

Introduction

On Freud's Couch, Dreaming of Art

During an extremely short trip to Paris in November 2003, I visited the Centre Pompidou and encountered the work of Sophie Calle, whose retrospective exhibit “M’as-tu vue” had opened a few weeks earlier. Its largest piece, the multipartite autofictional installation *Douleur exquise* (1984–2003) (*Exquisite Pain*) made a powerful impression on me, the extent of which I did not fully realize until much later. Perhaps the artwork’s strong effect was partly due to having discovered it on a three-day transatlantic trip (where nothing else so memorable happened). At the time, I did not notice that my circumstances, my jet-lag, even, resembled the artwork’s own structure, since the “exquisite pain” in its title was an involuntary effect of the protagonist’s having left home (Paris) on a three-month trip to Japan that began on a trans-Siberian train.

I remember, upon my return, describing the work—an excruciating, drawn-out, multimedia narrative of a breakup, and of the most painful experience lived by ninety-nine other individuals¹—in detail to a close college friend who, to my surprise, was immediately moved to tears, although she had not seen the exhibit herself. The attunement of her response to this particular artwork’s logic, which is based on the transmission of unique experiences for which words fail, to subjects who did not witness them, only became clear to me after more than a decade, and this belatedness is also intrinsic to Calle’s piece. That now-distant

1. See the book version: Sophie Calle, *Douleur exquise* (Arles, France: Actes Sud, 2003).

viewing experience appears to me today as an origin of this book, whose chapter 5 focuses on *Douleur exquise* (1984–2003).

The time Calle's *Douleur exquise* itself took to be completed, eighteen years, involves in profound ways the transformation of the world Sophie and her camera knew at the work's inception, when she boarded an eastbound train across communist Russia and China in 1984, to reach Japan on a three-month artist's grant to go abroad. By 2003, when *Douleur exquise* was first shown in its complete version at the exhibit I saw, not only had the Berlin Wall fallen more than a decade earlier, but so had the Kodak empire, giving way to the rise of digital images in the late capitalism we still know now. Obviously, this lapse of time must have also implied changes in its author's life (at the very least, over these years Sophie Calle had become a recognized figure in the contemporary art world). In like manner, between 2003 and now, my own reality has changed in ways I could not foresee at the time of that brief trip and art-viewing. I did not imagine then, for instance, writing on that particular artwork, let alone still thinking about it sixteen years later. My choice to do so concerns its decisive effect on my sense of what works of art and literature can do to subjects through their very opacity and singularity, a question this book develops.

The temporality of creation in Calle's artwork also resembles the infamously long years it usually takes for a psychoanalysis to reach its end. This similarity is no accident, for what causes this delay is, one might indeed say, an "exquisite pain": an excess, or, in a word Jacques Lacan introduced to psychoanalysis, a singular "jouissance" that stands at odds with shared reality, and with any preexistent path into the social link that sustains that shared reality. *Douleur exquise* is precisely about evoking such an excess, and stages its resistance to being cleared away by a daily narrative process that lasts ninety-nine days. "Jouissance," often translated into English as "enjoyment," is commonly used in French to refer to intense pleasure, including that of orgasm. But the latter famously ends quickly. To the extent that jouissance exceeds reality and emerges as "exquisite pain," its specificity escapes phenomena we can name and identify in an objective way. An intensity of this order might be felt as pain rather than pleasure, insofar as it remains a satisfaction only to itself, and not to an external criterion that establishes the limits of enjoyment. This excessive jouissance thus undyingly resists a full resolution in language (or "sex"), which is why it may be clinically defined as "untreatable," presenting itself as an unwelcome symptom that disrupts

the organism.² Such an untreatable *jouissance* is of central importance in this book: *The Aesthetic Clinic* is about strategies that take the side of *jouissance* in an effort to create—through art, psychoanalysis, and writing—a space for it in reality, more specifically, a clinical space for the transmission of the aesthetic force such *jouissance* carries, each time in a unique form.

At stake in my engagement with works by Louise Bourgeois, Sophie Calle, Lygia Clark, Marguerite Duras, Roni Horn, and Clarice Lispector alongside psychoanalytic and aesthetic theories is an understanding of the function of the work of art as a process that bypasses the interests of self- and social identity, in order to access subjects of an unconscious *jouissance* and uphold, as the only good each subject can bring uniquely into the world, desire. Gilles Deleuze's aesthetic philosophy is particularly important to my articulation between works by these women, aesthetics, and psychoanalysis. The more common tendency among Deleuze scholars is to discard psychoanalysis as reactive, to which Deleuze's own criticism of that field contributed, although psychoanalytic thought is a crucial underpinning for his own theories. Deleuze's continual proposal—expanded with Félix Guattari—of an experimental, decidedly non-normative unconscious, certainly makes room for theorizing women's art and writing,³ and, I believe, it also favors a discussion on female subjectivity in its specificity, and on the feminine. This proposal's break with Oedipal law enables an approach of the desire and *jouissance* problematic beyond a question of satisfactions that must be renounced and of the family romance as the decisive underlying element in the unconscious. Furthermore, Deleuze's grounding of this unconscious in aesthetics, a field of inquiry about sensations and the acts of thought they inspire by disrupting habit and convention, also invites one to conceive of the work of art and writing as a rigorous, necessarily nonrepresentational process that engages an untreatable excess. Reading

2. Willy Apollon, "The Untreatable," trans. Steven Miller. *Umbr(a). Incurable* (2006): 23–39. Coincidentally, in this essay Apollon explains castration, a relevant concept I will also discuss, in terms of "an irreparable cut" that "becomes the source of *an exquisite suffering*" (35, my emphasis).

