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DAY-DREAMING

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Abstract: What follows is a revised version of a paper given in *Making Space* on 25 February 2012. I have included some of the images I showed then, but my extraneous remarks (which I am unable to resist), my improvisations (as I responded to the audience), and my resistance to keeping to time are missing. I have retained the sense of direct address, for which I would ask the reader's forgiveness. The text constructs, in a somewhat aleatory way, an analogy between day-dreaming, writing, and the production of what some may choose to call a work of art, making the gentle suggestion (at times a little insistent, voice raised) that it is itself a work of art. There is a tour of the artist's working process in the studio, as I make an object and write an essay, in which there is a move from Freud to Winnicott, in an exchange on the creative process, with a sudden incursion of Lacan, supplemented by appearances from Mallarmé, Zola, Proust, and several of their fictional characters. The model of a body – a torso – is gradually clad and the attention is drawn to folding, fixing, and material. The material moves in other directions, and finally achieves its object (one might say) as it is displayed and worn.

Unusually I spent an entire week in my studio a few weeks before the conference for which I was writing this paper (on the day of the event that luxurious week had receded into the past). I had habitual duties, which never disappear entirely, and as usual was beset by the anxious checking of emails, while being shored up by Radio 4. I had seven days to write this paper. I set myself a particular structure, a task: I would make a work I had been thinking about making for quite some time; a work I had described to others for several months as though it really existed, and which I had thought about often, as though thinking about it would bring it into existence. I had deferred its making, holding on to its image for as long as I could, retaining the image of a perfect object yet to be produced, an object in waiting, one might say, in attendance but fully

formed in an idealised image. I imagined a nice scene: I would write for a while, then move to the other side of the room and work for an hour or two, making an object that would become an image for the conference and engaging in a different sort of writing, a note-taking. I would thus be able to produce a parallel text: the paper, given (as one says), and another text, which might be called a working diary, which would be seen projected on the screen during my presentation and read, as I read over or next to it, viewed alongside images of the work as I made it. I imagined that this would produce a threefold reading, each part adjoining the others, in mutual support or indeed, provoking some opposition or at least an oscillation between them, one that might evoke the situation and sentiment of production – the place and feeling of making a work of art, however it is figured. And I would end up with an object that I might describe as a structure of adornment that both conceals and accentuates a feminine sexual identity (should no-one else do so first).

I was a woman day-dreaming, at least when I started making the work I showed as I spoke, when I started to write my paper. I imagined my text as well, for it is – in its way – a work. However, as so often happens, neither work nor text ended up in quite the way I imagined, oh no, not at all. I fear I may have to leave it to my reader to extend the analogy between day-dreaming, writing, and the production of what some may choose to call a work of art, into which I am going to launch into in a moment. I do not think I have done what I was asked to do, even at this third attempt. Patricia Townsend, on receiving the first draft of my paper, replied to me in a most delicate manner. She felt that while there were many possible points of discussion between Kenneth Wright and me, these were somewhat technical, concerned with rather different theoretical stances. She would like me to address the *experience* of making a work, she wrote in response to my text, and that *really* had been my intention. I felt I had failed, so when starting to speak, I asked my audience to forgive me in advance for my self-declared failure, as I spoke to them about day-dreaming, writing, and the making of a work.

Sigmund Freud begins his essay of 1908, *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming*, as follows:

> We laymen have always been intensely curious to know […] from what sources that strange being, the creative writer, draws his material […] if we ask him, the writer himself gives us no explanation, or none that is satisfactory; and it is not at all weakened by our knowledge that not even the clearest insight into the determinants of his choice of material and into the nature of the art of creating imaginative form will ever help to make creative writers of us (Freud, 1908: 143).

