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CATHERINE NASH

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Reclaiming Vision: looking at landscape and the body

CATHERINE NASH, *University of Wales, Lampeter, UK*

ABSTRACT *This paper responds to feminist critiques of the masculinity of the landscape tradition within geography. It draws upon reassessments of the gaze within film theory, art history and cultural studies as well as within representational practice. It does so in order to reclaim the concept of landscape as a theoretical tool and subject of study for a feminist cultural geography. In theorising a reclamation of looking and landscape through a critical feminist approach, issues of vision and space, gender and representation, politics and pleasure are brought forcefully together through considering images of the male body as landscape by two contemporary women artists. While recognising the politics of representation, the aim is to deconstruct ideas of an unproblematic women's vision and of a singular or essential male or female gaze. Despite the way in which the metaphor of the body/land has been employed to justify both approaches to women and the environment and to legitimate colonisation, this paper suggests that with regard to both the body and landscape we need to look again and reconsider the radical potential of visual pleasure and traditions of visual representation.*

Introduction

Feminist critiques of the concept of landscape within cultural geography have made its use questionable. This paper firstly discusses feminist responses articulated by Gillian Rose and Susan Ford to the problems raised by feminist theory in relation to landscape representation within cultural geography. Gillian Rose's critique of landscape study in cultural geography employed film theory and psychoanalytic accounts of the gaze of the 1970s to discuss the complex feminisation of landscape (Rose, 1992, 1993). My response to this critique similarly draws on contemporary reassessments of visual pleasure and anxiety within film theory and cultural studies as well as within representational practice. By applying these approaches to representational politics, to a discussion of women's images of the male body as landscape, I attempt to reconcile a feminist approach which retains the idea of landscape as a focus of substantive and theoretical concerns, despite feminist critiques of the masculinity of the landscape tradition within geography. This paper seeks to examine the possibility of a feminist politics of visual pleasure which does not entail abandoning a critical perspective on the politics of representation. These images suggest that rather than simply assert the oppressive nature of images of feminised landscapes or of women's bodies as terrain, it is necessary to engage with them to disrupt their authority and exclusive pleasures and open up possibilities for difference, subversion, resistance and reappropriation of visual traditions and visual pleasure (Kotz, 1993). Pleasure in research, writing, or looking at landscape or the body is political but this does not render this representation or vision automatically unacceptable. Working towards a critical perspective on visual pleasure and landscape imagery involves considering issues

Correspondence: Catherine Nash, Department of Geography, University of Wales, Lampeter, Dyfed SA48 7ED, U.K.



FIG. 1. Diane Baylis *Abroad* 1992. Published with permission of the artist.

of desire, consent and representation. It raises the issue of whether visual desire is always dependent on a position of domination or pleasure always oppressive. It thus entails reassessing the criteria by which the politics of representations are judged.

In theorising a reclamation of looking and landscape through a critical feminist approach, issues of vision and space, gender and representation, politics and pleasure are brought forcefully together through considering the image of the male body as landscape. Since much of the criticism of landscape has been based on the feminisation of the 'field of vision', these masculine objects of vision provide a focus for considering the radical potential of returning to traditions of visual representation. Two images of the male body by women artists: the photograph *Abroad* (1992, Fig. 1) by Diane Baylis [1] and *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* (1985) a video-installation by Pauline Cummins [2] provide means to address the specific and complex politics and pleasures, potential and problems of the body/landscape metaphor. In addressing two explicit images of the male body by women, this discussion is located in a series of overlapping academic, cultural and social developments. It is framed by recent attention to the representation and production of those identities against which 'marginal' groups have been defined: whiteness, masculinity, heterosexuality. This attention to the constructed nature of the identities of the 'centre' supplements a longer critical study of the representation of the 'marginal'.

Secondly, it draws on reassessments of women's visual pleasure as artists and audiences as well as objects of vision, in film theory, art history and creative practice. This consideration of women's images of men also reflects developments within feminist art history, which has moved from a focus on representations of women and the retrieval of lost histories of women artists, to consider gender difference in representational practice through differing combinations of Marxist, post-structuralist and psychoanalytic approaches (Gouma-Peterson & Mathews, 1987; Pollock, 1995). Finally, it is located also within debates concerning sexuality, pornography, power and ethics, within a diverse range of sexualities, sexual practices and sexual relationships, their representation and

censorship (de Lauretis, 1988; Dyer, 1990; Gibson & Gibson, 1993; Harwood *et al.*, 1993). Significantly, in both published work and in representational practice issues of women's visual pleasure and the production of erotic imagery of men and women for women are being addressed (Gamman & Marshment, 1988; Boffin & Fraser, 1991; Lau, 1993, Salaman, 1994). Both *Abroad* and *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* represent the male body in different ways, one through using a Western, pictorial, landscape format, the other referring to the cultural symbolism of an Irish regional landscape. In doing so they appropriate visual traditions and cultural symbols, despite the way these traditions have been implicated in relations of power and oppression. They thus prompt a reassessment of approaches to the politics of representation within geography and more widely.

Valid and valuable engagements with the politics of representation from feminist, antiracist and post-colonial positions, have undermined ideas of cultural production as an autonomous artistic rather than socially grounded practice, yet have tended to render all forms of visual pleasure and representational practice deeply problematic. Vision and visual representation become equated with generalised notions of masculinism, imperialism and oppression, leading to a deep unease about representation and a form of critical iconoclasm (Solomon-Godeau, 1992). In addition the media of representation from maps to photographs have come to be deeply and often implicitly essentially, associated with oppressive power-knowledge relations. While much of this work has been dependent on careful historical research on the use of mapping or picturing in strategies of control and subordination, the simple suggestion that landscape representation is ideological, or vision oppressive, suggests an ahistorical condemnation of the genre, practice or media rather than attention to the particular effects of images in specific and finely differentiated social contexts. This kind of criticism may collapse the differences between different landscape representations and kinds of seeing.