3. Feminist theorists have considered the potential of Deleuze's philosophy to examine the stakes of women's writing. See examples in *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, ed. Ian Buchanan and Claire Colebrook (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), and *Deleuze and the Schizoanalysis of Feminism: Alliances and Allies*, ed. Janae Sholtz and Cheri Carr (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019).

and perceiving must, in turn, abandon interpretation and the assumption of a stable standpoint external to the work. The art and writing this book explores insist, in particularly powerful ways, on the need to renounce that position of control; reading subjects can thus instead welcome the incalculable transformations that the artwork's encounter discloses for them. Upholding desire, then—in practices of writing *and* reading, sculpting *and* viewing—is making something out of the intractable *jouissance*, rather than erasing it in attempts at representing and interpreting, which inevitably miss the mark. That desire would distinguish itself as aesthetic, in the sense Deleuze gave to this term: as a unique sensation with a parameter of its own.⁴

This notion of the work of art implies a methodological approach to reading that this book develops, where an irreducible opacity in the work, that is to say, its resistance to translation into common terms, leads the process and raises its own conditions, much in the way that signifiers play unique roles in each psychoanalysis. For example, in chapter 3 I explain that, in Lygia Clark's lifelong "search for a fusion between 'art and life,'" as she herself defined it in 1956,⁵ her experimentation led to reconceptualizing the work of art itself. While she shared this task with conceptual artists around the world at the time, this reconceptualization involved not only acknowledging the materiality of the canvas (in the style of Lucio Fontana, for instance), or pushing its limits (as did, say, Lee Bontecou) onto other spaces (as in land art or *dérive* experiments); it also meant understanding the work as an autonomous "proposition"—one that is capable of bringing desire into a unique kind of speech act that introduces its own language and temporality, while calling for a reader, or "participant." Each work of art, then, calls to be read in its

4. Or as "obscure and distinct," in Baumgarten's classic formulation in the late eighteenth century, to introduce a discipline within philosophy that did not fit the ideals of light and clarity. At the end of this book I will consider a renewed sense of these two qualities with Horn and Lispector.

5. Lygia Clark, "Lecture at the Escola Nacional de Arquitetura, Belo Horizonte, Fall 1956," *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art 1948–1988* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2014), 54. Translations of Clark's writings cited from this source are by Cliff Landers or Licia R Olivetti. Clark envisions in this text an alliance between artist, architect, and psychologist to develop "new and authentic plastic solutions" to create an atmosphere or environment for "the future habitation of man," in which he (or she) "will be the artist," as he will be able to choose and modulate his living environment (54–55).

own terms. When the reader can welcome this constraint, the analytic and theoretical dimensions of the work itself emerge through its very form or aesthetic quality, as something inseparable from the aesthetic experience that provokes those dimensions in the first place.

Indeed, Clark's writings confirm that the creation of concepts through art was an effect of what one could call (with Bataille) extreme inner experiences that preceded it. The propositions she develops throughout the 1960s and early '70s increasingly constrain participants to undergo, for their part, intense experiences, too. As Suely Rolnik aptly puts it, the propositions increasingly "depended on the process that they mobilized in the body of the participants as the basis of their realization."⁶ Eventually, this priority leads Clark to leave the world of art, as she had once left the canvas, and to turn her studio into a clinic for one-on-one sessions, where her propositions support the bodily expression of its user's/patient's unconscious. Another important consequence of the work of upholding desire is the possibility the artwork opens—in Clark's participatory propositions and clinic, but also in other approaches, such as the "exquisite pain community," created by Calle's *Douleur exquisite*, which I discuss at greater length in chapter 5—of getting beyond interactions between egos, to transindividual encounters between subjects of unconscious desire. Here, too, the interests of self and social identity that serve what Sigmund Freud called "civilization" are bypassed, in favor of an aesthetic expression of desire based on the truth of a different, unconscious experience beyond the limits of language that constitute perception and consciousness.⁷

This is what I previously referred to as the "exquisite pain community." In the last of its three parts, *Exquisite pain* accompanies its repetitive tale and image with ninety-nine stories⁸ of different people

6. Suely Rolnik, "The Body's Contagious Memory: Lygia Clark's Return to the Museum," trans. Rodrigo Nunes. *transversal—eipcp multilingual webjournal*. <https://transversal.at/transversal/0507/rolnik/en>

7. This "beyond" or "out-of-language" is, of course, an effect of the cut introduced by language into being. This inaugural status of language does not, however, eradicate everything that is not graspable within "sense" or the "sayable." Language introduces lack, which, as this book will explain, is the site of the free drive that can be harnessed in creative acts.

