

# In the Fold between Power and Desire



In the Fold between Power and Desire:  
Women Artists' Narratives

By

Maria Tamboukou

**CAMBRIDGE  
SCHOLARS**

---

P U B L I S H I N G

In the Fold between Power and Desire: Women Artists' Narratives,  
by Maria Tamboukou

This book first published 2010

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2010 by Maria Tamboukou

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-2148-9, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-2148-3

*To Mihalis Zervos*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations .....	ix
Acknowledgements .....	xi
Introduction .....	1
Broken Narratives: Textual and Visual Interfaces	
Chapter One.....	53
Auto/biography and the Portrait: Rosa Bonheur and Anna Klumpke	
Chapter Two .....	83
The Art of Moving: Narrative Technologies in the Memoir of Sofia Laskaridou	
Chapter Three .....	103
Epistolary Geographies and Smooth Spaces: Unfolding Gwen John	
Chapter Four .....	131
Landscapes for the Self: Carrington's Letters, Drawings and Paintings	
Chapter Five .....	155
Narratives as Assemblages: Mary Bradish Titcomb	
Chapter Six .....	179
Narrative Pleasures: Ethics, Aesthetics and Politics	
References .....	193
Index .....	209





# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1.....	64
<p>Klumpke, Anna Elizabeth (1856-1942): <i>Rosa Bonheur</i>, 1898.  New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.  Oil on canvas, 46 1/8 x 38 5/8" (117.2 x 98.1 cm).  Gift of the artist, in memory of Rosa Bonheur, 1922  © 2010. Image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art  Resource/Scala, Florence</p>	
Figure 2.....	91
<p>Laskaridou Sofia (1882-1965): <i>Sea of Manche</i>, 1915  Oil on canvas (44x61.5 cm).  National Gallery and Alexandros Soutzos Museum,  Athens, Greece, no.3511</p>	
Figure 3.....	99
<p>Laskaridou Sofia (1882-1965): <i>In Front of the Fireplace</i>, 1914  Oil on canvas (100x81 cm).  National Gallery and Alexandros Soutzos Museum,  Athens Greece, no.3507</p>	
Figure 4.....	117
<p>Gwen John (1876-1939): <i>Self-Portrait nude sketching</i>, 1908-9  National Museum of Wales</p>	
Figure 5.....	132
<p>Dora Carrington (1893-1932): Painted ceramic, 1920  The Bloomsbury Workshop, London</p>	
Figure 6.....	155
<p>Mary Bradish Titcomb (1856-1927): <i>The Writer</i>, 1912  Oil on canvas (30x25 inches)  Photograph by Lisa Nugent, Photo Services, Museum of Art,  University of New Hampshire</p>	



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book emerges from a broader research project of writing a genealogy of the female self in art. This was indeed a long process that goes back to 2004 when a small research grant from the Art and Humanities Research Board gave me the opportunity to conduct archival work at the Manuscript Section of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre (HRC) at the University of Austin at Texas, the Archives of the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, UK, the Archives of the Rodin Museum in Paris, France, the Archives of the Massachusetts College of Arts in Boston (MassArt), USA and the National Library in Athens, Greece. This multi-sited archival work was further supported by two sabbatical periods that the University of East London granted me in the spring terms of 2006 and 2010. I am grateful to AHRC and UEL for supporting this research. I am also deeply indebted to the archivists of the institutions above. I want to thank in particular, Virginie Delaforge and Véronique Mattiussi at the Rodin Museum Archives, Paul Dobbs at the MassArt Archives in Boston and Tara Wenger at the HRC in Austin for being so supportive and extremely generous in offering time to facilitate my research. My thanks also to Sara John for giving me permission to get photocopies of the entirety of Gwen John's letters to Ursula Tyrwhitt. and to Anwen Pierce and Cyril Evans at the NLW for facilitating this process.

A number of people in galleries, museums and university libraries have been very helpful in facilitating the permission procedures for the images that are included in this book. I want to thank Emily Jones from SCALA London, Konstantina Plaka and Olga Metzafou from the National Gallery in Athens, Kay Keys from the National Museum of Wales, Tony Bradshaw from the Bloomsbury Workshop, Robert Brandeis from Victoria University Toronto, Christopher Green and Elizabeth Vose from Vose Galleries in Boston, Wes LaFountain and Lisa Nudgent from the University of New Hampshire. My thanks also to the Research Committee of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of East London and particularly to Naheed Khan and Jo Sherman.

Aspects of my work with women artists narratives have appeared in a number of journal articles and book chapters. Many thanks to the anonymous reviewers of these publications, who offered insightful comments that were later incorporated in the writing of the book.

My colleagues and PhD students at the Centre for Narrative Research at UEL have all been great and I have been extremely lucky to work with them. I am particularly thankful for their friendship and on-going collegial support to Molly Andrews, Erika Cudworth, Giorgia Dona, Cigdem Esin, Barbara Harrison, Linda Sandino, Corinne Squire and Angie Voela. Beyond UEL I want to thank Glafki Gkotsi and Eleni Hodolidou from the University of Thessaloniki in Greece.

Writing this book was a long process that has involved a lot of emotional work. Looking back the first person I want to thank from the very depths of my heart is my partner Mihalis Zervos, who has been supporting me non-stop not only on a personal level but also by practically being my research mentor, guiding me through the ups and downs of academic life since the years of my PhD study. My daughter Ariagni Adam has been a great inspiration in my life and work and more recently a wise advisor in my philosophical quests. I want to thank her for that. My thanks also to my family in Greece and particularly my mother Teta and my sister Anna.