Critical interpretation of an image needs to address its relation to the history of the representational tradition to which it belongs since its meaning cannot be completely disentangled from the history of its genre. It is in part the use of landscape imagery in the history of Western culture in establishing ideas of hierarchical class, gender and racial difference which makes landscape problematic. In particular landscape imagery and the ability to view landscape according to ideas of picturesque taste, helped secure the social and cultural authority and status of white, upper- and middle-class men in Britain in the late eighteenth century (Barrell, 1990). Both images discussed here relate to traditions of representation which have produced and naturalised forms of social organisation through landscape imagery. *Abroad* deploys the format of conventional landscape imagery, and thereby evokes its attendant history. *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* draws heavily on the symbolism of the West of Ireland and may then be considered complicit with essentialist ideas of national, racial, sexual and gender identity that images of the West have been used to support. The Aran of the title and of the knitting tradition refers to the Aran Islands off the coast of County Galway in the west of Ireland, which were the focus of intense national desire and anxiety about racial, moral, linguistic, spiritual and sexual purity in the early twentieth century (Nash, 1993). Yet, through my discussion of these images, I will argue that this history does not fix an image as eternally oppressive by association with images which were used in particular times and places in legitimating and reinforcing social power and control. More effective critiques of particular representational practices can be made through the more demanding and complex task of understanding images through specific contexts of production and reception which include but are not finally determined by the representational tradition to which they belong, evoke or work through. My reading of the radical potential of these two art

works, which bring together a sexualised male body and images of landscape, is through their different and historically and geographically specific contexts. These contexts include the deliberate framing of the images through the artist's intention. This intentionality should neither be dismissed, thereby reinforcing the silencing of disruptive voices, nor solely relied upon, but understood as part of the contingent politics of the image. These images seem to unsettle any easy claim of oppression in any act of seeing or visual representation. Visual representation of landscape and the body can clearly operate to reinforce gender, sexual as well as class and racial oppression, but, as I will suggest through these two examples, can do otherwise.

Using a concept of contextual politics entails being attentive to the initial time and place of production; the relationship between this location and the places figured within the image and to the endlessly variable arenas in which the image may be consumed. When considering the circuit of meaning production from producer to text to consumer, it also entails thinking through ideas of scale, from shared contexts to individual responses. Different issues will emerge in addressing the politics of an image at every scale. Rather than interpretation being framed by a concentration on male visual pleasure in images of landscape or the female body, interpretation needs to acknowledge the multiplication of contexts and relations of reception and the diverse and contingent meanings and effects of representations. Acknowledging the contingent politics of representation may avoid the danger of general feminist or antiracist critiques and condemnation of forms of representation being recuperated by the Right to censor representations of resistance and difference (Butler, 1990; Williams, 1993). The 'messy' ambiguity of the meaning of an image, produced through the 'structures of feeling' that occur across multiple relations between authors, texts and readers (Mercer, 1994) make representations themselves and attempts to judge their political effects both more undecidable and more effective.

Representing the Male Body as Landscape

Abroad (Fig. 1) is part of contemporary visual and textual assertion of and investigation of women's images of men and of the relationship between sexuality and representation (Kent & Morreau, 1985; Caught Looking Inc., 1992; Gibson & Gibson, 1993; Salaman, 1994; Smyth, 1994). The photograph was exhibited in and was used as the cover illustration for the catalogue accompanying the Arts Council funded exhibition 'What she wants: women artists look at men' which toured Britain and Northern Ireland in, 1994. The exhibition was a response to the pornography debate and the largely unsatisfactory commercial production of images of male bodies for women. While Diane Bayliss's art work was produced in a context in Britain in which representation of the body has been politicised through pornography debates, the AIDS crisis and the expression of sexual diversity, *Inis t'Oirr/ Aran Dance* by Pauline Cummins deals with craft production, sexuality, and cultural traditions in Ireland. The installation is a series of slowly changing slide images of a male torso and images of wool, knitting patterns and an Aran jumper, accompanied by the voice of the artist over its 10-minute duration. The artist narrates her thoughts about knitting, story-telling, landscape and the movement of her hands over the male body while images of the body, first dressed in the Aran jumper, then naked, slowly evolve on the screen. This installation was made and exhibited in the mid-1980s in Southern Ireland when women's reproductive rights were being debated and women were attempting to negotiate personal identity with traditional Catholic and nationalist ideas of Irish femininity (Cummins *et al.*, 1987; Smyth, 1988).

Diane Bayliss's *Abroad* and Pauline Cummins's *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* thus raise issues of pleasure, power and representation and questions of what it means to depict the male body as landscape. Does it simply replicate masculinist vision? Or does it free looking from its automatic implication in patriarchal and phallogocentric representations and power? Can it suggest not only other forms of feminine sexuality but other versions of masculine sexuality as passive and desired rather than active and desiring? Can it point to ways of acknowledging the erotics, pleasure and power of landscape imagery while relating to landscape in less oppressive ways? Again the answer is geographically and historically contextual. There is no inherently bad or good looking. This article discusses different ways of considering gender and visual pleasure and their implications for understanding landscape and sexuality within and outside cultural geography. In doing so the different ways that these two images relate to landscape should not be collapsed or simply opposed. *Abroad* and *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* draw on two different but connected understandings of the term 'landscape'. *Abroad* adopts with irony the pictorial conventions of picturesque landscape imagery. Its rectangular format, framing devices, distant horizon and intersecting, receding topographical planes within the image evoke the conventions of late eighteenth and nineteenth-century Western landscape painting. Alternatively *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* refers to another understanding of landscape. Here the male body is represented in conjunction with, and in parts of the installation is indistinct from, a set of meanings and symbols derived from a whole series of written and visual representation of a region, which constructed the west of Ireland as a highly significant and contested national landscape. The installation thus relates to a set of representations which constitute the meaning of the landscape or imaginative geography of the west of Ireland, while *Abroad* engages with a convention of landscape depiction. The relationship between the image of the male body and landscape is also different in both. The association between body and landscape is less overtly defined in *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* than in *Abroad* but the associations work on a number of levels: the clothed body evoking the rural landscape in the patterns of the jumper, the jumper standing in for the body, the knitting evoking the west of Ireland, the male body as fleshy terrain. Yet both play upon ideas of closeness and distance: in *Abroad* the closeness implied in seeing the body as a body, and the distance required to see it as a landscape, and in *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* the intimate tactile presence of the body and implicit presence of desire and sexual pleasure, in spaces and activities defined through ideas of domestic femininity, and in attachment to a national landscape and cultural traditions.

