6 | Fallen Women: The Gender of Horizontality and the Abandonment of the Pedestal by Giacometti and Epstein

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A central theme of the narratives of modern sculpture concerns the critical engagement with and eventual abandonment of the pedestal. The crux of this story, as it is often told, occurred in 1932 with Alberto Giacometti's Surrealist sculpture, *Woman with her throat cut* (fig. 1). It has become common to see this work, with its activation of the experiential environment of the spectator, as a precedent for the minimalist and postminimalist exploration of literality and presence. While Giacometti's story is well known, he was not alone in this endeavour. In that same year of 1932, Jacob Epstein created his *Woman possessed* (fig. 2), a work that similarly repudiated the imperative of the pedestal. Like Giacometti's *Woman*, Epstein's work was made without a base so it could be placed directly on the floor. Derived from his own engagement with primitivist styles and subject matter, Epstein's sculpture represents a woman who has lost all self-control and writhes in the throes of a spiritual or demonic possession. She has fallen to the ground, unable to hold either her body or her mind under her own will. Epstein's work, that is, shares with Giacometti's the depiction of a woman who is not only horizontal but also prostrate and helpless on the floor.

In what follows, I will take the coincidence of these two contemporaneous sculptures – one in France, the other in England – as the starting point for an interrogation of some of the gendered conventions at work in the development of modern sculpture. These two artists made similar moves towards the floor, and both were drawing on the same sculptural traditions. In particular, I see both Epstein and Giacometti as registering a longstanding logic of the figurative statue that implicitly equated verticality with a subjectivity that was itself assumed to be gendered male. Both artists moved the statue to the floor by toppling it, making that statue represent a woman, and depriving that figure of any implication of or capacity for self-possession. In order to do away with the pedestal, that is, they both relied upon gender as a crucial factor facilitating what are ostensibly formal decisions.

There are a number of precedents for this modernist move to the floor, some of which should be noted before embarking on a discussion of Epstein's and Giacometti's

Fig 1 Alberto Giacometti, *Woman with her throat cut (Femme égorgée)*
bronze, 1932
National Galleries of Scotland (Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh)

fallen women. Sculptors such as Constantin Brancusi, Wilhelm Lehmbruck and Epstein himself had earlier made works that took on a new relationship between sculpture's physical support and its actual environment. Brancusi's 1909-10 *Sleeping muse* or Epstein's 1902–4 *Head of a baby* both lay the head directly on the table or base in such a way as to emphasize its autonomy from the support or pedestal. Similarly, Lehmbruck created works such as his small *Crawling child* (1909), which could be placed in various orientations on a table or base to represent the different possible bodily positions of a child tentatively learning to walk. All of these works, to some degree, drew upon Auguste Rodin's reconsideration of the figure's relationship to orientation and gravity, an agenda most evident in the works related to the *Gates of Hell* (1880–1917). Beyond the realm of figurative sculpture, the floor would also become a crucial component of some of Marcel Duchamp's readymades such as the *Bottlerack* (1914) or, more evidently, *Trap* (1917), in which a coat rack was attached to the floor of his studio. Creating a literal and conceptual snare, *Trap* not only activated the actual environment in which the viewer moved, it physically challenged the viewer within it by reorientating an everyday object.

There were, then, earlier instances of floor-bound objects and smaller scale, table-top sculpture without conventional bases. This was not only the case with early-twentieth-century modern sculpture, and one can find further examples from the previous centuries among bibelots or smallscale statuettes. Indeed, both Epstein's earlier

Fig 2 Jacob Epstein, *Woman Possessed*
Hoptonwood stone, 1932
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

bronzes without bases and Giacometti's own series of horizontal tabletop objects from the early 1930s operated on a such a scale. What made the sculptures of 1932 a notable departure from previous experiments, however, was their citation of the traditions of figurative statuary via their bold representation of the body (and not just a fragment) on a less intimate and more confrontational scale. (It should be noted, however, that neither sculpture is human size. The Epstein measures 33.3 x10.2 x 45.1 cm , and the Giacometti 22 x 53.5 x 87.5 cm).

Of the two artists, it was Giacometti who had most thoroughly explored the horizontal format in a series of works created during the three years leading up to *Woman with her throat cut*. Beginning with works such as *Reclining woman who dreams* (1929), he reconstituted the figure as a set of linear forms evoking body parts and positions. This led to works such as *Head/Landscape* (1930–31) or *No more play* (1933), in which he created self-contained topographies in the format of gameboards. As Rosalind Krauss has noted, Giacometti's work of this period (up to *Woman with her throat cut*) was concerned with:

> sculpture's withdrawal from the frame of vision, which is couched in the verticality of both the image seen and the uprightness of the viewing subject, whose 'imaginary' is also deployed along the

