Lydia Bauman: The Poetic Image in the Field of the Uncanny

by Griselda Pollock.

For many years I have had the pleasure of encountering the works of Lydia Bauman in places where her works are cherished and admired. Her early still life paintings, some of them monumental in their engagement with fragments of the classical age, as well as her landscape paintings of the 1990s are part of the landscape of my intellectual and personal friendship networks in a northern provincial British city, Leeds.

Leeds is one of the cities to which the artist came as a teenager after her family's flight from Poland in 1968, Having spent time in between in Israel, Lydia Bauman and her family had moved through landscapes as different as could be, suddenly torn from her native Poland and transposed firstly to the Middle East and then to Yorkshire in England, before she settled to study and work in Britain, Her art and art historical education took place firstly in Newcastle - its University boasting an art school highly significant in the history of Britain's assimilation of the still vivid formalist protocols of modernism - and at the Courtlauld Institute in London, until recently, the premier site of art historical training in Britain.

By landscape, I do not mean only the geographical lie of the land. Landscape, as we known, can also an imaginary space. More than topography, its painted representations have offered poetic means to imagine our place in the world. Represented land is more often than not a reflection of the human subjectivity which projects itself onto a space either of its sheltering habitation or its sublime otherness. The paradox of landscape is that it is both what is other to the human subject: land, place, nature; and yet, it is also the space for projection, and can become, therefore, a sublimated self-portrait.

Deterritorialisation - the loss of the natal landscape, the spaces of our beginnings, the place that marks our being in the world - can be a profound and painful condition. It is, however, a widespread, postmodern condition, making it necessary to theorise the painting of landscape with its human resonances in the historic aftermath of such widespread uprooting. Inflicted on so many by exile, migration, postcolonial hybridisation, as well as the long duree of the Jewish and African Diasporas, dislocated (the Latin root of this English word contains the notion of locus; place) identity can too easily become a truism of postmodern sociology. It is to artists, as well writers, that we may need to look for singular testimonies to the complex effects of the current epidemic of uprootedness, which is, by the same token, a destabilisation of identity. In the novelty of each poetic or artistic image, the intense meaning of these lived processes reverberate.

In preparing to write about the work of Lydia Bauman, I visited her studio in the East End of London: a busy, noisy, changing cityscape that acks all signs of the picturesque in its drab, economically rundown and pervasive sense of neglect. In a beuatifully transformed room, at the top of an old house remade as a music studio, the artist revealed to me large landscape paintings awaiting transport to their exhibition in Poland (p. 7). The array of paintings pierced the London gloom with jewel-like intensities of colour, Close-up, the worked matt surfaces composed of plaster, beeswax and colour-infused resins, arranged in defiantly ordered explorations of modernist materiality and two-dimensionality, opened out vistas of 'foreign' spaces -Morocco, Australia, Tuscany, Provence, Poland, each captured in their singular character- but not only by the artist. For these landscapes - or imaginary places as 1 prefer to think of them -come to the artist, already encoded by the culture of travel on the one hand, and the legacies of the Romantic belief in the genius loci, translated through quality photography, on the other.

Lydia Bauman is the inheritor and remodeller of (at least) two other distinct traditions. As a student of art history, she is well aware of the modernist tradition of the painter sur le motif, a painter like Cezanne, for whom the daily reading in the book of his beloved Provence, was the necessary condition for an artistic practice which was as much about being there with the mountain, rocks, tilled fields and pines, as it was about trying to paint his petite sensation from the vibrant, coloured atmosphere that enveloped theirforms.

This intensity created a new chapter in the book of Western landscape painting, already revised by his colleagues in the Impressionist movement, who had tried to articulate landscape and modernity through references to industry and leisure, fashion and temporality,[1] Cezanne's landscapes achieved their monumental intensity from the paradox of a personal attachement so profound it could only be articulated in a mournful acknowledgement of the impossibility of anything but a dispassionate recording of external forms and sunbaked colours of a beloved space. Thus the very formalism of Cezanne can easily, and was, mistaken by being taken at face value and raised to a doctrine in the years after his death, that was detached from both his practice and its subjectively invested space.