These images of the male body also provide a means to address the representation of men and especially those representations produced by women, since to continue to study the representation of women without considering the representation of men elides the cultural investment expended in display of the male and reinforces the apparent effacement of masculinity as a social construction (Cohen & Hark, 1993). Both images of women and gay men are produced against the structuring norm of heterosexual masculinity (Neale, 1982). Only recently has attention turned to the discussion and analysis of the process of constructing and maintaining this norm (Cook, 1982; Dyer, 1982, 1993; Neale, 1982, 1993; O'Pray, 1982). Film theory has mostly:

equated the masculinity of the male subject with activity, voyeurism, sadism, fetishism, and story, and the femininity of the female subject passivity, exhibitionism, masochism, narcissism, and spectacle. In this scheme of homologous differences the power stability, and wholeness of masculine subjectivity at the

expense of femininity seem all too axiomatic and, thus, universal and uncontestable. (Cohen & Hark, 1993, p. 2)

Questioning rigid gendered positions in film means that men can be considered in relation to visual spectacle, masochism, passivity, and masquerade normally linked to the feminine, rather than reinforcing the 'unperturbed monolithic masculinity produced by a decontextualised psychoanalysis' (Cohen & Hark, 1993, p. 3). The male body can be investigated as it signifies gendered, class, racial and generational differences. Images of men represent them 'overtly performing their gender, in neurotic relationship to it, or seeking alternatives to masculinity as their culture defines it'. Yet even dominant images of men only precariously produce and reproduce masculinity. They 'rarely efface the disturbances and slippages that result from putting men on screen' (Cohen & Hark, 1993, p. 3). While the construction of hegemonic masculinity is precarious, so too is the production of alternative versions of masculinity. However, alternative images of men have potential to disrupt the unquestioned equation of vision with power and the binaries of 'normal' gender and sexual identity. The possibility of women's images of the male body, and the male body as landscape, which are not simply an inversion of power, may lead to the possibility of retrieving images, the study of landscape and visual pleasure from inevitable entrapment within the logics of the 'male gaze'. As Salaman suggests,

[when] women artists attempt to represent men as the beautiful object they will not effect a social reversal of power, but they can affect the scopic regimes, and this can translate into a new knowledge, new 'abstract power' in the debates of pleasure and representation. [...] both begin to articulate ways in which a modernized female observer can look at the male body and play with the legacies of his vision without having to occlude her desiring body and its variety of identifications. (Salaman, 1994, pp. 23–24)

While artistic intention cannot fix the meaning of these images, my interpretation of them derives in part from the way they relate to the intentions of the exhibition organisers and artists. Attending to artistic intention as part of this context of meaning production allows the specific assertion of women's pleasure as a political strategy of these artists to remain highlighted. This does not mean that they cannot also be read as offering pleasures which escape the binaries of gay or straight, masculine or feminine. Reading these images as objects of women's sexual pleasure is not to suggest that they cannot function as a source of men's pleasure or to fix visual pleasure in the male or female body to tightly defined sexual identities. It seems limiting to suggest that women's visual pleasure in the male body is necessarily heterosexual or in the female body is only lesbian. If sexuality cannot be neatly attached to overt gender identity, then by extension neither can pleasure in looking at male or female bodies be simply harnessed to polarised sexual identities. *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* apparently focuses on female heterosexuality, yet this does not mean its pleasures are limited to heterosexual women identifying with the artist. It may offer positions of identification for men and women, gay or straight. This is not to undermine gay and lesbian claims to difference but is an understanding which has emerged through the way in which gay and lesbian representations can work to disrupt binary understandings of gender and sexuality (Harwood *et al.*, 1993). Attention to the text—audience relations entails thinking through the possible meanings and effects of representations for individuals and social groups without suggesting that images will automatically be read in certain ways, or that the possibility of multiple readings and complex viewing practices means there is 'equality and freedom in the regime of representation' (Dyer, 1993, p.2) The concentration here on one author—text—audience

relation, that between images of men, produced by women and read by a woman, is strategic. The readings of *Abroad* and *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* which follow suggest the way these images may work in their specific contexts to produce alternative and non-traditional understandings of male and female sexuality through reworking traditional representational formats and cultural symbolism. While this reading can never be final or universal, neither does it rest only in a personal and internalised subjectivity. Rather than deliver a statement of personal positionality and somehow fix myself categorically and my reading as a direct function of this, it is part of my argument that positionality in looking cannot be easily defined. The disputed meaning of these representations and the shifts in spectatorship of an individual viewer point to the context-bound nature of both the politics of representation and social subjectivity.

Landscape and the Problem of Visual Pleasure

Considerations of gender, visual images of women and spectatorship were stimulated in the 1970s by Laura Mulvey's influential article which linked psychoanalytic perspectives to a feminist analysis of images of women within mainstream film (Mulvey, 1975; Marcus, 1991). According to her analysis, women in film have a passive role as objects of male viewing. This understanding of the construction of femininity through women's to-be-looked-at-ness, means that female viewers can either identify with the object of the gaze or adopt a masculinist viewing position. Gillian Rose has powerfully combined this psychoanalytic perspective with a critique of the equation of women with nature and the gendering of knowledge production within geographical epistemology. She suggests that within cultural geography, Nature, landscape, femininity and the unknown are figured as objects of masculine desire and fear, and thus linked to senses of loss and lack across which male subjectivities are produced and managed according to psychoanalysis. For Gillian Rose, studies within the landscape tradition in British cultural geography of the class relations constructed and reproduced with nineteenth-century English, rural landscapes, and virtual silence on issues of gender, signifies not only the omission of gender issues and critical engagement with patriarchal power but a deep ambivalence regarding the object of study. The ambivalent pleasures of landscape within cultural geography draw 'not only on a complex discursive transcoding between Woman and Nature, but also on a specific masculine way of seeing'. For Rose both fieldwork and images of landscape are structured by the 'gendered logic of the gaze' within the dominant visual regime of white, heterosexual, masculinism. This 'masculine gaze':

sees a feminine body which requires interpreting by the cultured knowledgeable look; something to own, and something to give pleasure. The same sense of visual power as well as pleasure is at work as the eye traverses both field and flesh: the masculine gaze is of knowledge and desire. (Rose, 1993, pp. 98–99)

The pleasure and emotive force which landscapes may provide (Daniels, 1989), according to Rose, is an ambivalent pleasure which disrupts the construction of modern masculinity as scientific, rational and distanced. The pleasure of the text disrupts distanced, rational and scientific knowledge, producing a 'tense oscillation between knowledge and pleasure' (Rose, 1993, p. 101). For her the male gaze moves between scientific viewing and a sexualised aesthetics, between voyeuristic distance and power and narcissistic identification with the image. Images of women or nature suspend fear of lack while distance from them supports masculine self-identification. Thus men's relationship

to landscape for Gillian Rose is mediated by desire for integration and fear of engulfment (Kolodny, 1975; Rose, 1993, p. 105).

