

# THE WORK OF TRANSFORMATION: THE SEDUCTION OF THE BROKEN OBJECT

*Tessa Adams*

There have been various accounts as to the nature of primary satisfaction that the fragmented object can provide for us. We can look to Peter Fuller's psychodynamic interpretation of the *Venus de Milo* as one notable example. The statue, he tells us, transcends its mutilation by offering us a site for our maternal projections - its random breakages touching upon primary repression. His view is that the *Venus* is more seductive than her intact counterparts since, with pitted surface and absent arms, we meet the body at once ideal and broken, signifying the mother who has survived our infantile attacks. That is to say, Fuller sees the *Venus'* damage as paradoxically enhancing on the basis that it is a statue which can offer us a representation of the 'whole object' in Kleinian terms. He maintains that, in embracing its mutilation by aestheticizing its flaws, we meet again our earliest bid for reparation.<sup>1</sup>

It is from this perspective that I will consider the work of Cornelia Parker, a contemporary British artist, who purposefully challenges the boundaries of the object. I will focus on two of her most striking installations: *Thirty Pieces of Silver* (see Figure 1) and *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View* (see Figure 3) and interpret the impetus for each work. This discussion will be set within the context of other art works which feature artistic preoccupation with destructive/reparative processes. Here I refer to Rachel Whiteread's famous *House* (see Figure 5), that concrete interior which met its public demolition against a background of considerable controversy, and to the images of damage in death that Damien Hirst so blatantly exploits through his formaldehyde edifices. This exploration will be framed by Kleinian principles and look towards assessing these artists' intentions as to their transformative ambition.

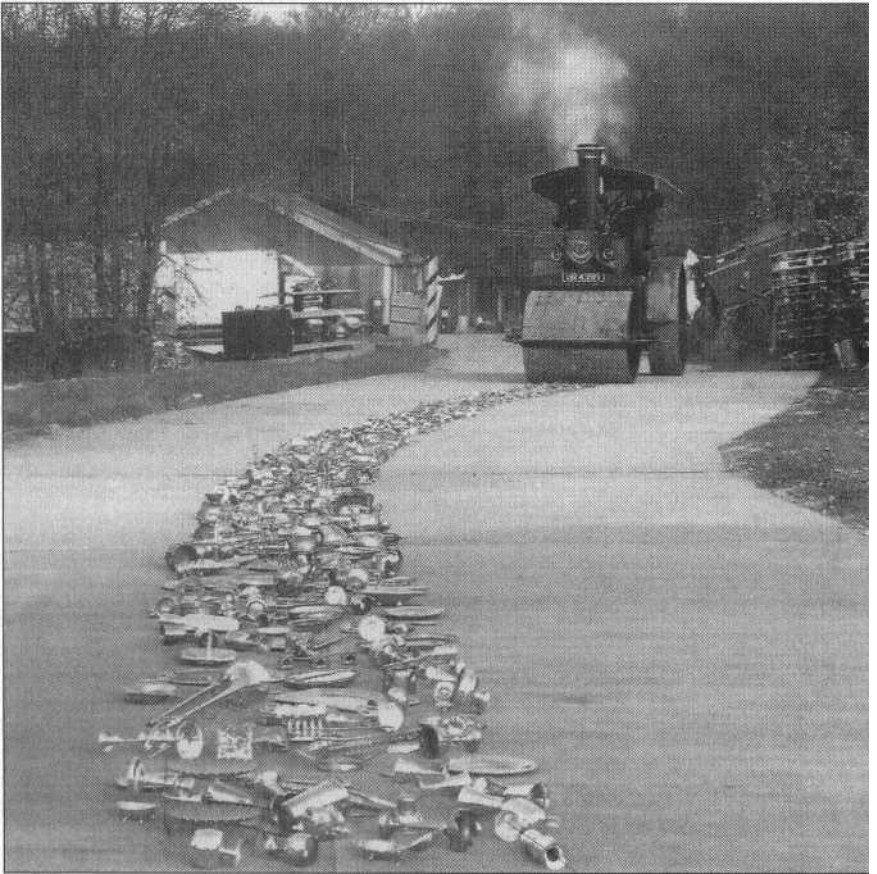
It is recognized that Melanie Klein's theory of child development differs from Freud's in her focus on the infant's pre-oedipal struggle for autonomy. This is a task which demands the transition from primitive, part-object cathexis, termed the paranoid/schizoid position, to the capacity for full-object relationship by the end of the toddler years. This struggle, termed the depressive position, is seen to be resolved through the infant's acceptance of the mother as a 'whole object'. Which means that the infant's early perception of a world of part-objects (in which good can only be split from bad) is seen to give way to the realization that 'good' and 'bad' exist as aspects of the 'whole'.<sup>2</sup>