> vertical axis. The horizontal field assumed by Giacometti's work of the '30s organizes these objects more in the kinetic than the optical axis: the bodily trajectories of walking and touching and sleeping. That Giacometti explored this axis (in *Woman with Her Throat Cut*, *No More Play*, and the erotically charged *Project for a Passageway*) puts him more in touch with the radical sculpture of the '70s (think of Smithson, Serra, Andre, Morris) than the constructivist work of the late '60s (Caro, here).[1]

Woman with her throat cut was, of all of his horizontal works of this period, the most physically confrontational. Unlike the table-top gameboards and objects, this sculpture of a murdered woman occupies a position low to the ground and directly on the floor. As Krauss observed, this shift of axis places *Woman with her throat cut* outside the conventional framework for freestanding figurative sculpture. It is contiguous with the architectural envelope of the exhibition space in a manner more immediate than either traditional sculpture or even Giacometti's other works of this period. Of course there are many horizontal-format or reclining statues throughout the history of art, but Giacometti's work has been seen as revolutionary for forcing the viewer to share the floor with the representation of a dead woman.

Conventionally, *Woman with her throat cut* has been understood in relation to the Surrealist fascination with sex and death. The body depicted is mantis-like and abstracted, but it is nevertheless deliberately marked as 'female' through the inclusion of breasts (not to mention the title). The rib-like forms seem to have been spread apart and thus no longer capable of offering any protection. By implication, the subject has been seen as a victim of sexual violence. The splayed legs and prostrate position of the figure suggest such a reading, and the work has also been seen in the light of Giacometti's youthful fantasies of rape and murder.[2] Reinhold Hohl has suggested, as well, that the violence of the sculpture could be traced to the end of his relationship with his lover, Madina Visconti.[3] Regardless, the final form of the *Woman with her throat cut* conflates the murderous act with the sexual accessibility that is central to the canonical format of the reclining female nude. The work stages just such an episode as we might expect from the Surrealist obsessions with death and desire. Giacometti intimated a disquieting encounter between viewer and sculpture, and we walk up to the work as we might a corpse encountered in an alley. As Krauss remarked, for this work "confrontation is a major resource".[4]

Looking at Epstein's treatment of the same theme, we are similarly faced with a woman who is no longer in control her own body. The clenched fists and prostrate yet

writhing body reflect her inner turmoil and loss of self-possession. The horizontal position of this sculpture has sometimes been considered anomalous amongst Epstein's stone carvings, but in fact it had parallels in his experiments in modelling. Epstein's carved and modelled works are frequently considered as separate trajectories, yet we can see in *Woman possessed* an expansion, in stone, of the spatial concerns he had already been exploring in his bronzes. In addition to the 1902–4 *Head of a baby*, other works such as the *Fourth portrait of Peggy Jean* (1920) and *Sunita reclining* (1931) are earlier examples of his innovative investigations into the relationship between figure, base and support.

Both the content and style of *Woman possessed* derived from Epstein's interest in non-Western art, and it has been suggested that a sculpted figure from Gabon provided the formal and thematic inspiration for the piece.[5] The imagery of the spirit possession and the nudity of the figure certainly could be seen in relation to sensationalist stories of African ritual practices that were constitutive components of the mythical image of the 'Primitive'.[6] More fundamentally, *Woman possessed* must also be seen in the context of Epstein's investigations into mythical and essential images of gender during the same years.[7] In particular, the scandalous *Genesis* of 1929–30 and *Adam* of 1938 frame this period. Both works exaggerate bodily indications of sex, foregrounding its thematic importance to the subject matter of these works. Also, at the end of this period Epstein sculpted the 1937 *Consummatum est*, an image of Christ presenting his wounds prior to his worldly death. In contrast to the psychic and bodily turmoil of the earlier *Woman possessed*, Epstein's Christ calmly displays his palms to Heaven. Though floor-bound, this figure resists the floor, exhibiting a defiant subjectivity and self-control completely alien to the earlier sculpture. Whereas *Woman possessed* depicts a violent internal struggle for control, represented by her inability to stand, the later Christ passively relinquishes a vertical bodily orientation as a metaphor for his surrendering of the flesh.

While motivated by vastly different agendas, and created in different national contexts and with different attitudes to figuration and materials, both Epstein's *Woman possessed* and Giacometti's *Woman with her throat cut* share a similar interweaving of subject matter and orientation. Both women have fallen to the ground precisely because they have lost their capacity for self-determination and self-possession. Whether from the violent and murderous act or by the equally violent conquest of the mind through spirit possession, their agency has been taken from them. Disturbingly, both Epstein and Giacometti furthermore intimate a male viewing position from which these shocking scenes open themselves to eroticism. Just as it has often been noted that Giacometti's work possibly evokes the sexual through the conflation of sex and death,[8] so too could we read the pose of Epstein's possessed woman as having sexual connotations, which

would be in keeping with the insistent exploration of sexuality throughout his work. As Richard Cork has observed, "Whether terror or ecstasy is her principal emotion, she is absolutely in its thrall."[9]

What binds these two contemporaneous experiments together – and what they, together, help to illuminate about the gendered conventions of modern sculpture – can be drawn out by placing them into a broader context of figurative sculpture, for it was the conventions of that larger context to which both Giacometti and Epstein reacted. There are two central issues for the statuary tradition that are pertinent to the present analysis of these works: the spatial isolation of statuary and the consequent reliance on the human figure and its poses to convey meaning.

