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Lena Cronqvist: Reflections of Girls



Lena Cronqvist: Reflections of Girls

Katarina Wadstein MacLeod



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Frontispiece, Lena Cronqvist, *Hand in Hand*, 1990, oil and tempera on canvas,
150x117 cm, © Lena Cronqvist/BUS 2005

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Introduction

In 1998 I saw, for the first time, a major exhibition by the Swedish artist Lena Cronqvist (b. 1938).¹ I was then in the process of formulating the subject for my postgraduate research. I already knew that I would write about girls in art, and had my eye on Lena Cronqvist's work; she was after all the grand dame of unruly girls in Swedish contemporary art. What I was not prepared for was the intensity of her work when encountered on a large scale, face to face. Her paintings struck a chord with me, and whilst it was not love at first sight, I was instantly intrigued by the strength of these girl figures' expressions and their sense of subversive cheek.

The title for this thesis is, *Lena Cronqvist: Reflections of Girls*, and the idea of a reflection has many simultaneous meanings: in this context, in a precise way, it describes the reflections in the sea of the bathing girls in the painting *Hand in Hand (Hand i hand)*, 1990 on the cover of this book. *Reflections of Girls* also refers to all the different guises and complex layers of meaning that I explore in the thesis. The subject is Lena Cronqvist's images of girls, but I also look at how her work reflects and is reflected in other artists' work, contemporary and historical. These reflections do not stop with fine art; some examples extend to society and culture at large. Reflection is also associated with mirrors and self-portraiture. In her girl series Cronqvist works with a kind of self-image by using herself, but as a child, for her paintings.

It also becomes a reflection of the self, as in psychoanalytical terms where the *mirror-stage* denotes the formation of the subject's identity. These mirroring reflections are further extended to the viewers, whose subjective knowledge, experiences and emotions are reflected in their interpretations of the images.² The first time Lena Cronqvist began to explore the theme of girls was in a trilogy from the middle of the 1970s: *The Road* (*Vägen*), 1976, *The Ice* (*Isen*), 1975-76, and *The Hedge* (*Häcken*), 1976, and the girl figure appeared again in a series of paintings from 1982 titled *The Girl in the Water* (*Flickan i vattnet*), all of which are important to this study. However, it was not until the beginning of the 1990s that Cronqvist began to focus more consistently on the girl, which in the following years became her main theme. In a timely coincidence, just as this PhD is being sent off for printing in early January 2006, Cronqvist is opening a new exhibition at Gallery Lars Bohman in Stockholm, with a new set of themes, publicly announcing that her work with girls has come to an end.

Girls in Art

What first encouraged me to do a PhD in history of art was encountering a number of contemporary artists' work, primarily by women, that challenged the way in which girls were portrayed. The girl figure has an important presence in art, primarily as innocent little children or as young girls with sexual undertones. The surrealists, for example, were occupied with the so-called *femme-enfant*, a woman-child hybrid where the *femme* stands for the woman's sexual aspects, and the *enfant* for the child's purity and naiveté. These combined qualities made the woman-child the perfect muse for the male surrealists.³ The adolescent moment of sexual ambiguity has been a persistent theme in the history of art, particularly over the last century. Some examples are Edvard Munch's (1863-1944) anxiety ridden *Puberty*, 1894-95, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's (1880-1938) studies of Marzella and Fränzi, and Balthus's (1908-2001) erotically charged portraits of young girls and adolescents.

This type of sexually charged girl seems to dominate how girls appear

in our western history of art, at least as it is presented to us through museums, books and catalogues, but it is certainly not the only type represented. From early on in the twentieth century artists like Dorothea Tanning (b. 1910) and Leonora Carrington (b. 1917), both associated with the surrealist movement, offer much less enticing images; their girl figures seem to be a far cry from the *femme-enfant*. Other artists that have challenged stereotype representations of children are the Swedish artists Siri Derkert (1888-1973), Vera Nilsson (1888-1979) and Molly Faustman (1883-1966), whose plump and frumpy figures stand counter to both sunshine ideals of girls and eroticisation of the same.⁴ What appealed to me was the counter image presented through a range of artists' work, whose images challenged the more standard perception of girls in representation. Listing artists who have worked towards reshaping the girl figure would be a good exercise in name-dropping, which I will resist. However, having said that, I would like to mention some Swedish artists' work on the girl figure, that have been important from the beginning of the study, but which in the end I had to leave out: Maria Lindberg (b. 1958), Helen Billgren (b. 1952) and Marianne Lindberg de Geer (b. 1946). All three are younger than Lena Cronqvist, and I think their provocative and often humorous girl figures relate to those by Cronqvist. The latter's images have been influential for a younger generation of artists and this is another important reason why I finally chose to focus the whole study on her work.

What once started as an enormously ambitious project, to look at representations of girls in art with a time frame spanning from the antiquities to the present, has thankfully been narrowed down to a focus on one artist's work. However, while I concentrate on Cronqvist's figures I continually make references to and comparisons with other images by other artists, and am therefore in some way finishing where I started. Yet, instead of trying to narrow down the western history of art to one study, I open up a limited set of images to what could be a nearly endless amount of comparisons.

Girls and Popular Culture

Cronqvist's images reflect pressing issues in contemporary society and I consider it no coincidence that her theme of girls surfaced when it did.⁵ In the 1990s the girl as a figure was visible as never before in western society, popular culture and visual arts. The alarming and heightened awareness of the atrocities of child abuse, pornography and honour murders were impossible to escape. These reports were all too often delivered through the mainstream media. Yet, not much points to the 1990s as a time when these violations of human rights actually increased, but rather that society suddenly acquired better awareness of it. As a consequence, today, instead of being taboo these issues can now be brought into the light and dealt with openly. In the following chapters I will argue that Cronqvist's girl figures have several faces; they draw on a distorted Lolita type and they also incorporate a visual tradition of the ugly and grumpy child, as mentioned above. The first type is far more common in popular culture, for, as Marianne Sinclair points out in *Hollywood Lolita*, the Lolita figure existed long before Vladimir Nabokov gave her a name and pointed out a genre, with his novel *Lolita*, 1955. Sinclair's many examples of famous 'Hollywood Lolitas' range over time; they differ in age and are as diverse as Shirley Temple, Mary Pickford, Nastassia Kinski, and Jodie Foster.⁶ This tendency has by no means diminished, and the 1990s saw a steady stream of girls, perhaps most notably in fashion, where the so-called *heroine chic* fashioned models (i.e. under-aged, painfully thin and anaemic girls) became popular towards the middle of the decade.⁷

However, it is not all doom and gloom concerning the way in which girls are portrayed. In the last ten years there has been an upsurge of powerful images of girls. Not only have the representations become more varied and powerful, girls themselves claim more space in art and media.⁸ In the film *Ghost World*, 2001, based on a cartoon, the main character is the kooky and slightly weird Enid, who is sexually active but not sexualised.⁹ Another example, which focuses on the complexities of a girl's transition from being a child to a teenager, is the

film *Thirteen*, 2003. It is a raw and disturbing portrait of an ordinary American girl who is lured into the dark side of drugs, sex and theft, all driven by teenage hormones and insecurities.¹⁰ In an article on representations of girls, the Swedish historian, Ronny Ambjörnsson, writes that the innocent child seems always to have been exposed to the gaze of the paedophile, and that innocence and exploitation are flipsides of the same coin. He gives as one example, Pippi Longstocking, and argues that, in the 1950s, when the story was written and illustrated, there were no question marks around her innocence. However, today, as even childhood becomes sexualised, the gap between her stocking and skirt could be perceived to have erotic undertones.¹¹ For me, seeing Pippi as a sexual icon would be rather extreme, but I acknowledge Ambjörnsson's point about the meaning of an image being subjected to the eyes of the beholder. These observations may be applied to Cronqvist's girl figures too, and it might be a 'truism', but the cultural and social background of the viewer strongly informs what we see in her images. On another level Pippi, perhaps more than any other popular figure, might come close to what Cronqvist is getting at in her studies of the girl. Pippi is strong, both in mind and body; she gets her own way; refuses to comply with the expected ideals of society; she is independent and has an endless source of ideas for what the adults surrounding her see as mischief. At the same time she is also just a little girl who deeply misses her parents. Cronqvist's images present a series of questions for the viewer, and the artist plays with all the above-mentioned complexities at once.

Reading Lena Cronqvist's Art

Cronqvist has been placed, by herself and others, in an expressionist tradition. Her late husband, Göran Tunström's, essay about the artists that inspired Cronqvist has often been cited. Amongst some of the important names he mentions are: Francis Bacon (1909-92), Edvard Munch, Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966), Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) and the Swedish artists Siri Derkert, Carl Fredrik Hill (1849-1911), Sigrid Hjertén (1885-1948),

and Ernst Josephson (1851-1906).¹² Cronqvist is known to draw on personal material in her work, and her own life story is nearly always acknowledged in writings about her art.¹³ As a consequence some critics have labelled her art confessional, while others have emphasised the artist's need to paint as something necessary, even cathartic.¹⁴ The dominant way of writing about Cronqvist's images in criticism, has been biographical, and at the very least by pointing out the artist's intentions.¹⁵ This is not so surprising: in her art Cronqvist has, in the manner of artists like Frida Kahlo or Edvard Munch, predominantly portrayed herself, but also borrowed her family members' features for her images.¹⁶ After 1969, she rarely paints people other than those belonging to her inner circle. In the art before 1990, she not only employed family faces, but dealt with big events in her own life such as: the marriage to the author Göran Tunström; the birth of her son and the following post partum psychosis; motherhood; her relationship with her mother; her bourgeois upbringing and the death of her parents. In the 1990s the girl figures and the two adults, a man and a woman, still bear likeness to Lena Cronqvist (the older and bigger girl), her sister (the younger and smaller girl), and her mother and father, but the scenarios that previously were more or less taken from the artist's past, seem to have shifted. Throughout the thesis, I refer to these figures as girls, or sisters, mother, father, or parent figures. This interpretative assumption is partly based on what the artist has said about her images; that the figures used to look like her and her family members, and partly on her body of work in general, from which we can recognise Cronqvist and her parents' features. It is also based on the fact that the two girl figures together with the two adult figures quite clearly present a family drama. I should like to take this opportunity to comment on the age of the parent figures, which tends to shift between the images from being middle age to old. Whilst I have observed this tendency, I have not included this in my interpretation.

Because Cronqvist's work draws on personal material it might indeed be tempting to link the themes in her images to biographical facts, or even attempt a *psychobiographical* reading. In the recent overview of art from the twentieth century, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Anti-*

modernism, Postmodernism, ‘psychobiography’ is defined as ‘a profiling of the artist in which art history is remodelled as psychoanalytic case study’.¹⁷ Yet this kind of analysis is all too often a limiting and even reductive approach. It is true that Cronqvist’s work tempts the viewer to speculate about her life; it is also true that the artist has contributed to her categorization in some kind of psychobiographical genre, through her work, as well as through interviews and exhibition catalogues. However, at the same time she is careful to point out, again and again, that these are only images, and therefore not real, but always fictional on some level.¹⁸ Speculating on the conundrum of what to do with Cronqvist’s biographical material, the Norwegian art historian Jorunn Veiteberg argues in an article, that it is precisely because the artist has borrowed her own and her family members’ features, that we should question a biographical interpretation.¹⁹ Even though I do not entirely avoid biographical facts myself, I take a stance against readings that lean on this type of information. I think that Cronqvist is one of those artists whose work has suffered from an interpretation that has been too one-sided. While her exhibitions have generated a lot of writing, there is still a lack of serious critical analysis of her latest body of work. I hope to fill some of that gap with this thesis.

Current Research

Lena Cronqvist is a major artist on the Nordic art scene, as recognised in 2002 when she was awarded the prestigious ‘Carnegie Art Award for Nordic Artists’.²⁰ Cronqvist’s work is represented in several of Sweden’s major public art galleries and museum collections, and she frequently exhibits all over the country. She is also well represented in Norway and Finland. Since the mid 1990s Cronqvist started to spend time in New York, exhibiting in the middle and late 1990s, at the gallery Tricia Collins Contemporary Art.²¹ A number of books and catalogues are published on Cronqvist’s art, but there are only two major monographs published after 1990, thus including her girl images. The first monograph, or trilogy of monographs, *Lena Cronqvist: Målningar* (Lena Cronqvist Paintings), *Lena Cronqvist: Skulpturer*

(Lena Cronqvist Sculptures) and *Lena Cronqvist: Teckningar* (Lena Cronqvist Drawings) were published in 1994 and 1995. Each volume has essays or poems by a different author: *Lena Cronqvist Målningar*, by Ingela Lind; *Lena Cronqvist Skulpturer* by Leif Nylén, and *Lena Cronqvist Teckningar*, by Birgitta Trotzig and Göran Tunström.²² The second monograph *Lena Cronqvist* came in 2003, with texts by art critic Mårten Castenfors, and the fiction authors Eva Ström, Eva Runefelt and Göran Tunström.²³ Both monographs feature a wide selection of images and deal with Cronqvist's work from the 1960s and onwards. Tunström has contributed several texts to many other books and catalogues. Tunström and Cronqvist also collaborated on several projects, where she illustrated his texts.²⁴ Other important contributions to the literature on Cronqvist are by the curator Sune Nordgren, and art the historians Sven Sandström and Maj-Britt Wadell, who have written catalogue texts and articles.²⁵ In criticism Ingela Lind and Leif Nylén in particular have written extensively on Cronqvist, in newspaper articles, as well as in the above mentioned books, *Lena Cronqvist: Målningar* and *Lena Cronqvist: Skulpturer*.

However, academically, there are few studies on Lena Cronqvist's art in general, and none on the girl series. Nina Weibull is a rare exception, as she has written extensively on Lena Cronqvist, and is also working on a PhD at department for history of art at the University of Stockholm. The working title of Weibull's forthcoming thesis is, in December 2005 when I write this introduction, *Spegling och skapande: En studie i Lena Cronqvists 'Målaren och hennes modell'* (Reflection and creation: A study of Lena Cronqvist's 'the painter and her model'). When I started this research project, Weibull was already working on hers. To ensure that we avoided overlapping, we met and kept in touch during the autumn of 2002, so as to define our different areas of interests. Weibull's research interest is centred on Cronqvist's series of paintings where the artist has painted herself as a painter, using her adult self as the model. This series is also discussed in Bia Mankell's PhD on selfportraits in Swedish twentieth century art. In her articles on Cronqvist Weibull has primarily focused on a psychoanalytical interpretation, where the author makes continuous references to myths

and symbolic language frequently used in art, and which are recycled in Cronqvist's body of work.²⁶ Another important and critical analysis of Cronqvist work is by the art historian Jorunn Veiteberg, mentioned previously, who, in contrast, focuses her interpretation on the visual impact of the images, not psychological.²⁷ There are also several undergraduate essays written at different Swedish universities. One that particularly stands out is Mette Göthberg's dissertation *Att måla i mytens sprickor: Om konstnärligt skapande ur kvinnligt perspektiv med utgångspunkt i Lena Cronqvist måleri* (To paint in the cracks of the myth: On artistic creation from a feminine perspective from the point of view of Lena Cronqvist's paintings). The study focuses on the fallacies surrounding the female body and conundrums for the female artist, and how Cronqvist's work deals with and questions those traditions.²⁸ However, my thesis, *Lena Cronqvist: Reflections of Girls*, is the first study that attempts to seriously, critically and exclusively engage with Cronqvist's representations of girls.

Regarding research on the girl figure in art in general there is a surprising lack of work in the field. One study that does stand out, and that has been particularly important to my own research, is Anne Higonnet's *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*, 1998.²⁹ Her book is one of the few studies on representations of children in visual culture, and has a particular focus on images from the late nineteenth century, to the present. One of the important observations that Higonnet makes is that the idea of innocent children is a relatively recent tradition, constructed in the late nineteenth century when the innocent child began to be represented in anything from fine art to family albums and advertising. A recent addition to this field is Patricia Holland's *Picturing Childhood: The myth of the child in popular culture*, 2004.³⁰ Further, there are two Swedish PhD dissertations that touch on the theme of girls and representation. Firstly Annette Göthlunds *Bilder av tonårsflickor: Om estetik och identitetsarbete* (Images of teenage girls: On aesthetics and the forming of identity) from 1997, which written in the wider field of cultural studies, looks at how a group of teenage girls help create their self images through the aesthetics with which they surround themselves.³¹ The other study

is Karin Sidén's PhD, *Den ideala barndomen* (The ideal childhood), about seventeenth century portraits of Swedish royal and aristocratic children.³² Although it seems that there are few studies on the girl in visual arts, scholarly work on girls and children in general seem to have escalated since the beginning of the 1990s. I would particularly like to draw attention to the British psychologist Valerie Walkerdine's extensive research. She has done in depth research on girls and has looked at, amongst other things, their presence in culture, in the education systems, and girls' perception of their role models.³³

Aims and Limitations

As I have mentioned, there has so far been no other study that engages specifically with Lena Cronqvist's representations of girls, an artist that I have argued is an important and influential part of Swedish contemporary art, and whose work merits serious analysis. The aim with this thesis is to fill that gap. By critically looking at a selection of Cronqvist's paintings and sculptures I wish to present a more nuanced and varied understanding of her images of girls than has hitherto been on offer. In her work, Cronqvist makes references to interesting currents in art and society, of times gone by, as well as in the present. In the same spirit I hope that this study manages not only to cast new light on Cronqvist's work, but that some of that light will also reach out beyond and bring meaning to the wider field of images of girls in representation.

Without fail, any research projects has as many limitations as opportunities, and in hindsight I feel that I am only just getting started, but already it is time to draw the whole to a conclusion. I do not want to lessen the value of the work I have done, but inevitably some areas had to be prioritised over others. This is partly because there was not room for more angles within the scope of this study, and partly because some areas in themselves merit an extended research. Thus, one of my favourite areas has had to be discarded, or as I prefer to see it, postponed for future research projects. Cronqvist's images are full of dolls and I do discuss their presence in the thesis, but they have

not been granted their own space. Like the girl, dolls are frequent figures in art, often represented with dubious and complex identities. In a future project I hope to put into context, dolls, as they figure in a number of women artists' work, where Cronqvist's images have their evident place. Another interesting subject that features in Cronqvist's images of girls, but has been overlooked in this study, is the presence of shadows. Furthermore, I make references to a range of international artists, but little to a Swedish lineage of art works. This very much reflects my interests rather than, necessarily, Cronqvist's possible sources of inspiration.

A limitation of a completely different kind is the number of works on which I have chosen to focus, and I will discuss that further in the following section *Method*. Cronqvist is an artist who works in different types of media and who has made a wide range of girl orientated productions in bronze and clay sculptures, and drawings, as well as in oil and tempera paint. Lately she has also experimented with glass. I do mention some of her sculptures but am mostly focusing on her paintings, whilst I have chosen not to reference her drawings. A further limitation is the time frame I relate to. It was always the purpose to focus on Cronqvist's representations of girls, and in order to respect Nina Weibull's research for her PhD on Cronqvist, mentioned above, I have largely avoided looking into Cronqvist's other body of work, apart from some rare exceptions.

Method

In some respects this study mimics a monograph as the focus is on the work of one artist. On the other hand I am trying to break free from a chronological and monographic format, where the artist's life and work is followed from beginning to end.³⁴ I focus instead on a small part of Cronqvist's work where the girl figure is the main character and look at this from different angles, whilst I largely omit details about the artist's life. The study is entirely focused on an analysis of the selected images, and that would be the best description of the method I have employed – visual analysis. Whilst I refer to a wide

range of studies in the text, which build on many different methods and theories, it is all in the name of the visual study. Furthermore I compare image with image, and although I am certainly aware of the social and cultural place in which Cronqvist lives and works, I have not made a reading of the cultural context of her art. Likewise, this thesis is entirely based on a qualitative study, where a relative select number of images are studied in detail, and has no quantitative aspirations. This means that I have seen a large number of Cronqvist's representations of girls, but I have not attempted to make a catalogue of all of these. That would be neither within the scope of the project, nor in my interest. Furthermore, I am making a point of particularly discussing those of her works that are better known, and which have tended to be selected for reproductions, exhibitions and therefore analysis.

The materials I have accessed entail the bespoke art works, along with published material on and by the artist. Cronqvist has met with me on two occasions and has been very helpful in directing me to the locations of art works, the techniques she employs and other matters that I will refer to throughout the thesis.³⁵ I have tried to respect her wish not to discuss the content of her images and thus avoided posing questions relating to interpretation. Concerning other artists' work that I have compared with Cronqvist's images, they span time and place. There are many examples that I could have used instead, or as well, but I have been careful to usually choose examples to which I have had access, through collections and exhibitions. I should also add, that the art I have looked at is entirely based within a European and North American axis.

Theory

In this dissertation I take Cronqvist's representations of girls as my starting point, and approach them from five different reading positions. This in itself enables a pluralistic attitude towards theory, and I pick and choose in a way that allows me to analyse these images from as many points of views as I have found room for, within the

framework of this study. The British art historian, Briony Fer, once suggested, in a rather informal way, that it is far more fruitful to try and look at theories in relation to studies in visual arts, as two things that can open up each other, and furthermore, to let art and theory put equal pressure on one another, rather than using theory as ‘a sledgehammer to crack a nut’.³⁶ I am drawn in by this metaphor and it has certainly been my aim to avoid the ‘sledgehammer’ approach. Because this thesis is structured as it is, into five separate chapters, I will present the theories to which I relate as I go along. Here, I will only explain the background to the choices I have made.

My own theoretical education, which undoubtedly has informed my choices both of literary and visual references, has been formed in two important places. Having always been a feminist at heart, it was not until the end of my undergraduate studies at the University of Lund, that I realised the importance and the possibilities that lay in a feminist perspective, when looking at art. Like so many other feminist art historians, I was suddenly perplexed by the absence of women artists in the canon that was being taught to us, as well as the lack of interpretation of the many female bodies on display. My first tentative steps in forming a theoretical background in this field, were skilfully supervised by my tutor, Anna Lena Lindberg, whose work on art history and feminism stands unparalleled in Sweden. She has also created a unique research environment at the department of history of art in Lund, where several PhD students work with her, along with a large number of graduate students. She has initiated a teaching project, whereby gender studies are included and incorporated into the general curricula, rather than as before, when they stood apart more as an elective option. This has created an environment in which my type of research has been encouraged and very much assisted. When I was presented with the chance to undertake an MA in ‘Politics of Representation’ run by Tamar Garb and Briony Fer, at the Department for History of Art, University College London in 1998, it was a great opportunity to further my knowledge in different theoretical aspects. What I learnt there has very much been a backbone to this thesis.

At the very core of my theoretical and art historical interests, are

representations of bodies, women, femininity and identity. The amount of work that has been done in these fields since the 1970s, by scholars, artists, critics and curators, is immense. I would not know where to begin, and even less, where to end, an overview of all the aspects that have been important to me, and to the field. However, for a brief introduction to the legacy of feminism and history of art, I would like to point towards Griselda Pollock's book *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*, 1996.³⁷ In her foreword and in chapter one, 'The Politics of Theory: Generations and Geographies in Feminist Theory and the Histories of Art Histories', Pollock maps out important shifts in attitudes towards feminism and its use in art, and also the difficulties of making an umbrella for a field which is eclectic both in terms of theoretical diversion, geographical places and generational gaps. Regarding representations of bodies, Lynda Nead's book *The Female Nude*, 1992, has been important to this study, as it offers a comprehensive and wide spanning discussion on images of female bodies in visual art.³⁸

Also when it comes to feminist, or gender, theories I have embarked on an eclectic journey, leaning on what seems to be suitable for the discussion. In the dissertation I do not really discuss different feminist approaches, but take these for granted. They are the basis from which my academic thinking stems, what influenced my choices and taught me to see what I do. As Lindberg has phrased it, a feminist visual analysis is not about applying a method, it is rather to redefine what is interesting to critically look at.³⁹ The schools of thoughts that have been of influence are many and diverse. During the 1990s, the number of theories that appeared under the banner of feminism were enormous, and feminism is not one field but many.⁴⁰ Rather than being committed to one train of thought or another, I can see the benefits of many different theoretical aspects. However, if anything, I do subscribe to the idea that the value of sexual difference is very much culturally and politically shaped, and no one formulated it better than the pioneering feminist, Simone de Beauvoir, when she famously said in 1949: 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.'⁴¹

Throughout the thesis I make references to psychoanalytical theories,

one of feminism's sometimes uncomfortable and often debated bed-fellows.⁴² For an introduction to the value of psychoanalytical theories for feminism, particularly based on Freudian thoughts, I would like to refer to Juliet Mitchell's much acknowledged book *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, from 1974. Mitchell structures the reasons why she believes psychoanalysis was not the cause of bourgeois and patriarchal oppression, but a symptom of it. She argues that it can be seen and used as a tool, for understanding what made women different from men; it 'offered the sword that cut it apart'.⁴³ Or as Laura Mulvey phrased it, in the article 'Fear, Fantasies and the Male Unconscious or "You Don't Know What is Happening, Do You, Mr Jones?"', from 1972: 'Freud's analysis of the male unconscious is crucial for any understanding of the myriad of ways in which the female form has been used as a mould into which meanings have been poured by a male-dominated culture.'⁴⁴

Psychoanalysis and art is another interesting, but often uneasy, partnership. For a great introduction to the usefulness of a psychoanalytically informed reading of art, I refer to Peter Fuller's *Art and Psychoanalysis*.⁴⁵ Peter Brooks, who also advocates psychoanalysis as an important tool for interpretation in cultural and visual studies, writes in the introduction to *Whose Freud? The Place of Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture*: 'Instead of being a therapy for neurotics, it has become a theory of mind, a theory of human development, cultural history and interpretation'.⁴⁶ It is precisely in that spirit that I have been drawn into psychoanalytical theories, as a way of understanding cultural history and as another narrative that might cast light on the fictions on display before my eyes.

The Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is constructed into five chapters, and in each I focus on a separate interpretation. All five chapters are independent from each other, in as much as each can be read per se, and they all have a short introduction where I state the main questions on which I will expand. Yet, naturally, as they are all part of the same project they fit

together and have been formed during the process of the research. Chapters one and two can be loosely grouped together, as in these two chapters I tend to look at historical material for my comparisons. Chapters one and two also reflect the earlier stages of the research. In chapters three, four and five, I make reference to art from the nineteenth century and onwards, and these three chapters reflect the later stages of the research.

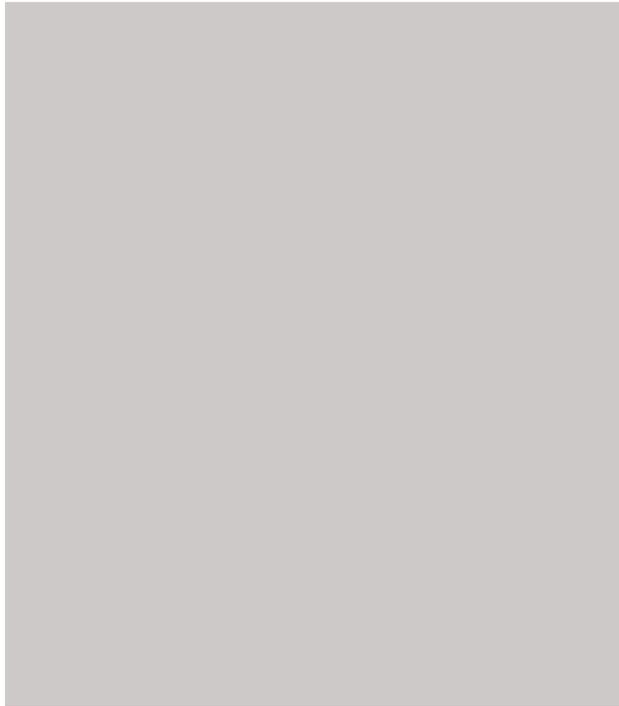
In the first chapter 'Young Bathers', I draw on some of my previous work on nymphs and Venus in art, and use it to contextualise my research on Lena Cronqvist's bathing girls.⁴⁷ This is the chapter where I most intensely look at thematic backgrounds, and I discuss representations of Leda and the Swan; the impact Venus has had on images of bathing women, and bathing nymphs in general. If the first chapter is centred on representations of mythological nymphs, the second chapter, 'Ambiguous Bodies' is preoccupied with its derivative *nymphets*. The core theme in this chapter is *ambiguity* and I look at how this notion is integral to some of Cronqvist's paintings and how it can be used as a way to interpret the figures' bodies and their narratives. Ambiguity is put into relief through a comparison with Jean-Baptiste Greuze's (1723-1792) portraits of girl-woman hybrids. Furthermore I ask whether it affects our viewing experience if we know the gender of the artist making the images. I explore how we might view differently a portrait by Balthus, which is very similar to a painting by Cronqvist.

In chapter three 'Fictitious Realities and Narrative Structures' I explore some of the different *narratives* that are present in Cronqvist's work. By narrative I mean storytelling, or something that conveys a message of content. This survey starts off by looking at what I call the *reality effect* Cronqvist's art transmits, a narrative I argue is underlined by the biographical references encapsulating her work. I then proceed to discuss other narrative levels that add to the fiction in Cronqvist's art: the titles, the compositions of the images, and finally the near compulsive repetition of themes and forms.

The fourth chapter, 'The Colour of Memory' deals with what seems to be insignificant memories, and I look at them through the notion of

screen memory, as coined by Freud. Photography as a medium has in culture been associated to the notion of memory, and I continue the analysis of Cronqvist's brief and fragmented memories, by associating with photographic snapshots. The fifth and last chapter, 'Angry Girls and Violent Games', deals with the anger that pours out from the canvases and violence and aggression are the central concepts. These terms do not need much introduction. Instead, I would like to point out the lack of women's expression of anger in a patriarchal discourse. In this chapter, I draw attention to what it might mean when a woman artist works with a language of anger and violence, and I look at the dark side of Cronqvist's girl figures and their actions. The violence is obviously manifest when the girl figures are physically abusing the parent figures, but I also discuss images where the violence is more 'silent'. Last, I have chosen to conclude the thesis with a 'Coda'. Here I grasp the opportunity to end the thesis with a more general discussion on how, as a feminist, I can read the language Cronqvist employs.

Last but not least I would like to make a few comments on some practical aspects. Throughout the thesis I refer to Cronqvist's images in English, but offer their Swedish titles the first time each work is mentioned. To all other artists' works I refer to their English titles only. When I have translated Swedish titles of books to English in this introduction, these translations are not in italics and written as they are in Swedish, i.e. in lower case, in order to mark that this is a reading tool only, not a translated text. Moreover, all translations are my own, unless otherwise stated. All Cronqvist's paintings until 1982 are oil on canvas, and all paintings after 1982 oil and tempera on canvas. For further images by Cronqvist, and for more colour reproductions, please look at books and catalogues referred to in the bibliography.



1 Lena Cronqvist, *Olympus (Olympus)*, 1984, 185 x 165 cm.



2 Edouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863, oil on canvas, 130.5 x 190 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

1 Young Bathers

I try and work on the backside of the myth with reality as I experience it, work in the cracks of the myth, make an account for my ambivalence towards the stereotypical woman's role.

LENA CRONQVIST ¹

Throughout her body of work Lena Cronqvist makes references to art historical themes and expressions. As Sune Nordgren points out, such references in Cronqvist's work are no haphazard coincidence.² Cronqvist carefully elaborates, renegotiates and appropriates known themes and particular paintings. Before I explore some of the historical traditions with which I believe Cronqvist's representations of girls are affiliated, I will look at one poignant example from her earlier work, *Olympus*, (*Olympus*), 1984 (fig. 1). A naked male figure lies cross-legged on a bed, supporting the upper body on one arm, whilst the other is covering his genital area. He looks towards a female figure, also naked, but standing erect protecting her modesty with her hands. It is common to represent Venus, the Goddess of love, as an undressed, reclining figure, as well as shyly standing up whilst barely covering up her modest parts. The painting could also be seen as a loose interpretation on Edouard Manet's (1832-1883), in his lifetime, infamous, painting *Olympia* (fig. 2) from 1863, and I believe Cronqvist has juxtaposed similarities to the (pre-) impressionist painting against distortions of the same.³ One important similarity, which echoes the tradition of the reclining Venus, is the position of the male body.⁴ The hand on the groin is nearly identical to Manet's *Olympia*, as are the crossed legs. Although, 'Olympia' is in Cronqvist's version turned into a man, and instead of as in Manet's painting

looking back at the viewer, the reclining male figure looks at the naked woman standing in front of the bed. The black maid coming out from a patterned screen in Manet's painting has been substituted by a black shadow, coming out from behind a studio-like screen. The whole environment in Cronqvist's painting is in fact very bare and studio-like in its character, much colder than Manet's lush nineteenth century environment, with its abundance of soft cushions and textiles. As much as Cronqvist's painting evokes Manet's *Olympia*, and the infamous stare by the prostitute Maya posing in front of the shocked audience, it destabilizes that same tradition. *Olympia*, as such, is substituted by a male figure, but instead of being only a piece of attractive flesh on display, he is actively engaging in his own search for visual satisfaction by looking at the female nude standing upright between us viewers and himself. If by the title *Olympus* we come to think of a male version of Manet's title, it also reminds us of the Greek mountain inhabited by the ancient gods. Cronqvist has played with the theme on yet another level, as the theatricality of the scene is further emphasised by the two main figures' mask like eyes – instead of eyes, black holes are painted in. This castration of the eyes, as it were, refers to issues regarding representations of women and the economy of looking. In this picture, the male figure is there as a kind of 'Maya', although he is not only there to be looked at, but just as much to look himself, at the naked woman in front of him. Likewise, she is standing in-between the viewer and the rest of the image, inviting us to rest our gaze on her body. The shadow in the background seems to look at both of them, as it peeks out its head from behind the screen, like a voyeur secretly taking a sneak view of the man and the woman. The shadow also mimics the viewer who, too, becomes a kind of voyeur, looking at the different acts of looking. My aim in discussing this examples from Cronqvist's work of the 1970s is to illustrate the level to which the artist has, for many years, referenced art historical themes and conundrums in her work, and how she in her art simultaneously adopts and subverts them.

In her girl series, Cronqvist has continued to make references to the history of art, although it seems that in most cases she draws on

general themes, rather than on precise works. In this chapter I will focus on the theme of the bathing girl and the historical and mythological topics that lurk in the background. Bathing, in its most basic sense, means cleaning, but has thematically in art been associated with a wide range of subjects: death, voyeurism, fertility, renewal, purification, rainfall, healing, birth, christening, and tears, as well as with architecture.⁵ Furthermore, bathing females in art are strongly connected with femininity and sexuality and not least, with aspects of looking. Who is looking at what, and for what pleasures, are unavoidable questions and something I believe has been a starting point for several of the art historians that I make reference to. The important question of the gaze and the relationship between the viewer and the object is a subject, which I will return to several times throughout this dissertation. However, in this chapter, it will not be my primary focus. Bathing girls, who have been a frequent theme in history of art, can be crudely divided into two faculties: playful children and bathing female nudes, often in the guise of mythological figures. It seems that particularly in Scandinavia, there was a strong tradition around the turn of the twentieth century to represent bathing children, in the spirit of Carl Curman's health advise of exercise and salty swims in the sea.⁶ Many of Cronqvist's bathing girls fall into these two traditions, but more often, they fall in-between.

In this chapter I will discuss how several levels of the theme of bathing is present simultaneously in Cronqvist's paintings, and further how these are renegotiated through Cronqvist's images. I will also discuss the visual references I bring along as an art historian when looking at these images and I will map out some of the complexities behind the themes of bathing women. Needless to say, any endeavour to catalogue or make a fuller survey of all the possible works of art that might have served as a source or inspiration, or indeed with which I, as a viewer, can associate, would be a mammoth project. Furthermore, I bring up the question of what it may mean when a woman artist works with an iconography otherwise very much associated with a male perspective, where women are objectified in representation.



3 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl and Swan (Flicka och svan)*, 1993, 47 x 43 cm. (plate 1)

Young Girls and Cunning Swans

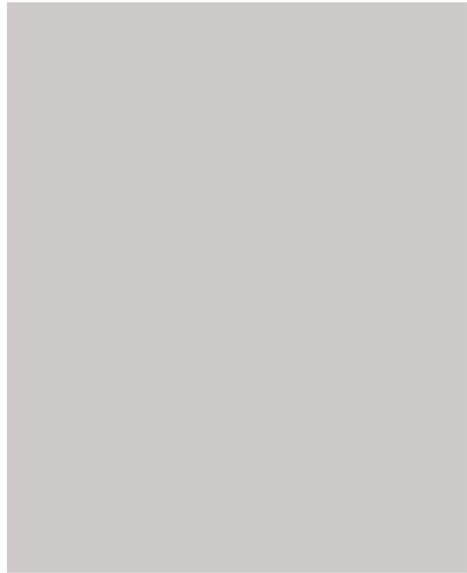
When Björk, the Icelandic singer turned actress, turned up at the Academy Awards, Los Angeles in 2001 robed in a swan, she probably knew what she was doing.⁷ To a skin coloured body was attached a fake stuffed swan, whose elongated neck caressed Björk's body by making an s-shape, with the beak resting on one of her shoulders. I believe the swan feathers can be seen as an interpretation of the many feathers worn at this glamorous event. In addition, a woman dressed as a swan evokes HC Andersen's tale 'The

Ugly Duckling'. By wearing a swan Björk and the dress designer also, without doubt, made reference to the myth of Leda and the Swan, often quoted in culture, visual or otherwise.

Cronqvist has made a couple of versions of a girl with a swan, and I would like to bring attention to two paintings and one sculpture, all titled *Girl and Swan (Flicka och svan)*, from 1993-94. The paintings are very similar, both in size and theme, with only some compositional and painterly differences. In the first version (fig. 3; plate 1) the girl is standing thigh high in water.⁸ One of her hands is dipping into the sea; the other hand gently rests on the swan's back. The girl looks out of the image, slightly beyond the swan, and the bird is looking straight ahead out of the picture to the left. The image is calm; even the sea is represented to be as still as can be. In the second painting there is some suggested movement. The girl is looking over the head of the swan and is standing with her front towards the viewers. The bird in turn is placed in front of her, looking up with its long neck towards her face, whilst the girl's hands gently stretch out towards the swan. When

asked to remark on the piece, the artist's only comment was that they, (the artist, her husband and their son) had a tame swan at their house on the Swedish west coast.⁹ These biographical facts may be interesting, but it is certainly not the whole story about the painting, and not a particularly satisfying explanation. That the family might have had a tame swan does not in any way reduce the paintings' other connotations. In the second painted version, (fig. 4; plate 2) there is more movement. Cronqvist's girl figure stretches out her hands towards the swan, as if about to touch it. The swan is caught in a movement too, as it stretches up its head towards the girl's face. There is movement also in the way that the blue paint has been applied. The water is still calm, so much so that the two figures' mirror images are visible in the surface, yet the strongly visible brushstrokes underline the general sense of movement.

Ovid writes in *Metamorphoses* that Arachne, the expert weaver, pictured the many tales about Jupiter's (Zeus) numerous disguises, transforming him so he could more easily seduce the nymphs he was attracted to. Ovid tells the stories Arachne weaved about Europa and the Bull, Antiope and the Satyr, Danae and the golden shower, as well as that of Leda and the Swan.¹⁰ All of which are themes frequently represented in art, from the Renaissance onwards.¹¹ About Leda, Ovid writes: 'She [Arachne] wove, and pictured Leda as she lay under the white swan's wings.'¹² There are several versions about Leda and the Swan but it is commonly understood that the earthly woman, wife of the Spartan King Tyndareus, was swimming as Jupiter approached her in the guise of a haunted swan.¹³ The moment most frequently represented in visual arts is when Leda has the swan in her arms. Such varying artists as Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) and Henri Matisse (1869-1954) have



4 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl and Swan (Flicka och svan)*, 1993, 52 x 43 cm. (plate 2)



5 after Michelangelo, *Leda and the Swan*, made after 1530, oil on canvas, 105.4 x 141 cm, National Gallery, London.

captured the scene, and it is a theme that is represented in most national collections. Tintoretto's (1518-94) version of *Leda and the Swan*, 1555, shows a naked woman leaning backwards on an abundance of soft textiles, whilst caressing the swan peeking its beak towards her.¹⁴ It is interesting to note that the mythological story, imprecise as it is, is

even further distorted in Tintoretto's version. The scene is set indoors, where red and heavy textiles surround the woman and the swan, a most unnatural environment for the swan, but one which emphasises the swan's true nature as a lover rather than an animal. The two *Leda and the Swan* paintings at the National Gallery in London both continue the bedchamber theme. In the painting *Leda and the Swan*, made after 1530 (fig. 5), according to the museum a copy after a painting by Michelangelo (1475-1564), shows Leda again leaning on thick red cushions and textiles. The swan has snuggled in between her legs and arms; she in turn has wrapped one of her legs around the bird's body. Leda tilts her head down, closes her eyes and unites with the swan in a kiss. A very similar iconography is repeated in the painting in the style of Pier Francesco Mola (1616-66), dated to 1650-1666 (fig. 6). The embrace is very similar to the other painting, the kiss is repeated and the couple are again comfortably placed on a bed. Only this time the bed is situated outside, in nature. However, once again the bed eliminates any doubts as of the nature of their relationship. The National Museum in Stockholm holds Francois Boucher's (1703-1770) version of *Leda and the swan*, (fig. 7) in which two nearly identical women are

faced by the swan.¹⁵ The scenario is the same as before, but with two women, where one is Leda the other a companion, although it is impossible to tell them apart. The other difference is that Leda and the swan are depicted next to a river.

In the bronze sculpture *Girl and Swan*, 1993-94 (fig. 8) the indication of an embrace in Cronqvist's second painted version is taken further. The swan stretches up towards the girl's face, in much the same way as in the second of her paintings with this theme. The only compositional difference is that in this version the girl figure holds a firm grip around the swan's thin neck. In the sculpture a kiss seems to be even closer, as it is only a few centimetres that keep the girl's mouth and the swan's beak apart. However tame the swan swimming near Cronqvist's house was, it is unlikely it would agree to a kiss and cuddle. I do not think there is any doubt that Cronqvist's *Girl and Swan* paintings and sculpture, take on the mythological theme mapped out above. It is, as Leif Nylén suggested, a 'little Leda'.¹⁶ The reference to Leda carries connotations of physical love and has to do with a semi-involuntary love-making, which to some readers' eyes is close to motifs of rape.¹⁷ When considering the mythologi-



6 Pier Francesco Mola, style of, *Leda and the Swan*, c. 1650-1666 oil on canvas, 38.6 x 50.1 cm, National Gallery, London.



7 Francois Boucher, *Leda and the Swan*, before 1742, oil on canvas, 59.5 x 74 cm, National Museum, Stockholm.



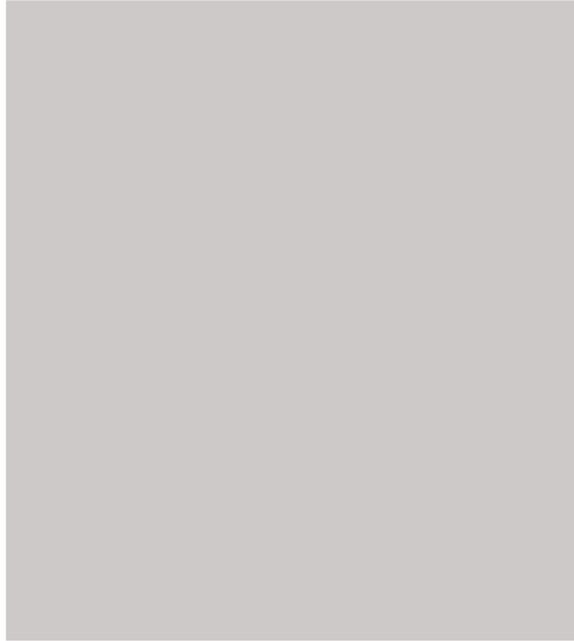
8 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl and Swan (Flicka och svan)*, 1993, bronze, h. 28 cm.

cal connotations in Cronqvist's versions of *Girl and Swan* there seems to be equal measures of similarity and distortion. The similarities are the ingredients of the drama: the swan, the female bather and the sea. The distortions are the young girl's age, the hollow expression of her face and her grip around the swan's neck, as featured in the sculpture, bordering between a caress and a strangle.

A Freezing Venus

Leda and the Swan is not the only mythological tradition related to female characters, mortal and divine, that Cronqvist has played with in her work. Göran Tunström argued about Cronqvist's painting *The Ice* (fig. 9) that the project started with the artist wanting to paint a paraphrase of Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, 1484-6 (fig. 10). In Cronqvist's version, 'Aphrodite' (Tunström refers to the Greek name) was to be enclosed in a glass bulb sinking into the sea, while all the caring characters from Botticelli's painting were to turn their backs towards the divinity. Tunström claims that in the artistic process of making the painting, Cronqvist turned the green sea of the fifteenth century painting

into ice. Increasingly, according to Tunström's text, the goddess of love became a self-portrait of the artist as an eight-year-old girl. As the beach turned into a winter landscape the naked goddess became a well wrapped up girl in mittens and thick boots. All that is left of the original Aphrodite, Tunström writes, is the angle of her head. The dark shadows in Cronqvist's painting replace the life giving figures in Botticelli's, and the theme, in Tunström's interpretation, comes to be more about loneliness than anything else.¹⁸ Most



large national collections have at least one version of Leda and the Swan, but the number of re-

9 Lena Cronqvist, *The Ice (Isen)*, 1975-76, 150 x 135 cm, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Oslo.

clining nudes and beautified women throughout the western world that are titled Venus are numerous.¹⁹ According to their online collection, the National Gallery in London alone holds 36 pieces with the subject of Venus.²⁰ Before continuing to examine Cronqvist's paintings, I will examine the historical background of this theme and look at how the earlier iconography of Venus and nymphs has strongly influenced our conception of female nudity in general, and female bathers in particular.

Since ancient Greece countless paintings, sculptures, prints and drawings have been dedicated to Venus, the Goddess of Love. After the Renaissance mythological figures in art were referred to by their Roman names (a practice I too will adopt for simplicity, unless the artworks' titles refer to Aphrodite). At the time of the Italian Renaissance, and with the revival of Greek mythology, there were theories about the existence of two different types of Venus. Those by Ficino



10 Sandro Botticelli, *Birth of Venus*, 1484-6, oil on canvas, 175.3 x 279.5 cm, the Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

are important as he argued that the celestial Venus is the motherless daughter of Uranus and belongs to an entirely immaterial sphere. Her beauty is the 'primary and universal splendour of divinity', an intellectual beauty not possible to reproduce and reduce to a visual shape. Venus Vulgaris, or, 'Common Venus', on the other hand, owns a beauty that is reproducible in a physical, human world.²¹ It is thus Venus Vulgaris that is represented in the visual arts, and her most common attributes are pink roses or rose petals and two doves. Venus is often represented together with Amor, sometimes understood to be her son, at other times her closest companion.²² One frequent way of representing Venus is reclining, often looking into a mirror; doing her 'toilette', as for example in Diego Velasquez's (1599-1660) *The Toilet of Venus* also known as the *Rokeby Venus*, 1647-51; or Venus together with the three Graces.²³ Another common interpretation in art is the moment when Venus is 'born', as in Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*.²⁴ In this painting Venus is sailing ashore onto the island Cythera on a gigantic rococo seashell. In a faint attempt to cover her naked body the figure hides her sex with one of her hands, whilst holding up the

other before, or rather in between, her breasts. The thick, long, golden hair is simultaneously framing the body and covering parts of it, but in a way that further emphasises Venus's sexuality.

