suggests Minoan and Neolithic sources. I use Minoan symbols, not in their original religious iconic state but as disguised symbols and attributes, in a secular narrative sequence that describe my personal experience. I do not pluck them from their context without changing them. They are not represented literally but poetically. Blood is represented as red paint or a red shaft of light. The motif of the eye affected by this colour symbolises interior vision.

I have selected three models, emblematic, allegorical and genre painting, so that I can integrate and graft symbolic and attribute gestures into a complex symbolic context. I make a link between the way features such as the eye and gaze, hair, hands and
background, resemble the same features in their Minoan context. I see links between
depictions of the eyes of Dürer's Self-Portrait, 1500 and the eyes of the goddess both
symbolically and visually. The engaging, yet far-away stare in both paintings refers
symbolically to the presence of a deity. The upraised hand of the goddess is similar to a
depiction of an upraised hand in a Gentileschi painting and Velázquez's depiction of his
studio resonates with allusions to the Labyrinth.

I chose an old master medium and some of their techniques as models because my
imagery requires the use of illusionist forms and spaces, as though seen through a
window, to convey my meanings. This strategy does not exclude viewers from making
different interpretations.

The figures on the Theran Adyton fresco depicted in a ritual narrative do not
appear to communicate across the spaces separating them. The space is flat although the
figures and landscape, rendered in a naturalistic linear style appear alive rather than life-
like. The use of line not only describes the figures' shapes and details of their costume, it
slightly distorts aspects of the anatomy that has the effect of conveying a sense of
movement. I combine elements of verisimilitude with aspects of linear distortion to
portray figures in a partly life-like manner, moving in an illusionist space, as though
alive.

The basic theme of the three paintings, Dürer's Self-Portrait, 1500 (fig.10),
Gentileschi's Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting, 1630 (fig.11) and Velázquez's Las
Meninas, 1656 (fig.12) is self-fashioning and authentication and how both link the
artist's sight to cultural vision. In the sixteenth century, the self-portrait, emblem of
vision, was also an emblem of self-fashioning (Greenblatt, 1980) and historical
consciousness rather than an imitation of nature. Artists, such as Gentileschi and
Velázquez, influenced by Caravaggio's naturalism (designo externo), found ways to
extend the use of symbolism disguised in a covert poetic way that integrated into genre
painting. I combine elements of verisimilitude and naturalism with aspects of linear
distortion, to portray figures in a partly lifelike manner moving in an illusionist space, as
though alive. I catch both still and active moments, separately and simultaneously, where
the resulting tension between the two creates a feeling of psychological intensity.

Emblem

The Dürer Self-Portrait, 1500, is an emblematic painting which contains a monogram A
D with the date 1500 above it and on the right side of the figure is Dürer's name in Latin,
"Albertus Dürerus Noricus" imitating the elaborate triple names of antique poets. His age
is underneath. The viewer reads the inscriptions from left to right, from the epochal
moment of world history (1500), through the artist's initials and name, to the
biographical historicity of Dürer himself, twenty-eight years old. There are oblique
Fig. 10 Albrecht Dürer, 1500, Self-Portrait
Fig. 11 Artemisia Gentileschi, 1630, *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting*
Fig. 12 Diego Velázquez, 1656, *Las Meninas*
references to Christ made by Dürer's initials A D and *anno domini* and Dürerus and *Dominus* (Koerner, 1993: 185). The remaining imagery speaks a visual language that reiterates the text through attributes and gestures: the hands, the tilt of the head, the arresting gaze of the eyes, the hair on the head and beard, and fur and satin on his coat.

The position of the body, fully frontal, meeting the viewer's gaze and constructed by geometric proportions is reminiscent of van Eyck's *Holy Face*. The description of Christ's features stated in the Lentulus letters were the supposed original source of every facial detail (Koerner, 1993; Kurtyluk, 1991; Freedberg, 1989). In a sense, van Eyck's invention (*inventione*) of this image, as and from an ancient message, was the oil painting prototype that brought the past into the present. Although the evidence is circumstantial, both paintings resemble the image of the *Vera Icon* (true image) that was a traditional devotional image known in the Western tradition as the Sudarium or sweat cloth, said to have been the imprint of Christ's face. Veronica obtained the imprint on the cloth as she wiped His face on the way to crucifixion. The Christomorphism of the *Self-Portrait*, 1500, not considered blasphemous, was influenced by the doctrine of *imitatio Christi*. Christ's beauty as God's expression of the beautiful, and Christ's Passion fused by particular attributes into the facial characteristics of his portrait are analogous to the sacredness of divine and artistic creation (Nahm, 1947; Panofsky, 1955; Koerner, 1986, 1993).

Dürer extended the reference to divinity by pictorial allusions which conveyed the idea of Theomimesis. The riveting gaze invites the viewer to reflect on the face as an example of Dürer's imaginary, idealised self. Dürer may have found this type of gaze from examples such as the images of Christ Pantocrator. The main characteristic of the eyes is that they follow the viewer around the room, directed to all, but, at the same time toward each person separately. The viewer becomes a subject whose identity is affirmed by this apparent following omnivoyant gaze (Hopkins, 1985 trans. and citing Nicholas of Cusa). The gaze of Christ was also a metaphor that related to the capacities of the imaginary gaze of the hidden God, believed to exist outside time and possess perfect vision.

The image of Dürer's eyes cast in an outward theomorphic gaze, depicted larger than the eyes in his previous portraits, depend on the tilt of the head for their apparent prominence. The angles of the bottom eyelid, nose and mouth face downward, but the angles of the eyebrows do not. The amount of hair visible on his head is the result of the forward looking pose. The result of this disjunction and slight widening of the eyes, makes the brow appear slightly higher and the forehead lengthened. This effect conveys the ingenuity of the artist as an intelligent creator, a 'motion of the mind' portrait.

Dürer's play on identity and the drama of originality manifests in the image of his hands. His working hand disappears below the edge of the picture frame. Only the cuff of his coat shows so that his left hand attracts attention. It is as if the visible left hand had
not been reversed in the mirror and reads as the right hand. The reason probably lies in the relationship of the painting to the Sudarium. The property of this cloth, 'not made by human hands', was analogous to the image of Dürer's inactive hand with the implication that his painting was also a divine creation. The image of a beautiful left hand, skilfully painted and physically perfect, was a metaphor for the idea of the morally beautiful person who, by implication, could only paint beautifully. "The artist's very flesh is implicated in the things it produces" (Koerner, 1993: 143).

The viewer valorised the effortless skill of the hand as the instrument that captured ideas. Dürer's left hand, middle and index fingers turned inwards towards the body, the index finger resting at the position of his heart (within Dürer's models of human proportion), indicates the artist's mental pre-occupation. To paraphrase Koerner, the heart is the treasure chest, wherein nature, internalised in the draftsman's work, is distilled and abstracted as art. The artist's secret lies neither in external nature nor in the laws of geometry but in the innermost core of self where practice, theory, perception and imagination uniquely mediate. Dürer's finger aims at his heart, whose secret treasure romanticism will call "experience" (1993: 163).

The hand's position relates to certain established poses within the Western pictorial tradition, originating from images of Christ's raised right hand blessing the beholder. Dürer's right hand, resembles certain Eastern icons where Christ's hand is turned towards his chest, gesturing toward the book held in the other hand. The intended meaning of mercy revealed and sustained in the truth of the Word is apparent. Dürer's hand modifies this gesture and its meaning. By pointing his finger towards his body he says that he is 'self-sustained' by his hands. The index finger echoes a small-scaled version of his head, slightly isolated and painted, like the head, with a highlight on the finger nail.

The hand connects to Dürer's clothing, objectively and symbolically. A small tuft of fur from his coat lining pushes between the index and middle finger where it returns the touch of the artist's exploring fingers and silhouettes against their flesh. Dürer is idly fingerling the fur while trying to maintain a stiff pose as imago Dei and at the same time signalling his interiority (1993: 160). In the Self-Portrait, 1500 the artist's gesture toward the fur coat, depicted in lines of paint, connects the instruments of his practice with the emblem of his art. The fur coat, apart from alluding to Dürer's hoped for patrician status, could signify the bestiality of man, power and animality. The hand could tame these baser instincts.

The fur between the index and middle finger is shaped like an eye with a flat base formed by the side of the index finger, and is echoed, not only in his sleeve inset but in the vertical gaps in the material behind the inset. The position and highlighting of this area is reminiscent of the chest and hand wounds of Christ as Man of Sorrows. The wounds and eye-shape made by Dürer's hands are also a reference to interiority and seeing as
redemption. Sight as a sense underwent redemption because it linked to piety. The atonement brought about through sacrifice unified sinful flesh (original sin) with the ideal Godhead. Dürrer's hands by implication connect head and idea to heart.

Dürer's snake-like hair endowed with a transcendent Christamorphic glow, with each hair painted individually, celebrates intricacy and delicacy. This, as well as the hair of his beard, could double as the hair of his brush, being emblematic of the body as self-reference instead of adhering to the portrait convention where the sitter is represented with an object or tool of trade to indicate their identity.

Dürer's great skill was his ability to synthesise two different aspects of divinity. The omnivoyant gaze of God the Father combined with gestural attributes of God the Son that referred to the dying aspect of the deity. The image of the idealised head combined with attributes conveying the antithesis, the mortification of the flesh and the flow of blood. Vision, which is one of the senses, by implication is redeemed through this visual language. This ideological program came at the expense of characterisation. Portrayal of his interiority conveyed by attributes and the artifice of idealisation precluded and preceded the direct characterisation visualised on a painted surface.

Allegory

My second major influence is Artemisia Gentileschi's *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting*, 1630. In this painting, Gentileschi disrupts traditional narratives of seduction and voyeurism. She depicted her body as awkward and resistant but attached to an expressive and reflective head. Instead of sublimating her identity as a mythic Old Testament heroine, she presents herself as a subject in her own right. She adopts some of the attributes of the female personification of painting, called Pittura, set forth in *Iconologia*: golden chain around her neck with a pendant mask (imitation), unruly locks of hair that stand for the divine frenzy of the artistic temperament and garments with changing colours that allude to the painter's skills. Gentileschi inherited and changed Ripa's iconography. She removed the image of the gag from Pittura's mouth which symbolised silent poetry and functioned to align art with poetry as worthy of inclusion into the liberal arts (fig.13). The foreshortened, active pose replaced the passive image.

A *Portrait Medal of Lavinia Fontana*, 1611 by Casoni, a portrait on one side and the image of the allegory of painting or Pittura on the reverse side, may have been a source of inspiration. She fused both images, whereas male artists kept their image separate from the female allegorical figure. The artist's tools and clothes were a problem for the status-conscious male artist. His real image and the awkward combination of attributes of Apelles, Minerva or Athena, Poesia or Pittura when combined resembled the sixteenth century *maniera* artists who mixed the ideal with the real. The ideal and allegory was an image that pertained to men's abstract thoughts but were embodied in a female
Fig. 13 "Peinture", (Pittura) from Cesare Ripa's, *Iconologia* (Paris, 1644)
figure. The legacy of Caravaggio was the rendering of complex abstract ideas, sensate and clear, through cohesive images that were direct and naturalistic. By combining pittoresca with Pittura, Gentileschi presented a forceful living embodiment of the allegory rather than a male fantasy.

She confirms Caravaggio’s metaphor and Alberti’s claim that Narcissus was the model for the first portrait. There is a structural resemblance to Caravaggio’s Narcissus, the arms arched, framing an intensely gazing face. Narcissus gazes down, as his hands reach his reflection at the water’s edge where he falls in love with his mirror image. Gentileschi positioned her hands and gaze sideways, both hands joined at the head, which may be read as an allusion to the fusion of theory and practice. Both images challenge the idea of art improving on nature. In the mirror image, nature and man are in unity and harmony, he cannot possess his reflected image and so dies. His own nature is part of Nature. According to Garrard, his death, represented as a cyclical complement of life, the joined hands of reference and representation, are embracing life and death.

Gentileschi uses the mirror as veritas rather than vanitas, changing the conventions which depend on the stereotype of female vanity. The self and the truthful vision of nature are identical. This vision is a meditation on the nature of the art of painting that draws on the inclusive understanding of the symbiotic relationship between human, natural and artistic realms. Her imitation of nature is identical with herself, assisted by the female personification (designo interno) and by Renaissance ideas that parallel art and female beauty. Hers is not a beautiful but an unconventional self-image. The implication is that her natural self is her model and source of artistic inspiration.

In order to depict a near profile, Gentileschi used a double mirror, a procedure that reveals something about her attitude to imitation. The mirror, understood as a behavioural corrective alluded to the inscription of “know thyself” on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, was the means of acknowledging one’s defects as self knowledge, assisted by the guiding hand of a teacher. The image of the unseen natural model in the mirror balances in the viewer’s imagination the intense meditative concentration of the visible artist. The poised brush refers to the mind reassembling the external world to the inner ideal (designo interno). The abstract intellect of the artist is conveyed by highlights on her forehead, but is reason not achieved at the expense of Nature (herself) and the visible world, and combines with Nature presenting a unity between artist and mind and subject and matter (Garrard, 1989: 367). Her eyes look beyond the canvas to the mirror, her mind reassembles this image, and at the same time, the position of both hands at the edge of the canvas in front of her gaze, connects vision to the senses.

By painting her canvas as the tabula rasa, as the image of the raw material, Gentileschi presents a new pictorial form, an emblem where she will bring forth her own potential through the capabilities of the art of painting (1989: 368). The painted canvas resembles the actual canvas, therefore, not denying its physical presence. The canvas is
not presented as a dull opaque object waiting to be converted into a window on an imaginary world and is not separated from the illusion on its surface. The empty canvas alludes to the unity between the intellect and the physical sphere, the tabula rasa before which she works. The depicted surface image (designo externo) is not inferior to the idea (designo interno).