8. The book version features ninety-nine stories; the installation version contains thirty-six.

accounting, at Sophie's request, for the moment they most suffered in their lives, for which Calle, who never saw or lived this herself, creates ninety-nine images. The four elements form a sequence of quadriptychs, with others' pain on the right, and Calle's on the left (in chapter 5, see figures 5.3 and 5.4). On this side, the stubborn image of a red analogue phone on a twin bed in a hotel room remains intact to the very end, despite the protagonist's efforts at narrating *ad nauseam* to dissolve the painful memory at the work's core. I believe *Douleur exquise* suggests that it is this insistent element, a strange experience that cannot find its place in a given moment or word, that gives rise to a work of art, where it might find expression. The repetitive, disruptive psychic pain of absence, provoked by a romantic rupture, that *Douleur exquise* foregrounds and attempts to work through, by telling its story ninety-nine times, indicates the relevance of the analogy I find between this piece and a psychoanalytic treatment.⁹ Its distillation into a precise image of absence (in the repetitive photograph of a red, hung-up analogue telephone on a single made bed in a hotel room) and a precise formula ("exquisite pain") opens up the beautiful possibility of welcoming others' untreatable pain into the work. Moreover, the reading process that the work calls for extends the operation of transmission beyond the subjects whose stories are explicitly included on the right side of the quadriptych. These effects of embracing the untreatable closely resonate with the conviction, in contemporary psychoanalysis after Jacques Lacan, that what takes place at the end of an analysis is not only a cure, as release from the hold an underlying unconscious mental representation ("fantasy") has had on a subject's life. Rather, the analysand's own construction and transmission of an unprecedented object ("objet *a*") that causes desire also becomes possible, and often necessary. Its transmission consists in somehow evoking something that does not already have a signifier, but is unique to a subject.

Thus, I find, the transmission of *objet a* is not only a clinical matter, but also an aesthetic one. The hysteric women Freud observed and wrote about at the turn of the twentieth century attest to this aesthetic dimension through their bodies, acts, and dreams. Freud recognizes a

9. I am thinking of a Lacanian approach to the analytic process. I will discuss key moments and differences between Freud's views on the treatment he created and Lacan's proposal of a formalized conclusion, drawing on the more recent theorizations of Willy Apollon for the *École freudienne du Québec* (the Freudian School of Quebec).

creative talent there, but its potential to speak ethically to the aesthetic and to the concept of art comes forth a century later, in works of contemporary artists such as Louise Bourgeois, who in the 1990s, as I explain in chapters 1 and 2, launched an investigation on hysteria through sculpture and installation. Calle's *Douleur exquise* or Bourgeois' *Arch of Hysteria* (1993; figure 1.1 in chapter 1), like the other works this book explores, are not only objects that can be called aesthetic—for their unique formal, material, spatial, and temporal qualities—but also processes concerned with the clinical dimension of *jouissance* and desire.

A project of Sophie Calle's that preceded the 2003 exhibit where I discovered her work speaks most directly about the artist's engagement with psychoanalysis. In *Appointment with Sigmund Freud* (1999),¹⁰ at the Freud Museum in London, which was the psychoanalyst's last home, Calle chose among the relics of Freud's life and juxtaposed them with her own objects, photographs, and stories. She placed some of these objects in Freud's actual consultation room, and in other rooms in the house, offering something like a set of fragments for her case history.¹¹ The following sections of this introduction will focus on a particular gesture I find Calle to make in Freud's office, a kind of correspondence between "Sophie" and "Dora." They offer an introduction to questions and concepts central to this book, as well as to the kind of conversation that can take place between contemporary art and literature by women, aesthetics, and psychoanalysis.

The wedding dress Calle spread over Freud's couch in his consultation room playfully staged two wishes: first, in her words, "the secret dream I share with so many women: to one day wear a wedding dress,"¹² and, second, to have analysis with Freud. However, in a distinctly hysterical gesture, it simultaneously posed a challenge to some of "the master's" words on female subjectivity. To better grasp this challenge, and its

10. Sophie Calle, *Appointment with Sigmund Freud* (New York/London: Thames & Hudson, 2005).

11. In the narratives that form part of her artworks in this period of her career, she frequently refers to psychoanalysis as a part of her *Lebenswelt*. More recently, in *Prenez soin de vous* (2007), she also makes references to the psychoanalytic clinic and theory, in a Lacanian vein. For instance, one of the participants in this piece that engages 107 women contributes the formulas of sexualization Jacques Lacan put forth in 1972–1973.

