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GLASS SCENOGRAPHERS

NOTES ON SPACES OF
ONE'S OWN

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GLASS SCENOGRAPHIES
Notes on Spaces of One's Own

Szilvia Gellai

with a response by
Sina Brückner-Amin

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EDITORIAL

Today, it is natural to speak of media and computer architecture, the architecture of European foreign policy, philosophical constructs, the corporate architecture of major companies, and even of security architecture. In the case of built architecture, contemporary examples such as the internationally discussed reconstruction of the Neue Altstadt in Frankfurt reveal the extent to which socio-political notions of order and historical narratives are recognized through the visual and spatial organization of architecture. However, current developments reflect more than a mere trend toward an increasingly broad understanding of architecture, which is now one of the key fields of social self-perception: Planned and also constructed buildings spark controversial debate on the importance of architecture as the deployment of order in a spatial discourse. In this context, the LOEWE research cluster “Architectures of Order” is dedicated to studying architecture as a cultural technique that manifests itself not only aesthetically, materially, spatially, and discursively, but also epistemologically. “Architectures of Order” refers to the significance of ordering techniques in the practices of architecture, while investigating the relevance of architectural thought in social discourse on order.

The series “Architectures of Order”, which is published within CCSA Topics, presents monographic texts by researchers who participate in and are associated with the research cluster. The broad range of the series reflects the project’s interdisciplinary approach, while unifying architectural-historical and theoretical expertise with historical, cultural, media-studies, sociological, and design-theoretical competence, complemented by perspectives from the field of practical architectural design and media.

LOEWE research cluster “Architectures of Order”

GLASS SCENOGRAPHIES

NOTES ON SPACES OF
ONE'S OWN

OBSCURE LIVES, TRANSPARENT BOUNDARIES

In 1927, Evelyn Word Leigh, a former society girl and motion picture actor, had a glass house built in Nyack, New York and lived there until 1940. The story of the divorced, childless, beautiful woman who bathed in light in her greenhouse-like home was reported by the press in New York, San Francisco, Hamburg, and Vienna. The utopian idea of living in a glass house was thus neither a “fraternal” nor an “unrealized obsession” of modernity.¹ As a means of practical memory, archaeology can actually be a surreal activity, shaped by chance encounters and discoveries. Leigh’s glass house certainly belongs to the buried remnants of the 20th century. If one is persistent enough in investigating this infamous woman, whose life was at times the stuff of legend, and the nameless glass house that inspired such fascination before it was forgotten, one discovers junk, an *objet trouvé*, with fragments of pixelated and yellowed old newspapers, oral histories, virtual graves, digital flea markets, and film archives. The story of this building, which has been unexplored to date, exists entirely outside the modernist tradition and beyond male authorship. Perhaps that is one reason why studies on glass culture and transparency have remained silent about it.

“All these infinitely obscure lives remain to be recorded,” Virginia Woolf writes in her essay *A Room of One’s Own* (1929). The text is based on lectures she held in 1928 on the subject of women and literature, having been invited by the Girton and

Newnham women's colleges at Cambridge University. Following extensive reading and research, Woolf concluded that woman is "an odd monster" of history: "Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history."² The authors of the biographies, history books, and philosophical and literary works she could find to prepare her talks were almost exclusively men. Woolf therefore tackled the subject in a different way and considered the conditions of creative work "grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in."³ She believed that what women need in order to be able to write is a secure income and a room with a lock on the door. As prosaic as the demand might sound, it nevertheless proves to be multifaceted. It represents an architectural order that affords privacy to women, as well as legal and financial independence as a precondition of intellectual freedom. In this demand, Woolf insists on literally making room for women in all fields of cultural production and in history.

To develop her argument, she choreographs numerous small scenes, mutually interwoven walks and trains of thought. When her fictitious counterpart strolls around the male domain of Oxbridge, she proposes a notable example of a kind of architecture that seems conducive to creative acts: "Strolling through those colleges past those ancient halls the roughness of the present seemed smoothed

away; the body seemed contained in a miraculous glass cabinet through which no sound could penetrate, and the mind, freed from any contact with facts (unless one trespassed on the turf again), was at liberty to settle down upon whatever meditation was in harmony with the moment.”⁴ This glass cabinet that appears to the female intruder in the hermetically sealed world of educated men is not yet unlike the room of one’s own she demands for women. It is a place of protection and passage, providing a temporary haven from the noise of the world—right up to the moment when the transgressor is driven off the lawn. Woolf’s glass scenography builds a subtle bridge between literature and architecture. She also demonstrates a process of subjectification in which the empowerment and disempowerment of women are closely connected, where inclusion and exclusion constitute ambiguous spaces and boundaries are at stake. Thinking in scenographies first means keeping sight of these aspects, and second, working with the scenic-theatrical organization of spaces, figures, and perspectives. Inspired by a few obscure lives and staying with the historiographical trouble that Woolf engaged with, this essay addresses a multifaceted issue in which women, literature, and glass architecture play the leading roles.

The first part of this essay is devoted to the story of Leigh and her glass house. Obsessed with the sun, Leigh’s ambiguous flirtation with the public inflamed tensions early on, until the house was

shattered by stones around 1936. In 1940, Leigh's temple of the sun was foreclosed upon and demolished. However, as long as it stood, the building was a remarkably diverse medium, serving as a body and climate technique, a means of moral education, and a stage for self-dramatization. After discussing this unheard-of architectural episode, the second part turns to a construction form of the imagination that several female artists took up between the mid-1920s and early 1960s: the glass dome. Over the decades, this form's scales and modes of existence kept changing. In surrealist photography, Claude Cahun and Lee Miller put actual glass domes over female heads, staging a dramatic interplay between external order and internal beauty. This dynamic can be traced further in the literary texts of Anaïs Nin, Hilda 'H.D.' Doolittle, and Sylvia Plath, for whom the bell jar evolved into an influential metaphor. From then on, the trope refers to highly ambivalent mental states turned inside-out, forming transparent or translucent spherical environments that are, first and foremost, the site and epitome of profound artistic crises. How these different construction types of women's glass spaces are connected with each other and with the cultural history of glass and transparency requires further exploration.

As I have proposed in an earlier essay, using examples of a roughly historical typology (greenhouses, exhibition buildings and glass residential buildings) from the 19th to the mid-20th century, glass houses can be regarded as models and embodiments of working on boundaries.⁵ These boundaries run between the typical modern dichotomies evident in the technically and industrially characterized structural transformation that occurred in western societies; for instance between nature and culture, others and ourselves, materiality and discursivity, transcendence and immanence, privacy and publicity etc. In a paradoxical way, glass houses intervene in the interaction between these binary oppositions. On the one hand, from the perspective of aesthetic perception, they destabilize the boundaries between them, whereby this destabilization is primarily implemented and produced through rhetoric. On the other hand, glass houses also draw boundaries in different places and in contrasting ways. Thus, while the focus lies on stressing the mutual permeation of two zones, the act is surreptitiously undone at the same time. As Marcus Hahn neatly puts it, Bruno Latour's "work of purification" means that "every statement of modern separation is combined with the modern practice of mixing, which cannot be addressed by the statement of separation."⁶ With that in mind, glass houses invert the usual pattern of purification, because, in them, statements of modern mixing are permeated by practices of separation.

In the context of such assumptions, I address the question of what kind of agency glass homes and glass domes afford to women, since these environments suggest practical and artistic negotiations on modern boundaries and differences. Indeed, glass domes allow for the same work as glass houses. The fact that the former operate on different scales by no means indicates that the boundaries they help to negotiate are less significant. As I will demonstrate, these boundaries run between the animate and the inanimate, dream and consciousness, fact and fiction, subject and object, body and mind, reason and madness, woman and man/human. And most importantly, bell jars in particular reveal that this last boundary is not simply about gender difference, but a very specific aspect of it. The question is who is entitled to a room of one's own, who is permitted to write, think, build, and work creatively, and under which conditions. What really is at stake is cultural agency, the issue of authorship. Ultimately, it is a question of proper places in the history of a 'glassy'¹⁷ and transparent modernity.

Having transformed from an ambiguous dream of modernity into an imperative of the 21st century, the concept of transparency ranks as a key term of our present, with its genealogy and critique enjoying a great deal of attention in various disciplines.⁸ Whether concerning institutions or individuals, the rhetoric of transparency is intimately linked to a handful of pivotal demands and promises,

such as the democratic accessibility of information, a sense of responsibility, the reduction of asymmetries in power relations, and moral behavior.⁹

As Emmanuel Alloa states, transparency has become the ideal of an era that considers itself to have left all master narratives behind. Precisely because of this post-ideological claim, it seems increasingly important, “to analyze transparency for what it purports to be: an ideology of neutrality.”¹⁰ Against this backdrop, a genealogical critique of transparency in architecture and literature necessarily involves questioning the myth of the glass house. This myth has strong visual, rational, male, white, western-colonial connotations and is associated with the naturalization of connections with respect to race, class, and gender.¹¹

The historiography of transparency itself is at least complicit in perpetuating this myth in so far as its ancestral portrait gallery almost exclusively consists of male figures.¹² The question of the place allocated to women in this history has been addressed far too rarely. Yet upon a closer look, they tend to be found at the very center of glass house narratives.

For instance, consider Vera Pavlovna, who, in Nikolay Chernyshevsky’s powerful utopian political novel *What Is to Be Done?* (1863), does not simply dream of living in a crystal palace. This building also provides the setting for a society in which the division of labor, equal rights, and truthfulness in gender relations prevail.¹³ Consider also Léona ‘Nadja’ Delcourt, who was supposed to make André Breton’s surrealist

work *Nadja* (1928) transparent towards life and ensure a documentary poetics, of which his glass house is a metaphor.¹⁴ Walter Benjamin posits that inhabiting this glass house is “a revolutionary virtue par excellence.”¹⁵ We also recall the doctor, poet, and translator Edith Farnsworth, who sued Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the architect of her weekend home in Plano, Illinois, because she considered the purist masterpiece obscenely expensive, structurally flawed, and hardly reconcilable with her notion of living.¹⁶ Well into the 21st century, despite their striking presence, female figures form the foundation, as it were, upon which the hegemonic history of architectures of transparency is made legible. This situation has a highly disconcerting effect when the names of these women (such as Nadja and Farnsworth) become metonyms of the artistic mastery of the men whose works they enabled in the first place.

In the historiography of glass culture, then, the gender constellation strongly recalls the punch line and title of Paul Scheerbart’s so-called “ladies’ novel” *The Gray Cloth with Ten Percent White* (1914), in which he uses narrative to discuss the theses of his substantial manifesto *Glass Architecture* (1914). In the novel, the bride-to-be of an architect signs a marriage contract that she will only wear gray clothes with ten percent white lace, in order to provide a highlighting aesthetic contrast to her future husband’s colorful glass houses. He declares in advance that the “nature of the costume must not outshine

a colorful glass wall [... and] may under no circumstances compete with the glass.”¹⁷ In view of such an allocation of roles, the novel ironically and provocatively investigates the question whether the woman can be considered a figure at all or whether she has merely become part of the background. It does not take long for the architect’s wife, herself a successful artist, to rebel against the rule. The dynamic, in which a woman in glass disturbs a male order and resists her characterization as an oppressed subject, is not unique in modernity.

The figure-ground constellation has long belonged to the vocabulary of feminist theory, criticizing androcentric patterns of thought and perception with a reference to traditional female backgrounding. However, a strategy of simply inverting the relationship would pick up on the “masculine logic of asymmetric distinction”¹⁸ and continue it under opposite auspices. Thus, how could one make a different contribution to the cultural history of glass architecture, other than via the canon, without following a masculine logic or inverting prevailing gender asymmetries?

My strategy is two-fold. First, the focus is shifted towards female subjectivity in works by female authors, i.e., from the center to the periphery. Second, this essay examines not only the myth of the glass house, but also the often overlooked tradition of the bell jar as a motif and concept. In this way, two different standpoints are established, in which

the glass house tends to conform with an outer perspective and the bell jar more with an internal perspective. The former is addressed through the reconstruction of the story of Leigh's glass house based on Walter Benjamin's works on cultural theory. From there, the object and metaphor of the bell jar leads to new artistic and theoretical fields. What is no doubt the most famous example, Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar*, is just the tip of the iceberg. As mentioned above, the filiation lines of the bell-jar tradition reach back to the 1920s and 1930s. The surrealist photography and object art of Claude Cahun, Lee Miller, and Mina Loy are notable examples, as are texts by authors such as H.D. and Anaïs Nin, who engage with literary and cinematic avant-garde movements, as well as with psychoanalysis.

The fact that these works have previously been studied neither within cultural histories of glass nor in architectural histories of transparency is likely because they have been traditionally located in poetic discourses on madness and genius. In literary criticism, the bell jar is generally interpreted as a metaphor of psychological disturbance or oppressive states of mind: ranging from existential loneliness, melancholia, and depression to psychosis. Such "signs of genius" are declared to be self-confident claims by specific female authors, who "distinguish their 'feminine' melancholic writing" from the bitter lament of others "through the bleak relationship between the genders" and the social repression of women.¹⁹

In view of the given historical background, the extreme social and intellectual constraints on women's field of action, the resulting psychological damage is undeniable. Nevertheless, such a one-sided perspective is limiting, especially since it once again leads to the hysterization of female subjects.

As I will show, the bell jar serves as a trope that offers to engage not only with questions of modern femininity and sexuality, but also and especially with the *aporia of female authorship* in the androcentric field of modernism. Woolf herself addressed the myth of female authorship in *A Room of One's Own* through the fictitious Judith Shakespeare. As different as the works by Nin, H.D., and Plath are, each one straddles the same line between self-writing and fiction as Woolf's essay. Moreover, the driving forces behind their works are always creative crises experienced by the female authors, in which the bell jar is not exclusively repressively or pathologically motivated (in the sense of illness, isolation, exclusion, lack of appreciation, fetishization etc.). Instead, it is far more a playground of artistic subjectivities that *simultaneously* opens, i.e., a room of one's own in which women can find and invent themselves as artists. Therefore, the structural form refers to a transitional state—which is true for every crisis by definition. These entangled aspects of artistic productivity, protection, and passage are clearly apparent during the Oxbridge strolls described by Woolf.

Spanning the arc from architecture to literature through visual culture does not mean successively receding from physical matters to the realms of fiction, as construction forms, images, and texts interpenetrate each other in both parts of the book. Instead of offering a unified narrative, this essay aims to salvage fragments and make overlooked episodes of cultural history “citable,”²⁰ as Benjamin suggested. It opens up parallel stories that often occur simultaneously in different milieus or on different continents. The protagonists meet in their penchant for the aesthetics of glass, which, contrary to its cold and clean image, provides one of the most suspenseful surfaces of modernity, a surface that is in fact covered with material traces. In this sense, the stories of this book connect not only thematically via surfaces. They are surfaces themselves, each illuminating the next through overlaps, convergences, and tensions. By moving back and forth between the different sceneries, working through various more or less transparent layers, the same questions keep coming up: Where do we draw the line between materiality and discursivity, or between inside and outside? In what ways do tangible architectures of transparency merge into imaginary architectures of bodies and minds? Where does the reality of glass houses end and the imagination of living under glass domes begin? Transparency often leads to a dynamic perception of boundaries. Hence, it is no coincidence that female artists create and inhabit

actual and virtual spaces made of glass to challenge and negotiate their 'naturally' assigned places in western societies and the boundaries associated with them. They do precisely that both in glass homes and glass domes, creating a crucial connection between this unlikely pair. Both structures are, in fact, building sites of women's subjectivities. If "[w]e are all haunted houses,"²¹ as H. D. claimed, then today, in the era of transparency, it is necessary to take a closer look at these sites of modernity.