Cezanne's rigorous attention to the geographical architectonics and colouring of 'nature' outside Aix-en-Provence provided a structure which made possible the painter's daily task of painting, of 'being with' art and place, At the same time his practice allowed painting to be a means of being with a landscape that imaginatively, rather than actually, contained the deeply formative memories of childhood and adolescence. Thus the more insistent was the desire to paint the place, the more intense the experience of loss and the impossibility of recapturing the moment the landscape seemed to hold in an eternal promise. Painted space became the displaced signifier of time, and thus of melancholic memory, The affect of looking at a Cezanne is, therefore, an uncanny one of impossible, terrible longing, Lydia Bauman is not in the landscape of her childhood. She belongs to a larger world through her own displacement and to the modern conditon of tourism. Yet her painting recalls Cezanne's in so far as the practice of painting in a structured formal way and of painting 'place' becomes an overdetermined play of longing and imaginative re-emplacement.

The second legacy is that of photography, which, as soon as it was invented, also turned its gaze onto the genre of landscape. Shaped by the conventions inherited from fine art, pictorial photograhy reframed the very landscape that contemporary modernist painters were trying to free form these conventions. But without colour, photography revealed an unexpected formalism in the representation of a scene, which became a patterned play of dark and light. Its play of form and void would always empty out the space

which had been the central aesthetic concern of landscape painting. Photography made visible the very flatness that was an uncanny contradiction of all painted landscape had aspired to create: space for human consciousness and its unconscious desire. In its total artificiality, which the discourses of positivism tried so hard to disavow, stressing photography as unmediated vision or literal record, photography become a technology of loss, a fetish of the absence the photograph ironically memorialises, and, thus according to Barthes, at the heart of photography is our encounter with death.[2]

Let me for a moment revise the history of western landscape painting, schematicaly, to explain this point. Consider two major paradigms. From the seventeeth century Dutch, we learn how the attempt to make sense of a social and cultural geography of the Protestant Republic that could sustain emergent national identity, required the superimposition of a pictorial order onto the chaotic jumble of trees, houses, fields, roads and towns, trade and agriculture.

The Dutch, in the case of Ruysdael's views of Haarlem, for instance, invented, through painting, a viewpoint whose sense of mastery was sustained by the imposed logic of succeeding planes, modulated as contrasts of light and dark, that came to stand for the concept of progression into the distance. Thus the formal order allowed a pictorial invention of a visible sign for space, In that space, national and political identity could be invested and recognised through the relation of a spectatorial consciousness to the pictorial cartography of social hierarchy. At the horizon is the city of the merchant rulers, governing, with the authority of a Church, whose spire is the defining vertical of an otherwise horizontal, secular world laid out beneath it, in socially defined ranks, synonymous with the pictorial planes of foreground, middle distance and background.

The Italianate paradigm embodied in the Claudian landscape, is that of an Utopian dream of perfection, sustained by a classically formulated use of horizontality and verticality, which underpins the selected and managed arrangement of natural features dotted with signs of human history in ruins. The creation of an

imaginatively penetrable and limitless space, receding to an everfading distance produces a viewing position which is both a melancholic retrospect on some lost, ideal moment of harmony, and a prospect of its, at least, aesthetic recreation, through the imaginative skill of a painter, who places his/her viewer before an idealising conjunction of past time and prospective space.

Landscape is the pictorial representation of a space that is neither geographical nor physical. Its absent centre is always the spectator, the human consciousness reflected in this brilliant exercise of formal invention coupled with a 'the field of dreams'. Freud discovered that dreams 'take place', that our desire requires a scenario for its representation: phantasy. In landscape painting, western artists, predating Freud, discovered that painting folds into visible these elusive aspects of human subjectivity and provides the setting for phantasies about loss, memory and desire,

To return to the studio in London and landscape paintings in 1990 by Lydia Bauman, is to find a postmodern moment where these complex histories once again motivate intriguing paintings that find their way into contemporary debates via a detour through art history. Resisting the art historical attempt to lock art into chronologically defined boxes and periods, the questions posed by western painting of space and time: landscape, shifted from their traditional genres through modernist revisions, becomes, once more, the site for intelligent investigation.

Lydia Bauman does not work sur le motif, but often from photographs, some of which are her own, and many of which are by others. These pre-images are, in a sense, ready-mades, symptoms of world travel, of tourism's repacious appetite for the other, the foreign, the distant, the piece of historically coded places and spaces of culture, France, Italy, Australia and so forth. They are also the found signs of a rediscovered longing for place, which is, within this argument, a displaced signifier for time; somewhere else is also sometime ago. Never directly representing, these paintings suggest an underlying thematic of memory.
Invoking Duchamp, does not suggest the idea of copying, or merely copying on the already culturally packaged.