Yes, where do one's ideas come from? In 1907 Freud delivers this paper as a lecture in the rooms of the Viennese publisher and bookseller Hugo Heller, a member of the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society and the second publisher of Freud's works. Ninety people are present. His lecture is developed into a longer essay, and published a year later. It is a lovely account of phantasy, pleasure, and play, and it is not the first time he has addressed this subject, an insight into the nature of creative writing. Indeed, in his essay on Wilhelm Jensen's short story *Gradiva,* Freud remarks that writers draw upon sources that have not yet been opened up by science (Freud, 1907: 8). In 1906 Freud writes his analysis of Wilhelm Jensen's novella *Gradiva* in Lavarone. He examines the mental processes of the characters, through application of the psychoanalytic method, as though it is a case history, and sometimes he seems to forget they are fictitious. Carl Jung draws Freud's attention to the story (though it was probably Wilhelm Stekel who did so first), described by its author as a 'Pompeian phantasy' Jung, too, had been tempted to apply the method of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in analysing the dreams in the story (Jones, 1955: 382). He had approached the author, to ask if Jensen knew much about psychoanalytic theories, and was given a brusque dismissal. The source of the story lay in the writer's imagination, the writer replied, somewhat shirtily, but Freud wonders if the writer's disavowal really stops at that.

Donald Winnicott writes that while it is possible to make interesting, even important comments on the life of an outstanding personality in the creative arts, weaving a relation between work and the events of infancy (like Freud, he gives the example of Leonardo da Vinci), such studies 'tend to irritate artists and creative people in general' (Winnicott, 1971: 93).

In 1907 Freud writes a postcard, dated 24 September, from Rome to his wife, Martha. He has received a card from Martha, in which she expresses her pleasure at his gift of a small cabinet, and he advises that a small mirror frame should also be arriving soon. He invites her to think of his joy in encountering – or re-encountering – after a long solitude, a beloved face. It is, however, a rather one-sided recognition, for he is referring to the *bas-relief* of the *Gradiva,* steeping lightly, high up on a wall in the Vatican. I worried that there would not be enough silk to trail on the floor after I had finished folding, pinning, and finally stitching; that the ankles of a

woman who does not exist would be exposed, but the skirt must be prevented from dragging all the same. The skirts of the late nineteenth century barely skim the ground.

There is no story to interpret or analyse in the essay on *Writers and Day-Dreaming*, unless it the story of a child occupied by play, a child who behaves like a writer – for in playing, the child imitates adult life, or least, what the child imagines about it. The child does not have to hide its desires, unlike the adult who has to act, to live in the world, who has to give up play, while some of the desires which give rise to phantasy certainly have to be concealed (they may be childish or impermissible). Freud remarks that nonetheless we know quite a lot about phantasy, even if

people make a mystery of it. He lists some of the characteristics of phantasy: a happy person never phantasies; only the unsatisfied person has a phantasy; unfulfilled wishes drive the phantasy; the phantasy, like a dream, is the fulfilment of a wish. Wish is really better translated as desire, no? But the English translators prefer the more palatable sense of 'wish', which is as hopeful as it is desiring, but without the urgency of desire, which carries a sexual connotation, which we must admit is not always desirable.

Indeed, wishes – or desires – are either those of ambition or they are erotic, especially in the case of young women, whose ambition is absorbed by 'erotic trends'. The eighteenth-century Swiss physician Samuel-August Tissot writes that any girl exposed to novels at a tender age would be certain to succumb to hysteria several years later, in the deferred action of improper reading. Louyer-Villermay's *Traité des maladies nerveuses ou vapeurs, et particulièrement de l'hystérie*