My final thanks to Cambridge Scholars Publishing for endorsing the project of this book and particularly to Carol Koulourdi, Soucin Yip-Sou and Amanda Millar for carefully guiding me through the final stages of the manuscript.

## INTRODUCTION

### BROKEN NARRATIVES: TEXTUAL AND VISUAL INTERFACES

This morning I went by myself to the Louvre. Looking at pictures seriously is very exhausting [...] But I wanted to examine an entire school, Bellini, Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese, Giorgini, El Greco, Raphael, Velasquez and Rembrandt [...] I love being quite alone in Paris. It is an excitement I so rarely enjoy [...] All this is part of my new religion; to be more independent. I read by myself a whole chapter of Proust's life yesterday [...] I am now longing to get back to my painting for I have made several important discoveries in the Louvre which I want to carry out [...] I still think of Yegen [...] You have no idea what visual images mean to me [...]<sup>1</sup>

On January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1924, Dora Carrington, an English artist in the peripheries of the Bloomsbury group, was writing to her life-long friend and writer Gerald Brenan a letter expressing her thoughts about the pleasures of travelling, solitude, reading literature and painting. This short epistolary extract brings forward many themes that were important in the complex ways that women artists at the dawn of the twentieth century attempted to work upon themselves in search of a new mode of being or rather of becoming. Paris is of course prominently highlighted as the geography par excellence for such experiments in life and in art. Indeed space and movement across and within different spaces and places were important in the ways women artists were striving to redefine and reinvent themselves. Carrington is one of six fin-de-siècle women artists whose auto/biographical narratives and paintings I have studied, discussed and analyzed in writing this book. These women artists, namely Rosa Bonheur, Anna Klumpke, Mary Titcomb, Sofia Laskaridou, Gwen John and Dora Carrington cover four generations and come from four different countries: France, the USA, Greece, and the UK. What I argue they share in common is their passion for artistic creation which transcending the boundaries of their art motivates them to live an unconventional and beautiful life. In writing this book I have thus created a matrix of images and stories in *the*

*fold between life and art*<sup>2</sup> and it is unfolding their interface that I will now turn.

## Working with Stories as Multiplicities

“The world is full of stories [...] just waiting to be told”, Hannah Arendt has written. (1968, 97) In expanding the Arendtian proposition regarding the plurality and richness of the stories we are surrounded by, I would add that the world is full of stories not just waiting to be told, but also to be written, retold read and reread. As Roland Barthes has eloquently put it: “Those who fail to reread are obliged to read the same story everywhere.” (1974, 15) In this light, one of my arguments in this book is that we need to reread the stories that have revolved around women artists’ life and work, and challenge perceptions and clichés that still dominate the genre of artists’ biographies in general and women artists’ in particular.

Narratives have indeed become exceptionally useful tools for biographies and historical analyses, as they offer rich insights into how lives, stories and the making of history are intertwined in multifarious and complex ways. In flagging up the significance of “the narrative turn,” Norman Denzin has argued that “the study of narrative forces the social sciences to develop new theories, new methods and new ways of talking about self and society.” (2000, xi) However, approaches to narrative research vary according to the disciplinary field they are located in and the theoretical and epistemological frameworks they draw upon.<sup>3</sup> Such differences have opened up space for dialogic exchanges and interdisciplinary discussions and it is to these debates that I hope this book will contribute.

Thus, while recognizing the significance of narratives as useful analytical tools, we also need to identify problems with conventional biographies—artists’ amongst them—which draw on different, disparate and carefully selected bits and pieces of auto/biographical narratives and then reshuffle and reorder them, constructing a linear and clean version of “a life”, “history” and “the past”. Moreover in reflecting on the poetics and politics of artists’ biographies we need to be more attentive to the ethics of writing and reading about their lives, particularly so when making connections between their lives and their work. As Arendt has thoughtfully put it: “The connection of an artist’s life with [his] work has always raised embarrassing problems, and our eagerness to see recorded, displayed and discussed in public what once were strictly private affairs and nobody’s business is probably less legitimate than our curiosity is ready to admit.” (1968, 98)

In writing this book I have avoided the temptation to create sequential orders in otherwise discontinuous, broken and irresolute narratives, which was indeed the case with the majority of autobiographical documents I have drawn on: women artists' memoirs, journals and letters. Instead, I have worked with my archival documents in a spatial rather than chronological way, charting maps where the role of narratives as sites of story making has been delineated, analyzed and ultimately deconstructed.

Being attentive to the productive role of stories in their interrelation, I have thus worked both as an archivist and an analyst. My archive is rich and encompasses a wide range of stories, including auto/biographical documents—journals, letters, diaries, biographies and memoirs—formal and informal histories, literary and philosophical texts, paintings and commentaries on them, academic texts, reviews and critiques, to name but the most obvious. Instead of being used as unproblematic evidentiary material—as it is too often the case—these stories have been theorized as effects of specific historical and cultural milieus, *events*<sup>4</sup> throwing light into the complex interrelation of discourses and practices. These stories are not however merely taken as power effects: they have also been considered as forces creating meanings, constituting subjects and shaping particular perceptions of history and the social. What finally emerges from my analysis is the argument that stories “participate in and evoke larger narratives [...] organize perceptions and delineate possible ways of thinking, acting and being.” (Israel 1999, 14)

## Problematizing Coherence and Sequence

Many of the stories I have worked with in the archives—and particularly the letters—were fragmented, unfinished and incomplete. As Carolyn Steedman has poetically put it: “you find nothing in the Archive but stories caught half way through: the middle of things: discontinuities.” (2001, 45) In thus working with discontinuous and irresolute auto/biographical narratives, the problem of coherence, sequence and closure emerged as central in my analysis. How can one do narrative research when the Aristotelian condition of a plot with a beginning, middle and end is simply not there? Indeed, an important strand in the early periods of narrative theory has been the narratologists' focus on coherence, sequence and a continuant subject.<sup>5</sup> In the discourse of classical narratology, events are always conceptualised in relation to actors by whom “they are caused or experienced” (Bal 1985, in Gibson 1996, 181); these actors can further be detached from the event and become consistent characters, carrying the sequential order of the narrative.