Most often, the statue stands alone in space with only a small number of attributes. There is no represented background for the statue, and consequently any spatial or environmental context can only be implied in a limited way through additions to the base. Generally, only the statue's pedestal demarcates the figure's setting as well as its distinction from the surrounding space. Sculptors have always been aware of this limitation, and in response many have postulated the spatial autonomy of the statue. Perhaps the most explicit example of this can be found in the work of Rodin, which both culminated the figurative tradition and provided the catalyst for developments of more self-consciously modernist sculpture in the twentieth century. One of Rodin's most perceptive commentators, Rainer Maria Rilke (also his personal secretary), argued that his twisting and contorted figures eschewed any relationship to the actual environment in which they were placed. They transcended the limitations of gravity, having become autonomous from the exigencies of the surrounding space. Rilke wrote,

> Rodin: This is what makes his sculpture so isolated, so much a fortress-like work of art: protecting itself, militant, inaccessible, attainable by a miracle only to those who feel they have wings: that it has liberated itself in the main from dependence on surroundings and background [...][10]

Rodin's relationship to space and to the implication of gravity is extreme, but his priorities adequately represent a longstanding characterization of the statue's domain as being distinct from the shared space of the surrounding environment. Ironically, Rodin himself came to acknowledge that his sculptures worked best when installed in such a way that they seemed to interact with each other, even if they all individually appeared, *pace* Rilke, "fortress-like" in their denial of gravity or orientation.[11] Similarly, there are many examples of nineteenth- and early- twentieth-century statues that somehow

address the environment in which they are placed, from Adolf von Hildebrand to Brancusi. The dialogue between sculptures and their architectural and public settings, however, often occurs not on a semantic level but in relation to overall design. In most, there remains a distinction between the spatial context represented *within* the sculpture and the experiential space of the viewer. They may overlap to some extent, but the viewer rarely thinks he or she is inside the space of sculptural representation.[12] What makes both Giacometti's and Epstein's works stand out in relation to these earlier conventions is their implication of continuity between the floor on which the represented women lie prostrate and the floor on which the viewer circumambulates around them. More than merely addressing the space of the viewer, these works gain their effect by establishing that the represented setting for the sculptural figure is one and the same as the literal environment of the viewer. That is, these works aggressively activate the floor itself *as part of the sculpture*. A statue merely standing without a base would not, in itself, call attention to the shared space of the floor as directly and confrontationally as these figures.[13] Krauss has remarked that Giacometti's sculpture was "inserted more directly into the flow of ambient space. The *Woman with her throat cut* of 1932 was a work placed squarely on the floor, the human form fashioned from a disarray of sheathings, resembling a pile of old rags which the viewer might trip over."[14] More than just placed as an obstacle or obstruction, however, this sculpture goes further in extending its representational domain to the floor, incorporating it as a constituent element. The same holds true for Epstein's *Woman possessed*, which is only fully intelligible if we understand the figure as fallen to – and semantically reliant on – the actual ground. In short, unlike the tradition of spatially isolated freestanding statuary, *Woman with her throat cut* and *Woman possessed* do have a specific represented spatial context and background – that of the literal floor itself.[15]

The second, related feature of figurative sculpture germane to these works is sculpture's conventional limitation either to the single figure or to a small group. Material, spatial and economic factors generally constrain large compositions of many freestanding statues. (There are a small number of exceptions to this in freestanding sculpture, but most often the impulse towards more complex, multi-figure compositions manifested itself in relief sculpture.) A central problem for both artists and viewers of freestanding sculpture is the difficulty posed by identification of and with a statue that must adequately convey its mythological, historical, or other subject matter through the single standing figure alone. In response to this problem of how the single figure could tell a story or provide a message, there emerged an elaborate language of the human body and its poses, culminating in the codes of nineteenth-century academic sculpture in which meaning was attached to subtle variations in position and

orientation.[16] Many viewers today find nineteenth-century figurative sculpture opaque precisely because they are unfamiliar with the nuances of composition, thus lacking the formal vocabulary that was central to the way in which many nineteenth-century viewers understood and evaluated sculpture. This limitation to the isolated single figure (or small group) effectively meant that the sculptural body on its own had to carry the burden of conveying its meaning with a minimum of those tools and strategies available to artists working in pictorial media. The body, alone (and often nude), came to be responsible for expressing a host of ideals, emotions and concerns. In this context, such seemingly basic formal issues as pose and orientation carried with them a great deal of semantic weight – as was the case with verticality and horizontality.