It is within this resolution of the depressive struggle that Klein locates the dynamic of creativity. Her claim is that the infant's dread of internal fragmentation, arising from persecutory phantasy, is so overwhelming during the depressive phase that a

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***Figure 1. Cornelia Parker, *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, 1988. Installation commissioned by the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham. Photography: Edward Woodman. Traction engine flattening silver trophies and utensils.***

drive to restore the good internally is mobilized. Significantly, Klein identifies this original bid for restoration as the genesis of external reparative acts from which the impulse of artistic activity derives.<sup>3</sup>

Turning now to Cornelia Parker's installations, it is clear that the dynamic of destruction and restitution features prominently in her work. What I wish to profile here is a contrast that can be drawn between *Thirty Pieces of Silver* (1988) and *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View* (1991), particularly in the specific way that unconscious projection can be seen to inform each project. I shall argue that, while it is apparent that the destructive/reparative dynamic of each installation is certainly similar in many respects, a notable difference can be interpreted, in Kleinian terms, as to the principal origin of the associated destructive ambition.

First let us consider the conception and construction of *Thirty Pieces of Silver*. This complex installation has as its focus an impressive collection of over a thousand silver-plated utensils (vases, trophies, teapots, spoons etc.) that were typical of British homes of the 1930s to 1950s. These objects, of their time, can be readily associated with the 'internal space' of the mother: incorporated but set apart within the home to be polished and displayed. Parker emphasizes this point by photographing selected items in a specific way before assigning them to their fate. For example, a silver vase of freesias is placed on a polished table, a candlestick on a gleaming piano, to be documented in their appropriate settings.

The next stage of the project was a public act. Parker carefully placed the homely treasures in a linear form down the centre of a country lane to be flattened by a traction engine. As if a sacrificial altar, the country lane yielded the fragile objects to the powerful force, which transformed the valued utensils to a series of useless distorted silhouettes. Of her destructive ambition Parker remarked:

I wanted to change the objects' meaning, their visibility, their worth, that is why I flattened them, consigning them all to the same fate. As a child I used to crush coins on a railway track [ and] kept the metal slivers, as an imaginative currency and as physical proof of the destructive powers of the world. I find the pieces of silver have much more potential when their meaning as everyday objects has been eroded.<sup>4</sup>

Significantly, by virtue of her vicarious involvement, Parker remained literally separate from the devastation that she brought about. She avoided directly attacking these 'maternal' objects herself - it had to be a driver and a machine that would act on her behalf. Interpreted, it is as if she called upon this patriarchal force (nominated by her as 'the destructive power of the world') to become the agent of her phantasized attack on the 'maternal body'.

That is to say, psychodynamically, Parker presents us with a situation in which the interior/maternal (symbolized by the valued everyday objects) is overpowered by the external/paternal (symbolized by the brute force of the traction engine). Is this not, then, a re-enactment of an aspect of the 'depressive struggle' - that time when the child omnipotent, but literally weak, in phantasy invokes a giant to wreak its vengeance? With so much devastation it is not surprising that Cornelia Parker was moved to resurrect these flattened objects. Suspended on fine silver wires, hardly off the ground, the remnants were interwoven into a new form comprising thirty circular platters (a metre in diameter) signifying the coins to which the title of the piece referred. The silver thus shimmered again, though not on a mantelpiece or diningtable this time, but in a gallery which invited us to honour the transformation.



**Figure 2. Cornelia Parker, *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, 1988. Installation commissioned by the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham. Photography: Edward Woodman. `Coins' suspended in the gallery.**

It is interesting that before this second stage of the event Parker again selected certain items to be photographed - now not as prized possessions of a polished home, but instead where the object's degradation is emphasized: for example, a fruit bowl, flattened, discarded, lies abandoned on the floor of a derelict house. Significantly these two sets of contrasting images are displayed side by side which ensures that the 'split between good and bad' is clearly accentuated. We are presented with the object at one time idealized and intact, while at another repudiated and broken - a deliberate cleavage rendered by so much force.

