

Allegories of the Present in Lili Dujourie's Oeuvre

1492

24th July

*Andrea held a reception today in the still unfinished house. He has lived there since the autumn of '90 when he returned from Rome. But only today was the inscription put in place 'Here on this spot in the world, Andrea Mantegna continued to build his house' [...] I am not saying that I hope the house is never finished. I am not saying that, but deep down, it is exactly what I hope for. I am attracted to the ill-defined transitions between Art and Nature, and when I see the way the young apprentices who come here to learn drawing and perspective fare better in depicting the leafy vines that wind around the base of a column than they do with the column itself, then I am deeply delighted. And if I see them mistake flowers and fruit for different sorts of coloured stones, I am more delighted than ever. Then I see how strong the physical world is when it reveals itself obliquely to artists' educated perceptions.*

Inger Christensen, *The Painted Room*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Inger Christensen, *The Painted Room – A Tale from Mantua*, transl. from Danish by Denise Newman, Harvill Press, London, 2000, pp. 47, 49. Originally published as *Det maledede værelse*, Brøndom/Aschehoug, Copenhagen, 1976.

I would be tempted to describe Lili Dujourie as a Flemish Old Master of the present. And I am also tempted to describe her as an allegorist.<sup>2</sup> I shall seek below to examine these ascriptions, which Lili Dujourie at the same time constantly evades in her own distinct fashion.

At first glance, the artist's works may seem purely contemporary, but what does *purely contemporary* mean against the backdrop of contemporary art shaped by conceptuality and discursivity? Thinking in terms of an allegorical understanding, it signifies having an acute sense of historicity concerning art and being able to connect to this memory of art, appropriating and transforming it in a specific way. It means creating a short-circuit between the sedimented memory of a repertoire of history and the present. This process involves working in fragments, renewing and reviving forms or fragments of forms and also 'pathos formulae'<sup>3</sup>, which assume a new and different meaning in a hypostatized form when removed from the totality of an enclosed iconographic context.

How could my assumptions prove tenable in the light of an oeuvre that is so diverse and rich with allusions in its use of materials, media and genres? And in the light of an oeuvre that in addition operates with very specifically codified art historical rhetorics. Think of the door, the window, the mirror, or anamorphoses, still lifes, trompe-l'oeil, not to mention allusions to film (Nouvelle Vague), literature (Nouveau Roman) and to earlier as well as more recent periods of art history—Minimalism for example, a term, which in its broadest sense, can certainly be attributed to Lili Dujourie's early sculptures. In the late 1990s, she reinstated this Minimalist vein allegorically in her works in lead—however, with the clear notions of displacement and transposition which are the hallmarks of her meta-sculptures and more generally of her entire creative output. For precisely these reasons Dujourie's oeuvre cannot be categorised as belonging to any specific movement; instead it serves an eidetic art with a pronounced interest in materiality and themes that foster, if you will, a process of reanimation.

<sup>2</sup> I have recently asserted elsewhere that Ree Morton is an allegorist, Cf. Sabine Folie, 'Performing Sculpture, Performative Language – The "Allegorical Impulse" in Ree Morton's Work', in Ree Morton, *Be a Place, Place an Image, Imagine a Poem*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Aby Warburg, *Der Bilderatlas – Mnemosyne*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2000, pp. 4f. Cf. also Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'Image survivante, Histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 2002.

## Ambiguity in the Material

Before looking at some phases of Lili Dujourie's oeuvre, I would like to make a few comments on her extraordinarily diverse forms of articulation, which, though diverse, stand in consistent relation to one another. This coherence is achieved by the persistent web of cross-references that she weaves and the way in which she picks up again and again on certain forms and materials that constantly re-emerge at different points in her work from the late 1960s until today. Above all, I would like to stress her tenacious examination of materials as 'means of expression' and to emphasize how she deploys material and rhetorical 'formulae' to unleash their allegorical potential, besides revealing the inherent ambiguity of material and imagery. She makes employ this ambiguity in order to run through the modes of representation contained within a material and to explore the way in which it is transposed metonymically in each artwork she creates.