The ready-made is a perplexing object. As art, the ready-made marks an exchange between cultural forms that are already freighted with cultural meanings, and the subjectivity that, in choosing this object or image, both brings into view that freight and finds itself reflected in an object seemingly indifferent to the singular subjectivity of its selector. Anonymity of the produced and commodified photographic image mixes with what makes the artist a unique sensibility, each acting as the other's revealing mirror, the photograph, found in a book, and chosen as the motif, becomes a spur, or a prick, that breaches the division between the self and the world. In an exchange that could even be called a wounding, what is unknown to the artist-self may find a form of representation in something made in absolute indifference to the artist who will one day select it as a motif, re-engaging with it in her own, studio space.

After Freud, we no longer can sustain a fixed inside/outsiode, you/me, before/after divide. In a sense, however, all art in the postmodern moment, is burdened with the paradigm of the ready-made because the concepts of originality are withered by our much more knowing understanding of the inevitable latecoming that is condition of creativity. At the height of the modernist revolution, I have identified the avant-garde gambit as that of reference, deference and difference? Any ambitious artist in the avant-garde formation must invoke the precedent through connection with which the new work assumes its avant-garde identity. Yet the reference must also become the creative moment of producing a difference, that is the emerging artist's declaration of identity.

In the literary field, Harold Bloom has identified a similar process as 'the anxiety of influence.'[4] For Bloom, all artists/writers are late-comers, emerging into their own creative identity in the overwhelming presence of what has been done before. Rather than disappearing under this parental burden, Bloom suggests that artists create precisely through the anxiety or tension inspired by the necessary engagement with what has come before. The quality of art is the nature of this anxiety that we the reader/viewer experience in seeing the text or

painting as ‘work’, working through this inevitable retrospect.

Thus Tradition or the canon is created retrospectivelty by the way in which late-coming artists invoke their ancestry, and struggle, in the work itself, to move beyond or through it to a distinctive formulation within this selected community. The past is not a simple influence, directly stamping its successors or predetermining their course, as so much mundane art history still seems to say. It is in the artistic or literary work of the present that the past is invented by being invoked in order to be reworked, Dialogi-cally ever present, what has come before thus functions as a spectre or trace that ensures that important work is recognised for having worked through the anxiety of influence, the creative battle with what makes its present possible.
In this sense, I have invoked in preapration for my discussion of Lydia Bauman’s works, Duchamp and Cezanne, and as an art historian, interested in the problematic of landscape painting in the twentieth century, I could also mention the Americans, Georgia O’Keefe, specifically in her refashioning of desert landscape as a modernist site, or her uncanny images of barns near Lake George, and Helen Frankenthaler who negotiated the possibilities of landscapes, the body and abstract floating colour.

These are not the artists from whose work Lydia Bauman’s is derived. Hers does not look like theirs through style or formal interest. But they form the possible candidates for an artistic genealogy in relation to whose major projects, the character of Lydia Bauman’s paintings can emerge as artistic struggle, as revealing a necessary tension in her continuing to work on artistic problems and issues better known to us through these artists’ practices. They are the enabling spectres, that prevent her work from remaining isolated in the London studio, as the singular output of a local artist. In conversation with the larger ‘landscape’ of modern art and the problems of painting. Lydia Bauman’s project comes into a new perspective.

The move from studio to public space is mediated by the forms of discourse in whose mirror the work may be allowed its conversations with the history of art, past and present. If denied, the connections remain invisible in market-led commodification of brand identity. One of the chief myths of art is the automatic nature of recognition. In fact, art becoming art depends upon the critical reflection in discourse of the genealogies which have made the work’s existence possible and render its ambition legible.

Thus the function of art criticism is not to classify or provide with the grading stamp of museum approval. It is to discern the tenacious and tenuous threads that allow an artistic practice to emerge as a singular condensation of its maker’s and of art’s histories. There is a world of difference between a cynical postmodern reliance on pastiche or its harmless play in the musee imag/na/re of world art, and the quiet and often unexpected discovery of an artist working through the still unfinished business of some strand of twentieth century art, thereby incurring the ‘anxiety of influence,’ the necesary staging of one’s own art in the presence of that genealogy to which it is chronologically distant but conceptually related. This is a feature of art in 1990s, a release from the relentless pursuit of the new, in favour of reconsideration of still rich veins of possibility left unmined by the capitalist pressures of vangauardist marketing.

As an art historian fascinated with and still perplexed by the break we call modernism in the late nineteenth century, and a feminist engaged with the possibility of semiotic transformations in the postmodern moment through aesthetic practices ‘in, of and from the feminine’[5], Lydia Bauman’s work becomes visible to me as an intriguing instance of the way in which contemporary practice allows us to understand more of the work of the past to which her painting unexpectedly refers me. At the same time, that reference to the past provides a means of entering into the particularities of her painting now. It may be a singular feature of our present that we undo the logics of historical succession, so encoded in our museums and art history books, where art’s development is relentlessly teleological, uni-directionally moving forward through a succession of great men and major movements.

