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# WRITING THE REAL: THE COLLAGES OF HANNELORE BARON

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**WRITING THE REAL: THE COLLAGES OF  
HANNELORE BARON**

**by**

**VALERIE JAMES REARDON**

**A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth  
in partial fulfillment for the degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**April, 2000**

VALERIE JAMES REARDON

## WRITING THE REAL: THE COLLAGES OF HANNELORE BARON

### Abstract

Baron's work has not been extensively studied nor is it known in full. Critical writings and scholarly attention have focused on the work as representative of Holocaust suffering. This thesis intervenes in that assumption by arguing that it is possible to understand Baron's processes of making collage as a significant case study in the problematic of signification and a complex of differences none of which are reducible to or deducible from each other.

Drawing together a range of biographical information, primary source material and close readings of many of Baron's collages (including two hitherto unseen series) traces are revealed of both a maker: an artistic subject finding itself in its own practice, and a making, in the sense of a process that cannot be bound into the singularity of the subject who made it.

A framework is established using psychoanalytic theory and second generation Holocaust theory that allows for the possibility of reading into Baron's life story both the symptoms of unresolved conflicts and a particular set of strategies that enabled her to sustain a creative subjectivity. Kristeva's formulation of art as an *imaginaire du pardon* permits a reading, however tentative, of Baron's art in terms of a poetics of imaginary restoration and reparation in which archaic and traumatic affects are given the structure of symbolic representation. This is especially pertinent to Baron's fourteen year experience of cancer.

Finally, a consideration of Baron's collage making as a process of inscription that is in relation to the body as a coalition of history, memory, corporeality and the psyche is not only significant to contemporary understandings of identity and subjectivity, but also makes it possible to propose an ethical dimension concerned with a feminine understanding of difference.

## **List of Contents**

### **LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS**

### **KEY TO INTERVIEW REFERENCES**

### **LIST OF APPENDICES**

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

### **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

### **PREFACE** i-ii

### **INTRODUCTION** iii-x

### **CHAPTER ONE: An Overview of Baron's Collages**

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Scale	3
1.3	Colour	4
1.4	Construction	7
1.5	Materials	8
1.6	The Grid	9
1.7	Frames, Compartments, Edges	11
1.8	Prints	13
1.9	Language	17
1.10	The Body	21
1.11	Endnotes	24
1.12	Chapter One Illustrations	25

### **CHAPTER TWO: Victim Discourse Reconsidered**

2.1	Introduction	29
2.2	Frame as Context	30
2.3	A Catalogue of Disaster	32
2.4	Art Press Reviews	35
2.5	Anatomy of the Artist's Biography	37

2.6	A New Geographical Context	40
2.7	Germany and the Holocaust	41
2.8	Holocaust Memory in America	44
2.9	Kristallnacht in America	48
2.10	The Subject Cannot Speak for Herself	50
2.11	Suffering as Simulacrum	53
2.12	Woman as Wound	56
2.13	Sites of Self-Inscription	60
2.14	Endnotes	63
2.15	Chapter Two Illustrations	65

### **CHAPTER THREE: Re-reading Baron's Holocaust**

3.1	Introduction	66
3.2	Anxiety as Symptom	68
3.3	Psychoanalysis	72
3.4	The Mother	74
3.5	A Kleinian Account of Subject Formation	76
3.6	The Holocaust: Beyond Simple Meaning	77
3.7	Psychoanalysis as a Discourse of the Parents	80
3.8	The Father	81
3.9	New York	83
3.10	The Second Generation	85
3.11	Creating an Inner World	89
3.12	Marriage	92
3.13	'Highway'	92
3.14	Death of the Father	94
3.15	Endnotes	96
3.16	Illustrations	99

### **CHAPTER FOUR: The Semiotic and the Symbolic**

4.1	Introduction	101
4.2	Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman	103
4.3	Language as Space	106
4.4	Art as Language	108

4.5	Language in the World	111
4.6	Breakdown	117
4.7	Horizon Line and Free-floating Shapes	119
4.8	Frames and Cloth	122
4.9	Relationship with Dolly	123
4.10	The 'Protest' Collages: "It's never stopped"	125
4.11	'Torn Flag' Collages	126
4.12	'War Letters'	130
4.13	Envelope	132
4.14	'No More No More'	134
4.15	Endnotes	139
4.16	Chapter Four Illustrations	142

## **CHAPTER FIVE: Writing the Real**

5.1	Introduction	146
5.2	1973: Cancer, Breakdown	148
5.3	Hugo Beigel	151
5.4	'Red Roof' Collage	153
5.5	Interim	155
5.6	The Print as a 'one-off'	156
5.7	Binding as Hypercathexis	158
5.8	Cancer Again	163
5.9	The Hospital Collages	166
5.10	Exhibitions	175
5.11	1982	178
5.12	1983	181
5.13	The 'Hurtful Mountain' Collages	185
5.14	Endnotes	192
5.15	Illustrations	195

## **CHAPTER SIX: Beneath the Invisible and the Real: Baron's Collages as Negotiation and Practice**

6.1	Introduction	203
6.2	Collage and Modernity	206
6.3	Why Collage?	210

<b>6.4</b>	<b>First Collage</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>6.5</b>	<b>Matrixial Borderspace</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>6.6</b>	<b>Gathered with Great Care</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>6.7</b>	<b>Space/Time</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>6.8</b>	<b>Women's Time</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>6.9</b>	<b>The Last Collages</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>6.10</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>6.11</b>	<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>234</b>
<b>6.12</b>	<b>Illustrations</b>	<b>236</b>

## **REFERENCES**

## **SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## **APPENDICES**

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Relevant illustrations are located at the back of each chapter.

Numbering for the collages follows that of the Baron archive, inaugurated by Mark Baron. C (for collage) followed by two digits (indicating the year of production) followed by three digits (representing its place in the sequence for any one year).

Nearly all of Baron's work is untitled. Where a title is written on the work by the artist, it is designated by italics. Words in brackets are mine and refer to the text.

Unless otherwise indicated the exact dimensions or present location of a work is unknown.

### CHAPTER ONE: (Illustrations on pp 25-28)

- Fig. 1. C77-005 (painted cloth), 1975
- Fig. 2. C85-006 (colour field collage), 1985
- Fig. 3. unnumbered scalloped edge collage, c.1970
- Fig. 4. C77-034 (errant L/H form), 1977
- Fig. 5. C77-003 (erotic gap), 1977
- Fig. 6. C77-013 (ellipse print)
- Fig. 7. examples of Baron's copper figures. Baron estate
- Fig. 8. C76-018 (yellow star), 1976
- Fig. 9. C76-056 ('Egyptian' collage), 1976

### CHAPTER TWO: (p.65)

- Fig. 10. C76-001 (mimetic stitches), 1976

### CHAPTER THREE: (Illustrations on pp 99-100)

- Fig. 11. Abstract casein painting c. late 1940's / early 1950s.  
Baron estate
- Fig. 12. Cubist Still Life, c. late 1940s. Baron estate
- Fig. 13. Cubist still Life (2); c. late 1940s. Baron estate

Fig. 14. *Highway*, pencil drawing . dated Oct. 1950. Baron estate

#### **CHAPTER FOUR: (Illustrations on pp 142-145)**

- Fig. 15. b/w photograph of Baron, c.early 1960s
- Fig. 16. C65-009 ('European Man' collage), 1965
- Fig. 17. C68-009 (Torn Flag collage), 1968
- Fig. 18. C77-014 (Torn Flag collage) ('Won Award' written on verso), 1977
- Fig. 19. C73-008 (War Letter), 1973
- Fig. 20. unnumbered collage (Spring Letter), 1973
- Fig. 21. C76-063 (envelope), 1976
- Fig. 22. unnumbered collage (No More), 1974
- Fig. 23. unnumbered collage (No More), 1974

#### **CHAPTER FIVE: (Illustrations on pp 195-202)**

- Fig. 24. C73-001 (breast cancer collage), 1973
- Fig. 25. C74-008 (Red Roof), 1974
- Fig. 26. print of figure with damage, c. 1977/78. Collection of Dolly Honig.
- Fig. 27. Hospital Collage No.1, 1978
- Fig. 28. Hospital Collage No.3, 1978
- Fig. 29. Hospital Collage No.4, 1978
- Fig. 30. Hospital Collage No.5, 1978
- Fig. 31. Hospital Collage No.6, 1978
- Fig. 32. C80-071 (rocket figure), 1980
- Fig. 33. C81-094 (early vessel figure), 1981
- Fig. 34. C83-044 (vessel figure) 1983
- Fig. 35. C83-227 (contact print from C83-044), 1983
- Fig. 36. C83-161 (floating vessel figure), 1983
- Fig. 37.. C83-210 (abject vessel), 1983

- Fig. 38.. Large Etching (380 x 290 cms), 1983. Collection of the author
- Fig. 39. Hurtful Collage Mountain No.1, 1983
- Fig. 40. Hurtful Collage Mountain No.4 ('split' vessel), 1983
- Fig. 41. Hurtful Collage Mountain (stacked bodies), 1983
- Fig. 42. (Pink Still Life), 1983

#### **CHAPTER SIX: (Illustrations on pp 236-238)**

- Fig. 43. C95-2206 (first collage), c.late 1950s
- Fig. 44. C76-055 (tear in fabric), 1976
- Fig. 45. C84-095 (ragged edge), 1984
- Fig. 46. Fetish print (172cms x 245), 1978. Collection of Author
- Fig. 47. C87-014, 1987
- Fig. 48. C87-016, 1987

## **KEY TO INTERVIEW REFERENCES**

The following interviews have been transcribed. References include page numbers from the transcription. Where there is a number in brackets after the title, it refers to the transcript number.