There is no question that Venus, the Goddess of Love, is obviously associated with sexuality and desire. So much so that this meaning of Venus might be all that remains of the mythological goddess today, and transcendental and religious significances since long lost. Venus has lent her name to parts of the female sex, as in for example 'Mound of Venus' an expression for the female pubes. 'Venereal', as in disease, moreover belongs to the same family of words as Venus, words with a Latin origin adopted into both English and Swedish.²⁵ In his erotic text *Dictionnaire Érotique Moderne*, illegal at the time of its publication, Alfred Delvau pushes meanings of mythological words and expressions to an extreme. He does the same also with ordinary words, woman for example. 'Woman' according to Delvau is designed exclusively for the purpose of man's sexual pleasure. Deliberately he subverted nature into erotic fantasies, thus the vagina is described to be 'the part of the female nature which renders man such tremendous pleasure'.²⁶ Clearly the dictionary is an extreme example but as such illustrative, making visible meanings that have become synonymous with certain expressions. His generic use of woman bears little meaning in our everyday understanding of it, but it does cast some light on meanings of Venus as represented in visual arts, particularly during the nineteenth century. 'Venus Populaire', according to Delvau, is a girl from the street who does not demand more than a franc for a trip to Cythera, the island where the goddess landed as she was born by the sea. A voyage to that same island is in this context a euphemism for the sexual pleasures between the two 'travellers'.²⁷ In the nineteenth century, representations of Venus became more and more reduced to be a naked or eroticised woman, and as such a woman whose promiscuity was questionable.²⁸

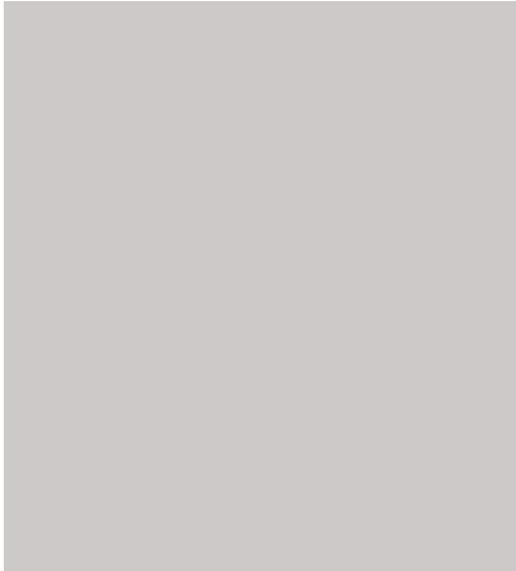
Scholars have been preoccupied with trying to classify, contextualise and understand the theme of Venus, as well as taking pleasure in and admiring the beauty on display. Attempts to reclaim the naked female body and to understand the underlying agenda that produced these images has been a topic for many scholars, feminists or otherwise.²⁹

Venus has in many periods been seen as the ideal female nude.³⁰ At times when the ideal nude has been male, the parameters for what is ideal have differed, as discussed by the American art historian Abigail Solomon-Godeau.³¹ One such difference can be spotted in the fifth and sixth centuries BC, where the male figure is often represented as heroically nude, whilst the female is covering her sex. Also, if the female genital area is uncovered it is represented as a flat and castrated surface, without pubic hair or genitals. In Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* the figure is vainly covering her sex, a gesture that has been much quoted, and is described as a 'Pudica position'. The word 'pudica' relates to the word *pudenda* that bear the double meaning of shame and genitalia. Thus, the gesture of covering that part constructs a narrative of protection and shame of being seen, as well as of sexual attraction. Nanette Salomon makes an interesting and illuminating comparison with Venus in the 'pudenda' position and Massaccio's (1401-28) figuration of Adam and Eve in the fresco *The Expulsion from Paradise*, 1427.³² While Adam handles his shame by covering his face, leaving his sexual organ free for observation, Eve is covering her genital area. Solomon points out that the narrative conveys how Adam's shame is of a spiritual nature but Eve's is physical, sexual.³³ Like Massaccio's Eve, Venus's attraction is of a physical nature, in the way that the figure has been appropriated and represented in art over time. As is well known, when one enters into a national collection in any large European city, there will be a substantial assembly of female bodies, more or less naked, on display. I would like to argue that all that flesh, bathing or otherwise, owes a lot to the goddess of love. It also owes much to the nymphs, other figures commonly associated with the theme of bathing females, and whose iconography sometimes very much resembles that of Venus.³⁴ Like the Goddess Venus, nymphs are mythological figures that have often been employed in the history of art as a way of visualising male fantasies about female bodies.

Nymphs Frolicking in Water

As mentioned previously, Tunström argues that all that is left in Cronqvist's version of Botticelli's Venus, *The Ice*, is the angle of the head. Cronqvist's paraphrase is faint and it might be difficult to detect any similarities with the mythological theme mapped out above. However, when comparing Cronqvist's bathing girls to other bathing girls in the history of art, there seems to be an affiliation with the longstanding tradition of representing nymphs and Venuses that has transcended into representations of younger mermaids by the sea. One such example where these connotations are more rapidly recognised is Cronqvist's painting *The Girl in the Water I* (fig. 11; plate 3) and *The Girl in the Water II* (fig. 35; plate 9). Like a much younger Venus, or nymph, the little girl stands in the middle of the sea, shyly looking back at the viewer. The water surrounding the girl is painted in thick, abstract strips of differently coloured paint. In painting number one the suggested sea tends towards a greenish yellow, with blue and yellow streaks forming a grid. In the other version the thick lines connoting water shift between blue and orange – a visual play mimicking the sun being mirrored in the sea. In both these versions the girl stands erect with her hands on her waist and shoulders pushed up.

What also brings me to associate these two versions of *The Girl in the Water* and their iconography, to the idea of the nymph, are the effects of the water, uncannily similar to the painting *Oceanides*, 1909 (fig. 12; plate 4), by the Finnish artist Akseli Gallen-Kallela (1865-1931). In Gallen-Kallela's image five female figures are bathing and sunbathing by the sea. They all have blonde hair and their bodies are unnaturally pink, reflecting the strong sunshine. Three of the women are frolicking in the sea, whilst two are resting on the seashore. The five figures are very similar to each other, if not identical, and are stripped of any facial features. The lack of eyes, mouths and noses relieves them of any personality and this abstraction renders them some kind of generic symbolism for 'Woman', or rather for 'Nymph', as they are referred to in the title as Oceanides.³⁵ The striking similarities between Gallen-Kallela's painting and Cronqvist's are not the bathing

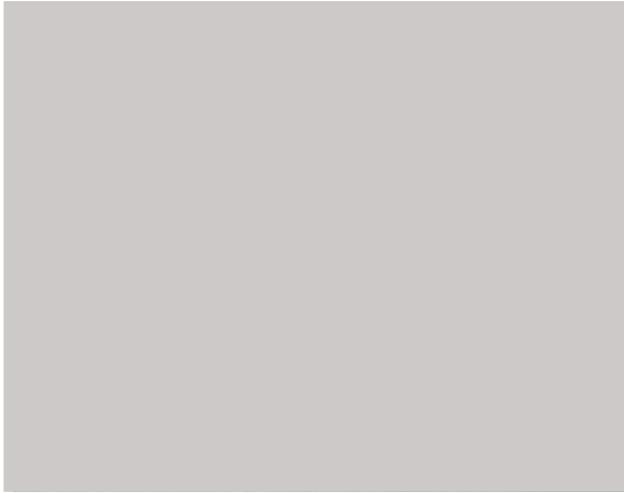


11. Lena Cronqvist, *The Girl in the Water I* (*Flickan i vattnet I*), 1982, 150 x 135 cm, Läns-museet Gävleborg, Gävle. (see plate 3)

figures, as much as the sea they are enjoying and the peculiar painterly effects of the rippled water. Some 70 years later Cronqvist has repeated, knowing or unknowing, the thick lines of Gallen-Kallela's painting. In 1909 the Finish artist mixed blue patches with thick strips of golden orange waves, resembling creases on the water surface and the reflections of a blazing sun. In Cronqvist's first version, *The Girl in the Water I* the effects are very similar, as the girl figure is surrounded by horizontal, thick lines, alternating between orange and blue – an abstraction made in the same colour tone as Gallen-Kallela's, which captures a calm sea in strong sunshine. In the second

version, *The Girl in the Water II* the abstraction is taken even further. The water is here made of thick strips of blue and yellow, forming a square pattern, set against a greenish yellow backdrop.

Gallen-Kallela's painting has a place in the particular tradition in history of art, of representing bathing women as a way of exhibiting female flesh made erotic, a theme deeply entwined with that of the nymph and Venus. Gallen-Kallela's *Oceanides* are there alongside Renoir's bathers and their Swedish equivalent and contemporaries, Anders Zorn's (1860-1889) voluptuous, nude and bathing women.³⁶ Cronqvist's representations harbour on the outskirts of these traditions, sampling some elements, distorting others. In the context of mythological references, I would like to argue that the 'bathing nymph' resonates in these two versions of *The Girl in the Water*. It is also closer at hand to see the references of Botticelli's Venus sailing ashore in this painting, rather than in the tilted head in *The Ice*. In images from the Roman period, a common depiction of a nymph is a female

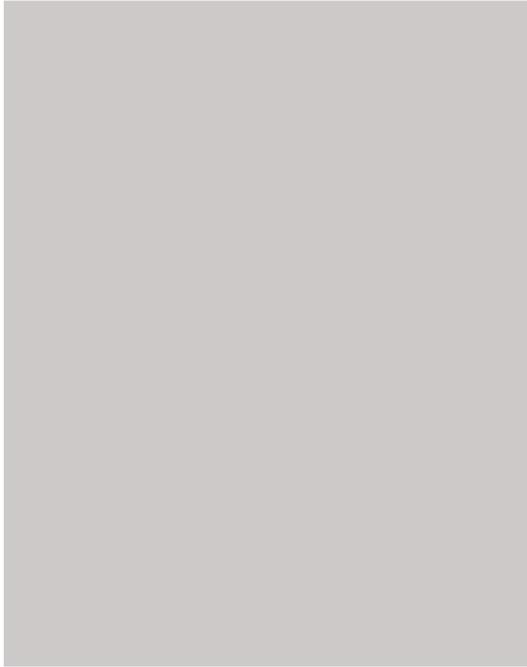


12 Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Oceanides*, 1909, oil on canvas, 116 x 146 cm, private collection. (see plate 4)

figure with a naked torso, with long hair hanging freely afloat, carrying a washbasin, a vase or a seashell.³⁷ This tradition has continued and after the Renaissance there are images aplenty with women bathing, or lounging near water of some sort. So much so, that in common language we associate a nymph with a young bathing woman. Hence, when Cronqvist paints her bathing girls, she also plays with the tradition of female bathers, which I will continue and explore next.

Bathers

In the first years of the 1990s, Cronqvist made a series of paintings of girls by the sea. These scenarios have a familiar, ordinary feel to them, a bit like a snapshot or holiday photo effect, something I will discuss in chapter four. Yet, at the same time as these images appear to be familiar, they are set in an indefinable environment. In *Hand in Hand* (fig. 42; plate 12), the two girls are standing next to each other, surrounded by sea and a blue sky. Their hands are firmly interlinked and the bigger girl is looking down at the smaller girl who is gazing at something unknown, outside the picture plane. The two paintings



13 August Renoir, *Nude in Sunlight*, 1875-76, oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

The Girl in the Water I and II have similar settings with the girl figure standing in the middle of the sea.

Girls and bathing is a sub theme that runs across Cronqvist's art of the 1990s. At the beginning of the 1990s her girl figures are painted by the sea, but closer to the middle of the decade, they are predominantly pictured, in paintings and sculptures, in a bathtub. In the preceding discussion I have proposed an affiliation between Cronqvist's paintings *Girl and Swan*, with the mythological theme popular throughout the history of art, and I have analysed how Venus as a figure has been of great importance for our understanding of representations of femininity. In the work of such an artist

as Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), women are represented as a force of nature, and nature is equalled to sexuality – a sexuality that it is necessary to control. Renoir painted, again and again, nudes and semi nudes posing in nature. The titles of his paintings refer to nudes or women, rather than to nymphs but his iconography, as Tamar Garb has observed, is closely related to the nymph. Garb describes Renoir's *Nude in Sunlight*, 1875-76 (fig. 13), in the following way: 'Like a nymph of the woods drawn from some timeless Arcadia: Woman takes her place in a world of water and foliage, feathery and full in its textural evocation, in which flesh, vegetation, hair and cloth provide a soft and downy pillow on which the weary urban viewer can rest his eyes.'³⁸ In classical mythology, as discussed above, nymphs as guardians of springs, forests, trees and sea, belong to nature. They are even defined by which part of nature they belong to. In visual arts, nymphs are mostly depicted outdoors, in their 'natural' habitat, as opposed to

for example Venus, or Leda and the Swan, where indoor settings are also frequent.

In the iconography of bathing females, water and women are closely interlinked. In early Greek cult practice all water was considered sacred. Susan Guettel Cole writes that 'Rainwater was thought to come from the male Zeus, and spring water, associated with the nymphs from the female Earth.'³⁹ Cole gives some examples of rituals of women involving water, for example, the baths of brides in protected water before the wedding ceremony. Further, she argues that the worship of the Goddess Hera (Juno) wife of Zeus (Jupiter), always involved water. The ritual is believed to have been a celebration of the marriage between Zeus and Hera, and is specifically associated with the latter's own bridal bath. Cole cites Pausanias (150 AD), who, in his story of Greece, said that each year Hera took a bath in a particular spring, and in that way restored her virginity.⁴⁰ Also Artemis (Diana) was associated with water and one of her many nicknames was Artemis Limnatis, 'Lady of the lake'.⁴¹ It is interesting to note in relation to Cronqvist's bathing girls, and the preceding discussion about Venus and nymphs, that one of the festivals held for Artemis Limnatis was celebrated by young girls. Artemis Brauronia, too, was celebrated by dancing maidens five to ten years old.⁴²

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* nymphs and goddess swimming and bathing are a never-ending source for peeping toms. Yet, in other examples from the history of art water has fertilizing, penetrative associations. Lucas Cranach the elder (1442-1553) for example made a series of enigmatic paintings of nymphs sleeping by a water source, one of which is *Nymph of the Spring*, after 1537.⁴³ The reclining, nude female is posing in nature, surrounded by the attributes and allusions to both nymphs, Venus and Diana. In the upper left corner an inscription in Latin says: 'I am the nymph of the sacred spring, do not disturb my sleep. I am resting.'⁴⁴ Further, the pearls around the figure's neck usually connote Venus, whilst the bow and arrow, hanging in the nearby tree, and the picking pheasants are associated with Diana.⁴⁵ Thus Cranach alludes to different kinds of female beauties, all of which it is common to find represented by water of some sort. In the background of the



14 Anders Zorn, *After the Bath*, 1895, oil on canvas, 84 x 50.5 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

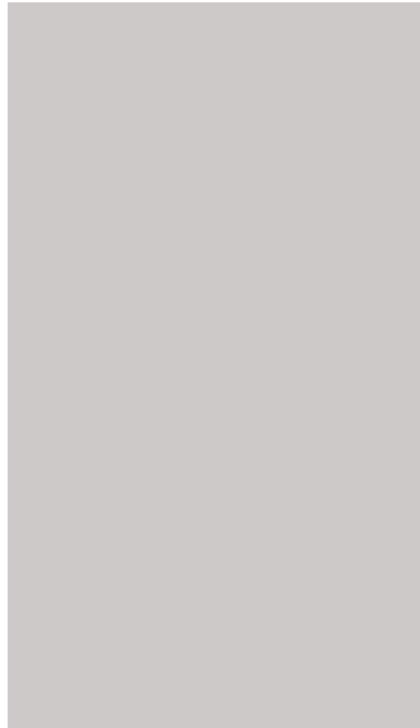
painting there is a mountain with a spring, from which water is sprouting straight out. The water is shooting out in a highly suggestive penile manner, which only serves to further underline the sexuality of the female figure.⁴⁶ In different constellations and at different historical times the effects of the combination of water and female nudes have had different meanings. Yet, it is safe to conclude that many representations of bathing women are imbued with strong erotic connotations.

As mentioned above, the Swedish equivalent to Renoir's bathing women, is the painter Anders Zorn.⁴⁷ A Swedish audience will be very familiar with his many paintings of women with swelling, soft shapes. So much so, that he has given name to that particular type of women which

he preferred to paint.⁴⁸ Thus a *Zornkulla* is a variation on the term *Dalecarlian woman*, (a woman from the Dalecarlia region, where Zorn lived) and brings to mind a young rustic woman of generous forms and blushing cheeks. The National Museum in Stockholm houses two such paintings, one set indoors and the other outdoors. *After the Bath*, 1895 (fig. 14) shows a woman, painted with an impressionist touch, drying her hair and doing so leaving the rest of her body exposed to the viewer's gaze. The female figure's eyes are downcast but the viewer is still left wondering if she is not meant to be aware of our viewing as her cheeks are red from blushing. The second nude figure, barely visible in the stark light, is crouching in the background. The other painting in the Stockholm collection, *Girls from Dalarna Having a Bath*, 1906, (fig. 15) shows two women engaged in the cleaning ritual of bathing in

a tub. One of the figures, the one further into the painting, faces the viewer in a full frontal view as she stretches a pan towards the fire, located just outside the picture plane, but whose warm light illuminates the rest of the image. The other female figure is placed closer to the viewer, turning her back towards us as she sits in the tub. She is captured just in the moment of bending down in the tub, reaching for water and in that movement raising her generous behind towards us. There is no doubt that these nineteenth century representations are erotically charged, and that the concept of the nymph lurks in the background.⁴⁹ As I have concluded above, the number of artists that have returned to the theme of bathing women, mythological or not, charging them with erotic undertones, is nearly inexhaustible. In his work, Zorn created a fantasy of the female nude, voyeuristic images of women drying themselves in the sun somewhere in the Swedish archipelago, or making an act of cleansing and hygiene into a scopophilic opportunity. I will soon return to the reason why these representations of the female flesh are artful constructions, far removed from the reality of the day.

I have mapped out how bathing and women are a frequent motif in the history of art, and also how it is a theme where sexual connotations are imbued. When a woman artist like Cronqvist revisits such a theme, a lot of questions arise. Is it possible to reclaim an area where the female figure has been so remarkably exposed to the male gaze, and where bathing women have more or less become synonymous with objects for display?⁵⁰ Embarking on such a theme means inscribing oneself to the tradition of male masters and their muses. But for the woman artist painting herself, Cronqvist paints herself as a child,



15 Anders Zorn, *Girls from Dalarna Having a Bath*, 1906, National Museum, Stockholm.

naked and bathing, and in doing that she becomes both the master and the muse, which is when the whole iconography starts to break down. Cronqvist does know, I am certain, what she is doing when she quotes Leda and the Swan, but inserts a young, introvert and sad looking girl instead of the usual shapely women. I would like to propose that she positions herself as a painter smack bang in the middle of history of art's traditions, but instead of fitting in, her art sits there as a silent eye sore, calmly provoking the museum's big masters. Like Cranach's nymph by the spring, Cronqvist's girl figures cite many traditions at once, and as I said at the start, rather than combining them, her work falls in-between. If one such tradition is the bathing female, often disguised as a mythological figure, the other is the bathing child, born in the health movement in the nineteenth century.

Children in Water

In 1991 Cronqvist painted *Three Girls in the Water* (*Tre flickor i vattnet*) (fig. 16), displaying three girls playing side by side in shallow sea. To the left, one figure is standing holding a mummy doll, dipping it into the sea, in the middle a seated girl is bathing a daddy doll, and to the right the third girl is bathing a black cat. When I stumbled upon the painting *A Summer's Day*, 1886 (fig. 17), by the British painter William Stott, I was struck by the compositional similarities. In Stott's painting three naked figures, this time boys, relax and enjoy themselves by the sea. They sit on a large expansive beach, typical for the English coast, and are playing in a puddle of water that has come in from the sea in the background. The boy to the left is standing up, leaning back looking over his shoulder, and we view him from behind. The figure in the middle is crouching on all four touching his mirror image in the water and the third figure sits down, leaning back on his hands spreading his legs into the water. The boys' appearances are very similar, their hair has the same cut and colour. Perhaps it is the same boy, repeated thrice, perhaps three brothers. As to their identity Cronqvist's girl figures offer the same interpretation. Their similar haircuts suggest a visual cloning, but in the context of the larger body of Cronqvist's girls, we can as-

16 Lena Cronqvist, *Three Girls in the Water* (*Tre flickor i vattnet*), 150 x 170 cm, 1991, Vidamuseet, Öland.



17 William Stott, *A Summer's Day*, 1886, oil on canvas, 132.9 x 189.3 cm, Manchester Art Gallery.

sume it is the two sisters, and the third figure being a repetition of one or the other. Both interpretations are equally possible. Stott's painting also alerts us to the strong presence of representations of nude boys and adolescents from the turn of the nineteenth century, a presence contemporaneous with the female bathing nude.

Several Scandinavian painters were preoccupied with the theme of bathing youngsters, mostly male, but rather than a mere one-way eroticisation of naked flesh, these could also be seen as a display of health and vitality, as propagated by for example Carl Curman.⁵¹ Curman strongly advocated a health ideal involving the benefits of swimming. His idea, as the Swedish art historian Bo Grandien points out, was that 'the naked skin would be strengthened by the exposure to wind and water – in the sauna and swimming pool just as well as in the sea air and saltwater at the West Coast'.⁵² Grandien suggests that there is an echo of Curman's teachings in the art of Zorn when he painted women 'skinny dipping'. Thus bathing nudes also advocate ideas about the healthiness of sun and salty swims, part of the 'spa culture' that spread across Northern Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century.⁵³ In the same spirit naturist colonies and nudism were promoted, although areas for naturism were reserved for men.⁵⁴ The culture of bathing, in nature or in swimming pools, was heavily promoted all over Northern Europe, from Ireland to Paris to Stockholm.⁵⁵ This is the cultural background against which I believe it is important to consider the many images of nude children from the turn of the nineteenth century. There are plenty of examples from all the Scandinavian countries, but interestingly mostly of naked boys; the equivalent of nude girls are much less frequent.⁵⁶ One such rare example is the painting *Summer*, 1915 (fig. 18) by the Swedish west coast painter Carl Wilhelmson (1866-1928). Seated on one of the red cliffs, typical for the region of Bohuslän, the naked young girl (the model was the artist's youngest daughter Ana) looks a bit like a sea- maiden, a young nymphet in the Swedish Archipelago.⁵⁷ This image stands in stark contrast to for example Verner Thomé's paintings of swimming boys who are actively climbing on the steep rocks by the seaside, as in *Boys Playing*, 1903 (fig. 19). Even when the boys are

18 Carl Wilhelmson *Summer*,
1915, 105 x 95 cm, oil on canvas,
private collection.



19 Verner Thomé, *Boys Playing*, 1903, oil on canvas, 111 x 140.5 cm, Ate-
neum, Helsinki.

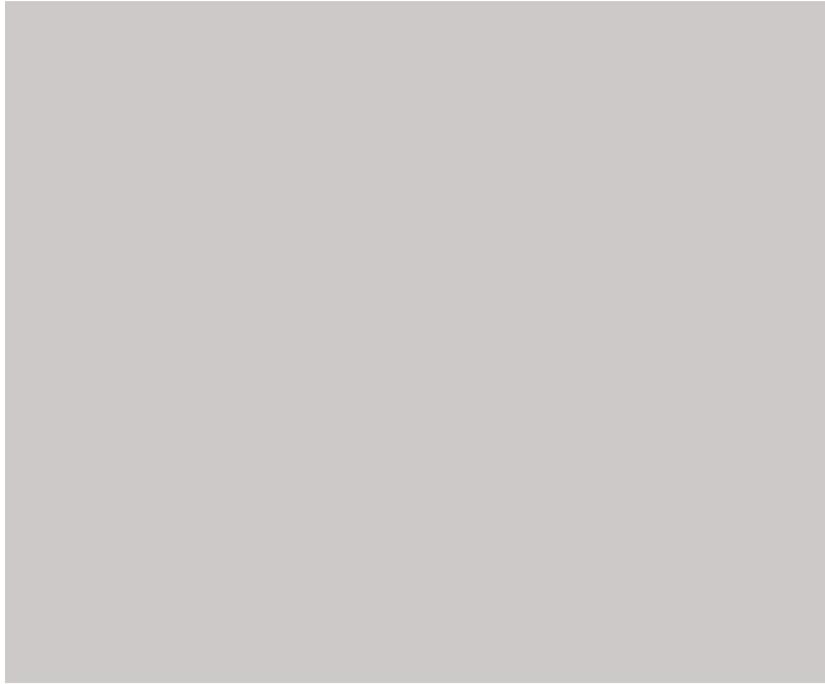
resting, as in *Bathing Boys*, 1920 (fig. 20), there is something active and dynamic about their postures: two boys are approaching the sea, the other two boys are sitting on the rocky beach, looking out towards the bathing figures, as if they too are about to move. Despite her young age, Wilhelmson's passively posing girl has thematically just as much in common with nymphs as with bathing children. A traditional pattern of women as passive recipients of the viewer's gaze, and men as active players in a drama, is repeated in these two different representations of children. Or, put another way, the comparison highlights a tradition of representing women or girls as a natural phenomenon, and men or boys as producers of culture.

Nature versus culture

Looking at Wilhelmson's sunbathing 'sea nymphet', a stream of different thoughts and feelings flush through me. I can easily identify with this girl on a physical level; I feel the sun on my body and the salt water from the sea drying on my skin. The pink rocks are very familiar to me, as I grew up during summertime, in the same west coast village Wilhelmson came from and to which he always returned, both in person and in his work.⁵⁸ As I see the girl sitting on the rocks I can smell the sea, I hear the seagulls and feel the warm cliffs underneath my body. There is nowhere I personally have experienced an affiliation with nature and the pleasure of bathing more strongly than in this precise place. I can also identify with the adult taking pleasure, although not sexual, in looking at a child posing in nature without any of the restrictions of society or culture – an eternal image of the archetype of innocence and purity. Although, things are seldom as they seem. As I look at this seductive painting and let my thoughts wander off to the summer paradise of my childhood, my thoughts are distracted. The naturalness just seems too good to be true. To get a girl of eight years, (Ana was born in 1907, thus 8 years when the painting was made in 1915) to pose naked might have been an achievement as such. The image also reminds me of being a model myself, on those same cliffs, for the French artist Paul-Armand Gette (b. 1927), needing someone

to pose for him. Dressed in some pants of his choice, I happily sat on the sun-drenched rocks letting him take the photographs he wanted.⁵⁹ It was a short break in my play with friends and family in this summer holiday idyll. For Wilhelmson, a local son of this puritan west coast society, painting nude females outdoors was a big thing indeed. Undressing in public was just as unlikely as swimming in the sea, a pastime reserved for the summer guests that started to frequent the resort towards the end of the nineteenth century.⁶⁰ In his book on Wilhelmson, Eric Jonsson writes that as a local it would have been unthinkable to paint nudity but as Wilhelmson had left the area, travelled to Paris and moved to Stockholm, the new influences and the art to which he was necessarily exposed made it possible to break free from these puritan constraints.⁶¹ Some 70 years later, sometime in the early 1980s, when Gette took his photographs of me, and several other girls, nudity was no longer a taboo subject. Although, his project was to push those limits, and when doing so he demonstrated the thwarted politics of looking. Looking at Gette's images today they not only evoke a discourse on Lolita type fantasies.⁶² To me they also demonstrate that what is seen as natural and taboo is very much in the hands of the viewer, the producers of culture and the social order.

It has been an underlying argument throughout this chapter that women and water are closely associated. Moreover, that many of the works I have brought up in this chapter have represented woman, or femininity as something natural, even as nature. The American anthropologist Sherry Ortner in her seminal essay 'Is Female to Male as Nature to Culture?' argued that woman in culture has again and again been reduced to nature. Ortner phrases her question straight at the beginning of her text, asking 'What could there be in the generalized structure and conditions of existence, common to every culture, that would lead every culture to place a lower value upon women?'⁶³ Ortner finds the answer to be nature, because nature is in most cultures subordinated. Universally women, throughout history and in different cultures, have been more closely associated to nature than men. In women's particular physiology, the procreative organs and life giving breasts, 'animality is more manifest'. She then proceeds to discuss



20 Verner Thomé, *Bathing Boys*, 1920, oil on canvas, 108.5 x 130 cm, Ateneum, Helsinki.

why there is an inferior value attached to nature, and subsequently to women, in culture and lastly the implications of this affiliation to social structures.⁶⁴

We need to have the understanding of woman as closer to nature, if not as nature, in the back of our minds when we view bathing female figures, particularly as the theme was negotiated in the nineteenth century and beyond. In her article on images of bathers in Paris towards the end of the nineteenth century, Linda Nochlin writes: 'Nothing would seem less problematic than the late 19th-century bather: it seems to be a natural "given" of art history: timeless, elevated, idealized, and as such, central to the discourse of high art.'⁶⁵ In her essay on Renoir's bathers Garb points out that, on a closer look, the naturalness of *Nude in Sunlight* (fig. 13) is compromised on several levels. The female nude, surrounded by foliage with her hair let out

has a sense of archaic womanliness and complete naturalness about her. But, as Garb observes, the model's shiny golden jewellerys betray her modernity. Further, looking at the circumstances of the time, there is, she argues, nothing natural about depicting an undressed female in an outdoor environment.⁶⁶ Nochlin in her essay points out why it was unthinkable for a woman to undress outdoors in France at the time and Catherine Horwood discusses the strict rules and regulations around female bathers' bodies in England during the first part of the twentieth century.⁶⁷ Although the bathers discussed in this chapter are strongly associated as natural beings, be it as divinities of nature or children of nature, they are, of course, a product of culture. However 'eternal' the nude seems, as in Renoir's work, or however classic the theme as in Cranach's sleeping nymph, the figures herald the urban contemporary.

In both versions of Cronqvist's *The Girl in the Water* the figure is standing still, as if frozen, captured in a snapshot. It seems as if nothing could be more natural and closer to nature, than a child swimming naked in the sea. Yet, this figure, in the same way as Cranach's nymphs or Renoir's nudes, bears the marks of urban culture and society. To be naked is not her natural habitat. Her stark white torso is distinctly different from the tanned arms and legs, revealing her summer costume. In Renoir's *Nude in Sunlight*, the urban and modern girl is transformed into a force of nature, where only a few telltale signs mark her urbanity. The urban signs in Cronqvist's girl figure on the other hand, work in reverse; the tanned arms and legs, showing off the traces of a summer dress, make her look unnatural and distinctly uncomfortable in her birthday robe. This reversal also has a bearing on the viewer's attitude towards the painting. If, as Garb suggests, the weary urban viewer can rest his, or her, eyes on the natural nude, Cronqvist's little figure transmit the discomfort her tensed body so clearly felt in front of the viewer.

I have argued that in Lena Cronqvist's representations of bathing girls, there are echoes of art historical references, from such varied sources as classical mythology and renaissance art to images of 'healthy bathers' from the turn of the twentieth century. Whilst those

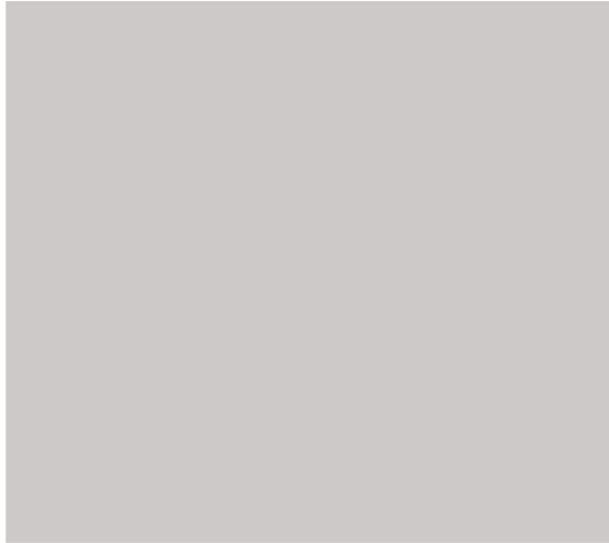
traces are present, in the hands of Cronqvist they become heavily distorted. When, as I have argued, Cronqvist's work is falling between these visual traditions, she shows up the themes, which are echoed in her work, and challenges the viewer, making uncomfortable all that pleasure otherwise inherent in the theme of bathing females, young or mature.

2 Ambiguous Bodies

Am I that which I observe or that which
observes me?

LEONORA CARRINGTON ¹

On a visit to the Wallace Collection in London in June 2002, I was taken by the hanging of one particular wall, coincidentally in what is called the 'Boudoir Room'. Eight of the ten paintings are by the French artist Jean-Baptiste Greuze, and two by his British contemporary Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792). Of Greuze's images, six are so called *têtes d'expression*, most of which were made during the artist's later years, and the other two are genre paintings, telling famous stories from the *Comédie Italienne*.² The adolescent figure, bordering between being a girl and a woman, is at the core in all of the paintings by Greuze. What was the curator's aim when putting together these pictures in this particular room? This hanging intrigued me because the display exhibits visual sensual pleasure in a way that, at least at first sight, could be a textbook example of a visual realisation of male erotic fantasies about female virginity. By putting these ten paintings together on one wall the sexual aspects are further emphasised and any other themes or narratives suppressed. In his play with allegories, morality and taboos, Greuze paintings are full of contradictions between sexuality and innocence, in a way where primarily the girls' bodies and postures betray the sexual undertones. In Reynold's paintings exhibited on this wall in the Boudoir Room, the sexual undertones are particularly underscored by the girls' attributes and by the figures posing like women whilst being young children.³



21 *Daddy's girl (Pappas flicka)*, 1993-94, h. 20.5 cm, bronze.

The contradictions in these eighteenth century paintings make them interesting as a reference for Cronqvist's girl figures and I think this hanging serves as a good starting point for thinking about the ambiguity in Cronqvist's paintings. Naturally Greuze's images were made in a different time and place than Cronqvist's, but as the American scholar Mary Sheriff argues, when looking at Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806): 'Probably I'm not the ideal viewer for Fragonard [Greuze in this case], but his paintings are ideal for my interpretation.'⁴ The hanging at the Wallace collection is an example of how the theme of girls in the history of art has been eroticised. The soft powdery paintings by Greuze are highly seductive, yet the theme leaves a bitter aftertaste. It is this aftertaste that I propose is at the core of Cronqvist's images to be discussed in this chapter.

In Cronqvist's bronze sculpture *Daddy's girl (Pappas flicka)*, 1993-94 (fig. 21), a theme she first elaborated on in a painting with the same title in 1990, the daddy figure sits on a square stool, holding the girl between his legs and close to his body. With his huge hands, somewhat deformed as each hand only has a couple of fingers, the father figure holds up the girl, but only slightly, so that she just about

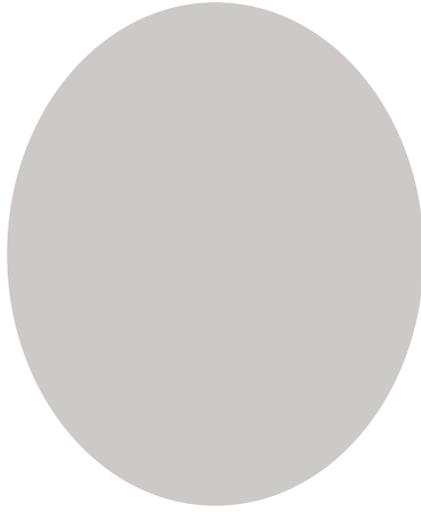
floats in the air above ground. The figures are set tight together, the hard and cold bronze, once a fluid and hot material, unites the two bodies forever. Their bodies are interlaced through the material as well as through their grips; the father figure holds up the girl with his hands around her waist, the girl figure holds on to the father with her hands on his thighs. Although father and daughter are physically firmly connected, there seems to be a vast abyss between them. The father figure stares straight out with an empty look, not looking at the girl, or at the spectator. The girl's face is stripped of expression too, her little eyes staring straight ahead, as if at nothing, a gaze seemingly turned more inwards than outwards. There are few clues as to how to interpret the sculpture: a contemplation of fatherly affection; or as an example of a more strenuous relationship; as an image with sexual undertones; or as a frozen moment captured just before the girl is about to run off and play. What does exist is a high degree of ambiguity. I start the discussion by exploring the ambivalence in Greuze's images as his girl figures are exemplary illustrations of ambivalence in representation. The two terms are very near, but with the difference that *ambiguity* indicates an expression imprecise in meaning, alternatively uncertainty in meaning or position. *Ambivalence* on the other hand, is having two opposing and contradictory meanings.⁵ The difference is slight but if anything Cronqvist's work tend towards the former and Greuze, as we shall see by my comparison, towards the latter.

In this chapter the main issue is to look at how ambiguity permeates Cronqvist's representations of girls. I also investigate how ambiguity can be used as a feminist strategy, both for making and interpreting art. I conclude the chapter with a discussion about the ambiguous and problematic viewing position for the spectator and I compare a painting by Cronqvist with a very similar composition by Balthus. Throughout the chapter the question that Leonora Carrington posed and which I have quoted at the top will run as a backbone: 'Am I that which I observe or that which observes me?'⁶ When Cronqvist represents herself in her art, this question is pertinent – is it possible, as a woman, artist or spectator, to escape objectifying oneself in representation?

Jean-Baptiste Greuze and Innocent Girls

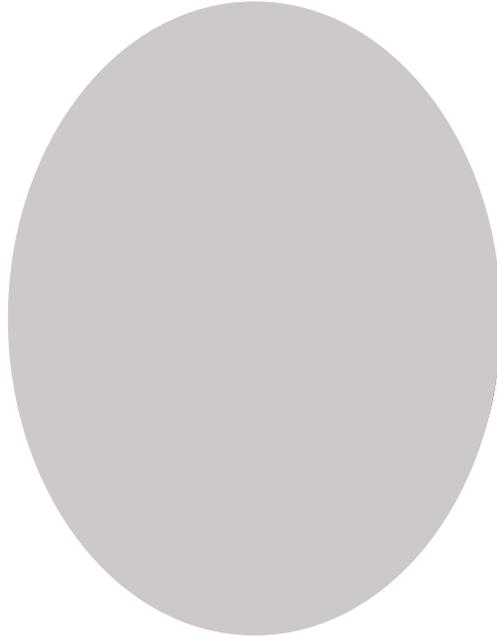
In Greuze's painting *The Broken Jug*, 1785 (fig. 22), a girl is standing upright, holding a bunch of pink roses in her skirt, which doubles as a basket. Over her right arm hangs the broken jug referred to in the title. Her garments are hanging loosely around her in a disorderly way. A monument or sculpture of some sort can be glimpsed in the background, and its most visible feature is a lion spurting water. The girl is, according to Norman Bryson, a typical 'Greuze child' whose childlike features are exaggerated, for example the large eyes, and the big head. At the same time, which Bryson also points out, the girl is represented in the role of a woman, not the least through the emphasis on the moist lips and the developed and revealed breasts. Her awareness of her own sexuality is just as clearly expressed as is her childishness. Greuze has, according to Norman Bryson, captured the moment in a girl's life when she is both child and adult, innocent and experienced.⁷ Greuze's paintings of girls are full of contradictory meanings. In *The Broken Jug* there is on the one hand much sexual metaphor: the roses held over her crotch, the lion sculpture spurting water – an image of double meanings of masculinity – and the girl figure's eroticised body per se. On the other hand there is the young girl herself, brimming with innocence, and barely aware of the sexual connotations her picture exudes. In many of his paintings Greuze experimented with conflating moral messages with sexual undertones causing a clear ambivalence as to what is represented: is it the attraction of sexual desire or its moral downfall. Brookner describes the typical Greuze girl as 'adolescent girls on the verge of orgasm'.⁸ In Greuze's representations of girls, there is a consistent juxtaposition between complete innocence and, if not always culpability, at least intent.

In the book *Sedaine, Greuze and the boundaries of Genre* the British scholar Mark Ledbury offers an alternative to the customary analysis of Greuze's work through Denis Diderot's (1713-1784) criticism. Ledbury examines how Greuze fused high and low; popular form with artistic ambition; moral messages with ambiguities. Further how



22 Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *The Broken Jug*, 1785, painting, 108 x 86 cm, The Louvre, Paris.

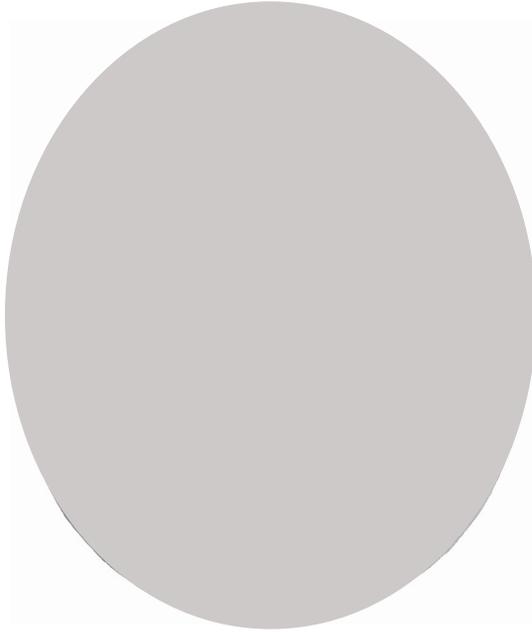
Greuze as a young painter was influenced by Boucher as well as by the popular opéra-comique.⁹ Although a comparison on these aspects of Greuze's and Cronqvist's work is not the intention of the following discussion, and although their lives and the context in which their art is situated are widely different (not the least through time, place and gender), it might still be helpful to make a quick comparison. Cronqvist too, in quite a remarkable way, fuses high and low, as she makes references to the fine art of history just as much as soaking up and processing current trends in contemporary society (see also 'Introduction'). Cronqvist elaborates on personal experiences and through her art makes these general. It is also true the other way around, that she brings general experiences and themes from history of art to a personal level. There is no doubt that in the experimentation with genres, and in particular in his representations of adolescent women, Greuze too brought in elements of Greek and Roman mythology, following in the footsteps of such artists as Boucher and Fragonard.¹⁰ An example of Greuze's play with allegory is *The Milkmaid*, year unknown (fig. 23). The painting depicts a young woman leaning towards a horse or pony, which has two carrier baskets over its back. The girl figure is



23 Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *The Milkmaid*, year unknown, oil on canvas, 106x86 cm, The Louvre, Paris.

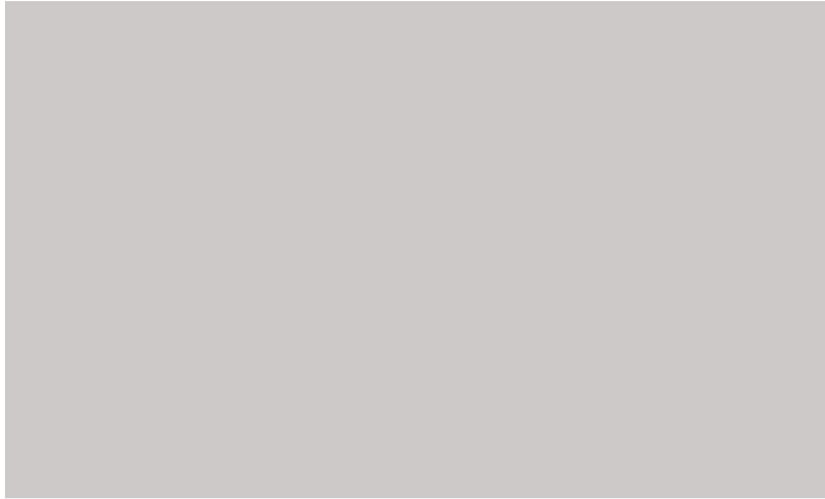
dressed in a plain red skirt with a white apron and a transparent scarf around her neck, tucked into the loosely fitted shirt. As in the other paintings by Greuze, discussed previously, the composition of the loose garments draw attention to the chest, where the left nipple is almost revealed. Most poignant in this painting, is the hand placed so that if removed the dress would fall down from her breast. Another focus point is the crotch, as the fold in the dress mimics the female sex underneath. This is further emphasised by the milk cup, which is placed in the same hand whose grip creates that suggestive fold in the dress. According to *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts 1300-1900s* the sea nymph Galatea has often been depicted in postclassical drama as a shepherdess or a milkmaid.¹¹ In Greuze's interpretation of the milkmaid, mythological drama is combined with reflections of contemporary life, desire and sexuality.

In some ways Greuze's emotional explosions could not be further removed from Cronqvist's restrained figures. The ambivalence in the



24 Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *A Girl with a Dead Canary*, 1765, oil on canvas, oval: 53.30 x 46.00 cm, The National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.

discussed paintings by Greuze is full of narrative, whilst in Cronqvist's work, the story line is kept to a minimum (see further in chapter 3). The ambivalence in Greuze's work seems intentional, as if it mimics a presumed viewer's own feelings. This indeed was how Diderot interpreted one of Greuze's paintings when he responded to *A Girl with a Dead Canary*, 1765 (fig. 24). The painting, which Diderot considered the most interesting at the Salon of 1765, shows a girl, with a loose shawl around her shoulders and some flowers tucked into her décolletage. She is leaning her head in one hand mourning the dead bird lying on top of the wooden cage in front of her. Diderot wrote: 'One would have approached that hand and kissed it, had one not respected the child in its pain.'¹² Diderot asks rhetorically why the girl cries so over her bird and proceeds to imagine what could have preceded the painted event. In Diderot's fantasy the girl's mother left her alone in the morning, something that would prove to be a mistake. 'He came, and showed the girl his charm and passion and said to her



25 Lena Cronqvist, *Hoary Swamp Lilies (Vissna myrliljor)*, 1973-74, 120 x 200 cm.

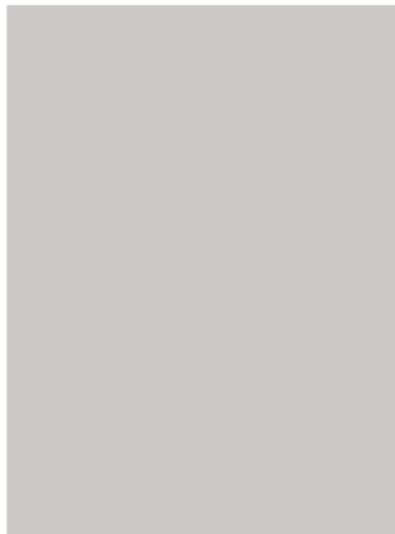
precisely the right things, that went straight into her heart. The man was overwhelmed by the young girl's beauty and the girl by his confidence. What happened the girl cannot be accused of, but her mother, who left her in her seclusion and exposure.' But why cry, Diderot asks, and proceeds to answer that a man who promised and met such a wonderful young girl will not forget his promise. He will not desert her. And the bird? If one has forgotten oneself forgetting one's bird is not so surprising. Perhaps the dead bird is a sign. He continues to say that were it him who was guilty of the girl's misfortune he would not be all that sad.¹³

To today's viewer of Greuze's paintings, as well as to Diderot, it is clear that the ambivalence is in knowing that these girl figures are represented with a sexuality that can be perceived as problematic. It is problematic partly because in some images they look underage. This innocence is on the other hand what makes them appealing to Diderot and others. Looking at Greuze's paintings, I would like to argue that as viewers we are positioned in what Laura Mulvey famously declared 'the male viewing position'.¹⁴ The pretty girls on display in Greuze's images are there for us to enjoy, and Diderot's account for his viewing

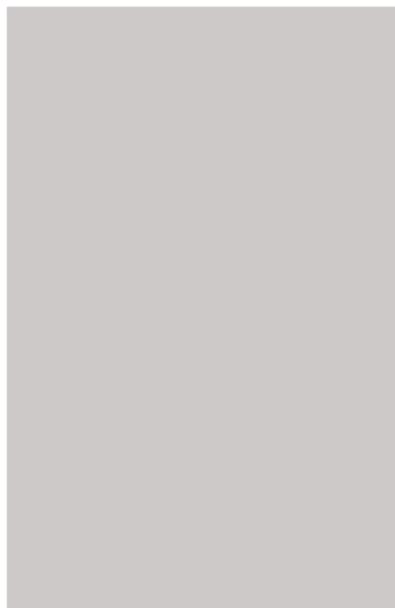
experience seems to describe to the point that male position. Although, when looking at them in 2005, it is clear that they are representations of a femininity which does not, in the manner of Renoir's nudes, take into account a woman's own sexuality or identity, in representation or as a viewer. When compared with Cronqvist's pictures, it is easy to see that the viewer's 'position' in relation to her work is dramatically different. Next I will look closer at the ambiguity within her images, before further discussing issues of looking.