The position of colours also point to unity between theory and practice by alluding to the connecting highlight on her forehead with her breast and the white paint on her palette. The brush held with her palette mirrors the brush in her reaching hand. The latter aligns with her head. Both upper and lower brushes reach beyond the edge of the canvas and point towards the implied mirror. The viewer will, therefore, regard the image that she is about to paint through her eyes.

I note from observation she is not an object of the viewer's gaze. The following is a personal reading of this painting designed to clarify how skin and blood can be painted as disguised symbols in my work. Gentileschi's medallion mask, emblem of the painter and imitation, positioned in shadow beneath her highlighted forehead, appears to 'look' at the viewer across her palette. Is the viewer the implied imitation of nature who is in need of improvement? White and red are the first colours on her palette that attract the viewer. Red used throughout the composition on her lips, slightly flushed cheeks, her raised hand and index finger holding her brush, as well as in the glazes over the green dress material, is symbolic. Images of skin and garments, as emblems of the soul, visually connect to the red in the canvas, simulating another skin or potential soul.

The naturalism and its link to designo externo through the imitation of nature undermined the manner of the allegorical tradition where in Garrard's words "women's bodies stand for men's minds" (1989: 356). The language of paint and naturalism, rather than functioning as a surface manifestation or imitation of nature unified with the textual language of emblem and allegory, (referring to the inner spirit of God or designo interno). Gentileschi blurred the boundaries of these two opposing Albertian categories as well as referring to female creation through the language of the red paint juxtaposed to the white paint. Both hands and their proximity to the red connect visually to her mouth. Her voice speaks through her use of paint, challenging the image of the gagged Pittura and negative subliminal messages, to allusions that women's voices are as chatter.

The snake-like wavy hair of Pittura, transferred to this self-portrait, is reminiscent of an earlier version of this motif which was also an attribute of Medusa. In Judith and Her Maidervant, 1613-14, Gentileschi refers to this image and the self-portrait by a profile and near profile of the heads of Medusa (recalling Caravaggio's Medusae) and Pittura, both with wavy trails of snake-like hair. The most obvious reference to Medusa is her depiction on the pommel of Judith's sword as she decapitates Holofernes. This image accompanies the emblem of David or St George on the brooch in her hair. Gentileschi may have been remarking on Cellini's Perseus statue. Garrard points out that
the head of Medusa has undergone a sea-change with the reversal of sex roles (1989: 319). It functions as a talisman, like the brooch in her hair, with the snakes removed. It was the gaze of Medusa and her snakes that frightened the male heroes, Perseus and Odysseus and without them Medusa, as benevolent apparition, links with a broader iconographic type of powerful mother image, thereby supporting the idea of Judith as an androgynous hero.

Has Gentileschi reclaimed aspects of Medusa's snake-like energised hair-image sixteen years later in her Self-Portrait? If she refers to the ancient version, her demise at the hands of Perseus. If she aligns herself with Pittura or Athena as Goddess of painting and craft, or any other patriarchal versions, who are praised for their beauty rather than skill, the connotations are also negative. The ugly Gorgon or Medusa was apotropaic or alternatively, with her attributes omitted, was more acceptable as a mother. Either way she was a vaginadentata.

She aligned her image with Pittura, even though she imbued this allegorical sign with life as a symbol of female capabilities, but the fantasy of Pittura's glorification did not match the reality of ordinary women's lives. Women, systematically excluded from so called male disciplines of logic, mathematics, grammar and history, could not reach full potential. Women, who were at once a super-species and unable to match this expectation through disadvantage, form a sub-species culturally and socially. Gentileschi, deserving of praise for her genius, was considered unusual (1989: 174).

When Dürer's Self-Portrait is compared to Gentileschi's Self-Portrait for its emblematic capacity as an apotheosis of the artist, the latter cannot compete on the same grounds. Pittura, as a male invention, or Medusa, in her patriarchal version, do not have the powers of a man-made God. The male artist as dying and resurrected god, a deity that could link the past to the present by a religion endorsed by the culture, presented a historic reality. The Greek goddesses, although used to endorse the status of the arts, did not symbolise power because in the pantheon they were subject to male control. The implication, when transferred to iconography, meant that the presence of their attributes changed the way the content, meaning and form read. So that when they denoted attributes that conveyed materiality by pointing to the senses, they denoted this materiality as 'nature' which is in need of redemption and resurrection to the realm of the spirit.

Genre

The theme of vision has a secular cast in Velázquez's Las Meninas, 1656. This group portrait of the Spanish royal family and their entourage contain the artist's self-portrait. Previously he experimented with the artifice of idealisation and modifying features in portraits of Philip IV without compromising likeness. Attributes around the sitter's features were not central to Velázquez's naturalism; instead, he used augmented emblems
within the interior. Velázquez solves the dilemma of naturalistic painting being an imitation of nature by the use of the mirror that is faithful to truth. His characterisations have dignity. He embraces two conflicting modes of representation: that of looking through the window in keeping with Alberti's instruction *designo interno* and the *camera obscura* mode where an outside image, obtained through a lens, casts onto an inside flat surface. A fragment of the larger world compressed onto the canvas, it is a surface impressed with colour and light, categorised as *designo externo* and encompasses colour, surface, decoration, brushstroke, nature, fidelity, truth and imitation as represented by Caravaggio, an early influence on Velázquez.

In *Las Meninas*, the resolution between naturalistic portraiture, genre painting and the monumental composition of history painting was achieved. The painting that appeared casual and intimate was a highly calculated composition. *Las Meninas* was both a replication and reconstruction, a composition that hovers between reality and illusion. Everything is in perfect order, yet an illusion is in fact created. It is not in the painting; it is in us, and it is one of understanding (Snyder, 1985: 552; Umemger, 1995: 115). The viewer sees that things are not taken for what they are but for what they seem, everything initially appears obvious but the painting's real intention is the understanding of idealised standards and values.

Central to this is the mirror. The mirror in *Las Meninas* functions as an exemplum. It reveals the hidden image which Velázquez is painting, meaning that his art is not only an image caught in the natural world. The rear wall, the position of the mirror, doorway, curtain and stairs and the placement of allegorical paintings on this wall all relate to the requirements of *designo interno*, and are focal points, placed in a 'higher space'. The looking glass represents the 'ideal' or the 'idea' of the prince, or princess in this case, who conveys ideal norms of conduct, character and thought. This reflection, reached only through art and seen only by the inner eye is not and cannot be corporeal in origin.

It is also the reflection of a Renaissance and Baroque artistic ideal, since the figure of the perfect or exemplary princess is a creation of human fashioning. The theme of the mirror is that of Art perfecting nature and completing the work initiated by nature. By juxtaposing the princess's head with the frame of the mirror, Velázquez signifies her moral virtue. The character of the creator of the ideal is implicated because only the inner eye apprehends the source of the reflected image rather than the naked eye. The inner eye can also see corrupt qualities but only in a mirror that images the soul. The image of the king and queen is not seen in person but in the imagination whose cause is art. The mirror holding their painted reflection is exemplary of the monarchy and is a reflection of ideal character and the artist's genius for clever invention (Snyder, 1985: 558). The seeds of art and science (perspective), that are in the soul need cultivation. All activities radiate
from the mirror. The viewer is directed by the pointed tip of Velázquez's brush to understand this spectacle through reflection.

Velázquez's palette and brush are a connecting arrow between his canvas and the mirror. One eye appears preoccupied as his thoughts turn inward after looking directly at the royal couple. The other eye slightly turning aside as he remembers the image before he places it on canvas. The palette juxtaposed with the maid's beribboned head matches it in brushstroke and hue, making a claim for craft.

My interpretation of the Las Meninas' format may be found in an image from Ripa's Iconologia titled "The World", based on a version of the Labyrinth (fig.14). The world, understood as the universe, is everything (the Greek word pan means everything or all) and is personified by the bearded and goat-footed god Pan in the foreground. His figure pictorially merges with the tree behind him as he dances and turns aside to gaze at the waterfall. His horns represent the sun and moon and his red face symbolises the pure celestial fire, superior to all other elements that make up the world. His beard represents both the upper elements (fire and air and the masculine) that send down their power to the lower elements (earth and water), the feminine in nature. The spotted panther hide symbolises the eighth sphere of the universe and encloses all that pertains to the world, according to Ptolemaic thinking.

The fatto or background event links the foreground and figure of Pan by the positions of his attributes; the shepherd's crook and syrinx or reed flute and his pointing finger. The first symbolises the rule of nature's laws, (a staff or a rod usually signifies dominion or rule) or the year that, like the top of the crook, turns back on itself and the second, the god's invention. The finger points at an open doorway at the rear of the Labyrinth that is the image of the fatto or event. Another 'finger' of the god's hide 'points' at the doorway entrance of the Labyrinth.

For Ripa, the Labyrinth represents the course of human life. At the entrance stands a child with flowers who starts the journey that progresses in stages; in the first circle stands a youth with a sickle and grain; in the second, a mature woman with grapes; in the third, an old man crouching at a fire. These symbolise the four ages of man and the four seasons. In the centre stands Death with the hourglass (pointing at a doorway near the rear wall of the Labyrinth) and scythe (also pointing to an open doorway), symbolising the goal, the end of existence. The third doorway nearest to Death connects the skeleton standing on a stepped pedestal with a curtain. Death could walk out of this Labyrinth because all three openings connect to a fourth in the rear outside wall. A foreground leaf and the shepherd's crook of Pan overlap this open doorway. The epigram that explains the meaning states that: "all that you see everywhere-heaven, the sea the clouds, the earth-now all pass away; their transiency proves they existed." The Neoplatonic view of material nature used (the reed pipe and crook) to transform instruments into creations that continue in time although the things of the world are
MUNDUS.
Quicquid ubique vides coelum, mare minita tellus,
Omnia nunc perunt, exitus acta probat.

Die Welt.
So ändert sich der Lebenslauf,
und endlich hört alles auf.

Fig. 14 "The World", from Cesar Ripa's Iconologia (Paris, 1644)
transient.

Velázquez identifies with Pan by the two paintings on the rear wall of *Las Meninas*. Both paintings are about competitions between gods and differing status. The death of the loser represents the triumph of divine art over human craft. Velázquez ideologically aligns his pose in keeping with the act of inspired gazing rather than the application of paint. One of the paintings, *Apollo and Pan*, represents the music contest. The contest theme implicates Apollo and Marsyas. The victorious Apollo skinned Pan or Marsyas on a tree.

Another possible identification with the image of Pan is the parallel between the similarity in the way both figures hold their implements. Pan is pointing to the open or blank space of the doorway, an allusion to the blank space that holds potential, indicated by Velázquez's gesture of the pointed brush. Pan's reed pipe links to Death's hourglass and Velázquez's palette points to the looking glass.

These attributes surrounding the mirror image idealise the viewer's understanding because of symbolisms that transform the image into a secular Vera Icon, a soul-skin cloth. The dying god story underpinning the theme of inner vision is located in a narrative space, authorised by ancient Greek sources that refer to a Labyrinth. Velázquez naturalism, the loose, smudged and cloudy brushstrokes rather than realism or detailed verisimilitude depicting royalty, turned them into secular icons.

Conclusion

Dürer painted himself as a deity, a theomimesis that constituted a 'true image' in that cultural setting. By imitating that procedure, my aim is to represent myself as the Snake Goddess. The representations of the eyes of Dürer and the Goddess in frontal positions are similar, (the combination of simultaneous inward and outward gaze) although the meanings attached to both are different. I want to change the meaning of this gaze by augmenting it with surrounding attributes in the background, in a similar manner to Velázquez.

The representations of hands by both Dürer and Gentileschi are instructive. Her depiction appears less idealised and replicates aspects of the upraised hand of the goddess, holding a brush rather than a snake. I use the image of my brush and its shadow, as if snakes, to reach toward the metaphorical underworld of my imagination presented on the canvas. The image of Gentileschi's thumb, also emerging snake-like through the hole in her palette, resonates with links between the inner and outer realms. I use the image of the hand as a reflection, not of a beautiful character as does Dürer, but as one of exploration. Gentileschi's direct active pose with reaching arms and hands counteracting her still eyes create an interesting tension that conveys the moment when
imagery observed is reassembled mentally before transferral through the body to the canvas. Her vision and senses fuse.

This fusion, set against the image of Gentileschi's blank canvas, is like a stage prop and may have influenced Velázquez’s use of the position of his canvas. The blank canvas connects to other similar objects like the mirror and doorway that simulate the picture plane. This complexity augments the possible meaning of the blank canvas (in potentia) that expands into a background and a cultural context. The Christian definition of the Labyrinth, changed by me into a Minoan version of the Labyrinth, embeds into its original context. The illusionist space in Las Meninas that occupies the top half of the painting is a deep space with a mysterious element caused by the way figures appear compressed in the shallow space of the foreground. They are juxtaposed with the distant figure of Nieto in the doorway, who because of tonal contrast, is part of a distant focal point. The compression of this atmospheric space serves as a model for the space to approximate that of an adyton-like mysterious atmosphere that I seek to portray.

Velázquez’s use of diverse light sources also contributes to the sense of the numinous pervading a secular context. Like Velázquez, I turn my studio into a context that relates to the Labyrinth, a public place. The qualities of oil paint combined with turpentine and damar varnish, linseed oil, stand oil, and venice turpentine facilitate many effects ranging from watercolour wash to buttery, ropey impasto indicating the different way light falls on objects, or reflects from them by using glazes over impasto highlights. These old master techniques, Rembrandt-like glowing surfaces, convey the sense that matter is ‘alive’ and emits its own light like phosphorescence. Lights glow in the dark and fall onto objects. By using light in a variety of ways, figures in the composition are treated differently according to their position in space. The image of Nieto in Las Meninas is like a flat cutout, but in the middle distance larger figures are partly dissolved by shafts of light. The highlights focus on particular gestures to simplify a crowded composition by obscuring details that the viewer unfolds slowly in successive glances.