Instead we must realise that we do not move through history, but are placed at different angles to major formations of culture and society. We will go nowhere until we have explored other stories within, or even refused linear narratives of art history altogether. The model I am offering is anti-art historical and anti-

museum. It is feminist in so far as it prefers the notions of encounter, a conjunction and a movement across time to remap cultural meanings as the threads of unexpected relationships. In mentioning this here, I am also wanting to bring back the scattered thoughts of this section about time, memory, loss, retrospect and the staging of subjectivity through the imaginative representation of space.
In a recent study of another artist with Polish-Jewish roots, Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, I argued against the possibility or tenability of landscape painting 'after Auschwitz'.[6] Thus I confront the engagement with landscape Lydia Bauman's work challenged to reconsider this problematic.

Through its various paradigms of landscape painting, Western tradition had made place a means of representing the very ideals that were slaughtered in the fertile fields of Poland outside towns and villages whose names we cannot ever forget. In the seventeenth century, in the painting in his series of Four Seasons, Summer, an artist like Poussin assimilated to the classical ideal, the Christian tradition of the Books of Hours which had endowed nature with cultural meaning by infusing the agricultural seasons with devotional associations derived from a Biblical story.

Thus the season of summer harvesting, reaping and gleaning was associated with the story of love and redemption in the figures of Ruth and Boaz, After 1933-1945, these terms and images are irrevocably altered and we, its survivors and inheritors, its other and its future, are like the dislocated stranger and exife, Ruth; we have become gleaners after a terrible reaping. We come not only 'behind' -in space - but 'after' - in time - the reapers' whose terrible reaping cata-strophically redefined the West.

The beneficentfertilly of a European summer is tinged with a grimmer image of reaping, the mediaeval association with the Grim Reaper who adopted the uniform of bureaucratic and militaristic modernity to reek unimaginable suffering and destruction. In the fertile countryside of rural Poland, they built the death camps, and now grass grows obscenely around the places that delivered a death that changed the history and self-image of the Euroepan West forever. As the Dutch artist Armando asks, can the trees that stood by be inocentof what happened in their presence? Is there a nature to paint that does not, by implication, bear responsibility for having indifferently witnessed this tragedy?

In addition, therefore, to the artistic self-consciousness of taking on the problem of landscape painting in the 1990s, is a tragic and historical problematic, which means that the very place this artist might wish to invoke to reformulate a sense of displaced identity and memory is, in Adorno's words impossible unmoglich. That does not mean, not possible. It can also mean 'difficult to manage,[1] as in the case of 'impossible behaviour,' which is hardly tolerable.[7] I suggest, therefore, that we might examine Lydia Bauman's paintings for a particular tension: between what can be offered to our thoughts or can be spoken, and, on the other hand, what haunts the making of the work, precipitates choices of images and directs-the making of effects through colour and design.

The power of the work lies in a certain uncanniness, a 'return of the repressed', that can never be glimpsed or represented directly. The underlying urgency and affective power of the paint-ings lies in what everything that we can see as we look at the work struggles to keep us, and possibly the artist herself, from glimpsing, while its insistence lends to the work its singular fascination. These landscapes are not offered to console; lyrically of pastorally. The subjective presence they poet-ically convey despite their apparent subject matter is far more indicative of a postmodern sensibility that is inevitably 'after Auschwitz.'

The sign of the artist is the preoccupation with art itself. This sounds too trite, perhaps, But it has taken me many years to grasp it. Trained within the dulling Cold War discourses of western formalist art history that cauterised any attempt to define any other purpose in art that its own, I broke with my training to become a social historian of art. Cynical of artists' statements that they were not making paintings about anything except certain forma problematics, social historians of art teased out relations between specific semiotic organisations of a canvas, social relations and ideologies to propose ways in which art would never be allowed to stand alone. This was a historically necessary project in America and England, which would, in the end, allow a

more subtle engagement with the question of the possibilities and effects of the art making process itself.
For me a further turn, to psychoanalysis, has led to me to understand the meaning of art beyond the conflict between aesthetic self-sufficiency and ideological readings of art's social implication. Art also addresses itself to subjectivity, therefore, to what