With these conventions in mind, it becomes increasingly clear that one can understand the dramatic horizontality of Giacometti's *Woman with her throat cut* and Epstein's *Woman possessed* not as the result of isolated *sui generis* formal decisions but, rather, in relation to the rules and expectations of the format of the freestanding statue from which they extrapolated. Both artists rejected the spatial and semantic separateness of the statue, but did so by predicating their horizontal bodies on the nuanced meanings that the conventions of statuary ascribed to the poses and orientations of the freestanding single figure. Obviously, there were horizontally-oriented statues prior to 1932. They were, however, limited to two main options, both of which set them apart from the heroic format of the freestanding vertical statue. Simply put, the horizontal statue was either physically incapacitated *or* female. Unlike the wider range of poses one finds in painting, the horizontal or reclining figure in sculpture is largely limited to a handful of major categories. The majority of sculpted male horizontal figures are dying, wounded or dead.[17] When one surveys the traditions of the statue, one finds horizontal injured warriors or heroes laid to rest, but very few able-bodied reclining men (and only the occasional boy).[18] By contrast, one can find a larger number of unwounded recumbent female statues, mostly nudes. As in the tradition of the female nude in painting, the reclining sculpted female figure is justified through a fairly explicit address to eroticism and the presumed male gaze. There are exceptions to this, as for example François Joseph Bosio's *Hyacinth awaiting his turn to throw the discus* (*c.* 1824), but often these do little more than transpose the eroticism attributed to the reclining female to the feminized adolescent nude boy.

Any decision to make a horizontal sculpture could not have been ignorant of these conventions. Within the language of figurative statuary, the connotations ascribed to horizontality were derived from its inversion of the proper format for the statue, standing tall. Either unable to stand *or* female, the body represented in horizontal statues is primarily defined by the presumed lack of that which the statue has historically

conveyed – the ideality of a personage or subject to be emulated. For sculpture, in other words, uprightness was a primary sign of subjectivity and mental activity while horizontality was, by inference, a sign of weakness or vulnerability. In this schema, only women have consistently been allowed to occupy the latter position without being dead, wounded, or asleep. In effect, the conventions of statuary tacitly enforced a double standard whereby women, but not men, were more often represented as objects.[19] Horizontality in figurative sculpture, in other words, was far from a neutral option. It was designated as *difference* – in this case, difference from the standing statue. Necessarily, difference establishes a hierarchical distinction between what it stipulates as the primary term and an other term defined as that which the primary term is not. Or, more to the point, in constituting the 'secondary' term, the 'primary' term becomes itself constituted via difference *as being* primary, pre-existing, natural and neutral. In the case of the language of sculptural composition under consideration here, that which was defined as the neutral primary position was the erect statue. The act of standing functioned as an axiomatic starting point for this medium at pains to project an illusion of mental activity and life onto immotile, obdurate three-dimensional objects.[20] In the conventions of figurative sculpture, the horizontal format gained its particular parameters and connotations via its definitional difference from the erect statue. However, once we see how this difference has unequally distributed representations of male and female figures in the history of statuary, it becomes clear that this compositional difference relies upon and reiterates binary *sexual difference*. The limited range of subject matter allowed in horizontal statuary (wounded, dead, vulnerable and/or female) illustrates that the vertical and the horizontal are not simply divergent artistic options. They are exposed as being gendered polarities with the naturalized primary terms (standing, subject, ideal) defined as implicitly male and the secondary terms (reclining, object, vulnerable) coded in terms of the not-male, or the female. This binary line of reasoning can be traced back to the pervasive hierarchical differentiation of mind from body and matter in Western thought, which, in turn, reinforced sexual difference through the formula of 'female is to male as nature (or body) is to culture (or mind)'.[21] Paradoxically, for a medium that dealt primarily with the representation of the human body as the sign for subjectivity, this reductive logic sanctioned the sculptural representation of reclining women as mere objects rather than as proper subjects. Although we generally only see men in similar positions when their bodies have failed them (and, as is often said, they are 'returning to the earth'), women can less problematically occupy that horizontal position within these traditions when they are offered up as erotic or sensual objects.[22]

I recognize that I have painted the traditions of figurative sculpture in very broad

strokes, parsing distinctions and categories that are, necessarily, generalizations. I have done this in order to bring to light the nevertheless operative and pernicious gendered hierarchies that have underwritten the production of three-dimensional representations of human bodies. Epstein and Giacometti represent a self-conscious elaboration of the logical foundations of these traditions. The horizontality they employ is not innocent, but rather based on an inversion of the general expectations for the statue and its equation of gender and orientation. Their move was radical in its break with the traditions of statuary while at the same time logically consistent with its underlying assumptions. They used both of the two categories of horizontal sculpture – the incapacitated *and* the female – in order to drive their statues mercilessly to the floor. This should indicate to us how demanding this art-theoretical gambit was and, consequently, why (especially in the case of the more well-known Giacometti) its polemicism became such a precedent for the development of the broader parameters of sculpture in the twentieth century (and the eventual abandonment, or marginalization, of the statue format *in toto*).