The Human Body

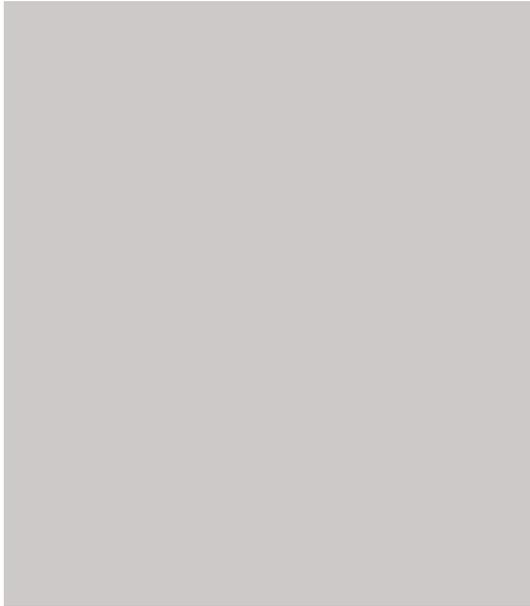
The human body plays a central role in Lena Cronqvist's body of work as her images to a large extent deal with narratives involving life cycles and the human psyche, staged through human figures.¹⁵ Even in her landscape paintings the life and death of a body of sorts takes centre stage. The painting *Hoary Swamp Lilies* (*Vissna myrliljor*), 1973-74 (fig. 25), for example, is a close up study of a plant, telling a story of life and death. The plant's tired leaves droop to the ground, connoting its yearly rite of passage, whereby its short life ends in death every autumn, only to be relived again next summer. In her representations of girls the human body is of uttermost importance. Not only do the figures' bodies enact the story, but there is also a narrative to be extrapolated from the bodies as such. The typical non-descript backgrounds serve to enhance the presence of the body even further. One



26 Lena Cronqvist, *Two Girlfriends* (*Väninnor*), 1991.



27 Lena Cronqvist, *Which Hand* (*Vilken hand*), 1990, 136 x 90 cm.



28 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl, Gorilla and Sun (Flicka, gorilla och sol)*, 1992, 43 x 39 cm. (see plate 5)

example in which the human bodies dominate the picture space is the painting *Two Girlfriends (Vänninnor)*, 1991 (fig. 26), where the background is nearly non-existent in its pale grey colours, divided into two fields; ground and background. Two identical figures hold hands and are dressed in bright red short trouser-suits. The figure on the right, from the viewer's perspective, is holding a mummy doll. The two girl figures are literally filling up the space, stretching over two thirds of the canvas, both vertically and horizontally. In *Which Hand (Vilken hand)*, 1990 (fig. 27), the girl figure, dressed in the same red outfit as in *Two Girl-*

friends, holds her hands behind her back. In this painting too, the background is whitewashed in a grey tone, and the sun (or moon), positioned slightly to the right, is vaguely painted over and the horizon only just stated. The title asks which hand, but we don't know who's being asked or what is being promised. If the game is played with the two black pets, a dog to the left and a cat to the right, it is somewhat pointless as they are situated behind the figure and can therefore see in which hand the treasure is kept. What is more, the figure's sombre face has taken all pleasure out of the game, giving it a serious significance.

Human bodies tend to dominate the picture space in Cronqvist's paintings of girls, as in the painting *Which Hand*. In a review Eva Ström writes that the sexuality of the girl figure in Cronqvist's images is ambiguous and disturbs both the interpretation and any easy viewing experience. She argues that what makes the figure in *The Girl in the Water* (fig. 11; plate 3) look so exposed is the discomfort expressed



29 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl with Mirror and Gorilla* (*Flicka med spegel och gorilla*) 1993-94, bronze, h. 23 cm.

by the body posture. I also agree with Ström when she argues that the sense of exposure is further accentuated by the figure's sex, placed in the exact middle of the canvas.¹⁶ Another painting where the sexual ambivalence is intriguing is *Girl, Gorilla and Sun* (*Flicka, gorilla och sol*), 1992 (fig. 28; plate 5). Our main character is very young in this image, standing erect in the middle of the canvas with her feet placed towards the lower edge. A small tonal difference in the colour blue separates the upper and lower field. Although an even stronger differentiator between ground and background is the application of the paint. The upper part, or the sky, is thinly painted with vertical strokes and the lower half is painted with thicker paint and horizontal strokes. We get the idea that the figures are placed outdoors because, also in this painting, in the top right corner (from the viewer's perspective) an orange sun (as confirmed by the title), has been painted over, albeit only thinly so, as the sun still shines through. Behind the girl figure a

seated gorilla is portrayed, supporting itself with its long arms. That supporting, or balancing act, also serves to frame the girl figure.

Pets are often represented in Cronqvist's images, but like the swan in the painting *Girl and Swan*, (fig. 3: plate 1) (discussed in chapter 1), the presence of the gorilla complicates the interpretation. Gorillas feature in several of Cronqvist's works, as in the painting *Girl, Poppy and Gorilla (Flicka, vallmo och gorilla)* 1992, where the animal sits in a much more calm and restful manner in the background.¹⁷ In the sculpture *Girl with Mirror and Gorilla (Flicka med spegel och gorilla)* 1993-94 (fig. 29) the girl stands in front of a gorilla holding a mirror in her hand. The figures and the base on which they are placed is cast in bronze, but between the two figures, separating them, is a piece of glass. The girl holds up her hand towards the gorilla, saluting him or her, whilst the animal scratches its chin looking back at the girl. Neither a swan, nor a gorilla, are cosy, cuddly animals. Furthermore, neither in society nor in fiction are there any famous relations between a gorilla and a little girl. However, there is a tradition of gorillas as a feature in movies. Particularly is this so in the upheaval of Hollywood produced thrillers from the 1930s and 1940s, based around a gorilla as an evil and sexual force capturing the leading lady. The prime example is the feature film *King Kong*, 1933, where the giant gorilla falls in love and kidnaps the beautiful woman.¹⁸ Even though the movie might be far fetched as a direct reference to Cronqvist's painting, the idea that the gorilla is male springs to mind. The word gorilla in Swedish, apart from denoting an animal, is also slang for *bouncer*, a very male occupation, as well as an expression for gangster. One argument to read the animal as a metaphor for a male being is that in the early 1990s Cronqvist made several paintings where there is an uncertain sexual relationship between the girl and a male figure. I discussed in the previous chapter a potential reading of the presence of a male as a sexual subtext in the painting *Girl and Swan*. Another example where exposure and vulnerability are at stake is *The Edge of the Wood (I skogsbrynet)*, 1994 (fig. 30; plate 6). Towards a flaming red background – the ground as well as the sky and the forest are painted in red tones – the naked girl, with the trade mark ribbon holding the fringe to one side, is standing upright at the fore-

front of the canvas. Behind the girl figure, closer to the forest, a naked adult man approaches her. The male figure is not actually portrayed as walking but the upper body is leaning forward at an unsettling, awkward angle, or as if captured when about to take a step. His face is without features, and is more similar to the dolls in her other paintings than to any actual human being. The man coming after the girl does



30 Lena Cronqvist, *The Edge of the Wood (I skogsbrynet)*, 1994, 46 x 55 cm. (see plate 6)

evoke feelings of threat. Why are they naked? Parents warnings to their children not to follow strangers to unknown places seem to echo in my ears. But the figures are moving away from the dark forest, not going there. It is possible to continue to speculate about interpretations of the painting and the story it is telling. For now, I will simply point out, that, when looking at several of these paintings, there are without doubt troubling sexual undertones.

The same sense of a double message is also present in the painting *Girl, Gorilla and Sun*. On the one hand we have the references of exposed girls whose sexuality might be threatened, on the other self-sufficient girls denying that reading. The gorilla in this painting might also be read as a female animal, an argument supported by the fact that its breasts seems inflated.¹⁹ In that reading its framing of the girl with her (or his) arms would more easily be read as protecting the girl. Of course, regardless of whether the gorilla's gender is male or female it could be read as both threatening and protecting. However, as discussed above, a male figure in relation to little girls does bear threatening connotations. Having said that, the gender of the gorilla might still be insignificant. Much more striking and that which re-

ally emphasises a sense of ambiguity and sexuality, is, as in Greuze's paintings, the girl's body in itself. The red slabs of paint dominate the otherwise pale figure; the red line on the lower part of her tummy indicate her genitalia, emphasised by the red v-shaped ribbon in her hair. The attention to the colour red is furthered by the red smeared mouth, much too red to be a natural colour, as well as by the redness in the figure's eyes.

In several of Cronqvist's paintings the girl figures' sexual parts are abnormally large and very much at the centre of attention. Looking again at the painting *The Girl in the Water I and II*, (fig. 11; plate 3) the figure's tanned face and arms catch our attention but once the abnormally large genitalia are distinguished, they become the centre of the image. The hairless triangle, reversely crowned by the crevice, looks like a separate part attached to the rest of the body. Once the viewers' eyes alight on that part of her body her rounded belly starts to appear more clearly. In *The Girl in the Water* and *Girl, Gorilla and Sun* alike, the girl figures' youth is stressed by the bloated belly young children often have. The round belly is also echoed in the animal's circular shape. But there is an immediate visual contradiction in the childlike figure's body; apart from being too young to be pregnant, from a social and moral aspect it is also too young to be sexualised.

The ambiguities in Cronqvist's representations work on several levels, and the imprecision in meaning is illustrated by the above examples, where implications of the figures' bodily features are uncertain. In Greuze's case the ambivalence regarding the girl figures' sexuality is more outspokenly made into a narrative in the paintings. I would like to argue that the paintings by Cronqvist discussed in this chapter float somewhere between those ideals, where innocent playful children and sexualised girls are the two different poles. If these polar opposites can, as Bryson suggests, co-exist in the work of Greuze, they are in Cronqvist's images made awkward.²⁰ Whilst I have argued that there is a questionable subtext in her images discussed hitherto in this chapter, it is an uncomfortable subtext, and not as in Greuze's case a subtext made titillating to the viewer. By contrasting her work with Greuze's, one example amongst many, I have hoped

to illustrate issues of girls in representation that I think exists also in Cronqvist's paintings. The important difference is that in her work those issues are consciously elaborated and seem to be there in order to intentionally disturb the viewer.

Ambiguity: A Positively Problematic Strategy

Cronqvist's representations of girls as discussed so far are ambiguous, both in terms of their themes and in terms of the figures' bodies. As Ström argued, because the figures' sexuality is ambiguous, that interferes with our interpretation.²¹ As discussed in the 'Introduction', representations of girls are often characterised by double standards. It is at once a body that is idealised and eroticised and as such scandalised. I also pointed out in the 'Introduction', that there is surprisingly little literature on representations of girls. It is an issue that it is difficult to obtain a standing to, both risking exploiting and moralising, all at the cost of real children. I think it is important to critically look at images such as Cronqvist's, or for that matter those by Greuze. However, rather than providing an understanding of children, they give us insight into politics of representation and interpretation in visual arts. Double standards have also strongly characterised rules and regulations, aesthetic and legal, concerning representations of the adult female body. One way of approaching the ambiguities of the girl figure in representation is through the discourses on ambiguity in feminist critique about the female body in art.

Since the emergence of the second wave of feminism since 1968, as described by Julia Kristeva, artists and feminist scholars have been concerned with the female body in representation.²² The British art historian Lynda Nead points out in her book *The Female Nude*, 1992, that the subject is immense and says that one is easily impressed by the many fields in contemporary and historical culture that are opened up by studies of the female nude.²³ *The Female Nude* is in fact the first major rethinking about the underlying structures and implications of representations of the female body since Kenneth Clark's seminal book *The Nude*, first published in 1957. Nead mentions that lots of

writers have made interesting and very important observations about individual artists, but with the lack of a major survey, Clark's tropes about the naked and the nude have remained unchallenged for a long time.²⁴ (As a young student of history of art at the beginning of the 1990s I recall how I was taught the difference between the naked and the nude with reference to Clark's paradigm).

In the light of today's research in the field of history of art, and in related disciplines such as visual culture or film studies, Clark's study seems nothing but offensive. Or rather, considering that it was written in the 1950s, with its particular context of gender stereotyping, it is astonishing that it has had a bearing for so long. Clark's project was to analyse the nude in relation to the concept of the ideal. The naked body is seen as fundamentally different from the nude, as the naked is undressed and the nude is dressed in the robe of art. What critics have pointed out since then, is that naked is naked whether it is art or not, and that the parameters for what gives aesthetic, as opposed to sexual, stimulation, are highly volatile. Several of Clark's fallacies have been proven untrue, for example his notion that: 'Since the 17th century we have come to think of the female nude as a more normal and appealing subject than the male.'²⁵ Solomon-Godeau, for example, demonstrates the reverse in her book *Male Trouble*, and she argues that historically it was in fact the male body which was the ideal for beauty and nudity, the female body as an ideal is from that perspective but an exception.²⁶ Several other art historians have also debated the 'Clarkian' view and offered a number of alternative models for interpretation. One other such example is Marcia Pointon's study *Naked Authority: The Body in Western Painting 1830-1908*. She contests that the nude is a timeless ideal, and successfully establishes the nude body in a cultural discourse and as something that is necessarily negotiated in relation to a viewer.²⁷

Nead investigates the meaning of the female nude, highlighting that it is a figure inundated with ambiguity. She argues that the female nude at times has been seen as both an ideal form, and simultaneously marking the border to the indecent. Thus the female body is both at the very centre of art and is challenging its boundaries. Nead provides

several examples of female nudity that challenge definitions of art and pornography, demonstrating how strong an influence the cultural context has had on perception. As a result, what can be determined 'decent' nudity and not, have proved ambiguous, and it depends on who draws the lines and for whom. Another level of ambiguity is introduced when that framing is being confronted; when the 'when, where and who' is drawing the lines are changed.²⁸ Nead discusses several examples of women artists who have challenged these notions and reclaimed the female body. Making an image of a woman as a woman calls for different sets of criteria, both in the making and in the viewing. Nead quotes the American artist Mary Kelly (b. 1941), who expressed a concern that it is problematic for a feminist artist to represent a woman. Kelly herself has, in her art, represented her own body through emblematic objects. Both Kelly and Nead are in two minds about the ambiguities around women artists' representations of women. Because, just as much as new ambiguous representations of women have potential to offer more varied interpretations of femininity, female sexuality and the female nude, it may also bring legitimacy to the exploitation of an already exploited body.²⁹

Nine years after Nead's study on the female body, Helen McDonald published *Erotic Ambiguities: The female nude in art*.³⁰ Instead of seeing ambiguity in relation to representations of female bodies, femininity and sexuality as something potentially destructive for feminist goals, McDonald proposes an analysis of ambiguity as something enabling, constructive and positive. According to her study, a turnaround in the debate, and in art, came about with the emergence of pro-sex feminists in the 1980s and with pop artists such as Madonna, bordering between exploitation of the female body and liberation of 'her' sexual drives. This turnaround, according to McDonald, has opened up opportunities for artists to rethink the female nude in representation as something positive, enabling ways to express 'woman's' sexual desires. She maintains that reconsidering ambiguity as something positive, rather than a suspicious side effect, as in Lynda Nead's view, will allow artists and interpreters to rethink the body in representation.

It is only towards the end of McDonald's study that ambiguity be-

comes more problematic. After having gone through pains to elaborate on all the positive effects of ambiguities for a feminist orientated production and critique of art, McDonald concludes that:

While the principle of inclusiveness may be extended to older women, on ethical grounds, for example, the increase in child pornography and the eroticisation of children in advertising suggests that this principle [ambiguity as a positive force] should not always be applied.³¹

Her own stance on the matter is ambivalent too. Whilst on the one hand she positively cites Catharine Lumby, she also thinks this author is taking it one step too far when Lumby's strong position against censorship extends into representations of children. Lumby's arguments against censorship of representation of sex are appealing. As she points out, a pro-censorship policy is not only in line with conservatism but is also about speech control, a strategy not favourable to feminist critique. Lumby brings up as an example of ambiguous representations of sexualised children, a Calvin Klein advertising campaign that ran in 1995, featuring young teenagers mostly clad in underwear. Lumby summarises opponents' critique against the campaign, which argued that the 1970s style room, where the scenarios were set, evoked adult magazines of that era. Furthermore, opponents criticised the images as being 'kiddie porn', and claimed that these images exposed them to overtly sexualised images of themselves, and to an imitation of adult sexual behaviour. Lumby's argument is that mid-teen kids are not only extremely media savvy, they are also sexual beings. She writes: 'Rather than seeking to ban images which depict teenagers as sexually precocious, concerned adults might accomplish more by supporting the availability of quality sex education, contraception and personal counselling for high school kids.'³² McDonald is with Lumby on this one, and so am I, but McDonald rightly criticises Lumby for still not trying to get to the bottom of the problem; why advertising and pornography continue to offend so many women.

According to McDonald ambiguity is a term 'associated with the imprecision of language'. But, as she points out, in visual arts, ambiguity, whether employed as a conscious strategy, or as an accident, is a result

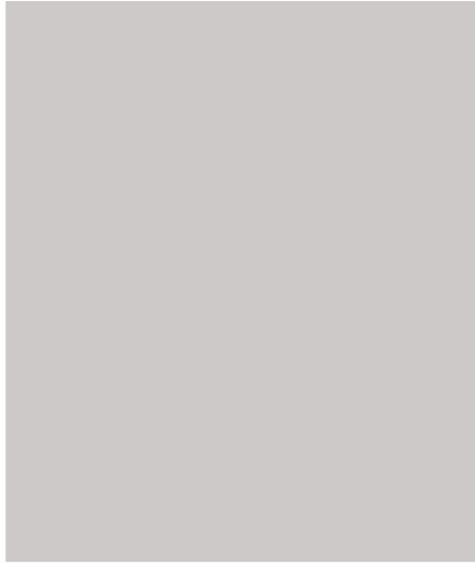
of complication, vagueness or obscuring. McDonald continues and argues that ambiguity, depending on someone's critical perspective, can:

occur in the mind or the body of the artist, or in the way the artist is positioned as a 'subject' in discourse. It can be found in the artwork or in the spectator, in public or in private space, or in the relationship between the art and its historical context. If art is to be seen as an extension to the body, and as a point of mediation between the artist's body and that of the spectator, ambiguity is an effect of its being both an object for erotic display and an object of erotic, visual pleasure. As such, ambiguity is of primary interest in a feminist analysis of the female body in visual representation.³³

The ambiguity in Cronqvist's work subscribes to many of the different levels McDonald maps out. If it occurs in the mind or the body of the artist we are not to know, but it is probably safe to assume that the artist Lena Cronqvist's subject position as a woman, making ambiguous images of herself as a girl, does entail a certain degree of ambiguity. In Cronqvist's case ambiguity is found in 'the way the artist is positioned as a "subject" in discourse', within the artwork, as well as in the spectator. McDonald's discussion around ambiguity is useful because at the same time as she argues convincingly the positive effects for feminism of ambiguity in representation of women, she also agrees that as soon as pre-adult bodies come into question, the discussion is not as straightforward. Rather than offering an answer, her discussion points to the many sides of representations of girls. What does run as an undercurrent, not fully brought forward in her discussion, is the position of the viewer. It seems that as much as there are ambiguous levels inherent in the figures' bodies in Cronqvist's images, they also call for complex and ambiguous viewing scenarios.

Anxious Looking

In Greuze's painting *Ariadne*, 1786 (fig. 31), the figure is throwing back her head, rolling up her eyes in the sockets whilst lustfully separating her full moist lips. The sensual gesture is emphasised as one



31 Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *Ariadne*, 1786, 49 x 42.8 cm oil on wood, the Wallace Collection, London.

of her hands lightly touches the throat whilst holding up a corner of the dress, as if in a vain attempt to conceal her exposed breasts. Mary Sheriff has observed that representations of women in ecstasy are marked by precisely this body language, where the prime example is Lorenzo Bernini's (1598-1680) sculpture *St Theresa's Ecstasy*.³⁴ Jacques Lacan said of the sculpture that 'you only have to go and look at Bernini's sculpture in Rome to understand immediately that she is coming, there is no doubt about it.'³⁵ Lacan's comment prompted an answer from Luce Irigaray, criticising the psychoanalyst over his view on women. In her text 'Così Fan Tutti', Irigaray delivers an analysis of psychoanalytic discourses on female sexuality. One of her arguments is that in this discourse, 'the feminine occurs only within models and laws devised by male subjects'. She argues that it is a challenge to ask if women can express anything at all, which for Lacan would have challenged his 'mastery'.

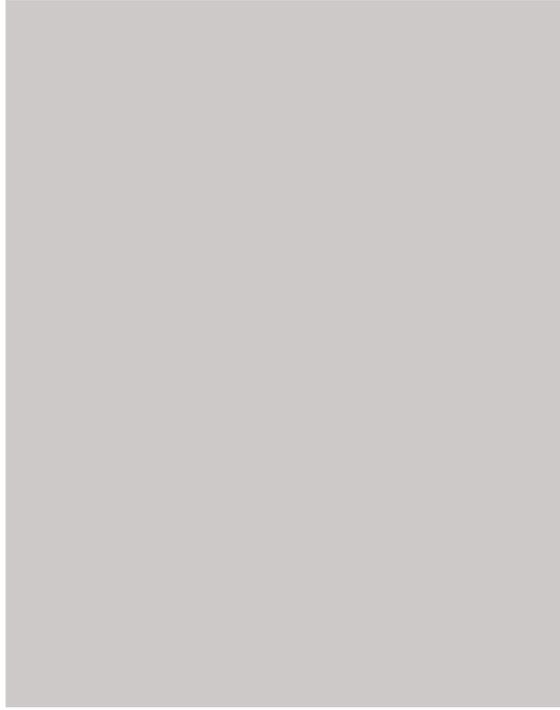
And to make sure this does not come up, the right to experience pleasure is awarded to a statue. “Just go look at Bernini’s sculpture in Rome, you’ll see right away that St Theresa is coming, there is no doubt about it.” In Rome? So far away? To Look? At a statue? Of a saint? Sculpted by a man? What pleasure are we talking about? Whose pleasure? For where the pleasures of the Theresa in question is concerned, her own writings are perhaps more telling. But how can one “read” them when one is a man? The production of ejaculations of all sorts often prematurely emitted, makes him miss, in the desire for identification with the lady, what her own pleasure might be all about.³⁶

In her angry answer to Lacan’s interpretation of Bernini’s *St Theresa*, Irigaray makes visible the uneven distribution of power when it comes to making images of femininity. Not only are these dominated by the man as the ‘author’, the femininity on display becomes simply a mediator for expressing the male fantasy. She also points out that even though a woman had made such an image, it would be hard for a ‘male’ dominated culture to interpret it. As many theorists have pointed out, the making of and looking at visual arts has been strongly dominated by the male gaze and I have already mentioned Mulvey’s theories. When, according to her, we look at narrative art, or as she writes about narrative film in the essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, the film places us in a particular viewing position. She analyses how in many films the hero is always the man, and the heroine is defined by the man’s desire for her. Thus, regardless of the person’s gender when looking at a particular film, or piece of art, we are positioned in a particular viewing position, and we are destined to identify with the hero.³⁷

I think there is little doubt that Greuze’s paintings of girls and young women call for a typically ‘male gaze’ orientated viewing. However, when Cronqvist employs the girl figure, and positions ‘her’ in sometimes ambiguous scenarios, the viewing gets more complicated. For a start, is it possible to represent oneself in a visual language where the woman, or girl, is already objectified and to a certain extent exploited? As discussed above, the question of whether a woman artist can suc-

successfully reclaim and renegotiate that image has been much debated and there are many view points and conflicting theories on the matter. To a certain extent, Cronqvist's work reflects this debate, at least, when as in this chapter, viewed in the light of other artists' work where the girl figure is colonised by a male view. In *Looking On: Images of Femininity and in the Visual arts and media* Rosemary Betterton summarises issues about looking at pictures of women. She points out that women who represents themselves face a fundamental problem; given the history of the female nude as an erotic spectacle, can women find a new imagery for the female body, which escapes oppressive codes of representation? She questions if it is at all possible for a woman to represent herself without 'destroying' the old images of femininity.³⁸ Cronqvist has bravely stuck her head into the lion's jaws, when she reworks ambiguous themes from the history of art, and challenges the whole discourse on representations of women. In the previous chapter the theme of Leda and the swan was central; here I look at how Cronqvist's images evoke a tradition of a compromised view on little girls in representation. In all these examples she makes use of exactly that narrative that has objectified femininity and has been seen as oppressive for women. In some of her images, as in *Girl, Gorilla and Sun*, the girl figures' sexuality is strongly emphasised, but at the same time the image is profoundly un-erotic. In other words, I think Cronqvist successfully reclaims the girl figure from the male gaze.

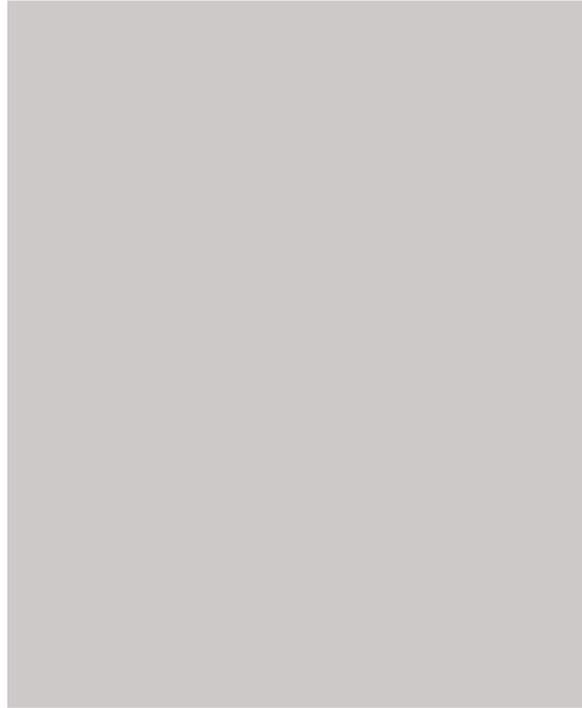
As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Cronqvist has worked with variations on the theme 'daddy and girl', a theme with many layers of ambiguity. In a painting from 1990 *Daddy's Girl (Pappas flicka)*, (fig. 32; plate 7), the father figure sits on a grey cube, which is the only other element in the image, apart from the father and the daughter. His large body swamps the tiny little girl, whose smallness is exaggerated by her very thin limbs, contrasted to the father's large hands. The figures are surrounded by bare surfaces, a background and an empty floor, yet to me this image feels claustrophobic. The father holds the girl, and his face looks tender. The girl's face on the other hand looks rather morose. Sven Sandström suggests one reading and writes that the image is about 'a child encapsulated in love and belief,



32 Lena Cronqvist, *Daddy's Girl (Pappas flicka)*, 1990, 114 x 117 cm. (see plate 7)

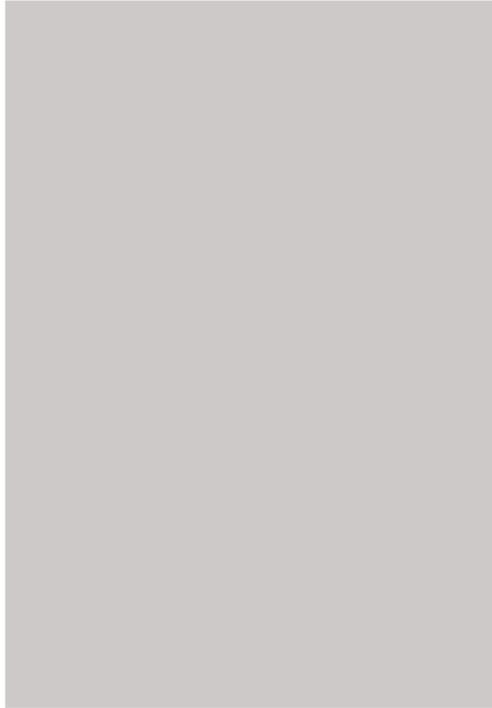
ready to run away and do her own things'.³⁹ I cannot quite agree with Sandström; to me this painting does not easily read as a manifestation of love and belief – at least not without complications.

Another way of approaching the image is to compare it with a later version, *Daddy and Girl (Pappa och flicka)*, 1993 (fig. 33; plate 8). The father, sitting on a yellow, cubic stool, is holding the girl in much the same way as in the sculpture and painting from 1990 (fig. 21). He holds the girl and she holds onto him, or leans against him, having her hands on each of his legs. The father and the daughter are very similar in the two paintings. They are for example dressed in the same clothes, the father in his black trousers and a white t-shirt, and the girl in a short, red, sleeveless dress. In the title we are alerted to two figures, and indeed the daddy and the girl are in the limelight, but there is a third character lying in the background, which gives sig-



33 Lena Cronqvist, *Daddy and Girl (Pappa och Flicka)*, 1993, 55 x 44cm. (see plate 8)

nificant meaning to the drama. The mother figure, looking somewhat abandoned, suggests a narrative to this picture, where the girl and the father are united and the mother quite literally put to one side. Thus, reading the theme in terms of some kind of Oedipal drama is yet another approach, where the mother and the daughter are each other's rivals for the father's attention. If that is an acceptable interpretation, then in this painting it is the girl who triumphs, but she does not look particularly triumphant or happy, rather the opposite. The girl looks trapped and her inward looking face and blank stare in the later version underlines the sense of claustrophobia mentioned above. This entrapment is even stronger in the first version; the two figures' bodies are much tighter together, where the girl is embraced by the father's whole body. It is also furthered by the direction of their



34 Balthus, *Joan Miró and his Daughter Dolores*, 1937-38, oil on canvas, 130.2 x 88.9 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

gazes. In the later version the figures are looking, or at least they have eyes, and gaze blankly ahead. In the first version they are deprived of their eyes, which are substituted by black, mask like holes (something Cronqvist has employed many times and I discussed it in relation to the painting *Olympus* in chapter one).

The variations of 'daddy and girl' are depicted as scenes from a family drama. A painting by Balthus, *Joan Miró and his Daughter Dolores*, 1937-38 (fig. 34) makes for a great comparison as the resemblances in theme as well as composition are striking. It is likely that Cronqvist knows about this painting and her awareness of Balthus and his images of girls has been previously recognised. Nina Weibull wrote in *The Grove Dictionary of Art*: "These [girl figures] lonely children are enclosed in a strange, luminous atmosphere, recalling both 15th

century fresco painting and the art of Balthus (1908-2001).⁴⁰ On an occasion when I talked to the artist about Balthus she did indeed confirm that she found his girl figures compelling but in some kind of twisted way.⁴¹ Balthus's painting of Joan Miró (1893-1983) and his daughter shows a man sitting on a wooden chair. Standing between his legs is his daughter Dolores. He is dressed in a dark suit and the girl in a stripy, knee length dress with puff sleeves. The background is reduced of any other narrative – unusual for Balthus's paintings which otherwise are full of props to enforce the narrative.⁴² The reduced and flat background is very much like those in Cronqvist's paintings of girls. The painting is split into two parts, with a sharp horizontal line separating the dark floor from the not as dark greenish, brownish back wall. The similarities continue, because, just as in Cronqvist's images of 'daddy and girl', Miró and his daughter are ambiguously represented. They are holding onto each other in a way that suggests an uncertain power relation. The father is grabbing her waist with one of his arms, so as to hold onto his daughter. However, she is holding him too, with one hand on his knee, and the other hand over his hand. The double holding of each other can be seen as sign of their mutual affection, which is immediately contradicted by their faces, completely devoid of expression or emotion.

Guilty Viewers

We have in front of us two very similar paintings, made by two different artists where the time gap of fifty years place them in different cultural contexts. Do these differences matter? When I compare Cronqvist with Greuze, it is just a loose comparison where his girls are examples of a visual tradition, which Cronqvist's work subverts at large. Balthus's painting of Miró and his daughter is different, as I argue that the similarities in theme and composition with Cronqvist's *Daddy's Girl* and *Daddy and Girl* are striking. If we accept that the paintings are of the same thing, a father and his daughter, does it matter to us when viewing these that one was made by a man and the other a woman?

Balthus portrait is markedly different from his other representations of girls, where he has excelled as a master of explicit propositions, where the girl figure's sexuality is strongly underlined and fully colonised by a male gaze. Balthus, often talking about himself in third person, denied readings of his images as transmitting a sense of sexuality, blaming it all on the viewer:

Perhaps here is as good a place as any to point out that the fabled theme of the young adolescent girl, which Balthus has treated repeatedly, has nothing whatsoever to do with sexual obsession except perhaps in the eye of the beholder. These girls are in fact emblematic archetypes belonging to another, higher realm. Their very youth is the symbol of an ageless body of glory, as adolescence (from Latin *adolescere*: to grow toward) aptly symbolizes that heavenward state of growth, which Plato refers to in the *Timaeus*. Eroticism is nowadays confused with libidinousness, thus obscuring the true intelligence of esoteric works ultimately pertaining to the divine cosmic mystery of love and desire.⁴³

The artist's brother and writer, Pierre Klossowski, on the other hand, delivered a somewhat contradictory statement. He confirms the blatant, exploitative streaks in the image, without himself necessarily regarding the exposure of the girls as either blatant nor exploitative. The quote below concerns the painting *The Room*, 1952-54.⁴⁴ The image features a girl dressed in Balthus's trademark outfit for girls; white knee high socks and red slippers or shoes. In this painting the girl is otherwise naked, draping her young body over a chaise lounge, head tilted backwards and arm flung out, a bit like Marat in Jacques-Louis David's (1748-1825) painting *The Death of Marat*, 1793.⁴⁵ Pierre Klossowski points out the ambiguities in the image, concerning whether the girl has been violated or pleased.

The light of day is cast upon the victim, offered and thrown back on a chaise lounge, is this an orgasm following a rape? Or else nothing happened at all. The painting seems to be situated on the verge where nothing happened and the irrevocable are poised. The determined gesture of the figure pulling back the curtain is like an endless reiteration

of the flagrant delicato of which the cat in the table is the only witness: the cat (belonging to the same species as the skirted dwarf) observes with the same amazement the illuminating gesture at it's accomplice what consequences will the latter draw from what he is showing, other than a magnificent painting.⁴⁶

Regarding the dress code, the art historian, Jean Clair, suggests it is an important element as an erotic accessory 'for the echoes it arouses in male imagination'.⁴⁷ There is little doubt about the messages in Balthus paintings. I disagree with the artist on this matter, who argued that any sexual obsession has to do with the viewer. Certainly his somewhat twisted imagery does not appeal to each and every viewer. However, what they do is evoke an awareness of eroticism, if a somewhat murky eroticism.

In his greater body of work Balthus made himself famous for fusing common themes from the history of art, such as a woman doing her toilette, with an iconography of eroticised girls, and I would like to argue that his images turn us into involuntary voyeurs of a gloomy old drama, where the voyeuristic experience is one of guilt. I questioned above whether the artists' gender was important to the interpretation of their paintings. In the case of Balthus's portrait *Joan Miró and his Daughter Dolores*, I would like to say that it is not so important who he was, but that the body of work that made him famous infuses my viewing of his art in general and the discussed portrait in particular. However, in that view I might just be too blinded by my past experience of Balthus images, and neglect to see this portrait for what it is. The ambiguities in the portrait of Miró and Dolores are of a different kind, neither sexual nor voyeuristic. Yet the image is no warm portrait characterised by affection between the two family members. The father is holding the girl with his hand around her waist, a double gesture of affection and control. The same goes for the girl, whose leaning against the father can be seen as a trustful act. Her hand on top of his can also be seen as an act of control, albeit contradicted by its limpness, which underlines the two characters' empty and placid expression. The image is filled with a great feeling of discomfort, or

indeed boredom as Rewald suggested. This is taken even further, knowingly or not, in Cronqvist's painting *Daddy's Girl* (fig. 32; plate 7) where the father's affection seems exaggerated by his tilted head, leaning towards the daughter. She on the other hand seems swamped by the massiveness of his body and big hands. Her overly thin arms are utterly delicate and seem barely powerful enough to make any movements at all. Her resistance is concentrated to the face, whose empty eyes and blank expression refuse any contact, from within or outside the image, and it is this cold look, which infuse the painting with meaning.

If it is not particularly important for our viewing experience that the painter of *Joan Miró and his Daughter Dolores* was the male artist Balthus, it is of much greater importance who Cronqvist is as an artist. That she is a woman, painting herself as a girl, is important and interesting, although if she had been a man and painted herself as a boy in his father's arms, the interpretation might have been much the same. What is more crucial, and where the two paintings differ most, is that Balthus has made an outsider's reading of two other persons, interpreting their relationship. When we look at Cronqvist's painting, we know that at one level this is a self-portrait, which complicates the levels of ambiguities even further, because then it is, potentially, a self-confessional image. Regardless of whether it is a confessional image or not, and it is very likely that it isn't, upon which I will elaborate in the next chapter, the fact that it is a kind of self portrait adds meaning to the painting.

Cronqvist's paintings of girls do evoke the male gaze tradition. Yet, as Weibull has suggested, at the same time as the girl is made into an object in the painting, by staring back the child offers the viewer some resistance.⁴⁸ The type of guilt one may encounter as a viewer of her paintings, in line with my arguments above, is different than that experienced in relation to the work of Greuze or Balthus. At the same time as attention is drawn to Cronqvist's girl figures' biology, and the sometimes ambiguous scenarios, their bodies are not made erotic, nor are the images seductive. With reference to the ongoing debate about girls in representation, and whether Cronqvist successfully manages

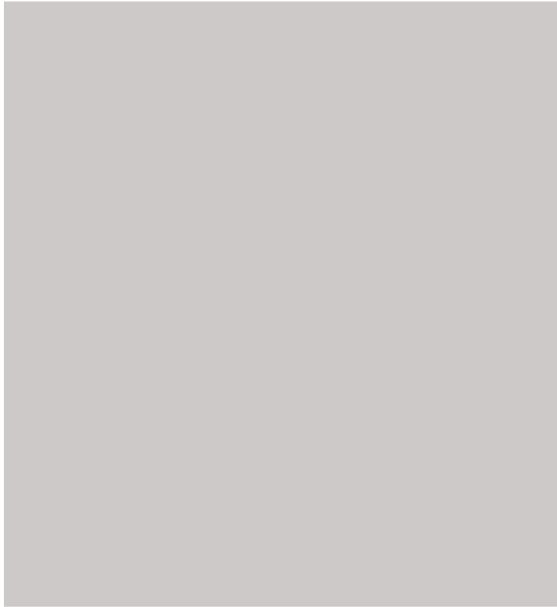
to reinterpret representation of girls, I would like to argue that her girl figures are either 'good or bad'. On the one hand they can be read as victims of the male gaze, but much more so, they challenge that reading and most of all they leave us with a positively subversive and ambiguous interpretation, where it is left to the viewer to fill in the story the image only suggests. In the case of Cronqvist's figures discussed here, when the figures' inward focus refuses the viewer's visual touch, it is as if the ambiguities occur in the viewer as much as in the image.

3 Fictitious Realities and Narrative Structures

Hallucinations, fantasies, dreams seem to
me to possess a high degree of reality.

AUGUST STRINDBERG ¹

In Cronqvist's painting, *The Girl in the Water II* (fig. 35; plate 9), the figure stands isolated before an abstracted background, but this image is anything but abstract. Firstly the title, *The Girl in the Water*, instructs us to read the pattern as water. Secondly, the girl figure placed in the middle is figurative and particularly her nudity is descriptive; she has obviously undressed to take a dip in the sea. Her white skin has the tan line of a short-sleeved dress and the way in which the figure holds up her hands suggests that although the sea is very tempting, it is a tad too cold to plunge into. But stopping for a moment to look again, I realise that nothing in the image or the title actually conveys *how* the painting should be interpreted. Without being able to help myself I have filled in the empty spaces of this 'narrative'. As an art historian I could continue and make reference to the myth of Aphrodite (see chapter one), who is depicted in numerous paintings approaching land from the sea. Or I may argue in favour of the voyeuristic male gaze objectifying the female body (see chapter two). As the private me, I am reminded of taking a skinny-dip in the cold Swedish sea in summer, and so relate the image to the realm of my reality or self-lived experience. I have already mentioned in the 'Introduction', that Cronqvist's art often comes across as 'real', as if it was somehow a documentary of her own life. Undoubtedly, this has something to do with a sense of reality transmitted through her paintings. This paint-



35 Lena Cronqvist, *The Girl in the Water II* (*Flickan i vattnet II*), 1982, 150 x 135 cm. (see plate 9)

ings seems to draw both upon realistic and illusory traits, which demonstrates the closeness between the effect of reality and narrative in representation. This relationship between real and fictional is exemplified by the quote from Strindberg, in which he proposed that the illusory seems to 'possess a high degree of reality'. The full paragraph in the letter from which the quote originates reads:

Hallucinations, fantasies, dreams seem to me to possess a high degree of reality. If I see my pillow assume human shapes those shapes are there, and if anyone says they are

only (!) fashioned by my imagination, I reply: You say 'only'? – What my inner eye sees means more to me! And what I see in my pillow, which is made of birds' feathers, that once were bearers of life, and of flax, which in its fibre has borne the power of life, is soul, the power to create forms, and it *is* real, since I can draw these figures and show them to others.²

I take Strindberg's thoughts as my starting point for thinking about the narrative aspects of Cronqvist's images. Strindberg thought that the hallucinatory was as real as anything. This made me think of how much Cronqvist's images manage to confuse her viewers that these in some sense are imprints of events or people that actually existed. However, instead of, as Strindberg, arguing that the fictional is real, I shall look at different narrative levels in Cronqvist's art.

In this chapter I focus on different fictional traits in Cronqvist's images, and the narrative elements I shall discuss can be split into two parts. In the first section I concentrate on the biographical theme

that runs in her work and the presence of a *reality effect*. These are themes where fiction and reality are fused into what I would like to call a 'fictitious reality'.³ When I employ the terms real and reality in this chapter, I do so with a dictionary definition in mind, where 'real' means something not 'illusory, fictional' but rather something actually existing, or 'genuine'.⁴ Consequently what I call a reality effect, is that which might come across as real, but the added word effect announces its artfulness and thus that we are talking about a piece of art and therefore to some extent fiction. In the second part of this chapter I look elsewhere to get to grips with the narrative, turn the focus to the structure of the images, and discuss how the titles, settings and use of repetition all become important parts of the stories presented by Cronqvist.

Family Members or Fictional Figures

I have already mentioned that Cronqvist has employed her own and her family members' features in her art for many years. In the girl series, the artist as a young girl is central to the images, together with her younger sister. The other two main characters are their parents, who are also easily recognisable from her earlier body of work. Cronqvist has said in interviews that it was important to her in the earlier version of the girl theme, from the 1970s, 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, that the girls carried her and her sister's features. Thus, what seems to be presented are some kind of portraits of the artist and her close circle of family members. Looking at the artist's biography for guidance as to how to interpret these scenarios might therefore be anything but far fetched. Once one knows that the artist has based the features of these figures on real people, and particularly people in her immediate vicinity, it is enormously tempting to search for an answer to these narratives in the artist's own life. Yet, as I have discussed, a biographical reading is a risky strategy, even for an artist who uses her life in her art.⁵ The artist has also said that towards the later part of the 1990s that resemblance did no longer carry the same priority.⁶ Furthermore, at the same time as we will never know more about the

artist than she choose to submit, thinking too much about the artist's intentions or life in relation to what she has represented, can cause us to get stuck in our interpretations.⁷

Maurice Merleau-Ponty discussed in an interesting way problems of a biographical focus in the interpretation of Paul Cézanne's (1839-1906) work:

If Cézanne's life seems to us to carry the seeds of his work within it, it is because we get to know his work first and see the circumstances of his life through it, charging them with a meaning borrowed from that work.⁸

Merleau-Ponty discusses how to perceive artists' lives in relation to their work. He comes to the conclusion that the two are necessarily interdependent, and if interpreted correctly the life of an artist may be useful to understand his or her art. However, a biographical interpretation is potentially misleading and in my understanding of Merleau-Ponty's text, it is more useful to see how the art of a certain person enlightens his or her life, and life in general, than how their life enlightens their art.⁹ Certain experiences and influences urge the artist to create specific works, circumstances that were true for one person but may also be true for others.

Several writers have pointed out, in relation to Cronqvist's work, that despite the self-referential streaks in her art, her images are most interesting when applied to life in general. I would like to continue that thought, and put further emphasis on the fictional streaks in her work. In reverse to Strindberg's quote at the top, I would argue that however real these images might come across, they are always fictional. Thus, despite being based on real characters, we are better off looking at this group of family members as fictional characters. Indeed, when looking closely, this is underlined within the images. When comparing a painting from the earlier part of the 1990s, for example *Girls, Cat and Parents*, (*Flickor, katt och föräldrar*), 1990 with the *By the Table I* (*Vid bordet I*), 1998 (fig. 36; plate 10), the shift between the figures from portrait-like, to fictional beings in their own right, is visible.¹⁰ In the first example, the girls look distinctly 'like themselves', as they are represented in the

earlier images with girl figures, and it is particularly their facial features, their hair and the sizes of their bodies, which make them look familiar. The main girl has one particular arrangement with her hair, with a red ribbon pinning up the fringe to one side. The younger sister has her hair braided in loops around each of her ears. The parents are large and statuesque, and in *Girls, Cat and Parents* their black, shadow



36 Lena Cronqvist, *By the Table I (Vid bordet I)*, 1998, 121 x 144 cm. (See plate 10)

like bodies are moving away from the two girls. Still, their profiles allow for identification, and the father's baldness and the mother's bob are present as usual. In the *By the Table* paintings we can still recognise the four figures, but their features have become much less distinct. The parent figures are reduced to the size of dolls and are distorted through the red noses and gaping mouths. The girls on the other hand are still girls, and while characterised by their hairstyles, they look much more like each other. In some images the two girls are even interchangeable. In other words, the features that before so easily mapped the figures with 'real' people are less clear-cut towards the end of the 1990s. Even the difference in size between the two girls is evened out. In *Girls, Cat and Parents* the older girl is noticeably larger than the younger, compared to the *By the Table* paintings where the two figures are more or less of the same height.

I would argue that it is most interesting to look at these characters when they exist in their own right. Not only will they continue to be 'girls', 'daddy' and 'mummy' in a universal meaning, rather than Lena and her family, for as long as the artworks survive, but that is also how

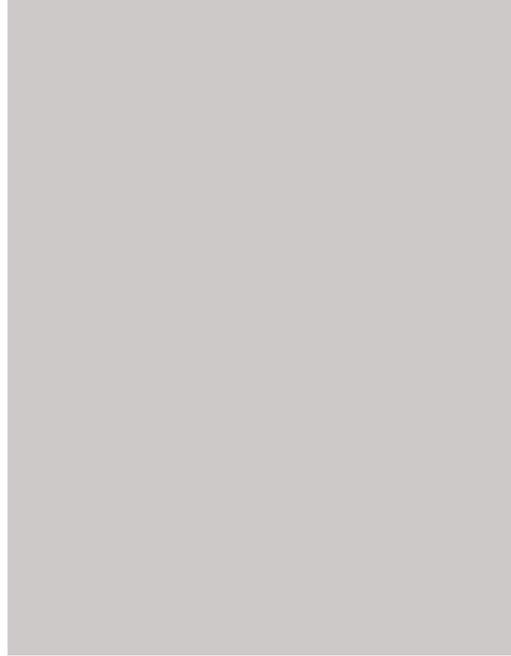
they appear to any viewer who might not have the biographical background information. It is only when we accept them as figures within this drama that we are liberated to look at the narratives for what they are. The question of what might have happened to whom becomes obsolete, and certainly the artist herself has become expressively tired of having to answer questions like 'did that really happen to you'.¹¹ The question that will always remain is what happens in the image, and in the meeting between the image and each viewer.