12. Calle, *Appointment*, 65.



Figure I.1. Sophie Calle, *The Wedding Dress*, 1999. Image courtesy of the Paula Cooper Gallery. © 2019 ARS, NY/ADAGP, Paris.

hysterical character, let me recall a few of such words by the founder of psychoanalysis. According to Ernest Jones in the role of Freud's biographer, the famous question "What does a woman want?" "*Was will das Weib?*" comes to Freud in the context of his humble confession to one of the first women analysts, Princess Marie Bonaparte, that he has not been able to answer that question in three decades "of research into the feminine soul"¹³ (an interesting formulation on what being an analyst entails). The beginning of his 1933 lecture "Femininity" resonates with that confession, although he turns his puzzle over to humankind: "Throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity."¹⁴ If one takes Sophie's wedding dress on

13. Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud II* (New York: Basic Books, 1955), 421.

14. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), XXII: 113. Hereafter cited as SE.

Freud's couch into consideration, with regard to the riddles of the nature of femininity and a woman's desire, her answer could seem simple. But while she displays the ultimately common "secret wish to one day wear a wedding dress," this confession raises the question of what is actually at stake in such a wish for Sophie.

Freud's terms "feminine" and "femininity" are also not to be taken at face value. Freud's theory of bisexuality (which originates around 1896 in his correspondence with Wilhelm Fliess) attributes masculine and feminine traits to both men and women.¹⁵ The "Femininity" lecture introduces this key idea of psychoanalysis by outlining the perspective of "anatomical science"¹⁶ at the time, which reveals the presence of both traits in both human organisms, simply in greater or lesser quantities or degrees, aside from the disjunction between ovum or sperm. Against this minimal element to distinguish bodies, the social convention he highlights, of immediately making a distinction between male or female upon "meet[ing] a human being,"¹⁷ appears as a matter not grounded in anatomy or biology in any significant way. He thus warns the audience against simply taking the model of human reproductive sexual functions to mean that "masculine" is a name for aggressiveness, while "feminine" means passivity: "we must beware in this of underestimating the influence of social customs, which similarly force women into passive situations."¹⁸ Freud's reasoning here cautions readers of Sophie Calle's *Appointment* too, against hurriedly concluding that the "secret wish to one day wear a wedding dress" shared with so many women is, ultimately, a wish to comply with the custom of "becoming someone's wife" (just as it would be a mistake to simply assume that if a man shares Sophie's secret wish, he feels like or wishes to be a woman).

15. See *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887–1904*, trans. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge: Belknap, 1985). For an account of the theorization of the feminine and masculine in this correspondence, and its relevance to contemporary psychoanalysis, see Daniel Wilson, "Writing the Drive: From Freud's Theory of Bisexuality to Wittgenstein and the Limits of Language." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 28.2 (2017): 65–85.

16. Freud, *SE* XXII, 113.

17. Freud, 113.

18. Freud, 116.

Enigma, Excess, and Envy

Having destabilized the meaning of the word “femininity” with his initial remarks on anatomy and social convention in the lecture, Freud still wants to present psychoanalysis as a distinctive line of inquiry with regard to this term. One of the most striking sentences in the lecture states: “And now you are already prepared to hear that psychology too is unable to solve the riddle of femininity.”¹⁹ Freud thus insists on a true enigma. It concerns not only the evolutionary question of “how in general the differentiation of living organisms into two sexes came about,”²⁰ but also a distinctively psychoanalytic question (which resonates with Simone de Beauvoir’s most famous contribution to feminist theory): “psychoanalysis does not try to describe what a woman is—that would be a task it could scarcely perform—but sets about enquiring how she comes into being, how a woman develops out of a child with a bisexual disposition.”²¹ If he sees this question as more difficult than that of how a man develops out of a child, it is not only because, from his own comment that social customs force women into passive situations, it follows that he considers these customs to subjugate men less, or not as much into passive situations. Rather, the enigma has to do above all with the child’s libidinal life, which does not find in female anatomy a direct path to female sexual maturity from a reproductive standpoint. Female sexual development, he thinks, involves a change of erotogenic zone (from the clitoris to the vagina) that is instead not required for the male reproductive function to operate. A different perspective on this question of erotogenic zones (one that avoids the prescriptive tone of renouncing the clitoris as an indication of maturity) might help to see what libidinal life is about, or what the concern is for psychoanalysis: for one body, orgasm is in principle tied to the possibility of reproduction, whereas for the other, it is not bound to its reproductive capacity.²² In a way, then, the female reproductive system’s “split” indicates the mobility of the body’s erotogenic

19. Freud, 116.

20. Freud, 116.

21. Freud, 116.

22. For a clinical exposition of this line of thought see Willy Apollon, “Féminité dites-vous?” *Savoir: Revue de psychanalyse et d’analyse Culturelle* 2.1 (May 1995): 15–45.

zones in human beings and their independence from organic functions. They respond, instead, to the unbound drive, which, as Lacan would later point out, is not an anatomical object of study.²³