My characterization of horizontality as a problem for the statue format that culminates in the break represented by these two works can be linked to the broader interest in the horizontal in twentieth-century art from the 1920s onwards. This trajectory has been explored by Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois under the umbrella of the "formless", a term whose use these authors trace back to the writings of Georges Bataille. Bataille's writings, in fact, provide one of the most compelling discussions of the traditional association of uprightness with subjectivity. In his essay, 'The Big Toe', Bataille argued that the foot represented the uncontrolled bodiliness and undifferentiated matter that Enlightenment conceptions of the mind and rationality had attempted to suppress and surpass. He began the essay,

> The big toe is the most *human* part of the human body, in the sense that no other element of this body is as differentiated from the corresponding element of the anthropoid ape (chimpanzee, gorilla, orangutan, or gibbon). This is due to the fact that the ape is tree dwelling, whereas man moves on the earth without clinging to branches, having himself become a tree, in other words raising himself straight up in the air like a tree, and all the more beautiful for the correctness of his erection. In addition, the function of the human foot consists in giving a firm foundation to the erection of which man is so proud (the big toe, ceasing to grasp branches, is applied to the ground on the same plane as the other toes).[23]

As Bataille goes on to explain, the toe, and the foot more generally, best represent the distinction between humans and lower animals (in both the use of toes by primates and the function of the toe in standing "straight up in the air like a tree"). Nevertheless, humans see the toe and foot – the points of contact with the ground – as dirty and base. He continued, "But whatever role played in the erection by his foot, man, who has a light head, in other words a head raised to the heavens and heavenly things, sees it as spit, on the pretext that he has this foot in the mud."[24]

Bataille then proceeded to explore the variety of attitudes toward the foot, building directly on the Freudian interest in foot fetishism. In his opening paragraphs, however, he accurately pinpointed the equation of uprightness with subjectivity that, I would argue, also underwrites the traditions of figurative sculpture. For Bataille, it is humanity's unease with the one horizontal part of the body (the foot) and its adjacency to the ground that in a larger sense exposes the human subject's suppression of its own bodiliness and materiality. Undermining that Enlightenment distinction between mind and matter, Bataille argued that the toe is the facilitator of human mentality and subjectivity just as it reminds us that bodiliness and materiality cannot be completely repressed or controlled by rationality.

Bataille characterized humanity's pursuit of elevation, generally, as flight from those base aspects which, following the general principles of Freudian psychoanalysis upon which Bataille drew, were repressed only to return. He wrote,

> Although within the body blood flows in equal quantities from high to low and from low to high, there is a bias in favor of that which elevates itself, and human life is erroneously seen as an elevation. The division of the universe into subterranean hell and perfectly pure heaven is an indelible conception, mud and darkness being the *principles* of evil as light and celestial space are the *principles* of good: with their feet in mud but their heads more or less in light, men obstinately imagine a tide that will permanently elevate them, never to return, into pure space.[25]

Bois and Krauss have extrapolated from Bataille's interest in the formless a counter-formulation of twentieth century art.[26] In their account, the horizontal emerged as a key term that, they argued, had been inadequately apprehended in art-historical discussions, despite its profound impact on the work of artists in the twentieth century. Speaking of the reception of the drip paintings of Jackson Pollock by sculptors such as Richard Serra, Krauss writes that the central feature to be adapted was not flatness, as the

prevailing accounts would have it, but "it was to rotate [Pollock's] work out of the dimension of the pictorial object altogether and, by placing his canvases on the floor, to transform the whole project of art from making objects, in their increasingly reified form, to articulating the vectors that connect objects to subjects." Serra did this by "understanding this vector as the horizontal field of an event".[27] The connectivity between subjects and objects of which Krauss writes occurs via the horizontal extension of the floor itself as the location of the sculpture and of the viewing subject. Such connectivity is precisely what Giacometti and Epstein fought so hard to win within the parameters of figurative sculpture in 1932.