Auto/biographical narratives are well placed in this tradition. To write about your life or about the life of others requires a coherent organization of otherwise fragmented, incomplete and chaotic stories. As Jens Brockmeier has aptly argued, “narrative is a forceful way to give human life an order in time.” (2001, 247) In this light, authors of auto/biographical narratives often rely on fiction and literary texts to represent the always-fragmented lives and subjects they are writing about. “Since fiction seems a more comfortable environment than life, we try to read life as if it were a piece of fiction”, Umberto Eco (1994) has written. (in Brockmeier, 252) What we therefore have in auto/biographical narratives is a hybridity of fiction and life, or rather a matrix of the lived, the desired and the imagined, *an assemblage*<sup>6</sup> of actualities and virtualities that constitute the real: life and texts.

Postmodern approaches to narrative analysis have foregrounded this hybridity and have argued that coherence and sequence are literary constructions, since lives can be nothing more than *assemblages* of “moments of being.”<sup>7</sup> Moreover the imperative of sequence and coherence is framed by a chronological conception of time as a linear and divisible unity. Virginia Woolf’s novels however, poetically express a different conceptualization of narrative time, wherein linear divisions of past, present and future are dissolved and time is experienced as *duration*: the coexisting moments where the virtual past—what was—inheres in the experience of the present—what is— and opens it up to virtual and radical futures—what will be.<sup>8</sup>

In this different image of thought about time women artists’ auto/biographical narratives are analysed as stories in becoming, discursive sites where meaning is constantly deferred, representation is problematized and the subject is decentred. Instead of being coherently articulated, narrative sense emerges as an effect of an endless process of difference and repetition with its own rhythm and refrains. As Virginia Woolf has poetically put it: “the rhythm is the main thing in writing.” (2004, 50)

How should then narratives be conceptualised and analysed within an image of time as duration? As Michelle Serres (1977) has put it, it is the here and now of narrative that we should be interested in. (in Gibson 1996, 12) What I therefore suggest throughout the book is that women artists’ journals, diaries and letters revolve around the here and now and it is stories carrying traces of “moments of being” that have become the focus of my analysis. What is interesting about these narratives, is not only the moments they freeze, but also their *lines of flight*, the ways they move away from established and rigidly codified systems of representation:



women artists writing to *become other*.<sup>9</sup> In this light, it is to the consideration of this process of *becoming other* through writing that my interest in the analysis of women artists' narratives has shifted. Narratives can only hold together a limited set of "moments of being"; but what is not actualized or expressed in a narrative form—the virtual, the silenced, the non-said—inheres in what has been recounted, creating within the narrative itself a depository of forces that can always take it elsewhere, divert it from its initial aim or meaning, create bifurcations, sudden and unexpected changes, discontinuities and ruptures in the sequential structure.

### **Making Sense of the Lives of "Others"**

Moving away from the imperative of narrative sequence and coherence inevitably creates new problems and questions. What certainly emerges as an issue is the subject herself, both as a researcher and as a research object. In writing this book, I was not interested in capturing the subject, getting to the essence, reaching the core of the self of the woman artist. As I will further argue, I do not think that this can be done anyway. There are of course some inevitable tensions here, particularly in the light of how the study of the lives of "others"—women amongst them—has long become a powerful tool in the theoretical platforms of social and political movements such as feminism. I am well aware of this tension and my contention is that agency is a critical notion that needs however to be continuously problematized, particularly because causality can be too easily simplified and what is actually an effect can be erroneously taken as a cause. In taking this critical stance, I follow a long-standing tradition of criticizing history and historicism in particular, a strand that is most recognizable today in Foucault's (1986a) suggestion for doing genealogies.

Genealogy as a Nietzschean concept redeployed in Foucault's work, is put very simply the art of archival research, the patience to work meticulously with grey dusty documents, looking for insignificant details, bringing into light unthought-of contours of various ways, discourses and practices that human beings have used to make sense of themselves and the world. Working in parallel with archaeology, genealogy keeps uncovering layers of distortions /constructions and is directed to the future rather than to the past. How has our present been constituted in ways that seem natural and undisputable to us, but are only the effects of certain historical, social, cultural, political and economic configurations? By revealing this contingency we become freer to imagine other ways of being. Doing genealogy involves focusing on insignificant details, searching

in the maze of dispersed dusty documents to trace discontinuities, recurrences and play where traditional research sees continuous development, progress and seriousness. Having thus worked with narratives as tools for writing feminist genealogies<sup>10</sup> and in the light of the theoretical issues I have already discussed, I now want to chart my methodological strategies in doing narrative research from a genealogical perspective.