Yet in drawing upon versions of psychoanalytic theory which problematically suggest a universal schema of development of self and gender identity and rely on ideas of masculine pleasure, desire and seduction, this critique may inadvertently reproduce the tropes of 'normal' sexuality. Desire is based on lack of the phallus rather than on any sense of productive multifarious desire (Kerr & Quintanales, 1982; Kelly, 1984; Best & Kellner, 1991; Besley, 1993; Spargo & Botting, 1993). Arguments based upon Mulvey's initial critique have tended to ignore the issue of women's spectatorship and reproduce the dominance of heterosexism in understanding gender and visual pleasure. If the specific discourses of landscape within geography have led to the conclusion that valid pleasure in landscape 'is for straight men's eyes only' (Rose, 1993, p. 99), lesbian and gay and straight women's images and accounts of looking point to the reclamation of visual pleasure despite its historical connections with heterosexual male power. Important issues of consent, trust and censorship have been brought to prominence by sado-masochism and its imagery (Butler, 1990; Henderson, 1992). My re-examination of the pleasures and politics of the visual responds to the suggestion by Gillian Rose that 'interpretation of geographical knowledge needs the specificities of historical geography often missing from psychoanalytic accounts of the visual' (Rose, 1992, p. 18). As she suggests, the power relations of pleasures in landscape and looking can only be addressed through specific images and contexts. To accept the way her critique works for a particular moment in the history of cultural geography, but to point to its omissions and risks of generalisation, in effect, matches her call for historical and spatial contextualisation of representation. It is this method of contextual interpretation that is applied in discussion of *Abroad* and *Inis t'O'irr/Aran Dance*.

Susan Ford has also responded to the tension between working within a 'geographical tradition formulated through visual means' and feminist critiques of the 'male gaze' and sought to 'explore a tenable viewpoint or viewpoints from where a feminist geographer might look upon a landscape' (Ford, 1991, p. 151). She argues that while vision, distance and power may have been central to the construction of the modern masculine subject, to relegate women to the other senses reinforces the dualisms between mind/body, culture/nature and masculine/feminine. In contrast to the conditions of distance, objectification and control within classical landscape art, acknowledging emotion and celebrating landscapes of intimacy, she suggests, may offer a means to reconcile feminist critiques with personal investment in landscapes. This feminist stance posits a 'transvestite gaze' which can adopt a distanced and thereby masculinist position and an intimate and thereby feminist position (Ford, 1991, p. 153). Yet this movement between a masculinist and feminist way of seeing tends to polarise both forms of looking and tie them to gender identities. It implies that women look intimately at the local, small scale and places tied to bodily experience, maintenance and reproduction. Their look is custodian, reverent and gentle. However socialised this vision may be, to claim a feminist position which can move between this and a masculinist violent gaze tends to reinforce ideas of deep gender differences and gendered difference in looking. I want to consider here the possibilities for multiple and mobile identifications with and ways of seeing landscape, and to unfix both versions of gender and sexual identity from ideas of masculine activity and the 'male gaze' and feminine passivity and reception of this gaze.

In reclaiming pleasure in vision and landscape for a feminist cultural geography, rather than turning to ideas of a feminine and body-centred identification with nature, it may be productive to think through a range of potential identifications with landscape or

nature including those of indifference or disinterest. In recognising the constructed and therefore unstable basis of both ideas of identity and landscape, feminists could employ non-essential ideas of landscape, place and nature without being tied to the choice between masculine distance from and feminine closeness to nature. Avoiding this dualism may be more disruptive and enabling than deciding between them. Self-conscious play with identifications and positions of dominance or submission, distance or closeness frees women from the pressure to adhere to ideas of women as both nature and body-centred. Painted, filmed, and written images of women, in indifferent, reverent or dominating relations to landscape, point to varied and non-essentialist, feminine subject positions in relation to nature or landscape, which do rely on the discourses of eco-feminism for their articulation. By suggesting, for example, the validity of a feminine heroic approach to landscape through a distanced and elevated viewing position, the power and naturalness of the masculine heroic is subverted. This is not a liberal feminist wish to claim male privilege but an attempt to pry apart the rigid equations of all looking with masculinity, and thus masculinist power and oppression (Grosz, 1992a). Women looking and representations of women looking may deconstruct essentialist notions of place and gender identity. Yet, this looking operates within and across subjectivities defined through class, race, sexuality and geography, rather than resting on an impossibly asocial concept of nature or landscape that offers a universal source of identification for all women. Thus women's varied relations to these objects of vision are never innocent. Calls for attention to women as active viewers have to confront the politics of these varied visual encounters.

Women Looking

Recent research in both art history and cultural studies is producing a more complex account of the production and consumption of visual imagery than the general contention that images of women are produced for the pleasuring and empowering of men. Male anxieties about women's spectatorship and active production of visual imagery in the history of Western visual culture reveal that despite the role of visual imagery in the construction of femininity, women have also been understood as viewers and potential artistic producers, as well as objects of vision. Within this history considerable efforts have been made to regulate images of women, images by women and women's vision in order to maintain normative gender identities and relations. Studies of nineteenth-century Britain and France show the way in which looking by both men and women was central to the construction of gender, class and national identities. Art exhibitions, museums and 'great exhibitions' produced images of the gendered self and images of the class, gender and racial 'others' through which national, gender and class identities were constructed and made visible, often with different sections aimed at working- and middle-class women and the production of appropriate femininities (Greenhalgh, 1985; Coombes, 1988; Breckenridge, 1989; Mitchell, 1989). The street of the 'modern' city was itself an arena for class- and gender-specific relations of looking and their power relations, but a space also in which these social relations could be disrupted by woman's returning look (Pollock, 1988, 1992, 1995; Bershard, 1992). In relation to the production of imagery, it was considered improper for the male nude to be a women's life class model and ruled out within the art academies (Garb, 1993). Thus the centrality of figure painting to the elevated status of history painting before its demise in the nineteenth century, had an exclusionary force which protected a masculinity based on men as cultural producers of representations of men's or women's bodies. Similarly, from the

mid-nineteenth century in Britain the suitability of landscape as a place for middle-class women to paint in terms of their presence in the countryside, or as a subject to depict was seriously debated (Cherry, 1993, p. 118). Concerns over women's vision did not end in attempts at its regulation but extended to the production of images for women's viewing and thereby the construction of class-specific versions of femininity. These often contained images of women viewing children, loved ones, domestic interiors and gardens, thus constituting these as the appropriate objects of a feminine gaze (Cherry, 1993, p. 118). Within the production of popular painting, by the late nineteenth century the function of images of women was less didactic as their primary function returned to providing visual pleasure for bourgeois men, to represent difference and to signify and secure this masculinity. But as Deborah Cherry suggests, this did not reduce the importance of women's vision as 'femininity was constituted as the locus of the network of *women's* gazes: pleasuring looks and appraising glances were directed to women's visual representations of femininity, whether these were constituted in their dress, appearance and "personal style" and/or their high cultural images of women' (Cherry, 1993, p. 119).