The (con)Fusion between Reality and Fiction

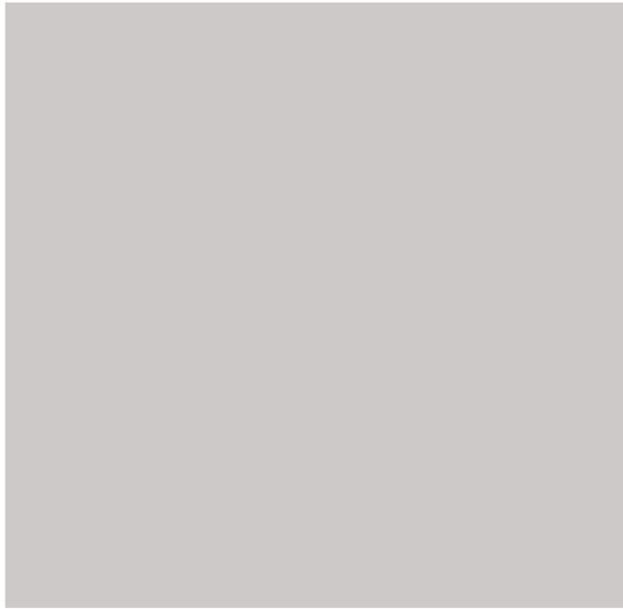
The fusion between reality and fiction in the arts has often caused outrage. Keeping to the theme of representations of girls, it is worthwhile to mention Vladimir Nabokov's book *Lolita*. After much difficulty, and having already been published in Europe (in Sweden in 1957 and in the UK in 1959) it eventually found a publisher also in the USA, where the author was resident. The novel caused a moral panic amongst readers, as the book's content was too challenging.¹² Despite being fictitious, the novel has continued to provoke its readers, (but has even more been praised as an astonishing piece of art ever since).¹³ The second film adaptation of *Lolita* (the first was made in 1962 and directed by Stanley Kubrick) was made in 1997 and directed by Adrian Lyne but did not make it to the screens in the USA, nor in Sweden where it was only distributed on video. No distributor dared release the film due to its controversial theme, despite it having been made into a film once already, which was not perceived to be controversial, and being based on what was by that stage a very well known novel.¹⁴ The reasons why the story caused outrage in the 1950s as well as in the 1990s are surely many, but one major factor is of course its subversive theme.¹⁵ Very roughly the plot reveals the way in which the middle-aged man Humbert Humbert marries Lolita's mother in order to stay close to the girl, with whom he is obsessed. The girl's 'real' name is Dolores, coincidentally the same as Miró's daughter in the portrait *Joan Miró and his Daughter Dolores* (fig. 34) (see chapter two), but the girl in the novel is quickly nicknamed Lolita by Hum-

bert. Subsequently the mother gets killed in an accident and as luck will have it for Humbert he gets custody of the young girl. He then proceeds to seduce and sometimes force Lolita into sexual activities. *Lolita* is a fictional novel pretending to be a document of reality, and as the novel starts off as a confession, the fusion of narrative and real is kick-started. Nabokov writes in the foreword that he has been sent a letter outlining the events which Humbert, who had died in his prison cell a few days before his trial, had wished be turned into a novel.¹⁶ *Lolita* is a good example of how fiction can stir the audience because it touches upon issues that are sensitive, and which in reality have severe consequences for its victims.

Another quite different but in its time still subversive representation of girls that springs to mind is Edgar Degas' (1834-1917) sculpture *Little Dancer aged Fourteen*, 1922 (fig. 37).¹⁷ The first version, from 1880-81, was made in wax, dressed in clothes made from linen and silk, the hair was taken from a horse and makeup added to lips and cheeks. The sculpture, measuring close to a meter in height, was cast in bronze after Degas's death and exists in about 30 samples. The bronze figure is clad in what was once a pink gauze tutu. At the time of the casting of the sculpture, the skirt was made to look as old and worn as the wax version that had been in the artist's studio for 40 years. Time has probably added its own patina too, and what remains today is a bleak and dirty shadow of the once so bright and firm ballerina dress. Degas's sculpture famously caused bewilderment at the sixth impressionist exhibition in 1881.¹⁸ Degas was perceived

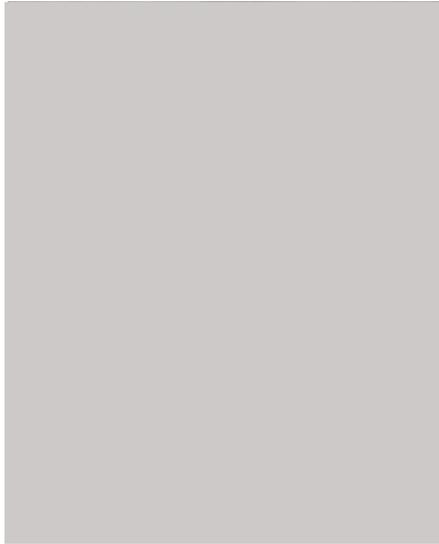


37 Edgar Degas, *Little Dancer aged Fourteen*, 1922, bronze, Tate Collection, London.



38 Lena Cronqvist, *Telltale (Skvallerbytta)*, 1993-1994, bronze, h. 17 cm.

as overturning the conventions for sculpture and some critics and audience were disgusted by the girl's ugliness. Others were disturbed by the elements of life like materials in this early example of modernist sculpture, where prefabricated materials were incorporated into the sculpture.¹⁹ I do not suggest that Cronqvist's works shock or cause bewilderment in the way that Degas's sculpture did to its contemporary audience, but Degas's sculpture does have some resonance in Cronqvist's work, both materially and thematically. In her small sculpture *Telltale (Skvallerbytta)*, 1993-1994 (fig. 38), one girl is trying to drench another, as she does in a painting with the same title from 1991. The figures are placed in a square basin filled with water and materially the notion of reality, in this context, becomes very literal and 'actually existing'. When looking at this and other of Cronqvist's sculptures that include water, the water has to a varying degree given the bronze a green patina. The intensity depends on the curators' decision on how much water to put into the square or basin, and for how long it was exhibited in that way. Both Degas and Cronqvist have used life like materials, i.e. some ready made or manufactured object or material from nature.²⁰ The first kind of reality effect, or, to use the



39 Lena Cronqvist, *Telltale*, 1991, 150 x 110 cm, Moderna Museet, Stockholm. (see plate 11)

Swedish art historian Torsten Weimarck's words, the first level of representation, stems from the use of life like material, incorporated into a figurative narrative.²¹ However, it is arguable that all material in her work exist on that absolute level; oil, tempera, canvas, bronze and water alike.²²

Reality as Fiction or Fiction as Reality

The second reality effect that I would like to draw attention to in Cronqvist's images is one which we thematically can recognize. Scenes we feel familiar with, which, together with the faces, which are by now well-known, contribute to the documentary streak in Cronqvist's narratives. This is exemplified by the painting *Telltale*, 1991 (fig. 39; plate 11), which portrays a summertime scene in which two girls are bathing in the sea. The summer holiday idyll in this painting is quickly overshadowed as the older girl is trying to push the younger under the water. The title *Telltale* confirms that one has told on the other and we can guess who is being punished for what. The two girls are

caught just at the right moment, as the younger is about to get her head dipped in the water. The girl receiving the dipping is pulling a face and in an attempt to resist this manhandling, she tries to grasp at the water's surface with her hands, as if the liquid material had turned into ice. The theme in this painting, as well as in the sculpture, comes across as an imprint of reality; we have all experienced children fighting, as children or as adults watching children.

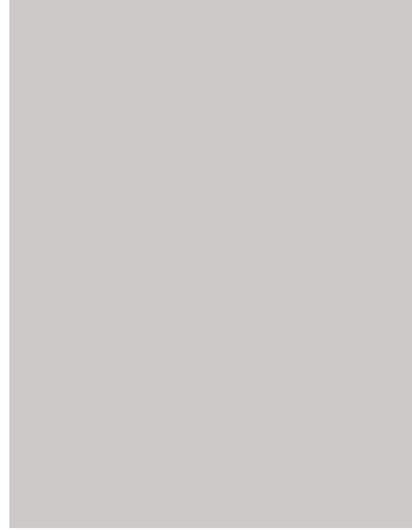
It is difficult not to get affected by Cronqvist's paintings, in different variations they bring up themes that can be hard to deal with. The sense of reality in her images owes something to the fact that they touch upon these sensitive issues: underage girls' sexuality, sibling rivalry, dysfunctional families, and angry and sometimes mean children. Weibull writes about the reaction of a student on one occasion when she presented Cronqvist's work. The student in question was strongly opposed to the content in the images as they touched upon 'that of which one should not speak'.²³ Just like some of the critics contemporary to Degas, that were taken aback by the strain in the dancer's young face, viewers of Cronqvist's work are struck by the immediacy of the figures. Neither Degas nor Cronqvist try to hide anything about the models' imperfect features or displeasing 'behaviour', as Linda Nochlin describes in her analysis of the *Little Dancer*:

Yet perhaps the most vivid of all of Degas's works in the novelty of its realism and its sense of sheer immediacy, is his statue of a female who is neither quite yet a woman, nor quite fallen: *The Little Dancer of Fourteen*. Certainly the most convincing of representations of adolescence in sculpture since Donatello's *David*, the *Dancer* is significant in that Degas has not represented either a famous personage or some allegorical quality, the usual pretexts for sculpture-making at the time, yet, at the same time, although technically anonymous, the little dancer is in actuality absolutely concrete and immediate as an entity, the sub-heroic heroine personified, accurate in pose, gesture and even, in the tulle skirt and coloured surfaces, in the very material of which she is made. In the artificial pose of her profession, angular by reason of age and arrogant by nature, this is a tantalizing simulacrum, softened neither by

the generalization of classical idealism nor by that of romantic pathos. The *Dancer* is as a Realist work must be, in the present tense, singular.²⁴

Nochlin reads the realism of this work on several levels. Materially, as discussed above, the sculpture mimics a real dancer in terms of the textiles she would wear. Nochlin also points out that thematically it is the immediacy of the figure, which is at the core of the Realist project. Nochlin argues that this work stands out, that it is not in any way softened and it exists in 'the present tense, singular'.

Nochlin's analysis of Degas's sculpture inspired me to recognise a sense of immediacy and singularity in some of Cronqvist's images. When looking at her representations of girls, it is nearly impossible to avoid the directness which the images communicate. In *Telltale* for example there are no extenuating circumstances, the situation is displayed in all its rawness. In the painting *Hand in Hand* (fig. 40; plate 12) 1990, the two girls are standing in the sea holding hands. The water is as blue as the sky, as it would be on a sunny summer day. Just as the sculpture *Telltale*, this is a scene that could be from anywhere at any time. But then again maybe not, as the sky is painted in a pale blue colour which betrays the northern hemisphere and the girls' short hair indicates the twentieth century. Nevertheless, when looking closer at this seemingly peaceful painting, some disturbing elements emerge. As so often in Cronqvist's work, the girl figures are not picture perfect, happily smiling towards the viewers, which according to Walkerdine we have come to expect from images of girls.²⁵ However, there are some other, more subtle disturbances at play. The older girl is looking at her little sister, but the eyes never hit the side of the sister's face but seem to just miss her. The sister's eyes do not communicate much either, as she looks



40 Lena Cronqvist, *Hand in Hand* (*Hand i hand*), 1990, 150 x 117 cm. (see plate 12)

blankly ahead and this lack of communication voids the image of any warm feelings. The two figures are not only holding hands, their limbs are intertwined so it is not clear where one hand begins and the other ends. This interlaced handholding could be read as a forced connection, rather than a tender clutch. If *Telltale* manifests a dispute between two sisters, *Hand in Hand* seems to pinpoint an emotional imbalance between the family members. Like Degas's *Little Dancer*, Cronqvist's angry girl in *Telltale* is singular; the sculpture stands out and is a manifestation of sibling rivalry, which seems to have few equals in visual arts. If thematically there are any realistic traits in this image, it is most of all that of the 'present tense' as phrased by Nochlin. It is an image that exists here and now, where the violence is striking and the immediacy inescapable.

A statement from Andy Warhol (1928-87) casts some further light on the hazy demarcation between fiction and life, particularly for anyone who has grown up watching television. In his book *From A to B and back again: The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* the artist talks about, amongst many other things, how he perceives reality as fiction.

Before I was shot, I always thought that I was more half-there than all-there – I always suspected that I was watching TV instead of living life. People sometimes say that the way things happen in the movies is unreal, but actually it's the way things happen to you in life that's unreal. The movies make emotions look so strong and real, whereas when things really do happen to you, it's like watching television – you don't feel anything.²⁶

Cronqvist once said in an interview: 'Only because I use myself doesn't mean that what I paint is true.'²⁷ Although what she paints is not necessarily true, it is certainly not untrue either. Cronqvist's stories have become realities of their own in which the figures live their own life. Elaborating a bit more on that I would like to turn to Freud who thought about the conundrum of reality in the case 'The Wolf Man'. Freud argued that it is not decisively important if a case is a real event or a fantasy, even if the analyst (in Cronqvist's case the viewer) was eager to know precisely that, because both give us the same narrative

sequence.²⁸ The traumatic experience is equally true whether the event happened or not. In other words, it is not decisively important that Cronqvist has used her own features, experiences or real life scenarios. Whatever we do with these paintings and sculptures they are still fabrications. Perhaps I can express it like this: however authentic the scenes seem, they are, as images, always fictional. It is precisely this, the meeting between the mimicking of reality and storytelling that, in my opinion, makes Cronqvist's images both disturbing and unavoidable, and which underlines their immediacy. The fact is that the distinction between reality and fiction becomes less and less acute, the more these images are explored. What we have in front of us are stories, regardless of whether they are based on biographical facts, actual events, psychological traumas or literary sources. Or, as the art historian, Ernst Van Alphen, wrote about Francis Bacon's paintings: "The question is not whether these images are narrative but how."²⁹

Narrative Structures

It may well be true that narrative "is simply there, like life"; but that does not mean that it is like life.

WOLFGANG KEMP³⁰

In cinema studies narrative is defined as 'recounting of real or fictitious events'. Thus stress lies on the recounting or storytelling, regardless of whether the content is fictitious or not. It is this understanding of narrative I shall emphasise, storytelling, or something that conveys a message of content. In western classical narrative cinema, the plot is character-led and the film offers a clear beginning and end.³¹ In pre-modern visual art, narratives were characterised by a literary, religious or historical story – or stories as several events may take place within the same image or over several panels. Even though a painting may focus on only one moment in a story, for example 'Diana discovering Actaeon' or 'the Annunciation', the story has a beginning and an end in so far as it draws on a known narrative, so the viewers know how to fill

the gaps. In visual art, narrative as illustrative or representational had been persistent. However, with modern and contemporary visual art, film, theatre and literature, a flood of theories have emerged renegotiating narrative structures.³² One early and very influential text is 'Fairy Tale Transformations' published in 1928 by the Russian structuralist Vladimir Propp. Previous scholars had focused on comparing the similarities of the fairy tale's plots and variants. As an alternative Propp suggested that the composition and structure should be considered, which would cast new light on similarities between tales.³³ The objects for Propp's study are in many senses far removed from Cronqvist's representation of girls, but his theory encouraged me to think beyond the thematic and identify other ways in which to look for what is narrative in Cronqvist's paintings. Thus, in the following I will look at similarities of structure in how the stories are told in her images.

There are many examples in contemporary art where a traditional narrative structure is challenged and any underlying text based story rendered non-existent. Mieke Bal, who has combined psychological, structuralist and semiotic theories in her development of narratology, argues that there is a fundamental difference between iconology of an image and visual narratives. If iconology is characterised in classical paintings as 'word-for-word translations of well-known biblical and historical narratives', visual stories are narrative in their own right.³⁴ Thus, she claims, visual narratives can instruct the text with meaning in the same way that a text (for example mythological) can be adopted for images: 'the analysis of visual images as narratives in and of themselves can do justice to an aspect of images and their effect that neither iconography nor other art historical practices can quite articulate.'³⁵ In other words, by focusing on the narrative structures, it is possible to get to grips with further levels of meaning in a work. Van Alphen has a similar view when he argues the difference between conveying and telling a story in Bacon's paintings. Conveying a story would be retelling an existing narrative, whereas 'telling' a story is to make or construct a new story.³⁶

From what I have argued above it is clear that, in my view, Cronqvist is telling a story in Van Alphen's sense, rather than conveying a

story. And, accepting what Bal says, that visual stories are narrative in their own right, I will explore the narrative structures that Cronqvist's paintings have to offer. I would like to propose that whatever the narrative structure the very basic elements of any story-telling are the *characters*, the *setting*, and the *plot*. With a wide interpretation of these elements even the most abstract and conceptual of art could be argued to tell a story. Thus, also in art that renegotiates narrative structures, it seems that these are constant elements. Take for example the recent spectacular installation *The Weather Project* by Olafur Eliasson (b. 1967) at Tate Modern in London.³⁷ Eliasson had created in the museum's massive Turbine Hall a sun, by installing a huge circular light, and a sky by placing a mirror in the ceiling. Throughout the vast space a gentle mist kept pouring out. In this artwork I would argue that the characters in the narrative are the viewers visiting the piece. They responded to the piece by gathering in hordes, lying on the floor and contemplating their own reflections. In short, the viewers made it happen, and the act of viewing, participating and engaging, became the plot. Moreover, the setting of the drama was simply the space in which the piece was installed. In the following I will examine three different levels of narrative structures that are present in Cronqvist's paintings. And whilst these narrative elements are not perhaps as challenging in her paintings as they are in Eliasson's installation, they certainly deserve some exploration. The first narrative level concerns the titles, which, as we shall see, deserve their due attention. The second narrative structure that is of interest is the actual settings, and I argue that these merit an analysis of their own. A third, and last, important structure that I will analyse, has to do with the repetitive way in which the stories are told.

Plotless Stories and Empty Titles

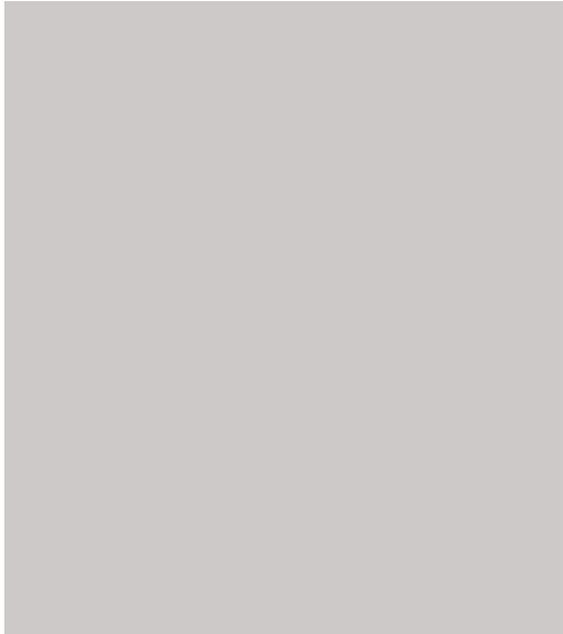
At the beginning of this chapter I identified the main characters in Cronqvist's dramas as the two sisters and the parents. It is more problematic to get to grips with the much more elusive plot, because in many of her paintings there seem to be a lack of events, of which the

painting *Hand in Hand* (fig. 40: plate 12) is one good example. We get the sense that the girls are in the middle of doing something, as they are stood in the middle of the sea, which is something they cannot do forever. Thus, the image is like a snapshot, only suggesting a story, which I will discuss in detail in the next chapter. The painting *Girls, Cat and Parents* offers a bit more drama, as the parents are walking away from the two girls, who are left with each other. Yet, at the same time as a story is implied, the image is still and quiet. One way of getting to grips with the plot in a work of art is, of course, by consulting its title. Some of the titles of her work mentioned so far in this chapter are *Telltale*, *Hand in Hand*, and *Girls, Cat and Parents*, titles that are both descriptive and open ended. By stating exactly what is before our eyes, but by no means exhausting the subject, Cronqvist's titles masquerade as an interpretative tool, but this soon proves to be deceitful. The dead-pan titles give us no further clues other than what we already know. They only provide the most basic of information, in other words the elements each viewer immediately recognises, for example *Girl and Swan*, *Girl*, *Gorilla and Sun* or *Daddy and Girl*. The title *Telltale* on the other hand does suggest a story, but the title gives no more of the particulars than the painting in itself. When reflecting over the nature of Cronqvist's titles, it becomes fairly obvious that the artist's intention is not to guide us in our understanding of her work. This strategy is further underlined by the artist's relative silence on her art. Whilst she does agree to do interviews, the artist rarely lets anything slip in terms of how to read the images.

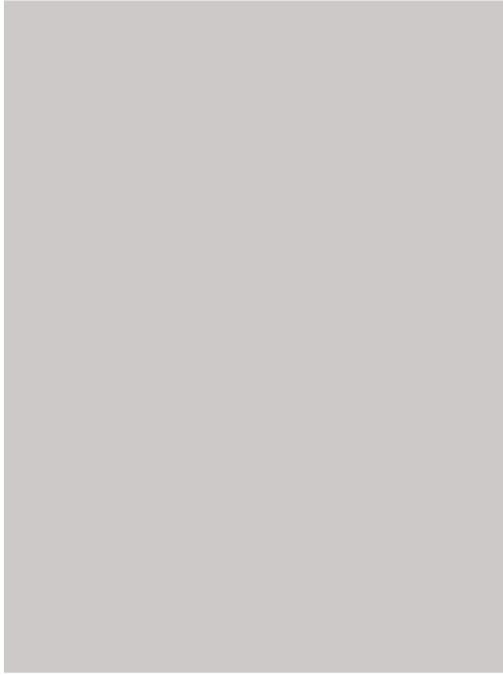
It might be fruitful to compare Cronqvist's paintings of girls with those by the British Portuguese artist Paula Rego (b. 1935). Belonging to the same generation they have in an uncanny way developed a similar artistic strategy resisting the prevailing movements in art of abstraction, minimalism and conceptual art during their formative years in art school. From the start both artists have been immersed in figurative painting. Like Cronqvist, Rego too has been in a continuous dialogue with history of art, and with her cultural heritage in general. Rego has been preoccupied with portraying girl figures and relating to life stories, often her own memories from her childhood in Por-

tugal.³⁸ Throughout Rego's body of work there are plenty of girl figures, which similarly to Cronqvist's, are far from the fairy tale dream in which girls have rosy cheeks and innocent minds. Interestingly, the two artists have approached the girl figure from opposite ends. Whilst Cronqvist makes her girl figures much too young for the roles they sometimes play and the emotions they exuberate, Rego has chosen a different strategy. In several of the paintings where she relates to fairy tale subjects, often with reference to the iconography produced by Disney, she has replaced the girl with a much more adult, robust and sometimes tired looking women. In the context of titles I will look at Rego's *Snow White* series.

Far from the beautiful Snow White in the Grimm Brothers' tale, especially as told through Walt Disney's film from 1956, Rego's version is a rather harsh representation of the development into womanhood.³⁹ The painting *Snow White and her Step Mother*, 1995 (fig. 41), shows the girl in a dress we recognise from Walt Disney's film about the fair princess.⁴⁰ The wicked stepmother, clad in a contemporary looking short dress and high heels, is reluctantly bending down to strip Snow White of her underwear. Snow White in her prim dress with wholesome knitted socks subjects herself to this degrading experience. In order not to fall over she has to lean on the stepmother but tries to minimize the contact by only touching the other's body with the lower part of her palm. The stepmother in her turn is demonstrating her re-



41 Paula Rego, *Snow White and her Step Mother*, 1995, pastel on paper mounted on aluminium, 170 x 150 cm, The Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester.



42 Rineke Dijkstra, *Almerisa*, *Asylumcenter Leiden*, *The Netherlands*, *March 14 1994*, C-print, framed, 62 x 52 cm.

pulsion through the angry expression on her face but even more so by the outstretched fingers. Snow White's minimal touch of the stepmother's body is echoed in the latter's way of holding the knickers with the exaggerated hand gesture. The fairy tale 'Snow White' is about the coming of age and the sometimes difficult relationship between (step)mothers and daughters. The importance of the titles in this series are paramount, because, even though Snow White's dress in some of the paintings might lead us to relate to the fairy tale, in others the clues are all in the titles. The artist has already singled out the context of the work in the title, we know from the fairy tale what will happen and what has preceded the moment which Rego has chosen to

elaborate on. Although Rego's version is her own interpretation of the tale, we have a firm idea of the original story. What Rego then does is to emphasise certain quite Freudian moments, that are told in the fairy tale or that she extrapolates from it. She thereby distorts the saga and directs us in our understanding of it. Thus Rego places her figures in a known narrative, and our recognition of this story is further underlined by the title relating to Snow White. Cronqvist on the other hand confirms in her titles elements of the image, like *Hand in Hand* where the two girls are holding hands, yet avoids contextualising the work, letting the viewer's interpretations hang in the air.

Another artist that makes an interesting comparison when it comes to the narrative structures and the importance of titles is the Dutch artist Rineke Dijkstra (b. 1959). She employs large-scale colour photo portraits and in at least two different series, *Beaches* and *Almerisa*, she

has worked with representations of girls.⁴¹ *Almerisa* is a series of photos of a girl with that name, sitting on a chair in an anonymous room. These photos are strongly connected to their titles, and my interpretation is further influenced by information about the project provided in the exhibition material. The photographed girl, Almerisa, came to the Netherlands as a refugee from Kosovo in 1994. Dijkstra met with Almerisa and her family, and has since taken a photo of the girl every second year until 2005. In the first photo of this series Almerisa sits erect on a chair in a cubicle-like room. The little girl is dressed in a red tartan patterned skirt and vest, with a neatly ironed white blouse underneath. She has a red bow tie, and black, lacquered shoes on her feet, which dangle in the air as her legs are too short to make it to the ground. The little girl's cute face looks back at us, with a kind of non-expression, or with the seriousness of a poker face where one tries to hide what is going on. Almerisa penetrates us with her eyes, in the same way as Cronqvist's *The Girl in the Water* (fig. 35; plate 9) scrutinise the viewer as much as we her. Dijkstra's photograph of Almerisa could be of any girl dressed in her best outfit. But knowing the situation in which they were taken, a perception of vulnerability and hope is unavoidable. The title of the first photo in the series *Almerisa, Asylumcenter Leiden, The Netherlands, March 14 1994*, (fig. 42) is very matter of fact, yet it gives us a lot of information.

As we know the name of the girl she becomes somebody with an identity, not a just random model. Furthermore, the setting in the asylum centre makes it an easy step to assume she is a refugee. Dijkstra's titles seem to be an important part of her work; they not only tell us where and when the image was made, but can also give a social and political context to the work. This could not be further removed from the titles Cronqvist has given to her images of girls, which constantly seem to refuse the viewer such information.

Cronqvist has said in conversation that she sets her titles for practical reasons, so as to be able to remember which painting is which. She also said that it used to be her husband Göran Tunström who gave her images titles, but that more and more it came to be herself, who saw their practical reasons whilst losing out on the poetic resonance

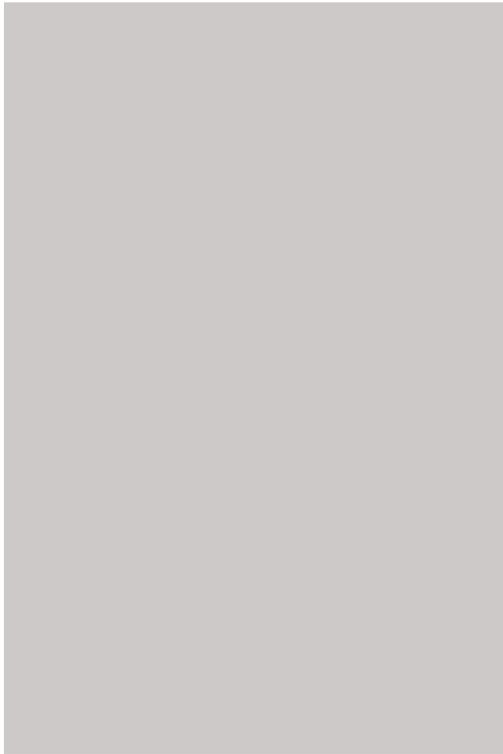
he rendered. Although now, when there are so many girl images, the practical function is also beginning to be somewhat undermined.⁴² In his book *Invisible Colours* John C. Welchman analyses the practice of titles in modern (both with small and capital m) art. He also gives a brief insight into the usage by some postmodernist artists. Welchman maps out three loose categories of titling in the modern period. Firstly what he calls 'denotative titles, where the words are presumed to stand in direct and untroubled relation to that which is represented'. The second category has to do with titles that bring on connotative, allusive or absurd references to an image, where he cites as one example Dadaist works and titles. The last category is the 'modernist practice of advertising the absence of a title through the description "Untitled" or through numbering or other systematic, non-referential designations'.⁴³ Towards the end of the book Welchman also brings up a couple of examples of how titles have been refashioned in women and feminist artists' photo based work: Barbara Kreuger, Sherry Levine and Cindy Sherman. I would like to suggest that Cronqvist's titles are somewhere between Welchman's category one, and a postmodern artist like Sherman's, use of titles. Cronqvist's titles are, at least to an extent, denotative according to Welchman's definition. If the title says a 'girl' and something else, there is always a girl in water, with a pet, with parents. The words in the titles are in a direct relation to the image, but it is not always an untroubled relation. Cronqvist's titles are at the same time also associated with Welchman's category three, where titles are characterised by non-referential designations.

Although all Sherman's photos are 'Untitled' with a number followed by the year in which they were made, she does give names to the series in which she works, for example *Film Stills* 1970-1980 or *History Portraits* 1988-1990 or *Sex Pictures* 1992.⁴⁴ Like Cronqvist's titles Sherman's series are very matter of fact: they neither add nor subtract any information, and neither aid nor subvert the interpretation.⁴⁵ It is also interesting to compare the two artists' silence about their work, not the least through interviews which in Cronqvist's case, as mentioned, are non-exhaustive and in Sherman's more or less non-existing.⁴⁶ By actually setting a title to her paintings, Cronqvist might not be as 'silent'

as Sherman is sometimes thought to be, nor are her titles in any way meaningless.⁴⁷ In the previous chapter I discussed the paintings *Daddy's Girl* (fig. 32; plate 7) and *Daddy and Girl* (fig. 33; plate 8) and those titles might certainly influence the way in which we read the paintings, while any other title might have underlined different meanings in the images. *The Girl in the Water* on the other hand is a pretty non-descript title, and later titles are even more non-descript. *By the Table I-VI* for example, or the many versions of *Girl in a Suit I*, (*Flicka i kavaj I*), 2000 - 1 (fig. 76; plate 28), give us complete freedom to interpret the images as we like – all the titles do are to establish the setting, for example by the table, or to identify that the little girls are wearing suits. It might be appropriate to consider Cronqvist's titles rather like labels, where the main purpose is to separate one piece from another. As the artist suggested they are simply there for the practicality of it. The idea of titles as labels leads my thoughts to an archive where every piece of information is carefully labelled so as to make it possible for its visitors to find their way around. Although, if we think of Cronqvist's work as some kind of archive of images, where the titles are to lead us onwards in our search, we would soon get lost. Cronqvist's titles are deceptively empty, as they emphasise the basics in the paintings. It is as if the titles in some way hide the many levels of depth and the complexities her stories portray. The next step in exploring possible narrative levels in her images is to look at the staging of the scenarios.

Mis-en-scène

There is something profoundly theatrical about Cronqvist's images, partly due to the same characters being recycled over and over again. The characters turn up, with slightly varying guises, playing out their roles against each other. Cronqvist has worked solidly with girl figures, in a variety of media, for more than ten years. As I have discussed previously they often resemble real persons, but I would like to again stress their independence from the people from whom they originate and whose features they borrow, and suggest considering them like fictional characters to which roles a different set of actors can be cast. The sense



43 Lena Cronqvist, *Girls, Cat and Pram (Flicka, katt och barnvagn)*, 1991, 150 x 100 cm.

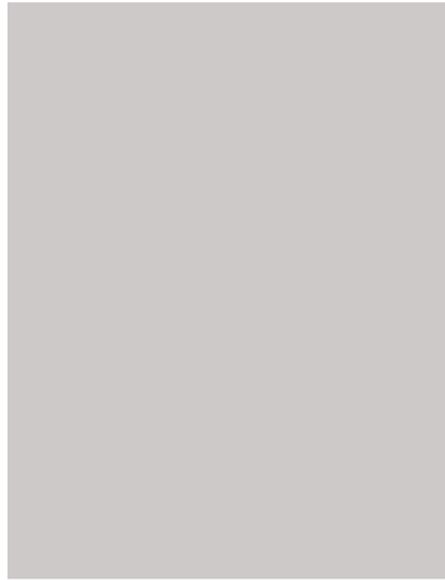
of theatricality is also strongly prompted by the staging, the 'mis-en-scène'. Concerning the images from the first half of the 1990s the scene is always set in a space we immediately recognise yet cannot identify. It seems reasonable to claim that Cronqvist works with generic rooms, set in recognisable but un-identifiable places, much like the theatre stage. *Telltale* as well as *Hand in Hand* are set by, or rather in, the sea, and the girl figures are surrounded by vast amounts of blue sky which is echoed in the blue sea. The characters in *Girls, Cat and Parents* are depicted in an outside environment, but in a nature that lacks any landmarks. This could be compared to Dijkstra's photographs where the when and where are equally uncertain, had it not been for the precision in the titles giving us an exact identi-

fication. Likewise a painting such as *Girls, Cat and Pram (Flicka, katt och barnvagn)*, 1991 (fig. 43), is in a non-specific room, without ceilings or any interior decoration. The only reason it feels like an indoor scene at all is because of the sharp line that separates the background into two fields. The lower part of the pictorial field is painted dark grey and the upper in a lighter grey tone. The line dividing the two fields is much too close to the girl figures to be perceived as a horizon. Thus the sharp angle and the steepness of the light grey field suggest a wall.

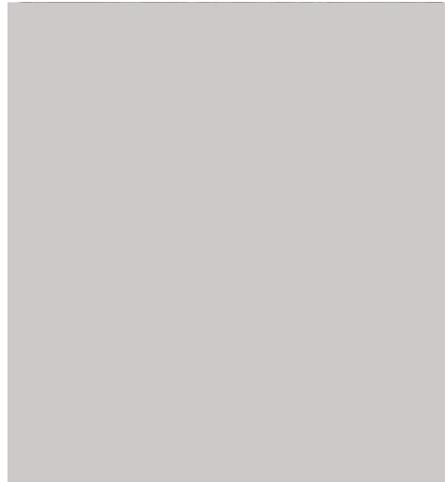
If we return to Rego's paintings in which she has elaborated on *Snow White*, the sense of a 'set' is also convincing, but in a different way.⁴⁸ For example in *Snow White on the Prince's Horse*, 1995 (fig. 44), Snow White 'rides' on a fur thrown over the back of a sofa, recalling the passage in the fairy tale where the prince finds the dead Snow White in a

coffin. In the fairy tale the prince brings her back to life, carries her away on his horse with the intention to marry her and be happy ever after.⁴⁹ In Rego's interpretation however there is no prince, and certainly no promises of a happy ever after. Indeed the setting seems a long way away from the fairy tale. Rego's Snow White sits with her legs on either side of the fur, which is slung over a piece of furniture, whilst holding on to a frame of some sort. It is suggestive to think about the frame she holds onto as an easel, the size of which would be suitable for the large format in which Rego generally works, and in particular regarding the Snow White series. My point is that the props in Rego's Snow White paintings are suggestive of those which one can find in an artist's studio. In *Snow White Swallows the Poisoned Apple*, 1995 (fig. 45), the figure lies with her head on the floor, and feet halfway up the sofa, pushing the dress up to prevent it from revealing her underwear (or lack thereof, considering the preceding image where the wicked step mother removes the knickers for inspection). Over the back of the old sofa, ripped apart by the wear and tear, hangs the fur substituting as the horse in the other painting. I don't know what props Paula Rego keeps in her studio, but the scenes inhabited by her Snow White are certainly more suggestive of an artist's working environment than the lush woods of fairy tale land.

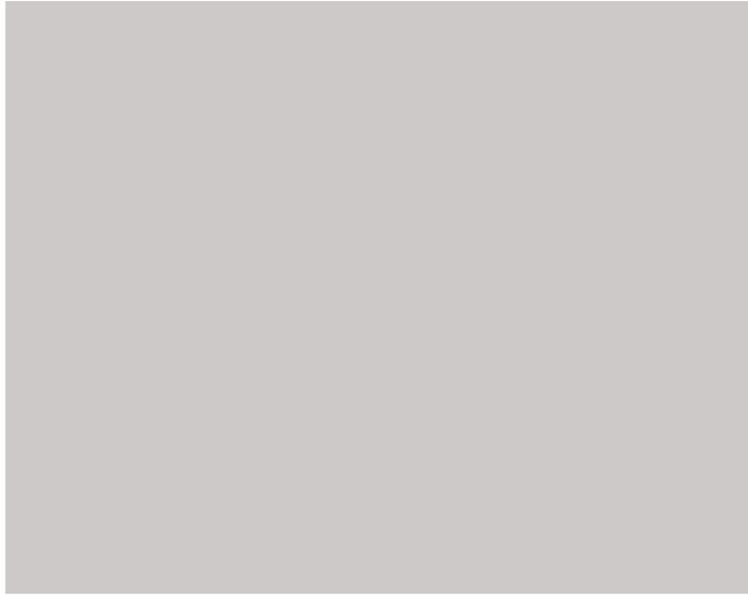
If Rego's *Snow White* paintings are plot-



44 Paula Rego, *Snow White on the Prince's Horse*, 1995, pastel on paper mounted on aluminium, 160 x 120 cm.



45 Paula Rego, *Snow White Swallows the Poisoned Apple*, 1995, pastel on board, 170 x 150 cm, Saatchi Collection, London.



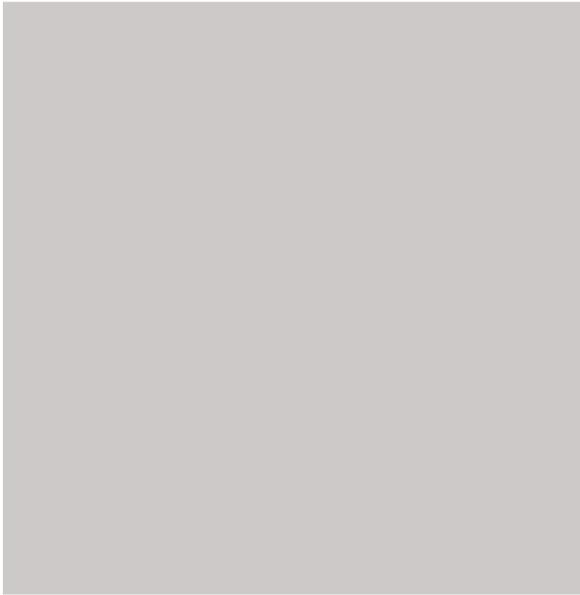
46 Lena Cronqvist, *By the Table II (Vid bordet II)*, 1998, 117 x 149 cm. (see plate 13)

ted in the studio, Cronqvist's girl figures belong instead to the realm of theatre. I suggested above that the characters are always the same and that within each series the scenarios and the compositions are very similar. The sense of a theatrical *mis-en-scène* is also underlined by the repetition of the props, in the same way that we saw in Rego's Snow White series. The same miniature furniture, dolls and toys keep popping up in the many different paintings and sculptures, and are recycled between the different series. The backdrops, an integral part of Cronqvist's paintings, perhaps more than anything connote a sense of theatricality. The characters and the props remain the same, but the scenes are shifted by simply changing the stage décor. In the earlier series, the beach and an anonymous room are the main settings. In the middle of the 1990s the scenarios move on to a square pattern against which similar dramas are played out, like the girl bathing, although now usually in a tub. Towards the end of the 1990s both the settings and the dramas have shifted and a large part of the scenarios take place on a table, and a series of work is appropriately titled *By*

the Table followed by a number. In most of these later works there is a shift in the horizon and the drama takes place in front of the girl. There is an argument that these two dimensional images are like rooms lacking one wall, allowing the viewer to peer into the scene – a bit like a renaissance perspective painting. The removal of the fourth wall underlines the sense of a theatre stage, where the spectators are invited to share the drama through that keyhole, all whilst the actors continue their acting as if we were not there. It is a triangular drama where the actors and the stage are both dependent on the viewers, at the same time pretending to be independent from them. In Cronqvist's later series when the girls appear standing side by side behind the table, playing with the dolls lying on the table in front, the horizon line is moved forward and locates, as it were, the pictorial space in front of the girls. The drama is played out before them and the edge of the table becomes the horizon line placed between the girls and the other figures. The table opens up and ends outside the picture surface, and I suggest that this relocation of the pictorial space subsumes the viewer into the image more than ever. The viewers, arguably, are as much part of the drama as the dolls are. To conclude I would like to propose that the actual staging, the composition in a painting like *By the Table II (Vid bordet II)*, 1998 (fig. 46; plate 13), effectively draws the viewer into the story and expands the narrative field to incorporate also the space surrounding the canvas.

The Compulsion to Repeat

I have outlined some of the different components of a narrative structure and how Cronqvist's images respond to those. The characters correspond to a traditional narrative, the setting to a stage, with its associations to narrative, whilst the plot is a bit tougher to nail down. What is at stake in these pictures is an open ended issue. However, what can be said is that if for a moment we regard the setting as a stage, then the plot is a play with a hiccup. The same characters, settings and scenarios are endlessly repeated, with only slight variations on similar themes. The near compulsive insistence on repeating the same things



47 Ellsworth Kelly, *Colors for a Large Wall*, 1951, oil on canvas, mounted on sixty-four wood panels, 239.3 x 239.9 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. (see plate 14)

over and over again, makes repetition a narrative level in itself.

The sense of a repetitive mis-en-scene grows stronger as Cronqvist's introduces what is loosely referred to as the New York series in the middle of the 1990s, where the girl figures and their persistent props are set against a square patterned backdrop.⁵⁰ Cronqvist has suggested that the patterns are an influence from what she saw in New York: Piet Mondrian's (1872-1944) paintings and the grid like street pattern of the city.⁵¹ These colourful squares remind me also of another piece, at the Museum of

Modern Art in New York, namely Ellsworth Kelly's (b. 1923) *Colours for a large Wall*, 1951 (fig. 47; plate 14). Kelly's substantial piece, adjusted in size for each space where it is exhibited, is basically a pattern of colourful squares. The squares are identical in size and painted in pastel colours on individual canvases, which are then mounted together, like a collage in colour. These squares seem to be perfectly situated in a genealogy of art works Cronqvist has seen and reinterpreted. At the same time, Kelly's meticulous squares seem like a far cry from the emotionally charged backdrops in Cronqvist's paintings. There is a tension in Cronqvist's squares both in terms of their heightened colour scheme (I will return to this issue in chapter five) and in terms of their insistence on repetition. The patterns are repeated, and systematically altered. In for example *Girl with Inflatable Animal and Doll (Flicka med baddjur och docka)*, 1994 (fig. 48; plate 15), the girl figure in a swimsuit, holding an inflatable animal under one arm and

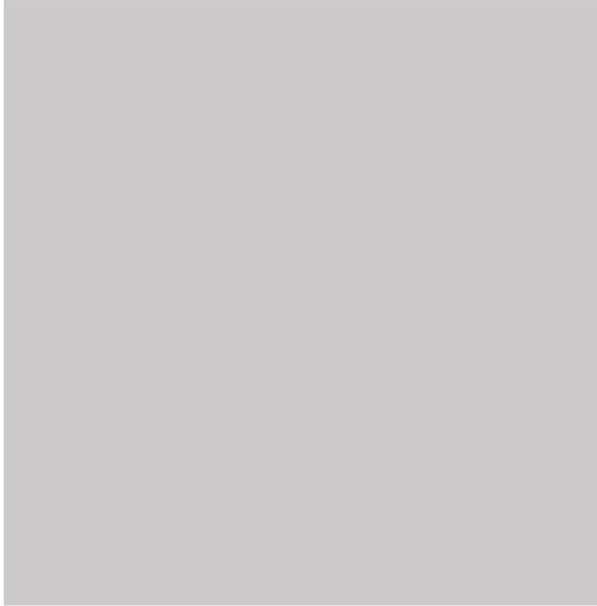
a doll in the other hand, is placed against this chequered background. The pattern is persistent: vertically the red cubes are placed two by two and in every space in-between there is a yellow square. Every second row however, is painted in a more sedate colour scheme, where grey and dark and light blue take alternate positions. In each of the so called, 'New York', paintings the patterned theme keeps returning, alternating the combination of the colours and the sizes of the squares.⁵² In *Girl in*



48 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl with Inflatable Animal and Doll* (*Flicka med baddjur och docka*), 1994, 45 x 48 cm. (see plate 15)

Turquoise Swimsuit and Dolls (*Flicka i turkos baddräkt och dockor*), 1995 (fig. 49; plate 16), the colour scheme is more consistent with red and orange as these constants are contrasted with some variations on grey and pink. Here Cronqvist has instead altered the sizes of the squares. The upper part of the painting features smaller squares, and the lower and larger part has larger squares. Contrasting smaller and larger sized cubes creates a kind of horizon line, marking a difference in the picture plane. Which leads me to observe another kind of persistent repetition in Cronqvist's paintings, the horizon.

Like the different backgrounds, characters and props, the horizons, or horizontal line, keep returning in the paintings, dramatically separating background from foreground. Once more I want to draw attention to the repetition of the compositions. In the *By the Table* paintings from 1998 the horizontal line is equally strongly emphasised, if not more so. But rather than being a horizon, it denotes different planes within the picture, as discussed above. Yet, the cutting sharpness of



49 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl in Turquoise Swimsuit and Dolls* (*Flicka i turkos baddräkt och dockor*), 1995, 62 x 62 cm. (see plate 16)

the line remains the same in the images where the horizon line is behind the girls, like in bathing scenes such as *Telltale* (fig. 39; plate 11). Moreover, in the *By the Table* paintings the repetition of the lines is unavoidable and it really stands out. Actually towards the end of the 1990s and the beginning of 2000, repetition in Cronqvist's art came to a peak. The setting in most of these paintings is consistently by a table with the two girls behind it, playing with the 'dolls' or some other toys. At the exhibition *Lena Cronqvist* at Malmö

Art Museum, Malmö 2003, the last room in the exhibition displayed beautifully her perseverance with repetition in images where the girls are staged behind a table. The horizontal line, marking the start of the table, cuts the image at exactly the same place in each canvas. The cutting is exact in as much as it is hard to distinguish any differences with the eyes alone. The repetitive input continues; with some variations the figures are displayed two by two. Two girl figures are standing upright, and two parent figures, portrayed as dolls, are placed on the table. There is also something repetitive about the characters themselves. In all these paintings the two sisters are featured side by side, and this is echoed by the parents lying side by side on the table in front of them, but it is also their facial features and bodily details which are repeated. The parents' faces resemble each other more and more, they have similar red clown noses, big red open mouths, even their heads are shaped in the same round way and their body types and sizes nearly identical. This physical mimicking is echoed between

the two girls, they also come to look like each other more and more. In the paintings *By the Table I* and *II*, the girls are clad in very similar dresses. In number I the dresses are red and of the same cut. In the other example the dresses are of a similar cut but they differ in colour. Even the girl figures' individual features have been erased and their eyes, noses and mouths have become identical in most of these paintings. The only feature through which they can be told apart is their hairstyles, a nod to the earlier images where the sisters' differences were more distinct. Again, there is a strong sense of repetition in the shapes and sizes of the actual paintings. There are some slight variations, and throughout the dissertation I discuss aspects of the individuality of the works, but here I would like to emphasise the similarities, which is striking. On that note it hardly seems coincidental that the *By the Table* paintings have a certain format in common, mostly measuring ca 150 cm in height and ca 120 cm in width.

Repetition: Maker of Meaning or Distancing of Emotion

What then to make of this nearly obsessive, compulsive repetition? When looking at the endless number of repetitions of themes, patterns, structures and characters as well as the sizes of the images, the idea of a 'compulsion to repeat' as coined by Sigmund Freud comes to mind. In a Freudian understanding 'the compulsion to repeat' has a restorative effect. By going back to the original event in dreams, or in a child's play, the trauma may be mastered.⁵³ But the trauma (if we think there ever was one) in the girl images is never revealed and the repetitions do not seem to have that restorative effect. Repetition in art is nothing new; most of the artists whose work I have brought up in this chapter have worked with repetition in one sense or another. Degas insisted on returning to the ballet and seems never to have tired of again and again drawing nubile dancers stretching and posing. Rego repeats the female characters and childhood memories in numerous settings, and Dijkstra's different series of photographs repeats the same types of figures striking similar poses.⁵⁴ Yet what I find most suggestive when trying to get to grips with the narrative meaning of

repetition, is to look at Hal Foster's reading of Andy Warhol's obsessively repetitive screenprints.