My interpretation of Gentileschi’s subtle use of red is that it metaphorically links blood to her vision and senses. One source of her disguised attributes was Medusa as the devouring mother. I use similar attributes but align them with the image of the Snake Goddess and situate the hybrid image in the Minoan Labyrinth. In this way I transpose meanings from iconic Minoan symbolism into disguised symbolic attributes which integrate into European oil painting. The symbolism on the foreground figure become attributes and relate to those in the fatto or background event. The images of the red columns and walls, red paint and the setting sun are metaphors for the mother’s blood line. Vision is in the flow of red paint or blood, that like menstruation, is a sign of the blood line. Although it has its transcendent aspect, it is not cut off from the senses or idealised through a purification narrative. My foundation narrative is about a vision inherited through the mother and daughter connection.
PART 2

FEMINIST POETICS: ICONOGRAPHY AND TECHNIQUES

CHAPTER 4

Iconographical Code and Vision

My paintings hang in a sequence that reflects my emblematic journey which depicts my progression through different stages of memory, where I retrace my steps through the entrance of the Labyrinth to the adyton, to 'confront' a symbolic death. The images of blood and symbols in the adyton suggest metaphors that allude to the female body. This process where I reclaim Minoan symbols is a means of constructing an identity. One aim is to widen the patriarchal meanings assigned to symbols and alter their positions as attributes on figures like Medusa (who plays a part in narratives as a personification of aspects of vision). For example, Derrida invokes Medusa to personify the artist's plunge into darkness as an element of a creative process (1993).

Other aims address the nature of self and construct a form of a metaphorically viscous and complex entity by composing the figurative elements in the paintings around shared vision. I extend the monocular nature of vision: its hierarchical structure, the male gaze, its inheritance from father to son and its link to desire and/or mortification and purification as a prelude to insight. The paintings also relate to aspects of self and implicate me in joining vision to my senses within a cultural context. Theoretically I constructed an iconography in which I aimed to break the circuit where in Berger's words:

Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves.
The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object-and most particularly an object of vision: a sight (1972: 47).

My revisioning aims to establish a symbolic language where women look through a female rather than a male language. The paradox of phallocentrism is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order to its meaning. An idea of a woman stands as a linchpin to the system: it is her lack of a penis that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence, it is her desire to make good that lack and to 'become' a phallus. She raises her child into the symbolic also as a phallic substitute which curtails her meaning as
a self entity in the process. Her meaning in this process signifies many things: the male other, a form of exchange, a conduit, keeper of the look not maker of the meaning and conveyor of sexual difference based on the absence of a penis rather than on the presence of a clitoris and vagina (Mulvey, 1975).

Woman's image as an object is a source of voyeurism, violence and sadism because of the 'guilt' attributed to her (Eve and Medusa). In this castrated form she is a vehicle for male narcissism or sexual stimulation. In order to displace the sight of her imaginary castration the viewer creates fetish objects out of everyday attributes like gloves and shoes. They serve as signs for the 'lost' penis. In the form of a castrator, the reverse side of the fetishised phallic woman, the viewer is confronted with horror (Mulvey, 1973). Medusa in mythology seems to embody both these aspects in her narrative. Firstly, she is a sight of castration and the bleeding wound through which Perseus 'gives birth' to sons. Secondly, as a mask whose eyes and gazes turned men to pillars by freezing their blood (erection). Before these manifestations, as a Gorgon she resembled the Harpies, the Sirens or the Eryines. The latter avenged matricide and the former were entities overcome and conquered by Odysseus. Other mask and pillar images of mythology were of Dionysos worshipped by the Maenads and Hermes, messenger to the underworld.

My alternative versions to the phallic nature of pillars and blood images refer to their presence in a Minoan context. Pillars and blood seemed connected to snake goddesses and funerary rites in pillar crypts and they suggest the presence of female puberty rites on the Thera Aydion Fresco. These symbols that convey a sense of life, death and rebirth are not implicated in a narrative about guilt and punishment. Rather than have the image of my daughter functioning as a phallic substitute, I inscribe her as the embodiment of a line of vision and her blood forms the image of my signature. We share the same name. Both vision and name are depicted in red light and red paint. I use the viscous and coagulating nature of oil paint and its many properties extended through the use of different mediums as metaphors for the female mind and body.

My strategy, like that of Remedios Varo's is to re-invent a religious cultural context. She altered symbols and rituals by using female imagery such as metaphorical eggs, fallopian tubes, a uterus, an umbilical cord and the magic of hidden generativity. In her gender masquerade her figures, in keeping with alchemy, are ambiguous, often androgynous (Haynes, 1995: 29). In Creation of the Birds, 1958, she depicts herself as the scientist-artist in the persona of Wisdom, the owl, who sits at a desk drawing a bird in a dimly lit chamber. The drawing transforms into a living creature when moonlight, magnified through a triangular lens, touches the image. A tube coming through a circular opening delivers water to an egg-like piece of alchemical equipment from which an arm-like tube delivers primary colours to her palette from its three 'fingers'.
Varo not only made a claim for the artist as one who goes beyond imitation of nature to creation itself but constructed a vision of woman's identity. She uses bird symbolism to refer to the state of transcendence. Lines of vision, illuminated by glowing forms conveyed by a yellow glow, focus gradually on the black circle of the musical instrument, as if an eye, in the position of her heart. This shape, alluding to the presence of a metaphorical eye, doubles as a larger opening depicted on the rear wall.

In my paintings, the viewer is invited to enter them from different positions. While the presence of mark-making suggest the gestures of a past moment, I place shadows from the exterior onto the canvas that suggests a person's presence. Images of my hand and its shadow allude to the material existence of the painting process. Vision and paint as metaphorical blood combine to form the basis of my feminist poetics.

Emblems of Self and Vision

Omnipotence and Omnivoyance

In the first suite of four paintings, I intended to construct a 'true image' as an alternative to the Vera Icon or a mask of Medusa. I conflate aspects of a woman-defined female 'holy face' with those of a female artist. The format of the head on a rectangle is paralleled, in early Minoan iconography, to the image of a goddess or person imitating the gesture of the upraised arms at a window seen in the funerary libation vessel.

All the heads in this suite emerge from the black keyhole but are partially obscured by my palette. I use the symbol on both horizons and as an element of my 'Vera Icon'. I observe the viewer from this imaginary Labyrinth entrance. My poetic replaces the idea of the 'eye of God' with the idea of the 'eye of a goddess' who appears to look outwardly and inwardly into and from the Labyrinth at once. A vanishing point is determined by our still position on the ground line of the picture plane and convey the vanishing point as a figure in the doorway at the entrance of the Labyrinth. This entrance image juxtaposes with the keyhole to obscure omnivoyant versions of viewing.

I interpret some elements of Claude Cahun's Autoportrait, 1928, (Chadwick, 1998) as disguised symbols about vision. This three-quarter view of Cahun's head and body-profile is double-headed. The mirror image reads as a floating window suspended in this exterior. It is a diagonal double, juxtaposed with the black rectangle obscured by the position of her body. The large diagonal is mirrored by her shirt's diagonal pattern. This pattern is reminiscent of images of tiled floors that function as perspective devices. Is the 'real' head about to whisper something into the ear of the mirror image as though speaking through a keyhole? Her dark mirror image is not unlike the keyhole aperture.

An eye positioned over the mirror's frame functions symbolically. The vertical edge of the frame links the viewer's eye to her hand. Only one eye, the one closest to the
viewer is a 'real' eye because from the centre line of her head, her face turns to overlap the mirror and is contained within its frame with her fingers. Her vision takes the viewer into the darkness of remembering, as well as confronting the viewer with her complex self.

In my paintings the viewer becomes a subject with a complex identity affirmed by an apparent following gaze. Both artist and viewer can face a symbolic death in this underworld. The main characteristic of the eyes is that they follow the viewer around the 'Labyrinth', directed to other viewers and toward each person separately. The artist and the viewer face a mirror image, as if Narcissus, viewing his reflection on the surface of the deep, watery underworld. The viewer faces my image from within this space that partially blocks the view of exterior with the keyhole symbol sitting on the horizon. There is an escape. The viewer is not forced to follow any further.

My partial mirror image of one eye, expresses the presence of an intangible reality. It signifies the dissolution of time, space and the self being outside the boundary of the painting. The space is coextensive with my image at the boundary, threshold or liminal space between inner and outer realms. Time also extends visually as I represent one eye as a mirror image, while the other exists in the dimension of memory, dream and imagination.

In two paintings, *Snake/Paint*, 1994 (pl.4) and *Another Menstruous Eye* 2, 1994 (pl.3), the image of my brush, as a disguised snake symbol, connects both keyholes; one in the Labyrinth and the other on the horizon. Analogous to the images of goddesses and snakes, they join inner and outer worlds. The image is a metaphor for my process of looking. I can only observe my eye in the instant of looking. My remaining facial characteristics are largely fantasy. As I look away from the mirror, I metaphorically plunge into darkness before my brush touches the canvas where I capture the several states of being, simultaneously. They consist of the memory of my observation, dreams, memories from the past, that is, walking through the ruin of the Labyrinth at Knossos and imagination. In *The Face and Horn*, 1994 (pl.1), the horn, (also present on several figurines of Minoan goddesses), juxtaposed with my thumb emerging from the hole in my palette, appears on the other side of my head. The red paint trickling down the surface of my palette is visible from behind a transparent black keyhole symbol. Both the lines of red paint and the black keyhole refer to the entrance of the Labyrinth. The palette and thumb, like a mask, replicate my face and the horn to indicate the presence of a multi-faceted identity. My shadow falls from my painting position to the mouth of my mirror image meaning that I am part of what I observe.

My slightly elevated gaze in *Snake/Paint*, looks down to engage the viewer. A head and reddish snake-like fingers and paint emerge from the keyhole. As displaced disguised symbols, the red outline around my eye and my snake-like fingers make an allusion to the attributes of snake goddessess.
Plate 4 Snake/Paint, 1994, oil on canvas, 60 x 76 cm
Plate 3 *Another Menstruous Eye* 2, 1994, oil on canvas, 60 x 76 cm
Plate 1 *The Face and Horn*, 1994, oil on canvas, 60 x 76 cm
In *Another Menstruous Eye 1*, 1994 (pl.2), one eye looks through the hole in my palette and the other eye is a painted within the textures and colours mixed on top of the palette. This indicates one eye symbolising vision and the other the senses. Snake-like paint and thumb rest on my palette in *Snake/Paint*. Wavy marks simulate hair- the indication of inspirational creativity. The red eye of Minoan art parodies the so called 'menstruous eye' said by Pseudo-Albert in *Women's Secrets* (a medieval medical treatise) to break mirrors (Rodnate Le May, 1992).

The upraised hands in three of these paintings, juxtaposed with the images of the eyes not engaged in observation, indicate interiority and self-reflection. In *Snake/Paint*, the hands are placed in a lower position near the heart, the head appears upraised instead. I insinuate the crescent symbol into my iconography. A crescent-shaped light highlights one side of my head and cheek in *Another Menstruous Eye 2*.

Emblems of Shared Vision

*Mother and Daughter*

The meaning I intend to convey in this suite is that identity, insight and vision link through a female line. Images of women do not have to identify with male kin or function as a muse. I address how the conjunction of the hands, palette and eye symbolise a link between mother and daughter.8 In *Homage to Artemisia Gentileschi*, 1994 (pl.7), my wooden brush resembles the tree and snake, held in hands with snake-like veins alluding to the underworld of initiation. The shadow of my hand, appearing snake-like and umbilical, reaches up to my daughter's portrait. This hand holding a brush of red paint reaches up to touch the canvas but in the process its shadow points to an image of my daughter. The other hand below, like that in Gentileschi's *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting*, balances the hand above. As if one of many Cycladic and Minoan figurines and group sculptures, my daughter is 'held' above my head.9

I considered the previous paintings in this suite, to be unsuccessful because they seemed too literal. The iconography remained patriarchal and relied on the title to undermine the images. I used the title *Not Amused* to criticise my depiction of my lover as a muse. In another untitled painting my image and earthy colours do not convey the processes of thinking, mentally assembling, distilling and synthesising many influences before I committed them to canvas.

In the following suite of two paintings, I begin to explore how backgrounds of labyrinth-like interiors link with the foreground activity of painting. The shadow of my hand falls across an image of a painting situated in a shallow space in *False Dentata*, 1994 (pl.6). My hand is not a mirror image so I separate it from the depictions of my head as a mirror image. An image of my 'real' shadow connects the image of my hand to my head.
Plate 2 Another Menstruous Eye I, 1994, oil on canvas, 60 x 76 cm
Plate 7 *Homage to Artemisia Gentileschi*, 1994-95, oil on canvas, 70 x 80 cm
Plate 6 *False Dentata*, 1994, oil on canvas, 66 x 96 cm
Both my brush's shadow and my 'real' brush are parallel as they point to images of 'eyes'. One 'eye' is a small portrait of my daughter, painted in the eye-position of the shadow of my head. The image of my daughter's head resembles a displaced eye as my eye juxtaposes with the shape of her head. As I look at my daughter I metaphorically imply our connection through vision. My shadow draws attention to how I change the meaning attributed to an image of woman's mouth, often read as a *vagina dentata*. A painting hangs out of my mouth, echoing images of Medusa's lolling tongue.

In *Les Dentata*, 1994 (pl.5), my head protruding through the keyhole doubles the image figure at the entrance of the interior/labyrinth. The motif of the figure in the liminal doorway doubles for the head at the keyhole. The image of the red-masked artist, as a fantasy self, reaches forward to paint the larger-than-life-sized head, that, being painted more realistically, is not the fantasy but reality. These small suites introduced a private self, depicted in emblematic format resembling images of deities at windows and entrances.