Freud shows an awareness to feminist objections regarding the consequences for women of his account of child sexual development, where he proposes the castration and Oedipus complexes. Not only is the boy spared from having to change erotogenic zone to “reach maturity”; his discovery that the girl does not have a penis introduces for him the threat of castration, which helps him give up the mother as first love object that sets up his rivalry with his father. The threat of castration, then, allows the boy to repress and even destroy the Oedipus complex. As a result: “a severe super-ego is set up as its heir.”²⁴ Having internalized prohibitions, the boy can now be his own authority and become an active member of society. For the girl, castration is not a threat, but a discovered fact, and Oedipus, or her change of love object from her mother to her father “through the influence of her envy for the penis,” appears as a shift “as though into a haven of refuge. In the absence of fear of castration the chief motive is lacking which leads boys to surmount the Oedipus complex.”²⁵ The consequence of remaining in the Oedipus complex for a long time is that “the formation of the super-ego must suffer; it cannot attain the strength and independence which give it its cultural significance, and feminists are not pleased when we point out to them the effects of this factor upon the average feminine character.”²⁶ In other words, Freud considers that without an incentive to develop a strong, independent super-ego, women are generally less capable of significant cultural achievements or contributions than men.

23. Whereas Freud's take on femininity remains caught within the scientific paradigm, awaiting an organic explanation of the unconscious to be revealed in science, Lacan insists that there is no organic explanation for the unconscious. See Sarah Kofman, *L'énigme de la femme: La femme dans les textes de Freud* (Paris: Galilée, 1980); Danielle Bergeron, “Femininity” *American Journal of Semiotics*. 8.4 (1991); and Wilson, “Writing the Drive.”

24. Freud, *SE XXII*, 129.

25. Freud, 129.

26. Freud, 129.

Dangers in Constructing a Clinical Aesthetics

Is abandoning psychoanalysis—as a treatment and theory—advantageous to exploring the potential of women’s experimental writing and art, or art concerned with sexuality that does not conform to the Oedipal myth?²⁷ At a first glance, this seems like Deleuze’s standpoint in his book on the paintings of Francis Bacon and aesthetics. Bacon’s canvases present bodies that undergo various processes of deformation as a result of what Deleuze calls passing forces and intensities (for instance of contraction, dissipation, flight, gravity, rhythm, screaming, and sleep) that establish various unique relations with the enclosed spaces they inhabit. In painting such bodies, Bacon is known to have used late nineteenth-century photographic documents from the inpatients at the Salpêtrière Hospital diagnosed with hysteria by Jean-Martin Charcot, who was interested in charting hysterical attacks into four distinct phases, and whose investigations inspired Freud to invent the analytic cure. Deleuze follows Bacon’s rejection of psychoanalytic interpretation, as incapable of seizing the relevance of the paintings’ operations, as producers of original sensations and not disguised representations of unacknowledged wishes. Thus, Deleuze highlights hysteria in his logic of sensation, as a major concern and development for Bacon’s painting, but also in an extended way, for painting as an artform. The thought of hysteria in this study leads Deleuze to briefly posit the idea of a correlative “galloping schizophrenia” in music, and thus to consider “constructing a clinical aesthetics”: “It is true that there are numerous dangers in constructing a clinical aesthetics (which nonetheless has the advantage of *not* being a psychoanalysis).”²⁸ A few paragraphs later, he insists, and presents the locution that gives my book its title: “Can we speak of a hysterical essence of painting, under the rubric of a purely aesthetic clinic, independent of any psychiatry and psychoanalysis?”²⁹

27. This question was provoked by the innovative critiques of phallocentrism in psychoanalysis that Hélène Cixous (“The Laugh of the Medusa,” *Portrait of Dora*) and Luce Irigaray (*Speculum of the Other Woman*) launched in the 1970s with psychoanalyst and feminist activist Antoinette Fouque (founder of *Editions des femmes* in 1972).

28. Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London/New York: Continuum, 2003), 51. Emphasis in the original text. Hereafter cited as *FB*.

29. Deleuze, *FB*, 55.

Deleuze nominally distinguishes between the aesthetic clinic he invokes and psychoanalysis, as well as an analytic cure, and it is evident that the latter's clinical frame is not in play in painting and its work with hysteria, or in the other arts and their ways of harnessing different clinical structures. An aesthetic clinic has to be something different from "applied psychoanalysis." I believe the key to this important distinction, between an application of psychoanalytic theory to a nonclinical, cultural object, and an aesthetics with clinical effects on desire that simultaneously calls for a clinic uniquely grounded in aesthetics, lies in treating works of art and writing as differential sites that offer unique, autonomous modes of thinking and reading. A simple turn away from psychoanalysis does not ensure the construction of an aesthetic clinic, nor is it the only adequate response to Freud's limited views on women's psychical capacities.