This concern regarding women as viewers indicates the potency of women's active viewing. Asserting women's visual pleasure resists both the idea of women as passive objects of the male gaze and hegemonic versions of what is an appropriate feminine viewing position and objects of view (Betterton, 1985; Doane, 1981, 1982, 1988; Moore, 1988). To consider issues of female visual pleasure is not to suggest a way of seeing shared by all women. As Deborah Cherry writes, nineteenth-century women 'were located in and took up viewing positions in a social formation in which femininity was not monolithic but multiply shaped and fractured by colliding determinants such as age, dis/ability, religion, politics, sexuality and location as much as race or class'. Her understanding of nineteenth-century looking as 'a social and cultural activity framed by and taking place within the broader field of power relations which were not polarised but a tense and unstable web of interrelated and productive forces' remains valid for the late twentieth century (Cherry, 1993, p. 116).

Addressing more recent and contemporary images, studies of audiences of a range of genres in Hollywood film from fantasy to film noir point to both constantly shifting and never finally settled identifications and subjectivities in audience responses, which do not conform to the dominant and expected gender identifications. These studies discuss the shifting identifications that often structure an individual response and how apparently limiting gender roles may inspire members of the audience rather than offend (Kaplan, 1978; Dyer, 1993, p. 2). This research indicates the complex relationships between the psychic subject produced through the image and the social subject as audience and consumer of visual images, despite the problematic separation of the psychic and social they seem to imply (Stacey, 1994). Recent studies of mainstream film as well as pornography suggest that looking does not produce static positions of identification, distance, voyeurism, narcissism or fetishism but movement between these possible spectator positions for women and men. The understanding of consumption which these studies use is not one of simple assimilation of the imagery by the viewer but of active manipulation of its components and coding of its meaning (Wicke, 1993, p. 70). This means that a range of subject positions are available to the viewer which are not simply determined by an inherent psycho-sexual structure in the individual. These terms from psychoanalysis can remain useful in considering visual representation if freed from a universalising schema of the development of gender identity based in and reproducing early twentieth-century ideas of femininity, and if the terms describe positions and relations to the viewed which can be adopted by women and men (Williams, 1994a).

Thus to adopt landscape as a focus of research means neither that it can be detached from its history of use within cultural and social domination nor that to do so entails the simple masochistic replication of a coherent and singular male gaze or narcissistic identification with the objectified and feminised object. Rather than argue that the politics of representation or visual pleasure can be assessed by reference to a male or female gaze, it is more useful to think of a multiplicity of shifting viewing positions, gazes or ways of seeing. Thus the discussion of the two art works below, integrates two understandings of meaning in visual representation: established traditions of representing the body and landscape which are linked to but not limited by their shared meaning in particular geographical and historical contexts, and the possible responses by audiences of individuals in a variety of contexts. Attention to context, then, is mobilised by considering scale from general context of production, display and collective meaning to individual interpretation.

Abroad

The context of interpretation here includes the exhibition 'What she wants', which explicitly addressed female desire and visual pleasure. The images suggested alternative responses to a question asked and answered inadequately, from Freud to the contemporary media industry (Pollock, 1995, pp. 11–12). In the words of the catalogue:

'What she wants' establishes a site for women to take their pleasure seriously, eschewing market demands for images replete with fake seductiveness, which fail to 'clitillate'. The show attempts to chart current changing masculinities and situates 'want' back into the discourse of straight feminism, beyond the tortured defensiveness of anti-porn feminism and the *laissez faire* transgression of some pro sex representations. Even a couple of years ago such a project would have been constrained by women's fears of colluding with an oppressive system of looking, of indulging in a luxury feminism could ill afford, or of trying to imitate the clichéd codes of porn in a didactic demonstration of revenge. (Smyth, 1994)

Abroad has thus been produced in a context of the politicisation of sexual identity, and the situation of diverse, highly visible and highly contested representations of sexuality (Harwood *et al.*, 1993). By figuring the male body as a landscape, the image and its title draw on an exotic and erotic iconography of landscape, and the historical motif of equating sexual and geographical travel and exploration. The title implies being away from the familiar and known. *Abroad* may be about visual pleasures which are different or foreign, but as with imaginative geographies, also deeply known and present in the familiar. This is an image of the foreign and of the unknown, not because of the absence of women's sexual and visual enjoyment of men but because images of the male body by women until recently have been virtually unknown and rarely seen and women's visual pleasure rarely acknowledged (Walters, 1978; Saunders, 1989). While the title may imply a representational practice outside existing representational systems, importantly *Abroad* is neither fixed within nor escapes from traditions of depicting the body or landscape, but is powerful because it plays upon existing traditions.

The body in the photograph is aestheticised and sexualised through the landscape format. The spatial organisation of the image creates a vanishing point and visual focus centred on the genitals. The body is truncated in order for the allusion to landscape to work and thus there is no returning gaze. While truncation of the body may be criticised

as objectifying the man, it also avoids a submissive expression which could reinforce objectification or an aggressively sexual returning look which could make the female viewer again an object of his desire. More significantly the faceless body may allow the representation of female sexual and aesthetic enjoyment of an anonymous male body rather than love of a known man within conventional constructions of femininity. It is both an intimate image and distanced since the viewing position implied is both one of closeness to the body and distance from the landscape. To see the image as a body entails a viewing position whose closeness to the body does not allow the kind of distance and elevation associated with landscape representation and with power. It is this position that allows the body as a landscape image to be composed according to picturesque conventions of framing, receding horizontal topographic planes and central vanishing point. The movement between the kind of spatial ordering and imaginary viewing positions that are required in seeing the image as a body or landscape make both the conventions of landscape and the materiality of the body apparent.

The male body composed according to these landscape conventions is far from the sculptural traditions of representing the male body. The body in *Abroad* is neither marble-like nor tautly poised for action, nor representative of an 'ideal' muscular masculinity. Making the male body a landscape in this way, points to the arbitrary and constructed authority of figuring the female body as nature. It is as easy in this instance to find curves in the male body to correspond to apparent rounded forms in the natural landscape. This frees the body-landscape metaphor from any essential equation between nature and femininity. The politics of imaging either the male or female body as landscape are always contextual, and thus analysis of these issues needs to address the social specificity of the viewer and viewed and with knowledge of the historical alliance of colonialism and representation in construction of racialised and sexualised bodies (Young, 1994) [3]. This awareness does not delegitimize the strategic or pleasurable representation of the male body as landscape in women's images of men. *Abroad* also allows alternative conceptions of masculinity and male sexuality.