*Narratives as stories in becoming:* In my work with women artists' auto/biographical writings I have interrogated sequence and coherence as necessary organizing axes for making sense of narratives. In doing so, I have focused on minor processes of how narratives emerge and evolve as stories in becoming, taking unpredicted bifurcations, being interrupted or broken, remaining irresolute or open-ended. D.H Lawrence (1967) has argued that "the novel should seize the living moment of man's subtle interrelatedness with his [sic] universe." (in Gibson 1996, 52) This is exactly what I think narrative texts in the human sciences can do: grasp the living moments of the subject's subtle interrelatedness with the world. In this light women artists' narratives have been analyzed as textual effects of specific socio-historical and cultural material milieus and discourses, but also as forces shaping the social as well as our historical understanding of it.

If narratives are to be taken as *stories in becoming* however, the analysis should be made and remained on the surface. But what does it mean to work on the surface of narratives? Drawing on its Nietzschean tradition, genealogy rejects the search for hidden meanings or truths. In this line of analysis, the genealogist does not look beyond, behind, or under the surface of narratives. The aim is, rather, to look more closely at the workings of those narratives. Instead of going deep, looking for origins and hidden meanings, the analyst is rather working on the surface, constructing "a polygon or rather a polyhedron" (Foucault 1991, 77) of various minor processes that surround the stories of the archive she is working with. What is to be remembered is the fact that the more the analysis breaks down practices and discourses, the easier it becomes to find out more about their interrelation, though this process can never have an absolute conclusion. Abandoning the search for an ultimate truth, does not mean rejecting truth altogether. As Foucault has put it: "I believe too much in truth not to suppose that there are different truths and different ways of speaking the truth." (1988b, 51) It is these different ways of "speaking the truth" that a genealogical approach to narratives reveals so forcefully.

Within a genealogical framework then, my work in the archive of women artists' auto/biographical narratives has not been about hidden meanings, a search for truth about what these women "really" thought or felt about art, work, love, and human relations. I was interested in *how* their narratives make connections or create oppositions with the polyvalent fin-de-siècle discourses around creativity, femininity and gender relations. This is the point of remaining on the surface: it is the act of analysing narratives as multiplicities of meanings, and of creating a map of how different stories connect with other stories, discourses and practices in shaping meanings and in constituting the real and ultimately the subject herself. This way of thinking about narratives is driven by an interest in singularities and differences that can nevertheless be imagined as related and as making connections: texts are considered as multiplicities of meanings, characters as subjects in becoming, stories without definitive beginnings or ends, *nomadic narratives* as I have called them.<sup>11</sup>

*Narratability and the self:* As already discussed above, a genealogical approach to narratives inevitably raises the problem of the author, the move of displacing or desacralizing the "author-function" as a convention of discourse. (Foucault 1998b, 209) In writing genealogies of the female self in art, I have considered the author's disappearance as an immensely thrilling and exciting theme that has been radically reworked in the narratives revolving around the constitution of female subjectivities. These auto/biographical narratives have constructed a space "in the margins of hegemonic discourses" (De Lauretis 1989, 18) for the female self in art to emerge rather than disappear. This emergence, however, has not constituted a unitary core self, but rather a matrix of subject positions for women "writing themselves" to inhabit, not in a permanent way, but temporarily, as points of departure for going elsewhere, *becoming other*. In this light, women's signature did indeed become important in forging new and unthought-of identities at the dawn of the twentieth century. However in writing and signing themselves, these *New Women*<sup>12</sup> were constructing fragmented subjectivities; they were charting cartographies of often-inconsistent subject positions, ultimately having "only paradoxes to offer." (Scott 1996)

In this context the subject does matter in narrative research and not merely as a textual effect, but as embodied and grounded. Indeed, I see narrative research as a site for the deployment of embodied knowledges and as a stage for *narratable* selves to make connections. Here I have drawn upon Adriana Cavarero's (2000) articulation of the *narratable* self, one which emerges in the process of the auto/biographical exercise of

memory, and in the embodied and unreflective experience that the self has of being *narratable*; the *narratable* self has a unique story without being reducible to the content of this story. In this light, the idea of the narratable self opens up space for the researcher to oscillate between pathos, the force of relational narratives, and distance, the problem of identification with or “over-investment” in the subjects of her investigation.

*Narratives, imagination, politics:* Narrative research is immanently situated within the political, an argument that is exemplified in the history of how feminist research has heavily drawn on, discussed and problematized women’s narratives and narratives about women. As the political is configured in Hannah Arendt’s thought, speech and action are the modes par excellence “in which human beings appear to each other” (1998, 177), revealing as it were the uniqueness of the human condition. Action in the presence of others is a sine-qua-non condition for the emergence of the political subject. However, Arendt has pointed out that action as a fleeting moment in the passage of time is lost, if it is not transformed into a story. Following Foucault and Arendt, for the narrative researcher, stories should not be conceived as only discursive effects, but also as recorded processes wherein the self as the author/teller of his/her story transgresses power boundaries and limitations and follows *lines of flight* in its constitution as a political subject. For me, it is this very process of storied actions revealing the “birth” of the political subject that is the political in narrative research.

Within the political, narratives have opened up to the importance of the imaginary in what counts as research, a Spinozist formulation of imagination as a path giving access to the realities of the social world (Lloyd 1996, 63). In my work with women artists and elsewhere,<sup>13</sup> I have mapped an extremely divided and contested field opened up by women narrating their stories of becoming a subject. Indeed what I have traced is a diverse range of subject positions for female subjects to imagine themselves inhabiting, but also for “the subject of feminism” to emerge from.