Warhol famously kept repeating the same thing over and over again, in large series and sometimes his repetitive images fill a whole wall, like wallpaper. Thus, the numerous faces of Marilyn Monroe, for example, are all taken from the same original photograph and the same face meets us again and again. His screen prints come out as identical in theme and composition, underlined by being mounted in blocks of two, four, or any combination of numbers. But when one looks again each print is slightly different from the other, through a difference in colour, or a change in the nuance of the colours. In *Ambulance Disaster*, 1963, a woman's dead body hanging out of the crashed ambulance is repeated several times over, but through rips and tears each copy is distinctly different.⁵⁵ In Foster's interesting reading of Warhol's repetition in the *Death in America* series he examines the nature of these repetitions and argues that they are not restorative in a Freudian sense. 'More than a patient release from the object in mourning, they suggest an obsessive fixation on the object in melancholy.' Foster claims that 'repetitions not only reproduce traumatic effects; they produce them as well'.⁵⁶ I agree with Foster's reading, and looking at Warhol's *Death in America* does install a sense of trauma. Foster reads Warhol's screen prints in terms of 'traumatic realism', which he argues is not about realism as an aesthetic quality but instead as an interpretative tool. He takes this notion from Jaques Lacan's seminar 'The Unconscious Repetition'.⁵⁷ In Foster's brief account of Lacan's text, the traumatic is 'a missed encounter with the real'. Foster writes, in his understanding of Lacan, because it is missed, the real can never be represented, but only repeated.

Cronqvist's oil paintings are different from Warhol's screen prints for all the obvious, visible reasons. Primarily hers are paintings, an old fashioned technique championed by modern artists. His is a 'new' technique, existing within the parameters of pop art where the core was to challenge the old legacy of original art work with a master mind behind it. In a sense Cronqvist's work is part of the tradition Warhol tried to reverse, and each of her paintings is slowly produced in the

realm of the studio. Through his factory Warhol tried to somehow distance himself from the typical role of an artist. If, as he claimed, he was a machine who was as distanced to his life as we are to the TV screen, certainly Cronqvist is very much a human being processing emotions through paint. What I would like to take from Foster's interpretation of Warhol, and suggest also for Cronqvist's images, is that the repetitions produce a traumatic effect. She repeats the same themes and formats but the outcome does not seem to be restorative, at least not for the viewing subject, but rather increasingly violent and disturbing. The comparison with Foster's reading of Warhol is also interesting for the opposite reason, that it brings into relief other effects of her repetition. In Foster's account, Warhol's repetitions distance the viewer from the meaning of the images. Cronqvist's thematic and compositional repetitions, in contrast, generate their own saga. This persistence, which creates trauma rather than restores one, seem to bring the viewer closer to the work and give meaning to the images.

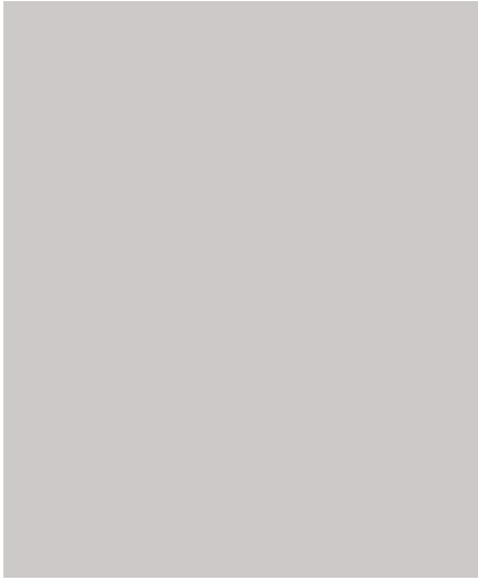


4 The Colour of Memory

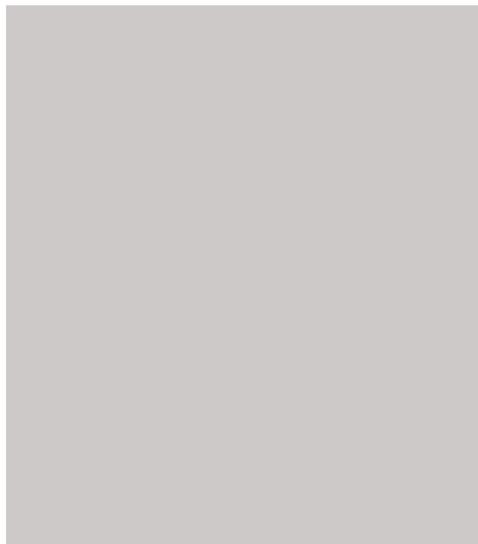
And over all of this is the deep blue of the
empty sky – the colour of memory.

Geoff Dyers¹

In her article 'A childhood which isn't there' Gabrielle Björnstrand questioned if Cronqvist's girl figures, from 1990-91, are about children at all, and if they really are about those two little girls often seen on a beach. She writes that perhaps the deserted beach where the girl figures are standing is the memory of a true beach from Cronqvist's childhood. However, rather than being about children Björnstrand suggests Cronqvist's girls reflect deeper human concerns. She points out that the artist's work is quite obviously about psychology, but a psychology that touches on wider issues than the personal trauma.² Taking on board Björnstrand's reflections, I would like to continue to consider the three paintings where the girl figures first turned up, *The Ice* (fig. 9), *The Hedge* (fig. 50) and *The Road*, (fig. 51; plate 17). In these three paintings I propose that the two things Björnstrand identifies are present: scenes from a childhood and a psychology that reaches beyond the personal trauma. This trilogy depicts the four family members and in *The Ice* they are present all at once, out walking on a cold winter day. In *The Hedge* the older sister is represented together with her parents, although the mother and daughter are separated from the father by the bare and thorny hedge referred to in the title. *The Road* features the younger sister walking between her parents, who are both looking dark and grey in a statuesque manner as they do in the other two paintings. The little sister, in contrast, is dressed



50 Lena Cronqvist, *The Hedge (Häcken)*, 1976, 150 x 128 cm, photo Bergen Kunstmuseum.



51 Lena Cronqvist, *The Road (Vägen)*, 1976, 150 x 135 cm, Borås Art Museum, Borås. (see plate 17)

in a lustrous yellow Dalecarlian folk dress. The girl's yellow dress and white face single her out from the otherwise monochrome painting and she is separated in terms of physical contact too. The mother figure takes a step away from the girl, without looking back at the daughter who is stretching her arms towards her mother. The father on the other hand focuses his gaze on the little girl, but although he takes a step towards her, with his arms reaching out for her, he does not make it all the way. I think these three paintings are bursting with feelings of emotions and loneliness. As Björnstrand points out, Cronqvist's paintings touch on deep human concerns, and for me that touch is successfully portrayed in the three examples discussed above, because they are depicted as personal memories from childhood.

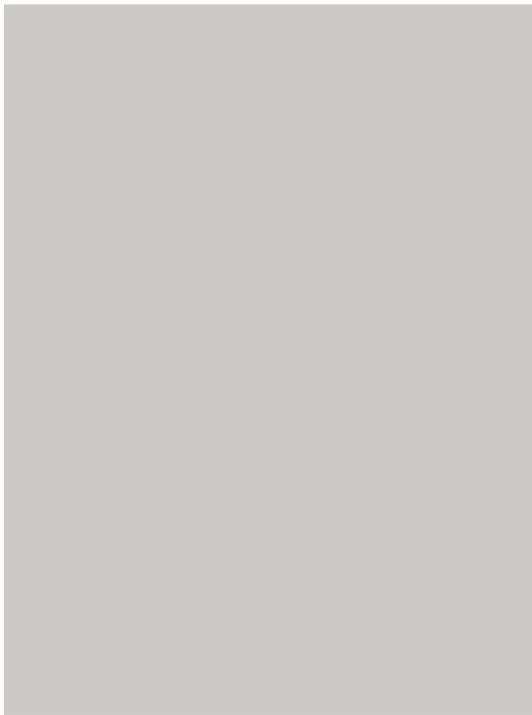
The title of this chapter *The Colour of Memory*, is borrowed from a novel by the British author Geoff Dyer. The content of the novel is very different from Cronqvist's images. Dyer writes about a group of young, well educated but impoverished adults getting by in Thatcher's 1980s Britain, but the form of the novel is to an extent similar to Cronqvist's narratives. It is written as a series of flashbacks, and the many different snapshot-like memories form the story. The title alone lends itself

very well to Cronqvist's work. The obvious meaning of colour is 'the visual sensations (red or green) caused by the wavelength of perceived light that enables one to differentiate otherwise identical objects', but colour also refers to the paint the artist uses to make the paintings. Another meaning of colour is 'to misrepresent, to distort' which I will argue is as fundamental a part of Cronqvist's images as the tinted paint.³ Thus the title *Colour of Memory* refers to the visual sensations of a colour, the paint she uses, but most of all to the distortions of her representations. It underlines that for each individual the act of remembering colours the memory of an event differently.

Many have been inspired by the notion of memory, writers, philosophers, neurologists and psychoanalysts alike. Memory is a broad and imprecise term and I am not attempting to give an account of the vast amount of work on the matter in these different fields. In this chapter I will look at Cronqvist's paintings from the early 1990s together with the three paintings discussed above, *The Ice*, *The Hedge* and *The Road*, from the point of view of them being flashes from a remembered past. I will discuss how these paintings are fragmentary and filtered like a memory, with certain moments and emotions remembered over others, memories that seem to keep surfacing in the artist's mind, over and over again. The idea of memory is present in several other ways too and I put Cronqvist's work side by side with Freud's concept of *screen memory*, after which I look at the so-called *snapshot effect* in her paintings and the discourse on photography and memory that this evokes. In a conversation Cronqvist confirmed what I had been suspecting, that certain paintings were taken from photographs from her childhood.⁴ Whilst some of her images might indeed be directly influenced by specific photographs, I discuss whether others successfully mimic a fictional family photo album.

Landscape as Dreamscape

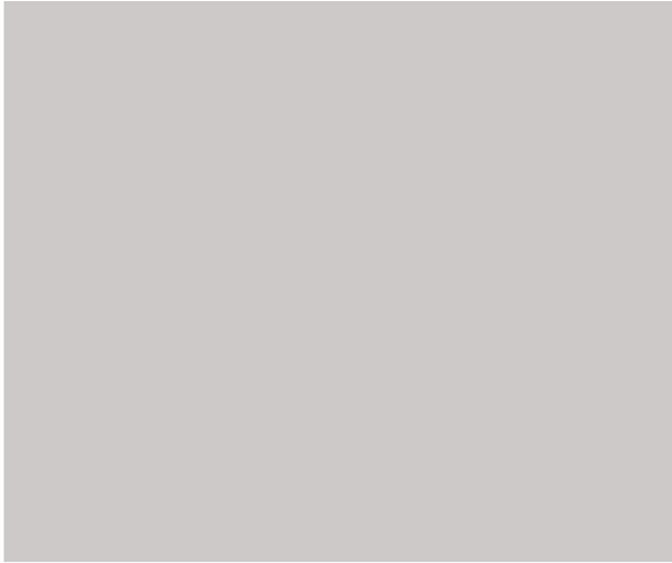
It is a pervasive thought to view the three paintings from the 1970s *The Ice*, *The Road* and *The Hedge* as some kind of flashbacks of childhood memories. In *The Road* the landscape becomes a dreamscape



52 Lena Cronqvist, *The Mother (Modern)*, 1975, 169 x 125 cm, Norrköpings Konstmuseum, Norrköping.

through the disproportions and exaggerations that have to do with the experimentation with perspective. The road continues endlessly without any other landmarks than two huge empty fields on either side. Naturally in Sweden, with all its vast spaces, the scene is not out of the ordinary. Yet I do maintain that there is a sense of exaggeration regarding the perspective; the road is thinning out too rapidly in comparison with the figures' sizes. Perhaps the scene is portrayed as seen from a child's perspective, in the way that our childhood memories give places or buildings exaggerated proportions. In an article the Swedish art historian Maj-Britt Wadell argues the strong dreamlike nature of some of Cronqvist's paintings, due to the disproportions of the

figures as well as the symbolism in them. The painting she focuses on is *The Mother (Modern)*, 1975 (fig. 52). A woman, with the artist's facial features, is wearing a blue dress covered with a gold pattern. She sits on a chair in the middle of a room, with various cabinets on each of the three surrounding walls. The setting looks like an old-fashioned bourgeois interior, with heavy and dark wood furniture, but the figure's dress and poise are evocative of Renaissance altarpieces. Wadell writes that Cronqvist did indeed base this image on a Renaissance painting, more precisely on *Madonna and child with Federico da Montefeltro* c. 1475, by Piero della Francesca (1910/20-1492).⁵ What destabilises Cronqvist's painting is the little figure in the woman's lap; instead of the infant Jesus we see an old woman, the artist's mother. Wadell points out that there are many layers to the use of the mother theme



53 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl and Daddy with Big Hands* (*Flicka och pappa med stora händer*), 1995, 50 x 60 cm. (see plate 18)

in Cronqvist's body of work. First of all there is the Madonna figure as mother to Jesus, secondly the presence of the artist's own mother. A further layer is the daughter, in guise of the Madonna, as a mother to her own aging parent shrunk to baby size. Wadell analyses the relationship between the mother and the daughter and argues that even though the latter is larger in size, she is still dependent on her mother, hence her presence. Wadell continues and associates this relationship to the artist's own experiences, and maps out her motives for painting what she does. Wadell defends her interpretation by referring to the autobiographical material in the images. I have previously discussed my more problematic stance towards a reading which depends on the artist's life and experience outside of that which is given to us through the paintings. However, I would like to draw attention to what Wadell so interestingly notes on the dreamlike atmosphere in *The Mother*. This, Wadell argues, is mainly due to the unreal proportions of the figures. She goes on to argue that the weightlessness of the child or doll-sized figure's body underlines the 'dreaminess' even further.⁶

The disproportions Wadell observes in *the Mother*, is something Cronqvist continued to explore in her representations of girls. The figures in these paintings are typically out of proportion; the father's hands in *Girl and Daddy with Big Hands (Flicka och pappa med stora händer)*, 1995 (fig. 53; plate 18), for example are much oversized, in fact his whole body swamps the girls diminished figure. Sometimes the parents are shrunk to dolls, in yet other images the features of the girls' bodies are exaggerated. Whilst physical disproportions in figurative painting is nothing out of the ordinary, in Cronqvist's work it underlines the sense of 'dreaminess', which I believe is inherent in many of her paintings. Or put another way, a sense of distorted perspective, coloured through memory is strongly present in Cronqvist's images of girls. These scenarios are staged as some kind of dreamscape, both through their themes and through the distortions of the figures' bodies. Yet, if some of Cronqvist's paintings can be understood as representations of memories from a childhood, they are just little snippets of memories. When the girls are playing in the sea, or with some toys in a room, nothing much is going on. If these are images of someone's childhood, why choose such seemingly unimportant incidents?

Insignificant Moments

Walter Benjamin wrote in an article about Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, one of the most important literary works about memory, about representing what is remembered and not lived.⁷

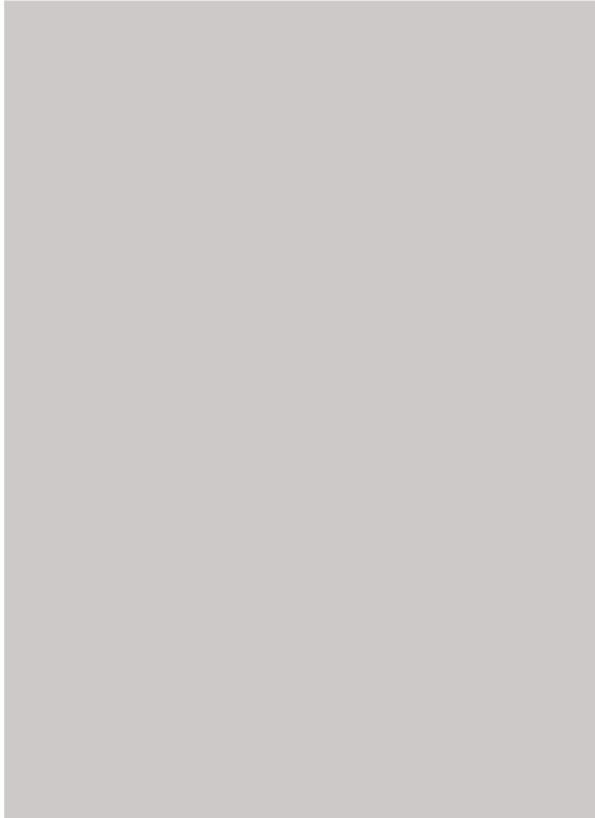
We know that in his work Proust did not describe a life as it actually was, but a life as it was remembered by the one who had lived it. And yet even this statement is imprecise and far too crude. For the important thing for the remembering author is not what he experienced, but the weaving of his memory, the Penelope work of recollection.⁸

The reference to Penelope's weaving suggests that recollecting or the act of remembering is something endless. As soon as it is done we tear it up and start all over again. However, Benjamin turns the expression

around and suggests that perhaps ‘involuntary memory’ in Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* is more about forgetting than remembering. Benjamin argues that rather than unravelling in the night the work of the day as Penelope did, Proust unravels in the day the dreams of the night. ‘When we awake each morning, we hold in our hands, usually weakly and loosely, but a few fringes of the tapestry of lived life, as loomed for us by forgetting.’⁹ It is tempting to think of Cronqvist’s select frozen moments as a tapestry of memory, characterised by its lapses as much as its contents. Moreover, it is interesting to take on board what Benjamin writes about Proust’s oeuvre, that it is more about forgetting than remembering. What seems particularly relevant in relation to Cronqvist’s images is Benjamin’s idea that it is not so much what was remembered, but the act of ‘weaving his memory’ that is important. Regarding Cronqvist’s work it is the act of engaging, the artist making it and the viewer looking at it, which becomes the ‘weaving’. It is in that mythical moment of artistic creation, or indeed in the moment of encounter, that a memory is evoked and thus constructed.

As I discussed in chapter three repetition is at the core in Cronqvist’s work from the 1990s: the beach, the square background patterns, the nondescript indoor settings, the characters, the dolls, the props as well as the general themes, are repeated over and over again. When lining up several images next to each other, as in an exhibition or a catalogue the idea of a continuing story, or a weave of images, is suggestive. But, just as Penelope tore up the work in the night, Cronqvist breaks up her narratives. As we slip in and out of scenarios, without beginning or end, we are left to fill in the before and after ourselves. When looking at the structure of the paintings, in individual images and as a series, the frozen moments appear like flashes of memory – instances that keep surfacing in the mind, demanding recognition. Albeit charged with emotions, the moments the artist represents seem to be non-significant. They are like split seconds without any particular meaning, like snapshots from everyday life, that could just as well have been lost in the sea of the forgotten had they not been caught on film.

Frozen moments appearing like flashes does evoke Freud’s concept



54 Lena Cronqvist, *Horsewomen (Ryttarinnor)*, 1991, 150 x 110 cm, Moderna Museet, Stockholm

of screen memory, and psychoanalysis is, above all fields of study, associated with the mapping of memory. Peter Brooks wrote, in *Reading for the Plot*, that the most useful way of treating psychoanalysis, when used as a tool for interpreting the arts, is to see it as a narrative that can cast light on other stories.¹⁰ Or, somewhat simplified, that psychoanalysis is above all a narrative art. In *Body Works: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*, Brooks argued that psychoanalysis is necessarily narrative because the analyst is concerned with the stories told to him or her, and the patients are there because something in their story is breaking down: “The narrative account given by the patient is riddled with gaps,

with memory lapses, with inexplicable contradictions in chronology, with screen memories concealing repressed material.”¹¹

When Freud developed his thoughts on screen memory he compared it to the temporary failure of the mind in remembering for example a name, which he termed a *slip of the mind*. (This is different from a *slip of the tongue*, which we have come to call a Freudian slip, and which is characterised by something that is accidentally said which reveals a truth one had rather kept hidden.)¹² Screen memory as well as a slip of the mind has to do with forgetting but in the latter case it is what is forgotten that creates attention, in the first what is remembered. Freud describes several cases where insignificant, or neutral,

childhood memories reside in the mind of the adult. These childhood memories caught his attention, as they were very clear memories of everyday scenes from an early period in a person's life. Freud points out that the age from when we have memories varies hugely between individuals, and he cites examples from 6 months to 6 years. Why, asks Freud, do some people remember neutral scenes but not occasions that were truly significant. In one of his cases Freud describes how a man remembers the specific moment he was taught the difference between the letters m and n. This learning experience was later associated by the man, as a boy being taught the difference between boys and girls.¹³ The notion of screen memory has been neatly summarised by Laplanche and Pontalis:

A childhood memory characterised both by its unusual sharpness and by the apparent insignificance of its content. The analysis of such memories leads back to indelible childhood experiences and to unconscious phantasies. Like the symptom, the screen memory is a formation produced by a compromise between repressed elements and defence.¹⁴

It is tempting to look at Cronqvist's paintings as visual examples of the kind of memories that Freud would interpret as screen memories. The painting *Hand in Hand*, (fig. 40; plate 12) is an example of one such seemingly insignificant moment. The two girls are standing together hand in hand in the sea. The pale blue water casts back a faint mirror image of the figures whilst the vast sea spreads out behind them. Nothing much is going on in the image. Another quite ordinary scene is *Horsewomen (Ryttarinnor)*, 1991 (fig. 54), where the two girls are riding on a wooden rocking horse. The older sister is clad in a red dress and the younger remains in the nude. The older girl appears over-sized for this toy, both in age and length. Particularly the older girl's body seems out of proportion, her upper body for example is much too long in comparison to the length of her legs. Furthermore, which might be even more disturbing is the small face crammed in underneath the flat skull, a harsh distortion of the girl figure's head. If we imagine this figure standing up tall, it would be a girl of surreal,

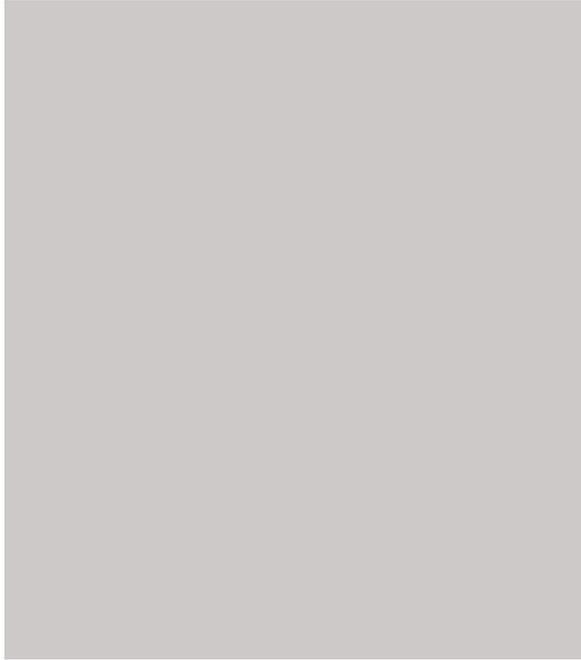
even monstrous proportions. But apart from the physical distortions the scene appears to be nothing special, an everyday moment, nothing out of the ordinary.

It is tempting to look at the triviality in these scenarios by Cronqvist, in the light of Freud's text on childhood memory. Freud says in his article on screen memory that in order to understand the separate cases and their select memories we need to have the full story of the individual's life. The distortions of the bodies and the landscape in these images bear an echo of warped childhood memories. The precise but insignificant scenes from everyday family life are exact but their lack of importance suggest they are associated with more momentous memories the mind has concealed and substituted with these seemingly lesser memories. By referring to Freud's concept I want to stress the sense of childhood memory that I recognise in Cronqvist's paintings. However, even though these paintings from everyday life are convincing as examples of Freud's notion of screen memory, the repressed material must remain unknown, for the same reasons that it is pointless to dig deeper into the artist's own biography. Instead I propose to uncover these 'flashbacks' by looking at them just as such, and unravel how the snapshot effect comes to be a theme in itself.

Snapshots and Family Albums

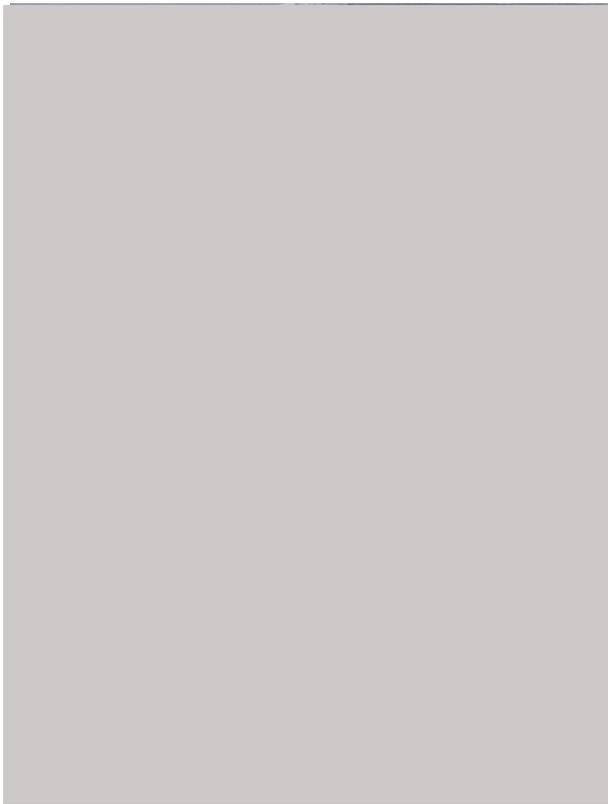
In the painting *Girl in a Swimsuit* (*Flicka i baddräkt*), 1990 (fig. 55; plate 19), the girl figure, clad in a red swimsuit stands in a contraposto, with the fringe pinned to one side. The figure is in the middle of the image, yet positioned slightly to the left from the viewer's perspective. Her turned and tensed body is clearly uncomfortable for one reason or other. The shoulders are pushed up, the head tilted down and the arms hanging straight down alongside her body. The right fist is clenched and the tension is enhanced by the blurry paint around the hand. The figure is squirming under the eyes of the shadow intruding the image from the right hand corner. The tensions in the painting create ambiguities, and ambiguities permeate the image in many ways,

particularly regarding the relationship between the girl and the shadow. Which raises the inevitable question of whom the shadow represents. The bulky shape of the shadow, its broad shoulders and the hints of a cap suggest it is cast by a man. Because of the way in which the shadow falls onto the image it is also suggested that it is cast by a viewer, and in that case the very first viewer of the image is the artist herself, a woman. The shadow might not only be approaching the girl for one reason or other, but might also be a photographer – a parent taking a photograph of his or her child. Like-



55 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl in a Swimsuit (Flicka i bad-dräkt)*, 1990, 39 x 34 cm. (see plate 19)

wise, the tensed girl figure's body could simply be an expression of the embarrassment the child feels in front of the camera lens. It was interesting to find that this is indeed a painted version of a photograph from a family album. Cronqvist, when asked, added in a demure way that it must have been a pretty bad photograph too, since the photographer's shadow is visible in the image.¹⁵ In another painting, *The Photo Session (Fotograferingen)*, 1990 (fig. 56), the composition is more or less identical, with the shadow protruding from the right hand corner. The only difference between the paintings is the girl figure, which in the latter version is younger, and dressed in a folk dress similar to that in *The Road*. The title *The Photo Session* confirms the shadow as someone taking a photograph of the child. The shadow brings many layers to this image, but even if it was haphazard in the photograph it has been carefully renegotiated as the image was transformed into a painting. Cronqvist has used photographs as a source of inspi-



56 Lena Cronqvist, *The Photo Session (Fotograferingen)*, 1990, 136 x 103 cm.

ration also for some of her other paintings, for example the two versions of *The Girl in The Water* (fig.11; plate 3 and fig. 35: plate 9). The girl figure glares up towards something or somebody absent from the image, and also in this image the figure's position in relation to the viewer appears to mimic a photo session. Thus the viewer in turn, takes on the same kind of physical viewing position that an adult would when photographing a child.

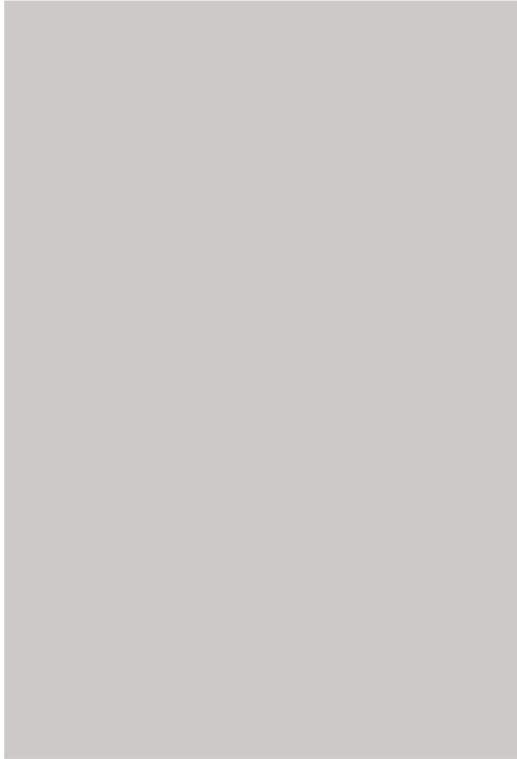
Even though only a few of Cronqvist's paintings are reportedly based on photographs, there are many more that are evocative of photography. A typical snapshot effect is in the painting

The Girls in the Water (Flickor i vattnet), 1991, where the two girl figures are standing knee deep in water with the sea expanding behind them.¹⁶ In the far background there is a faint line where the darker blue of the sea meets the very slightly lighter blue of the sky. The older girl is holding a black cat, stretching up its nose towards the girl's face as if uniting with her in a kiss and cuddle. The cat is hanging in the air with the limbs stretching down in a most relaxed way. This is quite obviously a frozen moment, as a cat would not stay in that position for long – if it would go near the water at all. The snapshot effect is stressed by the sister as well, who is caught in the process of dipping her teddy bear in the sea, one of whose limbs is already soaked. When

a number of paintings from the same period with similar themes are hanging side by side the snapshot effect is even emphasised through the mere format of the paintings. As discussed in chapter three Cronqvist often use a similar format of her canvas. The paintings from the earlier part of the 1990s tend towards a rectangular shape, whilst later on they become square. Although the actual sizes of the paintings are much oversized to be placed in an album, their rectangular shape would fit very well.

In the early days of photography, 'snapshots' began in family photographs, and were later taken on by journalists.¹⁷ Snapshots are also much used in contemporary art as an aesthetic strategy.¹⁸ I believe that seeing Cronqvist's series of bathing and playing girls as some kind of amateur photographs taken by a family on a summer holiday or at home is inescapable. Julia Hirsch points out in her book *Family Photographs: Content, Meaning and Effect* that indeed the idea of making family albums is as old as Renaissance portraits. With the development of photography the custom of showing the family as self-contained became available also to those with modest means. However, just as with painted portraits, family albums should be read with care as they, too, are coloured by social conventions. Julia Hirsch argues that it is customary to see albums, or single photographs, where ideals such as a strong father, nurturing mother, loving children and sheltering homes are staged. She points out that the most interesting aspect of all, concerning people's family albums, is the actual editing. As we tend to have more photographs than fit the album the conventions mentioned could be an important influence regarding which images we choose to keep.¹⁹ Hirsch says that in the 'perfect' album we only keep the memories that we want to have:

We do not normally keep photographs that show us disarmed by our children, angry with our spouses and shamed by our parents. ... Our own family photographs delude, obscure or reveal, but never leave us entirely neutral. They are always relics which remind us what we had forgotten, make us want to forget what we remember and bring into relief what we already knew.²⁰



57 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl with Mummy Doll* (*Flicka med mammadocka*), 1993, 50 x 43 cm. (see plate 20)

Allowing myself a generalisation, and with reference to Hirsch's quote above, family photographs serve the purpose of reminding us of past events – everyday moments as well as holidays and more festive times when family and friends gather. Benjamin Buchloh writes on amateur photography:

Industrial technology has, through the medium of the photographic image, given to the historically disinherited masses the possibility of securing photographic semblance of their experience. Therefore, the photographs of amateurs are memory aids in their struggle against temporal destruction, as well as trophies of amateurs' lived lives.²¹

Indeed Cronqvist does paint moments of her family and their everyday life. But if these paintings, or 'trophies' as Buchloh writes, do carry similarities to family photographs,

Cronqvist has included in her portrayals also those moments that do not make it to the album. In for example *Girl with Mummydoll* (*Flicka med mammadocka*), 1993 (fig. 57; plate 20), the girl figure is standing upright holding the doll, with her two hands, around its neck. The strangling rather than grasping grip, is stressed by the doll's choking face. The girl's staring eyes circled with red and her sombre face really makes this an underside of a girl playing with a toy. Other 'anti-album' images are; *Telltale* (fig. 39; plate 11) where the older sister is trying to drench the other; or *Girl in a Swimsuit* where the girl is squirming in embarrassment.

In an article, Valerie Walkerdine talks about how she was bowled



58 Photo from Christina Hagenfeldt's school class of 1951, Örebro.

over when realising that she had difficulties in accepting the publication of a photograph of herself as an overweight and generally unhappy eleven year old. The way she instinctively wanted to represent herself as a child, was through a photograph taken at the age of three, where she was dressed up as a cute little tinkerbelle fairy. Why was it, she asks, that she had such difficulties accepting any photograph of herself, other than one which so obviously conforms to a traditional way of objectifying cute little girls. Walkerdine, a feminist and psychologist who has spent years investigating the realities of schoolgirls, was stunned by her own reactions to these photographs. It should have been her, if anyone, who embraced a different image of herself as a girl rather than the commonplace stereotyping.²² By bringing up Walkerdine's example I want to underline not only the impact childhood photographs may have on us, but the strong factors that govern the selection process regarding which images we choose to keep and display of ourselves. In other words, the stories we tell of ourselves and of our lives may partly be traced through the images we choose to represent ourselves with. In the context of a selection process, the

themes chosen by Cronqvist appear even stronger, as she really has picked up on alternative representations of girls. Her girl figures stand in stark contrast to prettified children and sunshine memories.

Photographs and Memory

I discussed in chapter three the non-specificity of the settings in Cronqvist's paintings of girls. However, certain traits place these figures, if not in a specific place at least in a specific time. It is particularly the hairstyle with the fringe pinned to one side with a big red bow that marks the figure in a certain historical period. The hairstyle is typical for middle class children's fashion of the 1940s and early 1950s.²³ Looking at illustrations of Swedish children from this period, they often wear their hair in that particular style. What's more, the clothing in the paintings discussed is specific to that time: the red swimsuit in *Girl in a Swimsuit*, or the white jacket in *The Ice*. We know that the artist was born in 1938 and was thus a child in the 1940s and 1950s.²⁴ It suffices to consult my own family's photo albums and see that in a photograph from my mother's class of 1951, her female classmates could have been the girls in Cronqvist's paintings (fig. 58). As a matter of fact, when I visited the *Lena Cronqvist* exhibition at Malmö Konsthall, 2003, with my mother and her friend (both born in the 1940s) they both exclaimed how the girl's white windbreaker jacket in *The Ice* (fig. 9) took them straight back to their own childhood.²⁵ I have claimed before the imprecise settings of the bathing girls, but whilst it is uncertain exactly where the scenes are set, for example there are no landmarks, the girls hairstyles and clothes are significant of Sweden at the time when Cronqvist grew up. The setting in a particular place and period is of course most of all influenced by the knowledge that the artist is using herself and her family for these images. By considering these 'snapshots' as a family album we are, at first, led to believe that those images are from the artist's own past.

Anne Higonnet devotes a chapter in her book *Pictures of Innocence* to photography and memory. She discusses the ever-present family snapshots and even how our private identity, as a family member, or

as member of a group of friends, to some extent is built up by the photographs we surround ourselves with. She argues convincingly that snapshots of families, and most notably of children are very important for how we remember our lives. The case she argues throughout the book is that images of children, and in this instance of whole families, are deeply coloured by the romantic ideals of innocent childhood we have inherited from the eighteenth century. That photography has become an integral part of our everyday lives is nothing new, which Susan Sontag identified in her famous essay 'On Photography'. Sontag argues that families in particular, together with travelling tourists, are dependent on taking photographs in order to create memories and as a way of filtering their experiences. So much so, says Sontag, that parents who do not photographically eternalise their offspring can be perceived as indifferent towards their children.²⁶

Like Lena Cronqvist, many contemporary artists, as well as film makers have explored the close relationship between memory and photographs. To illustrate ways in which this has been a thematic and narrative strategy, I would like to draw attention to two great examples: Chris Marker's (b. 1921) ciné-roman *La Jetée* from 1962 and Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner* from 1982.²⁷ *La Jetée* is an ideal example of memories hinged on photographs and select images of certain moments. The ciné-roman is structured by a steady number of stills, apart from a couple of seconds of moving images just at the very start. As one image replaces the next, a voice in English narrates the story. The voice is backed by music and a variety of sounds that further illustrates the narrative. The story rests on an ambiguous memory from the narrator's childhood when he visited the Orly airport in Paris with his parents. This memory is made up from a couple of fragmentary elements: the memory of the airport, the glance of an unknown woman, and the death of a man. Marker's film takes place after the disastrous "World War Three" and is about the few that survived the catastrophe and their desperate search for a way to live on. They believe that the path to survival is through a loophole in time: "This was the aim of the experiment: to send emissaries into time, to summon the past and the future to the aid of the present. ... This man was selected from among

thousands for his obsession with an image from the past.' The narrator tells us that after a while 'images began to ooze, like confessions'. The people that had survived lived underground, and the narrator's first memories are from another world, above ground, the 'real world' where everything is real: 'Real children, real birds, real cats and real graves.' The real world is the city of Paris underneath which the unreal world of the survivors exists: 'The survivors settled beneath Chaillot, in an underground network of galleries. Above ground, Paris, as most of the world, was uninhabitable, riddled with radioactivity.' They choose this particular man, the narrator, because he had a single clear memory from pre-war days. His photographic and sharp memory portrays the surroundings, the places he went and the woman he desired. But the only thing that he didn't remember was the identity of the man who died at the airport. The ignorance of his own death had been replaced, or screened out in Freudian terms, by other commonplace memories. As a matter of fact the survivors were dependent on these few, select and photographic stills from the narrator's life.²⁸

Blade Runner is also another much quoted example of how photography is associated with personal history and identity.²⁹ It is a futuristic film about a cop, or blade runner, in Los Angeles whose job it is to track down human replicants declared illegal after a mutiny on an 'off-planet' colony. As the film develops we get to know the replicants, characterised by their lack of emotions, history and notably memory. They are fighting for their survival by trying to assimilate and be like other humans. The replicant Rachel (played by Sean Young) however belongs to a new breed which starts to develop emotions, and she, and some of the others, are given a set of photographs as a means of proving they have a memory, thus a history and therefore an identity. When Rachel tries to convince the blade runner Rick Deckard (played by Harrison Ford) of her human identity she shows a photograph of a mother and daughter. The photograph is her memory. Giuliana Bruno argues in her article on *Blade Runner* that in post modern time memory is not made of proustian madeleines but of photographs.³⁰ Bruno also refers to Roland Barthes and the notion of a photograph as something 'that has been': 'in Photography I can never deny that

the thing has been there'.³¹ Barthes argued that the medium in itself necessitates thinking about photography in the past tense.

The Photograph does not necessarily say *what is no longer*, but only and for certain what has been. This distinction is decisive. In front of a photograph, our consciousness does not necessarily take the nostalgic path of memory (how many photographs are outside of individual time), but for every photograph existing in the world, the path of certainty; the Photograph's essence is to ratify what it represents.³²

Scott Bukatman notes in his study of *Blade Runner* that the photographs, which constitute the replicants' substitute memory, counteract their own artificiality, it makes them more human and authentic. Because, he says, we generally believe photographs to be connected to what they depict, we trust our identity and even reality to them.³³ However, developments in technology as well as recent theory have given us reason to question the truth behind a photograph. The path of certainty is no longer as convincing, although we do still rely on photographs as a proof of authenticity, most notably through passports and ID cards.³⁴ Yet, when discussing photographs and their relationship to memory I find it, along with Bruno, unavoidable to cite Barthes, as he so eloquently formulated the way in which we, still, tend to think of amateur photographs in the past tense.

Considering the photographic qualities in Cronqvist's images in reference to Barthes' point about the past tense is both a fruitful and counteractive project. It is fruitful as the idea of a photograph as always existing in the past tense enforces the narrative of memory. As I have discussed, *Girl in a Swimsuit* (fig. 55; plate 19) is inspired by a photograph and it is possible to see the photograph through the painting and imagine 'what has been'. However, Barthes makes an important distinction between memory as something nostalgic and photographs as mere evidence of something that has been. What makes reading the photographic aspects through the painting in a Barthian way a counteractive, or at least a problematic project, is the lack of a *punctum*. One of Barthes examples of a *punctum* is the bad teeth of a child standing amongst a group of children in the photo-

graph *Little Italy, New York* (by William Klein 1954).³⁵ The punctum for Barthes is something in the photograph that disturbs or catches the viewer's attention, that makes us see the image but which was not planned or intended by the taker of the photograph. It is those little details that are not the main theme of the image, but that sneak in and potentially alter the way in which we look at it. For Barthes in the above example it is the bad teeth. In Cronqvist's painting *Girl in a Swimsuit*, a punctum could have been the clenched, blurred fist, a detail that makes me see the painting, and which confirms the otherwise tensed body. Although, the chance presence of what could have been a punctum in the original photograph, has disappeared in the painting. Any elements of the photograph that Cronqvist once looked at are carefully renegotiated when transformed into a painting. Her images exist in the past tense that Barthes describes, because, as I have argued, they are easily perceived as images from a childhood. Yet, at the same time the paintings exist just as much in the present tense, precisely because they are not a testimony to something that once was, but a mere after construction – an 'afterimage'.

Provocative Painting and Problematic Photographs

People have the most varied reactions to Cronqvist's images. Taking every opportunity to hear other's opinions both in private and in more public situations like seminars and conferences, and, of course, through reviews, I understand that the reactions to Cronqvist work are spread across a wide range – from contempt of the sexual undertones, feelings of deep sadness, a liberating force in the free minded girl figures, to detached formalist judgements. However, the most persistent comments have regarded the disturbing and problematic streaks in these images. I think that this disturbance concerns the violence and the spitefulness as much as any association to the 'Lolita theme'. Yet, Cronqvist's paintings have not caused a stir in the media in a way that artists working in film and photography have. A comparison in point is the American artist Sally Mann (b. 1951) whose project for a number of years in the 1980s was to photograph her three children, two girls



59 Sally Mann, *Last Light*, 1990.

and one boy, in their home in Virginia in the US. The children are posing in front of the camera in all kinds of settings but usually when at play or lounging on the terrace, in the garden or in the house and their playfulness can sometimes be provocative. Mann's photographs of her children are characterised by a narrative of contradictions, vulnerable children in dangerous environments, cute children being aggressive or young lively bodies posing as if lifeless. Thematically I see parallels to Cronqvist's work. Both artists deal with representations of girls that are subversive, regarding the children's sexuality but even more their behaviour in general, which serve to challenge our preconceived perceptions of girls in art. In, for example, Mann's photograph *Last Light*, 1990 (fig. 59), the naked child lies across a man's knees, the head

is flopped back and the eyes are shut. Muck of some sort is spread around the girl's nipple and some sand marks her chest. The girl looks lifeless, and the lifelessness is underlined by the man feeling her pulse on her neck. He holds her hand by holding her little finger with his little finger, a small gesture but one that gives us some hope that she is still alive. In another photograph *Jessie at Six*, 1988, we see the young girl at six years old, in the nude leaning towards a tree.³⁶ With her legs crossed and her arms behind her back, the girl is looking straight up into the camera lens. The girl's position and the viewer's angle are very similar to Cronqvist's painting *Girl in a Swimsuit*. In both cases the viewer is positioned very clearly as someone the represented figure is, at least technically, looking up at. These representations of girls looking blasé, uncomfortable in front of the camera lens, or too comfortable, and even dead, challenge conventions of looking.

Mann's work caused a strong debate in the US on the nature of representation of children and the morality of representing anything but innocent and happy children.³⁷ The differences between US society about morality and taboos, especially concerning representation of children, seem vastly different from the attitudes in Sweden. Yet, Sweden too, has seen heightened debates about representations of children and teenagers in art, perhaps most notably in an exhibition in Stockholm at The Museum of National Antiquities in 1998, when Donald Mader's photographs of naked and eroticised boys were vandalised. Although reported to the police, charges were dropped and the images freed of claims of being pornographic. In the months of June and July 1998 the national paper *Dagens Nyheter* frequently published articles on the subject. I firmly believe that part of the controversy around Mann and Mader's photographs has to do with the medium of photography. As discussed above, photography is widely understood to convey reality rather than illusion. It is the chosen medium for real exploitations of children through child pornography. This proximity might contribute to Mann's and Mader's images being perceived as transgressing taboos. Yet, the illusive reality of photography is not the only reason why an artist such as Mann has caused so much debate. The debates around Mann's work also concerned the moral rights of

a mother to 'exploit' her children. Children are dependent on their parents in all possible ways, which is why using them as subjects for her 'bold' art was perceived as morally corrupt. Higonnet makes a relevant point that this debate revealed just as much about the ideals evolving around motherhood as they did about innocent and romantic childhood.³⁸

I have brought up Mann's photographs of her children, because I think they fit in well with Cronqvist's paintings. I see an affiliation between the themes, and possibly in what the two artists want to say; that representations of girls have many layers and that we need to see all of them. Sally Mann's images make for an interesting comparison too in the discussion of photography and painting. This is illuminated by the way in which the two artists' work have been perceived so differently. Mann's photographs caused an enormous debate in the US, whilst Cronqvist's no less disturbing subject matter has made people feel challenged and uncomfortable, but not outraged. No one has accused Cronqvist of exploitation as they have Mann. One difference is still, of course, the different societies in which they both live and work, but I do not think that this is enough as an explanation. Another important difference is that Mann photographs her children whilst Cronqvist portrays herself. Mann can be accused of abusing her role as a mother and carer, whilst no one can accuse Cronqvist for painting herself. Yet, the most interesting difference, at least in the context of this chapter, which I would like to argue has contributed as much as anything to the differing response to public display of their respective works, is the different materials they work with. Mann's highly aesthetic and staged photographs are provocative partly because they are photographs, and thus perceived to be much closer to 'reality', and partly because they have made beautiful the conflicting messages the images convey. I believe that Cronqvist's paintings on the other hand come across as less threatening, partly because she has not made anger and violence beautiful in the same sense as Mann, but mostly because they are painted, and thus much more obviously constructed and potentially made up. Even if Cronqvist's paintings can be understood as documents of 'truth', as I discussed in the previous chapter,

the medium of paint necessitates that they are an after construction. Thus, when analysing Cronqvist's figurative images it is not possible to emphasise enough that she is a painter. In the following I will look at how the act of painting creates meaning and how it underlines the riddles of memory that I have discussed above.

Sticky Oils and Crazy Studios

When discussing the relationship between photography and paint in Gerhard Richter's (b. 1932) work, Buchloh quotes the artist on the nature of the materials he employs.

What we called blurred is imprecision, that is to say something quite different if one compares it with the real object represented. But since paintings are not painted in order to be compared with reality, they cannot be blurred, nor imprecise, nor different from (different from what?). How could paint on canvas be blurred?³⁹

If the camera helps us to preserve a particular moment, and aids our memory, then a painting arguably does the reverse. Rather than preserving something that was, painting an image means constructing a narrative. Thus despite the snapshot feel in many of Cronqvist's paintings, the illusion of photography and its adjoined sense of reality is undermined by her choice of material; oil or tempera on canvas. Thematically *Girls, Cat and Doll Pram* (fig. 43) is a typical snapshot moment. The two girls are playing with a cat in a non-descript grey room. The figures are captured just as they are about to put the pet, clad in a doll's dress, into the pram. The cat, if it is 'real' or a fluffy animal we do not know, is passively letting itself be manhandled. In *Girl in a Swimsuit* the girl figure is turning down her face, and in *The Girls in the Water* she is just about to kiss the cat. The moments are brief but the quality of paint has anything but quickness about it. I would like to draw attention to the meticulous details in *Girls, Cat and Doll Pram*, such as the pink patches on the cat's paws and the black strip in its yellow eye. Another minute detail is the colour of the background where a thin grey line very precisely differentiates

the floor from the wall. Besides perfecting details and balancing the composition, it takes time and effort to complete a painting on the most basic level. The paint needs to dry and of course the nature of oil and tempera allows for changes to be made. Spending time in a darkroom can be a laborious work too, staging the scene for a photograph time consuming, but the ease and quickness with which a snapshot can be done, or how fast it is to push the camera trigger, in contrast to carrying out a painting, is indisputable.