Within cultural representations male sexuality is predominantly centred on the genital and equated especially with the penis. Even if it is not directly shown, the penis is the symbol of an aggressive, active male sexuality, figured as a weapon, gun or knife (Dyer, 1993). Ideas of male sexuality as the result of an autonomous drive originating in the penis form the basis of representations of sex as violence. The uncontrollability of this drive then absolves men of the responsibility for their actions (Lehman, 1988). Hegemonic images of insistent aggressive male sexuality put women in their place as objects of vision to be acted upon but also increase the difficulty for men attempting to subvert dominant ideas of masculinity and male superiority.

Such representations help to preserve the existing power relations of men over women by translating them into sexual relations, rendered both as biologically given and as a source of masculine pleasure. What is perhaps more surprising is that these images should, by and large, be so unattractive, so straight and narrow, so dreary. Men too are fixed in place by this imagery, and if theirs is a place of superiority it is none the less a cramped, sordid, compulsive little place with its hard edged contours and one off climaxes [...]. Here and there we do get a vision of a sexuality that is not nasty and brutish, silly and pathetic, but varied, sensuous, languorous, warm and welcome. We need to see it more often in order to live it more fully. (Dyer, 1993, p. 121)

Unlike mainstream images of men the body in *Abroad* is static, passive, inert and unthreatening (Dyer, 1982). Richard Dyer's own writing and Diane Baylis's *Abroad* are Dyer's 'exceptional cases':

Male genitals are fragile, squashy, delicate things; even when erect, the penis is spongy, seldom straight, and rounded at the tip, while the testicles are imperfect spheres, always vulnerable, never still. There are very exceptional cases where something of the exquisiteness and softness of the male genitals is symbolised. (Dyer, 1993, p. 112)

Images of the variable form and softness of the genitals displace the representation of the penis as either weapon or anatomical joke (Dyer, 1993). In *Abroad* the penis is flaccid and as such it does not reproduce the tropes of 'normal' masculinity. In this landscape the penis does not break the skyline of the body's gentle contours. If male power is dependent upon the construction of a masculinity which is in turn a product of representation and understanding of the male body as inviolable, impenetrable and whose boundaries are hard-edged and distinct, these representations of the penis as flaccid may disrupt the stability of unequal social relations based on normative and essentialist understandings of femininity and masculinity (Schor, 1988). They also do not easily facilitate forms of criticism based on the presence or absence of the phallus, which however much defined as a symbol of male power, still ultimately depend upon theories of genital difference in which the fear of loss or lack of the penis, structures the formation of male and female subjectivity (Macey, 1992; Grosz, 1992b).

Women's images of men are not automatically unproblematic or redeemed by female sensitivity or goodness: as Linda Williams writes, '[t]hrough it is certainly significant that women image-makers are negotiating the line between the erotic and the pornographic, and that male bodies are balancing on that line, this reversal alone may not lead to any startling liberations from the presumed objectification of an all-controlling, and increasingly dubious, "male gaze"' (Williams, 1994b, p. 8). Yet this one, in this interpretative context, provides alternative versions of male sexuality and feeds women's 'greedy' and deprived sexual vision, offering alternative versions of both male and female sexuality, gay or straight (Williams, 1994b, p. 11). Looking is not always necessarily powerful and oppressive, nor is distanced vision always an appropriation. As studies in post-colonialism and sexual politics have shown, the experience and exploitation of the position of desired object can be empowering and pleasurable. To picture the male body as landscape is not simply to invert customary gendered positions within a scopic regime but to suggest other pleasures and subject positions which are not determined by this regime.

Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance

Though the metaphor of body as landscape is employed less directly, *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* is more explicit in its expression of female heterosexual desire than *Abroad*. Its references to specific traditions of Irish rural, domestic femininity are central to its subversive force and political strategy but do not limit its focus to women's heterosexual desire. The artist's voice and the images of the body offer two roles, that of being touched or touching, but ones whose relationship may be imagined as same sex as well the active feminine pleasure in the male body most apparent in the installation. Within the specific context of its exhibition within Ireland, Cummins radicalises rather than rejects traditional customs, crafts and landscapes of the nation to express an active and self-determined sexuality. Since the late 1970s in Ireland, unreflective adoption of conventional

landscape painting and the iconography of the west of Ireland have come under criticism because of the way they have been used to support notions of an inherent Irish identity and artistic tradition in the visual arts dependent on ideas of racial essentialism (Brett, 1986, 1989; Duddy, 1987; Fowler, 1990; Stinton Cosgrove, 1990). Despite this, Cummins expresses possibilities for alternative understandings of sexuality, gender and these national traditions themselves through, rather than against, the symbols of cultural identity she enlists.

The installation explores the products and results of female desire through describing the Aran jumper and male body. Both are constructed through fantasy and women's craft activity. In addressing her attention to the dressing and undressing of a male body in *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance*, Pauline Cummins raises important questions of the politics of representation, desire and visual pleasure for women (Cummins, 1987). The image of the Aran sweater, symbolic of traditional Irish life in the west of Ireland, evocative of the deep significance of the Aran Islands in Irish cultural nationalism, is used in her installation to draw attention to women's activity in knitting and in sexual enjoyment of the male body. Rather than rejecting this craft tradition because of its possible associations with reactionary views of the role of women, Pauline Cummins undermines the customary understanding of the domestic itself. By linking the domestic to autonomous and active female sexuality through an emblem of traditional Irish rural life, she prompts reconceptualisation of the meaning of traditional crafts, the domestic and the feminine. To imagine that women knitting in past and contemporary Ireland could and can be absorbed in fantasies of sexual pleasure is radically disruptive of traditional versions of Irish femininity. The artist describes the sources and structure of the video.

My interest was aroused by an old Aran sweater I saw, on a tailor's dummy. It clung so tightly, it was like no Aran sweater I'd seen before. It was sensuous and strong. It was voluptuous and warm, gentle and soft. It was very male. It was made by a woman, for a man—it was sexual. The first part of the tape is like an outer layer, a description of knitting, a suggestion of the fantasy imposed on the man by the woman. The second part is a love song—the enjoyment of the male body, by the female. A renaming—an inquiry into what is opposite—and how one creates the 'other'. (Cummins n.d.)

The first part of the sequence begins with images of balls of wool, then the jumper they produce. The second shows the torso of a man wearing it and then the body beneath. She begins her script with the words:

Begin at the beginning.

In a sense knitting is like drawing with a long piece of wool, its finger weaving, from the fleece to a warm pullover, a jumper, a jacket, a waterproof coat. And where do the patterns come from? From the woman's head?