'Testing' the material's characteristics and potential really does seem to be imbued with a sense of experimentation and exploration in Dujourie's art. Considering her oeuvre from its inception to the present day, the permanent alternation between 'soft' and 'hard' substances is particularly striking: After her early works in steel from the late 1960s, she went on to create delicate pieces on paper and collages (*Stilleven*) around 1976, then *Roman*, another series of works on paper, around 1979. One phase in her production of video works began at roughly the same time, and continued until 1981; around 1980 she experimented with slide projection (*Zonder Titel*), using just two slides, which she projected beside each other ('hung') like paintings—an entirely static, lit photographic reproduction. The nude with blue drapery in this work foreshadows the next phase in Dujourie's oeuvre, which might be described as highly allegorical theatre, above all in the mid-1980s. Frames (and therefore images) play a role, and endless quantities of velvet, spilling out of the (framed) pictures and swirling around the frames as decoration. This phase is generally described as 'Baroque' in the light of its style and postmodern eclecticism.<sup>4</sup> Fabric was also velvety long before the Baroque; Rogier van der Weyden or Jan van Eyck showed great mastery in depicting the material. Dujourie's subsequent works from around 1987 in marble, a material diametrically different to velvet, seem austere and rational, with architectonic, and also 'framing' props such

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Mieke Bal, *Hovering between Thing and Event: Encounters with Lili Dujourie*, Kunstverein München, London/Brussels/Munich, 1998.

as doors, screens and boxes. This was followed around 1993 by works where both hard and ostensibly soft materials were used: these are ‘cabinets’ or delicate screen-like stelae supported by thin legs or long tables reminiscent of refectories in monasteries, with white fabric lying or draped over them like towels. It is only when the viewer moves in closer to examine the surfaces’ tactile qualities that it becomes apparent that they are imitations. The fabric is made of plaster, a material which is initially a powder, hardened when water is added, metamorphosing as if in an alchemical process. This transitive quality is similar to Dujourie’s subsequent works from around 1997 in lead: an essentially soft metal, which retains and conducts heat, allowing an analogy to the body, while also appearing cold, forbidding and deathly. Next come filigree works in metal (2001), followed by works in clay (2008), another soft/hard material that only hardens when fired. The most recent works pick up once again on paper and collage: the delicate works in papier-mâché from the *Maelström* (2009) and *Meander* (2009–10) cycles and the paper flowers, *Ballade* (2011). In a kind of interlude in 2009, a series of videos pick up on works from the 1970s: moving still lifes, always depicting the same motif—the sea.

### Stylistic Tropes of ‘Meta-Painting’

*The frame separates the image from everything that is non-image.*

Victor I. Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image*<sup>5</sup>

*Gothic emphasizes the framing members. It has firm structural supports, lightly filled in, whereas the baroque puts the emphasis on the material and either omits the frame altogether or makes it seem inadequate to contain the bulging mass it encloses.*

Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, 1888<sup>6</sup>

In 1980, long before Gilles Deleuze drew attention to the Baroque, and especially the fold, in the context of reconsidering the era and its thinking, Lili Dujourie had already turned her work towards drapery, for example in *Zonder Titel*. This

<sup>5</sup> Victor I. Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, p. 30. Originally published as *L’instauration du Tableau – Métapeinture à l’aube des temps modernes*, Méridiens-Klincksieck, Paris, 1993.

<sup>6</sup> Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, Collins, London, 1964, p. 54f. Originally published as *Renaissance und Barock*, Ackermann, Munich, 1888.

is also evident in her five earlier videos of *Hommage à ...*, (1972) as a deliberate arrangement of the bed sheet and the artist’s body. The camera defines the frame around the image, as is also the case in *Zonder Titel*. In the latter work, the image still has the projection-like quality of a slide, but the movement, which is scarcely present in the videos either, is now entirely frozen: the naked woman holding a pose entirely transformed into a tableau vivant, an Old Master painting of unknown provenance. The only difference in the doubling of the image is that that the pose changes in relation to the first picture, the woman in the second image seems to be turned towards herself, her head bowed, sunk in reflection, doubled, as a commentary on the state of existence of the ‘woman in front of a blue curtain’.