The painter and art historian James Elkins inscribes meaning not only to the theme but equally to the material of which an artwork is made. He argues, from an outspokenly personal point of view, that in viewing a particular work of art his body senses the material and the memory of slaving over developing a film or trying to shape a slab of marble one way or the other. He asks rhetorically:

How is it that looking at a Monet painting I begin to sense a certain tenseness, feel an itchy dissatisfaction with the body? Why does Mag-nasco give me a little vertigo, and set up a swirling, diaphanous motion in my eyes? How does Pollock exhaust me with his vacillation between violence and gracefulness?⁴⁰

Elkins then proceeds to compare the reality of the artist's studio with that of the alchemist's laboratory. His book, *What Painting Is*, is a fascinating read, although the focus on material aspects can only be taken as one aspect amongst many when interpreting a work of art. What I would like to hold onto from Elkin's account, is what he says about the importance of the act of painting in understanding a painting. Whilst that might not be a valid point regarding many contemporary artists working with paint, I believe it is in relation to Cronqvist's. The material aspects are important to her, she works only with oil and tempera in her paintings. The craft aspects are important too, as she grinds most of her colours herself, a method used in art for hundreds of years.⁴¹ Furthermore, Cronqvist labours in the studio on a daily basis, preferably in daylight and has described the act of painting as a necessity.⁴² Elkins talks about the 'insanity' of the studio where the smelly, sticky paint finds its way onto every surface, and painters 'bring their work

home with them like the smell on a fisherman'.⁴³ For a painter, every brushstroke is felt and remembered by the body making the image, and every brushstroke is a negotiation between interpretation and application. This physical relationship remains in the finished object, and is particularly visible in the art of Cronqvist. She lets the brushstrokes be visible on the dried canvas, and in her sculptures we can still see the imprints of her fingers, in a Giacomettiesque way.

In the next chapter I will discuss the presence of the colour red, as something that enhances the aggressive tendencies in the images from the later years of the 1990s. Here I would like to draw attention to the colour blue. The last sentence in Geoff Dyers novel *The Colour of Memory*, cited at the top of the chapter, reads: 'And over all of this is the deep blue of the empty sky – the colour of memory.'⁴⁴ Blue as the sky connotes the infinity of possibilities, as infinite as the variations of memories. Blue is also the primary colour in Cronqvist's bathing scenes from 1990 such as *Telltale* (fig. 39; plate 11), and *Hand in Hand* (fig. 40; plate 12). A light, blue colour dominates the high and clear summery sky and is reflected in the marginally darker blue sea. In these paintings every brushstroke is visible. The application of the paint is integral to the painting, and the traces of the brush are still there, made permanent as the canvas dried. In Cronqvist's work the very act of painting is indeed important, something that is often overlooked in interpretations of her work, where the thematic aspects tend to be the principal interest, this study included. This focus is in some ways similar to the traditional division between form and matter, 'disegno' and 'colore'. Disegno famously being the intellectual and higher standing of the two, and colour its subservient and feminine counterpart.⁴⁵ In the examples just mentioned the girl figures' bodies are applied in a much thicker and concentrated way, as opposed to the blue backgrounds where the brush strokes are freer and the paint much thinner. The reflections in the water surface is a play not only of different shades of blue, but also between different intensities of the thickness of the paint. The variations in the brushstrokes, the process the artist went through when deciding, on impulse or after calculation, what to do and how, reminds us of a slowness in the making of the

painting. The many layers of paint, the visible alterations in the image and the finer details are testimony to the many hours in the studio. This has as a consequence also a slowness in looking. The snapshot effect – in a second we can take in the image, see the characters and get an idea, however brief, of what is going on – is quickly balanced by the stickiness of the paint and the precision of the details. A slowness which is still there, forever present and makes itself heard when we look at these paintings.

I discussed previously the absence of chance effects in Cronqvist's paintings, the blurry fist in *Girl in a Swimsuit* (fig. 55; plate 19) did not just slip in. Instead each element is carefully negotiated and if the artist is not happy with the outcome, the material allows for changes to be made. When writing about Gerhard Richter's paintings, from the 1960s and 70s that explicitly play with the borders between photography and paint, Benjamin Buchloh points out the uneasy relationship between the two mediums. He argued that the modes of representation (or rather the people advocating them) have alternated between the extremes of contempt and respect. Buchloh emphasises that the high degree of illusionism in photography allows for a construction of reality as in no other media.⁴⁶ And as Sontag puts it:

While a painting, even one that meets photographic standards of resemblance, is never more than the stating of an interpretation, a photograph is never less than the registering of an emanation (light waves reflected by objects) – a material vestige of its subject in a way that no painting can be.⁴⁷

If Freud's notion of screen memory brings attention to the snapshot effect in Cronqvist's paintings, which can be associated to family albums, and family albums in turn are related to a discourse on memory, we have come full circle because the application of the paint underlines the re-construction of that memory. As Sontag points out, the painting must always be an interpretation, and as Richter claimed, it can never be haphazard, which rings true also for Cronqvist's work.

Memories of Photographs and Painted Memories

In the painting *Developing (Framkallning)*, 2001 (fig. 60), which is one painting in a series Cronqvist made after the death of her husband Tunström, the artist has portrayed herself behind a table, in the process of developing photographs. The figure looks down on two pieces of film, as the processing liquid makes the silhouette of the man come out in each copy, and in her hands she holds a bunch of papers also to be processed. Photography as a way of remembering, memory hinged on a certain image, is forcefully staged in this painting where the artist has painted herself looking at photographs of her late husband being developed. Patricia Holland discusses how looking at photographs from the past, in a discussion evolving around photographs from childhood, can be a way of dealing with traumatic events in that past. One of the examples she brings up is the work of British artist Jo Spence (1934 – 1992) who very forcefully used family photographs to shed new light on the construction of complex identities. In her work Spence used both old family photographs and constructed new and investigated the power of exaggerating certain memories over others. Reconstructing memories through photography was a way for Spence of reaching hidden depths and traumas concealed by ordinary family life and every day scenarios.⁴⁸ Walkerdine's article discussed above is also a testimony to the trauma a photograph can evoke in the remembering body.

In this chapter I have discussed how Cronqvist's 'snapshots' of every day life can be compared to the kinds of memory flashes that Freud discusses in his theory on screen memory. What evoked Freud's interest was what was remembered rather than what had been forgotten. In a similar manner it is just as interesting to look at what scenarios Cronqvist has chosen to paint, as at all the information that is left out. I have pointed out that some of her paintings are based on photographs, but regardless if they are or not, the images discussed have a photographic quality. The images are like frozen moments flashing by, as quickly captured as a snapshot. Albeit with the important difference that the process of painting has anything but quickness about it.



60 Lena Cronqvist, *Developing (Frankallning)*, 2001, 142 x 137 cm.

If for some people, looking at a photograph from childhood (one's own or someone else's) may evoke hidden memories and past traumas, the medium of painting acts in different way. As I have argued, by negotiating an image through paint, a memory is not only evoked but also constructed, or recalled and recollected.

Cronqvist has said in interviews that she paints things not as they actually were but as her memory of certain events in her life.⁴⁹ Her girl figures are ghostlike in that they represent a past that haunts the present. The past, the recollected memories first of all belong to the creator of these memories, the artist herself. But as we view the

muddle of repeated themes, characterised by physical distortions and skilful handling of different nuances of colours, the memories also belong to ourselves. Whilst the figures carry the features of the artist and her sister, they are neither illustrations of the persons, nor are the scenarios exact replicas of events in their lives. Instead of weaving a net of memories, or unfolding a story with a linear narrative, her series of paintings are like a psychological mapping of the mind, characterised by its riddles and gaps. The fleeting appearance of Cronqvist's images leaves an aftertaste. Rather than being an afterimage on our retina the girl figures make a mark on our psyches, they evoke something from our own memories and all we know about them are the traces they leave on us.

5 Angry Girls and Violent Games

Operation

How old Lena, do we have to be? How many years (since their deaths) have to pass before we can cut off their limbs and watch them scream?

Cut them off
now her feet
Cut them off
Here's the knife
It's so easy
just like meat
just like carrots
No, chicken thighs
Grab her toes
and I'll slice
Watch them scream
Hear them scream
Don't!
See their mouths
See Dad's teeth
See their arms
without joints
without hands
See Dad's willy
See his boots
See the blood
spilling down
where we've cut
below his
knees Here goes
Mom's left foot
Do you think
She'll pass out?
They never had
hands to touch
They had us
They made us
We have them now

RIKA LESSER ¹

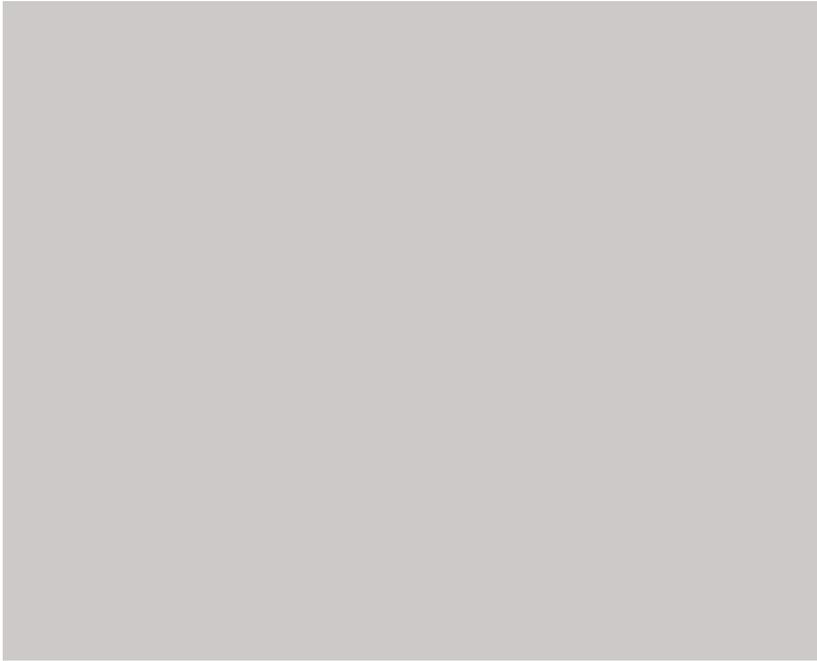


61 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl and Five Cats (Flicka och fem katter)*, 1995, 137 x 166.5 cm.

In the painting *Telltale* (fig. 39: plate 11) the older sister is about to push the younger sister underneath the surface of the water. It is a manifestation of sibling anger, perhaps nothing out of the ordinary amongst fighting children, yet it is an image that sends shudders down the spine. The discomfort of viewing this painting has to do with the violent act of actually pushing someone under the water's

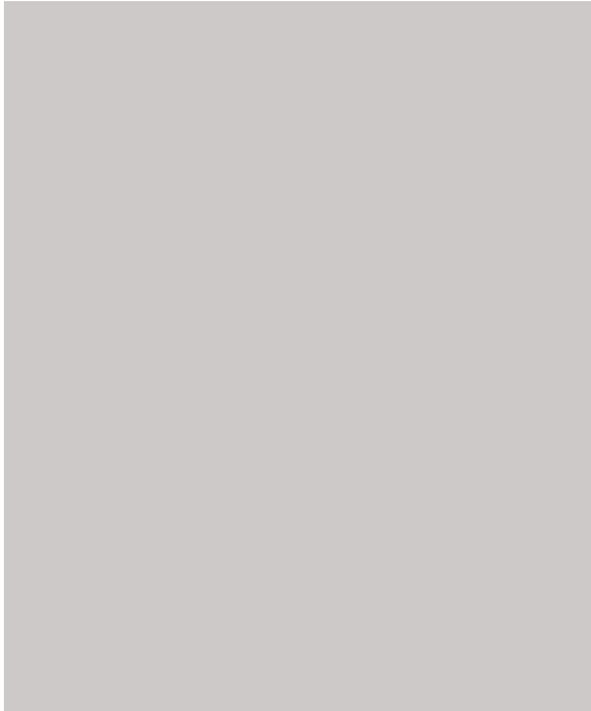
surface. It is easy to imagine the fear and claustrophobia felt by the victim as she is threatened to be drowned. The sense of discomfort may also have to do with the expression on their faces, characterised by a distant, cold and even absent gaze. As Hans-Olof Boström points out in a catalogue essay, the viewer of Cronqvist's paintings from the early 1990s never knows when 'the rough play will move into a drama about life and death'.²

In Cronqvist's imagery there is a lot of violence, between the two girls as well as towards the parent dolls. The violence towards the latter increases in the middle of the 1990s, see for example the painting *Girl and Five Cats (Flicka och fem katter)*, 1995 (fig. 61), where the girl is holding a grip around the mother's neck. The strangling grip in this painting is a bit careless, as if the girl is unknowing of the potential strangling, in much the same way as the girl Virginia is holding a weasel in Sally Mann's photograph *Holding the Weasel*, 1989 (fig. 62). The doll and the weasel might both, for different reasons, be lifeless, but there is something specifically childlike about that careless disregard for potential damage. Both girls are throwing a sideways glance, re-



62 Sally Mann, *Holding the Weasel*, 1989.

taining sombre faces. The ambiguity lies in the uncertainty of intended malevolence. Towards the end of the 1990s there is no longer any uncertainty, as Boström observed, but the violence is there, in your face, uncovered and agonizing. In some of Cronqvist's paintings from the later years of the 1990s and from early 2000 the violence, now solely directed towards parent dolls and animals (fluffy or otherwise) is escalated, but in others it is toned down, and in yet others substituted for an act of caring. Nevertheless, the sense of the parent figures, the pets and toys being at peril is retained throughout. This is most vividly illustrated through paintings such as *Taking their Temperature (Ta temperen)*, 2000-2001 (fig. 63), and *Operation (Operation)*, 2000-2001 (fig. 64; plate 21). In the latter the two girls are dressed out in white hospital coats, with the parents placed in front of them on top of the recognisable square pattern. The square pattern is placed on the flat surface, as a cloth on a dining table. Furthermore, the operation does not seem to be



63 Lena Cronqvist, *Taking their Temperature* (*Ta temperen*), 2000-2001, 55 x 46 cm.

particularly beneficial for the patients, but a rather cruel mutilation. The father figure's legs have already been amputated, the mother is about to have half a leg removed, and both parents scream out loud. In the former example, *Taking their Temperature*, the nursing game is played out with three figures and the girls' caretaking is yet again turned into abuse. I will come back to these paintings later on in this chapter.

In her poem 'Operation', quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the American poet Rika Lesser reflects over the uncompromising act of violence Cronqvist's girl figures

commit in the painting with the same title. In this chapter I will continue to look at the ways in which violence and anger are staged in Cronqvist's paintings from the end of the 1990s and the early 2000s. I begin by discussing Cronqvist's visual approach with anger and violence in relation to two other artists' works, which both deal with untamed girls: a stage play by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and two paintings by Dorothea Tanning. Furthermore, the numerous ways in which violence is present in Cronqvist's body of work is discussed and in the second part of the chapter I draw a parallel between Cronqvist's girls and Louise Bourgeois's installation, *The Destruction of the Father*, 1974. In that discussion I lean on Mignon Nixon's reading of Bourgeois's piece through Melanie Klein's ideas about aggression as formative for the subject.

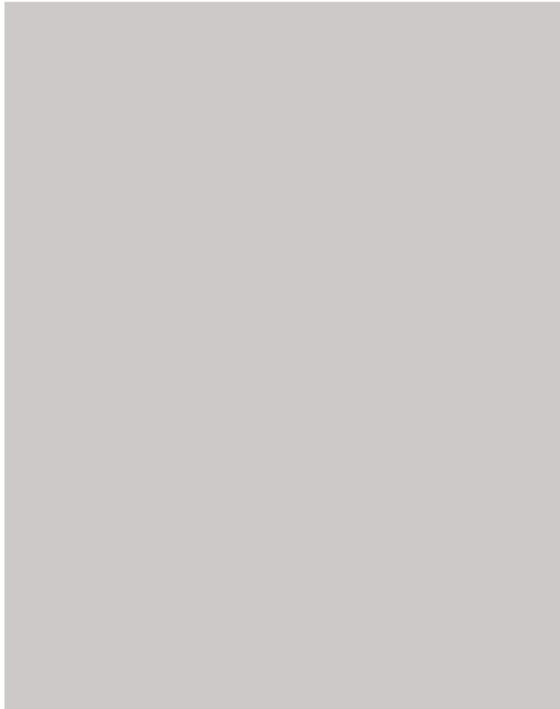
Picasso's World of Children

In 1949 Pablo Picasso wrote his second stage play *Four Little Girls*.³ It takes place in a kitchen garden and is about the wild games of four anonymous girls. It is not surprising Cronqvist found it suitable to quote a passage of this play in one of her exhibition catalogues.⁴ Indeed the similarities are many. Just as Cronqvist's girl figures are expressing violence, anger and contempt without censorship, in Picasso's play the girls are engaged in violent games with surreal undertones. In the foreword to the English edition the writer and ethnographer Michel Leiris wrote:

In 1865 a rabbit hole made it possible for the fair-haired

Alice, a little English girl, to enter a country where wonders led to yet more wonders. In 1947-48 the enchanted spot chosen by Picasso is a kitchen garden where four little girls, less elegantly groomed than their sisters of Victorian times, frolic and evoke in games infused with freshness, wildness and often malice, life, love, death: a whole world of magic and at anguish to which adolescence opens the door.⁵

The girls in Picasso's play are, thematically as well as historically, somewhere between Cronqvist's girls and Alice.⁶ Their whimsical non-sensical talk is evocative of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, but is here spiced up with some unromantic violence.⁷ In the preface the critic and curator Roland Penrose, also Picasso's biographer and friend, writes that, for



64 Lena Cronqvist, *Operation (Operation)*, 2000-2001, 147 x 117 cm. (see plate 21)

Picasso, the interest in humans' daily behaviour and presence overtakes his interest in aesthetics. Penrose continues:

This being so it is not surprising to find a ceaseless eager enquiry into the most mysterious and intriguing period of life, childhood. But we learn from early drawings of urchins in Barcelona and the numerous mother and child paintings of the Blue period that the child to whom Picasso was most attracted was not a sanctified bambino nor a little Lord Fauntleroy but rather the unselfconscious product of human life, the child of the people, innocent and yet stuffed to bursting with the germs of all the vices and virtues of an adult.⁸

It is interesting to see the play in the light of Picasso's visual representations of children, because, as Werner Spies points out in his book *Picasso's World of Children*, it is particularly in the stage play that Picasso renders his children a violent expression.⁹ I have to agree with Spies on this point, rather than with Penrose, as I too cannot see the children of Picasso's early periods (blue, and rose) as 'innocent and yet stuffed to bursting with the germs of all the vices and virtues of an adult'.¹⁰ The greatest benefit of Spies's study is the quantitative research, with the author having counted hundreds of drawings, paintings and prints featuring children in Picasso's collected oeuvre. On the basis of this large collection of material on Picasso's images of children, Spies makes some interesting observations, of which at least one rings true also for Cronqvist's representations; that the children are nearly always young, Picasso rarely portrayed adolescents. Towards the end of the book Spies comes back to this discussion and writes that for Picasso, adolescence seems to have been a taboo subject, 'never exhibiting a Lolita-style eroticism'.¹¹ This is of course noteworthy as, by being associated, albeit for a short period of time, with the surrealists, he was without doubt, exposed to the idea of the *Femme-enfant* (see 'Introduction').¹²

On the note of innocence there is a fascinating visual correspondence between Picasso's portrait of his daughter Paloma and Cronqvist's girl figures from the early 1990s, for example *Girl, Gorilla and Sun* (fig. 28; plate 5). In Picasso's *Paloma Asleep*, 1952, the girl is sound asleep

in her cot, her characteristic bob neatly combed over her forehead.¹³ Her body is all naked and the one detail that instantly strikes me as similar to Cronqvist's paintings is the thick strip of paint emphasising the girl's gender. Whilst this exaggeration in Cronqvist's image serves to destabilise the image, as discussed in chapter 2, in Picasso's painting the innocence remains undisturbed. Picasso did represent some male adolescents, in for example the painting with precisely that title, *Adolescents*, 1905 at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, from the Rose period, but Spies has found no such examples of girls, and nor have I. From Spies' study it becomes clear, and this stands in opposition to Penrose's words, that Picasso for many years restrained himself when visualising children, making them symbolic, and thereby reducing their individuality, and always during this period making them innocent. One example is the girl as a 'guardian angel', as in the drawing *Blind Minotaur, led by a Young Girl*, 1934.¹⁴ Only through his work on *Guernica*, 1937, and what Spies calls the 'History paintings' that followed Picasso's child figures became complex.¹⁵ In the left hand corner of *Guernica* from the viewer's perspective, a woman sits crying with a dead child in her arms in a typical pietà composition. Another poignant observation by Spies is that in his art Picasso was, at least towards the latter part of his life, more and more interested in the inner life of children.¹⁶ I think Picasso expresses this interest most successfully in the stage play, as if in the written word he was liberated from the traditions, taboos and his own anxieties bound up in visual representations of children.

Violent Little Girls

Four Little Girls consists of six acts, all set in a kitchen garden but each act is prescribed different props. The instructions for the sets are very precise: the first act has a well; the second a large boat in the middle with a goat tied to it; in the third all four girls are naked inside a cage; in act four the garden is illuminated by moonlight. In act five the setting gets more complicated and the instructions reads: 'Same garden. The Four Little Girls in bright coloured dresses. The ball

of fire of a great bursting sun rolls on the stage, on the big lake that the little girls spread on the ground at the end of act four. Enormous ibises paddle in the water and fish our fish and frogs.¹⁷ In act six: 'In the vegetable garden, under a big table The Four Little Girls. On the table, an enormous bouquet of flowers and some fruit on a plate, a few glasses and a jar, some bread and a knife. A large serpent winds itself round one of the legs of the table and rears up to eat the fruit, bite at the flowers, the bread, and drink from the jar.'¹⁸ The scenarios are given, and I imagine pretty difficult to actually stage; furthermore, there is no narrative that brings the story forward.¹⁹ There is no start or finish to the story, although it has quite a spectacular end, to which the instructions follow like this:

They lie down on the ground and go to sleep. Some trees, flowers, fruits, everywhere blood is flowing, it makes pools and inundates the stage. Four big white leaves forming a square, grow from the earth and shut in The Four Little Girls. While turning there appears by transparency written successively on each leaf: "FIRST LITTLE GIRL"; "SECOND LITTLE GIRL"; "THIRD LITTLE GIRL"; "FOURTH LITTLE GIRL". Complete blackout. The stage after lighting returns: the interior of a cube painted white all over fills it completely. In the middle of the ground a glass full of red wine. FINAL CURTAIN.²⁰

Just as in the titles of Cronqvist's images, the girls in Picasso's play are anonymous and throughout referred to as first, second, third and fourth girl. The third girl is mostly heard from outside the stage, visible only sparingly. The first act starts with the first girl saying: 'Let us open all the roses with our nails and make their perfumes bleed on the wrinkles of fire, of games, of our songs and of our yellow, blue and purple aprons. Let's play at hurting ourselves and hug each other with fury making horrible noises.'²¹ Throughout the play this contradiction between animosity, violence and affection continues.

The violence in Cronqvist's paintings is often tangible; for example it almost hurts to look at the painting *Operation* (fig. 64; plate 21) where, as Lesser suggests, the girls are cutting off the parent dolls' limbs as easily as chicken thighs. After a monologue in the second act

in *Four Little Girls* the third girl proceeds to cut off the throat of the goat tied to the boat in the middle. Later on she's dancing with the dead goat in her arms. Penrose maintains that the play is about childhood and that Picasso was very inspired by the children he met, in the street, his friends' children, and most notably his own.²² I discussed in the previous chapter that the girl images by Cronqvist are not so much about childhood but about the adult woman remembering, or (re)constructing a past. In his play, Picasso explores children's universe, a world without boundaries, tinged by the colour of wildness. Both Cronqvist's paintings and Picasso's play are without doubt aimed at an adult audience, because despite Picasso's efforts to enter a child-like mind, his elaborate language with its surreal turns remains adult indeed. This stands in opposition to Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which appeals to the adult reader but was written with children in mind.

Girls and violence were important themes also for the American painter Dorothea Tanning. Patrick Waldberg wrote in a catalogue text in 1967 that Tanning's girls have no 'equivalence in the history of art', and that she draws on her inner experience.²³ I think that Cronqvist's girl figures in several ways have become worthy equivalents of Tanning's. There is an echo also in Picasso's play of Tanning's ragged and wild girl figures. It is outside the scope of this dissertation to ascertain whether or not there was any mutual influence between Picasso and Tanning. Although, it is safe to assume their awareness of each other, at least through Tanning's husband Max Ernst (1891-1976), the confirmation of their relationship is not crucial to the argument.²⁴ The dialogue in Picasso's play is whimsical and nonsensical, and even though he was no longer associated with the surrealists, the play is strongly characterised by free associations, typical qualities of surrealist work. One such example is when the fourth girl says in act one 'The twelve white winged horses that draw the coach from a grain of rice'.²⁵ Or the second girl in act three: 'The little ladybird crawls, its lanterns hung on a cord round the neck of the gallows and squeaks its olive oil at the flints greasing the periwinkle blue pool, wiping the windows of its linen soaked in an egg breathlessly beaten into an omelette.'²⁶



65 Dorothea Tanning, *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, 1943, oil on canvas, 64 x 83 cm, Tate Modern, London.

The whole play continues in the same manner. The idea of a freely associating mind is also represented in the two paintings by Tanning discussed here. In the painting *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, 1943 (fig. 65), the music of Mozart, to which the title alludes, has not yet put the two girls to sleep.²⁷ They are standing in a hallway, outside a row of four doors, to the left hand side of the landing. The last door in the hotel-like, dark and sombre hallway is ajar and a bright, yellow light is streaming out of its opening. On top of the stairs is an oversized sunflower, its petals and stem far exceeding the size of the doors. The stem is a bit twisted and some petals are torn off, some are lying half-way down the stairs. The two girls are dressed in ragged clothes, like most of the figures Tanning painted during this period.²⁸ One of the girls is holding a petal in her hand, whilst she leans against a doorpost, closing her eyes and generally looking at ease. Her skirt is loosened up at the top, and is all jagged at the hem, her red shirt is open revealing her naked chest and stomach. The other girl's body language expresses the opposite as it looks as if she has stopped short, in the middle of a movement, just in front of the ravaged sunflower, as if captivated

by the view. She is placed sideways with her face turned away from the viewer. The two girls' hair also work in contrast to each other, the blond hair of the girl in the resting pose is falling down her back, nearly all the way to the floor in an unkempt way. The petrified girl's dark and equally long hair, on the other hand, is standing on an end straight up as if caught in a whirlwind. The painting is unsettling and raises a handful of questions. Why are the girls standing, as the title suggest, in the middle of the night in this vast hallway? Is it a dream? Of what? The broken petals of the flower might suggest something in the way of deflowering, the girls waking up to their arising sexuality. The door ajar might suggest a new insight, or an invitation to explore something on the other side. Whatever meaning we ascribe to this image it remains true that there is something wild and uncontrolled about these girls.

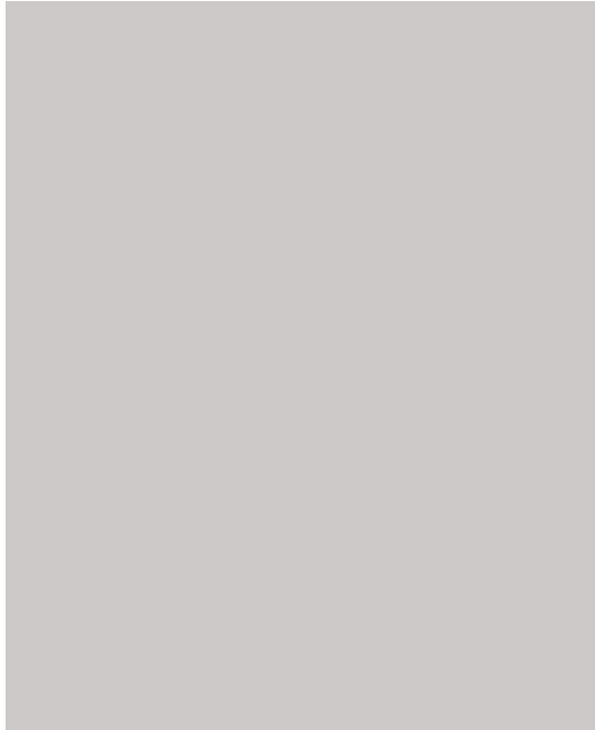
The sense of violence grows stronger in Tanning's painting *Children's Games* 1942, where two girls, in similarly ragged clothes, tear wallpaper from the wall, again in a long hallway.²⁹ Their rips reveal anthropomorphic shapes. One girl is exposing a stomach, the other a thick bunch of hair, which blends with her own long streaks. The removed strip of wallpaper is repeated in her own dress, ripped off in a similar way so the skin on her back becomes visible. A girl lies on the ground at the front of the picture surface, but we only see her legs as the rest of the body disappears out of the painting. The violent act of ripping off the wallpaper is aggressive and there is also something provocative about the girls' shabby, unkempt appearances. Mary Ann Caws reads the painting in a similar way:

In the dread provoking *Children's Games* ... hair streams down the backs of the terrible little girls like flames or stands up on their heads; their smallish beings are convulsed and sexualised, lined up against the wall in rapidly receding perspective. When they pull aside the wallpaper they reveal what we might have known all along: it was really the skin of a body. ... inside the scene is violent, and creation is associated with utter cruelty.³⁰

As opposed to Tanning and Cronqvist's visual representations of girls we never got to know how Picasso imagined characters in his play. Whilst in the stage play he carefully describes the surroundings as each act unfolds, he never mentions once what the girls actually look like. In my copy of the book the six drawings are reproduced from the original script and are all variations on the same theme, of three or four girls dancing around a tree. These somewhat abstracted drawings offer few clues to the little girls' appearances or indeed to their identities. To my mind Tanning's ragged figures would be well cast as the girls in Picasso's play. Her girl figures are not only violent when ripping the wallpaper but their whole appearance exudes an independent mind, doing what they want, looking wild as they like.

Looking at Picasso's play and Tanning's paintings of wild girls is interesting in relation to Cronqvist's figures. Picasso portrays girls who play 'at hurting ourselves and hug each other with fury making horrible noises'.³¹ No doubt the 'doctors' games Cronqvist staged would hurt too. In all three artists' versions of the girl, the figures reveal a human nature removed from the sunshine ideals that otherwise tend to dominate representations of childhood and family life.³² In Tanning and Picasso's case the girls are wild and violent towards animate as well as inanimate objects. Cronqvist's girls on the other hand 'live out' their violence particularly towards the parent figures and her paintings also stage a much more directed anger. Looking at Tanning's images and reading Picasso's play we get a sense of the girl figures' appearance (although this is never explicit in the latter's case); that they are unkempt and untamed. This is not the case in Cronqvist's paintings where the girl figures are always composed and with neatly combed hair and outfits. However, what Cronqvist's girl figures lack in the wildness of their physical appearance, they make up for in their violence towards the parent figures. Because, if Tanning and Picasso's girls are mostly wild, Cronqvist's figures are in some paintings outright violent and in others visibly angry. One such example is the painting *Girls in Yellow and Lilac (Flickor i gult och lila)*, 2000 (fig. 66: plate 22), representing the girl in a yellow dress, and with the red ribbon in her hair. She is frowning and demonstratively holds her hands on her

hips whilst looking angrily at the dolls and toy animals at the table. Her angry face is echoed in the mummy doll whose knitted eyebrows and wrinkled forehead underlines her sturdy stare back at the viewer. There is an invisible diagonal between the angry girl and the mummy doll, enhancing the expression of anger that dominates the picture, despite the other five figures not looking particularly angry or violent (the sister, daddy doll, teddy bear, crocodile and cat). As I will discuss next, in certain paintings that anger is further underlined by the use of the colour red.



66 Lena Cronqvist, *Girls in Yellow and Lilac (Flickor i gult och lila)*, 2000, 150 x 122 cm. (see plate 22)

Mad Colours

Throughout Picasso's stage play he makes references to symbols and figures frequently used in his visual art: the bull, a winged horse, a dove and not the least to colours. Again and again in *Four Little Girls* Picasso offers vivid descriptions of colours, as if the colours in themselves were part of the play, of which one example is in act one when the first girl says:

The blue aims the point of its azureal bluish clock, indigo, cobalt, sky blue, plum and the outstretched arms of lemon-yellow almond – green and pistachio, encircling the lilac-mauve, hit with both fists by the green and the orange and the tablecloth with royal blue and periwinkle blue stripes, bursting in confusion at its knees, and all the acid drop

rainbow of the white boarded by the arch at wet feet in emerald green,
funambulesque sounds of a gang beaten to death among the skins of
carnations and such rambling roses³³

Throughout the play Picasso continues to make this kind of eulogy to colour. Thus the fourth girl answers the first.

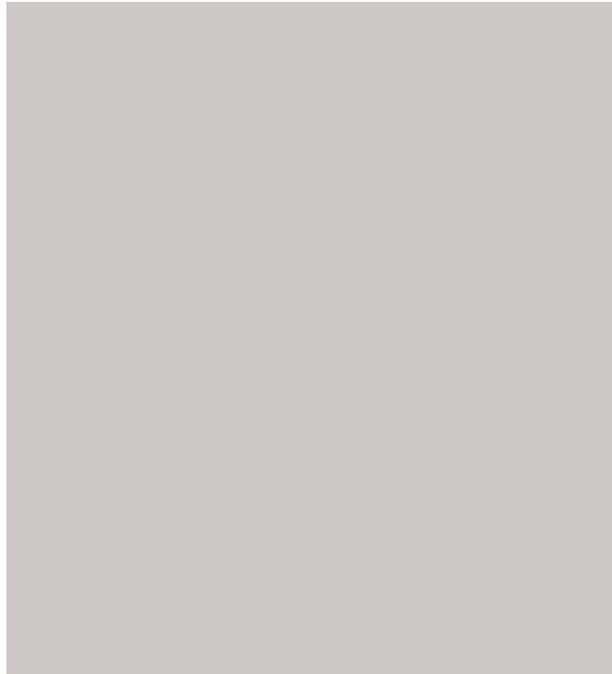
The blue, the blue, the azure, the blue, the blue of white, the blue of the rose, lilac blue, the blue of yellow, the blue of red, the blue of lemon, the blue orange, the blue that oozes from blue and the white blue and the red blue and the blue of the palms from the lemon blue of white doves, to the jasmine in the field of oats, in great almond emerald green songs.³⁴

In Cronqvist's paintings too the quality of colour is very important, carefully negotiated and considered.³⁵ In some of her paintings the colour scheme is cranked up, subtle colours taken further, as if they are screaming just a bit too loud. If in Picasso's play the colour blue is being poeticised, and has a cooling effect to the wild games of the four girls, the key colour in Cronqvist's images of angry girls is red. Red as in the colour of love and passion. Red is also the hot colour of chilli, of the sun, burning coal, as well as that of the inside of the body. A face flushes red in embarrassment or anger, and 'seeing red' means being angry; to lose one's temper. In Cronqvist's images of angry girls the colour red emphasises and underlines the aggression and the violence. Red seeps through all parts of *Girl with Mummy Doll* (fig. 57; plate 20). Most obviously the girl's dress and ribbon are red, but the colour is repeated all over her body. The shadow next to her left arm (from the viewer's perspective) is red, as is the shadow on her neck, and around her face. Her mouth is red, and most worryingly her eyes are encircled in red, around the eye lobe as well as around the inside edges of the eyes. A heightened redness is also a prominent feature in the mother's otherwise pale face, as her mouth and eyes are smeared with red. But the redness does not just exaggerate the features of the figures, it also emerges from the background of the painting, leaking out through the blue sky and the yellow ground.

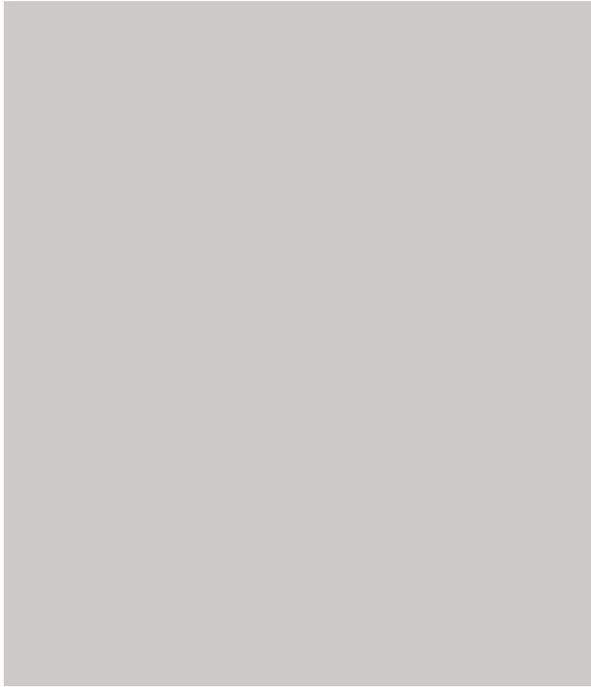
This exorbitant colour scheme features in several of the paintings

tinged with violence and aggression. The red lined eyes have been present in Cronqvist's art many times during different periods and in different series. Look, for example, at the red pupils of the mother's eyes in the many Madonna paintings from 1969 and 1970, for example *Burden and Possibility* (*Börda och möjlighet*), (fig. 67; plate 23) 1970, which is a paraphrase of the Madonna and child theme. The redness of the eyes is even more poignant in the painting *Mother and I* (*Mamma och jag*), 1987 (fig. 68; plate 24), where the 'I' is a portrait of the artist standing in the foreground, with the grey shadowlike mother in the background. The whites in the eyes are replaced with a sharp red, standing in stark contrast to the clear blue pupils. The redness in the figures' eyes is frequently featured in the works from the later part of the 1990s.

The colour red has taken over the whole painting *By the Table I* (fig. 36; plate 10). The two girls are standing side by side behind the table, and in front of them, on the table, on top of a white sheet or blanket, lie the two parent figures next to each other. In this painting the parents are not as small as previously when portrayed as dolls, but still markedly smaller in size than the two girls. The little sister is holding up the mother's head, so that the older sister can feed her with the spoon she holds in her hand. In this painting there is a contrast in atmosphere and colour I think. The girls are calm and in a peaceful way they are feeding their mother, who just about opens her mouth, where



67 Lena Cronqvist, *Burden and Possibility* (*Börda och möjlighet*), 1970, 95 x 85. (see plate 23)



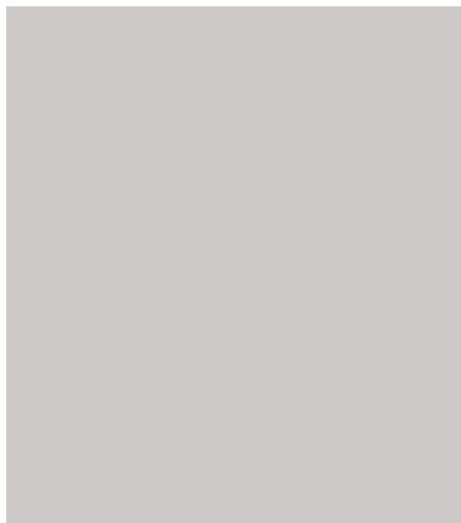
68 Lena Cronqvist, *Mother and I (Mamma och jag)*, 1987, 120 x 105 cm. (see plate 24)

only two teeth are visible. The father lies next to the mother, but his wide-open eyes and red clown nose and mouth break the stillness. The effect of this rupture is reinforced by the heightened colour scheme where the red soon dominates the viewing experience. Red is everywhere. The figures' dresses for a start, all four figures' outfits are red, the two girls dresses, the mother's top and the father's trousers, a red so loud that it nearly jumps out of the image. Even what is 'white' is tinted in red, like the surface on which the parents are placed, a mixture that ended up pink, and the girls' skin which is coloured in a

red tone, moving towards umber, rather than a fleshy pink. Like in *Girl with Mummy Doll* the red seeps through the background of the painting, as the underlying layer of paint is red. In this chapter I discuss paintings where Cronqvist has staged violence and anger, but despite performing violent and aggressive tasks, the girls often look contrived and cool. The contrast between a heightened colour scheme, as in the above examples where red dominates, and the girl figures' cool, or calm, expression cranks up the feeling of discomfort and unease even further.

Miniature Parents and the Act of Dwarfing

The sisters' enacted violence towards the parent figures is both tangible and inescapable. There is for example a whole series of paintings and graphics from 1999 where the girls, one or both of them, stuff the miniature parents into a glass flask, or as Mona Sandqvist convincingly suggests, alchemical flasks.³⁶ The titles are variations on: *Two girls with Glass Bubbles* (*Två flickor med glasbubblor*), *Two Girls in Red* (*Två flickor i rött*), *Girl in Blue with Daddy* (*Flicka i blått med pappa*), *Girl in Yellow* (*Flicka i gult*). The paintings have all adopted a similar iconography in which one or two girls have put a parent figure in a narrow necked laboratory glass flask. As opposed to some of the paintings discussed above, the girls do not look angry, but smile demurely, as if they take a quiet and quaint pleasure in the fatal game. Not so the parent figures who, to a varying degree, are represented as panic struck. In *Two Girls in Red* (fig. 69; plate 25) the girls hold their hands in front of the flasks' opening, and thus prevent the figures from getting any air. The two parent figures are leaning their hands on the inside of each respective glass flask whilst their faces mimic a scream. In *Girl in Red with Mother* (*Flicka i rött med mamma*), 1999 (fig. 70: plate 26), the girl is pulling her the mother's arm by sticking her hand down the



69 Lena Cronqvist, *Two Girls in Red* (*Två flickor i rött*), 1999, 150 x 135 cm. (see plate 25)



70 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl in Red with Mother* (*Flicka i rött med mamma*), 1999. (see plate 26)

glass flask's neck. While the mother figure is visibly in agony, screaming out loud, the girl is calmly observing her frustration. The mother's cry is a scream that got trapped on the two dimensional surface. As Parveen Adams suggested in her reading of Francis Bacon's painting *Head VI*, 1949, we hear the scream with our eyes.³⁷

It is interesting to note that in the titles of the paintings from late 1990s Cronqvist has referred to the parents, if at all, as mummy and daddy rather than to the otherwise common mummy doll and daddy doll. I do not want to read too much into the titles which, as I discussed in chapter three, are more like labels, there to differentiate one from another, rather than to connote any meaning. Although having said that, reflecting over the use of "mummy" instead of "mummy doll" might be fruitful. It confirms what most viewers probably have sensed all along, that the parent dolls are not so much inanimate toys as a diminutive of the parents. This is further emphasized as these toy sized figures are usually represented as a lot more expressive and animated than any ordinary doll would be.

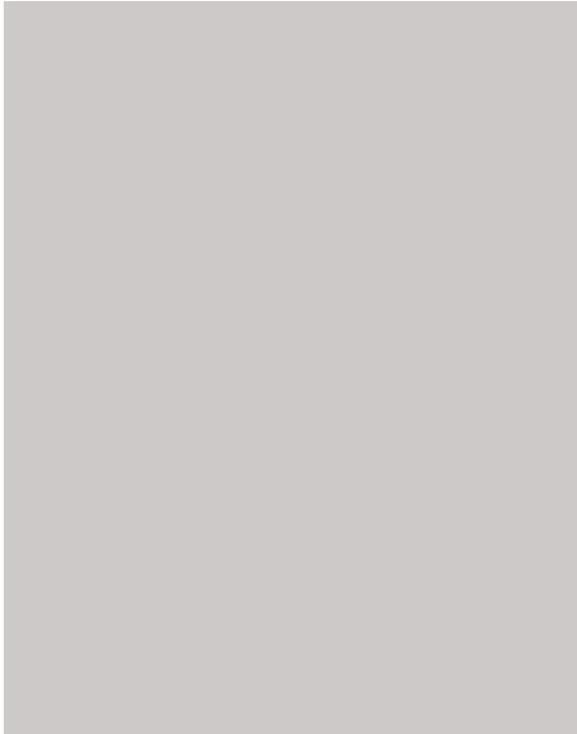
The violence Cronqvist has staged in her paintings in the latter half of the 1990s consists of molesting, cutting, and suffocating the parent figures; a manifestation of the child's anger. But there is also another, more subtle violence at stake, namely the mentioned dwarfing of the parents to doll sized figures. In the earlier girl images from the 1970s the parent figures dominate the girl figures, psychologically as well as compositionally, partly due to their much larger size. In these later representations the roles are reversed, and as Ingela Lind pointed out: 'During the 1990s parents and children have swapped roles. If Lena Cronqvist before used to paint the child/girl as a victim, she has now made her the executioner.'³⁸ It might be worthwhile to note that in the violence towards the parent doll figures in the paintings from the later part of the 1990s, the father and mother figure are equally abused.

In her book *On Longing* Susan Stewart reflects over the presence of miniatures in western society, from miniature manuscripts in the middle ages and the bourgeoisie's dollhouses to contemporary storybook countries.³⁹ Stewart points out that the desire to miniaturise comes from a desire of control and power.

The miniature always tends toward the tableau rather than toward narrative, toward silence and spatial boundaries rather than toward expository closure. Whereas speech unfolds in time, the miniature unfolds in space. The observer is offered a transcendent and simultaneous view of the miniature, yet is trapped outside the possibility of a lived reality of the miniature. Hence the nostalgic desire to present the lower classes, peasant life, or the cultural other within a timeless and uncontaminable miniature form.⁴⁰

Stewart writes about the nostalgic desire to present 'cultural others' or other 'subordinate' groups in a miniature format and I would like to try to apply this also to Cronqvist's dwarfing. What Stewart reads as nostalgic in the case of the bourgeois dollhouses, I read in Cronqvist's images as aggressively controlling. By diminishing the parent figures to doll size the girl figures gain control over the relationships, and the act of trying to control another being can be perceived as aggressive. To reduce a subject to an object, only to dominate, abuse and subjugate them, is indeed an aggressive act. In the quote, Stewart proposes that whilst speech unfolds in time, the miniature unfolds in space. This is true in Cronqvist's work on two levels. On a tactile level it comes true as the 'miniatures' are represented on a solid surface, the two dimensional canvas or the three dimensional sculpture. On a more abstract level it is true as it has to do with fantasy, a fantasy that is not bound up in time, but ever present in the space of the creating, or for that matter viewing, body. This argument refers back to the previous chapter where I discussed Cronqvist's paintings as repositories of memory. In her elaborate study on the miniature and the concept of longing Stewart also approaches the 'nutcracker theme', or Pygmalion like theme, where inanimate becomes animate as the toy comes into life. She writes that 'the animated toy initiates the world of daydream'.⁴¹ I too would like to place the cruel play with the miniaturised parents into the realm of dream, or reverie, and hold on to the argument that what is staged in Cronqvist's images is an adult's play, not a child's, as I proposed in chapter four regarding memories.