**Emblematic Journey**

*Vision and Context*

Three diptyches and a triptych introduce the theme of the relationship between the subject matter (aspects of the Labyrinth at Knossos), the act of painting (ritual descent) and self-reflection (facing the fear of death). In the manner of a ritual narrative, each panel segments parts of the story, not unifying the whole into the one perspective frame. One panel depicts a self, attribute gestures and a symbol deriving from Minoan iconography and the other depicts activities that augment the first panel by suggesting a narrative about vision. I experiment with the symbols and their juxtaposition with the figures. My use of symbols becomes less emblematic.

In *The Original Sudarium*, 1994-97 (pl.8), I portray myself in a mythological guise with horned head-gear in the mode of goddesses depicted on seal impressions. The staring oracular eyes of the goddess figurines appropriated in this work signify 'inner sight.' As noted above (p.1), the keyhole is a poetic device that conflates the doorway emblem, alluding to 'inner' and 'outer' space, into one unified image. In this painting I reversed the keyhole's position and placed the myth in the foreground and the image of myself painting in the round keyhole space situated in the background.

The second diptych titled *The Thread in the Labyrinth*, 1994-97 (pl.9), shows the keyhole and entrance motif as an emblem in an allegory of creative inspiration. I look out at the viewer and reach up, brush in hand, toward the keyhole. The keyhole, eye and brush are aligned on the same plane as the red entrance: the sunset's blood-light that
Plate 5 *Les Dentaiia*, 1994, oil on canvas, 66 x 96 cm
Plate 8 The Original Sudarium, 1994-97, diptych, oil on canvas, 132 x 180 cm
Plate 9 *The Thread in the Labyrinth*, 1994-97, diptych, oil on canvas, 132 x 180 cm
translates into red walls of the interior. My other remembered 'self' on the other side of the keyhole, portrayed as an image within a shadow, looks through the keyhole to the other active self. Behind the figure, a landscape based on the north-east ruin of the Knossos Labyrinth contains a bull fresco. I change the patriarchal meanings that allude to the bull as Zeus in the Rape of Europa. Rather than an image of rape (said by Panofsky to be a medieval allegory of Christ’s love for the soul (1939: 80), I use the image of blood falling from the bull to tell a story about the life-giving qualities of this liquid both biologically and as the flow of immortalising paint. The entrance painted in glowing colour is associated with sky and space. It extends the atmospheric perspective of the glowing red interior to the exterior.

Vision and Inheritance

The focal point in the first panel of The Eye Ritual, 1995-96 (pl.10), is on my eyes. As the title suggests, they engage in a ritual about observation, memory and reflection. The image of the eyes outwardly manifest an instant of recall. It is the instant after I have consulted a map of Crete. In the process of recall, the image of the reflective surface of my glasses mirrors the object of my thoughts. This type of stare conflates both inward and outward gazes. The image of my hand and its shadow depicted falling onto the images suggests that I am not a distant, so-called objective observer. Its juxtaposition with the my right eye, beneath my glasses, reflects the grid of a map of Crete with a keyhole symbol marking the position of the ruin of Knossos.

The second panel explains the significance of this place. It alludes to the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus on which a funerary ritual and blood sacrifice could poetically stand for the idea of life in death. Women are the protagonists in this ritual. The blood depicted on the red column, my daughter’s leg and in the ritual scene parallel our reflections in the mirror. The connection of blood and gaze confirms the connection between mother and daughter in a religious sense. My shadow falls across the second panel and in the mirror-image I depict the gaze between mother and daughter. The mirror is a metaphor alluding to the entrance of the Labyrinth. The positive shape of the mirror resembles the negative space of the keyhole and both shapes echo the triple-headed, sculptured self-portrait. My intention was to refer to the underworld manifestations of the Minoan goddess.

Vision and Perspective as a Symbolic Form

In the triptych About the Witch, 1995-97 (pl.11), I interrogate two stereotypic Renaissance exemplars of women: The Three Graces and the witch. This triptych is a response to some of Dürer’s and Hans Baldung Grien’s prints of these subjects which
Plate 10 *The Eye Ritual*, 1995-96, diptych, oil on canvas, 92 x 120 cm
Plate 11 *About the Witch*, 1995-97, triptych, oil on canvas, 90 x 252 cm
suggest a conflation of these two stereotypical roles. They translate into the nymph which contrasts with the *femme fatale*. The first models refer to male prescriptions about the nature of women in relation to male sexual needs, a definition of beauty and a sexual fantasy about woman as muse. The image of the witch (and the fate of many thousands of women burnt at the stake as witches or heretics) was reinforced and shaped by the moral order of the day (Zika, 1994). I see a correlation between these images and some twentieth century examples. In Hans Baldung Grien's work, images of women's bodies are rendered as though they are dolls. Smooth, boneless and contorted, he exposes intimate views of genitalia, anuses and breasts to the viewer's gaze. They remind me of David Salles's, Allen Jones's and Hans Bellmer's work that many feminists criticise as pornographic.

Another print titled *Vanity and the Devil*, a woodcut illustration from *Der Ritter vom Turn*, (Basel: Micheal Furter, 1493) similar to the above, depicts an image of a woman looking into a mirror. This image is juxtaposed with an image placed behind her that engages the attention of the viewer. It is an image of the devil whose anus doubles as a small mirror shape. This image suggests that a woman engaging in self-reflection (already accused of vanity) is also committing heresy because kissing the devil's posterior was said to be an aspect of a pagan ritual. The viewer's gaze aligns the anus, mirror and woman, suggesting a link between mirrors, orifices and the position of the woman's body. These analogies encode the link between the gaze that constructs perspective as a symbolic form and the woman's body as the object of that gaze.

In my alternative vision, the mirror depicted in the first panel holds a reflection of a painting that stands in the viewer's position outside the triptych. This fuses the eye of the viewer with the subject of that painting and the figure looking at the painting who is also reflected in the mirror. The viewer, the painting, the lecturer looking at it and my position, as I address the triptych, are all looking from the same point outside the panels. In this reflection of a painting, an image of my head and body in profile depicted in a riding position, fills a keyhole shape. As an emblem of vision, it echoes two other works included in this canvas, Dürer's print, *The Witch*, 1509 and a drawing of the *Rape of Europa*. All three images depict women holding implements. My brush is an alternative example to that of the broom, spindle and horn that refer to traditional oppressive gender roles.

My revisioning of the outworn symbolic content in this iconography juxtaposes vision, the brush, two mirror images and the entrance to the labyrinth with my red spectacles reflecting the blood-red sun from the entrance. A large self-portrait 'peers' through a black keyhole. Perspective as a symbolic form links to entrances of the Labyrinth and the keyhole. These entrances or liminal spaces derive their meaning from their association with rites of passage or epiphany of the deity. Complex perspective devices lead the viewer's eye out through entrances and in through mirrors and the
keyhole head in the third panel. Figures come out through mirror images and return through the entrances that double as the eyes of the viewer and myself. Perspective as a symbolic form used by the viewer and myself to metaphorically see, passes through the red entrances and the eye in the mirror reflecting the red setting sun.

Eyes and Wounds

I change the narrative revolving around flayed skin that propitiates deities who seemingly rejoice in symbols of martyrdom, violent heroism and the purification of blood. Instead I create a metaphor centered on women's bodies in which blood loss through menses is about creation rather than abjection. This is also a metaphor about the blood and skin passed from the mother to daughter as a sign of a line of succession.

I compare 'blood' flow to the flowing properties of oil paint in Gaze in the Labyrinth, 1996-97 (pl.12), The Visionary Thread, 1996-97 (pl.13), Interior Column, 1996-97 (pl.14), and Behind the Mask of Medusa, 1996-97 (pl.15), where the directional flow of red paint also partly constructs the subject's anatomy and sense of movement throughout the body.

The mirror in Gaze in the Labyrinth reflects the image on my canvas. My painted mirror image and figure at the threshold mimic the pose of another snake goddess where the arm gesture reverses. This pose imitates the gesture of the Boston Goddess (a small ivory figurine, arms in a downward gesture, holding a snake in each hand). I juxtapose three images. At the doorway is an image of a figure holding a brush dripping with red paint next to a small image of this snake goddess. The interior contains a mirror that reflects the painting on the canvas. In this reflected image, I am standing in front of my easel, mixing red paint that drips from my brush held in the manner of this goddess, out of the mirror into the labyrinth. This is a subversion of images of the transubstantiation where blood spurts from a painting of Christ's body into a chalice in paintings like The Mass of St Gregory (fig.15).\textsuperscript{11}

Vision: Control and Hierarchy

The possible message in European oil painting is that actual women are not allowed to have a controlling gaze. In Las Meninas the gazes of the female figures are non-specific. There is the triangular formation consisting of three women who look out at the royal couple into an implied narrative space from which they are excluded. Then there are three figures (two women and one man) who are inattentive to the king and queen and are occupied within the picture. Another triangular group of figures consist of adult men who direct attention outside the painting by their dispersal. They are privileged not only as focussing devices, but also as focalisers. Of the three groups "ranked according to what
Plate 12 Gaze in the Labyrinth, 1996-97, oil on plywood, 62 x 70 cm
Plate 13 *The Visionary Thread*, 1996-97, oil on canvas, 80 x 120 cm
Plate 14 *Interior Column*, 1996-97, oil on canvas, 67 x 100 cm
Plate 15 Behind the Mask of Medusa, 1996-97, suite of three, oil on canvas, 125 x 252 cm
Fig. 15 Master of the Holy Kinship, *The Mass of Saint Gregory* (Cologne; 1500)
they see" (Steinberg, 1981: 53), the adult men alone see.

These three layers depicting the complexities of vision, class and gender show that women, regardless of status, see less, while men, also regardless of their status, see more. Women's position, like the mask and mirror serving as a site of replication, is the lowest rung in the hierarchy of vision: the staring eye of the infanta replicates everyone else's gaze.

By contrast, in About the Witch, most figures address each other with animated gestures. Although I depict the figures as lecturers and students, they are peers. Each figure contained in her separate sphere of influence and activity still integrates her gaze into the composition. These portraits of friends demonstrate in their gestures various modes of looking within the perspective whole. They initiate their activities but contribute to this story about sharing vision. Their personalities, not totally lost in the action, reinforce the collective activities.

Emblem and Allegory

Vision and the Senses

In this section I explore how the figure and the ground integrate in my paintings. I used the fluid qualities of oil paint and its mediums to intensify emotional expressive qualities. Poured over drawn and modelled parts of the image, its random nature melds with linear structures and forms that partially dissolve. I build many layers of expression and tension into the painting's layers by contrasting the movement in the random flows of paint with the partially dissolved still structures and forms.

I aimed to amplify the symbolic content or iconographical codes presented in my work. I tried to avoid depicting the illusion of shallow space that sometimes occurs when painterly effects become an element in the composition. In order to depict a sense of the numinous or a mysterious labyrinthine space I used a modified linear perspective and atmospheric perspectives to evoke the illusion of depth. The vanishing point and the point of vision on the grid disrupted by a push and pull between flat and deep spatial areas becomes purposely complex. I encourage the viewer's eye to weave in and out of viewing points in the foreground and vanishing points in the background.

I avoided using figures as bridges to indicate lines of sight but tried to let the paint do the work.

Velázquez used various degrees of light intensity to indicate the position of receding figures in space that fall from above and from the side through windows. The figures connect to each other in space by their dimensions but also by the thickness and thinness of the paint between them. The artist uses many tones to construct the foreground figures and indicate their illusion of solidity and volume. Passages of heavy
impasto on the highlights combines with thinner layers as the surface of the form recedes. The atmosphere between these figures is almost transparent. As the viewer's eye recedes toward the rear wall the atmosphere appears thicker and the light behind the figure in the doorway looks almost solid. The flat figure resembling a cutout is rendered with thin paint, compared to the paint on the foreground figures. This figure functions as a vanishing point. The viewer's eye passes through this point only to return through the ethereal atmosphere of the mirror's surface. The image of the royal couple in the mirror reflecting the image on Velázquez's canvas and 'viewing' the scene and figures in the painting from the rear wall is fleeting, almost ghost-like. Velázquez used paint sparingly to capture their almost hidden presence suggesting the properties of an omnivoyant gaze.

Through atmospheric gradations, achieved through tone, this gaze links to the principal foreground figures who gaze at the viewer who looks back to them and into the distant doorway. These gazes suggest a vertical line of vision structured by the position of the infanta. Her head touches the mirror: she is superimposed on the mirror but the reflection in the mirror 'becomes' her face. She is in a sense an inscription. This tension is reinforced by her arm and hand leading up to her neck and head, appearing to 'jump' back to the mirror. The direction is echoed by one of the dwarfs, Maribárbola, in the foreground, and by Nieto's arm in the background. As a conduit between the background and foreground, head and body in one sense are split by the focal point or points in the composition.

My construction of horizontal and vertical lines of vision required a complex manipulation of paint on the figures and between them. In The Visionary Thread the horizontal line of vision intersects with the vertical at the point where my finger mimics the shape of a crescent moon as it passes through the hole in my palette. The viewer's eye and the image of paint slipping from my palette both 'fall' toward an image at the bottom of the canvas. This image is situated at the apex of an inverted compositional triangle; the two opposing points being the images of my eye and the central face of the small sculpture. The flow of paint is a linking device joining disparate elements of the composition. It is a symbolic and compositional device.

My flowing paint from the background blurs with the wet paint on the figures. The upper layers of paint bleed out from the figures into the middle distance meeting the paint flow from the background. The thickness and thinness of various textures forming the images of entrances, mirrors and images (drawings or paintings within the painting) that function as viewing points and vanishing points also envelope figures. In this way paint and vision join. Their conjunction links metaphorically to the senses through different visual allusions to blood. I do not paint literal images of blood. Instead, images of red paint drip into a line that 'writes' my signature. Red sunlight illuminates many parts of the composition thereby linking objects as they recede or advance in space.
constituting a perspectival line of vision. Poetic blood as light is a metaphor aligned to the senses and vision.

