



**WOMEN &  
LANGUAGE**

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Sally Silvers / Abigail Child

## REWIRE // SPEAK IN DISAGREEMENT

### 1. Almost Necessary But Not Sufficient Criteria Particular to Women for Production of Modern Art

*We defeated the lack of expectation.*

Enter the social, conditioning, context... OK, OK.

Perhaps we should use the word girl in every sense of woman in this essay—would that drive the point in a way similar to your suggesting a she when the he was always written. When writing about girls and modernism we have to talk about oppression... and find the rambattering tiresome.

Women have been traditionally involved in issues of the body in art—arts of presence— theater, dance, voice. This is partly economics (body is cheaper than paper and pen even), but also women's bodies seem definitional—as presence, as objects. Our bodies are expected information. Women tend to see themselves relating to and as bodies instead of to and as history.

Men with their tangible symbol/organ/phallus are challenged to compete to locate their desire in the (unattainable) power of the world. Women are more ambiguous in locating an identity, a location in relation to the world (in addition to being appropriated in men's sense of the territory available for them).

I disagree here with your analysis, where you talk about "women lacking a lack symbol." I think phallus just never had, has any power, real power to explain anything regarding women.

Power again. How we live in a world of male language and the need to redefine this: their terms.

But what I mean is that women not being trained in the unattainable desire for power/authority have a chance at a clearly distinct kind of maneuverability—which to me is one of the essences of modernism—maneuvering, recreating the subject using the materials of our mediums. Modernism as getting legs instead of power.

To put down their reigns (reins): defeat prior constitutionality.

*To give our readers an idea of what P. Charles gazes at in the royal*

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bedroom every night, the Examiner placed Di's face over the body of a fashion model exhibiting the lines of sexy lingerie.

Genital identification. *Even the maids aren't black.* Historically women have been bound to bonds of relation. Conditioned to condition. Women are like nature which is what modernism bases its conquest on. *Women were domestic goods so didn't sell or were sold and had earlier obsolescence.* They enter the economics but not the politics. Survival based not on knowledge, information, self-sufficiency but on finding a mediator and not going public. *Reflex survivors.*

*Demonstration photos inevitably show a young Japanese woman, a tentative smile on her face, with the robot's 7' 5" arm coiled around her.*

Possession of the *token* of power = has a man.

Domestic speech—what is used in the home in the nuclear family—is irrelevant in the American version where father/husband supports wife/mother, kitchen, kids—the division then of experience is so separate—the wife/mother homefront limited to children's speech, consumer advertisement, pubescent addictions and advocacy of prevailing (and duplicating) role models from a limited closed spectrum—how is an exchange of experience to be realized?

Women's lack exists—is this endless elaboration of perverted social realities, social psychologies, social behavior dysfunction. Feminine, the adjective, and equally masculine, the adjective, partake of the restricting cultural values, *define your restraints, shape the lacks.*

The gender argument is fucked—making dogma out of social conditioning.

It's just a speech defect because women are forced to accommodate men.

Dichotomous thought is antagonistic to the future, locked into the past.

~~It's not nurturer = earth  
mechanizer = destroyer~~

No female essence—intuition the small change of the patriarchy. We have to guard against feminizing the irrational, women's pre-linguistic association with nature. *No primal liberty between the meshes of the social body.* As you say, destroy the dichotomies which structure and wash the patriarchy and insure our position in relation to and formed by power. At the same time defeat coherent subjectivity on which capitalism, idealism is based—point up multiple contradictions which are clearly delineated and not un-

spoken, silent, taped shut. Constant strategies.  
Which means there is something to *do*, rather than apologize and explain endlessly the state of things—both male and female have the political/aesthetic job to fracture the social conditions we in this present exist in—for life as well as gender reasons.

*Articulate the differences with a fig.* New realities into new speech.

Speak in disagreement, enter the discourse.

Unless the woman sees her role as humanizing—emotionalizing the forces, personalizing—and then we're cooked and women leave modernism altogether.

Perhaps they have to become more improperly bred in the fear of desire.

Obviously women know too much to try to join the club.

*Oh dear little brushes. You can buy a kit and decorate your loved ones. You can buy a kit and go into business. Tattoo—the contact sport of the 80s. Darwin Was Wrong—across their young men's chests.*

*Obsolete mothers play a role in our lives.*

The logo for his museum the design of a heart beating the single word "mother." (= the most popular tattoo ever created. Defensive signaling of a dying ethos.)

Went up there to prove *their* manhood, saying: be an essayist. Be focused. Exclude trivia.

Bull on the above rationalized clarity of expression.

A good thought is a series of resonances.

The English makes its propositions apparently verifiable.

A road to power in quick thinking.

A seduction to think office-ties-master-electronics.

While knowledge is another kind of power and is genderless. This our entry.

Yet when you say fuck clarity of expression/focus, I disagree. "Oh what a pretty cute thing, so enigmatic, so easy to ignore." It fits too easily into the basis of existing repression. Our entry is knowledge but if it is to be 'genderless,' it can't reinforce stereotypes of the dark, mysterious internal = female expression. Our thoughts will contribute through multi-valenced force; with a vision, a uniqueness that has clarity as an intention. How else are we to have a dialogue and learn from each other as women. Let's go beyond the role model method; beyond just another woman on the list.