et de l'hyponchondrie, lists the unfortunate characteristics of hysteria, which include 'an ardent imagination […] a heart too tender or easy to inflame […] the tendency to stay too long in bed […] the abuse of perfumes, truffles, mussels, vanilla, cinnamon, perhaps strawberries' – (does not Anna Freud dream of strawberries, calling out in her sleep—she is 19-months old— 'Anna Freud, strawberries, wild strawberries, scrambled eggs, pudding…' [Masson, 1985: 276]) – and then, at the end of the list, there is 'the reading of novels' (Louyer-Villermay, 1832: 30–49). There is a passion for silk and velvet, too, but I cannot be sure Louyer-Villermay remarks upon this, and I wandered away from writing and sewing to refer to a book about Stéphane Mallarme's fashion journal, *Le Dernière Mode,* which he almost single-handedly wrote and edited, from which I learn that the bustle (for this is what I am making, as you may be beginning to gather) is also called *le cul de Paris* [the arse of Paris] (Furbank and Cain, 2004: 25). It proves distracting. 'Marguerite de Ponty' prophesises an absolute revolution in the Bustle (the capital letter is hers, or indeed, his). Mallarmé's magazine, with the wonderful fashion correspondents of Madame de Ponty and Miss Satin (an English 'miss'), is as exhilarating as Zola's novel *Au Bonheur des Dames* [*The Ladies' Paradise*] (Zola, 1883 [1995]: 409), in which I read the following: 'on neighbouring stands, there were bustles of horsehair and jaconet, their enormous taut rumps forming extensions to the long rods and their outlines appearing grotesquely indecent.'

A little later I read 'the life of the flesh, scented and warm with the fragrance of love […] and of which the slightest flutter, the pink of a knee glimpsed in the depth of the whiteness played havoc with the world' (Zola, 1883 [1995]: 410), but perhaps I am – I was – digressing. I noted from another ladies' journal, from 1886, the complexities of construction of the silhouette, the endless variations on the theme: two skirts, over which a tunic or a drapery, in the form of a *polonaise* – a coat-gown whose skirt fronts are pulled back over an underskirt – was arranged over the hips, ending in the *pouff* over a bustle *derrière*. The arse of Paris looks like a shrouded birdcage, 'which sticks out monstrously out behind her' (Gibbs-Smith, 1960: 7).

In July 1908 Freud writes to Anna of the welcome prospect of gathering strawberries – and mushrooms – on holiday in the Dietfeldhof: they will have some lovely walks, yes, they will read and write and wander about in the woods. Occasionally, while on holiday at Koenigsee, Martin Freud remembers that his father would put his writing aside and take his family on an excursion: they would pick strawberries in a grove behind a chapel at St Bartholomae, and 'the place had the happiest effect on him, allowing him to abandon his usual reserve and even to become a little playful' (Freud, 1958: 98). I stopped work at this point, the work of writing and the work of making, tired of both, to take the dogs for a walk (I found I had written 'for a work' but you will note I have corrected it, though I am drawing your attention to it). I broke off, escaped …

Winnicott writes that playing has a place and time, but it is neither inside nor outside; it is not part of the world that has to be recognised as external, outside control. He writes: 'To control what is outside one has to *do* things, not simply to think or wish, and *doing things* takes time. Playing is doing' (Winnicott, 1971: 55). Playing may be what one does on holiday, a deviation from work, simultaneously a displacement and a condensation, with many activities and indeed, overlapping desires. I thought that I would hold the folds of the form, which by now were taking shape nicely, with *points de capiton*. This felt satisfactory, especially as I would be able to get in a Lacanian reference, as much as demonstrating my knowledge of the technical terms of upholstery, echoed in the figure before me. The term is translated sometimes as 'quilting point', or sometimes as 'anchoring point'. It may also refer to an upholstery button. The *point* is a knot

that keeps a shapeless mass of stuff from moving about, and Jacques Lacan uses it as the image for a moment in the signifying chain when the signifier stops the endless movement of signification, producing the illusion of fixed meaning and the retroactive effect of punctuation. It has the aspect of metaphor as well, folding signifier into signified (Lacan, 1966: 805). It is a full stop, a button, a knot, and a stitch. It holds the wad of language as it holds the wad of stuffing, the *capiton* of wool or silk. To *capitoner* is to pad. A *capiton* is each division on the surface of a quilted fabric, and in particular, a padded seat (rather than the mattress that is often translated as the example). It is also a coarse silk used for various purposes.