Although, of course, some of the games Cronqvist's girl figures enact



71 Lena Cronqvist, *Nurses (Sjuksystrar)*, 2001, 150 x 118 cm.

mimic real children's games, for example the nursing games, where caretaking and abuse have become flip sides of each other. In the painting *Nurses (Sjuksystrar)*, 2001 (fig. 71), the two girls, dressed in white coats, have created a 'field hospital' on the surface in front of them, where three miniature figures are their patients. The two versions of the father figures are each put in a bed. One, placed horizontally in the picture plane, receives a drop whilst pulling a face and opening his red mouth to a scream. The other father figure, whose bed is placed vertically, is being held still by one of the girls. The mother figure's treatment seems even less comforting as

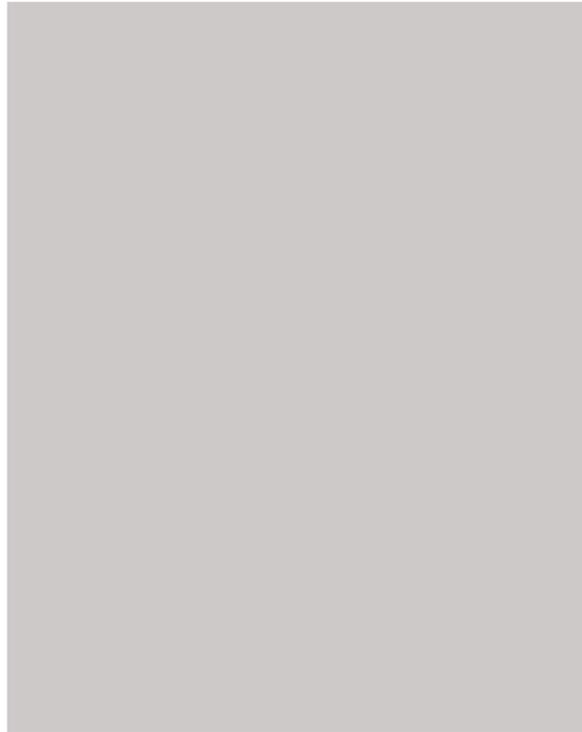
the second girl is pulling its face with both her hands. In *Taking the Temperature* (fig. 63), three male figures, two bald like Cronqvist's typical father figure, the third with hair, are placed on a square patterned surface whilst being manhandled by the two girls. The girl in the white dress has rolled the figure in bandages, transforming it to a mummy. The second male figure, the one with hair, is having his temperature, whilst the third is left to its own devices, lying on his back waving his hands and legs in the air. This third figure summarises the dual aspects of Cronqvist's dwarfing. On the one hand these paintings portray children's games, but a much more convincing reading is to see the infantilism as both a coping mechanism for relationships, of death, and of the difficult care of the sick and elderly. Difficult, as when a sick and aged, perhaps senile, person vegetates into a childlike state, it undoubted-

ly leaves his or her relatives ridden with feelings of guilt and sorrow. There is also arguably something violent in having to treat an adult person as an infant, intruding into someone's most intimate sphere.

In the series *By the Table* the girls are nursing the parent figures as an act of caring without the immediate undertones of abuse. In several versions the two girls are standing side by side, behind the table where parent figures are lying down. In some versions, like *By the Table I* (fig. 36; plate 10), one sister feeds the mother whilst the other holds up her head. In several others the girls are simply looking at them, pointing. In *By the Table II* (fig. 46; plate

13), the parent figures lie down next to each other with their arms stretched out, arms that end abruptly lacking hands, a lack which underlines their disability. This in itself is a form of reduction, emphasising their incapacity. So too is the infantilising of their red clown like noses, and the father figure's missing teeth. The third figure in *Taking the Temperature* lies on his back with the body only half clad, as an infant on its changing table. The little t-shirt is on but the bottom is naked and ready to be wiped. This infantilism is deeply disturbing as the figures are no infants but aged parents, bald in the case of the father and the mother often sporting a blue rinse perm.

I would like to suggest this violent dwarfing and humiliation of the parent figures as a coping strategy. As Stewart suggests when 'the other' is made into a miniature it is as a way of handling it, and arguably



72 Lena Cronqvist, *Three Sitting Marionettes* (*Tre sittande marionetter*), 2001, 150 x 118 cm.

Cronqvist's aging parent figures are miniaturised so as to be controlled.⁴² The sense of control, of having taken over, is something that Lesser picked up on in her poem *Operation*, cited at the beginning of the chapter. The abuse is furthered in the painting with the same title as the poem, *Operation* (fig. 64; plate 21) discussed above, where the castrated father figure has lost his legs. The abusive controlling is total in the painting *Three Sitting Marionettes* (*Tre sittande marionetter*), 2003 (fig. 72). Two elderly miniature female figures sit on two chairs close to each other. One is dressed in a thigh high dress with colourful knee high socks, the other in spotty trousers and a tank top, both with crowns on their heads. Their actions are completely controlled and their will subjugated, as the much larger girl figure standing behind them manipulates their arms through the strings attached. The ultimate stage of submission must be as a marionette, letting someone else take over your every single movement. The reduction of the male figure, the third doll sized figure in the image, is no less subjected, although he has not been trapped in the marionette's strings. Dressed out as a clown with a red nose and a top hat, he comes across as a bit of a lunatic, especially in the way he reveals his genitals by pulling up a hole in his red trousers.

In her essay 'Gesture in Psychoanalysis' Luce Irigaray comments on Freud's theory about his grandson Ernst's play with a reel on the end of a string, the so called fort-da game. Freud interpreted the game as the child's coping mechanisms for dealing with the absence of his mother. He threw the reel underneath the bed and shouted (what Freud heard) 'fort', i.e. far. When he retrieved the reel again he exclaimed, 'da', which in German means near.⁴³ Irigaray argues that when Freud wrote about the generic child in this context, he necessarily, perhaps unknowingly, wrote about a boy. According to Irigaray the child could not have been a girl, because a girl simply does not do the same things when her mother is gone. I will not try and debate the truth of this statement. However, what I find interesting in the context of Cronqvist's girl figures, is what Irigaray suggests about girls' play with dolls being a coping mechanism.

She plays with dolls, lavishing maternal affection on a quasi subject, and thus manages to organize a kind of symbolic space; playing with dolls is not simply a game girls are forced to play, it also signifies a difference in subjective status in the separation from the mother. For mother and daughter, the mother is a subject that cannot easily be reduced to an object, and a doll is not an object in the way that a reel, a toy car, a gun etc are objects and tools used for symbolization.⁴⁴

Irigaray's suggestion of girls' play with dolls is of course not exhaustive as a tool for interpreting the presence of dolls in Cronqvist's images. Yet, it might still be fruitful as a background for making sense of the aggression in these images, in terms of the formation of the subject, a topic I will go on and discuss in the remaining part of the chapter.

The Destruction of the Father

The artist par excellence who successfully has made visual her memories and fantasies of her childhood through a language of aggression, is Louise Bourgeois (b. 1911). In her psychobiographic art Bourgeois is much more explicitly feminist than Cronqvist, as she openly and consciously deconstructs patriarchal hierarchies. Yet the two artists have many themes in common, not least the focus on the image of the self and their families. They both draw on a biography that through their work is made into fiction. However, there is a difference in that Bourgeois outspokenly draws on some specific memories from her childhood, confirmed by her writings and through interviews.⁴⁵ Cronqvist, on the other hand, is more discreet, and 'speaks', only through her images. Jean Frémon writes that all Bourgeois's themes, evolving around some specific childhood memories, have been present from the very beginning, visually infinitely elaborated through the different periods through which the artist has passed.

Bourgeois, one daughter from a family of five, extended in time with another two adopted siblings, lives out, in her work, her wrath towards her adulterous father. He mistreated his wife by virtually replacing her through a longstanding affair with the children's live-in maid. At least that is the story Bourgeois has made public through a



73 Louise Bourgeois, *The Destruction of the Father*, 1974, Plaster, latex, wood, fabric and red light, 237.8 x 362.2 x 248.6 cm.

commentary often published along with her work. Bourgeois's anger is expressed in words but the violence is acted out in the making of the mutilated, anamorphous, sculptural objects. Bourgeois describes an early attempt to make three dimensional form like this: 'Once when sitting together at the dinner table, I took white bread, mixed it with spit, and moulded a figure of my father. When the figure was done, I started cutting off its limbs with a knife. I see this as my first sculptural solution'.⁴⁶ In their work both Cronqvist and Bourgeois are engaged in staging an infantile play where aggression towards the parent figures is acted out. The sculptural installation *The Destruction of the Father*, 1974, (fig. 73) was set in a room inside the room, a cubicle marked out by textiles. In the cubicle's ceiling as well as on its floor were scattered

a variety of rounded and oblong soft shapes which, in the context of Bourgeois's work, are evocative of breasts and phallic shapes. In the middle, on what we are led to understand as the table, are the body parts of the father, all made of plaster, latex, wood and fabric. A fuller understanding of the work comes with Bourgeois's famous commentary on the piece.

It is basically a table, awful, terrifying family dinner table headed by the father who sits and gloats. And the others, the wife, the children, what can they do? They sit there, in silence. The mother of course tries to satisfy the tyrant, her husband. The children are full of exasperation. We were three children: my brother, my sister, and myself. There were also two extra children my parents adopted because their father had been killed in the war. So we were five. My father would get nervous looking at us, and he would explain to all of us what a great man he was. So, in exasperation, we grabbed the man, threw him on the table, dismembered him, and proceeded to devour him.⁴⁷

Bourgeois's *The Destruction of the Father* is a three-dimensional installation, whereas when Cronqvist represents angry girls it is largely in two dimensions. Bourgeois lives out her aggression already in her work process. She is famous for creating with emotion, pulling sculptures apart, throwing them out, only to make them good again by putting them back together.⁴⁸ Although emotionally charged, Cronqvist's working process seems rather more contrived. Visually there is in Cronqvist's images an unsettling calm with which the figure in for example *Two girls in Red* (fig. 69; plate 25), stops the airflow to the parent figures in the round glass flasks. If, as Lynne Cooke suggests, Bourgeois 'subsumes the visual into the visceral and corporeal', Cronqvist introduces the visceral (in its other meaning, 'deeply or intensely felt') into the visual.⁴⁹

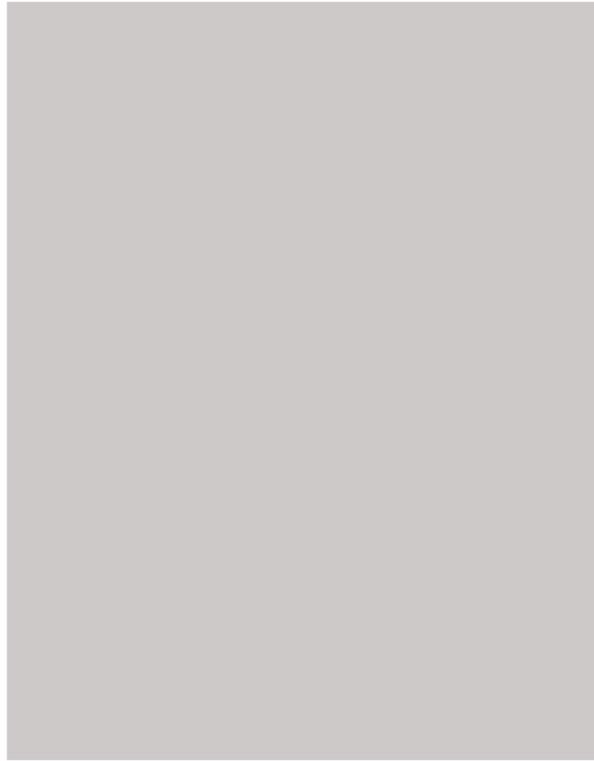
Aggression According to Melanie Klein

I have placed girls being wild, violent and angry in a lineage of art from the twentieth century that represents similar themes. The other area which I can't help but relate this display of aggression to, is the

forming of identity. The psychoanalytic clinician and theorist Melanie Klein suggested that psychic life is structured by unconscious fantasies, which in turn are motivated by bodily drives. Furthermore that aggression is a vital part of the forming of infants' identity. In contrast to Freud, put very crudely, Klein saw 'fantasy' as structuring the psyche, instead of sexual development. Another interesting angle in Klein's work is that she focused on lateral, horizontal relationships rather than linear, past to present, relationships. As Juliet Mitchell phrases it, for Klein, the 'present and past are one and time is spatial, not historical'.⁵⁰ In an article Mignon Nixon relates Louise Bourgeois's piece *The Destruction of the Father* to Klein's theory which argues that subjectivity is formed around an experience of loss which is then enacted through destructive fantasies. Nixon observes that it was, in fact, partly through Bourgeois's work that a Kleinian model was taken up and employed critically by a number of artists interested in Lacanian based work. Nixon argues that the oral-sadistic fantasy in Bourgeois's *The Destruction of the Father* is doubled by the artist's fantasy to eat the father's words: 'in order to shut the father up it is necessary to eat him up'.⁵¹ In her work Klein argued that the formation of the infant's subjectivity happens through a balancing between love and hate. Love represents the life drive, hate the death drive. When the child acts out her or his aggression towards the mother it is part of their forming of identity. In her arguments the Oedipal conflict occurs at a period when sadism predominates in the mental development. What has been suggestive in Klein's theories to feminist writers, such as Mitchell and Mignon Nixon, is that she saw aggression as essential for all subjects, instead of being a marker of sexual difference. It is therefore aggression in this line of thought, that is the site of struggle, as opposed to sexual development.⁵² Klein also argues that what makes up the individual is not a split between past and present in a linear, historical or psychological, way, but that all the components of the individual's identity exist in a horizontal present.

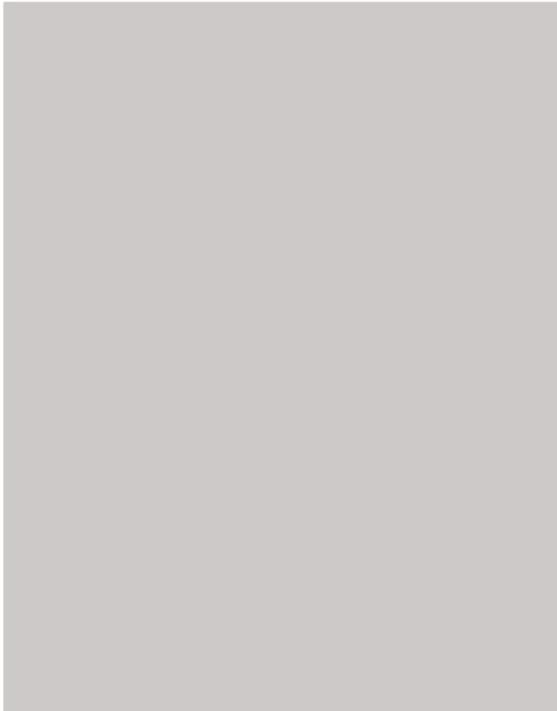
Bourgeois said in an interview that the purpose of *The Destruction of the Father* was to exorcise the fear. She says that exorcism is therapeutic, although as Bourgeois tries to avoid describing her art as

therapeutic, a better word is cathartic, and she says: 'So the reason for making the piece was catharsis'. Bourgeois continues to say that of course the story is a fantasy, but a lived fantasy.⁵³ Lived fantasy means something that is experienced, in 'real life' or in the mind. Here I would like to continue the argument I started in the section above, about seeing dwarfing as a coping mechanism of fear. By reducing or molesting the parent figures, fear in Cronqvist's images is under control. The act of painting might be cathartic for the artist, in the same way as the games acted out by the girls in the paintings could be seen as cathartic.⁵⁴ The reason behind the abusive acts in Cronqvist's



74 Lena Cronqvist, *Blank Pages (Tomma ark)*, 2001, 150 x 118 cm.

work are unspoken. However, one theme that has run through all of Cronqvist's body of work is death and loss and I think it is reasonable to locate some of the bespoken 'fear' as represented in her work in that context. In the 1980s Cronqvist made two series of paintings where loss and death are at the core. One series took place at the deathbed of the mother, the other at the deathbed of the father.⁵⁵ In 2000 she painted another moment of death; that of her husband Göran Tunström. In a series of four paintings she has expressed that loss. In two of the images she painted herself with her husband miniaturised, resting in her arms. In another painting two black and white photo portraits of a man are in the process of being developed.⁵⁶ In the first (first in the catalogue (*White Sheets*) *Blank Pages (Tomma ark)*, 2000



75 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl in a Suit III (Flicka i kavaj III)*, 2000-1, 150 x 117.5 cm. (see plate 27)

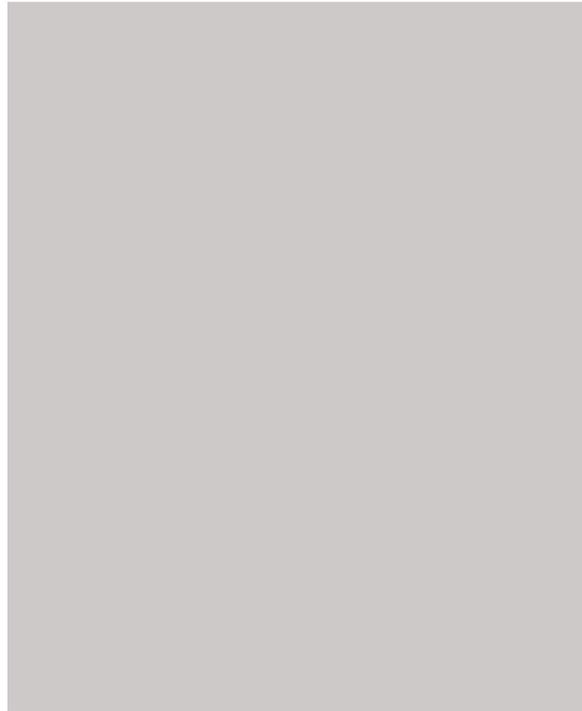
(fig. 74), the artist has painted herself standing in front of a table, in the same way as many of her girl figures, with eight white and empty paper sheets in front of her. To the right of the sheets are three empty chairs, props that feature in many of her paintings of girl figures. To me these paintings are strong manifestations of the total loss and emptiness felt after having lost a loved one.

Cronqvist's paintings of girls discussed in this chapter ooze aggression and violence, on many different levels. I do find Nixon's reading of Bourgeois work through Klein very convincing, as the artist is literally eating up the 'father'. Bourgeois not only

symbolically eats him up, but also continues to destroy her work, only to soon restore it, or have them rescued by her studio assistant.⁵⁷ In Cronqvist's work I perceive more of a distance between the creating body and the artwork, which partly has to do with the brush used when painting. Although the artist's brush can be seen as a prolongation of her body, it is also something that is between the creating body and the canvas, a barrier perhaps. Whilst Bourgeois's work is wild in a direct and passionate kind of way, Cronqvist's violence is contrived and cool.⁵⁸ Yet, the Kleinian model is suggestive also here, because, as I argued in the previous chapter on memory, the psychological stories enacted are lateral, present all at once. Cronqvist's girls are angry and violent, they are also not always girls. In *Girl in a Suit III (Flicka i kavaj III)*, 2000-1 (fig. 75; plate 28), the 'girl' is transformed into an adult, dressed in a pinstripe suit looking down at the parent figures bathing in mini-

ature tubs. Her facial features and hairstyle is easily recognisable from the artist's self-portraits. Most notable is perhaps the title, *Girl in a Suit III*, as the painting does not actually represent a girl. We also learn that it is painting number three in a series. *Girl in a Suit III* is situated amongst the girl paintings thematically as well as compositionally. Comparing it to painting number one, *Girl in a Suit I*, (fig. 76; plate 28) in that same series it is immediately obvious that they are compositionally very similar.⁵⁹ The girl, who in this first version really is a girl, is dressed in the same dark pinstripe jacket, and has the hair parted to the same side.

Only this time the red ribbon holds up the fringe and in painting number three the fringe is tucked behind the ear. The two tubs are placed in the same way, with the mother and father figures facing each other. The only difference being that in the two paintings they have swapped sides. In another painting *Game (Lek)*, 2000-1, the two sisters are again playing with the toys and the parent figures. The older sister has the girl figure's face, and the well-known ribbon in her hair, which this time is blue and to the other side of her head. The shadows around her eyes, let alone the sadness in them, make them seem more like an adult's. The adult woman artist represents herself as a girl, but as a girl with the adult woman's experiences, anxieties, angers and fears. This simultaneous representation of a girl and a woman, is evocative of a Kleinian analysis where the girl is in the woman, the woman in the girl, all at once.



76 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl in a Suit I (Flicka i kavaj I)*, 2000-1, 150 x 122 cm. (see plate 28)



77 Lena Cronqvist, *Little Girl and the Family by the Sea* (*Liten flicka och familjen vid havet*), 1992, 52 x 55 cm. (see plate 29)

In 1992 Cronqvist painted *Little Girl and the Family by the Sea* (*Liten flicka och familjen vid havet*), 1992 (fig. 77; plate 29), a paraphrase on Picasso's painting in a classical style, *Family by the Seashore*, from 1922 (fig. 78). In Picasso's version the picture plane is divided into three fields, in the far background the blue sky, next the darker blue sea and in the foreground the yellow beach where the family of three is gathered. The father lies down horizontally in the image, leaning his head on one arm,

whilst the other arm is lying across his body, covering his gender. The little boy sits next to the father poking his little baby finger in the face of the unresponsive father. The mother in turn focuses on the boy, caressing him with her hand. As the British art historian David Lomas has observed, this painting 'could be mistaken for a family snapshot of the Picasso family were it not that the stylistic overlay drains away any sense of immediacy or presence'.⁶⁰ In Lomas's resourceful reading he sees the similarity of the sleeping, horizontal, father to a dead father. Compositionally Lomas also relates the mother's position to a typical Pietà. The Pietà was a common motif for war memorials after the war. Instead of the dead Christ there would be the body of a dead soldier.⁶¹ According to Lomas, Picasso has in this painting portrayed his self portrait through the dead soldier. Lomas argues that what is disturbing in this painting is the insight that there is death also in 'Arcadia'. He reads the painting through Freud's idea of Oedipal conflict where 'guilt originates as a reaction to our aggressive and destructive drives'.

Lomas makes the interesting observation that two Oedipal subject positions are present at once in the painting; through the jealous son, and as the father – a simultaneous representation of jealousy and the subsequent feeling of guilt. Lomas also locates this double stance of revolt and submission to Picasso's relation to culture and the omnipresence of guilt in the post war period. He sees guilt as one of the reasons why Picasso reverted to a classical style.⁶²



78 Pablo Picasso, *Family by the Seashore*, 1922, oil on wood, 17.6 x 20.2 cm, Musée Picasso, Paris.

In Cronqvist's paraphrase the picture plane is also divided in three, but instead of as in Picasso's version having sea and sky following one after the other, she has added a field in front of the family of three. In this foremost field a girl is standing (the little sister) holding up a ball in one hand whilst having a father doll hanging in her other hand. The sharp horizon that separates the girl from Picasso's family suggests a floor meeting a wall, as if Picasso's image was erected as a vertical background to the girl's play. Lomas reads Picasso's painting through a patriarchal lineage, from the Oedipal conflict to Picasso as something of the prodigal son with a complex relation to his culture, native and adopted. The girl figure in Cronqvist's version is painfully staged outside of that lineage, shut out from the rest of the family, turning towards the spectator as if to see if there is anyone else she can play with. Lomas locates *Family by the Seashore* to a discourse on representations of the self. I think it is relevant to do the same with Cronqvist's images. Only the self in her work is a self that stands on the outskirts

of culture, a self that is not so easily placed in Freud's patrilineal theory of the Oedipal conflict. When Picasso represents himself in the examples alluded to, it is as dead, or at least passive through sleep, or through the guise of the minotaur, the monster animal.

In the images I have discussed in this chapter, Cronqvist too displays her 'self' as monstrous, but instead of being transformed into another being, like Picasso, her 'self' is always represented as herself, through the guise of the girl figure. In *Little Girl and Family by the Sea*, the little girl stands outside the image, arguably a way of stating her as an outsider of the lineage of visual culture exemplified by Picasso's famous brush. The girl with monstrous sides to her personality is a rare species, although existing, in the history of art. If the girl figure is also seen as a representation of the artist's self then the outsider perspective is doubled: when a woman artist represents aggressive sides of the human psyche, in the guise of girls, the otherness is complete.

Coda

Who, surprised and horrified by the fantastic tumult of her drives (for she was made to believe that a well-adjusted normal woman has a... divine composure), hasn't accused herself of being a monster? Who, feeling a funny desire stirring inside her (to sing, to write, to dare to speak, in short, to bring out something new), hasn't thought she was sick?

HÉLÈNE CIXOUS¹

By way of concluding this study I would like to turn to Hélène Cixous and open up the last words of this thesis to a more general discussion of Cronqvist's images. Cixous writes about the reaction of a woman who sees her true self – a difficult mirror image to perceive as she argues it is absent from the all pervading 'patriarchal culture'. She argues that if a woman is awakened to her desires, she will perceive herself as a monster, or at least as not being normal.² Cronqvist's girl figures do indeed come across as somewhat monstrous as they physically and psychologically abuse and molest the parent figures. If these images can be seen as an encounter with a self, the artist's self as much as the viewer's, it is a gruesome mirror image. Throughout the thesis I have proposed that these images are difficult to look at and to digest, and reading Cronqvist's visual language as a new way of writing the self in line with Cixous's ideas is one way of approaching them.³

The quotation from Cixous is suggestive in that it gives voice to the taboo of feminine desires. Cixous writes about the importance for women to find a way in which 'to write'. I propose to interpret that as an encompassing expression in general, rather than as a literal reading of the word write. Likewise, when Cixous talks about women finding a new language, she does not necessarily mean French or any other spoken language, but a means of expression adopted to a woman's voice in the generic concept of language. She encourages

the thought that women will dare to break away from the patriarchal language into which we were born and will dare to find another way for expression. This, she believes, will be a painful process, because we (women) will see ourselves as we are, not as who we think we are. Because, according to Cixous, when she wrote the text in 1976, the feminine desire, defined from a truly feminine subject perspective, has not yet been written about. She imagines a new language not yet explored or even invented. In fact, as is well known, Cixous's own style of writing is an attempt to reach a new means of expression. So, in a sense, instead of applying what Cixous proposes in her text to Cronqvist's work of art, I consider her text as a springboard for thinking about female authorship. Cixous writes in a visionary manner, about the world after total emancipation, where no one will have to 'write' from a subordinate position. In the essay 'Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays' Cixous talks about our time as an era when the fundamentals are shaking, and the rock that is culture is about to crumble and fall apart. She imagines how all stories must be retold, in order to involve two voices. Cixous writes that it has always been 'her', i. e. woman's, position to be the other. Further, she asks rhetorically what will happen when the dark and yet unexplored continent is revealed? She writes in powerful tones that 'they' have committed the worst crime of all, making woman fear herself, created an anti narcissism that makes woman disgusted by woman and unable to live in her own body.⁴ In fact since the second wave of feminism in the 1960s feminist writers and artists have worked in numerous ways to find both verbal and visual forms of female expression. As discussed in chapter two, that work, at least in visual arts, has often evolved around a renegotiating of the body. Cronqvist's work is all about bodies. Even in her landscapes, bodily themes of life and death are vividly present. In all the paintings discussed in this dissertation human bodies are in focus. However, the way in which I see Cixous's text as relevant to Cronqvist's imagery is not on that bodily level, but on a psychological level, where Cronqvist's visual language has few parallels.

I propose that Cixous's ideas cast some light upon Cronqvist's work, despite the central contradiction in this argument. Cixous demands

a new language, and new means of expressions: a language different from the system of thoughts, which she argues has repressed women throughout history. Yet, Cronqvist makes use of a particularly old fashioned language, figurative oil painting, deeply embedded in the patriarchal culture Cixous calls upon to implode. At the same time as Cronqvist's figures and their violent games have a liberating effect, in that they set free the dark sides of the human psyche, they are immediately positioned in a visual tradition previously subordinating woman's own experiences. Nevertheless, Cronqvist does explore the unexpected, violent sides of the female subject. Although Cronqvist might not write in 'white ink', there is a lot of that new, '(her)story', Cixous sees in her utopia.⁵ Cixous suggests that women need to find their own languages – languages in plural because there will be more than one. With her girl figures I think Lena Cronqvist has found one.



Summary

The starting point for this PhD, *Lena Cronqvist: Reflections of Girls* was my encounter with a large number of images of girls that opposed the common trend in which girls are represented as innocent, romantic and sexual. I was puzzled by the sheer amount of girl figures in art, contemporary as well as historical, and even more so when I realised how little academic attention this area had received. Cronqvist's art stood out to me, as despite her being a well established artist on the Swedish art scene, her representations of girls had failed to generate serious writing. The aim of this study has been to provide the first piece of research ever on this body of work by Lena Cronqvist. What I hope I have achieved is to offer a wide range of interpretations of some specific works by Cronqvist, but also to further the understanding of the complexities of representations of girls in art in general.

I have looked at a number of Cronqvist's paintings, predominantly those that have been exhibited and that have been included in books and catalogues. The method employed in the thesis can best be described as a visual analysis, in which I have closely studied the images. I have also made reference to literature, photography and film, and thereby placed Cronqvist's girl figures in a cultural context stretching beyond just visual art. My approach has allowed me to make comparisons with art from the present as well as from the past. I have recognised differences in time, place and culture between Cronqvist's art and some of the artists with whose work I compared, but have argued that the images are still informative in isolation, as I looked at them from a specific point of view and in a specific context.

In my thesis I have approached Cronqvist's paintings of girls from five different perspectives and this eclectic reading has led me in various theoretical directions. My understanding of theory in relation to the analysis of visual art is that such a multifaceted area as art

also benefits from a pluralistic approach to theory. However, my theoretical starting point has been gender studies, in which the feminine subject is renegotiated. In art this involves an understanding of the complexities for the woman artist as both the maker of the image and as a subject for the image. The lines of thoughts following Laura Mulvey's theories have been very influential for my understanding of the relationship between the viewer and women in representation. Regarding women in culture in general, I have been much inspired by scholars like Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, as well as by Juliet Mitchell, and the many debates that have followed in their footsteps. I have also been inspired by the way in which other art historians have made use of psychoanalytical theories, as another narrative that can elucidate the visual stories on display.

The first chapter, 'Young Bathers' focused on Cronqvist's images in which the girl figures are seen bathing and I looked at the relationship between these and other known themes of bathers from the history of art. Thus, I traced the theme of bathing girls, and women, from Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* 1484-46, through Akseli Gallen-Kallela's bathing nymphs in *Oceanides* 1909, to Carl Wilhelmson's painting *Summer* 1915, and discussed the importance the figure of Venus has had for our understanding of bathing women. Cronqvist's two paintings *The Girl in the Water I and II*, 1982, are central to this chapter. Another important theme is *Girl and Swan*, which Cronqvist has elaborated upon in both paintings and sculptures and I analysed how this theme is connected to the mythological theme 'Leda and the Swan', which is much quoted in art. What I concluded from this analysis is that Cronqvist is an artist who liberally picks and chooses from the rich plethora of references that the history of art has to offer. In the same way, her paintings invite the viewer to make their own comparisons. On the one hand, I argued that there is a strong echo of iconographical references in which the female figure is subjected to a male gaze. On the other hand I pointed out that her bathing girls remind us that there is nothing natural about representing bathing bodies. I maintained that depictions of bathing girls are very much inscribed with social and cultural values.

Throughout the thesis I discussed how there are many different meanings in Cronqvist's images, and how the same painting can be interpreted again and again, each time in a new way. One troubling, but inescapable theme, is the emphasis on girl figures' sexuality, which I analysed in chapter two 'Ambiguous Bodies'. I studied the ambiguity of her girl figures' bodies and the scenarios in which they are placed. To put into relief ambiguity and ambivalence as an aesthetic strategy concerning representations of femininity, I made comparisons with the French eighteenth century painter, Jean-Baptiste Greuze's images of girl-woman hybrids. The discussion then moved on to look at how ambiguity can be employed as a feminist strategy when representing female bodies, and be used so as to reclaim the ground from a tradition of representing girls and women as subjected to the male gaze. However, I argued that there is an ambiguity not only concerning the figure's bodies and the scenarios, but also in the way in which we approach these images. To make this point clear, I compared Cronqvist's theme 'Daddy and Girl' with Balthus's painting *Joan Miró and his daughter Dolores*, 1937-8, where the thematic and compositional similarities are striking. I claimed that the knowledge that the artist is a woman, and has made a kind of self-portrait, adds meaning to the image and makes it different from that by Balthus. In this chapter I argued that Cronqvist's girl figures are not ambiguous in a positive way, like Greuze's alluring and powdery eighteenth century portraits, nor are Cronqvist's girl figures negatively ambiguous. Instead I insisted that they are ambiguous in an intentionally unsettling way.

In the third chapter, 'Fictitious Realities and Narrative Structures', I looked at the way in which stories are told in Cronqvist's images. The chapter starts off by looking at how Cronqvist's paintings are often read as documentary, a reading underlined by the biographical references often characterising her art. I called this a *reality effect* by which I mean that the images might come across as documentaries, but merely as a side-effect. I argued that the reality effect is located both in the materials she uses, but much more importantly by the immediacy communicated by the images, a reading inspired by Linda Nochlin's interpretation of Edgar Degas sculpture *Little Dancer aged*

Fourteen, 1922. I then proceeded to analyse other narrative layers in Cronqvist's images. First I attempted to pin down the elusive stories, by looking at the titles of her work, to see in which way these might add to the interpretation of the images. Cronqvist's titles and images were compared to other contemporary artists working with images of girls, Paula Rego and Rineke Dijkstra, two artists that make use of similar mediums and/or themes but where the combinations of images and titles are very different. I also looked at the way in which the images are set, and argued that the figures appear like actors on a stage. I discussed how the composition of the images in Cronqvist's paintings from the later part of the 1990s and early 2000s are very much constructed like a theatre stage. In the selected images the two girl figures are placed behind a table, or surface of some sort, and the drama is acted out on this surface placed between the girls and the viewers. Thus, I argued that the viewers are invited, and even subsumed into the events played out on the canvas. The last section of the third chapter concerns the repetitions, which very much dominate Cronqvist's images. I analysed how the repetitive themes, shapes of the canvas, similar compositions and recycled props create a narrative of their own. However, rather than a compulsive repetition, or a distancing of meaning, as Hal Foster sees in Andy Warhol's repetitions, I proposed that Cronqvist's repetitions bring the viewer closer to the image and that in her work these create meaning.

In chapter four, 'The Colour of Memory', memory is the central concept, and was approached from a number of ways. This chapter focused particularly on Cronqvist's paintings from the first years of 1990s, together with the first paintings in which the girl figures appeared, from the middle of the 1970s. I suggested that these images come across like flashes of a past. In the painting *Hand in Hand*, 1990, we see two girls standing in the sea, in *Girls, Cat and Pram*, 1991, the girl figures are playing with a cat in a pram, and in *The Hedge*, 1976, they are merely standing outside, together with the parents. Yet, at the same time as it is suggestive to see these scenarios as childhood memories, they are too insignificant and everyday to be remembered. I related the selection of Cronqvist's images to Freud's concept of *screen*

memories in which he analysed how meaningless memories often hide more significant, but repressed ones. Instead of trying to uncover the artist's own memories of these snapshots, I analysed these flashes of a past at face value and located the discussion around the interesting relationship between memories and photographs. Consequently, these seemingly insignificant moments can come across like snapshots, taken from a family album, and I analysed what this might mean in relation to Cronqvist's art. Yet, I also argued that it is important to emphasise the medium in which the artist works, primarily painting. To underline some of the effects of painting, for example how we might understand a painting and photograph very differently despite their compositional and thematic similarities, I drew a comparison with Sally Mann's photographs of her children. I concluded that the medium of paint in which Cronqvist works creates, rather than documents, memories.

In the last chapter 'Angry Girls and Violent Games' I got to grips with the terrible little girl-monsters who in Cronqvist's later work cut apart, humiliate and in various ways abuse what is interpreted as their parent figures, shrunk into doll size. In a painting such as *Operation*, 2000-1, a key image to this chapter, the two girls are cutting off their parents' limbs. The violence in Cronqvist's art is powerful, and I argued that whilst Cronqvist's girl figures stand out in art, they are not alone. Two other representations of girl figures that show their teeth are brought up for comparison: Picasso's play *The Four Little Girls*, 1949 and two paintings by Dorothea Tanning. I looked at the play and the paintings in order to compare and put into context the violence and aggression Cronqvist's girls enact and embody. However, I recognised that there is also a sense of violence in some much quieter paintings, like for example *Two Girls in Red*, 1999, in which two girls help feeding their helpless parent figures, who are shrunk to the size of children. I argued, with reference to Susan Stewart's thoughts on dwarfing, that there is a sense of aggressive control in playing with miniatures. I continued the study of aggression by relating to Louise Bourgeois's installation *The Destruction of the Father*, 1974, and Mignon Nixon's reading of the same. Bourgeois has become well known for represent-

ing her anger in her art, and Nixon's reading frames that anger with the help of the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein's work on aggression. I ended the chapter by discussing how anger in Cronqvist's body of work also communicates a sense of control, and I discussed how that can be understood as controlling fear. I concluded the chapter by analysing *Little Girl and Family by the Sea*, 1992, which is a paraphrase of Picasso's painting *Family by the Seashore*, 1922, and how this painting exemplifies how the girl figures in Cronqvist's images appear as a 'self' on the outskirts of culture.

The postscript, 'the Coda', opened up a general discussion of how Cronqvist's representations of girls at large can be interpreted from a feminist point of view. I turned to the French writer Hélène Cixous, and her identification of the need for a feminine language, freed from the patriarchal chains of language as we know it. I proposed to look at Cixous's imaginative text as suggestive for thinking about the way in which Cronqvist's images are situated in the male tradition that is history of art, and that whilst her art has not 'broken free' in the sense Cixous envisioned, she has found her very own way of expression.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 Lena Cronqvist: *Genom tre decennier*, Vikingsbergs konstmuseum, Helsingborg, 1998.
- 2 For a feminist study of the meaning of some women artists' self-portraits, see Marsha Meskimmon, *The Art of Reflection: Women Artist's Self-Portraiture in the Twentieth Century*, (Scarlet Press: London, 1996).
- 3 The femme-enfant is featured with a photograph of a woman dressed out as a schoolgirl, seated at a much too small school desk in *La Revolution Surrealiste*, no 9-10, 1927.
- 4 Lena Cronqvist wrote a short text on Siri Derkert's painting *Didrik*, 1935, which despite the male name in the title is a portrait of a girl, see 'Lena Cronqvist', in *Korrespondser: Ett samtal med Baudelaire*, exh. cat., (Moderna Museet, Nationalmuseum and Riksställningar: Stockholm, 1987), p. 13. For images of children by Molly Faustman and Vera Nilsson, see for example Louise Robbert (ed.), *Den otroliga verkligheten: 13 kvinnliga pionjärer*, exh. cat., (Prins Eugen Waldemarsudde: Stockholm, 1994), for a brief entry on Derkert and Nilsson, see also Folke Edwards, *Från modernism till postmodernism: Svensk konst 1900-2000*, (Signum: Lund, 2000), pp. 67-71.
- 5 For a comment on Cronqvist's image as a dialogue with issues in contemporary society, see also Ingela Lind, 'Målaren', in *Lena Cronqvist: Målningar 1964-1994*, (Galleri Lars Bohman: Stockholm, 1994), p. 7.
- 6 Marianne Sinclair, *Hollywood Lolita*, (Plexus: London, 1988).
- 7 See for example Charlotte Andersen's study 'Krakeleret perfection – modefotografiets nye realisme', *Relitetet, Realisme, Det Virtuelle i visuel optik – et forskningsprojekt* no. 6, 2001.
- 8 For an excellent article on girls on film and in documentaries, in front

of, as well as behind the camera, see Kathleen Sweeney, 'Maiden USA: Representing Teenage Girls in the '90s', in *Afterimage*, no. 4, 1999, pp. 10-13.

- 9 Terry Zwigoff, *Ghost World*, US, 2001.
- 10 Catherine Hardwicke, *Thirteen*, US, 2003.
- 11 Ronny Ambjörnsson, 'Barndomen kom sent till Sverige', *Dagens Nyheter*, 23/1 2003.
- 12 Göran Tunström, 'Om Lena', (1977), in C.-J. Bolander (ed.), *Lena Cronqvist*, (Galerie Belle: Västerås, 1979), pp. 4-8.
- 13 See for example Maj-Britt Wadell, 'Om att söka sitt jag – ett tema i Lena Cronqvists konst', *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift*, no.1, 1986, pp. 28-37.
- 14 Leif Nylén, 'Nakenheten, ett skal utan gräns', *Dagens Nyheter*, 4/4 1984, or Ingela Lind, 'Kvinnokonst i Lund', *Dagens Nyheter*, 30/10 1981.
- 15 See for example Leif Nylén, 'Att finna sin mark', *Dagens Nyheter*, 1/4 1977: Cecilia Stam, 'Rädslan är verkligare än döden: Om Lena Cronqvists bilder', *Paletten*, no. 1 1981; Arne Thörnqvist, 'Det finns inget gömställe där', *Dagens Nyheter*, 11/3 1987; Peder Alton, 'Flickor lever farligt', *Dagens Nyheter*, 9/9 1994; Kristina Mezei, 'Lena Cronqvist målar för att överleva', *Sundsvalls Tidning*, 5/9 1994; Åsa Wall, 'Tillbaka till en frihet som är längtan', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 3/9 1994; Malin Hedlin, 'Lena Cronqvists bildvärld', in *Lena Cronqvist*, exh. cat., (Liljevalchs konsthall: Stockholm, 1994).
- 16 See for example comments by Sune Nordgren, *Lena Cronqvist*, (Kalejdoskop förlag: Åhus, 1990), particularly pp. 9-18.
- 17 Hal Foster et. al. (eds), *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, (Thames and Hudson: London, 2004), p. 19.
- 18 See for example Sonia Hedstrand, 'Bilder är inga sanningar', *Dagens Nyheter*, 12/1 2002, or Conny Malmqvist, 'Möte med tystnaden', *Kvällsposten*, 26/9 2003.
- 19 Jorunn Veiteberg, 'Skaping eller gjenskap: Nokre tolkningsproblem i samband med Lena Cronqvist sine bilete', in *Kunst og Kultur*, no. 2, 1983, pp. 113-128.
- 20 See www.carnegieartaward.com/prizewinners.asp?Year=2002, 2/11 2005.
- 21 Kaj Schueler, 'Lena Cronqvist slår i New York', *Dagens Nyheter* 6/6 1999.
- 22 *Lena Cronqvist: Teckningar 1969-1979*, (Galleri Lars Bohman: Stockholm, 1994), *Lena Cronqvist: Målningar 1964-1994*, and *Lena Cronqvist: Skulpturer 1993-1995*.
- 23 Mårten Castenfors, Lena Cronqvist and Jan Thunell (eds), *Lena Cronqvist*, (Sveriges Allmänna Konstförening and Wahlström and Widstrand: Stockholm, 2003).
- 24 Some examples of books with texts by Göran Tunström and illustrations by Lena Cronqvist: *Stormunnens bön*, (Författarförlaget: Gothenburg, 1974);

- Prästungen*, (Bonniers: Stockholm, 1976); *Indien en vinterresa*, (Författarförlaget: Gothenburg, 1984); Margareta Garpe, 'Våra kroppar är märkliga katedraler: En intervju med Göran Tunström' pp. 5-16, and Tunström, 'Världen öppnar sig: Ur en arbetsdagbok' pp. 17-24, both articles from *Ord och bild*, no. 2, 1983; *Bakhållet vid fort Riverton*, (Filmkonst: Gothenburg, 1994).
- 25 Nordgren, *Lena Cronqvist*, and Sven Sandström, 'Om en klarögd och oavkortad närvaro', in *Lena Cronqvist genom tre decennier*, and Wadell, 'Om att söka sitt jag', pp. 28-37.
- 26 For some of Nina Weibull's articles on Cronqvist, see for example: 'Bakom Lenas ansikte', *Expressen*, 11/11 1983; 'Om konsten som nödvändigheten att överge det på förhand givna', in *Lena Cronqvist: Retrospektivt och aktuellt*, exh. cat., (Sveriges Allmänna Konstförening and Konstakademien: Stockholm, 1987), pp. 5-30; 'En blodröd vallmo åt en namnlös', *Göteborgs-Posten*, 19/7 1989; 'Barnet, kvinnan, masken: förlustens motiv i Lena Cronqvist's måleri', *Divan*, no. 1 1990, pp. 4-23; Nina Weibull, 'Lena Cronqvist', *Karolina*, no. 4, 1994, pp. 698-9; 'Överraskas – förvandlas: Om rörelsen från verklighet till metafor', *Divan*, no. 3-4, 2000, pp. 57-61; 'Lena Cronqvist' at www.groveart.com, (5/10-2001).
- 27 Veiteberg, 'Skaping eller gjenskaping', 1983.
- 28 Mette Göthberg, *Att måla i mytens sprickor. Om konstnärligt skapande ur kvinnligt perspektiv med utgångspunkt i Lena Cronqvist måleri*, BA dissertation, (Department of Art History, University of Gothenburg, 1993).
- 29 Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*, (Thames and Hudson: London, 1998).
- 30 Patricia Holland, *Picturing Childhood: The myth of the child in popular culture*, (I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, 2004).
- 31 Anette Göthlund, *Bilder av tonårsflickor: estetik och identitetsarbete*, PhD, (The Tema Institute, University of Lindköping: Lindköping, 1997).
- 32 Karin Sidén, *Den ideala barndomen: studier i det stormaktstida barnporträttets ikonografi och funktion*, PhD, (Raster Förlag: Stockholm, 2001).
- 33 See for example Valerie Walkerdine, *Daddy's girl: Young Girls and Popular Culture*, (MacMillan: Basingstoke, 1997).
- 34 See for example Malene Vest Hansen's discussion about her PhD as a 'fragmented monograph', in *Sophie Calle: Identitetsbilder og social arkaeologi*, PhD, (Department for History of Art, University of Copenhagen, 2001) and Martin Sundberg, *Tillvaratagna Effekter: Om Jan Häfströms konstnärssroll*, PhD, (Makadam Förlag: Gothenburg, 2005).
- 35 Discussion with Lena Cronqvist, Malmö, 27/9 2003, and Discussion with Lena Cronqvist, Stockholm, 10/02 2002.
- 36 Briony Fer, postgraduate seminar at the Department for History of Art, Lund, 6/11 2003.

- 37 Griselda Pollock (ed.), *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Art*, (Routledge: London, 1996), for an account of gender studies, see also, for example, Anna Lena Lindberg (ed.), *Den maskulina mystiken: Konst, kön och modernitet*, (Studentlitteratur: Lund, 2002), pp. 7-29.
- 38 Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, (Routledge: London, 1992).
- 39 Anna Lena Lindberg (ed.), *Konst, kön och blick*, (Norstedts förlag: Stockholm, 1995), p. 15.
- 40 See for example Maggie Humm, *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*, (1989), (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2003).
- 41 Simone de Beauvoir, *The second Sex*, (1949) trans. H. M. Parshley (Vintage: London, 1997), p. 295.
- 42 This debate is huge and articles on different aspects vast, of which one important article is Elisabeth Wilson's 'Psychoanalysis: Psychic Law and Order?' in *Feminist Review*, no. 8, pp. 63-78.
- 43 Juliet Mitchell, *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis*, (1974), (Penguin Books: New York, 2000), p. xxiii.
- 44 Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1989), p. 11.
- 45 Peter Fuller, *Art and Psychoanalysis*, (The Hogarth Press: London, 1980).
- 46 Peter Brooks and Alex Woloch (eds), *Whose Freud? The Place of psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2000), p. 2.
- 47 Katarina Wadstein MacLeod, 'The Desires of a Goddess: Aphrodite/Venus in Modern and Contemporary Art', in Göta Johansson (ed.), *The Making of a Goddess: Aphrodite in History, Art and Literature*, (Palmkrons Förlag: Lund, 2005), pp. 67-76.

1 Young Bathers

- 1 'Jag försöker arbeta på mytens baksida med verkligheten som jag upplever den, arbeta i mytens sprickor, redovisa min ambivalens i den gamla kvinnorollen.' Lena Cronqvist, 'Lena Cronqvist', *Kvinnfolk: kvinnoarbete, kvinnokultur: historia, debatt, konst, exh. cat.*, (Kulturhuset: Stockholm, 1975), p. 28.
- 2 Nordgren, *Lena Cronqvist*, p. 10 and pp. 26-31, see also for example Cecilia Stam, 'Rädslan är verligare än döden: Om Lena Cronqvists bilder', *Paletten*, no. 1 1981, pp. 13-17.
- 3 See also Nordgren, *Lena Cronqvist*, p. 28. For one, amongst many, important studies of Manet's Olympia, see Timothy J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers*, (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1999), pp. 79-146.