Freud revealed as the psycho-sybolic domain. This is not about making pseudopsychoanalytical interpretations of the artist via the painting as dis-closer of symptoms. Psychoanalysis instead suggests ways of reading the precise articulation between signs and fantasy, which must combine intensely personal, and often undisclosed impulses, with those which structurally determine subjectivity in general, and which are, therefore, accessible to any viewer, independent of what she knows about the artist,[8] The power of fantasy in art is not that the art work expresses the private and singular fantasies of its author. This would be boring to any one else. Rather, the art work achieves its general effect at the conjunction between general structures of psychic life and the contingent elements derived from particular individuals.
'If fantasies we personal in this way, how can they work for a general public, for a mass audience? Firstly, fantasy scenarios involve original wishes which are universal. Secondly, the are contingent, so that just as we draw on events of the day to produce our own, so we can adopt and adapt the ready-made scenarios of fiction, as if their contingent material had been our own.'[9]

The author makes his/her fantasy available and meaningful to others through a number of processes, according to Freud, This involves the form in which it comes to us. Framed within existing artistic conventions, the singular nature of one person's fantasy moves onto a general terrain. Secondly, this relates particularly to the development of formalism and the insistence on uniquely aesthetic values in twentieth century art, Freud suggests that the writer/artist 'bribes us by the purely formal -that is, the aesthetic - yield of pleasure which he offers us in the presentation of his fantasies. We give the name of incentive bonus, or fore-pleasure, to a yield of pleasure such as this, which is offered to us to make possible the still greater pleasure arising from the release of deeper psychical resources.'[10]

Lydia Bauman's conversation with me about her work necessarily and rightly drew my attention to the aesthetic questions she faces everyday in her studio. How to paint, how to make colour do the things she wants, how to continue that experiment modernism released art into, the question of how colour-loaded fluids placed on a material surface remain true to the material properties, while also suggesting - not picturing - something other. In a word, painting oscillates between the emptiness of material substance, demanding a discrete understanding of its own properties and performance, and the metaphorical fullness of a material sign that stands for something other than itself which will engage the intellect or affectivity of an Other, the viewer who processes its signs and the form of their material existence.

If I stand close to a Lydia Bauman painting (p. 17 up), I am lured into traversing visually a fascinating surface, layered, scraped, brushed. Some of the greatest and most surprising pleasures of abstract painting lie in the restless visual examinations of the events of paint on a surface, animated by the remaining traces of the artist's moving hand and instrument through viscous, or over hardened substances. Yet Lydia Bauman's is not abstract painting, for the marks and patches, which at such close quarters offer such absorbing formal and technical pleasures, are also signifiers in an artistic language that will allow me, on stepping back apace, to experience an encounter with an imaginary place.

There is no plot to deceive; for even at the optimum viewing distance, I am never allowed to forget that I am looking at a painting, a made thing, a studio object demanding recognition for its sheer technical inventiveness and innovation. The necessary declaration of the object's unmitigated objecthood as a painting is secured by the refusal of the illusions of oil paint and, sometimes the punning inclusion of the very substance, sand, for instance, in a desert of dune landscape (p. 14). The plaster surfaces hark back to the frescoes of the Italian Renaissance, a material that required both a technical and an intellectual discipline that oil painting would circumvent. As I look and see an area of raked and caked colored plaster I have to hold both the fact it suggests agricultural tending of a field in Italy and the dragging of a scraper through substance on a surface

lying on a table in London.
If the painting too adamantly declares its status as just a painting, I am allowed to read its abstract forms as my Roschach blot, finding in the pathways of the brush the lay lines of my fantasy. If the painting insists with opposing force on showing me a sight, making its material subordinate to the image it aims to create, then I can only respond from the outside to what it presents. The constant and creative tension between the being of the painting as painting and its power to make me see an image, allows for my unpredictable encounter with the author-subject at the moment her painting registers her presence as the informing intelligence shaping the form before me while yet displacing herself into the independent objecthood of the painted scene.