Yet, when we consider the objects' reconstruction in the gallery, it appears that this split was not irrevocable, since Parker, through the structuring of the exhibited 'coins', ensured that the fragments would be valued again. The flattened remnants delicately interlinked to complete each 'piece of silver' certainly gained a new significance. For with the damage harnessed each object can be seen to transcend its degradation. In keeping with the *Venus de Milo*, again it is as if the object's flaws remain its strength - its losses an integral part of the whole. Further, both projects gain their 'life' from a virtual death: the *Venus* literally unearthed and the *Pieces of Silver* literally raised from the ground.<sup>5</sup> Parker acknowledges the object's transformation in the following way:

*Thirty Pieces of Silver* is about materiality and then about anti-matter. In the gallery the ruined objects are ghostly, levitating just above the floor, waiting to be re-assessed in the light of their transformation. The title, because of its biblical references, alludes to money, to betrayal, to death and resurrection.<sup>6</sup> (See Figure 2)

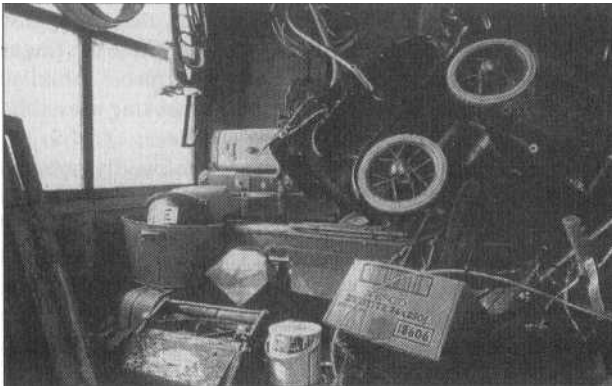
Thus we can see that Parker certainly bids for the object's potential transcendence. Through a Kleinian lens, it is as if she recalls the dissolution of her own infantile depressive conflict by making it sculpturally manifest. The whole exercise can be viewed as the process by which the artist re-establishes her triumph over the original 'depressive struggle' - the infant drama of destruction and restitution becoming resolved once again. What we find is that the paranoid/schizoid split has been healed, and that since the ruined silver objects are ultimately experienced as remarkably intact, it is not difficult, as Parker anticipated, for us to reassess them in the light of their transformation.

Turning now to Parker's other dramatic event, *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*. At first glance this project seems to follow a parallel pattern of destruction and restoration as that of *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, yet I will argue that the features of this installation can be interpreted as psychodynamically more primitively aggressive.

*Cold Dark Matter* opens with a massive explosion: a garden shed, filled with unwanted household objects, was blown to smithereens. To do this Parker transported the shed and its contents to a School of Ammunition in Oxfordshire. Again she called upon the giant to wreak her vengeance, except this time it was not a machine of great force that she employed, but the British Army with all its destructive expertise. There is no doubt about the sinister aspect of this piece which is aptly expressed by a journalist who witnessed the event:

The shed stood incongruously alone in a field, smelling reassuringly of creosote but oblivious to its fate. Inside were tools, a bicycle and a pram, together with suitcases full of household junk. Hanging from the ceiling, and looking rather like a giant conker, was a fistful of odourless, white plastic explosive.

One small press of a button, one hell of a mess. Splinters of wood were blown 100 yards away and, where once a harmless shed had stood, the mangled remains of buckets and spades were now scattered. Amid all the debris a euphonium lay from which it was just possible to blow a final, strangled note - the 'Last Post' perhaps.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 3.** Cornelia Parker, *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*, 1991. Installation at Chisenhale Gallery, London. Photography: Hugo Glendinning. Shed and contents before explosion.

It is clear that this reporter experienced a 'fate' that seemed far more final than the dereliction wrought upon the flattened silver wares of *Thirty Pieces of Silver*. There is a tone of shock in his account as he tells us how these familiar household objects and container were brutalized. Yet Parker saw this destructive act as simply the first stage of her sculptural process.<sup>8</sup> She gathered the twisted, scattered remnants, reclaiming them again to serve as a formal exhibition.<sup>9</sup> Displayed as particles within a *tableau* of wreckage the distorted remains were shown to be virtually irretrievable and, I would argue, more starkly fragmented than the elegantly fused 'coins' of *Thirty Pieces of Silver*. Parker's account of her presentation is as follows:

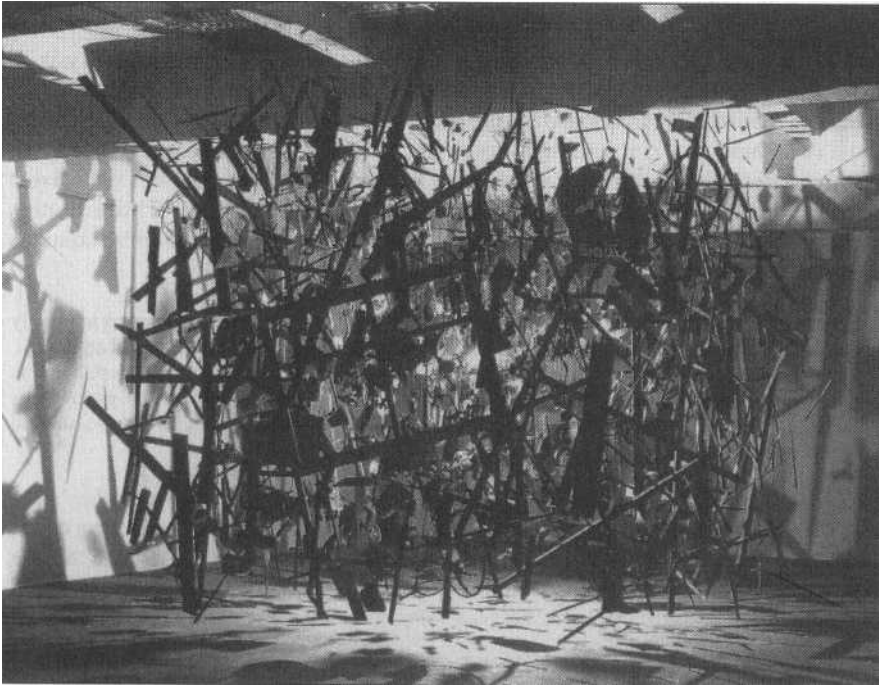
[The exhibition will be] a tableau/still-life in the gallery. The arrangement will consist of a group of revered objects, fragmented and dispersed by an explosion... Using the debris, the explosion will be recreated by suspending the fragments on wires in space. The arrangement will be considered and formalized in quiet contemplation of a destructive act.<sup>10</sup> (See Figure 4)

When we interpret the statements, 'revered objects', and 'quiet contemplation of the destructive act', we could say that they reveal Parker's concern for the extremity of her aggression. Her motivation to repair provided a spectacle in which the many fragments (including the splintered wood of the original shed) were suspended in light. Each piece of debris was delicately choreographed in such a way as to complement the others nearby. The wood of the shed comprised an ephemeral outer casing poignantly reminiscent of its former function. A central feature of this construction became the magnified shadows which, cast by the intense light, mirrored the splintering of the explosion.

Again photographic record was used to convey the force of the destructive act. But this time, the images seemed more purposefully candid in revealing the impact of the explosion. A gouged heel of the fragmented boot reminds us that an actual leg could have been shot to pieces. The broken toys, buckets, spades, etc., all suggest that damage can be insurmountable. And that, even in circumstances where the fragmented object is fetishized and revered, the experience is one of irredeemable annihilation.

I do not see *Cold Dark Matter* as a restorative project, seeking to establish a conquest over the depressive struggle, as in the case of *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, since Parker's attention to destruction and restitution is far more profoundly polarized. This is a project which demands that the whole edifice be blown apart and disintegrated, and that the remnant be held up as a dismembered counterpart of its original form. It is an event that enshrines each piece of debris but offers *no resurrection*. I would argue that *Cold Dark Matter* stems from the realm of paranoid/schizoid splitting which brooks no resolution, for after all we are asked simply to mourn the object's finitude.

In other words, my view is that *Cold Dark Matter* is not a project in which the reparative energies predominate, as in the case of *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, rather the creator's oral and anal impulses overshadow this abject ritual of mutilation. That is to say, our ultimate experience of *Cold Dark Matter* is the enormity of the Army's blast, gratifying our recall of primal destructive phantasy of which each ruptured article, distorted and splintered, remains a fetishized effigy. You might argue that the *tableau* of wreckage, with its lyrical lighting, does in fact create a transformative whole. I will counter this claim by citing Winnicott's statement about working with psychosis, which to me exemplifies the paradox of this display. The primary task for the person who is in this primitive emotional state, he tells us, is to retrieve their identity from an internal world which is in 'bits and pieces'.<sup>11</sup> Is this not the task that Parker sets before



**Figure 4.** Cornelia Parker, *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*, 1991. Installation at Chisenhale Gallery, London. Photography: Hugo Glendinning. Remains of shed suspended around a light within the gallery.



us as we hunt for the identity of the original shed within the spectacle of fragments suspended before us?