What is Sophie Calle doing in Freud's London office, exactly a century after his hysteric patient Dora spent three months in the Vienna location, as the analyst relates in *Fragment of a Case of Hysteria*? It is no accident that Deleuze formulates the construction of an aesthetic clinic within the context of a reflection on hysteria, specifically, the structure and phenomenon that Freud and before him Charcot observed, especially in women, and that gave rise to psychoanalysis. For Deleuze is concerned with creating, as the basis of aesthetics, a concept of sensation that implies a work of the senses beyond the organism, as a response to nonorganic intensities. And this is also what underlies the phenomena in nineteenth-century hysteric bodies that Bacon brings to his painting: "the famous spastics and paralytics, the hyperesthetics or anesthetics, associated or alternating, sometimes fixed and sometimes migrant, depending on the passage of the nervous wave and the zones it invests or withdraws from."³⁰ While one seldom reads about hysteria in Deleuze's work aside from this important late study on aesthetics, this hysteric background remains very present in the works by the contemporary women artists and writers here discussed—Louise Bourgeois, Sophie Calle, Lygia Clark, Marguerite Duras, Roni Horn, and Clarice Lispector.³¹

30. Deleuze, *FB*, 49.

31. Chapter 1 will consider the role nineteenth-century hysteria played in the invention of psychoanalysis, as well as the structure of hysteria in clinical psychoanalysis, showing how Bourgeois' art harnesses hysteria and its cultural trajectory.

Although Deleuze insists on separating the proposal to construct an aesthetic clinic from psychoanalysis and psychiatry, his very approach articulates such an aesthetics around clinical structures employed in psychoanalysis: hysteria (as one of two modes of neurosis along with the obsessional) and schizophrenia (as one of two modes of psychosis, with paranoia as the other).³² Thus his thought cannot be understood as a simple turn away from psychoanalysis. As I will later point out, Deleuze's engagement with psychoanalysis runs deeper than he admits in his *Logic of Sensation*, and since his collaboration with Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, from 1972. I certainly agree with his sense that the practice of art can and should steer the construction of an aesthetic system with its own concepts. I believe the fascinating question he poses, in psychoanalytic terms, of the clinical potential of artforms and bodies of work calls to be explored in unique, mixed media works of art that, like Bacon's, carry in themselves a clinical ambition. I initially mentioned, for example, Calle's "exquisite pain" as a formula (displacing a medical term) and photographic image for an untranslatable experience of stubborn psychic pain, or *jouissance*. "Art is a Guaranty of Sanity" is the sentence welded above the entrance to Louise Bourgeois' installation *Precious Liquids* (1992) (figure 2.1 and book cover), and it is important to find out how art might guarantee sanity, and what sanity involves from an aesthetic perspective. Lygia Clark named some of her handmade works, made for others to engage with and activate them, "Objetos relacionais," Relational Objects, evoking D.W. Winnicott's theory of the transitional object and space. Clark seeks to give participants access to another space and time, as well as to an aesthetic dimension of their body, just as playing, to Winnicott, can carry a child to a space that exceeds the limits of reality, but that is also not an isolated inner prison. These and the other clinical artworks in this book shed light on the problems of sublimation, sexuality, and the feminine, which are crucial

32. Deleuze links perversion to aesthetic productions early on, in the 1967 introductory essay to Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*, where he views the fact that the names of two modes of perversion, sadism and masochism, come from literature, as an opportunity to explore the literary (or aesthetic) and the clinical together: "The clinical specificities of sadism and of masochism are not separable from the literary values peculiar to Sade and Masoch." (Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty*, trans. Jean McNeil [New York: Zone Books, 1989], 14.)

to any aesthetics with clinical implications and effects.³³ So let us return to Freud's office and texts, as Calle's *Wedding Dress* invites us to do.

A Girl's Fates

Freud's theory of female sexuality discerns three fates for the girl. At worst, she remains stuck in the Oedipus complex; another, disappointed in her father's power to provide refuge, will "regress into her early masculinity complex,"³⁴ which may express itself in the choice of another woman; at best, she becomes a mother to a boy who will later have cultural significance directly. What about women who do achieve that significance themselves, for instance the women analysts around Freud, whom he cites, or his contemporary, Virginia Woolf, whose *A Room of One's Own* addresses problems closely linked to Freud's argument here? In the 1933 lecture, Freud reports that in current discussions about this, the answer is that women are considered "more masculine than feminine" in that regard.³⁵ (Woolf in 1928 would instead say that great writers, men or women, discover how to put the feminine and the masculine to work in harmony³⁶). At the turn of the twenty-first century, where might the protagonist "Sophie" with her wedding dress stand, according to the psychical process Freud outlined for the girl? And what about the artist Calle, who turns that very wedding dress into an element in an art installation with Freud's couch? Calle's autofictional works highlight a split between the protagonist and the artist/narrator, and such a split makes a statement on the questions of feminine desire and "becoming a woman."