OBSCURER LIVES,
TRANSPARENT
BOUNDARIES

**EVELYN WORD
LEIGH'S GLASS
HOUSE**

The news that a single woman, in fact one of great beauty, was having a transparent home built for her, spread through the American press in late June 1927. The house was built in the picturesque Nyack, directly by the Hudson River, only an hour's drive from New York City. In her first interviews, Leigh stated that she wished to bathe in the sun within her own four walls—with as little clothing as possible. Her physical health and beauty could only be maintained through sunshine: "I am building this house to live in. And no one is going to stop me. Nyack will be a better place, morally and mentally, after I begin sun worshipping."²² The neighbors were perturbed. Even before the house was finished, the local police made it clear that curtains would have to be installed. At the same time, the public's voyeurism was kindled and fed, not only with words. Photos present Leigh in a seductive pose, her head and hair thrown back, clothed in only a two-piece bathing costume [Fig. 1]. On other images, she can be seen during the construction work, where she is holding a trowel in her hand and wearing a surprisingly old-fashioned long dress [Fig. 2]. Another provocative circumstance was the fact that Leigh had pants made for her brown mare Lady by the best village tailor in Nyack, to protect the horse from flies. The solution was presumably intended as a temporary measure until the stable was finished. Beside a photograph of the horse in fly-proof pants and a picture of the glass panels of a greenhouse, intended to demonstrate the



Under everyone's eyes, montage with Leigh
in sun-suit, clipping, 1936

Fig. 1

Evelyn Word Leigh's glass house
in the making, clipping, 1927

Glass House Voes of the Lady Sun-Worshiper

On Top of All the Gossip About Her Horse's
Pants and Her Own Raw Food Diet
Comes the Story of Her Solar Soaring in an
Airplane Years
Ago.



The horse and rider in the illustration are the subject of the article. The woman is Evelyn Word Leigh, and the horse is her own. The article discusses her unique lifestyle, including her diet and her horse's attire.

The article continues to describe the woman's life and her horse's habits. It mentions her 'solar soaring' in an airplane and her 'raw food diet'.

The text further elaborates on the woman's eccentricities and her relationship with her horse. It includes details about her 'glass house' and her 'voes'.

The article concludes with a summary of the woman's life and her horse's story. It includes a small illustration of a woman working in a field.

The right side of the clipping contains several columns of text, likely from a newspaper or magazine. The text is dense and appears to be a continuation of the article or related news.



Fig. 2

building's construction method, there is also a close-up photo of Leigh's calves in fishnet tights. She was convinced that the fishnet structure helped her solar therapy.

In Leigh's case, living in a glass house was the architectural expression of an autonomous way of life, particularly since she combined it with physical exercise and a healthy diet. She went riding, danced, regularly swung onto the trapeze, did the gardening and was not only a vegetarian, but mainly ate raw food. Leigh called for minimal meat consumption, as well as refraining from bread and cereal products.²³

Sunbathing in a glass house, a raw diet and a horse in pants—these elements lived on in oral history up to the 1990s as traits of that 'queer' Mrs. Leigh. They form the narrative core of an "outrageous occurrence" (Goethe) that is endlessly recounted anew and played out in the realm of surfaces.

Regarding clothes and houses as surfaces of the body, grasping them as one's second and third skin, has been a traditional theme in philosophical anthropology, architectural history, and media theory. In modern glass architecture, glass and skin form a sensory analogy, referring to the now porous ontological and epistemic condition of the body. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe coined the famous formula of the "skin and bones buildings" for structures that used a skeleton of reinforced concrete to relieve walls of their former load-bearing function, thereby enabling large glass areas. However, the analogy between

glass and skin goes beyond this building method. As Beatriz Colomina argues, modern architecture cannot be adequately understood if it is reduced to new building materials, functional efficiency and mechanical aesthetics. Starting with the closely interwoven fields of medicine, illness, and building practice, she states that, “modern architecture was shaped by the dominant medical obsession of its time—tuberculosis—and the technology that became associated with it—X-rays.”²⁴ Thus, the porosity of modern transparent bodies and volumes corresponds closely both to medical insight and media technology that break down the distinction between materiality and discursivity.

Reports from Nyack anticipate the mediality of the glass house as a type of third skin during the construction period and penetrate its innermost layer, down to the skin of its future resident. “Her skin, of beautiful texture and coloring, is untouched by a sign of cosmetic. Her Titian hair [...] gleams in abundance over attractive features. Her bare legs [...] have been burned a beautiful golden-brown.”²⁵ This scopophilic process is even applied retrospectively to Leigh’s biography. The fact that she once wore a see-through gown as a debutante is implied as a precursor of her glass house; likewise her earlier passion for flying, since in the skies, she felt closer to the sun. It is difficult to decide where these teleological narratives originated from, either the reporters or Leigh herself. Her attitude towards

the press was always ambivalent and at times rather tense. On the one hand, she willingly presented herself to the public as a visual spectacle. On the other, she strongly criticized the newspaper business and all the industrialists who profited from it, as well as the often uneducated writers who rarely portrayed her accurately and were instead all too happy to feed the cravings of an American public addicted to sensation and violence.²⁶ Thus, not only clothes and glass clung to Leigh like additional layers of skin, but also images and fables. (Re)constructing the story of her house therefore has the status of higher-order speculation, working through the various layers.

Leigh grasps her glass house in three ways. First, as a body and climate technique, which keeps her fit and in shape. Second, as a surrounding medium that is useful in regulating social distancing and visual exhibition, acting as a stage for self-presentation. Third, she regards it as a means to morally influence the behavior and thought of the residents of Nyack using transparency. These functions correspond with historically varying building forms of glass houses. In its functions of a body and climate technique, Leigh's house is based on the cultural and architectural tradition of the greenhouse, a Victorian-dominated 19th-century building type. Her house becomes a medium based on merging characteristics of colonial-imperial exhibition buildings (the direct successors of botanic greenhouses) and early film studios made of glass. Finally, the didactic function

corresponds with the imagination of the glass home as a disciplinary apparatus, as seen in fairy tales, novels, film projects, and modern popular culture. What makes Leigh's house so exceptionally interesting in terms of the cultural and media history of glass houses is the convergence of all these strains in a single home, moreover in the hands of a woman who knew how to use that combination.

OBSCURE LIVES,
TRANSPARENT
BOUNDARIES
EVELYN WORD
LEIGH'S GLASS
HOUSE

**BODY AND
CLIMATE
TECHNIQUE FOR
A DELICATE
CREATURE**

Using the glass house as a body technique is by no means a superficial undertaking. Both the rays of the sun and her dietary restrictions literally went under Leigh's skin, making her body itself an adaptable material of architecture. She was not alone with these 'radiant' convictions. Around 1929, the "sun-struck" movement became fashionable, influencing language and celebrities—from the playwright Bernard Shaw to the billionaire John D. Rockefeller.²⁷ Around 1928, vegetarianism boomed for the first time in the United States. Furthermore, Leigh was close to the conceptual cosmos of X-ray architecture, which appropriated numerous practices and discourses that had been popularized by the life reform movement in Europe. Although Leigh's dwelling practice unfolds along the same lines, it also existed outside social movements or activist groups.

By the time she moved to Nyack in 1927, a tantric colony had already established itself there under the auspices of Dr. Pierre Bernard and his wife Blanche DeVries. One of the first yogis in the United States, Bernard became famous using the pseudonym "Oom the Omnipotent." Moreover, in 1919, the couple founded the Clarkstown Country Club, where they taught yoga, along with eastern philosophies, dance and music. However, Leigh explicitly denied any connection to them.

Her demand for ideal independence was combined with a certain self-determination with respect to the building structure. Since no architect

among her acquaintances was able or willing to design the house of her dreams, Leigh planned it herself and commissioned a greenhouse builder in Nyack with the construction. Thus, the building was not created in the usual architect-client relationship. Released from such hierarchies, the project was also freed of the “law of the father” (Lacan): it was never subordinated to the name of a male subject. The term ‘construction,’ which is associated with engineering, seems more apt for Leigh’s house than ‘architecture’ with its artistic connotations. This had already been the case with 19th-century glass and iron constructions, whose potential for modernity developed out of their very freedom from building conventions.

Leigh was by no means upset by descriptions of her home as a greenhouse. She herself encouraged the analogy, in which she acted as a delicate being. “I was delicate when I came [...]. So, I built myself a sun house, a hot house of glass and I did thrive. If I had gone to an expensive sanitarium to sit in a glassed porch with a lot of nervous wrecks [...], everyone would have thought me quite sensible.”²⁸ Leigh deliberately distanced herself from “nervous” sanatorium guests, thereby once again confirming that her “sun house” operates somewhere between botany, medicine, and architecture.

Based on the existing image material, it is only possible to partially reconstruct the house, which was foreclosed upon in May 1940 and then immediately demolished. The Nyack property was situated

between Sixth and Fifth Avenue on Tillou Lane, on a slope overlooking the river.²⁹ Built on pilotis and with a steel structure for the glass insets, the house was a U-shaped complex with three wings: a south wing with two buildings that came together at the corners in a slightly offset way [Fig. 3B], an enormous east wing parallel to the river [Fig. 4A], and a large north wing (possibly itself consisting of two buildings). All of its sections had gabled roofs. Apart from one section with a regular roof (presumably the north wing), half of all the roofs were made of glass. We only know the dimensions of the smaller room in the south wing, as well as those in the east wing: “The left [south] wing is about 24 by 18 [feet], the room next to it a little larger. The front room [east wing] is all of 48 by 23 something [feet], and the right [north] wing is a little larger than the left.”³⁰ Thus, by a conservative estimate, Leigh had at least around 3,000 square feet (approx. 280 square meters) of available space.

The house was planned and built in accordance with the principles of greenhouses, where the south sides and roofs are primarily glazed, giving the plants as much sunlight as possible. By contrast, the north side, which is in any case a source of less sunlight, needed to provide protection from the cold, so it consisted of opaque materials—at least up to hip height. From this side, the house looks like a ‘topless’ (timber) construction. The use of special glass that allowed ultraviolet light to pass through it drove up costs considerably. Leigh paid a total of \$ 30,000.

UNIVERSAL NEWSPAPER NEWSREEL
NYACK, N. Y.
Woman lives alone in house
of glass!—\$30,000 transparent
home dedicated to Ra,
Egyptian sun god



A

B

C

D

E

F

Screenshots from
Newsreel's outtakes, 1929

Fig. 3

Immediately after the building's completion in August 1927, she was bankrupt and advertised for lodgers in the local paper.³¹

Leigh's choice of special glass as a building material was distinctly modern, since she was following the eclectic knowledge of her time. The same knowledge informed the architectural theory of the Bauhaus. For instance, Siegfried Ebeling stated in his essay *Der Raum als Membran* (1926, trans.: *The Space as Membrane*) that the problem of guiding light into buildings of the future is less a question of form than of the material structure of the window apertures. Standard windowpanes absorbed "the ultraviolet rays that are probably essential for the organism."³² Ebeling's "biological architecture" was based on the progressive idea of "grasping and designing the building as its own source of energy," taking the "radiation processes" and "the earth's fine flows," in which it was integrated into account.³³ The glass house in Nyack may have been a far cry from an advanced energy concept, but Leigh clearly set great store on radiation, flows, and ventilation processes. No fewer than six doors and twenty large windows can be found on the sections of the building that have been documented by photographs, all of which could be opened and closed. The house stood on pillars six feet above the ground. This solution allowed air circulation beneath the floor and prevented dampness. However, the house only had a comfortable temperature during the summer months.



Fig. 4A

**The large east wing of Leigh's
glass house, 1927**

Fig. 4B

**Leigh enjoying her daily sun bath
in her garden, 1927**



The poorly installed fireplace was hardly sufficient and caused problems. Thus, its owner regularly spent the winter in Florida.

In Leigh's claim to be a sun-worshiper "in a scientific sense of the phrase,"³⁴ and her presentation of the theoretical foundation of her home, one senses an audacious balancing act between mythological references, esoteric manners of speaking, and scientific concepts. The scope ranges from study of the Egyptian sun god Ra to mercury vapor lamps as a replacement for sunlight, and even UV radiation, the dangers of which were as unbeknown to her as they were to Ebeling. Her conclusions and the way she led her life make tangible an "oppressive wealth of ideas," which Benjamin criticized as an attribute of a generation with a "poverty of experience" after World War I.³⁵ It is all the more ironic that Leigh combined the downside of such a poverty with glass architecture. Benjamin saw this cold, hard, smooth material as emancipated from secrets, possession, and aura. However, the same spirits haunt transparent walls and bourgeois interiors. Leigh's house encapsulates the contradictions of modern societies that consider themselves enlightened but at the same time integrate non-modern forms of myth and cult. As Hartmut Böhme explains, "being modern is precisely not creating or upholding an opposition between reason and fetishism, but about developing a reason that allows the horseshoe to remain hanging. Being modern means living with oneself in contradiction, without having to reconcile the contradiction."³⁶

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**ONSTAGE:
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IN A GLASS
HOUSE**

The mass media have always worked intensively on the symbolic ventilation of modern glass houses, by opening buildings up to the larger space of society. In the summer of 1931, the filmed report “Woman lives alone in house of glass! – \$ 30,000 transparent home dedicated to Ra, Egyptian sun god” was presented in a Universal Newsreel [Fig. 3A].³⁷ Judging by the outtakes, which have also survived, the on-location filming had been shot two years earlier [Fig. 3B – F].

The newsreel’s establishing shot only captures the building’s south wing. Its resident then walks through her rooms and opens the curtains. The incoming sunlight immediately illuminates an opulent interior. The “étui of the private individual”³⁸ has an extremely diverse appearance. The grand piano, gramophone cabinet, basket, mirror, console, bench, oil paintings, vases, small lamp, and carpets create a warm, homely atmosphere. Leigh is wearing a type of south-sea costume, a long raffia skirt with a belly-free top. Her attire appears to be even scantier in the outtakes, in which she poses in a two-piece swimsuit, giving her parrot a dozen kisses. She theatrically reclines upon a tiger skin on the floor, resting on the animal’s head and languishing majestically. “The sun is the light of my life. I worship the sun, it is my God,” she declares, advertising her way of life: “The sun is the greatest beauty doctor. If you realize its power to create health, perfect health, you too would live in a glass house.”³⁹

Leigh clearly enjoyed the performance. Her brief film career had come to an end 14 years earlier. In 1913, when she decided to turn her back on the New York society she had grown up in, trying her luck in the 'moving pictures,' she named good reasons. Primarily, she wanted to earn money to be able to pursue an artistic education in dance and singing without relying on the blessing of her family. Leigh was born as Evelyn Provost in Brooklyn in 1892, her mother descending from the old Van Orden family. She was also the cousin of Mrs. John Jacob Astor, who boarded the Titanic with her husband in 1912 and survived the disaster as a widow. Yet in 1913, the year of her introduction to society, Evelyn Provost already found life in such circles constricting. She assumed the artist's name of Adele Ray (or Rey) and announced: "If I am not inferior to the average man in intellect, [...] there is no reason why I should not be independent. Besides, I am a suffragette. I want people to appreciate me, not because I happen to have an attractive face, but because I can do things."⁴⁰ Whether and to what extent her self-description as a suffragette is accurate remains to be seen. There seem to be no traces of political commitment.

Leigh discovered the self-reflexive potential of film. In the cinema, unlike the theater, "you can see yourself as others see you," she explained. The knowledge of being "useful as well as ornamental"⁴¹ gave her great satisfaction. The perception constellation of cinema offered additional advantages.

Leigh was not willing to be observed from all angles and in all situations. She was especially uncomfortable with the perception economy of New York city life, which was characterized by a strong gender bias in favor of men [Fig. 5]: “When an attractive, stylishly dressed woman has to walk any distance without an escort, she is a target for stares from all the men she passes. [...] I have acquired the habit of closing my eyes in a street car or on the subway at the risk of having people think that I suffer from sleeping sickness.”⁴²

Like curtains, the young woman’s eyelids closed to escape the ‘oglers.’ Her complaint expresses resistance against the male-coded figure that Benjamin had developed, the *flaneur* and his look, catching sight of a beautiful pair of eyes passing by in the urban mass, meeting them and capturing them. Breton sets precisely the same scene for the encounter with Nadja. However, Leigh was no woman of the masses. Her rejection of this society was instead far more a key argument for her later glass house: “People are not made to live in crowds,” she stresses. “If you are with people constantly, you become de-magnetized. [...] To counteract the huddling of the cities, one should adopt a regime calculated to re-polarize himself.”⁴³ Her rhetoric of magnetism outlines an anesthetizing strategy against the urban throng, aimed at the possibility of controlling observation.