In the mid-1980s, in conjunction with various kinds of frame, or without any frame at all, this drapery features in a somewhat excessive manner within an allegorical theatre of frames with velvet fabric. The frame divides the image from everything that is not-frame, Stoichita observes.<sup>7</sup> It is the element of order that makes it possible to distinguish the world of the image and of *referencing, signifying* from the sphere of everyday life. The frame itself does not belong to the ideal world depicted, although it enables its representation. In Dujourie’s oeuvre, the frame paradoxically allows the depiction of a void. It shows nothingness with something—on the verge of ostentatiously taking leave of the image—velvet draperies that snake around the frame or have sheared off from it and float freely in the room. Alternatively, as in *La Traviata* (1984), the picture’s content spills out in the form of a limp black piece of velvet like a detached canvas, revealing a red background, surrounded by a monumental frame set up against the wall—like an ironic, post-modern and highly eclectic commentary on the post-Minimalist ‘frame’ of Robert Morris’ *Untitled (Fiberglass Frame)* from 1968.

In escaping the picture like this, the velvet drapery proclaims that it is a *parergon*, an ‘accessory’ to the image, yet, a sit only partially forms the content of the image as well as being the only content of the image, the referential medium, the *parergon*, itself becomes the content of the image; in other words, it becomes the instrument of a meta-art that reflects upon the conditions of its own production or existence. The allegory was long held to be an annex, a supplement, not substantially inherent to the artwork but rather something

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Victor I. Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image*, op. cit.

applied, making it impossible for form and content to coincide, in contrast, for example, to the symbol. In his essay rehabilitating allegory in postmodernism, Craig Owens argues that not only is allegory inherent to the works of art on a built-in meta-level, but also constitutes art's added value in the first place.<sup>8</sup> The allegory at work in the case of our 'frame with drapery' usurps the place of the work itself, inasmuch as it can, as an accessory,<sup>9</sup> *parergon*, or appendage; it replaces the work itself and can be read as its essence. In this case, the *parerga*—frame and fabric—constitutes the content of the picture, which however de facto portrays a blank space. The role the *parergon* normally assumes, fulfilling a deictic function as an appending structure by showing what is 'made' and not real, is purloined here in a paradoxical inversion. This means that the reference to *how* reality is made vanishes, and as a consequence representability—or rather, the scope of using meta-critical means to refer to the conditions determining representation—is cryptically subverted.

The Baroque anamorphosis, as an instrument of encryption and eo ipso as a procedure critical of representation, also filters through in altered form into Dujourie's investigations. Think of *Between Black and Pink* (1986), where a non-defined convolute of draped material is pressed between two panels, on one side a smooth black forbidding surface and on the other a pink, corporeal yet artificial surface, which one can see, with the surrounding space, in a mirror affixed to the inner face of the surfaces that the material is pressed against. The mirror is considered to be *the* instrument of anamorphic depictions. The effect of this mise-en-abyme is heightened by the arrangement of four of these pairs of surfaces to form an architectonic and spatial formation. Or, coming back to Gilles Deleuze: 'We have remarked that the Baroque often confines painting to retables, but it does so because the painting exceeds its frame and is realized in polychrome marble sculpture; and sculpture goes beyond itself by being achieved in architecture; architecture discovers a frame in the façade but

<sup>8</sup> 'Allegory is extravagant, an expenditure of *surplus value*; it is always in *excess*', Craig Owens notes in 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism' (1980) in id., *Beyond Recognition – Representation, Power, and Culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1992, p. 64.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. studies by Victor I. Stoichita, *The Self Aware Image*, op. cit. Cf. also the studies on the *parergon* by Jacques Derrida, *Truth in Painting*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987, p. 54. Originally published as *La vérité en peinture*, 1978: 'A parergon comes against, beside, and in addition to the *ergon*, the work done [*fait*], the fact [*le fait*], the work, but it does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside. Neither simply outside nor simply inside. Like an accessory that one is obliged to welcome on the border, on board [*au bord, à bord*].'

the frame itself becomes detached from the inside and establishes relations with the surroundings so as to realize architecture in city planning.'<sup>10</sup> We shall see later how this process of stepping beyond the image via sculpture also encompasses architectural space.