*Nomadic Ways of Seeing: Visual and Textual Interfaces:* The three themes discussed above, namely nomadism, narratability and the political imaginary have informed my analysis of women artists’ life writings, but I have also drawn on women artists’ paintings, creating an archive of images and stories and working in the interface of the visual and the textual. In taking the decision to include paintings in the narrative matrix of my analysis, I was aware of the difficulties that such an endeavour

inevitably involves. How we see, sense, interpret and textualize art and how we bring together texts and images are pertinent questions around which a rich body of literature and a range of quite different approaches have revolved.<sup>14</sup>

In this book I have deployed a mode of nomadic way of seeing, very much drawing on Deleuze's take on paintings developed in his work on Bacon (2003) and in his co-authored text with Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988). There are two main themes that I have found particularly interesting for my own experiment in seeing: the concept of "faciality" and the problem of "painting forces". Ronald Bogue has pithily noted that Deleuze sees the human face "as an important constituent of every social configuration of language practices and power relations." (2003, 5) Deleuze has theorized the task of painting as "the attempt to render visible forces that are not themselves visible." (2003, 56) "Dismantling the face" and "capturing forces" have therefore become central axes in my analytical strategies of women artists' paintings as will further be explicated throughout the book.

While working in the fold of life and art however, I am of course aware of the problem that Griselda Pollock has so succinctly identified and criticized, namely the auto/biographical lens that women artists' work has often been viewed through, as opposed to "the universal principles" that male artists' work is often assumed to address even when their work is discussed in relation to their life. (1999, 106) In tackling the problem of what I have called, the "auto/biographication" of women's art, it is not the "bio" but rather women's art as an autographic practice that I have focused on, the multiplicity of ways they constitute and indeed make sense of themselves as artists through their art.<sup>15</sup> In this context it is not real life events that I have been interested in but the logic of sense (Deleuze, 2001) and indeed the logic of sensation (Deleuze, 2003) that allows events and subjects to emerge as "two sides of a certain folding" (Colebrook 1999, 128), the folding between life and art. What I argue is that women artists' paintings create planes of intensities for singularities to emerge and forces to be released. As Deleuze and Guattari have argued, "whereas philosophers create concepts that lead thought to the plane of pure difference from which intensities emerge, artists present us with those intensities." (Colebrook 2002, 176) In charting these intensities and forces, I have drawn again upon narratives: I have thus created assemblages of visual and textual images, following trails that artists themselves have left in creating works where texts, lines and colours have been brought together.

In their critical overview of twentieth-century women artists' self-representation, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have delineated four primary ways in which artists may texture the interface to mobilize visual and textual regimes, juxtaposing images and words *relationally, contextually, spatially, and temporally*. (2002, 21) I have followed this model in devising four analytic strategies in my study: a) making connections: looking at the relations and juxtapositions between women artists' auto/biographical narratives and paintings, tracing areas of convergence and disjunction; b) making cartographies: given my overall interest in matrices of power and desire wherein narratives take up meanings and constitute realities and subjectivities, I have traced social, historical, cultural, political and interpersonal contexts within which paintings and auto/biographical narratives emerge and interact; c) spacing the narratives: my interest in spatiality is not purely visual, I have rather traced the diffusion of spatial themes in both images and texts, foregrounding the importance of the spatial constitution of "autographical subjectivities" and d) working with non-linear perceptions of time and memory: thinking through Deleuze and Bergson about time as duration, a co-existence of an expanding present with the past, "a movement of divergence and differentiation between one mode of virtuality (the past) to another (the future)—from what was to what will be." (Grosz 2005, 110) In a Deleuzian image of thought women artists' paintings and writings have facilitated leaps into space/time blocks past, present and future—heterogeneous and yet surprisingly contemporaneous. Reading their journals, memoirs and letters and looking at their paintings I have sensed the feeling of "simultaneously belonging to one's own time as well as to other times, the balance between contemporaneity and difference, connection and distance." (Dinshaw 2007, 119)

## Making Cartographies

Having situated my work within a theoretical and methodological plane wherein Arendt's conceptualization of narratives within the political and Cavarero's theorization of the narratable self make connections with Foucauldian and DeleuzoGuattarian analytics, I will now turn to the organization of the book. Overall, the book looks into the constitution of the female self in art and it is on different documents, figures and events of this constitution that each chapter focuses, while the conclusion explores multifarious connections between and amongst them.

In bringing together different auto/biographical documents, subjectivities, thematic interests, narrative tropes and lines of analysis, I have created a

spatial plane of reference which is crucial in the cartography of the female self in art: the European urban centres of modernity and more specifically Paris as the fin-de-siècle artists' colony par excellence. As it has been well recorded and documented in modern art histories, Paris in the early twentieth century was a celebrated art centre offering an excellent range of museums, artists, art teachers, studios and private academies. The annual exhibitions known as the *Salons* were opening up paths to recognition and the Parisian art world was a hub for potential commissions, buyers, patrons and collectors. Paris was also the home of the avant-garde, the place to be for new ideas in art and bohemian experiments in life. Women were of course explicitly excluded from formal academies—the prestigious *Ecole des Beaux Arts*, only admitted women in 1897—and in all sorts of tacit and latent ways from the bohemian circles. Nevertheless, there were many private academies like the *Julian* and *Collarossi*, which did accept women, although charging them with much higher fees. (See Reynolds 2000, 333) As pointed out in Gill Perry's study of women artists in Paris in the early twentieth century, "there were [...] many women artists from Europe and America who were coming to Paris for shorter periods to work and/or study and exhibit [since] Paris had become an undisputed international centre with a seemingly magnetic appeal." (1995, 16) Moreover as Tamara Garb (1994) has shown, women artists in Paris at the turn of the twentieth century were gradually negotiating space as professional artists, while some of them were beginning to tread paths of bohemian territories. Shari Benstock (1987) has given a brilliant picture of the expatriate women artists' contribution in the wider artistic and literary Parisian circles in the first half of the twentieth century.