The first two interviews are in the Baron archive the others formed part of my research and are more in the form of private conversations.

1. **HB/MB:1981** Hannelore Baron interviewed by her son, Mark Baron in 1981.
2. **HB/JO:1982** Hannelore Baron interviewed by Jean Olds in 1982.
3. **VR/HB:1994** Valerie Reardon interviewing Herman Baron (Baron's husband) (2 tapes) 1994
4. **VR/DH:1994** Valerie Reardon interviewing Dolly Honig (2 tapes) 1994. (The second tape consists primarily of VR reading aloud from Baron's letters with comments from Dolly).

**The following tapes have not been transcribed.**

5. **VR/SS:1994** Valerie Reardon interviewing Steve Schlesinger. (Robert Brown is also on the tape at one point).
6. **VR/MB:1994** Recording made during my first visit to Baron's archive in Riverdale, NY with Mark and Elise Baron.

## **KEY TO CORRESPONDENCE REFERENCES:**

Baron's **Letters to Dolly Honig** are mostly undated and for the most part, extremely damaged (by fire and water) and therefore many are quite difficult to read. I have tried to put them in a numerical order (1-57) based on various life events that are mentioned or the occasional date. I am not including the letters in the appendix because they were given to me for the express purpose of my research with permission to quote from them.

They are referenced in the text according to my own numerical sequence - i.e: **Letter to DH:23**

## **LIST OF APPENDICES:**

The appendix contains photocopies supplied by Mark Baron of original documents stored in the Baron archive that are referenced in the text. Additionally, some biographical documents that are not directly referred to are included for their historical relevance. Also included are examples of Baron's narrative writing in order to demonstrate the scope of her creative activity.

The appendices are numbered in the top R/H corner. Where an appendix includes more than one page, the number of pages is indicated.

Where a particular page of an appendix is referenced in the text, the reference delineates the page number in the sequence of the individual appendix rather than the overall thesis.

All hand-written notes in the appendices are by Mark Baron.

**Appendix I:** 41 page document entitled 'Hannelore Baron' that contains biographical notes; excerpts from the HB/MB:1981 interview; written statements by Baron; list of solo and group shows and a bibliography. This document was compiled by Mark Baron in 1993.

**Appendix II:** 14 pages of mostly undated written statements by Baron about her work.

**Appendix III:** Biographical notes about Baron typed on Gallery Schlesinger-Boisanté note paper.

**Appendix IV:** Hand written (by Baron) biographical notes - undated.

**Appendix V:** Different version of the above.

**Appendix VI:** 1972 newspaper cutting (Riverdale Press) of a photograph of Baron and an article about her teaching in the local community.

**Appendix VII:** Ten pages of up-dated biographical notes on Baron including excerpts from her personal writings. Compiled by Mark Baron in 1998.

**Appendix VIII:** Letter dated September 8th, 1941 written by Baron's father (Julius Alexander) to the Principal of the Textile High School.

**Appendix VIX:** Baron's school report cards (7).

**Appendix X:** Receipt for Baron's application for naturalisation as an American citizen.

**Appendix XI:** Baron's High School Diplomas (2)

**The following documents were all written by Baron in the form of autobiographical narratives.**

**Appendix XII:** Journal entitled 'How we came to the USA' dated June 21, 1941. (Photocopied from the original lined exercise book).

**Appendix XIII:** Fourteen pages telling the story of Uncle Siegfried.

**Appendix XIV:** Twenty-five pages (incomplete) telling the story of her involvement with macrobiotics.

**Appendix XV:** Two pages (typed) about her brother Hans.

**Appendix XVI:** As above, about her mother (Friedel Alexander).

**Appendix XVII:** One page (typed) about her neighbour Estelle.

**Appendix XVIII:** 'On the Outside Looking for an In'. Article by Baron published in the The New York Times. October 6th, 1985.

**Appendix XIX:** Poem about her father dated 1976.

**Appendix XX:** Final draft of story about her memories of the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to acknowledge the valuable support and guidance I received from my supervisory team: Professor Griselda Pollock, Dr. Claire Pajaczkowska and in particular my Director of Studies, Dr. Penny Florence.

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### **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award.

This study was financed with the aid of a research studentship from Falmouth College of Arts.

A programme of post-graduate research seminars was undertaken as well as regular tutorials with individual supervisors from the supervisory panel.

Relevant conferences were attended and three papers were presented.

#### **Conference Papers:**

*Hush Money: The Hidden Price of Restitution* 'Feminism and the Aesthetics of Difference', University of London, 1995

*Nothing Personal: Women, Creativity and Suffering* 'Virtue and Vulgarly' Feminist Art Histories Network, University of Reading, 1997

*Autobiography as Location and Text* Association of Art Historians, University of Exeter, 1998

Valerie J. Rensdon  
April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2000

## **PREFACE**

I first saw the work of Hannelore Baron at the Barbara Mathes Gallery in New York in September, 1993. I had taken details of the show from an article in New York Magazine about current exhibitions in the city. There was a small picture of one of Baron's boxes which attracted me and I wanted to see more. I can't remember whether or not the article made reference to her as a 'survivor' but the biographical outline which was on view in the gallery seemed like a chronicle of despair.

The show consisted of about twenty collages and several of Baron's box/assemblages and I was overwhelmed by the poetry and inventiveness of the work. I wondered why I had never heard of Baron and thought how interesting it would be to write about her and bring the work to the attention of a wider audience. The gallery staff were unforthcoming in providing any leads so I thought it wouldn't be possible particularly as I was scheduled to return to the UK within the next few days.

That evening I had dinner with an old friend who I told in passing about the amazing art I had seen that day. She asked me the name of the artist and when I replied 'Hannelore Baron' she said 'Oh, she was my aunt!'. Thus this project, which has both sustained and infuriated me during the past six years, began with a kind of miracle and I have often had to remind myself of that in those dark moments when I wanted to abandon it.

The day after my auspicious dinner I met Mark Baron who was very enthusiastic concerning my ambition to write about his mother's work. We made a visit to the Baron archive and he lent me a compilation of biographical material and a catalogue of 1275 slides of Baron's (untitled) collages from 1976 until her death in 1987. I returned home and for a long time felt defeated by the sheer volume of work and limited my study to the collages of 1977 and 1978 many of which incorporate prints of bound figures and/or old, stained and damaged pieces of cloth. I did not question the association

between the collages and Baron's experience of the Holocaust until much later when I began to look seriously at all of her work.

The following summer a research grant from Falmouth College of Arts enabled me to return to New York where I interviewed various family members, gallery owners and a woman named Dolly Honig who had been a close friend of Baron's. My research was beginning to reveal a much more complex idea of Baron that was often at odds with her representation as a suffering artist. As a consequence I began to struggle to find ways of conceptualising Baron's subjectivity and the artistic practices which helped to shape it as in some way resistant to the apparent cultural victimisation that is cited in relation to her. This required a certain kind of psychoanalytic theory as a main investigative methodology in order to produce a different notion of the singularity of the artist produced by art history and art criticism. Of great importance has been attention to Baron as a *female* subject whose work articulates a feminine symbolic dimension. Nonetheless, there is a paradox in deploying feminist theory in order to establish a singular subjectivity for an artistic author when much of that theory critiques such notions. The work of Julia Kristeva has provided a methodological framework that can contain that paradox because of the way in which she maintains the connections between art, the split subject who produces it and the wider social order.

My principle tasks in producing this dissertation have been to organise the material; challenge the dominant assumptions about Baron; and find some way of making 'sense' of her collages. There is still much work to be done and I am well aware that this is only the beginning of a much larger project. The following thesis marks the completion of phase one and is, in an important sense, a starting point both for me and for other Baron scholars who might initially choose to follow some of the paths I have cleared.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1989 the Guggenheim Museum in New York held a posthumous show of Hannelore Baron's work and the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC is planning a significant touring exhibition for the year 2001. Yet there is still no sustained study of Baron's work to date nor has it been exhibited in the United Kingdom. This project is intended not only to bring Baron's work to a wider, scholarly audience but also to interrogate Baron's collages for what differences they might reveal about the processes and practices of visual art, and the relationship between creative activity and embodied subjectivity. The central problematic of this thesis is that early critical responses to Baron's work established a narrative frame of 'Holocaust victim' wherein Baron is seen as a site of trauma and the collages as representations of that trauma. Exhibitions of Baron's work are invariably supported by biographical information that foregrounds her Jewish childhood in Nazi Germany, in particular the events of Kristallnacht, and the evidence of later breakdowns. It is precisely because of this tendency for art made by women to disappear behind the created 'subject' who seems to merely weep into her art work that I made the decision to begin the thesis with an attempt to read across the body of the collages for what can be discerned as syntax, vocabulary, choices, materials and habits of construction. Such an analysis of the work itself is also of crucial importance for accessing what makes the collages as object singularly and historically meaningful. Close attention to the making of the collages reveals traces of both a maker: an artistic subject finding itself in its own practice, and a making, in the sense of a process that cannot be bound into the singularity of the subject who made it. Rather than a stylistic or formal analysis, it is a semiotic process that more general psychoanalytical theories of semiosis can help to decipher and propose a range of meanings for this practice. I argue therefore in Chapter One that there is a necessary relationship between Baron's practice of collage-as-process and her

body as a coalition of history, memory, physicality, psyche and what Kristeva terms the semiotic - those traces of a relation to the pre-verbal body and its drives. This connection needs to be fully elaborated in order to counter the overdetermined readings of her work that dominate the critical literature. The risk in taking this position involves the careful negotiation of the pitfalls associated with psychobiography in that it could serve to produce Baron as yet another overdetermined site. Nonetheless, it is a necessary risk because Hannelore Baron has already been constituted as a text and it is only by reading that text against the grain for signs of difference that it becomes possible to see something of what has been silenced and made invisible.