Freud (1908: 143) writes that phantasies change with every change in situation, receiving – and it is a lovely expression — a 'date-mark' from every new impression, like the stamping of a library book or the franking of a letter. It is always a relation to time, hovering between three moments, between the current impression, a moment in the past (a memory of an earlier experience), and the day-dream or phantasy, marked with memory and the occasion that provoked it, and projected to a future and the fulfilment of a wish. Freud writes that 'past, present and future are strung together […] on the thread of the wish that runs through them' (Freud, 1908: 147). Phantasies or day-dreams, they are like dreams, those one dreams at night, and dreams are phantasies, like those one imagines during the day or while writing or reading or in the studio, making work or thinking about making work. Conscious or unconscious, they are wish-fulfilments.

Freud asks if the creative writer may be compared with a day-dreamer, one who has his or her phantasies, erotic or ambitious or both, in the light of day. He leaves aside writers who 'take their material readymade', in favour of those who appear to originate their own material (1908: 149). He chooses rather those less-pretentious authors of romances, novels, and short stories, who have a wide circle of readers. At the centre of each story is a hero, one with whom the reader will either sympathise or observe at a distance, and the hero will escape every misadventure, overcome every adversity, and every woman in the story will fall in love with the hero. It is not at all like reality, but it does its work, holds the reader in thrall to the unfolding of the story, the drive of narrative. Something happens in a potential space, neither inside nor outside.

Freud points out that in some day-dreams, the dreamer contents herself with a spectator's role, just like the writer of the novel. Winnicott proposes that it is not the content of play that is of importance but the state of 'near-withdrawal' of the child, which is like the concentration of an adult. The child inhabits a place it cannot easily leave, and to which it cannot allow intrusion (1971: 93). I am irritated when I am interrupted: by neighbours, family, external demands like barking dogs, an impromptu studio visit, even the ring of the telephone, yet at the same time I welcome distraction; I am disappointed when no-one calls.

The writer's skill lies in the overcoming of feelings of repulsion in the reader, the displeasure the reader may feel on reading phantasies, the boredom. Is that why I have resisted the description of experience? I was – am – boring when I am working. I bore myself, but it is as though I am waiting, even when acting. Boredom, it is clear, masks anxiety. The day-dreamer, recounting her day-dreams, would repel the listener at worst, and at best, the listener would feel nothing. The day-dreamer, in turn, would feel shame, shame enough to conceal the day-dreams, erotic or ambitious. The writer, Freud suggests, her play, her private day-dreams (erotic, ambitious,

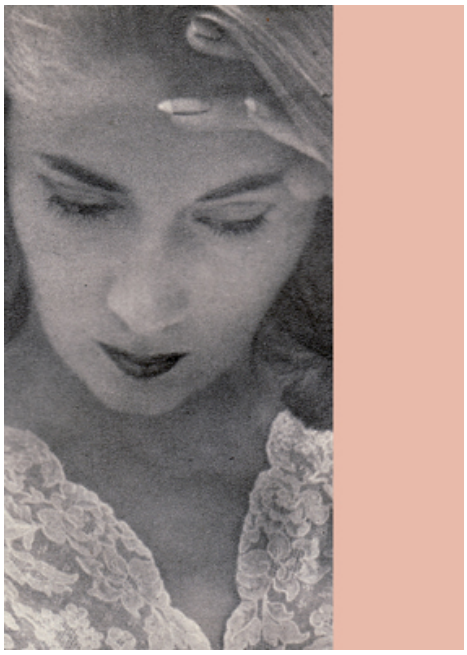
oscillating between both emotions or combining them in an excess of affect), and in this representation, the reader or viewer may find pleasure, enjoying his or her day-dreams 'without self-reproach or shame' (1971: 141). Playing, writes Winnicott, reaches is own 'saturation point'; that is, the capacity to contain experience. It is self-regulating, on the whole, for excess threatens parental anger or a prohibitive social reaction. Winnicott insists that the subject of playing has been too closely linked with masturbation 'and the various sensuous experiences', and that the pleasure of playing is arrested 'if the physical excitement of instinctual involvement becomes evident' – if playing does not stop, it is nonetheless spoiled (1971: 53). In *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Freud writes that as soon as certain activities, including writing ('which entails making ink flow out of a tube onto white paper), are eroticised, they must stop: they are renounced (Freud, 1926: 89–90). Winnicott proposes that playing involves the body, because objects are manipulated, but also because 'certain types of intense interest are associated with certain aspects of bodily excitement' (1971: 69).