Moreover, surely it will be confirmed that this unbridled attack upon the garden shed derives its impetus from paranoid/schizoid phantasy when Klein's analysis of early infant rage is more fully considered. In the paranoid/schizoid position Klein conceives the infant as dominated by an experience of primitive envy: a state of unrest so overwhelming that it arouses a desire to attack the mother's creative potential. She maintains that it is the mother's capacity to nurture which generates this aggressive phantasy, since all that is good is seen to be locked inside her body. This primitive infant aggression is described as the desire to *scoop out and destroy* the entire contents of the mother's body:

The phantasized onslaughts on to the mother follow two main lines: one is the predominantly oral impulse to suck dry, bite up, scoop out and rob the mother's body of its good contents... The other line of attack derives from the anal and urethral impulses and implies expelling the dangerous substances (excrements) out of the self and into the mother... These excrements and bad parts of the self are meant not only to injure but also to control and to take possession of the object.<sup>12</sup>

I shall now interpret the garden shed as symbolically the 'body of the mother' and, in so doing, Parker's actions become more starkly implicated. Her introduction of the *dangerous substance* - semtex, designed to *devastate its internal objects*, can then be seen to constitute primary aggression. But it might be argued that this analysis would overlook the presence of the father because, after all, 'male objects' (tools, boots, etc.) were equally subjected to brutalization. The interesting point about such an objection is that it touches upon perhaps the most controversial aspect of Klein's thesis of the paranoid/schizoid dilemma. We are told that the infant, in this 'position', firmly believes that among the objects contained within the mother's body there is the object of the father, and therefore, in phantasy, both parents are the subject of primal attack.

According to the child's earliest phantasies (or 'sexual theories') of parental coitus, the father's penis (or his whole body) becomes incorporated in the mother during the act. Thus the child's sadistic attacks have for their object both father and mother, who are in phantasy bitten, torn, cut or stamped to bits.<sup>13</sup>

Many might balk at the extremity of Klein's analysis of early infant aggressive desire, yet in the light of Parker's high level of destructive intent it could appear to be entirely apposite. It should not be forgotten that this is an artist who engaged the British Army to act out her drama of desolation which led to a 'tableau of wreckage'. Moreover, when we consider the process of dereliction we can say that each object was 'wrenched from its safe environment' by the 'dangerous substance' ensuring its final submission to the artist's 'control and possession'. In addition, it is undeniably the case that all the blasted objects carry signs of being 'torn, cut and stamped to bits'.

If it is therefore agreed that the destructive initiative of *Cold Dark Matter* derives its impetus from paranoid/schizoid phantasy we could anticipate that the sheer volume of devastation within this production would outweigh any restorative ambition. Indeed, the degradation of *Cold Dark Matter* is such that, with few exceptions, it is impossible to identify the original items within the final display. Of course destruction also features in *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, yet in this case the identity of the broken object is hardly ever in question.



**Figure 5. Rachel Whiteread, *House*, October 1993-January 1994. Commissioned by Artangel. Photo © Edward Woodman.**

Psychologically, then, Parker's enactments of destruction and restitution present us with the two opposing perceptual tasks which confront the infant in the early stages of life. The enshrined fragments of *Cold Dark Matter*, deriving from paranoid/schizoid splitting, speak of the part-object, in absence of the 'whole'. The constructed coins of *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, deriving from depressive resolution, speak of the whole object, in recognition of its missing part. Moreover, this psychodynamic contrast between the split state of the paranoid/schizoid position and the integrative/reparative dynamic of the depressive position can be underlined by drawing attention to the titles of the works themselves. For while *Cold Dark Matter* is surely the title of the body deceased, uncompromised in its mortality, *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, the currency of Christ's betrayal,<sup>14</sup> cannot but signify the body's salvation through transformation.

I will now turn to the work of Rachel Whiteread in order to profile a certain parallel that can be drawn between Whiteread and Parker in their deconstruction of the domestic object. Both artists are of the same genre, near in age, and have gained recognition as leading contributors to the field of current Fine Art debate. Whiteread has already been awarded the coveted Turner Prize of 1993, while Parker was nominated the favoured candidate for 1997. In contrast to Parker, Whiteread has received considerable media attention and her work is generally much discussed. One psychoanalytic text which is often associated with Whiteread's work is Freud's paper on 'The Uncanny',<sup>15</sup> but it is not my intention to discuss this well-trodden route here. Rather I shall continue in a Kleinian vein as a means by which to illuminate further the enactment of destruction and restitution within art process.