In *Portret* (1987), Dujourie begins to deploy marble, a material indubitably associated with Renaissance, Baroque and Classicist art. Here again there is an anamorphic or metapsychological component; if you put your head inside the box, where small mirrors are applied, you can see your own face, your self but from an unusual angle.

While drapery still functioned in the mid 1980s as ersatz players in a theatre without actors, almost as a performing sculpture, around 1988 eclectic shadow players also take to the stage (*Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbras*, 1988) or ladies meet for an ambiguous game on Vermeerian floors that morph into a chessboard (*Jeu de dames*, 1987). The titles themselves are allegorical and also shed light on the function of applying a particular language of forms and a particular materiality: marble. At the same time, a further art historical trope is introduced: light and dark, black and white as metonymic equivalents for light and shadow, *the* parameters of the game of representation. The way in which Dujourie deftly deals with this Baroque/Classicist monumentalism and Post-modern eclecticism is breathtaking, particularly in her transposition of light and shade from painting to sculpture: one might almost say that it is a virtually one-off phenomenon in art history.

As often, Lili Dujourie's titles draw on the world of literature. In *Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbras* (1988) she references Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IV, 'Aeneas in the Underworld', Verse 268: Aeneas and the Sybil wander through the Palace of Dis (*domos Ditis*) to the threshold where the allegories of evil (*terribiles visu formae*) dwell. Dujourie captures this moment of transition. In dramaturgical terms, the four variants of precisely this scene, with only slight differences in the outlines of the figures and the projection of the shadows, are essential to allow the element of time to become clear—an element that shows the duration of reflection, the inner unease, uncertainty, ambivalence as to how the journey may continue. In addition, the threshold is marked as a metaphor of a *rite of*

<sup>10</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold – Leibniz and the Baroque*, Continuum, New York/London, 2006 (first published by The Athlone Press, London, 1993), p. 141. Originally published as *Le Pli – Leibniz et le baroque*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1988.

*passage*: ‘The motif of the door is [...] very old: traditional, archaic, religious. Entirely ambivalent (as a place of passage, and as a place that cannot be passed) and used in this sense in the entire structure of mythic constructions. [...] The door is a trope of opening — but a contingent, a threatened or threatening opening that is able to give everything but also to take everything. In brief, it is always governed by a generally mysterious law. Its opening or closing itself is a *double-bind* figure. [...] And human forlornness, the desperate search for the ‘meaning of meanings’ or the ‘real present’, all of this often takes the form of doors that are to be passed through or opened.’<sup>11</sup> This is not the first time that a threshold or frame appears in Dujourie’s works, sometimes in form of a mirror; it is also a symbolic presence in the early video works (*Effen spiegel van een stille stroom, Sanguine, Spiegel, Une Tache de silence, Sonnet, La Passion de l’hiver pour l’été*).

The artist achieves a kind of ‘symbolic operation’ in *Ibant obscuri* by means of the chiaroscuro of light and shade (expressed through the materiality of the marble), conjured up with the assistance of a hybrid, sculptural-architectural setting — the frame on the wall, the figure in the image and the staircase with shadows that step outside of the picture as the draperies did earlier.<sup>12</sup> The passage of time and the ability to withstand duration also become topics in Dujourie’s remarkable marble sculptures, where two-colour marble panels often take highly distorted windows, openings or perspectival spaces and, by applying these to the wall, enter into a relationship with the floor, where these elements are continued. The theme reappears in the endless passage of time in front of windows in her early video works or her more recent video work, once again made up of a series of (still) shots, *Oostende* (2009).

*Mille et une nuits* (1993) and *De ochtend die avond zal zijn* (1993), works that followed a few years later, are also black and white. Their reference to the Old Masters is more distinct, at the same time they have a Surrealist touch. White cloths hang or lie across black stelae or long tables, but as mentioned above the cloths are imitations, they simulate softness but seem to have been taken from Old Masters’ still lifes, however, they are not painted but transformed

<sup>11</sup> Cf. studies by Georges Didi-Huberman, *Was wir sehen blickt uns an – Zur Metapsychologie des Bildes* (1992), Wilhelm Fink Verlag, Munich, 1999, here pp.227f. Originally published as *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde*, Éditions du Minuit, Paris, 1992. This quote was translated by Helen Ferguson, the translator of this essay.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the studies by Michael Baxandall, *Shadows and Enlightenment*, Yale University Press, New Haven/London, 1995.