Vision and Desire

I make symbolic connections in The Visionary Thread between menstrual blood and the flowing and coagulating quality of paint. The sloughing-off of menstrual skin relates to the paint/skin. I obscure a representation of Lyotard's diagram Les TRANSformateurs DUchamp (fig.16) depicted on the exterior lower section of the window ledge. An image of a reclining, mutilated, headless woman is blurred by the flow of red paint that falls over the hole in his image of a voyeuristic doorway. The red vertical female figure (the colour of death in the underworld) holds a palette. This image is a complex form of self that I construct by imagining two different aspects of myself. The head whose main sense is vision tilts backward. My eyes are exaggerated and engage in self-reflection caused by my need to obscure this representation, the symbolic form or personification of perspective. I construct my red body by the suggestive juxtaposition of my hand and brush. The paint falling from the brush appears to be my bodily substance. Fluid paint congeals or coagulates into another image of a body. The paint falling from the palette forms the shape of a woman. It falls over Lyotard's diagram containing the horizontal headless woman. My hand holds the palette by putting a forefinger through the hole: a position that juxtaposes to the opening in the doorway through which the male eye is assumed to look.

I also paint myself as a triple-headed sculpture situated in the background. The central, mature-age image looks out to the viewer, while the other two, that of youth and old age, look to either side. This sculpture replaces the headless dummy-like figure, mentioned above, that is reminiscent of Cellini's sculpture of Medusa. Her presentation as a headless, prostrate body with mutilated arms and legs has been employed by artists such as Duchamp in Etant Donnés, 1966, (fig.17), where the viewer is placed in the position of a voyeur looking through a brick wall, and Lyotard in Les TRANSformateurs DUchamp, as a personification of the symbolic form of perspective where desire and looking are conflated. This procedure originated with Dürer's grid through which objects are viewed and then drawn on to the picture plane. The woman's image is sexualised when the 'object' that is drawn, whether a prostrate woman, representing vision and desire is conflated as a cliche where the woman's image functions more like a landscape than a person.

Lyotard extrapolated pungently on this image that "he who sees is a cunt", where the image on the retina is a mirror propagated from the 'object' (Krauss, 1993: 113). The male artist 'wears' female genitalia as a form of ocular masquerade. I think that the type of desire assumed to be heterosexual may not be what it seems. Two alternative versions
Fig. 16 Jean-François Lyotard, *Les TRANSformateurs DUchamp*, diagram, n.d.
Fig. 17 Marcel Duchamp, *Etant Donnés: (view through the door)*, 1966
connected with the idea of desire depend on the exchange of gazes between men. The figure taking his pleasure at the peephole of Duchamp's installation, bent over trying to catch a glimpse of the interior, is caught from behind by the gaze of another man. This implies that men catching each other viewing is a metaphor relating to the vulnerability of the body exposed under a penetrative inspection. The body of the woman is used as a sign that does not relate to her desire. She has no vision, cut off from the male exchange, she is blind.12

When the line of vision penetrates the peephole in the wooden door as if in the act of defloration, the gaze is still monocular. From the position of my keyhole I can look in many directions: vertically, horizontally and from the underworld. My form depicted in The Visionary Thread, rendered with flowing paint and situated in a still, opaque space, contrasts with the image of my small sculpted form. Diminishing in space, its size conveys the illusion of distance and recession.

The gaze emanates from the central image in The Interior Column formed from three 'heads' which occupy a point inside an adytum. From this point a mirror reflects an imaginary entrance in the viewer's space. An image of a brush suggests the direction that the viewer's eye may take. A brush held in my mouth drips paint vertically from the brush that overlaps an eye reflected in the mirror. The lines of flowing paint falling vertically from the eye reflected in the mirror and 'heads' fuse into a shape that replicates a pillar. One 'head' is a reflection in the mirror held by my daughter. The reflection reveals the eye of my mother. It juxtaposes with a reflected image of an entrance to the Labyrinth. This reflection replaces the image of her other eye. An image of a second entrance placed almost above my daughter's head suggests a connection between grandmother and granddaughter. Both life trajectories are separated by my image. These objects, paint and mirror can be redeployed to represent a mythopoetics of insight and a disruption to sight through the presence of male desire. I create an analogy: the flow of paint parallels the line of succession between mother and daughter, the mother-line, the name of the mother.

Vision: The Male Gaze or Symbolic Death in the Adytum

The problem of violence and the male gaze has been exposed and described by Laura Mulvey who, extrapolating from Freud's essay The Medusa's Head, saw the representation of woman as a site of castration. Any attributes such as the snakes in her coiffure, were named as fetishes which symbolise castration and are therefore phallic symbols (Mulvey, 1973). The image of woman used as a sign does not necessarily signify the meaning 'woman' any more than does the Medusa's head. She is bearer of the look but not maker of the meaning. Creed, on the other hand, although ambivalent about Medusa sees her as the phallic woman and prefers a more positive model based on the
female monsters (sirens, harpies, gorgons or the Bacchae) of myth. She calls this image of woman the deadly *femme castratrice*. This manifestation, repressed in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, challenges Freud's view that man fears woman because she is castrated (Creed, 1993: 127).

Medusa raped by Poseidon in Athena's temple suggests a case where punishment and blame are meted out to the victim. I prefer a more balanced model instead of a totally phallic focus in which violence is an integral metaphoric link to vision and insight. In *Behind The Mask of Medusa*, I continue to reconstruct another view of my identity based on a symbolic language pre-dating theories influenced by Greek myths. I reinvent aspects of Minoan symbols and the myths. I use them as disguised symbolic attributes augmenting the theatrical manifestations of myself as I masquerade under various guises of Minoan goddesses. In this way I retain significant aspects of some of their attributions: blood loss, descending into the darkened adyton area of the Labyrinth, facing the fear of death through this rite of passage. These signify links to my narrative about vision and painting. Blood transforms into paint and the red light of sunset. The red columns, keyholes and entrances connote the presence of a labyrinithine context as an interior studio background.

Velázquez transferred the image of the Labyrinth into a depiction of his studio. This private space changed into universal public space that was suitable for accommodating depictions of both genre and history painting. Although Nieto stands on stairs analogous to the adyton, the images on the rear wall around him refer to Greek myths and violent punishment.

My version of the Labyrinth, based on its architectural elements and ritual, differs from that in Ripa's handbook possibly referred to by Velázquez. The adyton area missing from that illustration, depicting entrances and exits around a spiral construction, is a symbolic indication that the meanings and significance of the underworld had gradually changed. There were several adyton areas in the Knossos Labyrinth. The main point about the adyton is its relevance to the construction and reappropriation of my cultural memory as a woman. Although this is an area of speculation and evidence is circumstantial as mentioned in Chapter I, the central issue is that the protagonists in this rite and space in the Labyrinth appear to have been women.

Artists such as Mike Parr refer to labyrinths in a general sense. Since the late 1980s he has constructed a number of labyrinths that are large free-standing structures composed of corridors which the audience is invited to enter. The labyrinth is both a journey and a trial in which audiences are potentially trapped in a representative configuration or freed into a plethora of conscious or unconscious associations and memories. Metaphorically in the dark maze of our imagination, our fears and desires, our most expansive contemplation and most consuming blackness can be confronted. But to be specific, at the end of the maze is the adyton. To me it suggests a metaphorical mirror
as death shaped like a tombstone or canvas, where the self facing a symbolic death, finds the source of freedom.

In *Behind the Mask of Medusa* I construct different aspects of myself imagined in the *adyton* by representing a fantasy-self depicted in various media: in an oil painting, as a mirror image, a head and body covered in red paint and as an etching. I depict my 'real' self based on images of my hands holding brushes and a mirror and my shadow falling onto the canvas. The central panel is the focus of this masquerade in which the artist, as initiate at the bottom of the dimly lit *adyton*, faces symbolic death and resurrection.

In the first panel I depict two figures as aspects of self. One self-portrait holds a canvas on which I depict another self-portrait. The former comforts the latter before 'I move' to the central panel. The latter is an image of self-conscious fear depicted as an underpainting- red paint smeared over *terreverte*- that as part of the intended flesh colour remains incomplete. This self enters the central panel through the mirror. The image of the face on the surface of the mirror begins to crack. A smear of red paint on the mirror's surface follows a line where the crack appears. At this stage of the journey my eyes look up to meet those of the viewer. From this point a shadow from the mirror makes a line of vision toward the hole in the palette held by the image of another self. This image represents an imaginary climax, the next stage of self-awareness at the moment of symbolic death. Her eyes look out past the viewer to infinity.

The image of this red head turns toward another three-headed sculpture. Light glowing from the red figure illuminates the scene in the 'adyton'. The sculpture stands in front of a black rectangle that could represent both enclosure and an open space. It casts a shadow and, by falling on a side wall the shadow, forms a keyhole shape. This image also contains the idea of ambivalence. Is it a space through which the viewer looks or has it become a solid form? Both images double to replicate the mirror at the bottom of the canvas. They make a statement about Lyotard's peephole. I block his type of vision. The keyhole simulates the shape of the triple-headed sculpture that can simultaneously look outward and inward. Looking inward in this space is about resurrection by facing the fear of death without images of violent mutilation and execution. I vindicate Perseus's decapitation of Medusa. Images of paint make snake-like shapes. These shapes associate with the hands of the red figure. Snake-like daubs of paint on the palette and emerging from the tube imitate the snakes of the Minoan deity.

In the third panel an etching replicates the fantasy transformation or image of resurrection. This print mimics the idea encapsulated in the Vera Icon of retaining a 'real image' in the form of a printed surface which makes an allusion to a replication of an oil painted canvas on the computer screen in the second panel. The etched image protrudes to confront the viewer with a demanding gaze. This gaze attests to the effect of ritual passage through the *adyton* in the Labyrinth. The red sculpted sphere on top of a red
column placed in front of the distant black rectangle blocks a quick escape. The viewer's eye returns to the shadow juxtaposed with the etched face, across the eyes to the palette. The viewer's eye 'jumps' sideways back into the second panel directed by my hand painting the canvas. It returns to the gaze of the eye of the resurrected red figure, the apex of this triangular composition.

Conclusion

My versions of insight form the basis of my feminist poetics. Insight requires my willingness to undergo a form of symbolic death, a plunge into the darkness and to find symbols that witness this procedure. By reclaiming Minoan symbols I found a way to implement this process where my vision and senses meet metaphorically as a journey and visually as a symbolic language.

My poetics conflate the eye with the figure as part of the keyhole. The Self is a complex combination of both the interior and exterior properties of gazing into the mirror. The mirror and eye have both chthonic and celestial capacities. Medusa's role as a personification of the mind and body split, the image denoting the triumph of reason over the senses or vice versa reinforces binary oppositional structures where violence and punishment are preludes to insight. I consider emotional insight a component of imagination. Feelings and emotions lead to imagination which in turn engenders thought and reason.

In these paintings I challenge several aspects about the line of vision. It is not cut off metaphorically for me, as it is by the figure of Perseus or Duchamp's door but flows metaphorically as I descend into the adyton. I extend the monocular nature of vision: its hierarchical structure, the male gaze, and its link to desire and/or mortification and purification as a prelude to insight. This chapter deals with the sequence in which the works were painted and hung. They trace a journey into the underworld that produces insight which constitutes a feminist poetics that revises the Western tradition of iconography.
CHAPTER 5

Formal Considerations and Techniques

I have explained in the previous chapters how I synthesise disparate forms of symbolism into a coherent unified form. I integrate symbols from Minoan antiquities tradition into European oil painting. They attribute different meanings to some shared symbols. I observed traces of matristic Minoan symbolism, distorted over time into symbolic attributes, attribute gestures, paintings within paintings and architectural elements in the genre of oil paintings in the Renaissance and Baroque. Patriarchal Greek myths were the confluence where Minoan symbols re-contextualised in myths that were a textual and visual impetus for artists in the period between 1500 and 1650. Consequently, I aligned my paintings with artists of the Renaissance and Baroque. I reappropriated the disguised symbols (in the form of attributes, attribute gestures and architectural elements), retained their original meanings and situated them in a contemporary context. By returning to some early sources of both symbols and oil paintings I sought to reconstruct iconography around woman’s representation and the themes of self as artist, a relationship between colleagues and a mother-daughter relationship.

My paintings focus on how my gaze and relationships with others change, with the result that visual and painterly aspects of one medium, expand. Gazes and vanishing points, focal points, light and dark contrasts, exterior and interior light sources, the illusion of moving and still forms and atmospheric depth aim to convey the sense of mystery, intensity and drama seen from multi-valent viewing positions.

The flexible properties of oil paint, the wide variety of brushstrokes combined with larger areas of simulated textures are employed to enhance the poetics of my allegory where vision and the senses link within a cultural context. My focus on the material organic qualities and capacities of oil paint are ways to enhance a form of apotheosis in relation to a secular individual. The materiality of the medium facilitated a vision where artists could conceive of themselves in their own image: as a way of returning to themselves. I use my energy to flow into the medium and link with the symbolic objects and attributes. As Fuller says: "the incomparable energy of the painting is bound up in the way it is made" (1980: 26).

Energy is expressed through line and the way that I blend layers of paint and tonal gradations. These marks lie under transparent glazes in the from of veils of paint or constitute a combination of isolated glaze incorporated into blended semi-opaque and opaque tones. Both types of glazes and the different ways of handling tones build up into knots of energy that I juxtapose with flat areas of paint to increase the sense of tension. The energy flowing through my hands, mind and eyes can range from a calculated stillness to a blind, instantaneous rush. These stimuli combined with working the material
and manifest through blending, flowing, sanding, grading, wiping out, rubbing and bleeding paint, often resulting in random effects that can both constitute and change parts of the imagery.