'Did you make that out of your own head now?'

In the installation Pauline Cummins deals with the origin of the garments in images of the landscape and women's imagining of the male body. Her installation weaves the body and landscape together as sources for the women's craft. In taking women's knitting of the traditional Aran jumper as her subject she evokes the traditional image of Irish women as domestic reproducers of the crafts, traditions, language and population of the nation. Knitting often connotes ideas of passivity, privacy and maternal care in clothing the family. But Pauline Cummins emphasises the tactile nature of knitting and the fantasies of touching the male body of its future wearer woven into the garment, a practice that knits thought and knits desire. Her suggestion that knitting is a form of

drawing breaks down the distinction between art and craft, active and passive, which has devalued women's cultural production. The knitted is represented as the product of women's active, sexual narratives of desire; it tells stories of thought and touch.

And if knitting is like drawing with a long piece of wool, women have been drawing for quite some time now, weaving their dreams and fantasies into garments, for their children, for themselves, for their menfolk.

I'll spin you a yarn.

I'll weave you a tale.

And as the lines weave in and out of each other they weave a pattern.

The artist repeats her question of where the complex, geometrical patterns and winding lines in the knitting pattern come from. The answer for her is in the creativity of the women and the way in which the rhythms of soil and water and divisions of land in the west of Ireland are recreated by them in the patterns they knit.

Ploughed fields.

Waving sands.

Weaving water.

And what are the berries? They look like nipples to me, but they're like berries too or little houses set in walled fields, with the sea on either side.

Aran...

The patterns of the Aran jumper echo the morphology of the landscape and hug the contours of the male body it covers. For the artist, the knitting is about body and land, terrains of houses and fields as well as the terrain and features of the body. This association and slippage between the form of the male body, the texture of the garment and the topography of the Irish landscape, inverts and subverts the customary metaphor of the landscape as feminine and female body as a landscape. *Inis t'Oirr* translates as golden island and for the artist the male body is a golden, island landscape. Her appropriation of the body/landscape metaphor, like Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's poem *Oileán/Island*, which figures the male body as a landscape, is profoundly political in a historical context of the feminisation of the Irish nation and landscape. The installation takes the nationalist and often patriarchal symbolism of the west of Ireland landscape to produce a feminist statement which brings together attachment to these specific cultural traditions and a radical sexual politics. Though the body in *Oileán* is not named as male, the poet intended the piece to be understood as about a male body as landscape against the poetic traditions of representing Ireland as a female figure [4].

Oileán

Oileán is ea do chorp

i lár na mara móire.

T á do ghéaga spréite ar bhraillín

gléigeal os farraige faoleán.

Island

Your body an island

in the great ocean.

Your limbs spread

on a bright sheet

over a sea of gulls.

(Ní Dhomhnaill, 1988)

Rather than reject local and national cultures in favour of an international feminist alliance, Cummins and Ní Dhomhnaill return to these national cultural traditions in order to disrupt the meanings these traditions have been used to construct and support. They indicate a form of national identity which can retain attachment to national traditions without accepting the essentialist and uncorrupted versions of national, gender and sexual identity they imply. As I discussed in relation to *Abroad*, this use of the body/landscape metaphor does not in this case entail the adoption of a masculinist viewing position but destabilises the social and representational trope of the active masculine artist or viewer and the passive feminine object of representation or receiver of the gaze. For the woman artist to depict the male body as object of desire disrupts gendered notions of visual pleasure and representational practice which have governed art criticism. The suggestion that visual pleasure and representation is inherently exploitative and masculinist has led many artists informed by feminism to eschew figurative art in favour of abstraction (Deepwell, 1989; Fortnum & Houghton, 1989). *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* prefigures more recent returns to the negotiation of visual pleasure in representation of desire by women artists.

The second section of the installation suggests a recovery of women's active sexuality through uncovering the male body. In the sequence of frames from the clothed to naked body through the gradual removal of the jumper, the installation follows erotic conventions of undressing the body. In attempting to convey an alternative version of feminine, visual, sexual pleasure the artist draws on familiar tropes of Western erotic representation. She does so in the absence of a body of knowledge or an artistic tradition which recognises and describes female sexuality as a potent initiating force, rather than merely as a response to masculine desire. Her doing so suggests that it is not possible to find a language of representation that is outside and purified of existing pictorial traditions other than in untenable notions of a disembodied aesthetic originality or an asocial artistic source in the female body. This does not negate attempts to appropriate, renew and disrupt the meaning of representational traditions. Pauline Cummins's voice and the cultural referents in the installation locate it within the particular cultural and social context of contemporary Ireland. The costs and achievements of the installation and its particular sexual politics can only be judged in this specific context.

The body which is exposed from neck to pubic shadow, is shown with lines of knitting superimposed on it. These linear traces are of the woman's touch. She narrates the movements of her hands over his body and the enlarged chevrons of the knitting pattern. The body is thus both naked and clothed, exposed and protected by the pattern projected upon the body. The narrative describes the movement of her hands over him and to the genitals, erection and ejaculation. Her voice describes her uncovering of the male body and her tactile and visual pleasure.

The hidden male body, buried, suppressed.

Touch the hip, into the waist. Squeeze, Rub up.

The back. The spine bending, extending, joining the shoulder, broad, wide, thick.

Arms, hairy, sinuous, strength.

Thighs, joining, apart. And the butterfly motif.

While producing a version of male sexual arousal which is climactic, her hand movements across his body do not reproduce the focus and limits of male sexuality defined exclusively through the genital. The narrative does not end in ejaculation but describes its aftermath. 'Spilling, subsiding, the swelling, shrinking, sinking, back to size,

back to place, hidden, buried, always there'. Through her words the penis is brought back to size and back to place, which undermines images of the phallic. While the installation expresses a woman's enjoyment of the male body, in describing semen as 'hundreds and thousands' Cummins puns on the name for tiny coloured cake decorations and thus, through this woman-centred humour, avoids reifying the male body as object of reverent veneration, and locates her pleasure again within the space of the domestic and her social context rather than suggesting a universal feminine sexuality. She eschews the verbs and metaphors of conventional descriptions of male sexuality and the slow measured pace of her voice does not reproduce senses of urgency or violence in orgasm. The artist's insistence in her narrative that she is describing stimulation by hand rather than intercourse ('tipping the navel, pressed against the belly, *his* belly', 'Rubbing, pressing, raising, standing, ejaculating') emphasises that the man is brought to arousal by her touch, not by his sight of or action on her. That the orgasm is erotic rather than reproductive asserts the validity of sexual pleasure despite and against Catholic denigration of the body; that she is stimulator asserts the validity of active female sexuality against women's idealisation as mothers in Ireland.