Chapter Two considers the critical literature on Baron in the form of catalogue essays, gallery biographies and art press reviews which combined, locate Baron as an artist within a narrative frame that constructs her as a victim of the Holocaust who suffered from its effects throughout her life. The origins of this discourse can be traced to the early 1980s when the Holocaust as a signifier offered a means of reading Baron's work and locating it within a cultural category. When I began my research, Baron's son, Mark Baron, gave me a catalogue of 1274 slides of the collages made between 1976 and 1987 and a photo-copied 48 page spiral bound document entitled **Hannelore Baron** (Appendix I:1993) consisting of biographical notes (in the form of a chronology); excerpts from a 1981 interview that Mark Baron had done with his mother; various written statements by Baron about her work; a list of exhibitions (group and solo); a bibliography of critical writings beginning in 1973; and the public collections that include works by Baron. As a compilation it adheres to the conventions of modernist art by certifying that Baron's work was exhibited, reviewed and collected thereby confirming its status as art. The brief biographical chronology constructs a narrative that produces Baron as an

'outsider' artist who, as a victim of the Holocaust, suffered psychological and physical illness throughout her life. The statements by Baron included in this document are mostly undated, usually edited and have little or no reference to the context in which they were written. Their poetic quality and the fact that they were written by the artist herself *almost* supports the story the document tells but the inclusion of an edited transcript of the 1981 interview of Baron (HB/MB:1981) disrupts this reading by allowing access to Baron's spontaneous utterances unmediated by the implicit premeditation of her written statements. Despite the fact that the interview is understandably driven by the interviewer's efforts to structure Baron's career according to the modern conception of artistic creativity (the evidence of 'natural' talent at an early age, later artistic influences and the linear mapping of stylistic development [Battersby:1989:38-39]) her replies are often at odds with the logic of the narrative. Baron's presence as a 'voice', albeit incomplete, fragmented and edited, introduces a contradictory, heterological element into this text that is productive of its subversion. I wanted to hear more of this and in time I received an unedited transcript of the interview<sup>1</sup> and eventually, copies of the original tapes.

A year later another tape arrived in the post prefaced by a phone call from Mark Baron telling me that he had come across a tape of another interview with Baron made in 1982 by a woman named Jean Olds. He didn't know who Jean Olds was or why she had done the interview but despite his view that the interview was of little merit he thought I would be interested in it and sent me a copy. In this interview Baron was literally beyond the gaze of her family (whose influence on Baron forms a thread of this thesis) and more importantly, she was speaking from a place outside of their desire to construct her as a transparent subject. Whilst Baron was adept (by 1982) at inscribing *herself* as an artist

within the structure of the interview and Jean Olds attempted to adhere to the conventions of the genre, the conversation between the two women was less directed than the previous interview and as a result, was simultaneously deep and light-hearted. There is a quality of intimacy to the exchange which does not come across as collusion with the interviewer's conscious intention (Sheurich:1997:69). Jean Olds, while still asking Baron specific questions about her work, was able to facilitate random, almost stream of consciousness responses from Baron that not only revealed a lot about the intuitive nature of her working process but also how the demands of family life affected her practice. I was struck by how open and 'healthy' Baron seemed, an impression that was at odds with the tragic victim figured in the artist's biography.

This view was confirmed when I met Dolly Honig, the woman who had been Baron's closest friend from the mid 1960s until her death in 1987. Dolly Honig not only provided me with anecdotal evidence that was at odds with the version of Baron as tragic but she also gave me access to a number of Baron's letters which, as first person narratives, definitively contradicted the dominant interpretation of Baron's life.

This evidence, discovered in the interstices of her 'official' biography, led me to question the version of her life held up for public consumption and to understand something of its limits. But it also presented me with a dilemma: not that the art may not be a form of working through Holocaust related trauma but that the label hides as much as it makes visible particularly because it does not take gender into account.

The testimony of Baron's voice, albeit incomplete, halting and often contradictory, articulates a predicament relative to being spoken which suggests

that the effects of the Holocaust were far more complex and oblique than the critical writings imply.

Chapter Three proposes a counter reading of Baron's breakdowns which takes into account her position as the daughter of the family. A framework is established using psychoanalytic theory which attends to the formation of female subjectivity, and contemporary second generation Holocaust theory. This allows me to suggest that it is possible to read in Baron's life story both the symptoms of unresolved anxieties and conflicts and a particular set of strategies that enabled her to sustain a creative subjectivity. The psychoanalyst and semiotician, Julia Kristeva, regards language as a signifying process that is constantly moving between and being moved by the semiotic and the symbolic. This formulation takes into account the subject's body as both a repository of psychic inscriptions and a sited historical body subjected to discourse. Artwork can thus be read for traces of the inscriptions of the tensions between these internal and external worlds. This allows for a reading, however tentative, of aspects of Baron's life story in order to discuss her art in terms of a poetics of imaginary restoration and reparation in which archaic and traumatic affects are given the structure of symbolic representation.

In Chapter Four I examine a number of collages made prior to 1976 (when the slide catalogue begins) in order to propose that Baron's collage process functioned as a psychic space of self-articulation that relieved her sometimes unbearable feelings of isolation and alienation brought about by her social and historical situation including a familial dynamic that was inflected by persecution, migration and displacement. Kristeva regards melancholy as art's sombre lining in that it is loss and absence that set the imaginary in motion (1989a). For Baron, the originary loss that defines the subject as incomplete

was compounded by experiential loss and trauma. In *Black Sun* (1989b) Kristeva elaborates her concept of art as an *imaginaire du pardon* that represents the transposition of destructive experience into aesthetic form. To write or to make a mark is to introduce the possibility of an-other meaning and to open up the promise of an 'other' who might listen. Baron's affective experiences of loss did not result in melancholic aphasia but sought enunciation as structurations that breached the privacy of an inner world to function as tokens of exchange, as commentary and as a way of being delivered back to herself as a subject of a 'second life' (p.206).

During the time I have been working on this project, three people in my family died of cancer. I was therefore drawn to the fact that Baron had cancer off and on for fourteen years and, following Kristeva's account of art as an *imaginaire du pardon*, I felt certain that traces of her response to the disease could be apparent in some of the collages. This was confirmed when, on one of my trips to New York, Mark Baron showed me two series of collages (not included in the catalogue) that his mother had made in direct response to specific periods of illness. These hitherto unseen works (*The Hospital Collages, 1978* and *The Hurtful Mountain Collages, 1983*) are discussed in Chapter Five along with other collages that I argue bear traces of Baron's response to specific health crises. The cultural tendency to avoid the discourses of death and dying sheds light on the collective desire to ascribe the meaning of Baron's collage to the Holocaust as outlined in Chapter Two. It is easier to contemplate despair when we are not personally threatened by it. Using Kristeva's concept of the *imaginaire du pardon* as a methodological framework enables me to propose that Baron used her art to work through the anguish of cancer treatment as well as the trauma of various death encounters. Through a close analysis of Baron's use of the figure in some of her collages, I am able to argue that, as registers of non-

cognitive semiotic activity, the figures functioned, not as metaphorical representations, but as a form of hypercathexis - or preparedness for anxiety - that included her negotiation with and gradual acceptance of death.

In the final chapter I consider the significance of collage as a process in relation not only to Baron but to contemporary understandings of subjectivity, identity and the wider social order.

Kristeva positions art - literature, poetry, dance, music, painting - as a privileged and yet non-regressive means of renovating but also sometimes revolutionising the symbolic and the social, that is, radically changing the social order of meaning, because it makes possible new concatenations of signifiers and subjective relations to them. (Pollock:1999:31)

As a means of renovating the symbolic and the ways in which we think about difference, I draw on the writings of Bracha Lichtenberg-Ettinger in order to propose an ethical dimension to Baron's specific practice of collage. I also suggest that it is not only the metonymic and metaphoric potential of collage as a form that drew Baron to it but also, that as a process, it replicates the transactions between the internal and external world that are endemic to subjectivity.