For *Appointment with Sigmund Freud*, Calle defined the project as follows: "to display relics from my own life amongst the interior of Freud's home and also to select objects from his personal collection which relate

33. These are, I believe, as crucial as Deleuze's turn, with Guattari, to the psychotic structure Freud kept at bay.

34. Freud, *SE* XXII, 130.

35. Freud, 117.

36. Woolf ponders upon "the unity of the mind" and resolves to "amateurishly sketch a plan of the soul so that in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female" and considers that writing requires the two to "live in harmony together, spiritually cooperating." *A Room of One's Own* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2005), 96–97.

to stories I wished to tell.”³⁷ Her wedding dress interestingly does not relate to the story of any official marriage, but instead to the beginning of a long-awaited first rendezvous with a certain man:

I had always admired him. Silently, since I was a child. On 8 November—I was 30 years old—he allowed me to pay him a visit. He lived several hundred kilometers from Paris. I had brought a wedding dress in my bag, white silk with a short train. I wore it on our first night together.³⁸

In suggesting that her attraction to this man was not limited by her having a properly adult body, the narrative evokes Freud’s important theory of childhood sexuality. The child’s body may not be reproductively mature, but it is a body affected by jouissance that sets the drives in motion, “silently,” beyond what the child or anyone around her can say. The story suggests that the man waited for her adult body. The long work *Douleur exquise* retells this little story, revealing that this man was Sophie’s father’s friend when she was a child, which invites the reader to consider a possibly Oedipal aspect of her attraction for “a substitute father.” Through the act of bringing a “virginal” wedding dress, Sophie works to link this first night together to her childhood attraction for the man. The narrative tightly weaves together the child and “the 30 year-old woman” (featured in Freud’s “Femininity” as one in whom desire appears to have run its full course and rigidified), as if nothing else had taken place in between those two parts of her life but this infatuation finally finding satisfaction (although the other stories in *Appointment* indicate a lot of, often disturbing, experience of sexuality in the service of repression). The wedding dress stresses the event’s inaugural quality, just as the narrative stresses the long wait and distance she endured for it (even if the dress only has a “short train”).

Fifteen years later, in 1999, Calle places that dress and the memory it embodies on Freud’s couch. Insofar as what an analysand brings to it are unconscious wishes, the wedding dress spread over it, in replacing a living body, appears as a representation of Sophie’s wish to “become a bride,” which Calle’s narratives in other projects indeed make explicit (but

37. Calle, *Appointment*, 9.

38. Calle, 79.

what does it involve for her?), along with Sophie's repeated tragicomic impossibility to fulfill it. This consistent failure is no accident from a psychoanalytic point of view, and Calle's narratives, which underscore this unpleasant repetition in precise ways, betray an awareness of the part it plays in an unconscious desire, alongside the more pleasant and confessable wish to wear a wedding dress, which she has no problem fulfilling.³⁹ Wearing it to her own wedding is another story, and not Sophie Calle's, in any case. The disembodied presence of the dress points to the fact that, while this dress traditionally symbolizes an ideal of female identity, in which a woman reaches sexual maturity and confirms her value by a man's supposedly lifelong commitment to her, the dress remains merely a layer, a coating a body can "slip into" or out of, without fully identifying with it (in a related gesture, Calle does not miss the opportunity to slip into Freud's overcoat and pose, replicating a photo of the psychoanalyst in his garden⁴⁰). This slippery quality is indeed foregrounded again later, in Calle's story about this same wedding dress in *Douleur exquisite*: "C'était un ami de mon père. Il m'avait toujours fait rêver. Pour notre première nuit, je me suis glissée dans le lit vêtue d'une robe de mariée." ("It was a friend of my father's. He had always made me dream. On our first night, I slipped into bed wearing a wedding dress.") It is relevant that *Douleur exquisite* tells the end of this romantic affair, exactly, when he fails to go the required distance to meet her in a New Delhi hotel room after a three-month separation. This breakup causes the "exquisite pain" of a more fundamental absence, outlined in *Appointment* by the inert dress on the couch in a room from which Freud is missing too.

Lack

"Penis envy" in Freud's account of female psychic development names one mode of unconscious response to a fundamental experience of lack

39. In another story within *Appointment*, Calle poses in a wedding dress for a fake wedding, with a group of people and Gregory Sheppard, whom she had married, without a dress, at a drive-through chapel in Las Vegas (and soon divorced). In *Le mariage de rêve (Dream Wedding)* (2001) she poses in a red wedding dress at the Paris-Roissy airport, longingly staring out the window toward a departed plane in which her fiancé has flown away to China.

40. See Calle, 2–3.

that every human being is faced with. This experience is unavoidable insofar as language fails to name what takes place within the child's body on the level of drives, and Freud, taking the child's discovery of anatomical difference as an important moment, and thinking of the neurotic psychic structure, posits two kinds of response. But "penis envy" of course resonates with an unfortunate Aristotelian model of female anatomy as an incomplete or imperfect human body, since it suggests that the penis would fill the lack the girl discovers in herself, and that, logically, the male body is therefore not lacking. And indeed, the boy's "threat of castration" and repression of his Oedipal love offer the illusion of not lacking. In this light, one could consider "the wedding dress wish" Sophie brings to Freud's couch, as an instance of what he called penis envy, since both the gesture of "wearing something" and the act of marriage the dress invokes suggest images of complete satisfaction, or fulfillment of the lack that makes wishes possible in the first place. It is as if all she needed was the dress, or the man, or a baby boy, per Freud's outlined optimal fate for women. Yet both penis envy and castration anxiety are modes of resistance, and the point of the discovery of sexual difference lies, I insist, in an experience, for both the girl and the boy, of not being/having everything (to/for an Other on whose love their being depends).