I'm not talking of hiding behind veils of obfuscation. I'm suggesting rather that the 'call to order' is played against us, played against our mediums. That the traditional limits of the form define in a prohibitive way the boundaries of the possible. And the thrust of extension, of criticism which I choose to see as part of the work can

be blunted by an obeisant clarity. My work is clear to me. Is as complicated as it appears because it wanted more complicated clarities to keep going. I don't want a work I could see in my mind's eye at the start from the front. I wouldn't make such a work, not need to, no need for. I'm against a *solved* work. *Not* a triumph of failure. But a material (unmartial) term of manifold contradictions, construction, stand (fall) (the body metaphor doesn't hold)—complete parts. Non-hierarchical.

I'm looking for an unsolved work that satisfies. You want to be as clear as possible. But not some predestined clarity.

What you didn't understand in my text wasn't where I thought you wouldn't. Accepting the authority of their definition is playing their game.

Can figure out the project of undoing the damage. Not rewarding ourselves for not fucking up the world when we've been fucked instead.

Yet still. The terms of the indictment: who's inventing whom? The question of power and not the question of "why not enough women."

## 2. Every Bite Is a Revolution of the Material

*We got to it before it had time to finish.*

Modernism for me is not minimal. Is rather inclusive, something of the Futurists' action momentum, naturally fractured as movies are (machines are/'organic' cells are/attention is/'component'), and the unity humans regularly seek (habit) would be by now outside a system—shakes the habituated, no form/force/system of givens encompassing truth enough.

Instead a charge, a fracturing on all levels of our consciousness, finally getting legs instead of power. Modernism for me is definitely not orderly (as you say minimal). Even surrealism, cubism present the unconscious as surplus code, as orderly explosion or worshipful progress of the imagination. Expressionism was messy, chaotic, but too attached to the existential self. (Our) modernism is realism in the sense that it recognizes the complexities, the identities of things, of material (the components, the cell), but it doesn't make organic relationships between these things. It also interprets the things themselves as relations.

It makes sense to me that the modern insistence on discourse, the text, emerges now as a substance that doesn't try to remember, doesn't represent, is not dream, is itself and actualizes that.

Modernism could be a platform for women perhaps, a stance outside the patriarchy. Gertrude Stein for instance is much more

modern than Joyce or Pound; her work less hierarchical, less harkening back to king-catholic-aristocracies. Levi-Strauss speaks to this sense of an evolving aesthetic that reflects its contextual worldview when he analyzes painting as a movement in the definition of the Sublime. I.e.: early 19th century extols the romantic, waterfalls, nature just as the machine age is about to encroach; the impressionists create suburban painting—their vision applied to parks, bounded fields, yards; the cubists celebrate the machine while the surrealists look to the imagination as post-war reality crowds in on their vision. And though Levi-Strauss does not name it, he suggests a future SuperReality to compensate a world grown increasingly potentless—which I interpret as the point of entry for photography and film. So that the Sublime in our time has become the unreal, is defined as illusion. The photo *is* the modern world. And for the artist living within this paradox, the Sublime registers not as representation but as the frame, the medium itself. The natural so banished in vectors of economic-atom-pressure that the Beautiful is what is not simply not-natural (i.e., machine) but what takes its force in being forcefully Unnatural (i.e., reflection/photo-reality). With the added irony that these means seem even more convincing an 'illustration' of the real.

*History—a fiction we overthrow.*

Modernism not as a cure but as a finding of the go button. To open out options, as a stance, not just in opposition but to make something new, "to willfully not remember" the way things are; to not have to exist in relationship always to authority, to make a new position. As a building of desire, not limited to symbols of lack; not being stuck with an overdetermined symbol.

*Pop song: "Slave to my dick."*

I'd maintain that part of our modernism is this unceasing attempt to maintain a realism—of the disparate committed opposition to the "Setup"—the totality and totalization of life as lived in the corporate image, corporate entertainment, corporate work, postures that dominate our society. The script packages life, makes brackets out of what I experience IN FACT as vortices. I don't want to follow this stricture/sequence. Each blink of my eye disproves—

No totalities based on the mode of the natural organism. Give me fallacies any day. How can you believe in the model organism and believe in change? The corporeal surface as the location for new organs—Artaud—the organless body.

The body *is* the material and its deformations, errors, fallacies are what is of interest. And you—we—eat because every bite is a revolution of the material. What's so great about cinema is it takes the body and alters it, beyond the natural. Vertov's machine eye

relevant here: that we learn to see differently, the tool changing our vision. "How" has altered the landscape, reorganizes the organic, distributes new information (language).

Extending the matrix of what constitutes the image.

Internal organs create responsibilities and minds of their own creation.

Active complexities. Analysis, not synthesis.

The ideas are a struggle of contraries always in movement. Whereas dance, the organic unity, the "released" body, implies a single identity, a paradigm of the body. The body is already seen too much as property. To try to make it more "mine" is cowardly, miserly. I'm not writing owners' manuals.