The formal question that intelligence repeatedly poses to the viewer is the central issue of landscape painting: the middle ground. It is in the middle ground that the possibility of space, and hence of imaginative entry, comes about, It is there that modernism in landscape has repeatedly battled with the flatness of the canvas and the ability of colour on linen or panel to create effects of space. In one reading of the landscape period of her work, Lydia Bauman's work is all about the middle ground. She produces paintings as strictly and determinedly flat as any serious modernist would require. Nothing allows the push of the worked materials into illu-sionistic space. In Tuscan Landscape with Three Cypresses (p. 15, p. 45) the trees which should serve as repoussoirs stand firm and dark across the foreground, their vertical forms overrunning the luminous middle ground and insisting on the flat plane. Within that middle ground rectangles of white are placed to the left and right of the space the trees traverse, tipping these areas up to the plane of the panel, in contrast with the rolling forms that give a contradictory fullness to the top third of the picture.
No colour seeps into unprimed canvas, as in the case of Helen Frankenthaler's attempt to rework landscape as a paradigm for optical, modernist abstraction. Everything is resolutely and durably hard on the surface, flattened and manufactured, there for me to see and feel. The surface witnesses the trope of modernist painting: the artist at work in the studio. Yet, the plane of the canvas is choreographed by the play of light and dark, or the coloured variations that make us see bands of paint as planes in space. In this, Lydia Bauman's work echoes the organisation of some later Van Gogh paintings, where, tipping up the landscape so there is hardly any sky to create a sense of enveloping atmosphere, the viewer looks up the canvas as if they are looking into a panorama of space. In Van Gogh's case, the efects acrid accidentally through his inadequate grasp of perspective. Thus he included in his paintings the immediate foreground before his feet from which disproportion, we are launched into a landscape space that rushes away from us, or dizzyingly tips down towards us. In Lydia Baumans's paintings, there is a knowing exploration of the effects of play-ng with planes and landscape. She chooses her photographs, already conventionally and formalising landscape scenes into patterns of shapes and colours, and rearranges their contents to suit the needs of the pictorial organisation she is searching for. None of what we see is chance, or just there. All is highly mediated, but every time a choice is made, there will be the trace of its motivation.
If we are held back from the middle ground, by an extended foreground, as in Moroccan landscape or by the deeply shaded hillocks on which there ilex trees stand tall, we are allowed to ask why this blockage? The middle ground of many these paintings is the site of a highly significant element in this series of paintings: a building of some sort. At the risk of falling into the very crudeness of interpretation I forswore a moment ago, I cannot but believe that these tiny, isolated houses, cottages, barns or chapels are without immense significance in the language of the paintings,
Let me approach this cautiously. What I am suggesting happens, for me, in these paintings, is a peculiarly creative tension between the apparently found order of an already formulated landscape: a scene already encoded by photography within the conventions of 'landscape.' These claim merely to represent the order that exists in the scene itself, in nature, The painting takes on an order, a scenario remade for viewing, and subjects it to the power of painting to transform by a logic its own. What seems already known, familiar recognisable as Tuscany, Provence, Ayres Rock, North Africa, Poland, what is Freud's term - heim/ich - becomes unhe/m/ich, uncanny in English, made strange by its refashioning in a discipline of paint-ing that is so adamantly formal. There is in Lydia Bauman's paintings a will for an almost classical order so strict that it gives itself away. Undoing itself almost by its own excess, there emerges the possibility of an alternative reading for a kind of passionate excess,a private intensity that cannot be pinned down to anything in the picture. Yet it pervades the whole. My only interpretative access to this otherness that creatively introduces its

uncan-niness into the formally held order of a strictly produced modernist painting is via the house, and indeed via the Manet-like stripe of dense black that stands for windows and doors (p. 17 up). At a distance and in the dazzling-ly intense light that Lydia Bauman's colour floods through her paintings of Southern landscapes, these blind openings seem merely registers of the stark contrasts of interiors in unprotected sunshine. But they are too bold, too unmediated, perhaps too opaque. They wound the house yet deny access to its protecting interior.
In The Poetics of Space, Gaston Bachelard invites us to what he names 'topoanalysis', not a mapping of space: topography, and not quite a psycho-analysis of space, but a phenomenological attempt to grasp the transsubjective meanings of space, starting with the house. 'For our house is our corner of the world, As has often been said, it is ourfirst universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the world.'[11] Because it is so formative, the primary

sensations ot intimacy and belonging associated with the house can be carried with us as a layer of memories, investing subsequent homes and spaces, but tempting us back to this sedimented timeless space,
Through dreams, the various dwelling-places of our lives copene-trate and retain the treasure of former days. And after we are in a new house, when memories of other places we have lived come back to us, we travel to the land of Motionless Childhood, motionless the way all Immemorial things are. We live fixations of happiness. We comfort ourselves by reliving memories of protection. Something closed must retain our memories, while leaving them their original value as images... Thus by approaching the house image with care not to break up the solidarity of memory and imagination, we may hope to make others feel all the psychological elasticity of an image that moves us at an unimaginable depth.'[12]