In certain ways Whiteread's process appears to be more firmly split than that of Parker's. Whiteread's sculptures, consisting primarily of casts, mark the body's relationship with domestic experience, tethering the space of those objects that surround us. That is to say through 'lost form casting', intimately probing the underneaths and insides of domestic objects with plaster, resin and concrete, Whiteread flushes out those concealed cavities that encompass our day-to-day lives. This is a paradoxical approach which deploys classical sculptural methods in the service of radically deconstructing the environment so that ordinary things such as bath, wardrobe, bed, table, etc. become inverted replicas of the object destroyed in the casting process. This is a split activity from which the positive image of each cast represents the former object's absent usefulness. For Whiteread has canalized the original object for her creative purpose and, like chaff discarded, the object severed from all function defies all potential transformation. We contemplate instead Whiteread's mute negatives which, in ghostly reminiscence, speak of that which has been annihilated.

To emphasize the link between Whiteread and Parker I will point to a discreet connection between these contemporary women in terms of one item that they choose to destroy. Significantly the hot water-bottle, that quintessence of domestic comfort, becomes a focus for their attack. Further, can we not observe here an ironic symmetry that can be drawn when we consider the damaged water bottles that these artists present to us? Parker offers us a photograph of the bottle, torn and useless, retrieved from the debris of the exploded shed, to announce the devastation of her project. Whiteread offers us a resin cast, the original bottle discarded, as an interior substitute of the 'water' that a bottle would contain. It is as if the robustness to which Whiteread's negative cast refers is the image of the water's place that Parker's poignant tattered comforter can no longer hold. In other words Parker's ruptured leaking fragment, set in contrast to Whiteread's bloated resin interior, represents the hot water bottle as split object in

two aspects of its absent part; each work mirroring the bottle's devastation. Faced with a forlorn remnant on the one hand, and ossified resin 'liquid' interior on the other, we are offered an object split from all comfort and thereby all domestic function.

Looking more broadly at Whiteread's work we find that her insistent probing and stripping appear to know no bounds. For after embodying the spaces of a range of familiar objects she turned her attention to the interior of the container itself. Casting in concrete, first a room (*Room* 1993), and then an actual house (*House* 1993), she finally rendered the entire domestic environment impotent. The enormity of casting *House* is that on which I will focus here. Standing as a monument to the lives that it once contained, it permitted neither entrance nor exit and thus became Whiteread's most controversial project. *House* defied inhabitation, offering instead doors, windows, fireplaces, stairs, etc., in negative relief, as a forbidding testimony of this artist's destructive act (see Figure 5).

As with the suspended fragments of Parker's blasted shed, *House*, as concrete edifice, called us to engage with a futile search for the whole object that was lost through Whiteread's elaborate intervention. What is particularly interesting, though, is that *House* is an object of a double death: the original house and the cast interior equally meeting their sacrifice. Part of the public's engagement with this project is that it is the one event in which Whiteread contributed to a film of the entire process. Excerpts from her video diaries allow us to witness all the stages of the house's demise: the preparation of the interior, the onslaught of liquid concrete, the sacrifice of the building's exterior, and the unveiling of the cast substitute.<sup>16</sup> We witness, too, the final act of demolition by which Bow Council sealed this project's fate. Significantly, after its devastation *House* has not been forgotten since, in consequence of its absence, debate continues as to the efficacy of its former presence.<sup>17</sup> Since its demise the question much exercised is, why did *House* produce such controversy that it should be so harshly wrenched from Whiteread's hold? It is difficult to reconcile the fact that Bow Council should abolish all traces of such a leading piece from this artist of Turner Prize fame. The park now empty in its desolation reminds us that this extraordinary sculptural ambition cannot be separated from the twists and turns that its history was compelled to take. It was as if the very concrete declaration of the home's internal spaces evoked the desire for its destruction. For here stood the edifice of maternal space, bursting through its walls, revealing its rugged intimacies, exposed and laid bare to passer-by. Thus *House* is a monument to those crevices and folds that contained us in our infancy.