Modernism seems an attempt at timelessness or everything at the same time, eliminating hierarchies in the form. In your films, in my choreography, there is an immediate reading of juxtaposed meaning and no need to connect the elements—it is intelligible each moment and not through the passage of time. Each moment rises done.

Your films strive for that instant in painting when you can see the whole divulged in each instant. So as in Shklovsky—the process of perception becomes an aesthetic end in itself. In Brakhage for instance, this perception becomes like a fetish whereas for you it seems more defamiliarized because of the way you cut sound, rhythm, point of view. I could see *Ornamentals* as pure fetish however. Film is always in danger of that moment of seduction; *Ornamentals* a seduction through specialization of its elements perhaps. Well, I'm not a puritan. I can stand seduction even though it's art. *Is This What You Were Born For?* cracks the subject—enter the social albeit in modernist dress—the emperor (empress) is naked and dead. The subject becomes an activating process.

Dripping sweat. Yet, to understand is to be struck.

Modernism—no resolution possible.

Operative: the image of Science. The dream landscape of the century. Science a code word for modernism. The arena of an ideology and the arena in which conflicting ideologies are and will be fought.

You could define modernism in relation to 20th-century science and its precepts:

critical stance : investigative reasoning

reflexive : relativity

disorder : entropy

boundaries of the field : the new/also ideas of torus,  
pushed to their limits matrix, field, etc.



Knowledge now a sum of uncertainties. Entropy abolishes the monuments.

More chaos—*anarchy*—means politically more open to discussion.

Acceptance of decay, confusion, unresolved states = events shaped to your singular vision.

*One needs a point of view—can that be one of chaos?*

My vision of modernism is not from the theoretical position of idealism—that the human, the subject, the art maker is the point of origin of meaning or of practice. The coherent subject is a lie. How far outside ourselves can we go before realizing that we don't really manipulate it.

*I believe I am a unity but I am a construction.*

In my work, biology takes care of itself—it is its own structure but not a model for construction or thought. My organism is not action, but it is material. It doesn't hurt to know it as in learning the chemistry of paint pigment. (When I was reading *Scientific American's* brain issue, I could get high.) I don't like thinking of the body as something that can be finally 'known' with correct and more correct manipulations, releasing of the final tensions. Tensions are interesting as sites of power formations. That is one reason I'm interested in untrained dancers. Technical or released trained movers have only habituated their bodies to an ideal, be it distorted (ballet) or natural (release and some modern dance). Habituated means thoughts, tools, no longer can respond in an exploratory, investigative mode. End of interest.

For me the rejected or everyday demagnified gesture is used in your work to construct a choreography of parts. And what touches the viewer is where the inarticulate, the error or tension find concrete manifestation and are recognized.

Speak here on the relation between form and content: not that they are identical. More like content is the air around the structure, what the structure breathes. Content has a smell which sounds the structure (the synaesthesia essentially a reflection of relations, not dichotomies).

Simple schematics don't work in these definitions. Perhaps typologies emerge with the division of labor, and are false in light of post-Newtonian physics: that classic modernism is a response to 19th-century mechanization and must change to deal with the development of the electronic/information era.

I'm jealous of your time machine: film. Although I write compositions, they are realized completely in vanishing. This is my body—doing time. Your machine possesses it.

Whereas for me dance has the advantage of utilizing the material of

the body—the internal structure (in all of us) externalized, *plus* the facility/ability to improvise—changing contexts. If film possesses time, your body processes it (though I would maintain that is what film does as well—no illusion out-of-hand). In your work, you have access to all (social and historic) movement immediately and are not dependent on the laborious technical recording procedure of film.

Film sets new standards for time that are hard for movement, writing and sound not to lag behind. The speed of visibility. The seduction of Machine. The metaphor progresses—triumph, battle, defeat (i.e., defeat of nature) and as well projects the analogue of the Body: muscle power, gigantic 'bones of steel.' The age of electronics gets rid of the need for muscle—is subatomic—electronics the model and means. Maybe you could say the age of information *uses* nature as its model. At the least, it rids us of the muscle analogy and thereby the relative value of muscle strength and thereby divisive measures of male/female strength.

The information age gets rid of muscle applied to task but not the training of the body, the desires that are structured through the pores—these applications must not go unchallenged. Training of the senses (film), the body (movement), these are not outmoded unless you think society's meaning is only a translation of the forces of labor as constructed by science. But what about ideology—the source of what gets developed. What meanings get developed in the future—these realms are for politics and art, not just as reactive mechanisms to science. Art and politics are formative, an advancing of thought.

Yes, but there is an interrelation here between art and politics and science and ideology—not cause and effect.

*We all do social work, all of the time.*

I believe we (our modernism) are incorporating the context and content of the social in the materialistic integrity of our mediums. Shaking a paper bag, be it dance, film, writing—the creating of interior space, exterior space, the bag itself = the tradition of the field, the membrane that defines. The membrane (could anyone write a critical statement now not using scientific terminology?)—a tautology of the reflexive necessity.