In the following formal analysis I describe several elements orchestrated in a way to evoke a sense of tension and psychic intensity between the eyes and the other disguised symbols.

Formal Analysis of a Painting

Format

In the The Eye Ritual, the two panels are thematically related. The elements of each panel are similar in shape, colour, line, tone and texture. In the first panel, the forms of the head, hand and map are solid or positive and are painted over the background negative space. This format reverses in the second panel where I paint the forms as negative shapes and the background as a positive shape. This reversal sets up a tension between the two panels.

Line

The lines in the first panel help construct forms such as the head. As short strokes they also represent the hair. Thick and thin lines indicate the mass, volume and weight of the forms: the loose, tonal, blurry lines balanced by thin staccato lines, oppose semi-opaque grid-lines, spatters and dots. In the second panel, the linear qualities describe the light, around the edge around the canvas, as well as containing forms like the mirror. The form of the standing figure, depicted by a contour line, juxtaposes with the volume of the pillar suggested by hatched lines. The edge of the shadow is a line and contains a blurry form. This type of rendering is an alternative to the outlines of shadows that are usually either slightly blurred or have solid 'cut-out' edges, depending on the strength and direction of the light source.

Tone

The tonal complexity and contrast applied to the head and hand is played off against the flat tone of the shadow forming the shape of a hand, the shadow of the slightly graded head, and the almost flat space of the canvas. In the first panel, half-tones describe the form of the head and help create the illusion of space behind the shoulder. The flat tones in the second panel create space for forms consisting of linear and textural energies. This
patterned tonal structure contrasts with the other panel where the tone depicts the illusion of traditional space.

Colour

The colours are harmonious; different tones of green with an opposing colour, seen for example, in the flesh colour or the red pillar and red oil crayon. This limited palette allows the black shapes and lines to structure the composition creating tensions between the definition of space and form. The shadow in the second panel looks solid in relation to the ethereal superimposed forms, but then reads as a receding space when the viewer's eye compares it to the mirror image. While the circle and its contents read as a mirror, it is painted as a solid texture rather than as a reflection.

Composition

In the first panel, the tension based on a play between stable and dynamic principles constructs the composition. A stable rectangular format encloses the pyramid shape of the figure. Angular shapes and circular shapes interrupt this enclosure. The shapes in the second panel scattered in a random manner unify by a suggestion of an imaginary triangle. Its boundaries, indicated by the direction of the viewer's eye, connect the three circular shapes; the mirror, sculptured head and lower hand. Both panels join by an unstable V-shape but the position of the hand holding the circular mirror achieves a stable unity. By cropping this image I cause the viewer's eye to loosely join the panels. The mirror in the second panel has the same function as it balances the eye in the first panel which acts as a hub. The direction of the viewer's eye again led into the gap between the panels imposes a unifying circular motion on the images. It connects the horn in the first panel to the mirror in the second and the shoulder in the first panel to the hand in the second.

The development of different marks and strokes, as they evolve through the build-up of many layers of paint, not only partially constitutes forms and space, but also their positions within the composition. The partly random nature of defining the composition is aimed at refining a sense of disquiet and a vulnerable intensity.

My project has a philosophically postmodern aspect in that it is a critique of 'master narratives', and encompasses within one frame a sense of the theatrical, a fiction based on memories of different times and places. Some postmodern artists (such as Sherman or Kruger) critique and deconstruct images relating to gender and difference without changing iconographic codes. My aim was the expression of a feminist poetic, an extension of some meanings attributed to symbols that could change the codes. In one sense these canvases depict a performance returning to the canvas. The thickness and
thiness of layers of paint, whether on forms or space, and types of brushstrokes and bleeding, glazed textures, aims to augment the symbolism of this content. The medium of oil paint, therefore, facilitated private authenticity combined with a language of images (Fuller, 1980: 11). Other artists use this medium effectively to question and change the male dominance of oil painting by employing the symbolic qualities of oil paint in their work to enhance meanings.

Symbolism and Paint

Alice Neel

Paint application is often a manifestation of an artist's cultural values and emotions. Alice Neel used her language of paint as well as subject matter to challenge social mores. Her personal life was politicised and this precedent became important to feminist artists (Allara, 1998: 36). Neel's colour and brushstrokes suggest the symbolic and function as emblems.

In Self-Portrait, 1980, she demonstrates her belief that nudity brings the viewer closer to the subject. A grandmotherly persona depicted life-size, alert and self-confident, realised as the image of her eye with raised eyebrow (desígnio interno), demands the viewer's attention. High key colours, flattish shapes depicting her body and chair animated by line, express youthful energy of mind and body. Her white hair, white rim on the lower part of her glasses, white paint and white painting rag metaphorically link her mind with her expressive hands. This image portraying her multi-coloured face, rendered in shades of red, orange, blue, green and violet, is a metaphorical palette that links to her hands, and, mirrors the whole canvas. A plain background, an absence of an obvious cultural context referring to the religious, the numinous and distant past, conveys the sense of being outdoors. This impression is realised by the presence of a blue shadow and an earth red floor that contains areas of green and orange.

She is her own celebration. She is at once firmly seated on earth conveyed by a foot firmly planted on a green floor. The colours of the floor cut diagonally between both feet. A shadow under her slightly elevated foot, placed on the yellow part of the floor, appears to lever her upwards. Neel uses paint to convey symbolic ideas by manipulating colours, line and shape that endows this painting with positive and celebratory meanings.

Neel's use of compositional elements, complimentary colours and juxtaposition of objects to express and suggest meaning is also instructive. Her economic and succinct use of a blue wash behind her semi-impasto white hair suggests a celestial metaphor. The blue line used to describe her bodily contours and the chair juxtaposes with the colous on the floor and both reflect onto her face suggesting an earthly, material and physical metaphor. I see Neel's great skills in her ability to assimilate and transcend both the
modernist and traditional pictorial devices of European oil painting. Within the format of a shallow space she represents an emblem and allegory about women's images and where vision and the senses link. I suggest a similar emblematic allegoric representation. The context in my paintings containing figurative images is about an interior where this link occurs.

Wendy Stavrianos

Wendy Stavrianos combined different media with oil paint. In her earlier work she used fabrics as an element of her compositions. This technique takes a domestic craft into the realm of fine art, and includes aspects of the personal, diaristic and intimate. She developed images from this autobiographical impetus into large scale compositions. *Bridal Landscape*, 1984, is an installation that makes use of the wall and floor, and presents the earth as bride and whore. From a ravished landscape flanked by triangular rocks with a focal point consisting of wide valley leading to the sky, a bridal train drapes down on to the floor. Sculptural vulval forms emerge like shells from this 'shore' made from sewn shapes, nets, spangles, wax and paint. The viewer's eye, led up toward the valley and distant sky, hesitates at the sharp razor-like shapes that construct this passage. The viewer's eye returns, cautiously, down the passage and bridal train to avoid the pyramid shapes on the floor that seem like guardians.

When Stavrianos uses paint exclusively, in works such as *The Dark Night Mantle*, 1991-92 or *Fertility Dance*, 1991-92, it retains its material tactile surface quality. Built up impasto surfaces simulate the texture of material in garments. Layers of paint superimposed on one another 'cut' into the shape of the head, head-dresses and arms. Seam-like lines describe the edges of material, indicate folds and flow around arms like contour lines conveying a sense of movement. In *Gatherers of the Sheaf in the Night City*, 1993-94, lines in the middle distance and background, indicating elements of architecture and receding rectangles of linear perspective, have a thread-like quality.

The artist modified this quality in *The Intercessors at the Broken Tower*, 1995, and *Intercessor at Harcourt Quarry (Study 1)*, 1995, by using paint freely which simplifies her forms. Thicker, drier or chalkier paint applied in lines dragged over a dry surface in combination with a scumble and dry brush technique, contributes to flattening the surface of the painting. To attain the illusion of depth the artist uses blue as a receding colour. These pastel-like impasto surfaces seem to simulate a woolly textured surface, and the lines, a woollen thread.

In her later paintings, Stavrianos retains her impasto surfaces that suggest a way of replicating the surface of different domestic materials. In *Gatherer of the Sheaf in the Night City*, 1993-94, she uses a form of chiaroscuro and perspective with a combination
of symbols from pre-history and history. I use similar devices to convey meanings, symbols transform into disguised symbols.

Susan Norrie

A different approach to Stavrianos's use of oil paint is evident in the work of Susan Norrie in the mid 80s. She maximises the wide variety of brushstrokes and glazed highlights in *The Sublime and the Ridiculous*, 1985, (Holder, 1986). Norrie superimposes beautifully painted surfaces that normally metaphorically represent the idea of the sublime on to a tenebrous landscape, representing an underworld mindscape. These paintings resemble the upside-down world of Bosch, aspects of quattrocento paintings, and some *maniera* compositions where many scenes within the composition are assembled under a single viewing point. Cartoon characters, as if marginal drolleries, appear to play serious roles on these surreal stages. In the *Tall Tales and True* series, painted realistically, they integrate into their backgrounds. The style of painting 'from the legendary past' and the characters, once parts of the popular culture of the 1950s, are, now also, parts of history. I see, in these works, a mordant wit combined with a sense of loss and melancholy.

Jenny Saville

Jenny Saville uses beautifully painted textures to critique and deconstruct images of women. In *Branded*, 1992, (Borzello, 1998), she combines branded and scribbled words, like graffiti, in to the contours of an image of a fleshy body. It is one of a group of issue based self-portraits where she paints monumental nude bodies surmounted by her head. In an iconic elongated pose, her head leans back and to one side, and, looks down over the expanse of beautifully painted fleshy skin, to confront the viewer with their conventional response to 'imperfect' bodies. The upright pieta-like pose of the body and the hand's position squeezing a coil of flesh, evokes a sense of discomfort in the viewer, and, disrupts the tradition of painting women's bodies as beautiful objects for the delectation of the male gaze.

A red thumb that applies pressure to the red flesh directs the viewer's gaze to the reddish navel that functions like an eye-wound of a bleeding Christ. The viewer's eye directed through this 'navel' to the artist's gaze, returns back to the navel. From this position a centre-line shadow leads the viewer's eye down to the pubic area, that, cut off by the edge of the painting functions like an absent eye. The figure depicted in a simplified context sits in an interior. Saville uses oil paint in a traditional way that, I think, makes the flesh glow and breathe. Truth to the oil medium's organic qualities,
transparent, semi-transparent, semi-opaque and opaque and glazes over impasto highlights, she orchestrates this capacity of the medium to breathe life into matter.

Norrie and Saville use old master techniques to express moments of psychic intensity. I also use this strategy, and like Norrie, whose tonal contrasts and tenebrism convey a sense of uneasiness to the viewer, find this augments the symbolism of presenting an underworld as a mindscape. My use of red sunlight and paint is not unlike Saville's use of a red glaze to indicate the presence of blood beneath flesh and to influence the direction of the viewer's vision.

Scopic Regimes

I incorporate fragments of the three ocular or scopic regimes into my paintings. First, the Albertian window which Norman Bryson calls a disembodied "Gaze" and the "Founding Perception" of the Cartesian perspective tradition (1983). Second, I situate a picture plane in the rear of the composition. In Baroque tradition the figures in the viewer's side of the picture plane feel close to the viewer because they are life-sized and share the same spatial and temporal continuum. Third, I have placed one painting-within-a-painting, flattening the surface as in Dutch tradition. The viewer's line of sight uncouples from that of the Albertian artists who used the perspective grid. This viewing grid is replaced with that of a map. Instead of a metaphorical window, the canvas is described as metaphorical mirror. I create a tension between an allegorical narrative space, depicting my ideas within an image of a canvas, and the realism outside this area where my hand is at work in my studio. The metaphor that relates to my unframed paintings is the "tain of the mirror", a term used to describe the Baroque scopic regime because it is compared to the tin in the mirror, the material creating the reflection. The mirror that is held up to nature is the convex, concave or anamorphosistic mirror which distorts the visual image (Gasché, 1986; Jay, 1993). My images are also distorted, but rather than being enveloped in heavenly light; it is by the descent into the red darkness of the labyrinth and into the recesses of memory.

A sense of stillness is a characteristic that describes Bryson's Gaze. The Glance, on the other hand, is a metaphor that relates to bodily movement. The interrelation of both serve as a model to explain my procedure.

The Gaze and Glance

Bryson uses a 'medusal' metaphor to describe the effect of the Gaze on the body and alludes to 'medusal form' to describe this state.

To dissolve the Gaze that returns the body to itself in medusal form, we must willingly
enter into the partial blindness of the Glance and dispense with the conception of form as con-sideration, as Arrest, and try to conceive of form instead in dynamic terms, as matter in process, in the sense of the original pre-Socratic word for form: rhythm, the impression matter of the body's internal energy, in the mobility and vibrancy of its somatic rhythms (1983: 131).

I combine rhythms forming the Glance in the underpainting with layers that create a sense of stillness or Gaze. The Gaze is a stage that integrates with another Glance painted on the final surface of the painting. The Gaze is like the filling sandwiched between an underpainting of linear and washy Glance and flowing parts around and over impasto in the final layers of the painting. The result is a sense of tension between the still Gaze and moving Glances. The Gaze parallels the body as breath exhaled approximating a sense of stillness. The tension created in the layers forming the two Glances, approximating inhalation, also intensify the sense of a moment.

In the first stage, I pour ink over a sketch drawn on smooth gesso and combine it with wet gesso and water to attain an effect of movement. During the second stage of the Glance procedure I pour varying consistencies of paint over areas that constitute the Gaze. If I do not achieve the desired effect in my first attempt I quite often repeat these procedures. There are tensions pushing and pulling between both formats where I weave and enmesh the different paint consistencies into a unified surface.