There is no motion in Lydia Baumans's landscapes. This further renders them uncanny. Yet there is a pleasure in them, a joy created for the spectator to contemplate in landscapes made human by the presence of this image: the house. The phrases 'Motionless Childhood' and 'immmemorial things' catch for me the poetics of these paintings, so infused with an informing sentiment that cannot be pinned to any sign or element. Space becomes a holding, a housing forthis sedimented time of a happiness that is stilled in a landscape cast in plaster, made hard and durable, built and solid, yet luminous and deeply consoling. Bachelard's avoidance of psychological reading of the causes of these effects allows me to imagine why it would be that Lydia Bauman might paint like this, while in fact I am responding to the poetic image she has created for the revelation of our propensity to dream about being in the world, belonging, intimacy, shelter.

It is the house that signals the human presence in this space; yet the house is isolated. It is not the comforting sign of human activity taming, domesticating the natural world through agriculture and community. The building is isolated in a solitary space, hard to reach, whether placed as in Moroccan Landscape tiny, in a distant middle ground, or perched atop a hill as in Emerald Landscape (p. 54). Even in Tuscan Landscape 1990, where the house is in the foreground, its scale makes it seem tiny in the monumental mountainous landscape, presenting a bold 'face' to the light that falls directly on its facade. So there is a pull in the opposite direction, bringing back to the tension between the heimlich and the unheim/ich. From Bachelard's idea that the poetic image is a sudden salience on the surface of the psyche, we might finally return to Freud's notion of the uncanny, which Julia Kristeva has employed in her study of the stranger,[13]

Freud identified a set of strange, disturbing effects created in aesthetic fields such as art or literature, fields typically concerning themselves with the provision of pleasure through beautiful forms and attractive subjects. These 'uncanny' effects run from distressing to positively horrifying. To treat his topic, Freud becomes a linguist, puzzling over the psychic and semantic significance of the German terms: heimlich, familiar and homely, and its opposite: unheimlich, uncanny, unsettling, strange. The point of this reversal is to see that these terms are not categorical opposites but contain an internal inversion that means that each contains the meanings of its other.

Thus Freud can postulate that the uncanny is the 'return of the repressed', the re-emergence of some formative moment of the subject's history, a moment that was once familiar and even pleasurable, but is now

clothed in an anxiety connected to its reappearance from the closed archives of the unconscious, whether or not the original event was anxiety-producing, In one passage, Freud identifies the home, that can, in its later, returning forms of representation produce uncanny effects, as a displaced signifier of the primary home, namely the maternal body. It is not interesting outside of the analytic situation to trace back feelings to these origins as if that is an explanation. It is useful, however, in art historical or critical studies, to understand the nature of the transfers of meanings, through repression, sublimation and other psychological mechanisms into the work of culture of these archaic components of our subjective formations.

These archaic events and associated feelings form a powerful foundation for sophisticated cultural processes, lending to forms that speak to our intellectual and cognitive perceptions in adulthood, a freight of psychic affects, fantasies and sensations that are part of the complex pleasures motivating both the making and the enjoyment of art. If the home - mediated by poetic and aesthetic conventions into recognised cultural forms - is remotely related to the originary sensation of being ‘at home’, cradled within and in interchange with another, the mother, it is possible to trace an attenuated lineage in language and art to sensations of belonging and exile, to strangeness as the sense of estrangement, as the destructuration, undoing of the subject itself. Julia Kristeva uses Freud’s writings on the uncanny to move through the widespread fear of the stranger, of an Other, that fuels xenophobia and the religious, racist or nationalistic intolerance of difference, towards the recognition that this

problematic strangeness resides within us, as a result of our primary dislocation. In the process of becoming human subjects, marked by the internal division of conscious and unconscious, the infant tends to project outside itself elements from within it that are difficult to handle, such as dangerous, threatening feelings. We thus generate our own alien, our own double out of our own materials and sometimes a real other comes to be the figurative bearer of our own estrangement. Thus the person who becomes a stranger in a foreign land is doubly burdened by this complex internal fissure and by the projections she may have to bear from others, who in denial, project their sense of threat onto the stranger amongst them.

Lydia Bauman’s journeys from Poland to Israel and then to England in her adolescence are not exceptional traumas, indeed exile and escape, resettlement are, as we know a common condition, but each individual processes the immense stress associated with such separations and dislocations in unique ways. I may be projecting here myself, but I cannot but wonder about the ways in which this artist processed a loss of belonging -the title of one the artist’s mother’s books is after all, A Dream of Belonging,[14] the loss of inguistic familiarity and the lack of self-consciousness that results from being at home in one’s mother-tongue. All the metaphoric load of the way, in English at least, we express these things has the force of a psychological return to the repressed archaic world of the beginnings of subjectivity-at home, mother-tongue. Coming to England and to Yorkshire as a young Polish and Jewish woman involves encountering the process of becoming a stranger, relentlessy unassimilable to a particularly nationalist culture, that never acknowledges its own xeno-intolerance.