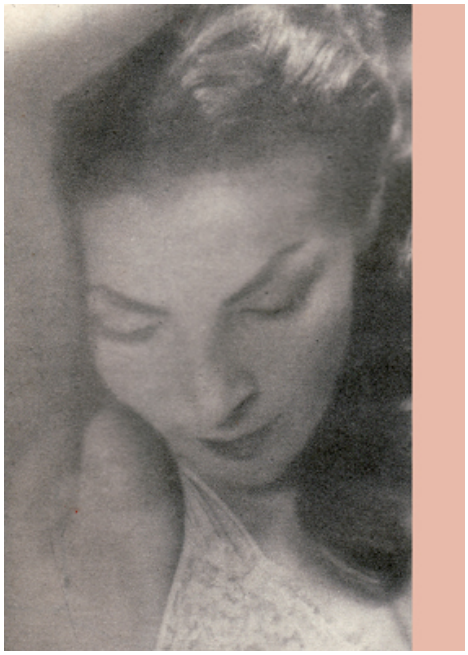
Some months ago, walking along the road and chatting to a young artist (the conversation had been solely about her current work and I was beginning to be bored), I announced that I was making a bustle, which I called – incorrectly – a *pouff,* as well as an attractive set of Molotov cocktails from empty scent bottles (those of *Allure*) and silk wedding tulle. This was a complete lie. I made up both on the spot – or rather, lied that I was making them but I do not know (I really do not know) if I was indeed thinking about them or if they occurred to me at that moment. I know for sure that I have had a postcard of the abandoned Molotov cocktails from May 1968 for at least two years, propped up in a number of places in my studio, and at one point I thought it lost. I know also that I had bought six metres of silk douppion (made with the thread of two different silk worms, whose cocoons are spun so close

together that the fibres are tangled) in a shade called blush, and had been distracted by French tulle in the shade of pale pink, French organza in couture blossom, French chiffon in blush, of which I also acquired expensive lengths. In what I have been working on, thinking about generally and at times, most precisely (for silk douppion must be cut carefully, for it has no give in it at all), *habiller* is to dress or decorate, and articles may be concealed under the guise of something else – this is trumpery. But wait, this may not be true – I think now that I recollect already having the bustle in mind when I bought the silk for something else, my usual sense of economy, of good housekeeping and frugality decisive in the extravagant purchase (I bought it first to line three *vitrines* for an exhibition).

Yet silk in other forms has haunted me for several years, such as in my re-photographing of photographs from lingerie journals of the 1950s, in which to the cropped and enlarged photograph a strip of colour is added, extending the image further. Each woman is ecstatic; the touch of silk against her skin is enough to make her faint, like those kleptomaniac patients of Gaëtan de Clérambault, for whom the squeaky rustling sound of silk as it was rubbed provided the most intense sensation (de Clérambault, 1908). Kleptomania was seen as a modern and feminine disease, a new neurosis of perverse desire, a sexual disorder at the heart of capitalism.