Calle's intervention in Freud's office with the dress on the couch does not lose sight of that underlying experience. As her introductory narrative to the project explains, she chose to accept the invitation to create an exhibition in Freud's last home "after having a vision of [her] wedding dress laid across Freud's couch."⁴¹ There is a significant difference between wearing a wedding dress and laying it across Freud's couch. Take another look at Figure 1.1. Facing the scarcely majestic, disembodied dress laid out flat on the empty couch, viewers are not so much invited to recognize or identify with the iconic bride figure as an ideal for a woman, as they are confronted with an absence—the absence at stake in castration. And that is the gesture's brilliance. The absence of the patient's body from the consultation room achieves two things. First, it underscores a double split: between Sophie as protagonist of the narrative and the dress, on the one hand, and, on the other, between the protagonist and the artist. She seems to have left the couch to apply her body to the tasks of writing, taking photos, and organizing Freud's

41. Calle, 9.

office in her own way, through gestures such as that of laying out the dress that, for Sophie, has never coincided with an actual wedding.⁴² The second effect of the missing body is that while the dress may stand in for the patient on the couch, the subject of unconscious desire can never be fully represented by the signifiers available in a given culture, here a Western one for female sexuality. How long will the dress lie there? Will it someday realize the doctor's chair is also empty?

Femininity versus Ego

In *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* (1937), a late paper in which Freud himself asks why psychoanalytic treatment takes such a dreadfully long time, castration is discussed as a logical moment at the end of analytic treatment, which gives rise, once again, to this crucial resistance in the child's development. It emerges as "penis envy" for women and as what he calls a "masculine protest" for men, which consists in "a struggle against his passive or feminine attitude to another male."⁴³ In both cases, a "repudiation of femininity"⁴⁴ is at stake. The final obstacle to the analytic cure, or what makes it "interminable," is, thus, the repudiation of femininity, which sides with the drive in the latter's struggle against the ego. As Daniel Wilson points out, to Freud this struggle cannot be entirely reconciled;⁴⁵ therefore it persists, as an "underlying bedrock"⁴⁶ that makes analysis to him interminable, in a certain way.

42. The project in which she does get married is the film *No Sex Last Night (Double Blind)* with Gregory Sheppard. This is an edited film shot with two hand cameras, by Sophie and Greg, who take a road trip from New York to California in an old Cadillac and speak to their cameras about the lack of communication between them. Calle intermittently presents an image of the unmade hotel beds, accompanied by her words "No sex." At a certain point the sentence is reduced to "No," repeatedly, until at a certain point there is a "Yes." Along the road they decide to get married, and she is not wearing a wedding dress. This inspires her to organize a "fake wedding" photograph with Sheppard. See my footnote 37.

43. Freud, *SE XXIII*, 250.

44. Freud, 250.

45. "Writing the drive," 72. Wilson explains that attempts at reconciling the drive, or feminine, to the ego emerge in the form of "a tendency to collapse the feminine into the maternal," influenced by Melanie Klein.

46. Freud, *SE XXIII*, 252.

I pointed out earlier that Freud in the “Femininity” lecture destabilizes the meaning of this term, in order to point to something that neither science nor culture can truly grasp. As for psychoanalysis, if it cannot “solve the riddle of femininity” either, it can point to its properly enigmatic dimension, as an “inner” experience of heterogeneity that is nonetheless intrinsically human. Femininity is an unconscious experience of excess of the drive that is irreconcilable with the ego. The formalization of an end of analysis into what Lacan called “la passe” (“the pass”) is concerned with breaking through the repudiation of the feminine, or “censored jouissance,”⁴⁷ by finding a way to sustain it in its very heterogeneity to the ego. To Freud, “avoiding a symptomatic reaction to a ‘censored jouissance’ that attributes this jouissance to an Other”⁴⁸ means periodically returning to analysis, as the only space for this jouissance that does not fit in the social link to express itself without causing too much disruption in the ego’s life. But jouissance will continue its work.

To Lacan, a conclusive moment must be reached when the analysand no longer attributes the jouissance to an Other, after which she can alone construct and transmit this jouissance as a necessarily unique objet *a*. What is it like to “not repudiate” but rather embrace femininity, to take responsibility for it, and thus to “traverse castration”? Is this act restricted to a school of psychoanalysts? In a way, yes, insofar as it is part of a specific space and practice. Yet surely this shift in a subject has effects in its life, beyond the clinical context. What are the consequences of traversing castration, with regard to a human being’s “cultural significance,” since to Freud that function was dependent upon internalizing laws and prohibitions that fail to grasp the feminine? How might a work of art offer, as Freud’s office did, a space to sustain the feminine? Each work discussed in this book engages such questions uniquely.

A Girl’s *Savoir*, and Her Other Fates

I have stated that Calle’s dress in *Appointment* points the viewer to a knowledge, or unconscious *savoir*, about an experience of the signifier’s lack, or of language’s inability to name the jouissance in the subject of

47. Apollon, *Untreatable*, 32.

48. Wilson, “Writing the Drive,” 66.