Paris would thus offer women opportunities to imagine themselves as different and somehow liberated from the gendered constraints of the home countries they had fled from. As I will show however in the chapters that follow, Paris was not a homogenized space and women artists living and working there would deploy quite diverse strategies and tactics to survive the urban spaces of modernity. While reading their auto/biographies, memoirs, journals, diaries and mostly letters, I could imagine them meeting at the Louvre, at some park or an exhibition opening; I would follow them getting on/off the tram, on their way to the private academy they studied, to a friend's party, to an artists' gathering or at some of the urban cafés, restaurants or *boîtes* they would meet. Having worked in Paris doing archival research at the Rodin Museum, and having completed the writing of this book there, working in solitude during my sabbatical, I have retraced women artists' spatial paths.<sup>16</sup> In this light, I have made real and imaginary connections not only with their materiality but also with the

realm of affective forces that have left signs in their personal writings: the excitement of meeting the next deadline for submission, the agony of finding a fresh theme or a new inspiration for their work, worries and tears about failures and rejections, the anticipation of selling their paintings, the struggle to afford a model and of course their on going efforts to make ends meet by working as models, art teachers or decorators.<sup>17</sup>

As influential feminist studies have shown, fin-de-siècle women artists would move in the urban spaces of the European metropolitan centres they lived and worked, albeit following different trajectories and time zones than their contemporary male artists. Although they were not excluded from the urban, their existential spaces were often quite different from those of their male counterparts and this differentiation was not only structured on a personal level, but was mostly and more importantly conditioned by gendered constraints and limitations.<sup>18</sup> It is therefore charting the historical, geographical, social and cultural matrix that the women artists of my study are embedded in that I will now turn. What has to be emphasized here is that my analysis is not so much about the constitution of the social as an effect of power relations and authoritarian practices. Without downplaying the importance of power, I am focusing on a rather neglected area in the constitution of the social: *lines of flight* that these women artists followed to escape the constraints and limitations within which they were thrown in the world.<sup>19</sup>

When fluid patterns of subjectivity move on shifting historical, political, social, cultural, but also spatial and existential grounds, certainties of all kinds melt in the air and what emerges is an open and radical future, new and unforeseen possibilities for being or rather becoming a subject. Therefore, although my study is directed to open and radical futures, the need remains I argue, to map the shifting grounds and analyse them in their specificity; it is to this task of making cartographies of the women artists of this study that I will now turn, following the outline of the book.

### **Auto/biography and the Portrait: Rosa Bonheur and Anna Klumpke**

In Chapter One, I make connections between auto/biographical narratives and portraiture, particularly focusing on the French animalist painter Rosa Bonheur and the American portraitist Anna Klumpke. The discussion of the chapter revolves around a memorable document that Klumpke published in 1908, nine years after Bonheur's death: *Rosa Bonheur: Her Life and work*.<sup>20</sup> What is particularly significant about Klumpke's



document is its unique blending of two women's lives in what is an auto/biographical text par excellence. (Stanley, 1992) In analyzing Klumpke's auto/biographical narrative, I have drawn on Arendt's philosophy of life histories and Cavarero's theorization of the *narratable self* as delineated above.

As I will discuss in detail in Chapter One, a central argument in both Arendt and Cavarero's philosophies is that narratives foreground the question of *Who* one is, as differentiated from the Western [male] philosophical tradition that has revolved around the question of *What* one is. As the book unfolds, I hope that the analysis and discussion of women artists' narratives will address the neglected question of *Who one is* in her singularity and difference. The biographical details for both Bonheur and Klumpke, that I will further present and discuss, still remain in the realm of *What one is*; as I have already argued however, this question is still important in mapping the socio-cultural milieu these women artists emerged from.

Rosa Bonheur (1822-1899) was one of the greatest animal painters of the nineteenth century. She was famous worldwide and her life had become the object of biographical interest, while she was still alive.<sup>21</sup> Bonheur was born in Bordeaux and was the first child of Christine-Dorothée-Sophie Marchisio, who was born in Germany and Raimond-Oscar-Marie Bonheur, a painter and an art teacher. The family moved to Paris in 1829 but life was difficult for a painter with a wife and eventually four children to support, notwithstanding the fact that his wife was well educated and was giving music lessons to contribute to the expenses of the household. Things became even more difficult when Raimond Bonheur joined the Saint-Simonians community,<sup>22</sup> abandoning in practice his wife and children to save the world. As a matter of fact Bonheur's mother died from poverty and exhaustion in 1833, when she was only thirty-six. The phantasm of her mother being buried in a common grave at the Montparnasse cemetery, would follow Bonheur till the end of her life and has been forcefully expressed in Klumpke's narrative:

My mother, the most noble and proud of creatures, succumbing to exhaustion and wretched poverty, while my father was dreaming about saving the human race. When I was flush with success and earning more than I could ever spend, what wouldn't I have given to know where to weep over my mother's remains, but it was too late!

(Klumpke 2003, 102-3)

Later in life and while being an advocate of women's emancipation, Bonheur would criticize the Saint-Simonian practices, which had

celebrated women's position at the same time of leaving them to carry the burden of earthy practicalities. In having made her own way to life through her art, Bonheur's feminism, inspired as it was by Saint-Simonian ideals had nevertheless moved beyond the utopian-socialism of the movement to the conviction that women's emancipation had to be founded on strong material bases.