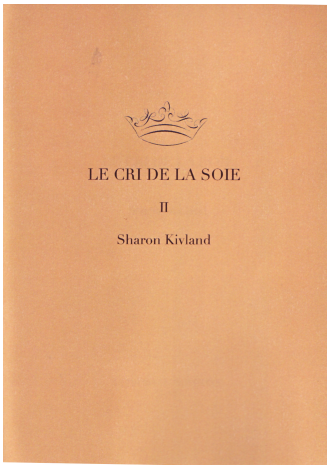
This work became a small book, one that is rather uncomfortable to regard in a public place. Cheaply produced, the images have a strange sheen, producing a blind spot and rupture, the effect of a screen as an object that reflects the gaze.

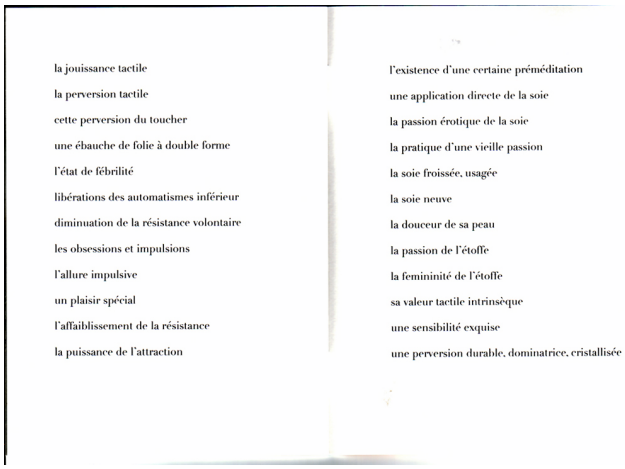




This work gave rise to another booklet in which the speech of kleptomaniac women interviewed by de Clérambault is entangled with a medical analysis; the resulting text is an insistent and extended cry of fetishism for silk – an erotic passion, tactile and *jouissant*. V.B. says that the contact with silk is superior to its sight and that while she would like to sleep in silk, it's not her style; that's for women who are seen in bed. She says that contact is better than sight, but the sound of silk exceeds both; its rustling excites her, she feels herself getting wet; no sexual pleasure equals that for her (de Clérambault, 1908: 46). *La soie a un froufrou, un cricri* (I did not translate the French words when speaking, but remarked it was unnecessary to do: the meaning is clear in the sound of the words, rustling and crying out, but a month later I met a young woman at another conference

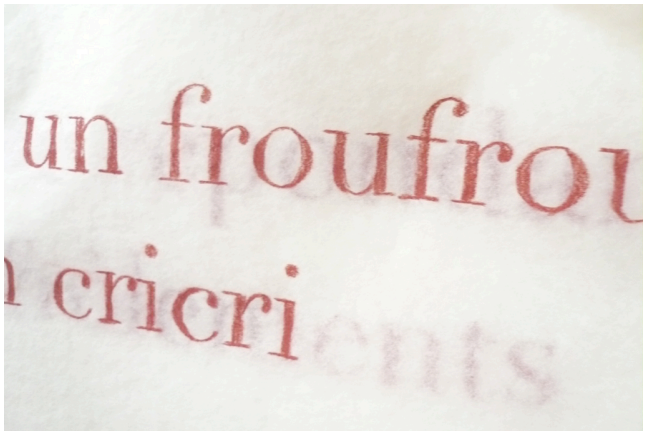
who had been present at this one – she asked me for a translation, for she had been at a loss to understand me). I took care to lift the silk from the floor while working but noticed that the grosgrain ribbon, a taffeta weave with a heavy weft, characterised by its ribbed appearance and dull lustre, had been sullied despite my efforts.