into sculptural forms in plaster. They recall 17th-century trompe-l’oeil paintings by Cornelis Norbertus Gijsbrechts, in which the reverse of the painting — actually a *parergon*, an accessory — becomes the main subject-matter of the painting itself and therefore elements which usually constitute the distinction between painted surface, frame and canvas are set on the same level, painted in a thoroughly illusionistic style. This further develops the dimension that, in the mantle of allegory, most of Dujourie’s works takes the form of theory apparatus (in the videos) or critique (in the sense of an investigation) of the modes of representation of various media phenomena. This includes exegesis and commentary,<sup>13</sup> coupled with an awareness of historicity that Dujourie draws from the appropriation of certain rhetorical strategies in art history, in particular those which examine the conditions of art itself, including a series of techniques related to the psychology of perception. Dujourie’s practices repeatedly come back to the deictic function of certain forms, especially in their already transformed form, for the revival of what exists as a given, coupled with citations of forms and how they are interpreted, produces something entirely different through repetition, an intermeshing of the history of ideas, as it appears inscribed in art, with a radical present and presence.

The meta-critical technique manifested in the depiction of a cloth that is not a cloth encounters the rhetoric of paradoxes and deceptive manoeuvres popular in the 17th century, deployed to make us look more closely at the actual conditions shaping what we see. The origin of these depictions of the ‘void’ — *De Nihilo* — in Gijsbrechts’ oeuvre and his portrayals of what generally forms the ‘background’ underpinning this to conjure up a perfect illusion is entirely stripped of magic. On the one hand through his suggestion that the ‘true’ image is to be found on the reverse of the picture and on the other hand in his demonstration that images are ‘made’, are representations of reality and not reality itself. The origin derives from the *vanitas* theme, that is to say from the portrayal of nothingness, of death. However, as Martinus Schoockius demonstrated, the portrayal of nothingness always points to the existence of something.<sup>14</sup> This brings us back once again to the more or less monumental, exaggerated frames which purport to represent something and in doing so only point to a blank space, a nothingness in their interior. This

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Craig Owens, ‘The Allegorical Impulse’, op. cit. p. 53. Owens refers to Northrop Frye, who asserted that the allegorical work tends to stipulate how it should be interpreted.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Victor I. Stoichita, *The Self Aware Image*, op. cit, p. 279.

also applies to the late works in marble, such as *Meroe* (1987), where the view into the room simultaneously seems to be a view out of a window, which in turn reveals only emptiness.

The austerity announced in the marble works of the late 1980s is intensified in the late 1990s in the emotionally moving works in lead, the *Luaides*. Their emotional impact is certainly due to the lead, a material with multiple connotations: just think of lead coffins or ammunition. Joseph Beuys chose lead for its alchemical quality and the way in which it resonates with the chill of death, as well as being soft and heat conducting. In the mid-1960s Robert Morris also created *Leads*, a series of works in this material, notably after visiting Germany and meeting Beuys.

An aspect taking us back to the Old Masters is Ghent, where the artist lived, a very specific theme. Just imagine how often the artist might have stood in front of the closed panels of Hubertus and Jan van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* (1432). I do not know whether this theme actually inspired the artist, but I would like to describe it nonetheless, because it again sheds light on the transformative dimension and allegorical potential of Lili Dujourie's art: a representation of the Annunciation, depicted on the closed wings of the altar: the two inner sections of the altar's exterior, the space between the angel and Mary, is defined by mullioned windows and painted in beautifully pared down, almost grisaille tones. On the left, a vista is visible, with a window looking out onto a landscape that mirrors and repeats the division of the mullioned windows in a kind of mise-en-abyme representation, just as the wing of the altarpiece is divided into two and is bisected again by a pillar. To the left of this is an allegory of Mary's virginity, a 'still life' with an number of washing utensils—a jug of water, a shiny, almost reflective bowl and to the left a towel hung up to dry: the towel of *Dieplood* (1996). Allegorical depictions are sometimes accused in art history of being cold, distant from the object to which they refer. There is no notion of coldness in *Dieplood*; on the contrary, the paradoxical coolness of the van Eyckian motif triggers a resonance with the backdrop of reflection, when we find ourselves facing this series towels: the timbre is tenebrous, leaving one breathless.