Krauss had earlier linked Giacometti's horizontal sculptures to Bataille's theories in her important essay, 'No More Play', which initially appeared in the catalogue to the controversial 1984 Museum of Modern Art exhibition, *Primitivism in 20th century art: the affinity of the tribal and the modern*. In that essay, she argued that the horizontal format of Giacometti's objects and gameboards from the early 1930s developed from the primitive a new conception of sculpture not tied to the reflection of human verticality, and thus of mythic subjectivity. "The gameboard, with its little pieces, is a representation in which the symbolic is made a function of the base, the base in Bataille's sense (*basesse*), a concept far from surrealist poetics, forged instead out of a vision of the primitive."[28] According to Krauss, this development is Giacometti's principal innovation, one which he unfortunately (for her) rejected when he turned back to figurative sculpture. Beyond positioning Giacometti as the initiator of a reading of the primitive based in a conceptually sophisticated repudiation of form and subjectivity (rather than primitivism as a mere stylistic borrowing), Krauss's essay laments the figurative sculptor Giacometti would become. With its implicit uprightness, the figurative statue serves as that which Giacometti temporarily rejected only to be seduced by it again.

Noticeably absent from Krauss's argument about Giacometti's horizontality is *Woman with her throat cut* – despite its position as a principal precedent for the more radical uses of the horizontal in the art of the 1960s and after. The works she chose to focus on as exemplars of Giacometti's horizontality can all be subsumed under the category of objects. Since the figurative statue served as Krauss's target in this essay, it is not surprising that she passed over the one horizontal sculpture of Giacometti's that represents a whole figure (however abstracted). Other works such as *Head/Landscape* or *Disagreeable object* (1931) may represent or imply bodily parts, but none of the works she praised in that essay can be understood to be figurative statues. It is the figurative that she characterized as conservative, and in this taxonomy *Woman with her throat cut* can be little more than a hold-over from Giacometti's earlier statues (such as *Spoon woman* of 1926) with their parroting of primitive sources.[29] Without a doubt, by being

a statue (as I have asserted it is throughout), *Woman with her throat cut* is more traditional than the gameboard pieces such as *Circuit* (1931) or *No more play* (1933). Like in the centuries of European sculpture that preceded it, *Woman with her throat cut* took the human form as the primary and almost exclusive subject matter for sculpture. Such a reliance on the human form led to the exclusion of this sculpture from Krauss's explication of horizontality. We should recognize, however, that in its relationship to the context and conventions of figurative sculpture, *Woman with her throat cut* tells us something important about the parameters and limitations of that tradition. To put it frankly, Giacometti's case demonstrates that it may, in fact, have been easier to develop horizontality without reference to the human body (with its assumed equation of uprightness and subjectivity). This was, ultimately, Krauss's point – that Giacometti refused the category of the statue as a means of formulating a sculpture that denied form, independence, rationality and uprightness.

However, we can characterize Giacometti's relation to the figure from a different perspective. By working *within* the tradition of the figurative statue and its conventional role of exemplifying the ideal subject (be it a heroic figure or a mythological ideal), Giacometti achieved baseness in a different way. In *Woman with her throat cut*, he effected the repudiation of the coherent, rational subject through the representation of a woman who had lost self-possession, thus asking the viewer to follow a chain of differential inversions: from the vertical to the horizontal, from the living person to the dead body, and from the phallic verticality of the statue to the reclining female nude. Rather than overlook *Woman with her throat cut* because it is a statue, I contend that only by seeing it in terms of well-established figurative conventions can we grasp its import for and complication of the presumptions of that tradition.

Taken with Epstein's contemporaneous work and its similar strategies, we can see that both artists sought to embrace the horizontal condition of the floor shared with the viewer. In order to do this *with a statue*, however, they could not just do away with the base or the pedestal. They had to reiterate this downward move through the paired inversions of the upright statue and the male subjectivity it implied. The abandonment of the pedestal, in other words, required a registration and re-ordering of the vertical statue's gendered logic.

As something which elevates its subject, the pedestal introduces verticality even in the most horizontal of figural compositions, creating a separation from the space of the viewer. In essence, an equation of ascendance and transcendence underwrites the pedestal. It physically adds to an object or figure's height at the same time as it semantically brackets that thing from the other things in the world. For sculpture, this framing also serves to push the object on the pedestal into the realm of the exemplary. As Krauss argued,

> The very axis of verticality declares the apartness of sculpture's representational field from the world of actuality, and this dimension is traditionally introduced by the uprightness of the pedestal, its removal from the space of the real.[30]

The pedestal, in short, ensures *both* the separateness and ideality of any statue. Traditionally, sculpture has carried with it the assumption of civic function, and from the Archaic *kouroi* onwards the freestanding figure has often played the role of personification of ideals. The pedestal served this function, and it was the chain of connotations of the pedestal, elevation, and verticality that Giacometti and Epstein sought to subvert by pushing their figures directly to the floor and by exaggerating the suppression of subjectivity implicit in the sculptural representation of the reclining female nude. As I have claimed, this move exposes the traditional and pernicious string of imbricated and interdependent differences through which gender is managed in these representational conventions.