This forms flowing paint, a textured surface and lines in the final layers of the painting. The presence of a red paint flow and bleeding red light expresses a metaphor about the female blood-line. Light glows from this substance referring to its transcendent capacity. Dark areas of flowing paint form part of the illusion of depth in the Labyrinth and a thin transparent flow forms the veil-like substance of the keyhole. In this sense the fluidity of the Glance metaphorically refers to aspects of Minoan culture.

The type of vision subject to the Gaze, (limited by the metaphorical rejection and distortion of the adyton in the Labyrinth) by the Western tradition, is often monocural. The image of the adyton seems to degenerate into a threatening underworld in Greek myths and is subject to further degeneration in the form of a threatening hell in Christian culture. I metaphorically align vision with this descent into darkness as a process characterising insight, where images of death and blood do not link with desire. The Gaze that accompanies these images suggests its link to death as punishment for original sin, (mortification of the flesh, violence and desire), dissolves. I place metaphorical images alluding to blood within the Glance and with the adyton to partly dissolve the Gaze in the flow and rhythm of my Glances.

The Glances' function extends the complexity of vision to include a network of visual passages through compositions leaving spaces in the composition where the viewer, encouraged to interact, can participate. Saville produces this complex interaction
through attribute gestures, and by realising the intrinsic properties of the oil medium, and applying them to interact with the viewer's gaze, in order to express her message.

Outline of my Process

**Illusionism**

The quest to convey movement in oil paint was a characteristic of Baroque art. Velázquez achieved the illusion of motion by blurring the brushstrokes on the spokes of the spinning wheel in *The Fable of Arachne*, 1657. Another aspect of Baroque illusionism was the application of almost impressionistic brushstrokes to render form, such as the hair and garments of the infanta in *Las Meninas*. I use this device to depict an illusion of aspects of reality. This contrasts with my random application of paint associated with the other reality of bodily movement.

I decided on the structure of my type of illusionism, by painting the disguised symbols in a static technique, characterised by crisp edges made by masking-out and overpainting. These areas integrate and connect by gestures that reach back into pictorial space, and others reach from the picture plane toward the viewer. These spatial relationships link into the flowing matter of the chaotic body of paint. These passages are painted with my eyes open, but almost as in a trance.

Various techniques convey senses of illusionism. I paint the eye that meets the viewer's gaze and the surrounding anatomy with impasto highlights and glazes in a traditional manner. When I paint the other eye, I wipe back the surface paint to the reflective qualities of the gesso. The image of the first eye approximates verisimilitude. The image of the second functions as a symbol rendered as a disguised symbol. For example, it contains a red dot in several paintings. A red dot can reflect a sunset or red paint and at the same time refer to the red eye of the Minoan Bull's Head Rhyton. A glaze placed over the image of the first eye (rendered using fives tones to structure the anatomy) creates the illusion of an inner glow. This surface dries before I apply a wet transparent glaze.

This contrasts with the wet on wet technique used to render part of the other eye. The fluid nature of this glaze combines well with the fluid paint forming this side of the head. I render part of the body this way where a loosely painted illusionism merges with the flow of paint forming parts of the atmospheric space in the background. I use gradations from light to dark to depict the planes of the interior background. I combine the sense of atmosphere by blurring the space around figures with passages of shadow.
Space and Time

My paintings share similarities with Baroque constructions of coextensive space where the observer and figures in the painting 'share' the same space outside the picture plane. The principle was not to separate real life from the work of art. Presences are conjured up inside and outside the painting by integrating real and fictive space. I employ these devices where recessional movements and directional gazes dissolve parts of the surface plane, thereby encouraging the mobility of the viewer's gaze. I use the image of the trompe-l'oeil hand and eye as devices to welcome the viewer into the theatre of most paintings. Shadows in real space fall onto objects in fictive space. They point to areas of interest where disguised symbols and figures interact. The ground plane advances beyond the limits of the frame so that I exaggerate the area shared by the viewer and the figures in the painting. I crop life-size and larger-than-life figures, indicating a possible imaginary bodily merger between that of the figures and the viewer.

The representations of canvases within canvases positioned in successive spatial compartments suggest to the viewer that outside the subject matter of these works exists a wider totality. They are a fragment of a larger reality evoked by the presence of entrances or exits. Passageways are directions toward possible transformations (symbolic deaths). My use of painterly mark-making and linear qualities combine to portray figurative momentum. Some of these gestures take place in a still space that resembles the stillness of outerspace. Theatrical illusionism, as a form of persuasion, presents a reality that consists of an intensely charged deep interior space and the presence of a transcendent space. In these spaces of transformation I paint light as a presence that coexists with and in matter. Time, not represented as an enemy, does not cause life to pass too quickly. Time slows in the darkness and stillness of the Labyrinth, the site of the plunge into darkness and imagination.

Light, Dark and Contrast

Light in the Labyrinth emanates from both matter and an exterior source. I do not set it in an oppositional contrast to the darkness or tenebrism of this space but it functions as a metaphorical double to the rendition of light in matter (like phosphorescence). The flow between the red light of the setting sun and glowing paint energises the action. Instead of using light as a way of ushering in the presence of a divinity from on high (Baroque) into the darkness below, I emphasise the presence of the illumination from below as a source of spiritual light. Darkness has a positive role in defining space. Looking into the darkness of space I see eternity. Tonal contrasts are strongest at the focal point situated on the picture plane. The ground line of the picture plane is often inside the edge of the
canvas, in the middle distance or background. The contrasts between the edges of the canvas and the picture plane lead the eye into the focal point.

Composition

I use the elements of design such as line, tone, light and shade, colour, texture-mass and shape to construct compositions where stability, instability and dynamic movement contribute to a sense of the spontaneity. Across the shape of theatrical props, rectangular canvases, entrances and keyholes, flow circular heads and snake-shaped hands and objects. The shape of heads and eyes are points like hubs from which emanate informal or random lines and textures. Dynamic perspective lines and shadows link the loose organic forms to the stability of the shapes depicted as props. An example of a composition based on informal balance is *Homage to Artemisia Gentileschi* where I have placed the head at the bottom of the canvas, almost falling out of the picture. The angular, dynamic directional line of the arm reaching towards the edge of the composition draws the head visually upwards. The reaching arm, hand and brush are kept in check by the weight of the circular image above it.

Method

The impetus for these works followed a visit to Crete with my daughter. I sketched the ruins of 'palaces' and their contents in a journal. Most of the antiquities were housed at Knossos, but the museums at Haghios Nicholaos and Sitea also held antiquities (fig.18). The Athens Archaeological Museum displayed frescoes from the excavation at Thera. This 1993 journal was a reference for many images. It also served as an emotional connection recalling vivid memories.

When I viewed the antiquities as a complex of images rather than in isolation as an illustration in a book, I made an observation. The sense of energy emanating from these figures gave me the impression of aliveness. It seemed paradoxical that a culture so concerned with the rites of the dead produce naturalistic life-ike images. My previous sources for attaining a sense of alive-likeness stemmed from a combination of classical drawing referring to Michaelangelo's pen and ink sketches and to loose brush and ink strokes in the manner of Zen Buddhist artists. Minoan artists seemed to carefully distort small parts of anatomy to attain their effects. It was as though they captured the image through a memory of a moment in action, perhaps as an after-image seen with the eyes closed. They used line as though it was an expanding and contracting elastic around the muscle's point of tension. I wanted to integrate this effect into my work.
In my 1994-97 journals (fig.18) I explore through the uses of line how I may restructure figures and situate them in a minimalist architectural interior. The images in my sketchbook in 1994 record several processes: first of observation followed by the mental processes that altered the image (fig.19). First, thumbnail sketches are observations of the subjects' expressions and gestures. This stage is followed by a series of preparatory drawings (pl.16). I used pen and ink, ink washes, willow and compressed charcoal and conte to attain a sense of aliveness. Gouache was introduced to experiment with the conjunction of local colour and symbolic colour. This mimetic stage in dry media continued into the anamnetic stage that required the employment of the specific or inherent qualities of oil paint, with the richness of the glaze and the many layers of paint with its viscous capacity enabling the manipulation.

The rehearsal stage gave me confidence to represent others and myself as memories (anamnesis). I then add mental pictures acquired from reading texts. Rather than functioning as narrative illustrations, my imagination compresses them into metaphorical distillations. When I purposely retire to a dark place they rise to the surface of my consciousness. I enter them as writing or drawing in my journal. Additional mental pictures emerge when I contemplate Minoan symbols and images. I modified this symbolic imagery into contemporary poetic objects.

The three mental pictures or snapshots correspond to three types of vision represented by various objects. The first is the eye with glasses symbolising the point through which memories are filtered. The second consists of the hands, body and mirror that allude to an internal vision caused by my response to my body. The third is the red paint and rays of light linking the poetic space of the Labyrinth (entrances and exits like second eyes) that symbolises transcendence. In combining these three stages into distilled and coherent images, my journal functions as a workbook.

Canvas

I sketch the first stage loosely on a smooth white surface of heavily gessoed ground. I delineate the images with charcoal, ink and gesso and gradually construct the composition. This surface is glazed with a veil of raw sienna or viridian. I retain some of these drawn areas by masking them with tape. Both the incomplete The Visionary Thread (pl.17) and Interior Column (pl.18), display some of the underpainting.

In the second stage, I experiment with the symbols and their juxtaposition with the figures. The symbols lose their original iconic status and transform into contemporary objects with poetic content. This sifting and revisioning process can be followed in my sketches; those depicting The Original Sudarium begin on 20-6-94 and end on 3-10-94.
Fig. 18 Journal depictions of Minoan antiquities, 1993
Plate 16 The Face and Horn, 1994, pen and ink, charcoal and pastel
Above. Plate 17 *The Visionary Thread*, 1995, underpainting

Below. Plate 18 *Interior Column*, 1996, underpainting
(fig.20). These stages, and any difficulties that occur during the painting process, are solved by re-drawing, re-painting and also by accessing different types of dream images in which I synthesise the stages and revise.

The paintings contain several layers applied in the wet-on-dry technique enabling me to define the essential or concentrated pieces of reality that define the eyes in particular and the head generally. I mask out some of these areas as focal points and cover the less specific areas with semi-transparent or semi-opaque paint which is poured, scumbled, wiped or dry-brushed. This editing process simplifies extraneous detail into graphic shapes, rather than tonally graded forms, that if left exposed would compete with the focal points for attention. In the process, the paint surface builds up into a flat, opaque atmospheric area which contrast with the tones and texture on the figures. Sometimes I sand back these flat three-tone spaces and reveal parts of the image underneath as in the Gaze in the Labyrinth (pl.19) where I glazed, masked and sanded the image of the face and the mirror.

As the layers increase from lean to fat, the background and foreground figures gradually integrate. Masking protects parts of the arrested, still Gaze, whether on the figure or in the background. With a rag or wide brush I blend wet-in-wet paint on the receding part of the figures. I use the rag to wipe off the paint to reveal necessary parts of the underpainting which conveys depth and solidity. My erasures partly reveal the route that I take to reach the images on the surface layers of the painting. This procedure differs from Bryson's description of the Gaze and allows both opaque and transparent pigments to expose some of the initial image in the underpainting.

In the final layers I apply gestural mark-making combined with a type of flowing paint in a shorthand manner associated with the Glance. My mark-making reinforces the drawing in a painted image and is not about the 'signature' of the modernist artist.

I aimed to augment the content of my paintings with marks and brushstrokes. Triple or double-loaded brush, palette knife and oilstick deliver swathes or lines of paint to wet and dry areas. Paint of varying consistency bleeds into the wet areas but forms crisp edges when the underneath layer is dry. The dry areas have impasto on the highlighted forms. Aspects of the forms are focusses of reality that I juxtapose with a shorthand of coloured gestural sensations as a way to capture life's vital forces. Parts of the form are linear and are drawn onto flat, low-toned grounds. The fluid drawing with paint functions as the gestural Glance but these passages of paint are built on a considered structure in the underpainting. Not unlike an alla prima technique, this apparent chaotic paint is applied to the canvas when horizontal.

Although the work is figurative I free colour and line from their representational responsibility. This strategy facilitates my use of the visceral, flowing quality of the paint and as a result, it fits into the format of the Glance. I blend this with aspects of the traditional mode of representation to create a tension between volume and silhouette,
Fig. 20 *The Original Sudarium*, 1994, sketchbook development of image from 20-6-94 to 3-10-94
Plate 19 Gaze in the Labyrinth, 1996-97, detail
weight and gravity, colour-mass and linearity and part and whole. I retain aspects of designo interno where line, tone and form are the elements that control the structure and idea in the painting. I use colour in a symbolic sense to amplify the meanings of the images. Line enhances the sense of movement. I use colour and line in a way that projects a sense of psychological intensity. These disparate areas are unified by the flow of paint merging glazes with serpentine fluid areas emanating from illuminated forms. Linear imprimatura for the still areas combines with the lush, fluid paint of allaprima.

Hanging and Sequence of Paintings

In the first suites I am cautious about the way in which I apply areas of paint that could be called the Glance. In some parts of the underpainting I retain the warm transparent darks that I associate with the Glance. As I paint through the Gaze areas towards cool opaque lights, a second area of Glance is painted in the surface layers where it assumes a greater prominence. This area gradually becomes more distinct. The sequential hanging could show this progression and process where painting and vision fuse. I modified a type of gaze where I intended viewers to feel that their gaze may change into a Gaze/Glance and vice versa.

My aim was to interrelate these two painted surfaces and integrate them without losing their specific qualities. The conjunction of a linear movement of paint, (associated with the Glance), with areas of still and opaque glazed paint (or the Gaze), was directed towards the eyes as the main focal point. The glow of the glaze enhances the glow of the form and its stillness. Gradually, my image slowly appears to transform from the model of a partly arrested Gaze into the model of rhythm and aliveness but retaining in the process, traces of the underlying construction.