Turning to other works in steel and lead, such as *Grijze velden* (1997) or *Fields of Sorrow* (1996), we find a sculpture, only seemingly Minimalist, imbued with a similar allegorical charge—the undertones tend towards delusion and they breathe the spirit of Old Master art. There is a funereal energy, oscillating between transition, an elegiac melancholy mood of looming death and a musty clerical chill.

## Rhetorics of Affect Triggered by Absence and Emptiness

*Now A ... has come into the bedroom by the inside door opening onto the central hallway. She does not look at the wide-open window through which—from the door—she would see this corner of the terrace. Now she has turned back towards the door to close it behind her.*

Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Jealousy*<sup>15</sup>

There is no need to go as far back as Vermeer's interiors and women by windows, or to Samuel van Hoogstraten. It suffices to go back to the 19th century. Probably one of the most intense and quiet observations of women by windows or in interiors can be found in Vilhelm Hammershøi's infinite permutations on this theme. He seems never to tire of it, as if he needs the 'series' to understand the silence of the rooms and the people sometimes found in them. In a similar vein to this rhetorical figure which stands for composed inflection in Hammershøi's work, Dujourie's women are also usually depicted indoors, with their backs turned to the viewer. The women in these interiors appear to be looking out of the window introspectively, yet somehow in a state of absolute detachment. Rather than the view outside being a 'window to the world', it seems instead to open a window to the women's inner being, therefore inverting the interior space. In both Hammershøi's and Dujourie's art the women appear to be pacing up and down in the rooms, walking through open doors into other spaces and returning again, staring into mirrors or standing idly in front of fireplaces, inward-looking, thinking, not thinking, outside of time—distanced from space and time, yet entirely present.

As Craig Owens observes, allegory serves as a link between a visual rhetoric of the past and the present, characterised by the linguistic structures of rereading, revisiting etc. Allegory draws its force from the reciprocity between visual and verbal, i.e. the visual becomes a rebus to be deciphered. In addition, allegory is characterised by the syntheticity of transgression, eclecticism, hybrids of genres and materials, which foster a kind of indecipherability (Paul de Man), a process of increasing opacity. The allegorical work points to something outside itself, is in itself an abstract and in this respect is on the other hand also a

<sup>15</sup> Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Jealousy*, Grove Press, New York, 1959, p. 3. Originally published as *La Jalousie*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1957.

pure ‘emptied-out’ form. All of the forms deployed by Dujourie adhere to this allegorisation, mostly using the means of anti-naturalism, because this is precisely the vector that allows the introduction of a level of meta-reflection, or what Stoichita calls ‘authorial self-reflection’. Anti-naturalism is however not the *only* factor involved, as for example insightful studies on representation in Louis Marin’s painting show us.<sup>16</sup> The techniques involved in this self-reflection also include irony, which Dujourie uses with great relish, and parody.

When considering Dujourie’s works, one often feels — albeit at a second glance — transported back in time. It is similar to Christensen’s novel, which reads like a fictitious or anonymous 15th-century novel — a meta-narrative that bears us along on a journey through time, carrying us back into a poetic adaptation of the past and at the same time turning that past into the present. The ‘physical world’ addressed in the introductory quote may well be powerful. It is the polarity of abstraction in Lili Dujourie’s oeuvre that makes us aware of this. The re-shaping of visual language in allegory embodies what ‘culture’ can achieve; it is perhaps thanks to culture’s ‘alienating’ and ‘appropriating’ interventions that ‘nature’ actually becomes accessible to us, while on the other hand overcoming the distinction between nature and culture specifically by articulating this divide.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Louis Marin, *On Representation*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2001 (originally published as *De la représentation*, Seuil/Gallimard, Paris, 1994); id., *Von den Mächten des Bildes*, Diaphanes, Zürich/Berlin, 1993 (originally published as *Des pouvoirs de l’image*, Éditions du Seuil, 1993), id. *To Destroy Painting*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago/London 1995 (originally published as *Détruire la peinture*, Éditions Galilée, Paris 1977).