Throughout this thesis I have drawn on biographical material in order to establish a history for the oeuvre and a context for the artist Hannelore Baron that counters the dominant interpretation. I am well aware of the danger of writing a kind of monograph when such inventions of the singular, consistent artistic subject have been critiqued. One defence, proposed by Griselda Pollock (1999), acknowledges this paradox yet insists on a feminist necessity in that disinventing the author abolishes the possibility of feminine authorship just when women artists are beginning to be recognised as authors. In struggling to understand what was being done by Baron in making her collages I have also

relied on Baron's voice as spoken in interviews and written in artist statements, personal letters and private autobiographical writings. This presence in the text is not intended as evidence of some kind of immutable truth, but instead, it is countered by psychoanalysis which proposes a notion of the divided subject constrained by its division into unconscious and conscious. Thus, a complex notion of Hannelore Baron is produced as on the one hand, she is located as a creative agent consciously making art in relation to her own choices of materials, processes and cultural references, but on the other, she is a subject both known and unknown to herself. The subject however only exists in so much as it is signified and much of this thesis has been concerned with the struggle over Baron's signification as more than a Holocaust victim. This is not to suggest that I now 'know' Baron but rather that it is possible to understand her processes of making collage as a significant case study in the problematic of signification and a complex of differences none of which, German-Jewish, exile, immigrant, daughter, woman, wife, mother, artist, depressive, cancer sufferer are reducible to or deducible from each other.

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes from this interview that are used throughout the following text are from the unedited transcript.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **COLLAGE AS A PROCESS**

#### **1. 1 Introduction**

Between 1976 and 1987 the New York based artist Hannelore Baron produced over two thousand collages. Baron's work has been exhibited in Europe and the USA but not in Britain and no major catalogue or scholarly monograph on Baron's oeuvre yet exists. This chapter is intended as an initial engagement with the material archive of this thesis, the collages themselves, in order to discern some of the patterns of inscription that characterise them.

Baron was self-taught in that she never had a traditional fine art education and she was immensely prolific often despite debilitating illness. As a housewife and mother living on the margins of New York City Baron was never part of any school or group nor did she mix with any other contemporary New York gallery artists. Until the last years of her life she did not have a studio of her own so she made her work in and around her domestic environment. Although her collages (and boxes) achieved increasing recognition and success<sup>1</sup> in the last ten years of her life, Baron never really altered her domestic routine or her working methods and eschewed all but the most necessary contact with the art world.

In such little critical writing as there is to date, art critics often compare Baron's work to the collages of Kurt Schwitters (Gardner, 1987; Forgacs, 1994; Frank, 1995). Both artists were of German origin and both used collage as their medium but there all similitude ends. In brief, Schwitters' collages rely on the clarity of rectilinear form, clean edges and clear, unambiguous colour. When print is incorporated into his work it is more often than not found material such as bus tickets or other industrially produced

matter rather than the small, self-generated prints that Baron used in her collages. In comparison to the clean, formal deliberation of Schwitters' collages, Baron's spontaneous execution and experimental mixture of materials and techniques veer daringly toward the messy and indistinct. That she consistently controlled this potential disorder demonstrates her dextrous handling of the medium and her willingness to take risks with her work. She re-cycled materials that were stained, irregular and damaged and layered them in reference to the depth that really underpins the surface arrangement more usually associated with collage. She drew across the surfaces of many collages with gestural, child-like markings and the prints she incorporated were made with simple, invented techniques that highlight their hand-made quality rather than referring to modern industrial manufacture. In fact, in terms of the spontaneity of execution and the density of the picture surface, there are far more similarities between Baron's work and that of Dubuffet and early Rauschenberg than those artists more usually cited in conjunction with her.

From the time that she first 'discovered' it in the late 1950s, collage (and to a lesser extent box construction, which, it can be argued, is another form of collage) became her medium. She no longer sketched, drew or painted except in conjunction with her collage process. Collage allowed Baron to regularly take finished work apart and to re-use and re-absorb different elements into new collages and boxes. This continual deconstruction, transformation and deferral speaks of a particular relation to her output as a process rather than a finished product. It also points to the fluidity of Baron's practice and the possibility for conceptualising her process in spatial terms.

At this early stage in assessing the work of a relatively unknown artist, the following discussion is necessarily selective. My principle has been to elaborate on particular works that I shall argue are most representative of Baron's practice of collage. This

chapter aims to offer a reading across the material traces of an artistic practice that is of necessity a primary point of articulation of subjectivity as manifest through a highly specific artistic and semiotic activity. Not formalist in its intent, this chapter aims to open discussion of 'Hannelore Baron' with the evidence of a practice and to establish a critical vocabulary that is adequate to discuss that practice as a point of complex articulations around the body, space, line, division and connection.

## 1.2 Scale

Baron's collages are small, always less than one square foot overall. One obvious reason for their size is the fact that for many years Baron worked on a kitchen table or at a desk in the corner of the sitting room (VR/DH:1994:(1)2). An artist without a studio is denied the luxury of working on a large scale and even when Baron eventually had a studio of her own in the converted attic of the house it was arranged domestically in replication of her downstairs working conditions. Another reason for the small scale is that working within the environment of the family home her working process was liable to constant interruption. Her tools and materials had to be portable, easily taken out or packed away, and by working small, she also had the possibility of completing a collage within a short period of time. In addition to the material constraints imposed by her working environment (which could well have become a habit by the time she had a studio or more uninterrupted working time) Baron claimed to relate positively to small things with a stated dislike for large vistas or even the concept of outer space:

I don't relate to large things. I don't like anything large. Large things sort of dwarf me and when I had the anxiety and all that, I felt so small and unworthy and such a nothing and I don't like anything that makes me small now. I don't like large buildings, large stores, I don't even like very tall people. Not that I don't like them as people, but what I mean is, I don't feel comfortable with them. I don't feel comfortable when they have to bend down and talk to me. (HB/MB:1981:20)

The intimate scale of the collages means that the viewer remains outside of the work, unlike large, abstract canvases which seem to invite the viewer to enter the picture's surface. In Baron's collages the boundary between the work and viewer's body is maintained as neither the work nor the viewer is in danger of engulfment by the other term. When individually framed and hung at standard eye level (which is traditional gallery practice) each collage intervenes in the space surrounding it and challenges the viewer to engage in a conversation which requires proximity, time, and solitude. This does not allow the viewer mobility of perspective. One cannot glance by it nor is it 'lobby art'. Instead, each collage articulates its separateness not only from the other collages but also from the viewer. In fact, the scale of the work, with its implicit demand for careful attentiveness, could almost be read as an act of aggression on the part of the artist. In order to 'see' the work, the viewing subject must become physically immobilised. Thus the small scale of the collages works in opposition to the amount of control Baron, as artistic producer, can exercise over her viewers as time and attention are at a premium in the contemporary western world. For Baron to present her work as small meant to risk it being overlooked yet it indicates that she had enough confidence in the work to believe that her audience would take the time to stop and look.

### **1.3 Colour**

An exhibition of Baron's collages often leaves a strong impression of pinks, browns and other soft 'earth' tones which seem to be her preferred palette. However, closer study reveals that curators tend to choose the work for shows in accordance with a particular colour scheme. In fact, Baron used quite a diverse range of colour often in surprisingly bold combinations but her basic tonal range tends towards the so-called 'warm' colours like pink, red, yellow, orange and brown. The addition of an unexpected colour, often of an entirely different value or tone from the dominant one, is

a typical Baron strategy that suggests a healthy disregard for the often fictitious fundamental rules of colour basic to an art school education.<sup>2</sup> On the whole, however, Baron used colour as a component of a collage rather than a decorative addition. Colour often carries the equivalent weight of other more material structural elements suggesting that for Baron colour was not decorative or secondary but had its own intrinsic materiality that could be 'found' and reincorporated into a collage.

For instance, Baron rarely used the colour blue as an applied colour, apart from her very first collage and a series of late collages, all of which will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Generally, when blue was used it was as a 'found' colour on a piece of cloth and even then, it tended to be a muted grey/blue rather than the clear light blue of the late collages. An example of Baron's use of colour as structural is the recurrence in several collages of a striped fabric on a blue-grey ground. To have included it so often indicates that Baron was attracted to its minute eccentricity. The pattern on the fabric is a repeat of a group of six stripes an eighth of an inch apart with each group woven at regular intervals of one inch, producing a double stripe effect. The stripes are beige except for the two end ones in each group which are a surprising ochre. The fabric itself looks quite utilitarian and could have been a tea towel or pyjamas when first discovered but the yellow ochre end stripes seem to exceed mere utility. It was quite possibly this surprising variation in colour, transformative of the utilitarian, that originally attracted Baron to the fabric. As the collage numbered C77-005 (Figure 1) shows, Baron highlighted this variation in colour by replicating the ochre stripes in paint, a mimetic device that muddies the distinction between the 'real' and the fictive, equalising them within the aesthetic space.