Young Evelyn Provost complains about flaneurs,
clipping with a photo by Joel Feder, 1913

Fig. 5

New York a City of Flirts; Pretty Girls are Insulted

CALLS MEN "ATROCIOUS CREATURES"



MISS EVELYN PROVOST.

Thus, the house in Nyack is also a media technique to control distance and proximity with respect to the social environment. Since it turns the threatening outside into an image, it acts as a visual medium, a filter, which only allows the visible through and eliminates all other sensory perceptions. Leigh stresses the aspect of separation, protection, and withdrawal: “They call my house ‘the fish bowl’ and say I can’t have any privacy. But I get all the privacy I want. I don’t mind passers-by looking in from the street as long as there isn’t a mob and especially as long as they don’t touch me and I can’t smell them.”⁴⁴ According to Tilo Amhoff, such a transformation of the world into images is an active process. In it, he sees a gesture of conquest that implies only being able to understand the world as an image.⁴⁵ When Leigh reflects upon her position in the glass house, it actually sounds like she and the outside world are observing each other not *through* but *on* a screen.

To withdraw from the masses is naturally a gesture of social distinction. Although utopian glass architecture (from Fourier’s Phalanstères to Bruno Taut’s Alpine architecture) often referred to the solitary idea of community,⁴⁶ it also had a distinctly anti-urban aspect. In these visions, the collective was carefully divided up, consisting of limited numbers portioned into manageable quantities. When Benjamin turned the glass house into a theoretical tool for thinking about a new society, he always focused on the organization of the collective body. Living in glass

houses was meant to make property and housing a public affair and, by thwarting the petty-bourgeois principles of humanism, to transform people aesthetically, politically, and morally. Given both the National Socialists' accession to power and the massive maldevelopments of capitalism, he considered the revolutionization of social life through a successful reception of technology to be urgent and imminent.⁴⁷ As for the practice of architectural modernism, glass as a building material never lived up to Benjamin's vision of its potential to political awakening. Living in a glass house turned out to be not "a revolutionary virtue par excellence,"⁴⁸ at least not per se.

Whether the Villa Tugendhat in Brno (1929/1930, Mies van der Rohe), the Maison de Verre in Paris (1928/1931, Pierre Chareau), the Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut (1949, Philip Johnson), the Edith Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois (1945/1951, Mies van der Rohe), the Casa de Vidro in São Paulo (1949/1951, Lina Bo Bardi) or the Casa Samambaia in Petrópolis, Brazil (1950/1955, Lota de Macedo Soares/Sérgio Bernardes), to mention just a few examples from the first half of the 20th century—all these glass residential buildings are "architecture[s] of class"⁴⁹ and could hardly be any more exclusive. Some have completely turned their backs on the city and its masses, while others, perched on an elevated location, have banished the urban landscape to a mere view.

On a closer look, modernist glass houses were all elitist projects, locations of genuine solitary and often auratic experience (of nature). At the same time, they were advanced architectural experiments, with results and construction principles that were later applied to public buildings such as universities, cultural centers, museums, and student halls of residence, as well as administrative and high-rise apartment buildings.⁵⁰ Thus, the ‘collectivization’ of glass architecture did not occur in the form of large-scale construction projects, as discussed in reaction to Leigh’s house. One concise and ever-recurring idea in the 20th century was the engineering vision of air-conditioned cities beneath enormous glass domes.⁵¹ Instead of such gigantic, never implemented designs, modernist glass houses developed a molding force via experimental residential buildings, into which the gesture of distinction was ‘built-in.’ As Bettina Köhler has demonstrated in the contemporary context of urban life, living in a glass house by no means makes the private public or un-private, as is often claimed. Instead, it continues the tradition of “public-related privacy” in the bourgeois form of representation, for which the 19th-century salon was typical.⁵² As Köhler states, the very fact that a glass house allows everyone to look inside, but only allows invited guests to enter, is a scenic representation of the traditional idea of privacy.⁵³

The same effect occurs through Leigh's Newsreel presentation. Her performance simultaneously adorns the private with a gloriolo of consumer aesthetics; its resemblance to today's influencers' Instagram feeds is no coincidence. Available sources do not reveal where exactly Leigh's inspiration to build a glass house came from. However, two models might have been crucial. She repeatedly stated that she spent a long time in England. As she explains, an invitation to tea meant nothing other than a sun bath—in higher social circles, one should add. Leigh mentioned the example of the “glass room” on the roof of the exclusive Savoy Hotel in London.⁵⁴ Her reference evokes other, more democratic places of industrial luxury in the 19th century: arcades and world fairs as showcases for select goods, art, crafts, jewelry, materials, machines, exotic goods, and plants. A second important source of inspiration was probably the Thanhouser film studio, which Leigh alias Adele Ray joined in the spring of 1913.⁵⁵

At the time, Thanhouser in New York belonged to the most productive and innovative studios. Its films were diverse in terms of content and drama, and known for a reserved acting style and new special effects, making it highly successful for a short while. The producers also quickly recognized the economic pulling power of their stars such as Florence La Badie, James Cruze, and the Thanhouser Kid, marketing them with advertizing. However, Ray came to Thanhouser in a troubled period because its

showcase studio in New Rochelle had burnt down in January 1913. The new studio, where Ray worked, was subsequently built of glass and internally called “The Glass Palace.”⁵⁶

In the early period of silent movies, film studios were generally constructed as glass houses, since the sun was the main source of light and only supplemented by artificial illumination. Since it was not only the most efficient source of light, but also free, “the sun dominated work in the glass house like a dictator.”⁵⁷ The rise of the film industry and the star system had an enormous effect on the economy, media culture, the general public, and literature. In Imperial Germany, there even was a popular genre called the film novel or glass house novel. When contemporary illustrated magazines investigated the question of what “Hollywood does with beautiful women,” they spoke of “female types born in the glass house,” disciplined stars who permanently ceased to be private persons.⁵⁸

Apparently, Leigh completely exhausted herself for her career, which massively affected her health. She withdrew from show business in 1915 on doctors’ advice. To recover, she went on journeys to Central America, probably marrying a mining engineer from Georgia in the late 1910s. However, the marriage with Word Leigh, whose name she retained, soon came to an end. In retrospect, the turning point in the way the ‘lady of the glass house’ led her life came through reading about physical health, nutrition, and sun therapy.

In this context, what she represents in the films is not simply an idea of privacy. She also goes beyond the cult of stars, “that magic of the personality which has long been no more than the putrid magic of its own commodity character.”⁵⁹ If the stars in the film industry’s glass houses ceased to be private persons, as the magazines claimed, Leigh inverts the pattern by staging the fetishized privacy and physicality of a now obsolete star in her glass house. In doing so, Leigh enters one of the experimental “side alleys of modern history,” for which Svetlana Boym proposed the playful term “off-modern” to indicate their paradoxical affiliation: “The ‘off’ in ‘off-modern’ designates both the belonging to the critical project of modernity and its edgy excess.”⁶⁰

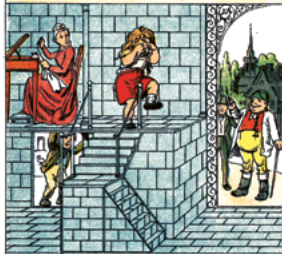
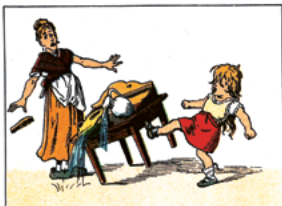
THOUGHT
BODY AND
CLIMATE
TECHNIQUE FOR
A DELICATE
CREATURE
ONSTAGE:
MASTERING THE
ART OF LIVING
IN A GLASS
HOUSE

**ON THE
MORALITY OF
TRANSPARENCY:
EDUCATION,
DESIRE, AND
SELF-DISCIPLINE**

In 1929, German-language newspapers reported on Leigh and her unconventional home for the first time. While the Hanseatic temperament regards the undertaking as the “fad of a dollar princess,”⁶¹ the Viennese *Kronen Zeitung* presents the case as a droll educational piece on the bourgeois public’s observation of the spectacle. The article quickly amuses itself with the moralistic indignation of American women, as well as the deep silence of their men, in view of the ‘half-naked’ facts. It is even asserted that Leigh writes non-stop on a typewriter. No one knows what. At any rate, the tabloid declares the resulting product irrelevant; what matters is the lady’s clothing. Following a voyeuristic description of her bathing costume, the journalist suddenly transforms the glass house into a monastery cell. Leigh is said to have claimed that she had neither a friend nor a lover, nor did she receive any guests. The article concludes by rejoicing that finally, there is a woman who has nothing to hide: “one can control her at all times.”⁶² The American press never mentioned such temperance. On the contrary, Leigh often stated that all her doors remained open for visits and relationships.

The fact that the anecdote from Nyack is molded into a moralist story on women in the German-speaking world is no coincidence. In this region, the glass house had long been a well-known form of architecture for disciplining ‘bad girls.’ For example, Heinrich Oswalds *Unter’m Märchenbaum* (1877,

trans.: *Under the Fairy Tale Tree*), like the infamous *Struwwelpeter*, was a children's book reprinted in the German-speaking region until the 1980s. Oswald's sinister educational stories "in rhymes and images" include one entitled *Das Kind im Glashauss* (trans.: *The Child in the Glass House*), a tale of the daughter of a master glazier, a "bad girl" that "never wanted to be washed."⁶³ As soon as one approached her with a sponge and soap, she knocked over the washing table. Thus, her father constructed a glass house for the rebellious child. The pictures show how even the flooring is made of glass and onlookers gather directly beneath her [Fig. 6]. The girl unsuccessfully seeks a place to hide or some form of help. Her mother simply says that people will no longer pay attention to her as soon as she "behaved." On the following page, another story picks up this fable and merges it with the then widespread colonial motif of 'washing the Blackamoor white' (*Mohrenwäsche*).⁶⁴ It claimed that if a child refused to wash itself for a long period, its skin would become black, representing a drastic, racist exaggeration of the anathema of purity. The tale does not simply deal with the dynamics of surveillance. It also highlights the making of the gender difference, the violence of seeing and of othering—as well as the internalization of these mechanisms. In the story, as soon as the glass house has become the technical means of regulating behavior and thought, ergo psychotechnics, the book induces gendered images on the 'nature' of female



Das Kind im Glashaus

In Frankfurt lebt ein Glasmeister,
Der Lehret Scheibenmann, so heißt er;
Der hat ein kleines Töchterlein,
Das wollte nie gemahnt sein.
Und kam mit Schwämmen und Seif' sein Glaschen,
Da lief davon das böse Mädchen;
Es warf sogar den Bleichschiff aus —
Das Wasser flog in Haus herum.

Da fing Herr Lehret Scheibenmann
Ein seltsam Haus zu bauen an,
Aus lauter Glas ein Haus, das, ach!
Durchsichtig war bis unter Dach.
Und in dies Glashaus legte man
Das böse Töchterlein Johann.
Da wurden, um es anzusehn,
Die Leute auf der Straße sehr.
Wenn allen Zeiten kamen sie,
Wem's jetzt beim Waschen wieder schrie;
Sie sah'n ins Glashaus all hinein
Und lachten: „Hi! wer wird so schrei'n!“
Am Rüstschiff sah Frau Scheibenmann
Und warnte: „Jeder sieht dich an!“
Da schämte sich das Kind und lief
Im ganzen Haus herum und tief:
„Wo soll ich mich denn nur verhehlen?
Wem sieht mich ja in allen Ecken!
Das Dach, der Keller, jedes Zimmer
Ist ja von Glas! man sieht mich immer!“

Die Mutter sprach: „Wem lüdest du?
Ein Wirtel gib's, das bist gefehlt!
Wenn dich die Leute artig sehn,
Dann werden sie vorbeigehn;
Wicht du beim Waschen nicht mehr schrei'n,
Dann sehn sie auch nicht mehr herein;
Wirst du dich brav und gut benehmen,
Dann brauchst du dich nicht mehr zu schämen.
Ein artig Kind nur Freude macht; —
Umart'ge werden ausgedacht!“ —

Das merkte sich das Töchterlein;
Es nahm sich vor, geschickt zu sein.
Und weil's beim Waschen nicht mehr schrie,
Da lachten auch die Leute nie;
Denn jeder, der ins Haus jetzt kam,
Der sieht ein Kind, das ganz geschickt.

Und lebt ihr seltsam ein Kind, ihr Leute,
Das bei dem Waschen immer schreit,
Sag's nur Herrn Lehret Scheibenmann,
Der schafft Euch gleich ein Glashaus an.

and other bodies. Impurity plays a key role as one of the historical attributions of femininity, very closely connected to the bourgeois fetish of virginity and chastity. The Viennese reception of the story from Nyack is evidence of this perspective.

Leigh was fully aware of the paradoxes of a repressive upbringing and the complicit role of mothers. Asked about her 'eccentricities,' she once compared them to the individuality of children, which is explicitly desired, yet, at the same time, radically repressed by parents, supervisors, and teachers. "When a girl grows up dull or nervous, her fond parents perhaps send her to a 'school of expression,' when there is nothing left for the poor thing to express after a childhood that has been a school of repression. How can a woman give expression to her real individuality when she has been trained to cringe at the laughter of the mob as if it were a volley of stones?"⁶⁵ Leigh was—exactly like Cahun, Miller, H.D., and Nin—a radical individualist who did not believe in collective solutions. Her glass house is the opposite of male-coded concepts stemming from Germany and Russia not only because a woman is in charge here, but also because (instead of collective psychotechnics) she is hoping for the educational effect of an individual example, i.e., micropolitics. In other words: For Leigh, the glass house is not a disciplinary apparatus for those inside, but a means of educating those outside. The visibility of her everyday life was aimed at helping a small community to achieve more openness,

acceptance, and a less prudish moral stance. “Besides I have frosted panes in the bath room,” Leigh added as a conciliatory gesture.⁶⁶

Lust and desire are by no means absent in historical glass houses. In the poetic and musical works of realism, naturalism, and fin-de-siècle symbolism, the greenhouse was a popular subject and the scene of sensual, erotic adventure, with the ability to destabilize and even transform bourgeois figures. One need only to think of the turning point of the adulterous protagonist in Theodor Fontane’s novel *L’Adultera* (1880), which begins in the muggy environment of a palm-tree house. However, in the following decades, greenhouses were often subjected to the cliché of a sterile atmosphere. Alice Friedman argued that Edith Farnsworth house’s pure, abstract, rational architecture by Mies negated and repressed the client’s sexuality, since it offered her no separate, private bedroom, but two bathrooms. According to Mies, an additional guest bathroom was designed to conceal from visitors Farnsworth’s nightgown hanging on the door of her own bathroom.⁶⁷ Thus, the building strongly contrasts with Philip Johnson’s ensemble around his Glass House. Situated vis-à-vis this transparent cube, Johnson built an opaque Guest House whose boudoir-like design ironically and provocatively addressed the subject of the then unacceptable sexuality of a gay man. In doing so, Johnson also caricatured the stereotype of rational masculinity, perceiving the transparent glass house

as an exemplary symbol of it. Glass houses in modern architecture can, therefore, become places of secrecy, lust, sexual difference, and queer identities.

Nor was Leigh's house a monastery cell. "She lived alone—no husband. Lots of men visitors,"⁶⁸ as a contemporary witness recalls. During Leigh's early years in Nyack, she is even said to have married twice. There is noticeable relief in press reports that the permissive neighbor is conforming to the legal norms of social order.⁶⁹ The peace did not last long, though. While the first marriage was a rumor, the second was annulled after only a few days. Leigh remained unmarried. Judging by the Newsreel's outtakes, she relished her physical freedom. In one scene, she walks up the entrance steps, turns half round, and invites the viewer into her glass house, standing directly at its threshold [Fig. 3D]. She then coquettishly apologizes that she must briefly withdraw to change for her sunbathing session. If flirtation is a mode with which to "activate" the intermediate space between oneself and the public "and to attract an interest in it going beyond one's own domestic sphere,"⁷⁰ Leigh is also and above all flirting through the media.