I have used this pivotal episode in 1932 to pry open the gendered logic that set some of the terms for modernist sculpture's reconceptualization of the figurative. For our immediate purposes, this helps us recognize that a metaleptic set of associations rooted in gender difference facilitated Giacometti's and Epstein's abandonment of the pedestal in 1932. In turn, our recognition of the constitutive role played by gender in both the shift from the vertical to the horizontal and in the move from pedestal to floor can provide the basis for a reconsideration of the later twentieth century sculpture that traces itself back to this formative moment.

NOTES

1 Rosalind Krauss, 'Alberto Giacometti, Museum of Modern Art, New York,' *Artforum* 40, no. 4, 2001, p. 113.

2 Alberto Giacometti, 'Hier, sables mouvants,' in *Écrits*, ed. Michel Leiris and Jacques Dupin, Paris, Hermann, 1933/1958, pp. 7-9.

3 Reinhold Hohl, 'Giacomettis Atelier im Jahr 1932', *Du* 563, 1971, pp. 352-65.

4 Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1977, p. 153.

5 Richard Cork, 'Image from Stone: Epstein as Carver,' in *Jacob Epstein: Sculpture and Drawings*, Leeds, Leeds City Art Galleries, 1987, pp. 30-31.

6 For discussions of the constitution of the 'Primitive' in modernism, see, for instance, Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush, eds., *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995. On Epstein's sustained interest in non-Western sculpture, see Alan Wilkinson, 'Paris and London: Modigliani, Lipchitz, Epstein, and Gaudier-Brzeska,' in *'Primitivism' in 20th-Century Art: Affinities of the Tribal and the Modern*, ed. William Rubin, 2 vols., New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1984, v. 2, pp. 416-51; and Ezio Bassani and Malcolm McLeod, 'The Passionate Collector,' in *Jacob Epstein: Sculpture and Drawings*, Leeds, Leeds City Art Galleries, 1987, pp. 12-19.

7 See Anne Middleton Wagner, *Mother Stone: The Vitality of Modern British Sculpture*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2005, esp. pp. 193-243.

8 For example, Anne Umland, 'Giacometti and Surrealism,' in *Alberto Giacometti*, ed. Christian Klemm, New York, Harry N. Abrams, 2001, p. 27; Krauss, *Passages*, p. 124.

9 Richard Cork, *Jacob Epstein*, London, Tate Gallery Publishing, 1999, p. 52. Cork had earlier commented, "From her bunched fists to her stubby feet, this carving presents a woman transported by an ecstasy which seems orgasmic in implications." Cork, 'Image from Stone,' p. 30.

10 Rainer Maria Rilke, 'Various Notes Relating to Rodin [1900-1902],' in *Rodin and Other Prose Pieces*, London, Quartet Books, 1986, p. 72. For commentary on Rilke and the autonomy of Rodin's figures, see Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 77-101.

11 This was one of the main innovations developed by Rodin in his exhibition practices of 1899-1900. See Ruth Butler, *Rodin: The Shape of Genius*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993, pp. 336-61; Musée national du Luxembourg, *Rodin en 1900 : L'exposition de l'Alma*, Paris, Réunion des musées nationaux, 2001; Claudine Mitchell, 'The Gift to the British Nation: Rodin at the V&A,' in *Rodin: The Zola of Sculpture*, ed. Claudine Mitchell, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004, pp. 183-200.

12 I have elsewhere discussed the late-Victorian sculptor Hamo Thornycroft's multiple attempts to overcome the spatial isolation of freestanding statues in a manner opposed to the emphasis on autonomy aspired to by Rodin and Rilke. See David Getsy, *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain, 1877-1905*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 63-64, 72. In general, the issue of dissolving the spatial isolation central to the statuary tradition has been a major catalyst for the development of installation art from within the medium of sculpture. See Alex Potts, 'Installation and Sculpture,' *Oxford Art Journal* 24, no. 2, 2001, pp. 5-24.

13 An analogous gambit by Rodin in 1899, for instance, generated relatively little subsequent influence, despite being commented upon at the time. He exhibited the life-size statue *Eve*, (orig. 1881) with the plinth buried in sand, so that the feet seemed to stand directly on the ground. See Albert Elsen and Rosalyn Frankel Jamison, *Rodin's Art: The Rodin Collection of the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University*, Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 189-90. Rodin, it is to be presumed, drew upon the standard metaphoric connection between Eve's sin and the earth (and, by extension, material desires). A similar conception determined the formal organization of the statue's pendant, *Adam*, 1880.

14 Krauss 1977, p. 118. See also Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood,' *Artforum* 5, no. 10, 1967, p. 23, n. 18.