I propose that Whiteread's act of casting this Victorian house's interior can appear as uncompromising as if the womb itself had been cast. Since we were offered a nurturing environment which, inverted, eschewed all possibility of containing life and, discomforted by the fact that all the openings were firmly shut, one experienced closure in the fullest sense. While this appears not to be the Kleinian 'scooping out', or robbing the mother's body of its good contents, it certainly seems to be their annihilation by sealing them in; as one art critic has stated, 'Whiteread's work is about death and its defeat'.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, other Kleinian imagery comes to mind as we watch Whiteread's filming of the flurry of interior dismantling, stripping and scouring that she deployed to secure her successful casting. She even acknowledges the malevolence of her act in Kleinian terms by referring to her team as, 'like locusts, and little animals which [had] got in and are gnawing it'.<sup>19</sup> So too, as with Parker's shed, Klein's 'dangerous

substance being expelled from the self into the mother, with purpose of taking possession', again was enacted. But not semtex this time, rather the pouring in of tons of lethal concrete by which the dwelling's hidden cavities were harnessed in the service of Whiteread's omnipotent control. In short I propose that primitive oral impulses dominate Whiteread's work - an interpretation in keeping with her expressed fascination with the film *La Grande Bouffe* (that gross drama of insatiable feasting) which she claims to have seen as many as four times.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, by Whiteread leaving us *House*, a mute substitute of the former inhabitable building, with access forbidden, with every entrance sealed, her act of invasion and possession could not be more complete. Is this not the re-enactment of the infant wish to sabotage the maternal body in order that its creative capacities be finally repudiated? And since the symbolic father's access must be denied, this inhospitable concrete cast signifies a phallic sentinel warning of castration and death. We can say, too, that the vengeance of the father was provoked, because after all Bow Council, as patriarchal law, challenged Whiteread's right of possession. For, notwithstanding an initial agreement that *House* be simply a temporary installation, many people petitioned for its survival.<sup>21</sup> Whiteread's fame was spreading and, ignoring all pleas for *House's* reprieve, the Council made certain that it was nevertheless demolished. We can note the determination to rid the park of the offending object when the chair of the Board that passed the decision commented sarcastically, 'As far as I am concerned, any of the thousands of towns and cities across Europe that would love to have *House*, are welcome to it.'<sup>22</sup> A cryptic view endorsed by a local resident who revealed to the press the problematic of this building's paradoxes by stating 'If this is art then I'm Leonardo da Vinci'.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, we meet in *House*, as with Parker's explosion of the shed, a death which brings no resolution as exemplified by the continuing controversy as to the efficacy of the project. Furthermore, the empty space in the park (where *House* once stood) perpetuates the split. *House* is remembered also in split terms: viewed either as martyred ideal wrenched from its glory, or simply a malevolent obstacle which deserved annihilation. Comments on its destruction bear this out, on the one hand Bow Council's ruling has been likened to the attack on art during the Reformation,<sup>24</sup> while, on the other hand, its demolition has been reported as a necessary 'relief from pain'.<sup>25</sup> Further, Whiteread's unprecedented conflicting awards equally point to the split object that *House* has become, since she received £20,000 for her achievement as the 'best British artist' from the trustees of the Tate Gallery, only to have her success dramatically repudiated by a gift of £40,000 from a group who claimed her to be the worst.<sup>26</sup> I would argue that this act of public ridicule cannot but suggest that the edifice of *House*, in contrast with the coins of Parker's *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, indicates that this work resists all transformation - for the whole object can never be sight, in concrete or symbolic terms.

Finally, as a means by which to look beyond the Kleinian frame, I will briefly turn to Damien Hirst, a contemporary of Parker and Whiteread, who is also of Turner Prize fame (1995) and is perhaps the most controversial in his destruction/restorative process. Hirst is internationally renowned, his public persona being as much a part of his artistic process as is the work itself. He challenges our sensibilities by the aestheticization of the spectacle of death. An embalmed shark, sheep, cow and calf confront us from the tanks of their eerie formaldehyde graves, in solemn sacrifice to Hirst's private cause. This is a world that we have never seen - let alone imagined.

Surveying this environment of suspended putrefaction, it is the cow and the calf which seem to be the most extreme. Entitled *Mother and Child Divided* (1995), this installation comprises four sections in which the cattle, literally cut in half, are framed in large glass tanks for our inspection and contemplation. These dissected animals are exhibited with the purpose of revealing the intricacies of ducts, vessels, and bones, normally forbidden our gaze. The tanks containing each halved carcass are placed in such a way that the animal can appear still complete, save for the cleavage of the split. The cattle are set apart sufficiently for the viewer to walk through the narrow space that divides each flank and, like Jonah travelling through the body of the whale itself, we are embraced by the animal's extraordinary severed interior. It is a rare moment of intimacy - the magic of seeing inside - which contrasts the original violence of the schism set before us.