From around the mid-1930s however, it became apparent that the living experiment had failed on a social level. With increasing frequency, she experienced the microphysics of local power when she left the house for the season, in the form of vandalism. At times, stones were thrown, while at others the

house was plundered. In 1936, her demoralized conclusion was as follows: “I could stand everything—the poverty, the loneliness, the complete loss of my health and days of actual starvation—if only they hadn’t robbed me of my dignity. Surely, each one of us has the right to privacy in our homes—but, it seems I forfeited all right to mine, when I built my home of glass. [...] I’d like to find work, but, so far, no one takes me seriously. I’m just ‘that nut who lives in a glass house.’”⁷¹ This reveals the other side of transforming one’s surroundings into an image. Inversely, Leigh’s glass house was only regarded as something to look through. Otherwise, its resident seems to have been ostracized in Nyack. At least to this day, there is no reference to her in local chronicles.⁷² Leigh left Nyack before the outbreak of World War II and lived in Miami, Florida until her death in 1974.

The quoted passage touches on a further aspect of the glass house. Ultimately, it was also a “technology of the self” (Foucault). Modernity knew such glass house scenes from the culture of show booths and fairs, in the attraction of the hunger artist, as memorably portrayed by Kafka. Barbara Gronau regards this technology of the self in close relation to the theater and the training of young actors. One of the first hunger artists of the 20th century was in fact a female actor. The ritualized process of stage productions highlights the importance of the scenic-performative context once again.

One key element of this “theater of asceticism” was ritual incarceration in a small glass house.⁷³ Although little happened there, the spectacle was very popular until the 1920s. The inmates sat, drank water, and waited. According to Gronau, in the precarious conditions of modern cities, the spectacle of hunger also functioned as the “defense ritual” of a sated bourgeois public against the misery and hunger of others, such as migrants and proletarians.⁷⁴ After all, the performance triumphantly overcomes the subject’s danger of being consumed and eradicated.

Leigh’s life in a glass house reveals aspects of the theater of asceticism in the sense that she herself walked the thin line of self-consumption. She once fainted on the streets of Nyack. When men rushed to her aid and offered to buy her a decent meal, she vigorously rejected the offer.⁷⁵ The key to becoming a subject and to self-empowerment lay in subjectifying and disciplining one’s own body. However, her controlled fasting with a diet of raw food probably led to involuntary starvation during the above-mentioned period of poverty and unemployment.

Evelyn Word Leigh’s life in a glass house expresses an iridescently ambiguous, (off-)modern, female subjectivity. The appropriation of greenhouse architecture was her individual and particular, mystical and technical, self-healing, and contemplative response to the cultural and gender-specific shock of urban modernity. “It takes a cult to aim at original techniques,”⁷⁶ she said in her final interview

in 1961. Leigh's way of life in Nyack combined a sun cult and the mimetic practices of the body (dance, acting, fashion) with the architecture of the glass house, thereby interacting with nature under the portents of new, industrially shaped technologies such as filming apparatus. Leigh's glass house exorcised the building form and discourse on modern glass worlds into material by uniquely mediating between old and new. As chance would have it, the house in Nyack existed during the years in which Benjamin produced his *Arcades Project* (1927/1940) in Paris. While Benjamin used material culture to seek theoretical passages between the 19th and 20th centuries, Leigh found a practical passage between them by creating a glass house of her own.

A DELICATE
CREATURE
ONSTAGE:
MASTERING THE
ART OF LIVING
IN A GLASS
HOUSE
ON THE
MORALITY OF
TRANSPARENCY:
EDUCATION,
DESIRE, AND
SELF-DISCIPLINE

**UNDER THE
DOME:
FROM CULT TO
EXPERIMENT**

The problem that Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929) addressed did not exist for some of her contemporaries, at least not any more. Many educated women and men believed that the female gender had already achieved independence. In 1926, Elizabeth Drew (later one of Sylvia Plath's lecturers at Smith College) stated in her book *The Modern Novel* that women enjoyed complete freedom of action and speech according to the ethical principles of modern society.⁷⁷ Two years later, Hans Hildebrandt presented a comprehensive study on *Die Frau als Künstlerin* (trans.: *The Woman as an Artist*), focusing particularly on his contemporaries.⁷⁸ In the same year, the Viennese columnist Alfred Polgar wrote: "Women themselves, out of a highly understandable desire and hunger for life, have broken the glass cover beneath which they had vegetated. They have become comrades, in both work and play, pleasure and fight [...]. Where they wanted [...], they have made space for themselves and relieved us of the task of offering it to them, both in life and on the tram."⁷⁹

The glass dome or the bell jar is a figure of speech and thought with a history, which, as Polgar's lines highlight, has a great deal to do with the space that bourgeois patriarchal societies allocate, afford, and provide to women—or not. Like every historical metaphor, it, too, has its roots in material culture.

In Austria for example, the so-called "Klosterarbeiten" formed part of traditional popular piety and the cult of the dead, and were mainly

produced in women's monasteries. Enclosed inside a glass case, ornamentally draped sceneries are presented with Mary, the Baby Jesus and images of saints, as well as locks of hair of deceased loved ones. Small decorative arrangements under a bell jar were also widespread in Victorian culture. John Whitenight speaks of a Victorian obsession with these miniature worlds, simulating an impossible version of nature with seashells, artificial flowers, wax fruit, taxidermy, and tiny automatons.⁸⁰ Thus, historical glass domes did not simply keep "material traces of the past, like a photograph or an archive,"⁸¹ but staged artificial worlds articulating the period's socially coded notions of faith, forms of devotion, and structures of desire. A driving force behind these handicraft works was fetishism, blurring the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate.

Women were integrated into these objects in two ways: first as figures, either paradigmatically as saints, or in the form of artificial women (such as dolls, automatons and homunculi), and second, as their producers. For a long time, as Woolf complained, handicraft produced at home was one of the few marginal tasks women could carry out without training (as was the case for a majority) in order to earn money.⁸² In his book *Die neue Wohnung. Die Frau als Schöpferin* (1924, trans.: *The New Apartment. Woman as Creator*), Bruno Taut dismissed that sort of bricolage as a merely "atavistic pastime" that "cluttered up the household."⁸³ Such knick-knack

under a glass dome was regarded as the epitome of bourgeois interiors full of traces, which Benjamin countered with the notion of the glass house.

In view of such energetic rejection in the name of the modern woman, modern living, and indeed a modern lifestyle, it is all the more surprising how prominent the glass dome became, especially in the artistic avant-garde between the 1920s and 1940s, which was so inspired by the idea of the glass house. In Bauhaus modernism and surrealism, in the field of dance, costume design, photography, and object art, the old-fashioned bell jar constantly inspired creative minds. How did it become so popular? One reason is certainly the frequent use of fetishistic components, which also characterized modernist avant-garde movements. The connotation of experimental orders should also be considered in this respect.

Since the invention of the vacuum pump in the mid-17th century, glass bell jars had a firm place in the mechanical testing apparatus of the new experimental sciences. The jars allowed people to directly observe the measurable effect of a vacuum on inanimate and living matter. By the time the painter Joseph Wright of Derby put *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* (1767/68) to canvas, the pneumatic device had long become a standard attraction at public performances. The macabre spectacle of gradually suffocating small creatures often lay in experiencing the transition from life to death—

the quintessential passage. It was, therefore, a theatrical order based on the public's voyeurism and even *Angstlust*.

As soon as breathing beings take to the stage, it becomes clear that bell jars are always also body and climate techniques. In that sense, the application of the device is already discussed in Gotthart Hafner's *Onomatologia Curiosa Artificiosa et Magica oder, Ganz natürliches Zauber-Lexicon* (1759): ranging from the cultivation of strange vegetation in gardening to the regulation of air and water pressure for deep-sea diving.⁸⁴ In both cases, the aim is the technical creation and control of artificial climates to maintain and enhance the performance of human and non-human bodies.

This historical excursion demonstrates that glass domes are submerged in a rich field of significance and practices. Characteristic aspects include their proximity to cult, the curious, fetish, and technical environments with respect to bodies and climate. Finally, another critical feature has become evident, which could be summarized as scenographic experimentality. This feature results from the interweaving of experiment and theatricality and allows the observation of precarious boundary crossings. As mentioned in the introduction, fundamental binary oppositions of modernity are up for negotiation under glass domes just as they are in glass houses. From early on, bell-jar projects by female representatives of surrealism reflect the conditions in which

these boundaries are created, as well as their manifestations and possible shifts. While the image of the glass dome circulated internationally through the visual culture of surrealism, fashion, cinema, and popular culture, the theoretical development and intellectual vocabulary of modernity were fundamentally shaped by psychoanalysis. As I will show in the following chapters, placing women beneath bell jars is closely connected to crucial theorems of psychoanalysis (like the mirror stage and its predecessor, the *Doppelgänger*, and the psychic apparatus).

ART OF LIVING
IN A GLASS
HOUSE
ON THE
MORALITY OF
TRANSPARENCY:
EDUCATION,
DESIRE, AND
SELF-DISCIPLINE
UNDER THE
DOME:
FROM CULT TO
EXPERIMENT

**FEMALE HEADS
AT THE CUTTING
EDGE OF
SURREALISM**

In their principal, highly unconventional literary work *Aveux non avenues* (1930, *Disavowals: or Cancelled Confessions*), Claude Cahun asks, “Where shall I put the silver?” They mean the silver layer on a pane of glass to create a mirror. Cahun is thinking of a guillotine window used in the British Isles: “Where shall I put the silver? Here or there; in front of or behind the window? In front. I imprison myself. I make myself blind. [...] Behind. I shut myself in just as much. I will know nothing of what is outside. At least I will know my face—and maybe that will be enough to please me.”⁸⁵

The dilemma of deciding which side of the window should be mirrored affects an elementary aspect of the constitution of a subject: the realm of images and self-images that form the basis of all identification. In view of the relevance of the mirror stage to the history of psychoanalysis, as well as to feminist theory and gender studies, Cahun’s miniature theory is highly remarkable. They do not merely place themselves in front of the mirror; nor do they walk through it, like Lewis Carroll’s Alice, to discover a world beyond; nor do they fold it like Luce Irigaray, turning it into a hollow mirror, “[to] disturb the staging of representation according to too-exclusively masculine parameters.”⁸⁶ Instead, Cahun intervenes before the mirror is there in the first place. Considering the options, they then propose to smash the window as a precondition of the mirror’s existence and create a mosaic out of the fragments.

Until the 1990s, Claude Cahun, the pseudonym of Lucy Schwob (1894–1954), was often linked to male authorship. In fact, Cahun was already breaking down habitual barriers during their lifetime. They lived together with their partner Suzanne Malherbe and maintained relationships with lesbian cultural circles in Paris. Their preference for masquerades and the ironic-provocative engagement with their subjectivity as a Jewish, lesbian artist remained constant themes of their work.

In a series of photographic self-portraits entitled *Studies for a Keepsake*, produced in 1925 together with Malherbe, Cahun's detached head is set beneath a glass dome. Cahun's shoulder-length, dark hair is combed back, the eyebrows reduced to thin lines drawn with eyeliner, and the lips are covered in thick makeup [Fig. 7]. The face is explicitly feminine and glamorous. The scene's illumination and the reflections on the glass vary, as do Cahun's pose, line of sight and facial expression. At times the chin is raised defiantly, while at others the forehead leans on the glass. Both the direct touch and the varying light incidence suggest there was no double exposure. It appears that Cahun really did have the glass dome over their head.

We learn from Cecil Beaton, who portrayed several British upper-class ladies under a glass dome in 1926/27, that this process was torturous. Beaton had tested the apparatus with his sister Baba. Because condensation initially appeared on the glass, he

Fig. 7

Claude Cahun,
Studies for a Keepsake, 1925



asked her to stop breathing so that she almost suffocated.⁸⁷ Although a later model, *Lady Loughborough Under a Bell Jar* (1927) [Fig. 8C], looks directly at the camera, the image evokes entirely different associations compared to Cahun's series. By integrating clothed shoulders into the bell jar, Beaton is rather building on the tradition of the bust. Cahun's photos, in contrast, present the naked neck, as if it had been detached by a guillotine. Presumably, it was this revolutionary connotation that motivated Lee Miller and Man Ray to explore this arrangement further. Inspired by Cahun's work, they produced a number of photos with a similar requisite around 1930.

By that time, Lee Miller (1907–1977) was already a student and lover of Ray and had formed a collaborative team with him for years, making the question of authorship very difficult in many cases. In the late 1920s, Miller worked as a photo model in New York for the American fashion magazine *Vogue*. Her discovery of surrealism in Paris was a decisive factor in switching to the other side of the lens.

Initially, Ray and Miller approached the order that Cahun had introduced in a similar way. In their images, the dome covers a sensuously made-up face that appears to have been guillotined. The head of the model Tanja Ramm stands on a book. The dome itself stands on a dark piece of furniture with a brass handle, thereby recalling a coffin. Even more importantly, however, Ramm's eyes are shut. Ray's photo was entitled *Hommage à D.A.F. de Sade*

and published in 1930 in the second issue of Breton's magazine *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, which was dedicated to de Sade [Fig. 8A].⁸⁸ The title explicitly places the female figure in a dual context: the revolutionary terror, which the surrealist movement found extremely fascinating, and the scandalous field of unfettered sexuality and violence. Ramm's blindfold in Ray's version additionally heightens the associations of sadomasochistic sexual practices. His image fetishizes and banishes the feminine by removing the threatening body from the scenery. Only the unseeing head appears—like a decapitated, blinded Medusa.

In Miller's version, the light conditions have changed [Fig. 8B]. The shadow no longer cuts through the model's face like a whiplash. Nor is there a blindfold. Dream associations are stronger than those of death. By rightly recognizing a male perspective in Ray's photo, Katharine Conley contrasts it with the images by Miller and Cahun, in which femininity appears to be only one aspect of the model's humanity. "To be a woman is not an exception to the masculine norm of humanity, claim Cahun and Miller with their photographs."⁸⁹ According to Conley, the staging by both artists inspires the viewer to consider their own mortality. Thus, the images are classified as *vanitas* motifs.

Fig. 8C

Cecil Beaton, *Lady Loughborough Under a Bell Jar*, 1927



Fig. 8A

Man Ray, *Hommage à D.A.F. de Sade*, 1930



Fig. 8D *Vogue* cover by Alex Zeillingner, November 1934



Fig. 8B Lee Miller, *Tanja Ramm Under a Bell Jar*, 1930



Such an interpretation not only ignores the fact that Cahun uses masquerade to contradict the standard patterns of the surrealist photographic staging of women “as erotic spectacle, nature, mystery.”⁹⁰ Conley’s efforts to claim a humanist position also entail the risk of maneuvering oneself into old theoretical problems. Simone de Beauvoir had already fallen into this trap in stating the need to claim the same humanity for women as for men. However, as Barbara Vinken demonstrates, such a demand and analysis unintentionally persists with a misogynist position: “This analysis pitches authenticity against inauthenticity [*Eigentlichkeit gegen Uneigentlichkeit*] or mere rhetoric. The former is the human male, the latter the female. By the Enlightenment period at the latest, this is precisely *the* topos of structurally implicit misogyny.”⁹¹ The wish to integrate women into humanity would mean to mistake the relationship between genders, in which female inauthenticity becomes a precondition of male authenticity. Non-misogynistic politics should, therefore, “break down the dominant authentic/inauthentic opposition, with its implicit gender allocations.”⁹²

When Cahun asks where they should put the silver, or stages themselves as a beautiful object under a glass dome, opening their eyes, looking back at the viewer and thereby becoming a subject they are doing what Vinken demands. Cahun observes binary categories in the making, examining their inclusive and exclusive mechanisms in order to undermine

them and break them down. They act on a level that counteracts homogenizing tendencies and binary divisions. Regarding Cahun's series, Conley asks justified questions: "And yet what human being could survive decapitation while retaining the appearance of a thinking individual? What new sort of person might this be?"⁹³ Indeed, this new sort of individual possesses incredible confrontative power. This force arises from Cahun's confident look, with which the head can *simultaneously* embody the animate and the inanimate, mind and body, subject and object. Cahun's keepsake oscillates in a categorical in-between. In this way, it subverts categorical division, which forms the basis of the traditional allocation of female and queer subjects to the subordinate side of the oppositions (death, body, object).