Dark works or works with strong, clear colours are less frequent although many of the collages made during 1976 (prior to the introduction of figuration) are simple colour field constructions which, more than any of her other works, lend themselves to the scale of slide projection and thus enlarged compare favourably with large format

abstract expressionist painting. Baron periodically returned to simple colour field collages which relied for their impact on the material aspects (colour, shape, texture) of the cloth components without the addition of drawing or printmaking. An example of this type of collage is C85-066 (Figure 2) with its uncharacteristically sombre ground relieved by the addition of bright red. Baron was a gifted colourist with a finely tuned sense of balance and the generally muted, soft palette that is typical of the collages could, in less capable hands, become tedious or constricted. Her use of off-tones like off-white and off-pink as the ground is sometimes so restricted that an entire collage is composed of slightly varying tones of the same colour. However, the emotional and formal strength of the work often lies in the impact made by her use of sharp accents of colour, sometimes black or very bright red. The accents are usually in bold contradiction to the whole and can be as unobtrusive as two bright orange dots on a monochromatic ground or a small slab of pea soup green jutting out off centre just above the horizon line.

In many of the collages a precarious relationship is elaborated between a subtle or unified ground (often made up of different tones of the same, usually pale, colour) and foreground shapes of darker, stronger colours clustered together in such a way as to leave expansive areas of the background revealed. The stronger tones in the foreground sometimes appear as slabs or blocks sitting on the surface of the picture plane and as such they frustrate desire for perspective. In others, a totally new and unrelated accent colour is introduced in the form of ink or paint flicked across the surface in staccato fashion reminiscent of pinpricks or the hurried dynamic of a quick conversation.

As found fabric is either used as the support and/or some or all of the collage elements, much of the colour in the work comes ready-made. There is also evidence in some collages that suggests experimentation with bleach, ink and sometimes paint to alter or mark a piece of fabric chosen for use as a ground. When paper was used as the ground, Baron usually stained it in some way as she described to Jean Olds:

I always have to do something to mess it up. I also think subconsciously, I was sort of thinking about why and I thought - I really don't like perfection. I don't like anything, even in other things in my life and that's why I like second-hand furniture and things. I don't like something new, so new it bothers me - even with clothes, with everything. (HB:JO:1982:7)

#### 1.4 Construction

Many of Baron's collages are like palimpsests where there is as much hidden from view - only to be guessed out - as that which appears on the surface. Generally, each collage has roughly three main elements or layers. The first can be considered as the ground although in some of the collages from the mid 1970s she mounted her 'ground' on Kitakata paper (Digby, 1985). However, for the sake of consistency, I shall consider the constructed ground as the first layer of each collage. This will sometimes be a single, usually misshapen piece of fabric, canvas or heavy watercolour paper, or else several tonally related pieces of cloth collaged together. On top of this prepared ground the pictorial elements of the composition are arranged. These are sometimes fabric pieces only (as in the colour field collages discussed previously), but often they are a combination of fabric and paper. Attempts to precisely decode her techniques are often baffled by crude print-making techniques that elude the conventional appearance of printing and look more like a direct surface drawing. Baron made much use of a technique known as frottage in which a rubbing is made on paper of the textured surface beneath it. She used frottage in such a way that paper takes on the appearance of textiles - a doubling effect that she further exploited by painting directly onto the ground in a manner that mimics the weave of the pattern of one of the fabric components. She also painted or inkwashed over certain sections of a collage producing a veiled effect that again, refers to what is beneath or hidden but also further hinders a wholly accurate account of her specific techniques. The third and (usually) final layer is generally two-fold: the surface application of splatters, dribbles or washes of paint or ink and the cryptic letters, child-like overdrawing and crude frames - each made either with either ink, paint, very soft pencil or a combination of all three.

## 1.5 Materials

The evidence of the collages indicates that Baron was led by her carefully chosen materials and that her process included careful consideration of each element's already accrued meanings. She searched for fabric at thrift shops and flea markets looking for materials that possessed the effect she was looking for. Often, a particular fabric, whether it originated as a dress or a dishcloth, sparked off a whole series of collages. In an undated statement (Appendix I:27) cited in a 1987 Baron catalogue, the artist commented on her choice of materials:

The materials I use in the box constructions and cloth collages are gathered with great care. The reason I use old cloth and boxes is that new materials lack the sentiment of the old and seem too dry and hard in an emotional sense.  
(Schlesinger/Boisante:1987:9)

And in reply to a letter from the Kunstverein Galerie Im Rathaus, Dillingen (sent in connection to a 1984 exhibition), Baron wrote:

I feel compelled to save all small bits of cloth and paper as if I were rescuing them to make them part of a new whole. The work that is created from them must however show the original tears and wrinkles found in its components and give a feeling of reverence and care. This is how I see life, full of brutality almost annihilating and still one must try to preserve parts and anchor them somehow. (Appendix II:4-5)

Baron's understanding of the intrinsic expressiveness of the cloth fragments she chose permitted her to focus on their inter-relatedness: whether she should place them side by side, touching, distant or even on top of one another. It is often these considered juxtapositions that produce emotional meaning, not just in the initial relationship laid down between figure and ground, but more significantly, in the correlation and interpenetration of one bit of cloth with another. These considered-placings can convey powerful human feelings such as isolation, powerlessness, or the attempt to hold or bind things together - all themes that will be developed in subsequent chapters.

In the early 1970s Baron was using canvas off-cuts as a support which she found in the sale bin at the artists' supply stores like Sam Flax on Canal Street in Manhattan

(VR/MB:1994). As evidenced by an unnumbered collage from 1970 (Figure 3) she particularly liked remnants from the ends of sized canvas that had been attached to a roll. In this collage the top edge of the ground has been warped by tension into a scallop shape and the canvas sizing has flaked off in the areas where pins held the canvas to the roll. Baron emphasised these flaws by outlining them with black ink, drawing attention to the marks of time and to the physical transformation of material wrought by pressure and/or containment. Similarly, a piece of hessian which looks like it originated as the underside of an upholstered chair, shows the rusted holes that are indices of its original purpose. These formal devices are consistently visible throughout her oeuvre and point to the way in which the collage process enabled her to bring the often haphazard conditions of time and chance into her arena of artistic control. The extent to which this dynamic was in play as an important part of her process is indicated in an interview when she stated that if she ever spilled ink or anything else while she was working she would wipe it up with a piece of material which she then saved for use in a future collage (HB/JO:1982:6).

## 1.6 The Grid

In Baron's collages the elements are more often than not arranged to conform to a grid-like structure of quarters and thirds articulated either horizontally or vertically. Often both spatial sequences are used in the same collage, i. e. elements are arranged in variations on halves or quarters going *across* the ground and in thirds on the vertical (or vice versa). However, Baron's grid is not the overt, regularly spaced grid that celebrates the finality of the surface and announces 'modern art's will to silence' (Krauss:1985:9) but a subterfugal, more rhythmic spacing that 'holds' the inchoate fragments together by creating the illusion of order, harmony and control. Louise Bourgeois (1982) commented that the grid 'is a very peaceful thing because nothing can go wrong... everything is complete. There is no room for anxiety... everything has a place... everything is welcome' (p.43) and it is in this sense that the

grid, redolent with verticality, can unify and stabilise the image and in turn, the subject who is viewing the image. This unconscious structuring process is evident in Baron's frequent use of an invisible horizon line as a central point of reference that is oriented vertically in the visual field. While consistently denying single point perspective or any reference to symmetry, Baron tended to cluster figurative elements either just above or dangling from an imaginary horizon line. Often, one rectangle will protrude from the central configuration and, although still attached, seem to hang precariously in 'space'. The 'presence' of an (imaginary) horizon line, which acts as an anchor for the form, also defines a space that is 'out there' thus creating a tension or breach in the illusion of stability. For instance, in the collage numbered C77-034 (Figure 4) there is an errant form that is entirely detached from the central compositional mass. Its position on the left-hand edge of the picture space produces the effect that it is in transit out of the frame entirely, referring to a potential *beyond* that exceeds the logic of the unified subject. Anxious affects, however mitigated by the fact that the finished works hang on the gallery wall to be viewed vertically as discrete objects, are integral to Baron's collages. Although she constructed them on a horizontal plane, the glue<sup>3</sup> (or sewing in some cases) resists the dispersive forces of gravity. When the work is vertical, the pieces do not fall off. We learn as children when we play with blocks that big shapes can support smaller shapes but not the other way around. Baron tended to reverse the laws of physics by placing large, 'heavy' shapes on top of smaller fragile ones producing an uneasy sensation of instability in the viewer. Often, there is a sense of something frail being crushed beneath the weight of something heavy, but the gravitational menace produced by this configuration is alleviated by the spirited, almost hectic drawing which occupies the intervening spaces. The outline drawings that often fill the void left by the clustered shapes provide the illusion of support or a sense of 'holding off' a heavy weight, producing a dynamic tension that suspends the potential unease and instead elicits feelings of pleasure and relief.

## 1.4 Frames, Compartments, Edges

All Baron's exhibited collages are framed identically in pale wooden box frames which are about an inch wide on their surface and one and one half inches deep. Each collage is float mounted against a pale cream background which is then enclosed behind a deeply recessed window mount before being framed and encased in glass.<sup>4</sup> What began as found fabric scraps and torn bits of paper becomes, through framing, an inviolable aesthetic object.