15 The meaning of these works is thus bracketed and made less subversive when they are placed on low pedestals or risers, presumably for safety and conservation reasons. For example, in the inaugural installation of the new Museum of Modern Art expansion (2004-5), *Woman with her throat cut* was placed on a low riser pushed up against the wall – a move which effectively disallowed any full circumambulation and mitigated the sculpture's impact on and connection with the space through which the viewer moved. A fascinating alternative practice can be seen in installation photographs of Peggy Guggenheim's Art of this Century Gallery from 1942-43 where Giacometti's sculpture was placed on one of the biomorphically-curved, chevron-shaped bases designed by Frederick Kiesler. Kiesler's objects sometimes functioned as pedestals, sometimes as chairs, and sometimes as tables. As installed on one of Kiesler's objects, *Woman with her throat cut* was elevated but no less confrontational. In one photograph, the moveable bludgeon-shaped appendage of the sculpture hangs limply over one side while the cut neck of the figure arches back over another edge. Unlike a low, flat riser that effectively contains *Woman with her throat cut* and its confrontational address to the viewer's space, this installation raised the sculpture on an angle, shifting the connotations of the work from the encountered corpse to the cadaver on display. For this photograph and a discussion of Kiesler's contribution to the installation, see Bruce Altshuler, *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition: New Art in the 20th Century*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994, pp. 148-51. I am grateful to Gavin Parkinson for alerting me to this variation in installation practice.

16 For an overview, see Charles Millard, 'Sculpture and Theory in Nineteenth Century France,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 34, no. 1, 1975, pp. 15-20; Anne Wagner, 'Learning to Sculpt in the Nineteenth Century,' in *The*

Romantics to Rodin: French Nineteenth-Century Sculpture from North American Collections, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, New York, George Braziller, Inc., 1980, pp. 9-20.

17 I include in this category those many sepulchral sculptures in which the commemorated dead is represented as being peacefully asleep. For a discussion of the conventions surrounding the representation of the dead, see Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture: Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1964, and, for the nineteenth century 2004, pp. 119-41.

18 There are two representative exceptions to this trend that seem worthy of comment: (1) James Pradier's *Memorial to the Count of Beaujolais* from 1936-39, in which Pradier has altered the horizontal format common to commemorative sculpture to depict the Count day-dreaming. In this way, the reclining adult male continues to be mentally active while the body replicates the orientation of the corpse or sleeper. (2) Rodin's *The Earth* from 1884, which also has funerary connotations. In it, the body of a man seems to sink face-first into the ground. The ground, however, is depicted with an irregular wedge-shaped base, thus becoming itself a kind of figure (of materiality) as it rises as to meet and to engulf the man's body. I am grateful to Steve Nash for alerting me to the complexity of the latter example.

19 Within this range, there are a number of variants, from the confirmation of the dying female body as erotically-available object (Jean-Baptiste Auguste Clésinger's *Woman bitten by a serpent*, 1847) to the conflation of the eroticized reclining ideal nude with the portrait statue of the politically influential (in the half-sitting *Paulina Borghese Bonaparte as Venus Victorious* by Antonio Canova, 1804-8).

20 For a discussion of the anxiety surrounding illusionistic sculptural representations of immotile (that is, dead) bodies, see Getsy 2004, pp. 133-41.

21 For discussion, see the classic essay by Sherry B. Ortner, 'Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?', in *Women, Culture, and Society*, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1974, pp. 67-87, and, further, Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994, and Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993.

22 It should be noted that this schema does not obviate the possibility of the sculptural representation of standing women as subjects to be emulated, of which there are many examples in the history of sculpture.

23 Georges Bataille, 'The Big Toe [1929],' in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1985, p. 20.

24 *Ibid.*

25 *Ibid.*

26 See Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide*, New York, Zone Books, 1997; and Rosalind Krauss, 'No More Play [1984],' in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1985, pp. 42-85.

27 Rosalind Krauss, *'A Voyage on the North Sea': Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, London, Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1999, pp. 26. Krauss also discussed this issue in her essay, 'Horizontality,' in Bois and Krauss, *Formless*, pp. 93-103. A different reading of the importance of horizontality in twentieth-century art can be found in the influential essay by Leo Steinberg, 'Reflections on the State of Criticism,' *Artforum* 10, no. 7 (March 1972), pp. 37-49. See also Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth Century Art*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1972, pp. 55-92.

28 Krauss, 'No More Play' (1985), p. 84.

29 A similar preference for Giacometti's Surrealist objects over the *Woman with her throat cut* can be found in the earlier Krauss 1977, pp. 118-20.

30 Krauss, 'No More Play' (1985), pp. 73-74.

David Getsy, "Fallen Women: The Gender of Horizontality and the Abandonment of the Pedestal by Giacometti and Epstein," in Alexandra Gerstein, ed., *Display and Displacement: Sculpture and the Pedestal from Renaissance to Post-Modern* (London: Courtauld Institute of Art Research Forum and Paul Holberton Publishing, 2007), 114-29