Studies for a Keepsake also indicates that Cahun wanted the work to be regarded as a series. Such seriality highlights the double function of the glass dome. Like Cahun's different poses, one can have a different stance towards specific boundaries, including those of gender and femininity: calm, serious, skeptical, rebellious, etc. The glass requisite creates a limitation but also creates a playground for subjectivity.

Although Miller captures a liminal state, her image cannot set such a stage for agency, nor evoke the epistemological irritation of Cahun's photos. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that Miller regarded femininity beyond masquerade as a form of authenticity

or universal humanity. Her essay *Human Heads* (1953) demonstrates that she was well aware of the historicity of aesthetic ideals and familiar with the hybridity of technically adjusted bodies: “With the human head we are also concerned with surface maintenance, the fantasies of architecture, seasonal decoration and protection as well as mechanical function and engineering. A secret world of barbers, beauticians and milliners flanked by dentists, oculists and masseurs perform magic rites, and the search for a fountain of eternal youth preoccupies as many people as the preservation of the immortal soul, which has been rumoured to abide in the head.”⁹⁴ With subtle irony, Miller interrelates technical and magical practices that primarily affect women. However, the rites take place on the alleged surface of the soul. As for maintaining beautiful surfaces, one specific image would have fit Miller’s remarks perfectly. In 1934, the cover of an issue of the American *Vogue* magazine presented an illustration of the stylized Vienna Youth Mask of Elizabeth Arden (an electrode beauty mask to tone the facial muscles) inside a bell jar [Fig. 8D]. Editor in Chief Edna Woolman Chase explained this “dream-like (sous-cloche) cover” with the words “Woman is the masked marvel of the ages” and identified the function of female masks with seduction and secrecy.⁹⁵ The fashion industry thereby summarily reinstalls the objectifying perspective that Cahun opposed. Instead of a pretty face, the disciplinary apparatus

of its technical fixation appears, thus evoking the emerging paradigm of the Transparent Woman. As I will demonstrate later, this paradigm tells the story of internalizing external orders of transparency. Before outlining the culmination of this development in Plath's novel, I first address the psychoanalytically saturated yet widely differing writings of Nin and H.D. Both coined different traditions of thinking in and about gendered bell jars that would later be overshadowed by the reception of Plath's more blatant use of the metaphor.

MORALITY OF
TRANSPARENCY:
EDUCATION,
DESIRE, AND
SELF-DISCIPLINE
UNDER THE
DOME:
FROM CULT TO
EXPERIMENT
FEMALE HEADS
AT THE CUTTING
EDGE OF
SURREALISM

**ANAÏS NIN'S
GLASS
HOUSES AND
DOPPELGÄNGER**

In a key scene of Kenneth Anger's experimental short film *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954), Anaïs Nin takes to the stage. Royal blue material envelops her body, while her head is in a silver bird's cage. A youth watches as her feet, in black fishnet stockings, and with red-varnished nails, step onto thick fur. The reflecting light dances like a halo on the cage. Slowly, Nin's blue costume is unraveled and her dance begins the occult masquerade. A Halloween party among alternative artists in Hollywood had inspired the film. Under the motto of "Come as Your Madness," everyone came as divinities. Nin embodied Astarte, the moon goddess of love and fertility. However, her original performance went beyond the fetishistic sexualization and ritual undressing of her body. Her 'madness' referred to the production of an endless text. Nin wrote in her diary: "Around my waist were strips of paper on which I had copied lines from my writing, out of context, and I unwound these and tore off a phrase for each person at the party. Curtis Harrington called it the ticker-tape of the unconscious."⁹⁶

Curiosity for the unconscious is essential to surrealism's dream of transparency, and, breathing the air of the movement in Paris, Nin (1903–1977) participated in this to a great extent. In 1934, following her psychoanalysis, she became a student of the dissident Freud-disciple Otto Rank and herself worked as a lay analyst for a time. As for her fiction, glass environments play a crucial role in her early volumes, *Winter of Artifice* (1942) and *Under a Glass*

Bell (1944), which she first self-published in the USA. As psychoanalysis recognized, lust and the logic of the unconscious are shaped by two semantic principles, metonymy and metaphor, which correspond with desire and suppression. The literary tropes that Nin developed out of her fascination for glass and transparency call for a mode of reading following these principles.

The metaphor of the title story “Under a Glass Bell” refers to a stately home and its aristocratic inhabitants. The protagonist Jeanne and her two brothers have a relationship with incestuous connotations. As if in symbiosis, they share joy, anxiety, illness, the yearning for a heroic life, and “the craving for purity [and] greatness.”⁹⁷ In their world, bodies have no weight. Jeanne even experiences the birth of her children from an eccentric perspective, as if the pain were not happening to herself. Their house exudes the aura of antiquation and transcendence. In this noiseless sphere, in an atmosphere imbued with heavy perfume, everything seems radiant, glowing, and so fragile that it seems the slightest movement could cause the furniture to collapse. The eponymous glass bell protects against the threat of decay: “The glass bell covered the flowers, the chairs, the whole room, the panoplied beds, the statues, the butlers, all the people living in the house. The glass bell covered the entire house.”⁹⁸ The dome proves to be expandable and scalable, allowing it to contain the individual objects in the house as well as the building itself.

As part of a volume, the title story is connected to the other stories, most of which constitute symbolic spaces. The first story takes place on a houseboat and the realm of dreams, while the last presents a heroine who barely survives giving birth to a stillborn child. The volume thus itself is a space with an entrance and exit, which are precarious transitions between land and water, sleep and waking, life and death. It should be noted that the way from dream to birth goes through the glass bell. However, besides this (syntagmatic) sequence of spaces, the (paradigmatic) connections to Nin's other works are also significant, since Jeanne is a recurring figure in Nin's literature and diaries.

Both the protagonist and the location of the story "Under a Glass Bell" rest upon true role models. This is important because a charismatic female author (and *salonnière*) is hidden behind the figure of Jeanne: Louise de Vilmorin. Her lineage also inspired the title metaphor, since she stemmed from one of France's most famous botanist families. In 1935, Nin herself became the tenant of the luxury apartment belonging to the lady of Château de Vilmorin but was soon uncomfortable with the lush interior. When Nin describes Vilmorin's home in her diaries as a "glass house,"⁹⁹ the trope refers to the apartment's radiant surfaces and the botanical culture of hothouses—present in the hallway's tropical greenery.

This link between the glass bell and the glass house is also reflected on the level of Nin's literary characters. Due to her cool temper and incestuously charged relationships, Jeanne is closely related to the father figure in "Winter of Artifice". He, too, lives in a luxurious house that is described as a glass house despite its solid-type construction. In this case, the metaphor accentuates the environment's artificiality and strict selection mechanisms. To the sensitive artist-father, life is a source of permanent danger. He manically tries to protect himself: to avoid the cold, he heats excessively; to avoid bacteria, he cleans constantly; to avoid deprivation, he hoards vast provisions. "He had built a glass house around himself to shut out all suffering. He wanted life to filter through, to reach him distilled, sifted of crudities and shocks."¹⁰⁰ This filter function and the botanical logic recall those of Leigh's glass house in Nyack. The anesthetization of the shocking present is utterly compatible with Nin's metaphorical glass architectures.

In "Winter of Artifice," the first-person narrator (Nin's alter ego) reports on her trauma. Her obsession with writing stems from the early separation from her father, who left his family. Her diary begins as letters that she never sent to him. For the daughter, the diary becomes a protective sphere, a conversation partner, a place of pleading requests to be reunited with the godlike father. Meeting him again as a grown woman rekindles this incestuous desire. The story comes to a climax and a turning

point as soon as the protagonist realizes that she is about to be integrated into her father's world. Everything she does to distinguish herself from him only further consolidates and confirms the fateful dyad. Here, living in a glass house means becoming a female *Doppelgänger* of the father.

Nin's texts have in common the grand gesture of declaring her diaries as a place of honesty and truth. Unlike Cahun, Nin is fundamentally suspicious of masks, surfaces, artificiality, and the realm of abstraction, which she regards as clearly masculine. She tends towards the essentialization of the feminine, which she endows with the 'natural' gifts of intuition, empathy, and sociability. In "Winter of Artifice," Nin uses these qualities to derive the psychological skill of X-ray vision for herself and her literary alter-ego: "She could see right through their flesh, through and beyond the structure of their bones."¹⁰¹ Both the moral category of truth and the tendency towards essentialism proved unsuitable in the reception of Nin's work. Her above-described Halloween costume is revealing because it underlines that she always believes writing belongs to performance. Promising the 'naked truth,' stating transparency, is part of her practice of mutually interrelating and constantly interweaving life and writing, sexuality and reflection. Thus, the categories of truth and lies often ascribed to Nin's oeuvre hardly suffice. By contrast, a mythopoetic approach seems all the more adequate, especially in view of psychoanalysis.¹⁰²

Nin's friendship with Rank was key to her engagement with the problem of female authorship. In *Art and Artist* (1932), Rank discusses historical artist types and so-called "world-parent-myths." In his view, these myths psychologically symbolize "that stage of development in which the individual, the hero, rises from the role of creature to that of creator and even self-creator."¹⁰³ This process is also *building*: building out of the bodies of one's parents, which the son tears apart in order to push the father upwards as a heavenly dome and the mother downwards to the earth. With this division, the hero reconstitutes the world and himself. In a radical diversion from Freud's Oedipus complex, Rank sees the significance of the incest motif against the backdrop of such myths. The son separates the parents to father himself with his mother, ensuring his immortality through this rebirth. This mythical-heroic structure allowed Nin to appropriate through inversion. By Rank's logic, acting on incestuous desire offered the chance to rise from a creature of the father to one's own creator. For even as a writer, Nin had been a creature of her father due to the diary. The goal was to eradicate this moment, overwrite it artistically, and thereby reinvent herself. The metaphor of incest thereby combines the remedy and the poison to produce a "pharmakon."¹⁰⁴

Such mythopoetic considerations shed new light on Jeanne under her glass bell. Conceived as *Doppelgänger*, the figures of the two volumes

resonate with each other through mutually merging glass tropes. At the end of “Under a Glass Bell,” as soon as Jeanne strays about in a mirror chamber, floundering amid endless reflections and hoping for salvation and unity, she reveals herself as the embodiment of the deepest fears of the daughter in “Winter of Artifice.” However, the situation is by no means hermetic. Jeanne can leave the glass bell. The first-person narrator takes action and provides help by sending Jeanne a series of Persian images portraying several powerful historical Indian female figures. Thus, one writing woman attempts to aid the other using the language of dreams, i.e., images and models (women with names and places in history), indicating paths towards self-empowerment.

As a resonance space for *Winter of Artifice*, *Under a Glass Bell* achieves two things. The volume can be read as the recognition of being trapped in the narcissistic loop of a mirror stage. The glass bell is a metaphor for this dynamic. At the same time, the book (creating art) itself is a rebellion against the allocated place in the father’s glass house, which would have fixed the daughter within the dyadically closed sphere not only of the imaginary (the images) but also of the symbolic (diaries). Just as the diverse rooms in *Under a Glass Bell* (from the houseboat to the female body) represent variations of each other, so is the glass bell a varied passage towards the author’s birth. Following Philipp Sarasin, Nin’s radical modernity lies in two aspects: first in her “lifelong

practice of using diary-writing to introspectively constitute an autonomous subject that only follows her own rules” and second “her conviction that the deepest truth of this subject lay in sex.”¹⁰⁵ Moreover, as I would argue, an integral part of this specifically modern subjectivity was Nin’s ambiguous idea and practice of female artistic agency, which she drew from the pharmacon of psychoanalysis and used to build her own body of work. This contribution to the myth of female authorship is as boundary-pushing as it is provocative.

SEE DISO LINE
UNDER THE
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ANAI NIN'S
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**THE META-
MORPHOSES OF
H.D.'S JELLYFISH
EXPERIENCE**

In 1933, when H.D. entered the practice of Sigmund Freud in Vienna's Berggasse, she was so abashed that she did not utter a word for minutes. Instead, her eyes studied the room in precise detail. Finally, Freud broke the silence by commenting that she was the first person to focus her attention on the things in the room rather than himself.¹⁰⁶ It was a tense beginning but a telling one, since the poet and the 'professor,' as she called him, found common ground in their love of antiquity.

Hilda 'H.D.' Doolittle (1886–1961) had just been on travels to Greece a year earlier. However, the inspiration she had hoped to find for her writing failed to emerge. She was stuck in a crisis. She sought Freud's support to decode some of her visions. The bell jar was one of these "hieroglyphs."¹⁰⁷ She distinctly regarded the analysis, for which she remained in Vienna for three months in 1933 and a further five weeks in 1934, as a collaboration, telling her story in *Tribute to Freud* (1956).¹⁰⁸

In his rooms, H.D. recognized Freud as a passionate collector who was part and parcel of his Greek, Egyptian, and Chinese treasures. Rows of ancient gods stood in countless glass cabinets, his favorites forming a semicircle on his desk. Like Penates, they even accompanied Freud during his annual summer residence in Döbling, as well as on emigrating in 1938. When the boxes with them finally arrived in London, H.D. sent geraniums to Freud, with the words "to greet the return of the Gods."

Touched, he thanked her with the ironic words: “other people read: Goods.”¹⁰⁹ As H.D. immediately grasped, Freud’s gods represented goods of a different kind: myths, theories, concepts, as well as disciples, patients, students, their portraits, and books that decorated the shelves and merged with the furniture. In Berggasse, even thoughts transformed into things “to be collected, collated, analyzed, shelved, or resolved.”¹¹⁰

One reason the interior played the leading role in their collaboration was that H.D. and Freud consistently communicated through objects and regarded analysis as a common auratic space. H.D. recalls with according reverence: “Length, breadth, thickness, the shape, the scent, the feel of things. The actuality of the present, its bearing on the past, their bearing on the future. Past, present, future, these three—but there is another time-element, popularly called the fourth-dimensional.”¹¹¹ H.D. first synchronizes the three dimensions of space with those of time. Then she implies a fourth dimension, which is an element of time but is not identical to it. When H.D. begins conceiving the fourth dimension spatially from her position on the couch and considers it “as simple and inevitable in the building of time-sequence as the fourth wall to a room,”¹¹² she is investigating thresholds. For the fourth wall opposite the couch has a large double door that opens between Freud’s analysis room and his office, i.e., between the practice and theory of psychoanalysis.

Due to this area's openness, there are also associations with the spatial order of the proscenium stage, the fourth wall representing the boundary between reality and fiction. Finally, speaking of a temporal sequence refers to the language of cinema. Liminality and mediality are, therefore, the main characteristics of H.D.'s fourth dimension. They allow the three-dimensional stage of events to be overcome in a medial space-time continuum, setting out on a journey through the four-dimensional sphere of the analysis room.

The narrative technique with which H.D. installs space-time interfaces can best be described with the film process of cutting and fading. Her collaboration on the film magazine *Close Up* and on editing work for Kenneth Macpherson's avant-garde silent film *Borderline* (1930) meant she was well versed in the material. A piece of furniture or object in Freud's room provided her with an image, which she then interconnected with her memory. H.D. 'cut' back and forth until a connection between the space-times of the respective objects was achieved. In this way, readers move from Freud's couch into the office of H.D.'s father during the author's childhood. This is where the object of the bell jar appears first, at the top of a shelf, covering a snow owl. One day, the father gifts the bell jar to the poet, insisting the object should be left at the same place. The fact that H.D. later used it as a motif for her *ex libris* indicates how greatly she valued the present [Fig. 9].