Art imitates that for which there is no model outside art, since nowhere else can we see the ambiguity of boundaries as the noncontingent truth of boundaries. This truth is rendered by the artist not as the result of his intelligent observation of boundaries, but of his indifference to all their empirical manifestations, or what we might also think of as his narcissistic concentration on dominating his aesthetic property. (Bersani:1993:100)

I would argue, contra Bersani, that for Baron the frame, canvas, or prepared paper or cloth on which she assembled her collages served to mark off a privileged *space* as if to announce the arrival of a subject rather than to ensure domination of her property. In the interview with Jean Olds, Baron talked about the importance of frames for her work.

I almost feel as if my work were too much art - A. R. T. because my son's very involved with the young artists and they're totally - all these things people make that can no longer be hung on the wall, that can no longer be shown in museums because they're not art as we're accustomed to thinking of art but I think I'll never get away from that because I'm too either old or old-fashioned or whatever. I still have to do it somehow so it's framed and hung on the wall. I don't know if I could ever. . . except for the boxes that I've done but even those, it's always within that kind of context. (HB/JO:1982:1)

The context Baron refers to is one of containment: either the frame demarcates the space of the container or, in the box constructions, the box itself is literally a container.<sup>5</sup>

However, in many of the collages the marking out of a contained space is inscribed directly on to the surface of the work before it is ever formally framed. I am referring to the drawn frames found in many of the collages that are usually indented an inch or so from the edge and made with either paint or ink. In other collages the actual cut, torn or

ragged edge itself is meticulously painted as if dipped in ink thus reinforcing the boundary between the inside space of the collage and the outside world. These reinforced edges are a minute detail that can be easily overlooked but they constitute an important element in her work. In many collages a fragile line is also drawn around the collaged pieces as if holding them together yet similar frail lines sometimes encircle just one element as if framing it in a protective space. In others, each component is carefully compartmentalised by overdrawing or by the paper rectangle of a print or a carefully cut piece of cloth but often even those intrinsic compartments have the addition of an overall drawn enclosure or frame.

This proliferation of frames within frames and their association with demarcated space and the establishment and patrolling of boundaries is subtly undermined by the appearance of gaps or openings in the painted outer frames. In some of the collages an entire edge of the ground is left unpainted suggesting penetrability. The open edge is unguarded and the surface figuration seems in danger of sliding off the picture plane, again referring to an excess *beyond* the picture plane. In other works, a small piece of tattered fabric is glued over the gap in an ambiguous gesture towards closure. But closure is resisted by the insubstantial nature of the patch and just as Baron's process embodies the pleasure of deferral, here too the collages as containers always include the possibility of release. For instance, the frayed edge of a piece of fabric becomes significant as references to solidity and separation evacuate the form via the splayed edges. Dangling threads are left as witnesses to former structure allowing for leakage from one thing to another. Less frequently, a tiny scrap of fabric will have its edges meticulously folded and hemmed thus reinforcing the boundaries of the shape before permitting it access to the picture space. Edges are crucial in the work - whether or not they butt up against each other, overlap or expose themselves. In the collage numbered C77-003 (Figure 5) a minute gap between two parts reveals a glimpse of ground which carries an erotic charge. The sense of violation is reinforced by hectic mock stitches

pencilled across the gap in a futile attempt at closure. Where edges abut genteelly the mimetic needlework is more languid and spaced apart as if requiring only passing reference. Often two or more edges will be sewn together with actual crude stitches or sutured with coarse thread like the stitching of a wound. Drawn or actual stitches are evident in many of the collages, as well as strips of gauze bandage. The use of stitching (whether actual or figurative) as well as a material of such abjection as bandage can be read as a form of binding together fragments in danger of breaking up or falling apart.

Clearly, resonances of childhood memories permeate Baron's work and certain recurrent arrangements and iconography such as the frames and compartments conjure up domestic interiors: the spaces of the 'family romance' of childhood. This is particularly true in those collages that include references to human figures (either drawn or printed) which are often positioned in separate 'rooms' or compartments. These fictional spaces bring to mind those sculptures of Louise Bourgeois that chillingly describe familial isolation.<sup>6</sup> In fact, as Bourgeois' work exemplifies, recognition of Baron's aesthetic achievement need not be incompatible with comment on those strong figurative elements in some collages that seem to trace certain highly keyed scenes from her childhood or even her adult life. That childhood events impacted on her and generated feelings of isolation and difference is undeniable. As I will argue, the shape of Baron's lived experience, her view of the world and the message she wanted to convey in her collages all influence and affect the kinds of formal characteristics that are currently under discussion.

### **1.8 Prints**

A significant formal development occurred in the latter part of 1976 when Baron began to experiment with small rice paper etchings for inclusion in the collages. There is a recurring printed motif in the work from this period that shows an indistinct, scrabbled out figure enclosed in an ellipse shape (Figure 6, C77-013). The ellipse looks like a

kernel, a seed or even a womb and following on from the generally open-ended abstraction of the previous collages, it signals a new direction. This figure seems to have ultimately dissatisfied Baron for, while variations of that print appear in quite a few of the collages made in late 1976, by 1977 it had virtually disappeared from her iconography. In the collages of 1977 and 1978, the protective kernel print was gone and a humanoid figure without a shell emerged.–

As stated earlier, Baron had no formal fine art training (apart from various adult education classes) and she developed her working methods and techniques through a long process of trial and error. She attended an evening class in etching at Columbia University with her friend Dolly Honig in the late 1960s and this introduction led her to further, more sophisticated explorations in printmaking. Prior to that time her prints were made without a press or any other specialist equipment. Monoprints were made by painting with oil on glass and then impressing the reverse image on small bits of paper. She used frottage or other forms of simple transfer printing often printing the actual surface of a piece of found fabric, metal, wood or even computer circuitry. Her experimental approach to printmaking consistently addressed the small transformations that occur within the spaces of direct transcription and it is telling that Baron never surrendered any of these early techniques even after she became skilled in more traditional printmaking methods. The majority of the collages from the mid 1970s onwards include some form of print made on rice or washi paper executed in a wide range of techniques. According to her son, Mark Baron, Baron always preferred the reverse side of a print because it was less legible, fixed or transparent.

Baron's tendency to avoid perspectival convention means that the textile elements in the work often carry little sense of volume. However, with the introduction of figurative prints into the collages in 1977, narrative suggestions become possible as well as a new sense of depth dictated by the presence of a figure *within* the printed field. Ineluctable flatness is avoided altogether through the use of recessive dark shapes against

foregrounded lighter ones which gives the impression of looking from one room through to another. In other collages, vertical structures produce the narrativising effect of doors or windows leading to something behind them. This effect is often compounded by the overdrawing which, rather than sitting on the surface of the work, can appear to be coming through from below or beyond it. As Baron's vocabulary expanded during the 1970s, diagrammatic rows and stackings of boxes or compartments invoke domestic interiors with an upstairs, a downstairs and sometimes even an attic and a cellar. As mentioned previously Baron's most consistent use of the figure began towards the end of 1976 with the appearance of a print of an embryonic form that gradually developed into upright often-sexually differentiated figures. As these figures appear as loosely drawn outlines, this was accomplished by simply drawing unclothed legs or 'dresses' to the knee. References to the human figure emerge as one of the most memorable motifs in Baron's repertoire despite the fact that they only appear with any consistency in the collages of 1977 and 1978. This paradox is probably due to the fact that much of the work is abstract yet it conveys powerful emotional affect and it is difficult to understand just how that affect is produced. By comparison, the humanoid figures are easily readable. They are bandaged or damaged in some way and their presence within the picture space gives the work a narrative potential that is more usually denied in Baron's collages. Thus, viewers (and critics) tend to remember those collages that they are able to weave a story around so a proportionally small number of figurative collages become exemplars of Baron's work.

The human figure has a double potency in her collages. It is a childlike figure, man imagined in innocence. But it also has the "shapes of people which were dug up somewhere at an archaeological dig." These she composes by cutting figures from thin copper sheets, then wrapping them in string and cloth "like Egyptian mummies, American Indian burial costumes. . . the body-bags in Viet Nam. The string has to do with imprisonment, but much of that is on a subconscious level and I can't really tell which of these things I do just for visual effect, or conscious or subconscious reasons". (Digby, 1985 - quotes within the text are statements by Baron)

The bound copper figures referred to above, were inspired by an image of some archaeological trove that Baron saw in *National-Geographic*. Rather than being limited to the single plate and multiple print of the etching process, the copper cut-outs could be printed directly on to the paper. They were no doubt comparatively quick to make and by altering the bindings, colour or orientation of any one figure she could produce many variations. Like frottage, monoprints or transfer prints, the copper figures opened up new possibilities for direct transcription leading Baron to try a number of different copper shapes (Figure 7) whilst attempting to vary each resultant print. The prints were made in a small etching press that Baron acquired in the mid-1970s and although the press enabled her to make multiples, she rarely printed the same thing twice.<sup>7</sup>

As well as altering the wrapping on each figure, she encouraged distortion by allowing the ink from previous pulls to build up on them (VR/MB:1994). The prints made from copper figures are the most fully realised figuration in her work in the sense that they have a two-dimensional surface on which to carry the ink. Nonetheless, Baron managed to ink them in such a way (possible by wiping ink off before printing) that parts of the figure would appear to be corroded or indistinct. Despite such obvious references to the human body as heads, legs, arms and upright stances, these figures, with their strange bindings and fragments of cloth, have a totemic quality reminiscent of African or Native American iconography. This resemblance is particularly acute in some of her bird figures but by the early 1980s, Baron had virtually dropped the copper figures from her repertoire in favour of less dominant or overt figures and the collages on the whole tended once more towards total abstraction.