There is strangeness, in the sense of tension, within Lydia Bauman’s paintings, that results from her painting of scenes that appear to have the quality of being known, familiar, the very signs of that place in Provence, Australia, Tuscany, Poland, while, at the same time, something is not at all familiar, cosy, welcoming, known. It is dissonant, and makes for a moment of melancholy in these works. Intense desire is guarded from any too complete a revelation, but is traced by the maker’s hand into the crafted objecthood of the painting, its fabrication, its clear declaration of an artistic programme of almost classical concern with design, with the architectonics of natural formations and the play of light and shade, But an overwhelming tenderness and simultaneous sadness, infuses the scene through colour, for instance, the expanse of biue in the Lavender Fields (p. 55) amidst which a tiny homestead floats, with no path leading towards it, no access to it imaginable, except by the flight of fantasy that the painting as a whole allows to a spectator outside its imaginary, ordered world - an other, a stranger to the scene.

The artist’s presence is in both the painting as its traces her labour and its sustaining fantasies, and in the

viewing position, outside and finally only allowed to look at the mis-en-scene she has created. Isolated houses, blind paths, the vulnerable clustering of trees in open landscapes, ail these are what gives the affective and haunting quality to these refashionings of discovered landscapes that tempt the artist by the challenge of their difficult forms, and by the probably unknown way those forms offer a means to structure and thus provide a representation of feelings that cannot be fully acknowledged. Suggesting a pathway into Lydia Bauman's landscapes via notions of the uncanny, the estranged, and the poetics of space is not meant to interpret and explain work.

They are a way to track some of the possibilities present in this body of work, which is the dense constellation of twentieth century art's histories and those of the artist, who in herself, born in Warsaw, resident in London, carries some of our century's telling experiences of loss and deterritorialisation into contemporary art in a singular and compelling artistic practice.

Cloaked memory and a sense of loss infuse an art where the painted space promises presence, the presence of the art work in the present, while indexing us, its viewers, to another, immemorial and motionless time, her past, and the time of the unconscious with its complete indifference to chronology that allows any gesture we make in the present to resonate and echo, Thus the moment of the painting and the poetic image it can install in its spectators is never caused by a fixed past.

As Bachelard suggests, 'the poetic image is a sudden salience on the surface of the psyche', an effect wholly in the present and thus. I close with Gaston Batchelard's revealing insight: The poetic image is not an echo of the past. On the contrary: through the brillance of an image, the distant past resounds with echoes, reverberates, and it is hard to know at what depth these echoes will reverberate and die away.'[15]

Griselda Pollock

1. This is substantively the argument advanced by T. J, Clark in The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and Who's Followers, London and New York Thames & Hudson and Alfred Knopf, 1984.
2. Roland Barthes, La Chambre Claire, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1980.

3. See Griselda Pollock, Avant-Garde Gambits: Gender and the Colour of Art History,
London, Thames & Hudson, 1992. 4 Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, New York. Oxford University Press, 1973.
5. This formulation is discussed in my essay 'Inscriptions in the Feminine', in Catherine de Zegher, Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of20cArt, Boston, MIT Press, 1996.
6. See 'After the Gleaners' my Genrations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings, London, Routledge, 1996.
7. This important point was made by Antony Rowland, University of Lancaster, in his paper 'Barbarism and Post-Holocaust Culture' at the conference Death and its Concepts. Centre for Cultural Studies, University of Leeds, 24-26 March 1997,
8. See Elizabeth Cowie, 'Fantasia', M/F, 1984, no. 9 provides an extended analysis of the psychoanalytical concept of fantasy and cinema - itself offering a mis-en-scene for desire and an illusion of place.
9. Cowie. 85.
10. Sigmund Freud, 'Creative Writing and Daydreams' [1908], Standard Edition, Vol. IX. 153.
11. Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space [1958], translated Maria Jolas, Boston Beacon Press, 1964, 4,
12. /bid., 5-6.
13. Julia Kristeva, Etrangers a Nous-Memes, Paris, Artheme Fayard, 1991.
14. Janina Bauman,/! Dream of Belonging, London, Virago Books, 1988.
15. Gaston Bachelard, op. cit.