Hilda 'H.D.' Doolittle's Ex libris, 1912

Fig. 9

The bell jar appears a second time when H.D. recalls a key experience from 1919 on the Scilly Isles. The episode forms the climax of a series of personal tragedies:

I cried too hard... I do not know what I remembered: the hurt of cold, [...] spring 1915, the shock of the *Lusitania* going down just before the child was still-born; [...] my broken marriage [...]; my father's telescope, my grandfather's microscope. If I let go (I, this drop, this one ego under the microscope-telescope of Sigmund Freud) I fear to be dissolved utterly. I had what Bryher called the 'jelly-fish' experience of double ego; bell-jar or half-globe as of transparent glass spread over my head like a diving bell and another manifested from my feet, so enclosed I was for a short space in St. Mary's, Scilly Isles, July 1919, immunized or insulated from the war disaster. But I could not stay in it; I re-materialized [...].¹¹³

Not only does H.D. describe a string of consecutive traumas during World War I, but also visual apparatuses from the paternal culture of things. H.D.'s grandfather was a botanist, her father an astronomer. However, scopic devices also play an important role in Freud's topical model of the psyche. In his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), he proposes

picturing “the mental apparatus as a compound instrument,” naming its elements instances or systems.¹¹⁴ He compares the configuration with a microscope, a camera and a telescope, focusing more on the temporally consecutive than the spatial sequence of lenses. Using this famous model, he develops an early version of his theory of perception, memory, and the unconscious.

However, H.D. already had received a different, powerful metaphor from her partner Bryher (Winifred Ellerman). Bryher, who was with her on the Scilly Isles, provided her with the female-coded trope of a jellyfish. Furthermore, H.D. considered her presence to be constitutive to the experience: “I felt the double globe come and go and I could have dismissed it at once and probably would have if I had been alone. But it would not have happened, I imagine, if I had been alone.”¹¹⁵ The double globe thereby refers to a shared experience. The exceptional experience was crucial to H.D. since it referred to the condition in which creative work sets people.

In her early essay *Notes on Thought and Vision* (1919), H.D. addresses the question of what the mind and body experience in the manifestations of life. She presumes that concentrated intellectual work effects a transformation in one’s consciousness, which is experienced ambiguously. In addition to unease and mental agony, it creates “a set of superfeelings.”¹¹⁶ The sharpened mind assumes an “almost physical character,” becoming an “over-mind.”¹¹⁷

In this context, she already uses the jellyfish metaphor. The jellyfish embodies *her* over-mind and is accompanied by an underwater aesthetic. The essay describes the mental transformation in a sensuous, mystical way and a tentacular language (long, dangling feelers permeate the body). Yet H.D. insists that there is no other way than intellect to reach the over-mind. The womb and the brain participate equally in the process and function like two separately recording lenses, which, with the right setting, “bring the world of vision into consciousness.”¹¹⁸

H.D. also ponders on the gender specifics of thought and vision, asking herself whether and how men experience this transformation. Considering women, she speculates whether it would be possible to think with the womb and feel with the brain.¹¹⁹

She regards female artistic brainwork in the sense of the eroticism of reason and seeks a new language for that experience. “I must find new words as the Professor found or coined new words to explain certain as yet unrecorded states of mind or being.”¹²⁰

In *Tribute*, H.D. develops her own model of the ego. She uses the available material-semiotic model kit to construct a technical hybrid being that alternates between the female-organic symbol of a jellyfish and the glass building type, its lenses stemming from the male-technical line of fathers. The aquatic environment remains. This immunizing sphere ultimately appears as a diving bell consisting of two interlocking parts. The jellyfish experienced

in *Notes* forms the conceptual precursor to its counterpart in *Tribute*, while both are experiences of the fourth dimension, which H.D. regards as creative and intellectual.

This hybridizing process and H.D.'s preference for the underwater world reveal affinities with Mina Loy's *Lobster Boy* from the 1930s, which is among the most exciting surrealist object artworks in terms of aesthetics and difference theory. Loy makes *Lobster Boy*'s body curvaceous and gives it the tail of a mermaid, creating a hybrid creature that alternates both between genders and between animal and human conditions. In doing so, Loy (like Cahun) undermines the typical surrealist gesture of the objectification and fetishization of women. As Susan Rosenbaum stresses, the bell jar does not act as a vessel in the configuration "but evokes a water-filled aquarium in which the creature swims."¹²¹ Loy, a friend of H.D., also combines the hybrid and the androgynous with watery environments in her surrealist novel *Insel* (1991), written in 1936. With this in mind, the fact that H.D. places her bell jar under water and imagines it as translucent appears to be an avowal of aesthetic, epistemological, and gender differences.

What H.D. experiences under this imaginary device of the bell jar in *Tribute* is a liminal state of mind and being, in which the artistically active female psyche is perceived as spatialized and embodied. Its metamorphosis into a diving bell refers to its

decidedly temporary condition. Additionally, the structure has a protective function for a creative mind—or even for two, as the mention of a double-globe and ego suggests. At one point in *Tribute*, H.D. even places the protective bell jar over the head of Freud, who is under threat from the National Socialists. After all, in 1933, she felt the growing danger in Vienna herself. Consequently, she transforms Freud into an owl, the “hibou sacré”¹²² under the bell jar. Between the lines of her book, H.D. presents her own poetic draft of the psyche, which is shown conceptually as a techno-organic hybrid, an idiosyncratic passage to the fourth dimension of thought and vision, which the poet diversely cultivated in the 1940s and 1950s.

EXPERIMENT
FEMALE HEADS
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**SYLVIA PLATH'S
POETIC OF
X-RAY
ARCHITECTURES**

Arguably the best-known example discussed in this essay, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963) is a preliminary culmination of the female bell jar tradition.

Plath's novel tells the story of a college student and young author, Esther Greenwood, who wins a writing competition organized by a fashion magazine and is permitted to spend a month with the company's New York editorial team. After arriving in the glamorous city, she shows initial signs of severe depression, which worsen when she returns home to her mother in a small town in Massachusetts. Following a failed suicide attempt, Esther receives psychiatric treatment in various institutions.

Published under the pseudonym Victoria Lucas shortly before Plath's (1932–1963) suicide, the book provoked dozens of biographical interpretations. The burden of biographism, often going hand in hand with one-sided pathologizing readings, already weighs heavily on Plath's novel but by no means affects this text alone. Interpretations assuming that the metaphor of the bell jar is solely a symptom of mental illness are regularly projected onto other glass dome projects, most recently, for instance, to Cahun's photographs.¹²³ Plath's myth thus retrospectively imprints its stamp on the reception of other works.

In *The Bell Jar*, the eponymous metaphor refers to a transparent enclosure that descends over Esther Greenwood as her depression worsens and begins to lift only with the first signs of healing.

However, the story already presents transparent and glass surfaces in abundance long before the protagonist's breakdown. They surround the female body on multiple levels and belong to diverse domains such as architecture, medicine, hygiene, the beauty industry, and popular culture. Depending on the protagonist's condition these surfaces oscillate between transparency and opacity.

During their stay in New York, the young writing talents are showered with advertising gifts. In addition to make-up sets and accessories, all the girls receive a corset from the Primrose Company. Tellingly, Esther refuses to wear it. This gift is worth a closer look as it points to the famous figure of the "Transparent Woman". Her story began in the first half of the 20th century with a transparent cellon figure called "Der Gläserne Mensch" ("The Transparent Human") that was a brainchild of the German Hygiene Exhibition. Hailed as a "prime example of technical perfection,"¹²⁴ this male figure was the star of the opening ceremony for the German Hygiene Museum in Dresden in 1930. The finely structured circuit system made of wire and illuminating organs fascinated the audience. Soon enough, the exhibit was smoothly integrated into the discourse of eugenics in Nazi Germany. Much later, around 1990, the figure was interpreted as an "expression of the liberation of humans from the constraints of convention, the taboos of nakedness and of gender."¹²⁵ Not only does its universalizing

original name contradict that claim, but also the story of its categorically opposed “Transparent Woman.” She was ‘born’ in 1936, when the American textile manufacturer S.H. Camp commissioned her production for \$ 20,000. Camp made his fortune manufacturing and selling corsets. The Transparent Woman fulfilled two purposes. As an educational object in museums, she stressed the importance of correct posture for unhindered blood circulation and breathing. Moreover, she became extremely famous in the USA as an advertising medium for Camp’s corsets, which provided medical support for this ‘freedom.’ “This famous exhibit continues to tell the story of Internal Order and External Beauty to over a million visitors each year,”¹²⁶ as *Life* magazine reported in 1950 [**Fig. 10**].

Esther’s gift from the Primrose Company invokes the same paradigm of “Internal Order and External Beauty,” which the Transparent Woman represents and Camp’s advertisements aptly visualize. They combine the corset’s presentation with a male-coded X-ray vision, penetrating, eroticizing and modeling a clothed female body and making the skin transparent as a sensuous interface. Women thereby become ‘transparent,’ i.e., primary subjects of the dispositif that Beatriz Colomina calls X-ray architecture. As Colomina explains, the glass architecture of the 20th century is fundamentally shaped by the period’s medical knowledge of tuberculosis and the X-ray technology associated with it.¹²⁷

MOST REMARKABLE FIGURE IN MODERN HISTORY

The CAMP TRANSPARENT WOMAN

Look right into the marvelous mechanism of the human body... organs, bone structure, veins and arteries. A life-size exhibit created by Camp that women may understand the vital relation between internal order and external beauty... and appreciate the importance of scientific medical counsel.

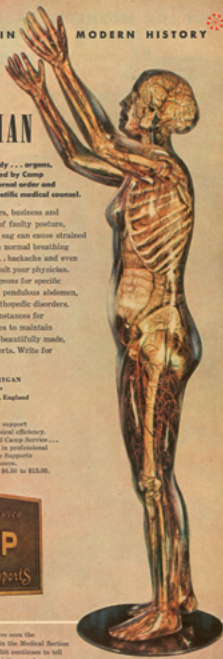
Millions of busy women... homemakers, industrial workers, business and professional women... are physically below par because of faulty posture, overweight, underweight and other figure problems. Body sag can cause strained muscles and cramped internal organs... interfere with normal breathing and circulation... excessive physical strain and fatigue... backache and even foot troubles. When such symptoms persist, be sure to consult your physician. Camp Supports are often prescribed by physicians and surgeons for specific conditions like the premenstrual and postmenstrual states, obesity, pendulous abdomen, visceroptosis, postoperative states, sacro-femur and other orthopedic disorders. They are also recommended by many physicians in many instances for general wear since they are designed along anatomical lines to maintain better body mechanics. Camp Supports are ready to wear, beautifully made, light in weight, comfortable... and precision fitted by experts. Write for free booklet, "The Inside Story of Scientific Support."

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30,380,000 PEOPLE including 25,000 physicians and surgeons have seen the Camp Transparent Woman on loan and in "her" permanent home in the Medical Section of the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry. This famous exhibit continues to tell the story of Internal Order and External Beauty to over a million visitors each year.



The Camp Transparent Woman advertisement in *Life*, 1950

Fig. 10

It has become a means of implementing the modern imperative of health and hygiene. Plath's novel is impressive poetic evidence of this dispositif's cultural and gender-specific implications. This apparatus, of course, also includes institutions for mentally ill. These are the elements condensed in the bell jar under which Plath's heroine performs work securing the very boundaries that are at stake in glass homes and in glass domes.

The protagonist of *The Bell Jar* is obsessed with the idea of purity. The novel constantly spells out this *idée fixe*, from skin to sexuality and on to morality. Esther Greenwood feels more at ease with herself in a bath tub full of warm water than anywhere else.¹²⁸ The bathing ritual also has a morally cathartic effect, since it allows her to dissolve connections to others whom she considers to be impure. The strategy can be observed in her relationship with Doreen, an intelligent girl who is closest to Esther in New York. At the same time, Doreen also embodies the other side of Esther's character, a bundle of qualities that are foreign to her: eroticism, physicality, amplex, touch, shyness. In a scene in a dark New York bar, her handling of this difference is especially striking. To Esther, Doreen suddenly appears like a black woman whose hair has been dyed blonde. The epidermal coding of Doreen's otherness touches on the category of race. Later, when Doreen appears at Esther's hotel room door, drunk after a sexual adventure, and vomits, Esther perceives her as

“an ugly, concrete testimony to [her] own dirty nature,”¹²⁹ therefore distancing herself from her friend emotionally.

The idea of purity correlates with a dissecting look that dominates the narrative perspective. Esther is passionate about botany because she enjoys cutting up leaves and observing them under a microscope. This visual mode has a strongly scopophilic component: “I liked looking on at other people in crucial situations. If there was a road accident or a street fight or a baby pickled in a laboratory jar for me to look at, I’d stop and look so hard I never forgot it.”¹³⁰ Moreover, this vision is demonstrated in her relationship with a medical student. On a tour of his workplace, the entire paradigm of the transparent human is evoked, this time in medical discourse. Esther witnesses the dissection of corpses and then studies a pathological-anatomical collection of the hospital’s preserved fetuses. Later on, the medical student is diagnosed with tuberculosis during the annual X-ray examination and subsequently sent to a sanatorium. Thus, the novel reaches the medical and technological backbone of X-ray architecture.

Plath paid almost obsessive attention to the materiality of skin. Claudia Benthien believes this aspect is intimately linked to artistic productivity, since the author ascribes psycho-hygienic functions to her writing.¹³¹ In New York, the novel’s protagonist experiences the literature market from within for the first time. The avalanche of manuscripts leaves

no doubt about the number of competitors in the industry and its gender bias. Literature is a consumer good, and Esther is only too aware of her own commodification as a writer. After a photo shoot, which causes her to have a crying fit, she attempts to clean up her face. The make-up scene is followed by a therapeutic daydream of finally presenting a “pristine” manuscript.¹³² When Esther later experiences writer’s block and begins to suffer from insomnia, her skin assumes a new quality. Her eyelids can no longer keep out the light. Sensing her skin becoming transparent correlates with the experience of the opacity of language.

The novel establishes this correlation early on. From her hotel window in New York, Esther can see the glass façade of the UN Headquarters, planned by an architectural collective led by Oscar Niemeyer and Le Corbusier. When Esther takes part in a tour of the complex, she experiences it as a Tower of Babel and is frightened by the fact that the medium of language might be impenetrable to her.

The increasing unavailability of language and the impossibility of writing contribute significantly to the formation of her bell jar. Esther first receives a rejection of her application to attend a revered writing course. As a result, she decides to write a novel but the few lines she puts to paper are poor and schematic. After this second fiasco, Esther at least wishes to work on her graduation paper on James Joyce. However, the pages of *Finnegans Wake*

turn into “an alphabet soup of letters.” Even her brain’s surface becomes “glassy,” rendering it impermeable for language.¹³³ Suddenly, the author is confronted by the fundamental problem of writing: How to begin to speak? How to master the task of entering the discourse? At the start of her crisis, she notes with respect to the first lines of *Finnegans Wake*: “I thought the small letter at the start might mean that nothing ever really began all new, with a capital, but that it just flowed on from what came before.”¹³⁴ The discourse, which is the object of desire here, flows like a river, and Esther sees it from the outside. The disquiet of the beginning unsettles the novel exactly at its compositional center. In the backwash of Joyce, the protagonist begins to twist and turn words suspiciously. Foucault speaks extensively of such forms of anxiety about the discursive desire, of the material reality, as well as the ephemeral nature and violence of words.¹³⁵ These matters confront Esther with all of their might.

According to Luke Ferretter, Plath encounters the metaphor of the bell jar for the first time in Philip Wylie’s controversial and then bestselling book *Generation of Vipers* (1943).¹³⁶ In this polemic work, the trope acts as a symbol of melancholia, connected to the perplexity Wylie faces in view of global political developments and especially the rise of National Socialism in the early 1930s. However, there is another side to this coin. Already for Wylie, the vacuum of the bell jar expresses a deep authorial crisis.¹³⁷

Against this background, two grand ambitions of Plath's first novel are recognizable. The first lies in becoming part of a decidedly male line of tradition. Apart from her patron Philomena Guinea, for whom Esther has little artistic respect, she mentions no female author by name; yet she discusses a series of great male authors (Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Joyce). Plath also explicitly attempts to distance her poetry from other female poets. As Lynda Bundtzen writes, she regarded them as "stereotypically feminine in their timidity; indeed, Plath embraces masculine virility and bravado for her creative powers, claiming to outdo Dylan Thomas [...] and W. B. Yeats in force and spirit."¹³⁸ Second, *The Bell Jar* aims to hold its ground as a novel.