In this context, Bonheur had firmly positioned herself in the revolutionary spirits of her time, striving to advance women's position, not only through her own attitude and life style but also in actively participating in concrete movements for opening up the art world to women. She eventually became a role model and inspiration for the members of the Union of Women Painters and Sculptors, founded in 1881.<sup>23</sup>

But to take up the thread of the story again, after her mother's death, the eleven-year-old Bonheur, went to live with her father, who had returned to the world and was teaching drawing at a boarding school in Paris. It was her father who taught her and encouraged her to become a painter: "Seek your way daughter [...] Seek your way, try to surpass Mme Vigée-Lebrun, whose name is on everyone's lips these days." (Klumpke 2003, 112) While recognizing her father's contribution in her career as an artist, Bonheur has nevertheless painted vividly the difficulties of living with him:

Life with my father was a mix of tragedy and farce. His studio, which was rarely swept out, was chaos, confusion, a real bazaar. Every time he got his hands on some money, he'd toss the coins to all four corners of the studio, since he was afraid of spending it too fast. When he needed a bit of money, he'd say: "Come daughter, dig around and find me a twenty-franc piece."

(Klumpke 2003, 113)

It was in these difficult circumstances, while she was still fourteen that Bonheur met Nathalie Micas, who was only twelve at the time. Bonheur's father was commissioned to paint Mica's portrait and this is how the two girls became friends and later on life-long companions, sharing their life together from 1849, the year Bonheur's father died, till Mica's death in 1889.

Bonheur's career followed an upward movement from 1841 when she entered the Parisian Salon for the first time. In 1848 she had already earned a gold medal at this prestigious Salon, while her famous painting *Horse Fair*<sup>24</sup>, which was first exhibited in 1851, became an immediate success and was sold for 40,000 francs in 1855. Bonheur's star had risen and would reach its culmination in 1865 when she became the first woman

artist to be awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honour, being promoted to the rank of Officer of the Legion of Honour in 1895.

Bonheur's fame had travelled the world and she had become particularly famous in Britain, where she travelled in 1856, and the States.<sup>25</sup> So great was her fame in the States, that in the 1860s, "American girls could hold, in an admiring clutch, Rosa Bonheur dolls." (Slyke 2003, xii) It was actually as a doll that Anna Klumpke, an American girl born in San Francisco in 1856, would get to know Rosa Bonheur. As Slyke has noted, while holding her Rosa Bonheur doll, "Anna Klumpke certainly never dreamed that she would grow up, cross the ocean and become Rosa Bonheur's chosen portraitist, biographer and beloved companion." (xii) And this is how I now turn to Anna Klumpke's story.

Anna Klumpke (1856-1942) was born in San Francisco.<sup>26</sup> Her father John Gerald Klumpke was German and had immigrated to San Francisco to become a businessman, while her mother Dorothea-Mathilda Tolle was an adventurous woman of German origin herself, who had moved to San Francisco from New Jersey. An accident while she was only two years old left Anna Klumpke lame and she carried this disability throughout her life, despite her parents' attempts to cure her. In 1872, Klumpke's parents divorced and her mother having won full custody of the children—five daughters and two sons by then—decided to move to Europe. The children were educated in boarding schools and colleges in Germany, Switzerland and finally in Paris. Being well educated, Anna and her four sisters, Augusta, Dorothea, Mathilda and Julia grew up to become extraordinary women: Augusta became the first female intern in the Parisian hospital system and eventually a prominent neurologist; Dorothea got a doctorate in mathematical science at the Sorbonne and followed a brilliant career in astronomy, while Mathilda and Julia became famous musicians. Anna of course made her fame as a painter in both sides of the Atlantic<sup>27</sup> and finally followed Bonheur in being awarded the medal of the Legion of Honour in 1926 and being promoted to the rank of Officer in 1936. By that time she had returned to San Francisco where she died in 1942, while her ashes were buried in Paris in 1945, alongside the remains of Rosa Bonheur and Nathalie Micas in the tomb they shared at the Père-Lachaise Cemetery.

Coming from a genealogical line of brilliant women, Anna Klumpke enrolled at the famous private *Académie Julian* in Paris in 1880 and first exhibited at the Parisian Salon in 1882. In her memoir, she has painted some vivid pictures of her experience at the *Académie Julian*, particularly stressing the anxiety and rivalry among women students over the ultimate object of desire—the medal:

My own attempt [...] was to present him [a man with a hat on his head] in profile and as I was about completing this work one morning, Marie Bashkirtseff, who sat in front of me, turned and abruptly accosted me with, "Klumpke, have you finished? Perhaps you expect to get the medal? "Why not?" I replied. "Like you, I am working toward that aim." "If you get it," she returned, "I shall pay the refreshments. But I do not worry—this time I shall receive the medal."

(Klumpke 1940, 17)

As further recounted in the memoir, Klumpke did win the medal, but Bashkirtseff<sup>28</sup> did not pay for the refreshments after all, since she did not turn up for the celebration party. (17) This recognition was followed by a series of medals, which worked towards spreading her reputation beyond France, to her home country. In 1886 she was commissioned to paint the portrait of the famous American feminist and suffragist, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and following that, in 1889, she was invited to go to Boston, "where several orders for portraits awaited me, all these due to the favourable reception of my portrait of Mrs Randolph Coolidge." (1940, 31) As a matter of fact in 1889, Klumpke became the first woman to receive the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts' Temple Gold Medal.