We could say that this installation, in which we find the body of cow and calf literally cleaved, exemplifies Klein's thesis that primitive phantasy has as its object the destruction of the maternal body. Yet, to interpret Hirst's extraordinary exposition as triumphant annihilation appears to me to be a far too obvious solution. Rather, I would argue that this work is in contradistinction to the devastation of Whiteread's house and Parker's shed since, ironically in this case, the animals, although dissected, appear not to be essentially sabotaged. This is verified by the fact that many writers report their experience as one which suggests that both cow and calf are viewed as virtually intact. Notwithstanding the reality that it is the carcass of a cow we see violated, it is clear that Hirst's desire is not to rob, sabotage, or to scoop out, or to seal up, instead it is simply a wish to expose all the richness that the body contains. This is borne out by the lyrical comments which accompany much report on this project. For instance, we are told that the interior is like 'landscape' and that the piece 'provokes unaccustomed feelings of empathy and identification'.<sup>27</sup> Further, although a literal split has occurred, we cannot say that we feel the need for resolution. Is it possible that Hirst presents us with a paradox which the Kleinian thesis cannot contain? For *Mother and Child Divided* remains a split object, but not a split subject - inside *is* outside - the whole object *is* revealed - death is transcended. Is this then the Lacanian Real, or is Damien Hirst simply *Away From The Flock*?<sup>28</sup>

### *Acknowledgements*

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### *Notes*

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2. Klein, Melanie (1988) *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945*. Virago Press, London, pp.284-6.
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4. Parker, Cornelia (1990) *Exhibition Catalogue*. The British Art Show, London, p. 88.
5. See Fuller op. cit. Chapter 11.
6. See Parker op. cit. p. 88.

7. Marlow, Tim (1991) Explosions of artistic endeavour. Review in *The Times* (14 September 1991).
8. Ibid.
9. The Chisenhale Gallery, London, exhibited this work and presented the catalogue, photographer Hugo Glendinning, in September 1991.
10. Parker, Cornelia (1991) *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*, exhibition synopsis.
11. Winnicott, Donald (1945) Primitive emotional development. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* Vol. 26.
12. Klein, Melanie (1977) *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963*. Delta, New York, p. 8.
13. Ibid. p. 219.
14. This refers to the money paid out to Judas Iscariot: the disciple who received 30 pieces of silver as a reward for betraying Christ. It is believed that this is the act which led to Christ's crucifixion and thereby his resurrection.
15. *Excavating 'House'- Uncanny Encounters*, ICA Video.
16. *House* was commissioned by Artangel and Becks. A video of all aspects of the installation was produced by Artangel and Hackneyed Productions (1995) which includes footage from Whiteread's own video diaries.
17. Public debates in various programmes, press articles and public seminars.
18. Archer, Michael (1991) Ghost meat. *Artscribe* Vol. 87, Summer, pp. 35-38.
19. Artangel video op. cit.
20. Rachel Whiteread in conversation with Iwona Blazwick.
21. The sponsors through Artangel secured the condemned Victorian building which became *House* for Whiteread's purpose. The building was reprieved from Bow Council's programme of demolition on the expressed agreement that it would be finally eradicated. But, on the basis that the park was empty and Whiteread's work was seen as a well-appointed investment, protest immediately arose when such steps were taken towards keeping the former undertaking.
22. Counsellor Eric Flanders, Chair, Bow Parks Board, letter to *The Independent*, London, 17 November 1993, quoted in *Parkett* Vol. 42 (1994), p. 104.
23. Kloster, Ulla, 'If this is art then I'm Leonardo da Vinci', *East London Advertiser*, 4 November 1993, p. 15.
24. Graham-Dixon, Andrew, 'I don't know much about art but I know what I hate.' *The Independent*, London, 24 November 1993, p. 26.
25. Local resident, Mrs Gulsun Bodur described *House* as 'a pain [she wants] to get rid of'. *The Independent*, London, 26 October 1993, quoted in *Parkett* Vol. 42 (1994), p. 104.
26. The day after the announcement of Rachel Whiteread as the Turner Prize winner the press broadcast that Whiteread had been derisively offered double the amount of money as a matter of protest against her achievement by K. Foundation.
27. Kent, Sarah (1994) Shark infested waters: *The Saatchi Collection of British Art in the 90's*. Catalogue, Zwemmer, London, p. 37.
28. *Away From The Flock* (1994) is the title of Damien Hirst's famous embalmed sheep.