- 4 Another painting by Cronqvist where a similar iconography is employed is *The Red Poppy (Den röda vallmon)*, 1984, see for example Nordgren, *Lena Cronqvist*, p. 27.
- 5 See further Helen E. Roberts (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Comparative Iconography*, (Fitzroy Dearborn: London, 1998).
- 6 Curman was not only a medical doctor, but also an artist, and at one point Zorn's teacher at the Royal Art Academy in Stockholm, see for example Teddy Brunius and Oscar Reuterswärd, *Samtal om Zorn*, (Bra Böcker: Höganäs, 1979), p. 71, see also Bo Grandien, *Rönndruvans glöd*, (Nordiska Museet: Stockholm, 1987), p. 277. For a study on Edvard Munch's bathing men see Patricia G. Berman, 'Body and Body Politic in Edvard Munch's *Bathing Men*', in Kathleen Adler and Marcia Pointon (eds), *The Body Imaged: Human Form and Visual Culture Since the Renaissance*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1993).
- 7 Design Marjan Djodjov Pejovski, see for example http://www.fortunecity.com/marina/breakwater/2370/bjorkallweb_pages/swan%20dress%feature.htm, 8/7 2004.
- 8 Both paintings discussed here are from the same year, and the nomination 'first' and 'second' are mine and only employed so as to facilitate the argument.
- 9 Kristina Mezei, 'Lena Cronqvist målar för att överleva', *Sundsvalls Tidning* 5/9 1994.
- 10 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A.D. Melville 1986 (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998), book 6, p. 121-125.
- 11 See for example Jane Davidson Reid (ed.), *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300-1900c*, 2 vol., (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1993).
- 12 Ovid *Metamorphoses*, p. 124.
- 13 See for example Alf Henriksson, *Antikens Historier*, (1958) (Bonniers: Stockholm, 1992), part 1 p. 227 and p. 300.
- 14 This painting is in the Uffizi Galleries, Florence.
- 15 The painting is not dated, but in the records of the National Museum Stockholm it says it was purchased by Fredrik Tessin in 1742, and must therefore be dated before that year, www.webart.nationalmuseum.se, 28/11 2005.
- 16 Nylén, *Lena Cronqvist: Skulpturer*, p. 8
- 17 See for example a discussion on the rapist theme in W. B. Yeats poem *Leda and the Swan*, W. C. Barnwell, 'The Rapist in *Leda and the Swan*', *South Atlantic Bulletin*, no. 1, 1977.
- 18 Tunström, 'Om Lena', 1979, p. 4.
- 19 See for example Reid, *The Oxford Guide*.
- 20 www.nationalgallery.org.uk/cgi-bin/WebObjects.exe/CollectionSearch.

woa/1/wa/newQuery?searchTerm=venus&searchButton=Search&wosid=3eNAeox/ZObyrJocH50hew, 25/06 2004.

- 21 See Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, (1484), trans. Jayne Sears (Spring Publication Inc: Dallas, 1985) pp. 53-4 and pp. 115-118, Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, (1939) (Harper and Row: London, 1972), p. 141.
- 22 See for example Reid, *The Oxford Guide*.
- 23 Velasquez' *Rokeby Venus* belongs to the collection at The National Gallery, London. For a comment on the famous damages done to the painting see for example Nead, *The Female Nude*, pp. 34-43.
- 24 Gombrich writes that Botticelli was the first Renaissance painter of nude Venus, see further in G. H. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance*, (1972) (Phaidon: Oxford, 1985) pp. 32-3. See also Patricia Rubin, 'The Seduction of Antiquity', in Caroline Arscott and Katie Scott (eds), *Manifestations of Venus: Art and Sexuality*, (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2000), p. 34.
- 25 *Longman Concise English Dictionary*, (1982) (Longman: Essex, 1985), and *Svenska Akademiens ordlista över svenska språket*, (1986) (Norstedts Förlag: Stockholm, 1994).
- 26 'La nature de la femme, qui sert d'etui `la grosse aiguille de l'homme', Alfred Delvau, *Dictionnaire Érotique Moderne*, (Brussels, 1864).
- 27 Delvau *Dictionnaire*, see also Jennifer L. Shaw, 'The figure of Venus: Rhetoric of the Ideal and the Salon of 1863', *Art History*, no. 4, 1991, pp. 540-570.
- 28 See for example MacLeod, 'The Desires of a Goddess'.
- 29 For an excellent anthology on representations of Venus in art see further in Arscott and Scott, *Manifestations of Venus*.
- 30 For a discussion on the female body as the ideal nude, see Nead, *The Female Nude*, for Venus as a particular ideal for the nude body in the middle of the nineteenth century, see Shaw, 'The figure of Venus'.
- 31 See for example Abigail Solomon-Godeau on the male nude as an ideal figure, in *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation*, (Thames and Hudson: London, 1997).
- 32 The fresco is in the Brancacci Chapel in Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence.
- 33 Salomon, 'The Venus Pudica', p. 79.
- 34 Patricia Rubin, 'The seduction of antiquity', p. 35. Rubin also refers to Paul Holberton's article, 'Botticelli's Hypnerotomachia in the National Gallery London: A Problem of the Use of Classical Sources in Renaissance Art', *Illinois Classical Studies*, no. 2, 1984, pp. 150-182.
- 35 See also Riitta Ojanperä (ed.), *Surface and Depth: Early Modernism in Finland 1890 – 1920*, exh. cat., (Ateneum Art Museum: Helsinki, 2001).

- 36 For a comment on women, nude and bathing, as Zorn's favoured motif, see for example Tor Hedberg, *Anders Zorn: Ungdomstiden* (Sveriges Allmänna Konstförening: Stockholm, 1923).
- 37 Reid, *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology*.
- 38 Tamar Garb, *Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siècle France*, (Thames and Hudson: London, 1998), p. 145.
- 39 Susan Guettel Cole, 'The Use of Water in Greek Sanctuaries', in Robin Hägg, Nanno Marinatos and Gullög C. Nordqvist (eds), *Early Greek Cult Practice*, (Paul Åströms Förlag: Stockholm, 1988), p. 161.
- 40 See for example Cole, 'The Use of Water'.
- 41 <http://www.theoi.com/Cult/ArtemisCult.html>, 9/10 2005.
- 42 Maria Leach (ed.), *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, 2 vol., (Funk and Wagnalls Company: New York, 1950).
- 43 At the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.
- 44 'Fontis Nympha Sacre Somnum Nerupme Quiesco', translated by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, www.nga.gov/cgi-bin/pinfo?Object=43432+0+none, 27/06 2004, to which collection the painting belongs. See also Michael Liebmann, 'On the Iconography of the *Nymph of the Fountain*', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* no. 31, 1968, pp. 435-7.
- 45 See for example the entry 'Female Beauty and Adornment' in Roberts, *Encyclopedia of Comparative Iconography*.
- 46 For an analysis of a peeing Amor as a metaphor for male ejaculation, see for example Rona Goffen, 'Titian's Sacred and Profane Love and Marriage', in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (eds), *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art*, (IconEditions: New York, 1992), pp. 111-125.
- 47 For a discussion on Renoir's misogynist attitude to women and his preference for uneducated women, working hard with the household and nursing children, see Tamar Garb, 'Renoir and the Natural Woman', in Broude and Garrard, *The Expanding Discourse*, 1992, pp. 295-309.
- 48 See for example Brunius and Reuterswärd, *Samtal om Zorn*, p. 3
- 49 For an analysis of Zorn's representations of women as erotic, see for example Inger Fredriksson, *Anders Zorn, Mannen, Mästaren, Myten* (Bildförlaget Öppna Ögon: Stockholm, 1984). Fredriksson's view of Zorn's representations of women as exploitative is contested by Britta Röstlund, *Zorn – Gubbsjuk eller unik kvinnskildrare*, BA dissertation (The Department of the History of Art: University of Stockholm, 1991).
- 50 For a discussion about women artists working with self representations, and with the making of, as well as the viewing of, images of women as inscribed in a male tradition, see for example Meskimmon, *The Art of Reflection*.

- 51 For an analysis of the vigour, strength and anxiety of male nudes, see Berman, 'Body and Body Politic in Edvard Munch's *Bathing Men*'.
- 52 'den nakna huden skulle stärkas genom att exponeras för bade luft och vatten – i bastun och bassängen likväl som i havsluft och saltvatten på Västkusten', Grandien *Rönndruvans glöd*, p. 277.
- 53 See for example Brunius' quote from Zorn, where he recounts how a sickly boy the artist 'borrowed' as a model, recovered through the fresh coastal air and swims in the sea. Brunius and Reuterswärd, *Samtal om Zorn*, p. 6.
- 54 See for example, George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*, (Howard Fertig: New York, 1985).
- 55 Carl Curman, *Om Bad: Studier, Om Romerska Bad och Finska Badstugor*, (P. A. Norstedt & söner: Stockholm, 1871).
- 56 For representations of naked bathing and sunbathing boys see for example the following artists: Finnish Verner Thomé (1878-1953), Finnish/Swedish Magnus Enckell (1870-1925) and Danish PS Krøyer (1851-1909).
- 57 Jonas Gavel (ed.), *Wilhelmson*, exh. cat., (Göteborgs konstmuseum: Gothenburg, 1994), p. 99. For a reference to Wilhelmson's employing family members as models and in this case Ana, see for example Axel. L. Romdahl, *Carl Wilhelmson*, (Sveriges Allmänna Konstförening: Stockholm, 1938), pp. 100-106.
- 58 See for example Kristina Jarnedal, *Carl Wilhelmson: Målaren från Fiskebäckskil*, (Skaftö Hembygdsförening: Uddevalla, 1992).
- 59 For Paul-Armand Gette's art, see for example P.A. Gette, exh. cat., (Malmö Konsthall: Malmö, 1979), *Paul-Armand Gette: Nymphe, Nymphea et Voisinages*, exh. cat., (Centre National d'Art Contemporain de Grenoble: Grenoble, 1989), *Les Mineral dans l'œuvre de Paul-Armand Gette: ou de la transparence à la métaphore*, exh. cat., (Musée d'art et d'histoire: Belfort, 1996).
- 60 See further in Grandien, *Rönndruvans glöd*.
- 61 Eric Jonsson, 'Carl Wilhelmsons liv och konst', in *Carl Wilhelmson: västkustmålaren*, exh. cat., (Göteborgs konstmuseum: Gothenburg, 1997), pp. 17-31.
- 62 Åsa Berntsson, 'Kasta ut "små flickor"! Barnporr för smygtittare', *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, 4/3 1980. See also Katarina Wadstein 'La visite ou le bain de la Nymphe: Paul-Armand Gettes nymfer och motivet "kvinnan vid källan"', MA dissertation, (Department for History of Art: Lund, 1997).
- 63 Sherry B. Ortner, 'Is Female to Male as Nature to Culture', (1972), in *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture*, (Beacon Press: Boston, 1996), p. 74.
- 64 Ortner rightly points out, along with Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, that there is no reason why a woman, once she has stopped suckling her infant, should be associated with domestic chores and be more closely bound to the private sphere, Ortner, 'Is Female to Male', p. 77-8.

- 65 Linda Nochlin, 'Bathtime: Renoir, Cézanne, Daumier and the Practices of Bathing in Nineteenth-Century France', *The Gerson Lectures*, (The Gerson Lectures Foundation: Groningen, 1991), p. 5.
- 66 Garb, *Bodies of Modernity*, and 'Renoir and the Natural Woman', p. 146.
- 67 Nochlin, 'Bathtime', Catherine Horwood, 'Girls Who Arouse Dangerous Passions: Women and Bathing 1900-1939', *Women's History Review*, 9, no. 4, 2000, pp. 653-673.

2 Ambiguous Bodies

- 1 Leonora Carrington, 'What Is A Woman', in Penelope Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, (University of Texas Press: Austin, 1998), p. 372.
- 2 For an analysis of Greuze's images as *têtes d'expression*, see Anita Brookner, *Greuze: The Rise and Fall of an Eighteenth Century Phenomenon*, (Paul Elek Ltd: London, 1972), p. 42, and for an account of Greuze referring to the *Comédie Italienne*, see Mark Ledbury, *Sedaine, Greuze and the Boundaries of Genre*, (Voltaire Foundation: Oxford, 2000), pp. 222-261.
- 3 Regarding Reynolds and his portraits of children, see for example, Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England*, (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1993), pp. 184-190.
- 4 Mary Sheriff, 'A rebours: Le problème de l'histoire dans l'interprétation féministe', lecture, Musée de Louvre, Paris, 25/05 1998.
- 5 *Longman Concise English Dictionary*
- 6 Carrington, 'What Is A Woman', p. 372.
- 7 Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Régime*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1981), p. 131.
- 8 Brookner, *Greuze*, p. 154.
- 9 Ledbury, *Sedaine, Greuze*, p. 126, for Greuze's relationship with Diderot, see Edgar Munhall, *Diderot et Art de Boucher à David*, exh. cat., (Hôtel de la Monnaie: Paris, 1984), p. 218, for more about Greuze and his life and art, see for example Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1985).
- 10 See further in Brookner, *Greuze*, p. 92.
- 11 Reid, *The Oxford Guide*, pp. 444.
- 12 'On s'approcherait de cette main pour la baiser, si on ne respectait cette enfant et sa douleur.' Denis Diderot, *Salon de 1765*, (1765) (Hermann: Paris, 1984), p. 180.
- 13 Diderot, *Salon de 1765*, pp. 179-184.
- 14 Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema', (1975) in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, pp. 19-24.
- 15 See for example Weibull, 'Lena Cronqvist', 1994, pp. 698-9.

- 16 Eva Ström, 'Det sinnligt iakttagna ögonblicket', *Svenska Dagbladet* 29/08 1998
- 17 See for example Castenfors, *Lena Cronqvist*, p. 1992.
- 18 Merian C. Cooper and Ernst B. Schoedsack, *King Kong*, 1933, US. For an analysis of the film as a cultural phenomenon, which takes into account gender and race relations, see Cynthia Erb, *Tracking King Kong: A Hollywood Icon in World Culture*, (Wayne State University Press: Detroit, 1998).
- 19 According to the images on the female gorilla Koko's website, a breastfeeding gorilla's breasts are inflated in the same way as a female human being's, although otherwise, the female gorilla's chest seems flat, see further www.koko.org, 26/07 2004.
- 20 Bryson, *Word and Image*, 1981, p. 138.
- 21 Ström, 'Det sinnligt iakttagna ögonblicket'.
- 22 Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', (1979), trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, in Toril Moi, (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader*, (Blackwell: Oxford, 1986), pp. 187-213.
- 23 Nead, *The Female Nude*, p. 4.
- 24 Nead, *The Female Nude*, p. 12.
- 25 Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A study in Ideal Form*, (1956), (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1990), p. 72.
- 26 Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble*, pp. 22-3.
- 27 Marcia Pointon, *Naked Authority: The Body in Western Painting 1830-1908*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990), pp. 12-19.
- 28 Nead also mentions how this discussion can, and have, been extended to other, in representation, subordinated groups, where issues such as race, disabilities *and sexuality have followed similar lines*, Nead, *The Female Nude*, p. 33.
- 29 Mary Kelly, *Interim* exh. cat., (The Fruitmarket Gallery, Kettle's Yard, and Riverside Studios: Edinburgh, 1986).
- 30 Helen McDonald, *Erotic Ambiguities: The Female Nude in Art*, (Routledge: London, 2001). McDonald's study provides a comprehensive overview of essential writings on the female body, dressed as well as undressed, in modern art history. She brings up the main arguments by writers such as Kenneth Clark; Foucault's thesis on the cultural formation of the sexual body; Lacan's importance to feminist scholars, along with other scholars whose work has been particularly influential for a feminist orientated discourse on representation, for example Laura Mulvey, Marcia Pointon and Lynda Nead. She also discusses the different stances by writers such as Theresa de Lauretis criticising the male gaze theories or Elisabeth Grosz that offers an alternative theory of desire not based on psychoanalysis.
- 31 McDonald, *Erotic Ambiguities*, p. 219.
- 32 The campaign was shot by photographer Steven Meisel in 1995, and was

- withdrawn because of the criticism towards it, accusing it of child pornography, see Catharine Lumby, *Bad Girls: The Media, Sex and Feminism in the 90s*, (Allen and Unwin: St Leonards, 1997), pp. 71-5.
- 33 McDonald, *Erotic Ambiguities*, 2001, p. 14.
- 34 The painting is in the Cornario Chapel, in Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome. See further in Mary Sheriff, 'Passionate Spectators: On Enthusiasm, Nymphomania and the Imagined Tableau', *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment/Huntington Library Quarterly*, no. 1-2, pp. 51-83.
- 35 Jacques Lacan, 'God and the *Jouissance* of Woman', in Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (eds), *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne*, trans. Jacqueline Rose, (MacMillan: London, 1982), p. 147.
- 36 Lucy Irigaray, *The Sex which is not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Caroline Burke, (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1985), pp. 90-1.
- 37 Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1989), pp. 19-24.
- 38 Rosemary Betterton (ed.), *Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual arts and media*, (Pandora: London, 1987), pp. 203-4.
- 39 Sandström, 'Om en klarögd och oavkortad närvaro', 'ett barn omslutet av kärlek och tilltro, färdigt att springa iväg och göra alldeles sina egna saker.' (no pagination).
- 40 <http://80-www.groveart.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se> 30/7 2004.
- 41 Discussion Malmö 2003.
- 42 Sabine Rewald analyses the empty background as a reference to Miró's work on 'abstract surrealist' painting. Sabine Rewald, *Balthus*, (Harry Abrams: New York, 1984) p. 37.
- 43 Stanislas Klossowski de Rola, *Balthus* (Thames and Hudson: London, 1983), pp. 9-10.
- 44 Private collection, see for example, Gilles Néret, *Balthus*, (Taschen: London, 2003), p. 38.
- 45 At the Royal Museums of Fine Art, Brussels.
- 46 Jean Clair, *Balthus*, (Thames and Hudson: London, 2001), p. 328.
- 47 Clair, *Balthus*, 2001, p. 308.
- 48 Nina Weibull, 'Lena Cronqvist', 1994, p. 10.

3 Fictitious Realities and Narrative Structures

- 1 August Strindberg, wall caption at the exhibition *August Strindberg*, Tate Modern, London 2005, the quote is taken from a letter from August Strindberg to Torsten Hedlund 18/06 1896, published in Michael Robinson (ed.), *Strindberg's Letters*, 2 vol, trans. Michael Robinson, (London Athlone Press: London, 1992), pp.572-4.

- 2 Robinson, *Strindberg's Letters*, pp.572-3.
- 3 Without accusing other writers for not understanding the fictional aspects of Cronqvist's art, the documentary streaks are in many reviews very much emphasised, where the girl figures are described as having a life of their own, and in some sense being separated from the artist hand, see for example, Gunilla Grahn-Hinnfors, 'Flickor med ny livsvilja', *Göteborgs-Posten* 25/11 1996, or Lars-Göran Oredsson, 'Den lilla flickan växer vidare', *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, 11/04 1996.
- 4 *Longman Concise English Dictionary*, (London 1992).
- 5 See also comments by Mårten Castenfors, *Lena Cronqvist*, 2003, p. 9.
- 6 See for example Annika Nordin, 'Familjeliv', *Månadsjournalen*, no. 12, 2001.
- 7 For an analysis of the British artist Tracey Emin, (b. 1963), who very much fuses her life with her art, see Rune Gade, *Kønnet i kroppen i konsten*, (Informations förlag: Copenhagen, 2005), pp. 105-164.
- 8 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Cézanne's Doubt' (1945) in Galen A. Jonson (ed.), *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Northwestern University Press: Illinois, 1993), p. 70.
- 9 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty*, pp. 70-75.
- 10 For *Girls, Cat and Parents*, see for example, *Lena Cronqvist: Målningar*, p. 155.
- 11 Hedstrand, 'Bilder är inga sanningar'.
- 12 See for example the anthology on *Lolita*, Ellen Pifer (ed.), *Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita: A Casebook*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2003).
- 13 For example the conference, *Lolita: 5300 days*, ICA, London 3/04 2003.
- 14 See for example Ulrika Kärnberg and Henrik Bergren's respective articles, both titled, 'Ö, Ljuva Lolita' in *Dagens Nyheter*, 19/04 1998.
- 15 See for example Michel Wood, 'Revisiting Lolita', (1998) in Pifer, *Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita*, pp. 182 -3.
- 16 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (1955), (Penguin Books: London,1995), p. 3.
- 17 For a discussion on the difficulties of agreeing on a English translation of the title see Richard Kendall (ed.), *Degas and the Little Dancer*, (Yale University Press: New Haven,1998), p. 1.
- 18 The original sculpture was dressed in, apart from the gauze tutu, a ribbed-silk bodice, ballet slippers and a wig, and the figure was tinted so as to look more life-like. It is believed that the sculpture was cast in an edition of 23.
- 19 For an extensive discussion on the Degas' sculpture *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* see Kendall, *Degas*.
- 20 Water and art has a longstanding relationship and several contemporary artists use water, or have placed art in water. Much as water in Cronqvist's sculptures can be placed in this sculptural tradition, I do not believe this to be the right time and place to further develop this discussion.
- 21 Torsten Weimarck, 'Verkligheten är sin egen beskrivning – design och konst

- som social materia', transcribed lecture, The Academy of Art, Stockholm, 28/1 2004.
- 22 For a great analysis of the complexity of using reality as an aesthetic strategy in the Swedish artist Meta Isaeus-Berlin's work, see Torsten Weimarck, 'Om "verklighet" i några arbeten av Meta Isaeus-Berlin', *Konsthistorisk tidskrift*, no. 1-2, 2002, pp. 26-38.
 - 23 Weibull, 'Barnet, kvinnan, masken', p.4.
 - 24 Linda Nochlin, *Realism*, (Penguin Books: Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 206. Please note that I have used the translation of Degas's title, *Petite danseuse de quatorze ans*, as provided by Tate, *Little Dancer aged Fourteen*, in contrast to Nochlin whose translation is, *The Little Dancer of Fourteen*.
 - 25 See Valerie Walkerdine's discussion on the photograph of her self as a 'tinkerbelly', in 'Bakom det målade ansiktet', *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift*, no. 2, 1993, pp. 19-26.
 - 26 Andy Warhol, *From A to B and Back Again: The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, (1975) (Picador: London, 1979), p. 91.
 - 27 Barbro Westman-Tullus, 'En kamp för golv och väggar', interview with Lena Cronqvist, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 9/9 1991.
 - 28 Sigmund Freud, 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis ("Wolf Man")', (1918), in Peter Gay (ed.), *The Freud Reader*, (1989) (Vintage: London, 1995), pp. 416-419. See also Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs*, (1981), (Routledge: London, 1992), p. 191.
 - 29 Ernst Van Alphen, *Francis Bacon and the Loss of Self*, (Reaktion Books: London, 1992), p. 22.
 - 30 Wolfgang Kemp, 'Narrative', trans. David Britt in Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (eds), *Critical Terms for Art History*, (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1996), p. 60.
 - 31 Susan Hayward, *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies*, (Routledge: London, 1996).
 - 32 For an account of the developments in narrative theories see Martin Jay and Teresa Brennan, (eds), *Vision in Context*, (Routledge: New York, 1996), see also James A. Walker, Graham Coulter-Smith & Maurice Owen (eds), *The Visual-Narrative Matrix*, (Fine Art Research Centre, Southampton Institute: Southampton, 2000).
 - 33 Vladimir Propp, 'Fairy Tale Transformations', (1928) in, L. Matejka and K. Pomorska (eds.), *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, (University of Michigan: Cambridge, Mass., 1978), p. 94.
 - 34 Mieke Bal, *Looking In: The Art of Viewing*, (G+B Arts International: Amsterdam 2001) p. 53.
 - 35 Bal, *Looking In*, p. 54.
 - 36 Van Alphen, *Francis Bacon*, p. 28.
 - 37 Olafur Eliasson: *The Weather Project*, Tate Modern, London 2003 – 2004.

- 38 Katarina Wadstein, *Paula Rego and the Problem of Narrative Art*, MA dissertation, (UCL: London, 1999).
- 39 'Little Snow White' in *Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm: Complete Fairy Tales*, (1944), introduction by Padraic Colum, commentary by Joseph Campbell, (Routledge: London, 2002), pp. 213-222.
- 40 Ted Sears and Richard Creedon, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, US 1937.
- 41 Several of the Dijkstra's photographs in *Beaches* are in the Tate Collection, and were included in the exhibition *Citibank Photography Prize*, The Photographers Gallery, London, 1999. The series *Almerisa* was included in exhibition, *Witness*, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 2003.
- 42 Discussion Malmö 2003.
- 43 John C. Welchman, *Invisible Colours: A Visual History of Titles*, (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1997), p. 8.
- 44 See for example Rosalind Krauss, *Cindy Sherman 1975-1993*, (Rizzoli: New York, 1993).
- 45 Compare this with for example the Swedish artist Jan Häfström's (b.1937) much more descriptive and contextualising titles, and Sundberg's analysis of these in, *Tillvaratagna effekter*: pp. 43-59.
- 46 In one interview Lena Cronqvist's answer to the question 'do you want to say anything about your paintings?' was simply: No, I paint so I don't have to say anything.' ('Nej, jag målar för att slippa säga något.') Kerstin Vinterhed, 'Vita ark om sorg för att slippa säga något', *Dagens Nyheter*, 18/10 2002.
- 47 The art historian Rosalind Krauss summarises feminist critics scepticism about Sherman's silence and the main concern is that her untitled titles and lack of comments sum up to the artist refusing to take responsibility of the interpretation of her work. A critique Krauss herself is sceptical towards. Krauss, quite rightly, points out that the idea that the artist has some kind of responsibility to speak out about his or her work seems absurd. See Krauss, *Cindy Sherman*, pp. 207-8, this recount by Krauss is also referred to in Welchman, *Invisible Colours*, pp. 339-240.
- 48 Wadstein, *Paula Rego and the Problem of Narrative Art*.
- 49 Grimm, *Fairy Tales*, pp. 220-2.
- 50 See *Lena Cronqvist: Flickor i New York*, exh. cat., (Galleri Lars Bohman: Stockholm, 1995).
- 51 See for example Nordin, 'Familjeliv', or Mårten Castenfors, 'Cronqvist formsäker skulptör', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 5/11 1995.
- 52 *Lena Cronqvist: Flickor i New York*, 1995.
- 53 Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', (1920) in Gay, *The Freud Reader*, particularly pp. 610-612.
- 54 For a great survey of repetitions and seriality in postmodern art, see Briony

- Fer, *The Infinite Line: Re-making Art after Modernism*, (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2004).
- 55 As featured in the exhibition *Warhol*, Tate Modern, London, 2002.
- 56 Hal Foster, 'The Return of the Real' in *The Return of the Real*, (The MIT Press: Cambridge Mass., 1996), pp. 127-136, see also an extended version of this article in Foster, 'Death in America' (1996), in Annette Michelson (ed.), *Andy Warhol*, (The MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., 2001), pp. 69-88.
- 57 Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, (1973), trans. Alan Sheridan, (Vintage: London, 1998).

4 The Colour of Memory

- 1 Geoff Dyers, *The Colour of Memory*, (1989) (Abacus: London, 2003), p. 254.
- 2 Björnstrand, Gabrielle, 'En barndom som inte finns', *Paletten*, no. 2, 1991, pp. 44-6.
- 3 *Longman Concise English Dictionary*.
- 4 Discussion Stockholm 2004.
- 5 This paintings hangs in the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.
- 6 Wadell, 'Om att söka sitt jag', pp. 28-37.
- 7 Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, (1913-27), 6 vol., trans. Andreas Mayor and Terence Kilmartin 1981, (Vintage: London, 2000).
- 8 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, (1955), trans. Harry Zorn, (Pimlico: London, 1999), p. 198.
- 9 Benjamin, 'The Image of Proust', p. 198.
- 10 Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1984), p. xiv.
- 11 Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*, (Harvard University Press: New York, 1993), pp. 231-2.
- 12 Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, (1901), trans. Anthea Bell, (Penguin Books: London, 2002), pp. 53-102.
- 13 Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, pp. 45-52.
- 14 Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, (1967) trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Karnac Books: London, 1988), pp. 410-11.
- 15 Discussion Malmö 2003.
- 16 See for example, *Lena Cronqvist*, 2003, p. 92.
- 17 Within theories on photography this is an enormous field, as it is in the practice of contemporary art. For an introduction to some of the many fields of the history and theory of photography, see for example Liz Wells, *Photography: A critical Introduction*, (Routledge: London, 1997).

- 18 For one reference, amongst many, to the use of snapshot in contemporary art, see for example, Mette Sandby, 'Snapshottets Realisme: skitse over en reaktion fotografiske tendenser og paralleler fra 1960'erne til 90'erne', www.hum.au.dk/nordisk/realisme/docs/tekster/sandbye_snapshots.pdf, 30/11 2005.
- 19 Julia Hirsch, *Family Photographs: Content, Meaning and Effect*, (Oxford University Press: New York, 1981), pp. 35-43.
- 20 Hirsch, *Family Photographs*, p. 10.
- 21 Benjamin Buchloh, 'Readymade, Photography, and Painting in the Painting of Gerhard Richter', (1977) in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975*, (The MIT Press: Cambridge, 2000), p. 380.
- 22 Walkerdine, 'Bakom det målade ansiktet', p. 169.
- 23 The four Swedish princesses (Margaretha, b. 1934, Birgitta, b. 1937, Désiré, b. 1938 and Christina, b. 1943) were famously photographed in the 1940s with this particular hairstyle, see for example www.aftonbladet.se/special/1900/40/sessor.html, 2/11 2004.
- 24 See also a comment on Cronqvist's paintings of girls framing a moment in the 1940s and 1950s, Britte Montigny, 'En otäck liten flicka', *Borås Tidning*, 8/11 2003.
- 25 Discussion Malmö 2003.
- 26 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, (1977) (Penguin Books: London, 1979), p.8.
- 27 Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner*, US, 2001.
- 28 Chris Marker, *La Jetée*, France, 1962.
- 29 See comments by amongst others, Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence*, p. 89, Max Liljefors, *Bilder av Förintelsen: Minne, mening, kompromettering*, PhD, (Palmkrons Förlag: Lund, 2002), p. 111, or Giuliana Bruno, 'Ramble City: Postmodernism and Blade Runner' in Annette Khun (ed.), *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema*, (Verso: New York, 1990), pp. 183-195.
- 30 Bruno, 'Ramble City', p. 191.
- 31 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, (1980), trans. Richard Howard, (Hill and Wang: New York, 1981), p. 76.
- 32 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 85.
- 33 Scott Bukatman, *Blade Runner*, (1997) (BFI Publishing: London, 2003), p. 78.
- 34 See further in, for example, Barbara E. Savedoff, *Transforming Images: How Photography Complicates the Picture*, (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 2000), p. 88.
- 35 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 54.
- 36 See for example Sally Mann, *Immediate Family*, (Aperture: New York, 1992), no pagination.
- 37 Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence*, pp. 194-195.

- 38 Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence*, pp. 193-226.
- 39 Buchloh, 'Readymade, Photography, and Painting', p. 388.
- 40 James Elkins, *What Painting Is*, (Routledge: New York, 2000), p. 95.
- 41 Discussion Stockholm 2004.
- 42 See for example Kristina Mezei, 'Lena Cronqvist målar för att överleva', *Sundsvalls Tidning*, 5/9 1994, or Dan Jönsson, 'Mäktig retrospektiv', *Dagens Nyheter*, 4/10 2003.
- 43 Elkins, *What Painting Is*, p. 149.
- 44 Dyers, *The Colour of Memory*, p. 254.
- 45 On the perceived femininity of *colore* see for example Patricia L. Reilly, 'The Taming of the Blue: Writing Out Color in Italian Renaissance Theory', (1991) in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (eds), *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, (Harper Collins: New York, 1992), see also Anthea Callen, 'Coloured Views: Gender and Morality in Degas' Bathers Pastels', in Andrew Benjamin (ed.), *The Body*, (The Academy Group: London, 1993), pp. 23-9.
- 46 Buchloh, 'Readymade, Photography, and Painting', p. 377.
- 47 Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 154.
- 48 Patricia Holland, 'Sweet it is to Scan...: Personal Photographs and Popular Photography', in Wells, *Photography*, pp. 105-150. See also Jo Spence, *Review of Work 1950-1985*, exh. cat., (Cambridge Dark Room: Cambridge, 1985), or Jo Spence and Patricia Holland (eds), *Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photography*, (Virago Press: London, 1991).
- 49 See for example Hedstrand, 'Bilder är inga sanningar'.

5 Angry Girls and Violent Games

- 1 Rika Lesser, 'Operation', from her sequence 'The Girls', Copyright Rika Lesser 2003.
- 2 *Lena Cronqvist*, exh. cat., text by Hans-Olof Boström, (Rackstadmuseet: Arvika, 2001).
- 3 Pablo Picasso, *The Four Little Girls*, (1949), trans. Roland Penrose, (Calder and Boyars: London, 1970). Picasso's first play was *Desire Caught by the Tail: A Play in Six Acts*, 1942.
- 4 Some writers argue that Cronqvist has been inspired by this play, see for example Nina Weibull, 'Cronqvist, Lena', *The Grove Dictionary of Art Online*, (www.groveart.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se 5/10 2001), or Steve Sem-Sandberg, 'Hennes bilder vill bli lästa: Lena Cronqvist får vägledning av Picasso', *Svenska Dagbladet* 24/3 1991. This might be a misunderstanding of the quote published in *Lena Cronqvist: Små Flickor: Målningar 1990-91*, exh. cat., (Galleri Lars Bohman: Stockholm, 1991). Cronqvist herself

maintains that she stumbled on the play when she was working with the girl series, which turned out to be a fruitful meeting rather than a source of inspiration, discussion Malmö 2003.

- 5 Michel Leiris, 'Foreword', *Four Little Girls*.
- 6 There is a lot of literature on Alice as a model for the photographer Charles Dodgson (alias Lewis Carroll), for the impact his photographs have had on art, see for example Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, pp. 217-26.
- 7 Lewis Carroll, 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland', (1865) and 'Through the Looking-Glass' (1872), in Alexander Wollcott (ed.), *The Complete Illustrated Lewis Carroll* (Wordsworth Editions: Ware, 1996), pp. 10-120 and pp. 122-250.
- 8 Roland Penrose, 'Preface' in Picasso, *Four Little Girls*, p. 6, (my pagination until p. 17).
- 9 Werner Spies, *Picasso's World of Children*, trans. John William Gabriel, (Prestel: New York, 1994), pp. 90-1.
- 10 The famous so called *Rose period* were the years 1905-1906, following the *Blue period* 1901-1905, see for example Sam Hunter and John Jacobus, *Modern Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, (1977) (Harry N. Abrams: New York, 1992), pp. 132-136.
- 11 Spies, *Picasso's World of Children*, p. 76.
- 12 It is interesting that Picasso makes such a nuanced portrait of these girl figures, lacking in innocence, yet not portrayed as eroticised, as he is otherwise widely recognised for misogynist representations of women, see for example the painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. Version O)*, 1911, Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the comments its prompted by for example Anna C. Chave, 'New Encounters with Les Femmes d'Alger: Gender Race, and the Origins of Cubism', in *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 76, no. 4, 1994, pp. 596-611, see also for example David Lomas, *The Haunted Self*, (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2000), p. 99.
- 13 In private collection, see Spies, *Picasso's World of Children*, p. 106.
- 14 Private collection, Hamburg, see Spies, *Picasso's World of Children*. p. 68
- 15 In the Prado, Madrid.
- 16 See further in Spies, *Picasso's World of Children* pp. 64-5 and pp. 90-6, see also Doris Krystof, 'The Heavenly Child: The Rise and Fall of a Motif in the Twentieth Century', in the expanded edition of Werner Spies, *Picasso's World of Children*, (Prestel: Munich, 1996), pp. 237-242.
- 17 Picasso, *Four Little Girls*, p. 79.
- 18 Picasso, *Four Little Girls*, p. 89.
- 19 The play has been staged a couple of times. Anita Gates writes in a review, that the play was probably never meant to be staged, only read and rightly so, 'Hues of Innocence and War from Picasso the Playwright', in *The New York Times*, 17/10 2001.

- 20 Picasso, *Four Little Girls*, pp. 93-5.
- 21 Picasso, *Four Little Girls*, p. 17
- 22 Roland Penrose, 'Preface' in Picasso, *Four Little Girls*.
- 23 Patrick Waldberg, *Dorothea Tanning et les enfants de la Nuit*, exh. cat., (Casino Communal, XXe Festival Belge: Brussels, 1967).
- 24 Tanning was certainly well familiar with Picasso's art already as young art student. See further in for example Dorothea Tanning, *Between Lives: An Artists and Her World*, (W.W. Norton and Company: New York, 2001). Furthermore, Tanning was a late-come associate of the movement, and not properly part of the surrealist circle, although undeniable loosely linked with surrealism in its later phase, both in her imagery and through her marriage with Ernst, see for example Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, (Thames and Hudson: London, 1985), pp. 9-11 and pp. 92-3. See also Mary Ann Caws, *The Surrealist Look: An Erotics of Encounter*, (The MIT Press: Cambridge, 1997), p. 63.
- 25 Picasso, *Four Little Girls*, p. 35.
- 26 Picasso, *Four Little Girls*, p. 57.
- 27 The information about the date varies but the present owner, Tate Collection, dates the painting to 1943.
- 28 For a catalogue of Tanning's body of work, see for example, Jean Christophe Bailly, *Dorothea Tanning*, trans. Richard Howard and Robert C. Morgan, (George Braziller: New York, 1995).
- 29 *Children's games*, 1942, private collection, see for example, Bailly, *Dorothea Tanning*.
- 30 Caws, *The Surrealist Look*, p. 84.
- 31 Picasso, *Four Little Girls*, p. 17.
- 32 For a background to the development of the ideal of 'romantic child', see Higgonnet, *Pictures of Innocence*, pp. 15-30.
- 33 Picasso, *Four Little Girls*, p. 34.
- 34 Picasso, *Four Little Girls*, p. 34
- 35 For an analysis of symbolic use of colour in Cronqvist's paintings, see Ingamaj Beck, 'Lena Cronqvist: Om färgernas dramatiska berättelser', in *Vingspeglar: Möten med samtida konstnärer*, (Natur och kultur: Stockholm, 1993), pp. 17-25.
- 36 For an analysis of how both Lena Cronqvist and Göran Tunström elaborated with ideas about alchemy in the 1970s, and how Cronqvist then employed similar glass flasks in her art, see Mona Sandqvist, '“Bröllopet stod i Ägget”: Alkemiska variationer hos Göran Tunström and Lena Cronqvist', in Birthe Sjöberg (ed.), *Möten och metamorfoser: Dikt i samspel med musik, bild och film*, (The Department for Literature, University of Lund: Lund, 1995), pp. 91-116.
- 37 Parveen Adams, 'The Violence of Paint', in Benjamin, *The Body*, pp. 53-9.

- 38 'Under 90talet har föräldrar och barn bytt plats. Om Lena Cronqvist tidigare ofta målade barnet/flickan som offer, gör hon henne nu till bödel', Ingela Lind, 'På gränsen mellan fulhet och skönhet', *Dagens Nyheter* 24/1 1999.
- 39 Two such examples in Sweden are *Astrid Lindgren's World*, in Vimmerby, and *Junibacken* in Stockholm, both featuring miniature replicas of the houses and environments in Astrid Lindgrens books for children.
- 40 Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narrative of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, (1993) (Duke University Press: Durham, 2003), p. 66.
- 41 Stewart, *On Longing*, pp. 55-7.
- 42 Stewart, *On Longing*, p.112.
- 43 Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle, in Gay, *The Freud Reader*, pp. 599-601.
- 44 Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. Gillian C. Gill, (Columbia University Press: New York, 1993), p. 97.
- 45 Jean Frémon writes that all Bourgeois's themes, evolving around some specific childhood memories, have been present from the very beginning of Bourgeois' career as an artist, and are visually infinitely elaborated through the different periods the artist has gone through. Jean Frémon, *Louise Bourgeois: Rétrospective 1947-1984*, exh. cat., (Galerie Maeght Lelong, Paris, 1985.)
- 46 This quote is taken from Mignon Nixon, *Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and A Story of Modern Art*, (The MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., 2005), p. 265.
- 47 'La piece est d'abord une table, l'horrible, la terrifiant table presidée par le père qui est assis et jibile. Et les autres, la femme, les enfants, que peuvent-ils faire? Ils sont assis, là, silencieux. La mere, évidemment, essaie de satisfaire le tyran, son mari. Les enfants sont exaspérés. Nour étions trios enfants: mon frère, ma soeur et moi. Il ya avait deux autres enfants que mes parents avaient adoptés car leur père avait été tué à la guerre (la Première Guerre mondiale). Si bien qu'on était cinq. Mon père devenait nerveux, agacé quand il nous regardait, et il nous expliquait toujours quel grand homme il était. Si bien qu'exaspérés, nous les saissions, le jétions sur la table, lui arrachions les membres el le dévorions.' Frémon, *Louise Bourgeois*, 1985, p. 6. trans. to English from Marie-Laure Bernadac and Hans-Ulrich Obrist, *Louise Bourgeois, Destruction of the Father Reconstruction of the Father: Writings and Interviews 1923-1997*, (Violette Editions: London, 1998). This passage is also quoted in Mignon Nixon, 'Bad Enough Mother', *October*, no. 71, 1995, p. 74.
- 48 Brigitte Cornand, 'Chère Louise', Canal +, France, 21/8 1995.
- 49 Lynne Cooke, 'Louise Bourgeois', essay published by DIA Art Founda-

- tion New York, (www.diacenter.org/exhibs_b/bourgeois/essay.html, 10/5 2004).
- 50 See the 'Introduction' by Juliet Mitchell (ed.), *Selected Melanie Klein*, (1986) (The Free Press: New York, 1987), p. 28.
 - 51 Nixon, 'Bad Enough Mothers', p. 75. For a further analysis by Nixon of Bourgeois's art see Nixon, *Fantastic Reality*, 2005, for Bourgeois's installation *The Destruction of the Father*, see particularly pp. 254-265.
 - 52 See further in Melanie Klein, 'The Importance of Symbol Formation in the Development of the Ego' (1930) and Mitchell, 'Introduction', in *The Selected Melanie Klein*, pp. 95-111 and p. 29.
 - 53 Bernadac and Obrist, *Louise Bourgeois*, p. 158.
 - 54 For a comment on the artist's need to paint, see for example the interview by Lena Katarina Swanberg, 'Scener ur ett konstnärsäktenskap', *Månadsjournalen*, no. 9, 1992, p. 35.
 - 55 See for example the series of paintings reproduced in the book *Lena Cronqvist: Målningar*, pp. 101-5 and pp. 145-6, or Stam, 'Rädslan är verkligare än döden', 1981, pp. 13-17.
 - 56 See for example *Lena Cronqvist Vita Ark /White Sheets*, exh. cat., (Galleri Lars Bohman: Stockholm, 2002).
 - 57 Cornand, 'Chère Louise', 1995.
 - 58 For a discussion of different levels of expressiveness through the act of painting, see Fuller, *Art and Psychoanalysis*, p. 232.
 - 59 See for example, *Lena Cronqvist: Vita Ark/White Sheets*, 2002, p. 29.
 - 60 Lomas, *The Haunted Self*, p. 109.
 - 61 Lomas, *The Haunted Self*, p. 112, Lomas refers to Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: the Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1995), pp 79 – 116.
 - 62 Lomas, *The Haunted Self*, pp. 102-120.

Coda

- 1 Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', (1975) in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (eds), *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, (1980) (The Harvester Press: Brighton, 1981), p. 246.
- 2 See for example Inez Hedges, 'What do Little Girls Dream of: The Insurgent Writing of Gisèle Prassinos', in Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf E. Kuenzli and Gwen Raaberg, *Surrealism and Women*, (MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1991).
- 3 Like Melanie Klein, Cixous has at times been accused of 'biologism'. In other words some critics read from her texts that expressions of sexuality are determined by biology, as opposed to a theory based on constructiv-

ism, like Judith Butler's, where all gender manifestations are culturally coded. See Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminsim and the Subversion of Identity*, (Routledge: New York, 1990). I am in this context not interested in engaging in this debate, although I would tend towards the constructivist camp, proposing to use Cixous texts only as a way of casting some light on the aggressive and troublesome streaks in the discussed images by Cronqvist.

- 4 Hélène Cixous, 'Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays', (1975), Cixous and Catherine Clement (eds), *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing (I. B. Tauris Publishers: London, 1996), pp. 63-132.
- 5 Cixous, 'Sorties', p. 93-4. Cixous refers to a discussion where she sees that all women carry the idea of the mother, symbolically, in her. The white refers to the quintessentially feminine of breast milk.

List of Illustrations

All Lena Cronqvist's work are photographed by Jan Almerén and Tord Lund, and are courtesy of the artist, with the exception of fig. 9, 39 (plate 11), 50 and 72 which are supplied by other sources, as listed below. All Cronqvist's paintings until 1982 are oil on canvas, and all paintings after 1982 are oil and tempera on canvas. Images by Cronqvist are copyright the artist/BUS 2005 and all her works are in private collection unless otherwise stated. When titles are marked by * the translation from Swedish to English is by Rika Lesser (from the catalogue *Lena Cronqvist: Vita Art/White Sheets*, 2002), and ** by Rachele Puryear (from the book *Lena Cronqvist*, 2003), remaining translations are by myself. All other artists' work are referred to their English titles, as supplied by the copyright holders.

Colour Plates

- 1 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl and Swan* ** (*Flicka och svan*), 1993, 47 x 43 cm.
- 2 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl and Swan* (*Flicka och svan*), 1993, 52 x 43 cm.
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- 5 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl, Gorilla and Sun* (*Flicka, gorilla och sol*), 1992, 43 x 39 cm.
- 6 Lena Cronqvist, *The Edge of the Wood* (*I skogsbrynet*), 1994, 46 x 55 cm.
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- 8 Lena Cronqvist, *Daddy and Girl* (*Pappa och Flicka*), 1993, 55 x 44 cm.
- 9 Lena Cronqvist, *The Girl in the Water II* ** (*Flickan i vattnet II*), 1982, 150 x 135 cm.
- 10 Lena Cronqvist, *By the Table I* (*Vid bordet I*), 1998, 121 x 144 cm.
- 11 Lena Cronqvist, *Telltale*, 1991, 150 x 110 cm, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, photo courtesy of Moderna Museet, Stockholm.
- 12 Lena Cronqvist, *Hand in Hand* ** (*Hand i hand*), 1990, 150 x 117 cm.
- 13 Lena Cronqvist, *By the Table II*, (*Vid bordet II*), 1998, 117 x 149 cm.
- 14 Ellsworth Kelly, *Colors for a Large Wall*, 1951, oil on canvas, mounted on sixty-four wood panels, 239.3 x 239.9 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New

York © 2005, Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence. Gift of the artist.

- 15 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl with Inflatable Animal and Doll (Flicka med baddjur och docka)*, 1994, 45 x 48 cm.
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- 18 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl and Daddy with Big Hands (Flicka och pappa med stora händer)*, 1995, 50 x 60 cm.
- 19 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl in a Swimsuit (Flicka i baddräkt)*, 1990, 39 x 34 cm.
- 20 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl with Mummy Doll (Flicka med mammadocka)*, 1993, 50 x 43 cm.
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- 22 Lena Cronqvist, *Girls in Yellow and Lilac * (Flickor i gult och lila)*, 2000, 150 x 122 cm.
- 23 Lena Cronqvist, *Burden and Possibility (Börda och möjlighet)*, 1970, 95 x 85.
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- 27 Lena Cronqvist, *Girl in a Suit III * (Flicka i kavaj III)*, 2000-1, 150 x 117.5 cm.
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- 3 See plate 1.
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- 5 after Michelangelo, *Leda and the Swan*, made after 1530, oil on canvas, 105.4 x 141 cm, National Gallery, London, Photo © The National Gallery, London.
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- 7 Francois Boucher, *Leda and the Swan*, before 1742, oil on canvas, 59.5 x 74 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, photo © Nationalmuseum/The Picture Library.
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- 11 See plate 3.
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- 21 Lena Cronqvist, *Daddy's girl (Pappas flicka)*, 1993-94, h. 20.5 cm, bronze.
- 22 Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *The Broken Jug*, 1785, painting, 108 x 86 cm, The Louvre, Paris, photo © RMN, Daniel Amaudet – IBL Bildbyrå.
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- 44 Paula Rego, *Snow White on the Prince's Horse*, 1995, pastel on paper mounted on aluminium, 160 x 120 cm, © the Artist, photo courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art (London) Ltd.
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- 74 Lena Cronqvist, *Blank Pages* * (Tomma ark), 2001, 150 x 118 cm.
- 75 See plate 27.
- 76 See plate 28.
- 77 See plate 29.
- 78 Pablo Picasso, *Family by the Seashore*, 1922, oil on wood, 17.6 x 20.2 cm, Musée Picasso, Paris, © Succession Picasso / BUS 2005, photo © RMN, René-Gabriel Ojéda – IBL Bildbyrå.



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