Klumpke first visited Boston in the autumn of 1891; she got immersed in the artistic Bostonian circles and rented a beautiful studio apartment in a city that was renowned for its cultural life. Klumpke's biographer has particularly noted the importance of "a studio of her own" in the constitution of the self of the woman artist, a spatial theme that runs as a red thread throughout the analysis of this book. What is particularly interesting with Klumpke's studio however is the way it was used to promote the artist through the Bostonian media. The following extract from a report in *The Boston Daily Advertiser* is an example of how the media could intervene in creating and sustaining a woman artist's visibility:

Her home is just what an artist's home should be. It is at the top of one of the old Beacon St. houses, 82, converted into business rooms. Up the three flights of stairs you climb until you find yourself in a strange place quite unsuggestive of anything Bostonian and conventional [...] From the four tall, narrow windows of the drawing-room, one looks over the public gardens as on an enchanted land, whether it be summer or winter. Within a bright fire burns in the old-fashioned open grate. Odd chairs carved or cushioned, quaint, graceful tables, book cases well filled, and two bewitching old spinning wheels are scattered in artistic groupings over the Japanese matting that covers the floor and intensifies the soft colouring of the many rugs [...] One corner contains a divan screened by Turkish draperies and made comfortable by numerous pillows covered with Oriental rugs and embroideries [...] In the studio there is even more

informality than in the other rooms. Battered old brass pans and copper kettles of Moorish and Breton origin lie close to queer bits of pottery and modern books.

(in Dwyer 1999, 66)

The cosmopolitanism of the Bostonian architecture blended with the Parisian and the Oriental decorative elements of the interior, compose a detailed topography that carries strong ideological messages around class, gender and ethnicity and is constitutive of the specific discourses around fin-de-siècle women artists in Boston. I will further discuss these discourses around women artists' spatiality throughout the book, while in Chapter Five I will focus again in Boston through the figure of another Bostonian woman artist, Mary Bradish Titcomb.

Despite the high number of women artists living and working in Boston in the 1890s,<sup>29</sup> gender boundaries and restrictions were very well at play; as Sarah Burns has noted, "the notion of creative power was very much a one-way street: male artists had the best of both genders." (in Dwyer 1999, 64) Finding herself as a newcomer, Klumpke did nevertheless succeed in "gaining notice" (64) in the Bostonian male elite, and she was seriously thinking of settling down there, but in between her meeting with Rosa Bonheur in 1895 would dramatically change the route of her life and career, as I will further discuss in Chapter One.

Bonheur's and Klumpke's lives should therefore be considered within the specific context of the European and American historical, political, social and cultural milieus of the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Feminist historians have richly analyzed and discussed women artists' multi-layered positioning in the fin-de-siècle urban spaces and have highlighted their contribution in the cultural histories of modernity.<sup>30</sup> As already indicated however, both Bonheur and Klumpke had followed *lines of flight* from the patriarchal structures of modernity, albeit in different trajectories, which were conditioned by the socio-historical and political specificities of their geographies and generations. Coming from an older generation, Bonheur had experienced the effects of the dramatic political changes that shook the world in the beginning of the nineteenth century. As already discussed, her family's active involvement in the French socialist utopian movement not only tragically changed her life, but also shaped her ideas and perceptions vis-à-vis women's role in society. Bonheur actively responded to these ideals not only by becoming an extraordinary woman artist but also by defying and ridiculing social conventions and expectations about how women should behave: she lived with a woman, she was dressed in men's clothes, and she would publicly smoke cigars. It was through her

work only that she had survived the wretched poverty of her childhood, had reached the point where she had earned more than she could ever spend, had become Rosa Bonheur. How different was Klumpke's trajectory, particularly in terms of her class background, the educational opportunities offered to her and of course the cosmopolitan milieu she had grown up.

In choosing Klumpke as her portraitist and biographer, Bonheur was projecting her admiration of "America" as a utopian country of women's freedom: "I admire American ideas about educating women. Over there you don't have the silly notion that marriage is the one and only fate for girls. I am absolutely scandalized by the way women are hobbled in Europe. It's only because of my God-given talent that I could break free. (Klumpke 2003, 10) Indeed, Klumpke was the personification of the American dream. Moreover, she was in close contact with American feminist networks. As already noted she had painted Stanton's portrait, while Nancy Fraser, a pioneer of women's education in the USA had also sat for her, as recounted in her conversation with Bonheur, below.

I showed her a few photographs of my Boston portraits. "This one lives and breathes. Who is she?" she exclaimed about the portrait of Mrs Nancy Fraser. With a few words I gave her some idea of this remarkable woman and feminist to whom the University of Chicago owns the construction of a special pavilion for female students.

In America you always find some generous souls eager to devote themselves to women's education and emancipation. Your country is becoming great because you all understand that girls, once they marry, have unparalleled influence over their children's education.

(Klumpke 2003, 21)

There is an implicit reference here to Klumpke's mother herself and the "unparalleled influence" that she had over her daughter's education. Indeed the figure of the mother is strong in both women's lives either by her matriarchal omnipotence as in Klumpke's case or by her tragic absence as in Bonheur.

Despite Bonheur's admiration of Klumpke, when the two women met, there were serious imbalances in terms of their power status. Klumpke's family and particularly her mother were alarmed when the news broke that the two women had decided to share their lives: "Have you considered your position in Rosa Bonheur's household? You are too proud, I think, to be a lady-companion" Klumpke's mother had remarked (2003, 73). In this light a whole legal agreement was set up, so that Klumpke's independence could be guaranteed: in Bonheur's will Klumpke became the sole legatee