Though focusing on a male body and suggesting a masculine sexuality which can be passive and gentle, *Inis l'Oirr/Aran Dance* does so, also, to provide a means of expressing a creative and active female sexuality through images of the male body. The suggestion that the body enjoyed is a known, loved body since the jumper has been knitted for him may connect women's sexuality to the love of a domestic partner. This, however, may make a too literal connection between the first and second part of the installation. That the body is unidentifiable produces a more radical representation of female sexuality than tying it to an acceptable monogamous stability. It is a male body, not necessarily limited to a known, loved individual, which is pleasurable as an object to touch and view. In representation of the sexualised adult body in commercial pornography or art it is often the face which is the point at which the politics of the image can be judged. It is the alluring or resistant expression of the face and the direction of the figure's gaze that often determines the visual relations possible in the representation of the erotic body and is the point of tension in the image. The face must not disrupt the tight and fragile alignment of viewer and viewed. The absence of a returning gaze in the installation again avoids the ever-present threat of the artist and viewer becoming again the object of his vision.

Unlike *Abroad*, this installation operates through two representational media and sensory registers: the spoken work and vision. It also draws heavily on ideas of touch and texture in describing the knitted garment and the male body. To a certain extent this mixing of media decentres vision. It could also suggest a version of feminine sensuality, sexuality and representational form which rejects vision in favour of touch and rejects a subjectivity structured through masculinist separation of subject and object in favour of loss of difference and individualism in a sensuous merging of both. Yet this reading would deny the very visibility of this video-based installation; it would entail ignoring her account of the visual pleasure that the sight of the jumper initially gave her; it would miss her insistent maintenance of distance in her explicit reference to *his* belly and *his* body. As she says, the installation is about 'how one creates the 'other'', and the formation of a feminist subjectivity through ideas of difference and objectification. It is this difference, separateness and distance within the subject-object relations in the image which allows, produces and feeds desire (Wicke, 1993, p. 79). The image of the male body as landscape does not escape the connotations of objectification or pornographic representation. Yet neither term offers unproblematic criteria of judgement. While studies of pornography have moved from a simple understanding of pornography as always an objectification of

women's bodies for men, to try to locate these images inside or outside of this category would mean supporting the class-based distinction between sexually explicit original art work as erotica and mass-produced sexual imagery as pornography. Resisting this distinction avoids the political danger of legitimating certain sexual pleasures and censoring others through definitions of what is or is not pornographic. It may be contentious to abandon objectification as a criterion of critical judgement and to suggest that objectification in representation is not always oppressive, but the images discussed here seem to suggest that a radical politics of visual pleasure may in some cases entail and endorse objectification. The politics of objectification in representing different bodies are not the same since the meaning of gendered, racialised and dis/abled bodies are linked to their history of representation with Western visual culture. The objectification of the male body in *Abroad* and *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* does not simply produce new relations of power and oppression, but undermines the authority of concepts of beauty, sexuality, pleasure and social relations supported by traditional depictions of women and readings of them as sources of male heterosexual pleasure (Nead, 1992).

In *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance*, the images on the video do not explicitly show the genitals and ejaculation her voice describes. To describe the ejaculation verbally rather than picture it may be a response to the threat of artistic censorship and an attempt to negotiate the representation of the male body and female sexuality, with distance from phallogentrism. Yet to represent a sexualised male body by a woman artist is significant within the context of contemporary Ireland. The installation deals innovatively and radically with subjects which are problematic in Ireland, within cultural representation and social relations. It untangles knitting from implications of domestic passivity, it engages with images of the west of Ireland despite the way it has been delegitimised within avant-garde Irish art as an artistic subject because of its connotations of unconsidered nationalist nostalgia, and it represents Irish women as sexually active and desiring both now and in the past. Most importantly it weaves together images of the male body and landscape through the jumper. The landscape is sexualised and eroticised through its conjunction with the male body. This masculinising of the landscape thus denaturalises the femininity of the body/landscape metaphor. *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* suggests women's activity as viewers of the body and landscape, recovering craft, female sexuality and landscape for non-essentialist understandings of each. The radical potential of the installation is achieved through using rather than rejecting this culturally specific landscape symbolism.

Conclusion

This paper has not intended to dismiss or diminish the important way in which feminist geography has impacted upon and is contributing to the study of landscape representation in cultural geography. Nor is it to suggest that representations of landscape or of the body can be easily detached from a set of limiting and oppressive meanings and subject positions. The history of Western representation, knowledge production and its effects cannot be erased. Yet the production and circulation of images like *Abroad* and *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* are disruptive of dominant representational systems and gendered and sexual subject positions and offer pleasures which are not limited to male heterosexual appraisal of women. Despite the way in which the metaphor of the body-land has been employed to justify both approaches to women and the environment and to legitimate colonisation, this discussion of the politics of visual pleasure suggests that with regard to both the body and landscape, we need to look again. As the work of many contemporary

women artists illustrates, neither landscape nor looking is redundant or inherently oppressive. Neither can their approaches to the relationship between the body and landscape be generalised; the land can be entered into, the body can be earth, landscape can be a motherland, the motherland can be deconstructed, history evident in the landscape can be mourned through ideas of the female body and emotion, the female body can be reclaimed as a landscape or the male body be revisioned as land to change conceptions of both male and female sexuality [5]. *Abroad* and *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* work with and radically deploy traditions of landscape representation and landscape symbolism rather than reject them. These images work precisely because they work through the representational traditions and cultural meanings they draw on and disrupt. Certain forms of visual representation may support patriarchal power relations, but looking is never only or just masculine. To view body as land or land as body has no essential meaning, yet neither can it ever be innocent. Its politics are always contextual; there are different kinds of looking.

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NOTES

- [1] Diane Bayliss was born in Canada in 1943 and now lives and works in southern England (Salaman, 1994).
- [2] Pauline Cummins was born in Dublin in 1949 and is working in Ireland.
- [3] If race has not been a central concern in my reading of these two images, it is because I have felt that neither of them can definitely be fixed as white male bodies and an attempt to decide the racial identity of the men in this way would reproduce those desires to pin down and determine the meaning of racial identity which have been part of racist ideologies.
- [4] Comment by N. Ní Dhomhnaill, Poetry Reading, Douglas Hyde Gallery, December 1991.
- [5] I am referring here to Catherine Harper, Kathy Prendergast, Dorothy Cross and Alanna O'Kelly whose work has been discussed in Nash (1994, 1995).

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