The colour or colours find an echo in the lovely packaging of the scent *Allure* by Chanel (frequently a point of reference in my work), which 'like all Chanel perfumes […] has a rich and complex composition. Fresh and citrusy at the beginning, it opens in lavishing floral heart to wooden and vanilla nuances and leaves lingering and fickle scent. It is best to describe it by the various accords it possesses: Fresh: lemon and bergamot; Fruity: mandarin and peach; Classical floral: the rose of May, jasmine, water lily, peony, magnolia, orange blossom; Woody: sandalwood and vetiver; Oriental: vanilla'. Yet this is a *modern* scent, designed by its nose, Jacques Polge, in 1996, and so I am wracked by instability and historical inaccuracy. It is a scent that has been reinterpreted extensively in skin creams, for it is associated with a creamy effect, soft on the skin, which while making *Allure* a little banal, also makes it easily recognisable, possessing a signature *(signé)*. It is found in hand- and face-creams, in soaps that

leave the skin clean, smooth, and supple, enhancing its beauty, leaving it just like silk; the advertising declares its purity. The bustle must find a logical place in my history, my catalogue, but I cannot yet insert it seamlessly.



Silk does have a *froufrou*, a *cricri*. I heard it all week, as I went from writing to making, dazzled by its oscillations, its irisations, and opalisations. It is a work I day-dreamed, and its eroticisation is never completely renounced, though it may be contained. What I made is not a *pouff,* which strictly speaking (and I would like to be strict, like an English 'miss') is the pad that supports the construction of the bustle. More properly, it is a *tournure,* which refers to the twisting and bunching of great amounts of cloth over the buttocks, a form that disappears in 1875, only to return in 1885 in a fantastically exaggerated way. *La Mode illustrée* describes those that have the form of the horn of a rhinoceros and others that resemble two spread wings at the small of the back, so angular and high that a tea service could be balanced there. The cloth becomes closer to that used in upholstery.

Now I have discovered the wonderful *vertugadin,* a structure of hoops that supports a skirt, though originally referring to the folds caused by the *panier* upholding the skirt, but before that a roll of fabric, bound tightly and inserted under the skirt, over the hips. It is, in English, a farthingale, I believe, and already, while I should have been revising my paper, following Patricia's gentle insistence that there is a conversation between her speakers, I started instead to make one, rolling silk over cotton wadding, binding it with grey silk ribbon, though the black velvet looks more professional – which is not quite the word I am looking for, of course. A *vertugadin* is also the amphitheatre of terraced grass of the formal garden of a French chateau, rising from the lake to the house. Yes, these things are structures.

Marcel Proust describes Odette's costume in *Remembrance of Things Past,* as giving her the appearance of being composed of different sections badly fitted together:

> to such an extent did the frills, the flounces, the inner body follow quite independently […] nowhere attached to the living creature, who according as the architecture of these fripperies drew them towards or away from her own, found

> herself either strait-laced to suffocation or else completely buried (Proust, 1913: 215).

In the making of a work (and I return to my perhaps obvious insistence that this paper is as much a work as is the representation or production of an object), I am left with nothing more than a residue of what I once imagined might be possible (such a wondrous possibility), yet there is nonetheless a yield of pleasure, offered by the artist or writer in the presentation of phantasies, designed to 'soften the character' of egoistic day-dreams. Let me offer *you* what I hope will be a moment of pleasure (shall we return to the erotic, to the question of desire?) as I come to the end of a paper, which may seem to have consisted of 'different sections fitted together'. This *is* how I work, like the hidden *vertugadin*, inelegantly translated as 'bumroll', the draped folds of silk, the terraced levels of a formal garden, the … I could not find the right words, but the *lacuna* does not dispel the image. I must remind you that, as Freud writes in *Studies in Hysteria*: 'An image that has been talked away' is not seen again (Freud, 1895: 96).

At the end I opened a box, which had been rather casually placed on a chair to the side, and took out the bustle whose making I had described and shown (I had not yet made the *pouff*). I put it on, tying the black velvet ribbons tightly around my waist, then stepped down from the small stage to take back my place in the audience. I have worn it and another made from black taffeta since and it causes one to walk in a certain way, even though the rest of the dress is absent. I wore it in the discussion that followed, then took it off, folding it back into its tissue paper (*papier de soie*). While several men in the audience commented on the erotic nature of the object and its affect, women complimented me on my dressmaking skills.

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