Artistically, Plath's protagonist struggles with two problems, which are once again acted out through other characters. The silent patient Miss Norris, whom the protagonist watches over for hours "simply to brood over the pale, speechless circlet of her lips,"¹³⁹ mimicking Esther's speechlessness. Her narrative difficulties, in turn, are made tangible through Joan, the character whose fictitious nature is implied by the text itself. Esther also calls her "the beaming double of my old best self, specially designed to follow and torment me."¹⁴⁰ When Joan begins to tell Esther the story of her own illness, she does so as if her breakdown were a function of Esther's disappearance, which she followed in the newspapers. But more importantly, Joan's report lacks

all coherence. It is a completely erratic string of bizarre events and banal details. Her narrative resembles a chaotic heap of press clippings she has collected on Esther's story—like Nin's costume made of tickertape, torn out of context. Not least, Joan is a lesbian. Esther perceives her desire as a difference entailing severe social sanction, which is inadmissible and immediately smothered.

All in all, the young author Esther struggles for words and her own narrative voice. Before her breakdown, she could neither eat nor sleep, falling out of all the cycles of production and regeneration. The vacuum of the bell jar indeed also refers to this. At the same time, it offers her the chance to liberate herself from the imperative of production. Foucault described madness as the most radical expression of a subject's freedom, because one withdraws from the world of reason and the realms of work, usefulness, and production.¹⁴¹ As Tracy Brain notes, the novel includes an echo of Woolf in the sentence "I have my own room again,"¹⁴² ironically just when the protagonist has been moved to a private hospital.¹⁴³

The critical factor in Esther's psychological healing and artistic recovery is the elimination of her personified problems. Right before the representative of narrative incapacity appears, the representative of speechlessness is moved to a different ward. And Joan hangs herself immediately after Esther loses her virginity. The novel closes with the protagonist's ritual rebirth as she breaches a threshold.

Facing a room full of doctors who will decide whether to discharge her, Esther enters the discourse (the story of her healing) as a fixed, competent and straight narrator.

The novel translates the protagonist's poetic creative crisis directly into the discourses and materialities of X-ray architecture and vice versa. Esther Greenwood's enormous writing difficulties are expressed in her psychological afflictions. Consequently, the experience of a bell jar not only reflects a young woman's mental illness. It also marks a turning point in the author's work, who uses this metaphor to spell out the aporia of her artistic development.

EDGE OF
SURREALISM
ANNA NIN'S
GLASS
HOUSES AND
DOPPELGÄNGER
THE META-
MORPHOSES OF
H.D.'S JELLYFISH
EXPERIENCE
SYLVIA PLATH'S
POETIC OF
X-RAY
ARCHITECTURES

**POETS,
TEMPLES, AND
THE LEOPARDS**

In the autumn of 1960, Edith Farnsworth published nineteen poems in the literary magazine *Tri-Quarterly*, accompanied by an article entitled “The Poet and the Leopards.”¹⁴⁴ In this essay, Farnsworth considers how a passion for art can be cultivated in demystified times, which confront poetry with massive difficulties. Grand themes that had always provided refuge to poetry have become secularized: Nature rubs her snout against the windowpane, love has died of its own revelation, and God has been buried along with Rilke’s body. Having lost their costumes, the poet can turn out to be a mouse, who—fleeing from itself in panic—runs into the arms of the only remaining entity of its confirmation: public relations. However, one could also see the poet in a different light—or no light at all, as Farnsworth ensures. For the spectrum of light that is visible to the human eye is very narrow. In the wavelengths of infrared and ultraviolet radiation, there is much room for in-depth and focused perception. After all, the new definition of beauty remains a purpose of poetry.

The essay is a fine example of Farnsworth’s poetic vision at the interface between humanist and scientific education. Her menagerie includes panic-stricken laboratory mice and Kafka’s leopards, which give the essay its title and motto. “Leopards break into the temple and drink the sacrificial chalices dry; this occurs repeatedly, again and again: finally it can be reckoned upon beforehand and becomes a part of the ceremony.”¹⁴⁵ Farnsworth closes her text

by returning to the hardships of art: “If our feelings toward religion, toward nature and toward love have changed somewhat, we still seem to need temples of one kind or another, but I do not believe that we need many leopards. It is bad enough if we have to share our chalices with them and to reckon beforehand that we shall be doing so, but it is much worse when we find ourselves unable to tell the difference between a priest and the leopard, or a religious ceremony with leopards or without them.”¹⁴⁶

Farnsworth’s allegory on art and authorship poses questions. From her perspective, it would certainly characterize the transformation of her relationship to the architect of her glass house in Plano. While Ludwig Mies van der Rohe initially appeared to her to be a priest of architecture, he transformed over time into someone who increasingly became focused only on sacrificial gifts. Throughout its history, the house has indeed functioned as a temple. Mies considered the building in spiritual terms and recognized it as a place for contemplatively experiencing nature. The dense, living forest and the river that regularly flooded the property were much less domesticated than Farnsworth suggested. The building also served as a temple for the admirers of modernist architecture, pilgrims visiting the site in their droves. From their perspective, the role of the intruder disturbing the ceremony was often the building’s resident; the woman who sacrilegiously had fly screens installed and dared to fit the house with

her own furniture. Even so, however, the glass house was a vexing design to live with. Farnsworth expressed this vividly in her poem *Artifact*. Waking up at dawn, she hears a bird outside repeatedly flying against the pane, so she asks herself: “Why does it not recoil, or die? | Why does it try | The cold smooth artifact to pass, | Why does it beat upon the glass?”¹⁴⁷ In this intimate scene, the glass is a boundary, the crossing of which must be attempted over and over again, like a test or a task involving endless efforts.

Tobias Döring notes that Kafka’s aphorism sounds like the observation of an ethnologist out in the field, protocoling the creation of a tradition originating “in the repetition and habituation of coincidentally invading untamed forces.”¹⁴⁸ From the perspective of media theory, the leopards are figures of disruption, an unwanted intrusion of noise into a system. Their appearance represents a threat to the established symbolic order, while also entailing the potential of creating a new one.

The women and their works discussed in this essay can also be located in the paradigm of disruption, by crossing the deeply traditional relationship between male authorship and art—as well as oscillating between figure and ground—to allow for new orders. This study aimed to establish them as figures of a critical history of glass culture and transparency. Studying their works provides valuable insight into reordering traditional sociocultural differences and dominant thought patterns in modernity.

These women's demand for creative and artistic agency challenged one of the longest-standing dichotomies of western culture, the polarity of 'female' versus 'male' and its corresponding asymmetric attributions.

Looking back on the history of the idea of female intelligence, Lorraine Daston points out that the traditional occidental dichotomies experienced a significant transformation between the 17th and 20th centuries. The engraved polarities were slowly replaced by gradual continua, i.e., by the notion of incremental differences. However, the polarities of gender proved to be especially stubborn. The intellectual abilities of women and men were long believed to have fundamentally different qualities, to be complementary and to regard each other as mutually exclusive.¹⁴⁹

The episodes discussed in this essay show how difficult the task of challenging binary thought structures can be, let alone releasing oneself from them. Evelyn Word Leigh's glass house and the glass dome projects by Claude Cahun, Lee Miller, Anaïs Nin, H.D., and Sylvia Plath can be grasped as individual passages towards artistic-creative agency. The resulting subjectivities by no means conform to *one* homogeneous concept of gender, femininity, or female authorship. Instead, they demonstrate highly contrasting practices, approaches, and conditions. Thus, such (often simultaneous) episodes should be regarded as stages in and contributions to a cultural

history that exist in between thinking of gender differences as polarities or as continua.

In building a glass house in Nyack, New York, Leigh appropriated a building form of the 19th century, the greenhouse, using it for health reasons as a body and climate technique. The key to her subjectification and self-agency lay in her body's objectification and disciplining. Furthermore, the glass house served as media technology to control the distance and proximity of the outside world. While the former actor gladly staged herself as a spectacle for the petty-bourgeois residents of Nyack and the mass media, she also used the house as a filter against the masses. It was an apparatus that kept the threatening outside world at a distance and transformed it into an image. Leigh regarded gender as a product of construction, namely education. She often associated herself with the stage of children before they were subjected to the social school of repression. As a radical individualist, she believed just as little in collective solutions or visions as Cahun, Miller, H.D. or Nin. She hoped the transparency of her individual lifestyle would lead to gentle educational effects on her environment. Although her living experiment failed in that respect, in its entirety, it demonstrates an original reception of modern technology by merging old, mimetic techniques of the body (dance, acting, fashion) with new technological paradigms (architecture, mass media, film).

While Leigh created an architectural passage through a transparent modernity, Cahun and Miller primarily used writing and photography to work on the construction of femininity. A comparison of their projects highlights how the object of the glass dome can become a stage of agency in the surrealist avant-garde. Between the 1920s and 1940s, the subject of female heads under glass domes repeatedly appears in surrealist-inspired photography and visual culture. They mostly associate the feminine with clichés of mystery, nature, seduction, and the erotic spectacle. Miller's photographic collaboration with Man Ray also reveals that tendency. Cahun's series of self-portraits is all the more powerful since the apparent object opens its eyes, looks back at the viewer and transforms the glass requisite into a field of action. In her images, Cahun undermines categorical divisions that form the basis of the traditional allocation of the feminine or the other to the subordinate side of the male-female gender polarity.

However, this polarity remains an essential point of reference for the literary bell jar projects that followed. The binary opposition of the sexes and genders characterizes psychoanalysis, whose theory and practice significantly shaped Nin's and H.D.'s work. In the 1930s, Nin benefited from her friendship with Otto Rank and her engagement with his ideas on art and artists, which are based on an anti-oedipal interpretation of the unconscious. By contrast, H.D. went through an analysis with Freud, thereby

encountering the patriarchal version of the theory. Although both authors treated the theoretical input in the sense of creative appropriation, they did so in highly contrasting ways since the 'building sites' of their creative subjectivities were utterly different.

Unlike Cahun, who ironically reflects on and smashes the mirror as a condition of possibility for processes of identification, Nin's early narrative works lead straight to the drama of the mirror stage. The framework of botany that architecturally defined Leigh's house informs Nin's spaces on the metonymical and metaphorical level. In her literature, glass domes and glass houses harbor a sensitive artistic type that can only endure reality if it is strongly filtered. At first, this type seems to be a counterpole to the artistic self-perception of Nin's heroine and alter ego, who prefers authenticity, intimacy, and intuition. Nin hotwires these qualities with femininity in a rather essentialist way. However, the glass-house figures also operate as the heroine's *Doppelgänger*, embodying a stage that must be overcome. Nin's primary interest lies in the genesis of female writers and the question of how they can dissolve isolating narcissistic constellations. From her perspective, art alone offered the chance to rise up and become one's own creator. Literary writing is Nin's means of choice to rebel against the given place of women in patriarchally formed mirror-worlds.

In H.D.'s work, the metaphor of the bell jar does not refer to the genesis of a female writer but to her creative routines. Specifically, it denotes a particular—crisis-ridden and temporary—experience that appears during intensive intellectual work. H.D. describes a mental state of exception that approaches uncomfortably, but leads to an almost physical feeling, and an eroticism of the mind. The author constructs her mystical-technoorganic model of the psyche using symbols of varying provenance. The result is a protective glass sphere that can be shared with others. H.D. places this liminal, tentacularly unfurling state of mind and being in an aquatic environment that can be decoded as a standpoint of aesthetic, epistemological, and gender difference.

Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* cannot be absent in a history of glass domes and glass homes, since the interpretations of this novel are so powerful that they also 'contaminate' the works of others. Yet Plath approaches glass and transparency in a different way, which I read once again through material culture. The novel translates the protagonist's creative crisis into the discourse and materialities of medicine, hygiene, and X-ray architecture, and vice versa. The formation of a bell jar not only refers to the psychological collapse of a young woman afflicted by depression. The crisis is equally an important phase in her activity as a prospective author, who uses the metaphor to spell out the fundamental unease of discursive desire and the aporia of her birth

as a female novelist. The representative figures of this aporia, as well as sensuality and homoerotic desire, are radically eliminated in the process. As a narrator, Plath's figure prefers a virile tradition.

These literary bell-jar projects contribute to the myth of female authorship. However, the texts provide very different answers to the question of what constitutes a creatively active woman, how she becomes one, how she works artistically, and which poetic or gender models she follows, or not—in short: which components she uses to shape her bell jar as a passage towards authorship. While Nin and Plath remained in binary thought and defined themselves at diametrically opposed conceptualized poles of this structure (Nin as decidedly 'feminine,' Plath as decidedly 'masculine'), H.D. created a hybrid, sensual, tentacular model of the artistic psyche. These modes of female authorship, which are closely connected to the culture of glass, highlight the plurality of artistic self-narratives, while equally sensitizing us to the tense and crisis-ridden coding of glass scenographies. When women negotiate boundaries through their glass homes and glass domes, they do, in fact, work. They pioneer what, as Farnsworth's poem underscores, needs to be done not once but again and again. They also remind us how important it is to reconsider our rituals and shape our approach to the leopards in a more diverse, curious, and persistent way.

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NO WAY HOME

**OR, PERPETUAL CARE FOR
ARCHITECTURAL
RESIDUES**

WHICH WAY IS HOME?

Looking around the exhibition spaces of uber-gallery Hauser & Wirth in Los Angeles in 2018, this question seemed impossible to answer on multiple levels. In its labyrinthine interiors, numerous medial variations of a small cityscape, its towers forming the tiniest skyline, all seemed to signal: Here, come here, look closer, this is the right direction. This is where you have to go. Sculptural, projected, drawn, or printed, always vibrant in color and slightly luminous, often socketed and wired, and sometimes under a glass dome, each small metropolis became a visually magnetic field on its own, leaving visitors vertiginous and tumbling in the dark and windowless gallery rooms [Fig. 11].

Yet looking closer, each city appeared not as an entirely new place, but as an uncanny variation of the one next to it—sometimes through incredibly small differences, sometimes shape-shifted entirely. With some, the towers' skyline was still intact, but buildings were added or removed, the architectural style changed. With others, the city looked as if it has been melted, the formerly recognizable structures slumped and collapsed into an organic landscape of blobs, rocks, and unidentifiable lumber. No matter where one turned, and which cityscape one focused, everywhere a different image of the same motif surfaced. With time, the imperative conclusion loomed: This must be the place, each of these is an idea of home, in all its distraught transformations.

Mike Kelley's *Kandor* Series, posthumously assembled at Hauser & Wirth in its entirety for the first time since its beginnings in 1999, circulates around the poignant story of the shrunken city of Kandor, the destroyed planet Krypton's capital, Superman's former home. Krypton exploded due to its old age, and to save at least one Kryptonian, Superman's parents decided to send him out on a rescue spaceship that landed on Earth and marked the start of the story of the arguably loneliest being on our home planet: Kal-El, known as Clark Kent, known as Superman. Although, not everything was lost forever. Victim to the evil laser shrinking beam of Superman's arch enemy, the humanoid artificial intelligence Brainiac, Kandor and all its inhabitants are minimized to a size an architect would probably identify as a scale of 1:500. Eventually, Superman manages to take possession of the shrunken city, now kept under a glass bell with a contained atmosphere and stored safely in his arctic Fortress of Solitude. Yet he remained unable to enlarge the citizens—and his former home—to its normal size. The Man of Steel, an alien on earth, thus became existentially homeless and eternally bound to “an ageless memento in real time.”¹

Fig. 11

Mike Kelley, *Kardors*, 1999 – 2011, installation view,
Hauser + Wirth, 2017



REPRESSED MEMORY CITIES

Approaching Kelley's *Kandor* series, the extensive body of work possibly translates into an intense mediation on an architectural medium, the model, in the fantastical space of a science fiction superhero story and the creative freedom this might allow. Contextualizing Kelley's work in his own art historiography, a considerably darker and more agonizing picture takes shape looking at the assembled vibrant miniature cities: In an almost inexhaustible interest in questions of memory and trauma, its mental storage and erasure in architectural spaces, actual places and misremembered ones similarly became objects of obsessive (self-)exploration for Kelley. Discovering the story of Superman and Kandor allowed Kelley, as he wrote, "to explore further my interest in spatial memory, relative to architecture and fantasy, which I had examined in earlier pieces such as *Educational Complex* (1995). In that project I approached memory and desire through the tropes of the biographical by building models of partially remembered structure associated with my own past."² And speaking of everyone's own past, what could be more troubling than not only not being able to find your way back, but having to accept your destination as irretrievably lost?