This effect is achieved by the use of light in relation to form. Traditional and contemporary aspects of illusionism generally use an exterior light source to describe and structure forms but mine gradually change from this mode to one where the glow of internal light in the darkness of the Labyrinth becomes another source.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have dealt with technical considerations such as the structure of the Gaze and Glance which enhance the sense of captured moment and time passing. Images of heads and bodies as fluid selves that surround the eyes slip away into fantasy; only one fixed eye suggests the presence of a prolonged gaze which seems like a reality. The violence associated with the stillness of the Gaze partly dissolves.

I add to the tradition of women artists like Neel, Norrie, Saville and Stavrianos by using aspects of the Gaze and Glance and by selecting and combining different elements
present in their work within my own. Like Neel and Saville, I depict aspects of the human form 'realistically' within a three-dimensional space. I integrate ancient symbolism into my compositions, as does Stavrianos, in a way that changes literal representation to poetic representation. Freed from literal representation, the random flow of paint across different images alludes to a fantasy world where some parts change to produce another image. The old masters' tenebrism used by Norrie, and the glazes over highlights used by Norrie, Saville and myself, facilitate this synthesis because they allude to the presence of a chthonic rather than a sublime realm.
Conclusion

The key factor in my research was to represent poetically my keyhole image with my selection of Minoan matrisc symbols and integrate them into European oil painting. Although I had been influenced by Surrealist painting techniques to access my unconscious, I had turned away from its ideology as did many other women, such as Varo, Carrington, Fini and Kahlo.

My keyhole image aligned metaphorically with my experience of visiting the Knossos Labyrinth and the Herakleion Museum. My image linked with pillars and doorways as an element of the architectural environment within the Labyrinth. In the first suite of paintings, the keyhole was like a vehicle carrying my image on an emblematic journey that continued to represent parts of my identity and constituted another 'mirror stage' or stage.

I developed a story beginning with personal feelings and responses to death, but then reversed this format. I situate myself into an ancient ritual that mirrored my original responses to death. In this way 'I' as a subject also becomes 'I' as a cultural other of representation. The polarisation of these binary opposites in Western culture, cultural subject and material object, change their status and reliance on the construction of masculinity and femininity as a form of personification. The spaces in my paintings are constructed to avoid movements between polar opposites. Instead I constructed spaces where the fluidity of forms and space represent transition, continual change and becoming or liminality.

By examining symbols and meanings, I sought to modify the sexism of transcendence and its relationship to women's autonomous self-representation. As Simone de Beauvoir noted, in Western culture it takes the interference of another person to construct a Self defined by the Other characterised by a binary oppositional structure. I do not reverse these oppositions or, as a woman, adopt a male stance.

In the first suite of paintings I combined meanings in texts about self-portraits with visualisations of my head and body, the keyhole and matrisc Minoan symbols associated with a female deity. (European oil painting used similar means to integrate the presence of the individual into a historical and cultural context). My constructed identity alludes to the presence of an authentic transcendent type of entity. As this entity, I hold a palette between my face, eyes and the sky, signifying the link between the senses and the transcendent.

Many of the paintings contain images of mirrors. The mirror metaphorically represents two aspects of self that I integrate in The Eye Ritual. The first panel presents an image of my preoccupation with Knossos. The second panel explores my understanding as derived from feminist speculations about the architectural environment and the remains and antiquities it might have accommodated. This consists of an image I
recorded in my journal from the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus in the Herakleion Museum. In
the second panel of _The Eye Ritual_, I depicted a sketch of a ritual portrayed on the Hagia
Triada Sarcophagus. I juxtaposed the image of the blood trickling from the sacrifice with
an image of my daughter’s red leg. She stands before this scene that suggests a funerary
ritual. These images are placed in juxtaposition to a mirror I am holding that reflects our
eyes. Opposite, in my other hand, is a red crayon signifying the link between vision and
material. The flow of vision passing from mother to daughter is my alternative foundation
narrative. It means that text and memory came into play-anamnesis or the ritual act of
remembering. The representation of this state aligned with aspects of mimesis. The image
of my spectacles and eye in the first panel represent mimesis. Therefore, text as self-
reflection and text as Other combine with visual self-reflections in the mirror image.
Within this mirror stage I played out my drama and demonstrated how my emblematic
journey can function as another dimension of self.

In several paintings the association of self, mirror and the area of the _adyton_ in the
Labyrinth became the subjects of a foundation narrative. In _Thread in the Labyrinth,
About the Witch and Gaze in the Labyrinth_, images of mirrors, keyholes and entrances
form passages to direct the gazes of the subjects and the viewer. Illuminated by red light
and passing through these objects, the gazes I construct may be similar to those
suggested by the architectural environment in the _adyton_. My gazes reach a place where
symbolic death and temporary blindness in the darkness of this space are the preludes to
the attainment of insight and vision.

This version of attaining vision and insight replaces the subtext symbolically
encoded in the Western canon. I demonstrate how I expanded the narrow definitions of
phallic symbols such as the snake and pillar. This was a necessary stage in my re-vision
of images depicting violent blood loss and eyes as wounds and vice versa. These images
associated with Medusa and a variety of dying gods and demi-gods who by their
decapitation, blood and wounds, link metaphorically in many cases male desire, death,
vision and the inheritance of insight from father to son.

In my response to the mirror I define myself by what I am rather than what I am
not. I am not like Perseus whose shield mirrors Medusa before he decapitates her. My
mirror may mirror death but not violently or as a form of negative identity. I am unlike
Narcissus whose self-gazing inaugurated his death, nor Oedipus, Tiresias or Samson
whose blindness by violent means was their entry into a transcendent state.

In the second panel of _Behind the Mask of Medusa_, I demonstrate how I
undermine male transcendence, reflected in a process where the woman’s mind is
removed from her body. (This process removes man’s mind also from his body through
the woman’s surrogacy because he associates her with his negative identity.) I conflate
metaphorically the meanings of the Minoan _adyton_ and mirror. I face symbolic death and
see myself at the end of this emblematic journey. This response to the mirror became an
aspect of self which combined images by which mind and body are compared to blood and vision. Self-defined representations meld within a cultural context, that is, the context of the Labyrinth and the symbolism of the snake, pillar, eye and blood. I have extended the symbolism of European oil paintings' sources of foundational narrative in Greek myths and the Old Testament, to the Minoan era.

In these paintings, I suggest that my understanding of death, others and one's own mortality, loss and change, are a resource that enhances life. Eyes looking through a red light symbolising the blood line, that 'see' death symbolically, share a compassionate gaze with others in these paintings and with the viewer. We all face death regardless of gender, race, status or age. In *About the Witch*, I replace the transcendent, omnivoyant male gaze with a complex transcendence, not cut off from social action and personal growth.

Rather than accept what representation does to women, I demonstrated different ways to change representation. By using elements of European oil painting which retained distorted aspects of Minoan antiquity through Greek mythology, I demonstrate how disguised symbols as pictorial devices integrate Minoan meanings into oil paintings. As disguised symbols, attribute gestures and objects, they extend the narrow focus of phallo-centric meanings to encompass metaphors relating to the female body. I investigated their origin within a context that has been partially ignored by Western culture; an architectural environment, the *adyton* and its possible precursor, the pillar crypt, excavated nearly a century ago. This pre-Oedipal symbolic language questions the formation of images that relate to castration.

My content was augmented by the symbolism inherent in the characteristics of different qualities of paint and mediums. In formal and technical terms, I demonstrated how my content (self-representations, images of others, gestures, objects and their context) integrate into form. Images of women's autonomous representation control and define vision and are integrated into a way of painting suggesting a feminist poetics. Outlines, chiaroscuro, tones denoting solids and volumes, linear structure in underpaintings, dislodge and partially dissolve into paint flows. Overpainting in the form of thicker random flows, metaphors for the female body, and mark-making freed from representation, are like a palimpsest that overlays part of the imagery underneath and changes it. This process retained aspects of both the still and violent Gaze and the fluid Glance. The Gaze modified into forceful motion and the fluidity of the Glance coagulated. At the conjunction of both, the paint became in Irigaray's terms, "viscous". Then, paint as a metaphor is also a mirror of the self.
Endnotes

1. The obelisk, pillar, sacred tree trunk, maypole and upright cross were male divinity symbols within patriarchal culture. In Archaic Egyptian mythology, two pillars called 'trees that shed blood', stood at the entrance of the temple. The blood they shed could render women pregnant (Maspero, 1967: 17-18).

Perhaps this suggests a remnant of an earlier idea that male blood, not semen, is the fertile essence copied from Neolithic worship of female 'moon blood'. The temple door represented the Holy Door of the Goddess (Budge, 1977: 144).

At Hierapolis, the temple of the Goddess had a phallic pillar on each side of the door. Every year a man climbed to the top of each pillar and remained there for seven days. According to Knight, this practice symbolically recapitulated sacrifices where pillars were bathed in the blood of human victims who were evidently left hanging for one lunar week, perhaps in imitation of menstruation (1974: 84).

The Christian 'pillar saint', St Simeon Stylites or "Simeon of the Pillar", died on a pillar hoping his prayers were audible because of his close proximity to God (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1970, "Simeon").

2. The excavations revealed roads, aqueducts, interior toilets, plumbing with descending runnels controlled by parabolic curves (1930, III: 241) and an advanced type of water pipe (1935, IV, I: 146-8) and sanitation system of underground stone-lined pits and ducts, '...with its tributary ducts debouching into spacious underground channels, its latrines and other refinements of quite modern contrivance, including features such as a ventilating shaft' (1935, IV, I: 65). Internal drainage also led from altars (210).

3. Evans also noted that the Temples in Malta served a similar purpose and related to Iberic, Britannic (1928, II, I: 181-91) and Anatolian architecture (277).

4. Eurydice met her demise due to a serpent's tooth in her heel (Ovid, 1980: 217).

5. At the time the five-year old infanta was the only child of Philip IV and his second wife Mariana. Their images are reflected in the mirror behind the infanta. She is attended by two maids of honour. The kneeling Dôna Maria Augustina Sarmiento offers her a drink from a small pitcher, and Dôna Isabel de Velasco bends towards her while glancing in the same direction as the princess towards the viewer. In the right foreground is the dwarf Maribárbara, and a midget,
the child Nicolás Pertusatio, who places his foot on the back of a large dog. Behind them a
widowed, lady-in-waiting Dóna Marcela de Ulloa and her unidentified escort converse.

One perception that culture has clung to is that man keeps the elements of sight, the gaze, the
reflection (Narcissus) for himself and allows woman to retain hearing and the echo (Echo)
(Irigaray, 1986b: 164).

Another foundational myth of vision is that of Narcissus. His image and story is the
exemplum of the self-portrait and reflexivity in the canon and like other demi-gods he also
sheds blood, in this case on the surface of his mirror-image (Ovid, 1980: 63).

"The family name, and even the first or given name, always stand at one remove from that
almost elemental identity tag: the scar where the umbilical cord was cut...when the father or
the mother threaten Oedipus with scissors or knife, they forget that the cord has already been
cut..." (Irigaray, 1980: 14-16).

"...in patriarchal genealogy we are dealing with the cult of the son's mother to the detriment of
the daughter's mother...Our societies forget fascination with that incest leads us to neglect the
genealogy of the woman, which has been collapsed inside the man's...Once one genealogy has
been reduced to the other's, it becomes impossible or at least difficult for the casual thinker to
define two different genders or sexes" (Irigaray, 1993: 3).

"... : blood is repressed because it is associated with female-maternal genealogies. Blood gives
rise to fantasies, to a ceaseless cry for wounds that open up the question of life and identity." (Irigaray, 1993: 160).

"...when the minister...pronounces the words of the Eucharist: "This is my body, this is my
blood," according to the rite that celebrates the sharing of food and that has been ours for
centuries, perhaps we might remind him that he would not be there if our body and our blood
had not given him life, love, spirit. And that he is also serving us up, we women-mothers, on
his communion plate" (Irigaray, 1993: 21).

The Bride in Etant Donnés is based on the life-size version of a small relief panel Given the
Illuminating Gas (1948-49), which was perforated with countless dots, a metaphor for
defloration. As a punishment for having infringed the incest taboo, the bride seems to have
undergone a torture that suggests that of the late-medieval Iron Maiden of Nuremberg. One of the
Bachelor's identities apart from that of the 'illuminating gas', is the coffin-like Malic Mould
(from The Large Glass). The Mould and the Iron Maiden will clasp the Bride in a mortal embrace.
Armless and headless, her image suggests decapitation—the symbol of castration. This punishment for her incestuous desires accords her the status of androgyny (immortality) and makes her an ideal mate for the immortal Bachelor. Their incestuous union does not take place. The Bachelor, as the illuminating gas, is a spectator to the Brides self-induced orgasm. Restricted Eros is victorious over Thanatos; pleasure will not bring death because there is no conjunction between the Bride and Bachelor (Schwarz, 1969: 240).

Ann Newmarch constructed and depicted herself in *Anti-Medusa/Risking Fifty*, 1995 in a process of ritual acts which she photographed and combined with paintings. Announcing her change in life at fifty she performed a ceremonial rite of passage; a rite of denial expressed by shaving her hair. This act aligned her with Gericault's regime of avoiding all distractions when he entered the Paris morgue in order to spend time on anatomical studies as preparations for his painting *The Raft of Medusa*. Newmarch's so-called unpretentiousness was meant to force her indoors to concentrate on her work. This process consisted of four distinct operations: cutting curvy, snake-like furrows into her hair, shaving the hair off, painting her head and face with fauvist-style masks and assembling the photographs of this procedure in mirror/double images.
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