Surprisingly enough though, Kelley's interest in Superman's biography arose on a detour. Invited to contribute to a turn-of-the-century group

show at the Kunstmuseum Bonn in 1999, titled “Zeitenwende: Ausblick,” which asked artists to focus on historical takes on the future, Kelley developed an interest in outdated depictions of futuristic cities and technologies, finding a fitting source in the representations of Kandor in the Superman comics. When he asked a German specialized collector for material and information on Kandor, the resulting image collection of hundreds of Superman comics revealed an unforeseen fact: The city of Kandor had no fixed image identity, in fact it was drawn differently in every story, sometimes even within one.³ Rendering the project of reconstruction virtually impossible, the implications of Kandor shifted radically, kicking off a series of works that extended into multiple media and long-term exploration. As could be observed in a subsequent gallery exhibition in Berlin (2007) and later in Los Angeles, Kelley took the ball and ran with it, exploring the visual phenomenon in a richness that seemed to coincide with the comics’ unfixed, fading, fantasized memory of what Kandor looked like—even though it had, at the same time, a very tangible reality within the story.

However, given what the comics offered, nobody could and would ever know what Superman saw when he looked at the bell jar. Exploring that paradox, the uncountable amount of Kandor variations in the comics proved to be utterly productive in the contextual frame of the pop-cultural, pseudo-psychological theory that dominated Kelley’s artistic

universe, starting in the 1980s: the Repressed Memory Syndrome (RMS), and building on that, the False Memory Syndrome (FMS).

Simply put, advocates of said theories hypothesized that severe traumatic experiences could not be recalled from memory, their repression resulting in all sorts of mental and physical symptoms.⁴ To resurface those memories, hypnosis and therapy were frequently used, and the retrieved memories taken, despite all uncertainties, as facts. As a consequence, culturally wide-spread accusations rose that therapists could themselves ‘implant’ memories by belaboring a certain memory until a clear image of trauma allegedly resurfaced. Especially in the context of children’s memories (and consequently child abuse), this led to heated conflicts and scandals in the USA and contributed to a climate of paranoia that Kelley experienced ostensibly reflected in his work with stuffed animals:

“I was made aware of the popular fixation on child abuse through the responses to my sculptural works composed of old stuffed animals. My intention was to present the objects as adult products and to raise questions about their formal construction in relation to their social use. I found that it was impossible to bypass the audience’s tendency to project onto stuffed animals. [...] Generally, the worn and dirty conditions

of the toys was read, not as the result of child's play, but as a symbol of adult mistreatment of children. The toys became sculptures of abused children."⁵

The impossibility of escaping interpretation was established, leading to an artistic self-questioning in Kelley's following work, such as *Educational Complex*, investigating where, when, and how trauma 'must' have occurred and how it was reflected in the gaps of his memory, correlating with places he would consequently not remember. Certainly, this argumentative deduction must be taken with a grain of salt, but still cannot weigh out the paradox that both theories create: A flickering picture arises in which neither the interpretation (the artwork spoke of trauma) nor its refutation (it had nothing to do with trauma) can be proven (as everything could have been repressed and/or fantasized).

In the maelstrom of the countless representations of Kandor, the question thus arises whether this phenomenon should not be read strictly as a symptom—as an oscillating memory image of Superman's constantly present trauma, which expresses itself precisely in the fact that no clear depiction can ever emerge. This condition is further complicated and made even more monstrous than already assumed by the fact that Kandor under the bell jar was the place of memory and memory image at the same time, as it was not a model of the city, but

actually *the* shrunken city. Kandor was, as art historian Falk Wolf observes, “an autoimago, an image that coincides with its subject.”⁶ He therefore offers the interpretation that Kandor ontologically entailed a condition of concealment, as already implied in the name of its home planet Krypton, stemming from the Greek *kryptós*, hidden. All the Kandors that Kelley produced, with their richness of color and form, would thus work in the psychoanalytical sense, like a linguistic crypta, on “parallelizing this concealment through an exuberant, playful visual richness.”⁷

ARCHITECTURAL GROUP THERAPY

Such an observation is definitely not wrong, but overlooks the question that must inevitably arise given the wide scope of artistic symptoms, if you will, that Kelley produced with *Kandors*: For all (t)his work, how could Superman, or indeed any other person who identifies, ever cope or approach healing the trauma of eternal homelessness?

At the very beginning of the Kandor project, for the Bonn exhibition, Kelley had already set a proposed solution that preceded the numerous sculptures and representations. In 1999, before discovering the aesthetic multitude of Kandor in the comics, Kelley had primarily planned a website that, as the medium of the future, would offer an assembly place for Superman fans all around the world. Together, their input would serve to render “physical and digital versions of the city [that] would be constructed and

presented in the museum.”⁸ While the Internet symbolized a medium of singularity and loneliness, similar to Superman’s fate on earth, the project’s title *Kandor-Con 2000* emphasized the counteracting aspiration for a collective solution to this sad state. Picking up on *Comic Con*, the US-American annual comic book collectors’ convention, Kelley’s production aimed at imitating the gathering of like-minded people, who would come together to not only nerd-out on Superman, but to actually build an architectural model of Kandor, *one* model. They would build Superman a home, and themselves a place to remember the positive powers of community, a sort of group therapy through assembly. Even a party was planned, with “all of the people who participated in the production of the piece via the Internet” invited, but it was ultimately the institution, of course, that halted these plans.⁹ No funds were available or could be acquired to meet Kelley’s plans, “let alone pay the travel expenses for an unknown number of Superman fans,” as he wrote afterwards.¹⁰

Looking at this backstory, and by extension the entire history of Kelley’s *Kandor* project (so important to the psychoanalytical work), gives a different impression from the one Wolf had noted. From the beginning, the emphasis was on bringing together a community, which, despite the institution’s good intentions, proved impossible precisely due to its institutional limitations. While the discovery of the numerous Kandor representations in comics

opened up new avenues of visual engagement, the community idea was never fundamentally excluded. A computer program embedded in the website was to create an ever-growing, changing image of the city. The Internet fan community, so Kelley's plan, would be asked to contribute images that corresponded to their personal idea of Kandor, to build a model in the exhibition space that had in fact been created from fragments of a collective memory.

FRAGMENTS UNDER THE BELL JAR

As we know today and as the exhibition history of the *Kandor* series has shown, the project could never be realized in this way and took a very different artistic direction. Already in its first presentation in Bonn in 1999, a large poster illustrated the crushed, now Utopian vision: Considering the amount of work that went into the project so far, it was estimated that the finishing line of Kandor's reconstruction would become visible in the year 419500. Utterly leaning into the history of its own institutional trauma, the unfulfilled desire for community and subsequent homelessness, the cryptic visual richness Kelley produced in the following ten years offers a viewpoint that leads beyond the Superman-inherent interpretive approach. It was a symptom, a crypt of the project itself, which poured out as artistic works far extending the aforementioned city models.

Most notably, the presentation of those physical Kandor renderings was enriched with various video works. Furthermore, radically deviating from his first single-model plan, Kelley began to cover the models with handmade glass bell jars. Kelley himself attributed this aesthetic choice to societal fears of the Internet, then an entirely new medium, being a “voiceless and imageless form of communication” that would breed “a generation of isolated individuals who communicate only in a world of disembodied fantasy role-playing.”¹¹ Like a bell jar, this new materially invisible technology would encapsulate its users, akin to Superman’s eternal loneliness and, as he noted, similar “to poet Sylvia Plath’s use of the bell jar as a symbol of psychic disconnection.”¹² And indeed, a later exhibition featured a video of Superman reading selected passages from Plath’s iconic novel, standing in a dark and unidentifiable room, only looking at one of Kelley’s Kandor models, speaking his traumatic truth to the source.

The bell jar proceeded to be a central visual subject, repeated and varied endlessly in drawings, videos, and sculptures. Blown up to the same size the bottled cities in the comics had in relation to their surroundings, bell jars in all forms and sizes populated the *Kandor* project and exhibitions. Often even depicted or shown without the encapsulated city, the bell jar recentered the attention to itself: Unlike in the comic stories, Kelley’s multiple Kandor models were models, not a shrunken city—yet its glass

surroundings could have existed in the same way in Superman's universe. They were uncannily real. Empty or not, the bell jars brought memories and fantasies into the real world of every visitor in the exhibition space. They acted as vessels for fragments, lost and forgotten, imagined or resurfaced. Under the heavy glass walls, the atmosphere they contained seemed to virtually (re)press any memory material into its form.

This work on fragments, perpetuated in form without visible solution or release, may seem truly depressing. But viewed in the context of the project's introduced history, there lies a reference back to the collective, and therefore healing, intentions of *Kandor*. Wherever one encounters these glass covers, that is, one encounters such potentially traumatizing memory slivers, the task is to sweep together a pile of these shards. Give them some *t/c* (that is, tender loving care). As a collective, reassembly is possible—not to achieve completeness, but to a state that possibly allows moving on. Therein, Kelley intended to perform the very opposite of what he hypothesized about Superman's fate as early as in 1996: "I wonder if the eternal Man of Steel ever feels the desire to smash this city and finally live in the present."¹³

Revolving around a medium that keeps such residues alive, the bell jar, both Szilvia Gellai's women in glass houses and Kelley's *Kandor* series illustrate the potential of taking care of fragments, no

matter how difficult the task or how high the stakes. This potential arises especially in contact with such blatantly neglected stories as Gellai has assembled in her *Glass Scenographies*. Her protagonists were, in the truest sense of the word, marginal figures, borderline figures even, whose lives, creations, and also work were considered a remnant in patriarchy, a by-product. Like Superman, they often developed enormous personal powers, visible in their actions and artistic works, but the times in which they lived seldom afforded them the clout needed to make them truly heard. From the outside and to their contemporaries, they appeared behind their glass walls as elements of society, and consequently, of histories later written, that almost nobody wanted to regard. Perhaps people were even frightened, as they might have been reminded of something unfathomable: that women exist—as independent, thinking, creative, forceful, fearless subjects.

Rightfully and fortunately, this has changed today (and herewith once again). Circling around the question of the centrality of such residues, the glass bells embody a distinctly architectural form, and lastly pose an essential question concerning the practices of architectural history: What does writing architectural histories mean today if not to perpetually care for those irretrievable histories that we try to reconstruct through their residual media? In other words: Shouldn't we all be Superman, even if it hurts?

ENDNOTES

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Cit. *ibid.*, p. 6.

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ENDNOTES

NO WAY HOME OR, PERPETUAL CARE FOR ARCHITECTURAL RESIDUES

1

Mike Kelley: "Architectural Non-Memory Replaced with Psychic Reality", in John C. Welchman (Ed.): *Minor Histories: Statements, Conversations, Proposals*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 2004, pp. 316–23, here p. 322.

2

Mike Kelley: "Kandors", in Rafael Jablonka (Ed.): *Mike Kelley: Kandors*, Exhibition: Mike Kelley. Kandors, Munich, Hirmer, 2010, pp. 53–60, here p. 54.

3

Ibid., p. 53f.

4

Kelley: "Architectural Non-Memory", (see Note 1), p. 319f.

5

Ibid., p. 320.

6

"Es handelt sich mithin nicht um ein Abbildungsverhältnis, denn die Flaschenstadt ist kein Bild von Kandor, sondern eine Autoimago, ein Bild, das mit seinem Bildgegenstand zusammenfällt." [trans.: It is therefore not a relationship of representation, since the city in a bottle is not an image of Kandor, but an "autoimago", an image that coincides with its subject.] Falk Wolf: "Mike Kelleys Kryptisches Laboratorium: "Kandor #6", in *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 70 (2009): pp. 281–90, here p. 287.

7

Ibid.: "Der Name des Planeten Krypton führt bereits den Gedanken dieses Verbergens mit sich: τὸ κρυπτόν ist im griechischen die Verborgeneheit; und es ist möglicherweise nicht zu weit gegriffen, dieses Verbergen durch einen überbordenden, verspielten visuellen Reichtum mit dem zu parallelisieren, was Nicolas Abraham und Maria Torok eine Krypta genannt haben, einen innerhalb der Sprache, durch Worte (Kryptonyme), verborgenen Ort" [trans.: This concept of concealment is already inherent in the name of Planet Krypton: In ancient Greek, τὸ κρυπτόν means concealment; perhaps it is not too far fetched to parallelize this concealment through an exuberant, playful visual richness, which Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok have called a crypta, a location concealed within language by words (cryptonyms).]

8

Kelley: "Kandors", (see Note 2), p. 53.

9

Ibid.

10

Ibid.

11

Ibid., p. 54.

12

Ibid.

13

Kelley: "Architectural Non-Memory", (see Note 1), p. 322.

FIGURES

Fig. 1

Under everyone's eyes, montage with Leigh in sun-suit, clipping, 1936, from Lillian Vergara: "Proving That Beauties Who Live in Glass Houses Get Peeked at," in *El Paso Times*, July 5, 1936, p. 10.

Fig. 2

Evelyn Word Leigh's glass house in the making, clipping, 1927, from "Glass House Woes of the Lady Sun-Worshiper," in *Allentown Morning Call*, September 11, 1927, p. 42.

Fig. 3A

Intro of Universal Newsreel about Leigh and her house, 1931, from *Universal Newsreels*, Release 59, July 20, 1931, Universal Pictures Company, Los Angeles, 1931, 03:40–04:20.

Fig. 3B–F

Screenshots from Newsreel's outtakes, 1929, from *Glass House – Outtakes*, July 30, 1929, Fox Movietone News Story 3–264, © Fox Movietone News Collection / Moving Image Research Collections, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

Fig. 4A

The large east wing of Leigh's glass house, 1927, Collection of Szilvia Gellai.

Fig. 4B

Leigh enjoying her daily sun bath in her garden, 1927, © Bettmann via Getty Images.

Fig. 5

Young Evelyn Provost complains about flaneurs, clipping with a photo of Joel Feder, 1913, from "New York a City of Flirts; Pretty Girls are Insulted," in *Joliet Sunday Herald*, June 15, 1913, p. 1.

Fig. 6

Heinrich Oswalt, *The Child in the Glass House*, illustrated by Eugen Klimsch, 1925 [1877], from Heinrich Oswalt: *Unterm Märchenbaum. Allerlei Märchen, Geschichten und Fabeln in Reimen und Bildern. Nach den Originalskizzen des Verfassers illustriert von Eugen Klimsch*, 12th ed., Frankfurt am Main, Rütten & Loening, 1925 [1877], p. 16.

Fig. 7

Claude Cahun, *Studies for a Keepsake*, 1925, Courtesy of Jersey Heritage.

Fig. 8A

Man Ray, *Hommage à D.A.F. de Sade*, 1930, from André Breton (Ed.): *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution. Collection complète, n° 1 à 6, juillet 1930 à mai 1933*, Paris, Éditions Jean-Michel Place, 1976 [1930], p. 37.

Fig. 8B

Lee Miller, *Tanja Ramm Under a Bell Jar*, 1930, © Lee Miller Archives, England 2022. All rights reserved. leemiller.co.uk.

Fig. 8C

Cecil Beaton, *Lady Loughborough Under a Bell Jar*, 1927, © The Board of Trustees of the Science Museum, London, CC BY 4.0.

Fig. 8D

Vogue cover by Alex Zeilinger, November 1934, © Jean Stockton / Alamy Stock Foto.

Fig. 9

Hilda 'H.D.' Doolittle's Ex libris, 1912, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University.

Fig. 10

The Camp Transparent Woman advertisement in *Life*, May 8, 1950, p. 147.

Fig. 11

Mike Kelley, *Kandors* Full Set, 2005, Tinted urethane resin, glass, silicone rubber, acrylic, celluloid,

polyurethane, medium density fiberboard, wood veneer, and compact fluorescent lights, dimensions variable, installation view, 'Mike Kelley: Kandors 1999 – 2011', Hauser & Wirth Los Angeles, 2017, Art © Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts. All Rights Reserved / Licensed by VAGA-New York, Pinault Collection, Courtesy the Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts and Hauser & Wirth, Photo: Fredrik Nilsen.

Cover

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CVs

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