As well as the printed figures already discussed, Baron used other techniques such as handmade and commercially produced stamps and stencils including the kind of number or letter stamps that originate in children's printing sets. Small stamped prints of irregular five pointed stars can be seen in many of the collages, usually positioned slightly off centre (Figure 8, C76-018). These stars are most often yellow, the colour of

the stars that the Jewish people were forced to wear by the Nazis but the Star of David - the so-called Jewish Star - has six points, not five.

Obscuring her methods and blurring the boundary between one technique and another are integral to Baron's methodology making it difficult to distinguish exactly what technique was used to make a particular print. Often it is hard to distinguish between a print and a drawing, and if it is reproducibility versus the uniqueness of the mark that distinguishes between these two forms, then it can be argued that Baron treated them as one and the same. But printmaking in one form or another is a structural component of so many of the collages it suggests that printing was another important means by which she could transpose direct marks or traces of her external environment into the space of a collage.

## **1.9 Language**

Baron was fluent in the visual language she created within the space of the collages. It has a syntax, a grammar and a vocabulary that familiarity with the work has enabled me to recognise if not fully translate. In many collages deep, scribbled marks are laid down beneath one element as if to underscore that particular detail. Like underlining in order to emphasise a point, the marks replicate written language by adding weight to what is pictured above them.

There are many references to hieroglyphs or pictographs, sometimes free-floating but more usually arranged in horizontal rows. The latter are most frequently found on the tall vertical collages such as C76-056 (Figure 9). The format lends a sense of weight or 'history' to the piece as if it were an ancient tablet of stone or a fragment of a ritual garment. Baron was a frequent visitor to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art where she studied the artefacts of ancient civilisations. There is a small room within the Egyptian section that contains a number of woven cloths found in the tomb of Henehenet (Dynasty II, 2060-2010 BC). On some of them there are small icons woven

near the edges that look like linen marks and one in particular, a simple flower shape, was recognisable from some of Baron's collages.

Hurriedly drawn directional arrows, pointing up, down or occasionally sideways, are another frequently used symbol. As Baron worked on a horizontal surface, the arrows could be intended as directional in anticipation of the shift to a vertical viewing position. In some of the collages however the arrows lack the emphasis of specific direction and seem to hang in space, pointing towards nothing in particular. Read in this way, the arrows become empty signs severed from their standard symbolic function. In other collages an arrow is used to link two elements within the composition without referring to anything outside of the frame. Allusion to the mutability of signs is very characteristic of Baron's collages and, as a consequence, the only certainty is that any formal claims one might make about the work can only ever be qualified in light of numerous exceptions.

Another symbol that frequently recurs is a drawn X (as seen in Figure 4). It is visible in nearly every collage made during 1976 for instance although she used it slightly less frequently in subsequent works. The X is most often drawn with pencil although sometimes with crayon or more rarely, ink. In some of the collages it crops up as part of a print where it looks as densely articulated as a crossed pair of knitting needles whereas in others, it is only faintly drawn. Generally speaking (which is of course the only way one can speak of Baron's work) Baron uses the X ambiguously.

Occasionally it is inscribed in a space of its own where it can almost be read as a signature. More frequently, however, the X functions as a crossing out or erasure of whatever lies beneath it. It is an erasure in the Derridian sense in that the viewer can still see what is beneath (and decide). The finality of total deletion is deferred owing to the visibility (refusal to disappear) of that which was crossed out, a device which is, in a sense, consistent with the logic of collage.

**X** also represents an unknown quantity - the answer to an algebraic problem or an anonymous identity only to be guessed at. Whichever way it is used (and read), **X** always seems emphatic as if, on completion of a collage, Baron was saying: 'There! **X** marks the spot'. But which spot and why? Is it negation or approbation? Baron's frequent use of the **X** as a pictorial device (rather than a specific linguistic symbol) illustrates the ways in which she played with the meanings of signs. She altered the meaning of **X** by changing its position in various collages. This included writing it repetitively in little boxes which anchored its meaning by giving it a homogenous status equivalent to all other letters.

Baron frequently used letters (most particularly a and e) and/or numbers often arranged in boxes and grids. The letters vary in shape and size but they are most often written backwards, in lower case and they are rarely free floating. Their presence as signs bears the promise of signification but the drive towards legibility is ultimately aborted as nascent words remain stillborn as impossible utterances. What appears to be a promising list of numbers will suddenly skip sequence then abruptly repudiate numerical references and potential meaning will collapse. This cryptic quality of the 'writing' on the surfaces of the collages is experienced by the viewer as nearly glimpsed understanding as if meaning were on the tip of the tongue. The drive to decode the work is further fuelled by the occasional addition of industrially printed numbers cut from worn cloth tape measures or restaurant cheques. The implications are of weight, measuring, food and clothing, all things that are related to the body. Similarly, she very occasionally used found fabric with writing already on it like the sacking which functions as packaging for foodstuffs. References to COARSE OATMEAL or CANE SUGAR speak of an endless round of food preparation as well as the constant transit of food. Baron used letters as signs for their associative rather than literal meanings. She was more concerned with what language represents rather

than what it means. In two undated statements (most likely written for specific shows) Baron discussed the use of lettering in her work:-

The lettering in my work is deliberately obscure. It can represent all that was ever written or just be seen as scratches that mark the otherwise pristine surface of the paper to make it more acceptable to me. (Appendix I:26)

For some years now, rather than being influenced by nature, I make collages that are more two-dimensional and have to do with the written word and printed matter. They are meant to be a form of document attesting to events I cannot forget. (ibid; p. 30)

In some of the collages faint numbers and letters are drawn in boxes becoming smaller and smaller as if to convey a sense of stifled or withheld speech, as if the words are squashed from without before having a chance to be uttered.

No doubt the mutability of words and language was significant for Baron who was forced to relinquish her 'mother' tongue but who was also fluent in at least four languages.<sup>8</sup> The illegible writing that is a feature of many of the collages points out the redundancy of language itself. In an undated statement, Baron wrote:

The writing that covers much of the surface is deliberately illegible because it represents all the words that have been written to tell the unimaginable and explain the unexplainable. The writing also commemorates all that has passed and not been noted, though basically, in my opinion, none of it matters very much since all has remained more or less the same, despite the many meaningful words scattered all about us. (Appendix I:28)

Baron's use of symbols such as arrows, X's and letters illustrates some of the ways in which her practice as an oeuvre embodies her critique and is in itself productive of subversions to the syntax that she created. Although she apparently moved across languages with ease (recorded interviews reveal little trace of a German accent) she distrusted the permeability of language's symbolic meaning preferring the unmediated expression of a cryptic visual language of her own invention.

## 1.10 The Body

Language, whether spoken, written or visual is always sited in the body. Recent feminist theorists (Braidotti:1991; Butler:1993; Grosz:1994) have made the body a central focus for thinking through female subjectivity. This is different from the mind/body dualism that has historically structured western metaphysics because it requires us to 'think differently, think through difference, and acknowledge the bodily roots of subjectivity and the locatedness of all knowledges' (Meskimmon:1997:1).

Within this framework it is possible to understand the body, not in opposition to the mind or the psyche but to 'think psychological depth or interiority in terms of the inscription and projection of corporeal surfaces' (Grosz:1990b:183). In other words, the biographical body - in this case Baron's - includes her history, memory, physicality, psyche and what Kristeva terms the semiotic - those pre-verbal drives and impulses that are stored in the body as memory (Moi:1986:183).

An analogy can be drawn between the body as a coalition and collage as a coalition of processes that include selection: (history, memory); cutting and pasting: (physicality); psyche: (language and structure) and the semiotic: (drawing, marking, staining, tearing). Kristeva is quite convinced that 'there is no fundamental discontinuity between the production of the work of art and the life of the individual' (Lechte:1990:24) and the continuity she argues for is particularly relevant and acute when the work of art is collage. As Donald Kuspit suggests:

Collage. . . destroys the idea that life is stable, whole, indivisible - or rather that the division of life will destroy it. Life still exists in fragments which afford new opportunities for finding meaning in it. Art and life become unexpected in collage, which gives us the opportunity for a creative relationship with both of them. (Kuspit:1989:53)

As mentioned previously, Baron always worked on a flat surface, usually a desk or a table. This means that she looked *down* on a collage as she was making it, although she stood finished pieces up in a vertical position for a few days to decide whether or not

they satisfied her (HB/JO:1982:6). In a 1981 interview with her son, Mark Baron, he asked her at what point had her work become completely abstract. It was the sight of a mosaic picture by an artist called Sergio Radulovic that triggered the shift in Baron's perception:

Yes, a mosaic picture, aerial view and then that gave me a new idea about doing aerial views and from then on it just became more and more abstract. It was almost as if the aerial view lifted me above. . . it sounds corny but it really was as if it put me up there where there were no rules and regulations. . . . (HB/MB:1981:10)<sup>9</sup>

In 1972, Leo Steinberg discussed the significance of a shift from the vertical to the horizontal picture plane:

But something happened in painting around 1950 - most conspicuously (at least within my experience) in the work of Robert Rauschenberg and Dubuffet. We can still hang their pictures - just as we tack up maps and architectural plans, or nail a horseshoe to the wall for good luck. Yet these pictures no longer simulate vertical fields, but opaque flatbed horizontals. They no more depend on a head-to-toe correspondence with human posture than a newspaper does. The flatbed picture plane makes its symbolic allusion to hard surfaces such as table tops, studio floors, charts, bulletin boards - any receptor surface on which objects are scattered, on which data is entered, on which information may be received, printed, impressed - whether coherently or in confusion. The pictures of the last fifteen or twenty years insist on a radically new orientation, in which the painted surface is no longer the analogue of a visual experience of nature but of operational processes. (Steinberg:1972:82)

The 'new orientation' Steinberg describes includes the aerial view that 'lifted (Baron) above. . . rules and regulations'. In a sense, this view is an omnipotent one in which the data and information received (from the external world) can be re-ordered and re-structured in accordance with *different* syntactical rules. The rules that Baron was 'lifted above' were those of the external world or even of what Lacan termed the Symbolic order. Clearly, as this chapter demonstrates, the collages were structured by her own rules. For Baron to shift a finished collage from the horizontal to the vertical - what Rosalind Krauss calls 'the front-parallel organisation of the Gestalt, with its drive to verticalise everything as image, to align everything with the viewer's up-right body' (Krauss:1997:94) - suggests a necessary relation between the inner and outer worlds that corresponds to the conceptualisation of the body as a complex amalgam of the internal and the external.

Working on the flat involved Baron in a corporeal relation to the work based on proximity to it and the fact that the elements from the external world that she re-ordered were literally brought in to the space of the collage. Her practice was not mediated so much by vision, what Steinberg called 'the analogue of a visual experience of nature' but by touch and smell, the so-called proximity senses more intimately associated with the semiotic body. C. M Judge, in her essay *Celebrating Intimacy* says about collage:

Tactility helps us to contain ourselves. The collage process, through the suggestive force of its tactual, multitextural, multilayered, immediate, experiential natures, nurtures and helps us to reintegrate with our worlds. (Judge:1989:292)

In the 1982 interview with Jean Olds, Baron explained her working process as primarily intuitive which she likened to a woman trying on clothes:

I don't think in terms of the structure...see all that is just unconscious. What I think of is in terms of - it looks too empty - too weak - just generally you know. I guess that's how some women are with their clothes. You know, they try them and they try them in different combinations and they go out and they buy this and that and then suddenly they say 'OK - now I look just the way I want to look'. And that's how it was here where it was somehow a long process and then finally it was the way I wanted it to be. (HB/JO:1982:7)

Literal references to the body are found not only in Baron's analogies about her working processes but also in those collages discussed previously that incorporate names of food stuffs or allusions to weighing and measuring as well as the many collages that include some form of figuration.

In this chapter I have argued for an understanding of Baron's collage practice as a process that replicates the body as sited on an axis of the intra and external world. Thinking the body as a coalition also requires thinking through the ways in which the body is produced by discourse which, in Baron's case, necessitates a consideration of the ways in which the categories 'Jew' and 'Woman' have been historically and culturally produced.

The following chapter will focus on the way in which Baron's work has been situated by/in contemporary art discourse. I will argue that the culturally assigned body of

Baron the artist as 'Woman' and as 'Jew' is imbricated with the psychological body (of Baron as artist) as unstable and tormented to produce Baron, and by association her work, as a particular category of cultural production. By deconstructing these discourses it becomes possible to demonstrate the mechanisms that locate Baron's collages within a reductive and marginal tradition thus opening up a space for a different and more expansive critical understanding.

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1. I am quantifying 'success' by the fact that Baron had regular national and international solo shows; the work sold consistently and for steadily increasing prices and her shows were always regularly (and favourably) reviewed in the art-press including newspapers such as *The New York Times*.

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Helen Andrews for her discussions about the largely fictional basis of colour theory. Her unpublished PhD thesis is entitled *Philosophies of Colour: Gender and Acculturation*. Another recent reference to this issue is made in Gage:1999:43-58.

<sup>3</sup> Baron originally used Elmer's Glue (a common American brand of household PVA glue) in the collages but later concerns about its archival quality led her to switch to an acrylic gel in the early 1980s although she stated that nothing has happened to those early collages and that she 'used very little glue anyhow' (HB/JO:1982:4).

<sup>4</sup> I am not certain to what extent the current style of framing reflects Baron's original intentions or if it is a development subsequent to her death. The latter seems more likely as the exigencies of style and the practicalities of the marketplace no doubt have an important bearing. Baron always intended her collages to be framed (HB/JO:1982:1) and I have seen two collages from the early 1960s in a private collection (Dr. A. Steiner, NYC) that were both given, already framed, as gifts by Baron. One of them is an abstract with some cloth elements typical of her work from that period while the other, given to her sister-in-law, is a torn up and reassembled vase of flowers. This would indicate that it was a very early collage (late 1950s) and/or that she considered a figurative collage to be a more suitable gift for the intended recipient.

<sup>5</sup> Of course, by implication, her statement could also be understood to mean that the context is the gallery as Baron only framed the collages in preparation for an exhibition.

<sup>6</sup> I am thinking in particular of the work *Cell (Glass Spheres and Hands) 1990-1993*. An illustration of this work can be found in Bourgeois:1995.

<sup>7</sup> In 1983 Baron made a number of small prints of the copper figures that were executed on good quality heavy paper (as opposed to the rice paper) and individually signed. Some of these have been donated to public collections such as the New York Public Library but to my knowledge they have never been exhibited.

<sup>8</sup> As well as her native language of German, Baron spoke English, French and Italian.

<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, another question was asked before Baron could finish her sentence but the statement offers a glimpse of Baron's desire to free herself from the confines of 'ordinary' life. I am arguing that she was able to achieve this through her process which was located in a borderspace above or to one side of more traditional art forms. This idea will be discussed at length in subsequent chapters.

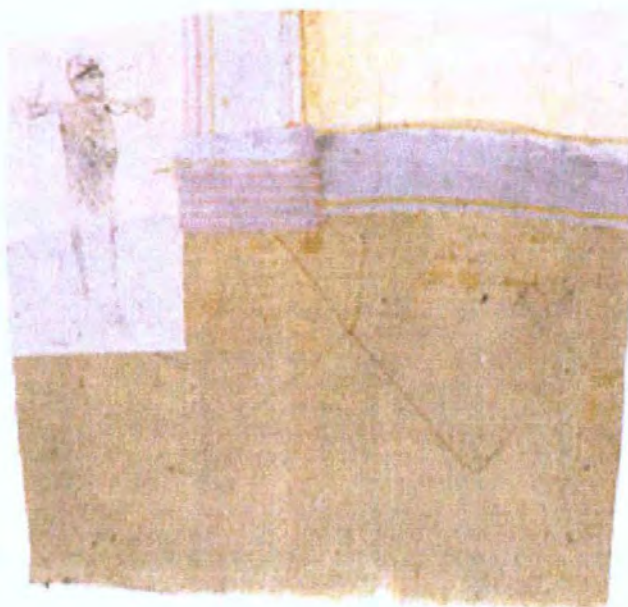


Figure 1. C77-005 (painted cloth) 1975



Figure 2. C85-006 (colour field) 1985



Fig. 3. unnumbered scalloped edge collage, c.1970



Fig. 4. C'77-034 (errant L/H form) 1977



Fig. 5. C'77-003 (erotic gap)  
1977



Fig. 6. C77-013 (eclipse print) 1977



Fig. 7. examples of Baron's copper figures



Fig. 8. C76-018 (yellow star) 1976



Fig. 9. C76-056 ('egyptian' collage) 1476

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **VICTIM DISCOURSE RECONSIDERED**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The critical writings on Baron's work to date privilege a narrative of suffering which references the Holocaust as its root cause. The salient biographical facts mobilised in support of this narrative are that Baron was born into a German Jewish family that fled from the Nazis in December, 1938, and that in subsequent years she suffered three nervous breakdowns. The latter is the term used in the Baron literature although my research suggests that severe anxiety and depression might be a more accurate description. Nonetheless, these particular facts are linked in an economy of cause and effect in which her collages and box constructions are represented as manifestations of a psychic struggle to maintain equilibrium in the face of traumatic childhood experiences. My intention in this chapter is to demonstrate that foregrounding Baron's childhood in Europe renders her collages transparent representations of Holocaust suffering. Furthermore I will argue that embedded within this narrative are certain ideological assumptions concerning art and women as well as a representation of a Holocaust that is monolithic and undifferentiated.

Many contemporary scholars of the Holocaust era have suggested that the Holocaust has, in recent decades, been mythologised through the processes of memorialisation and representation in order to serve present day, universalising liberal ideologies (Miller:1990; Young:1993; Langer:1995; Cole:1999). There is a blurring at work between specific, actual historical events and those forms of fictionalised representation that seek to offer meaning and even hope and redemption from the unimaginable meaninglessness that the Nazi genocide embodied. Thus, Anne Frank became a cultural icon when both the play and the subsequent film version of her diaries (1955 and 1959

respectively) end with the words 'In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart'. But as Tim Cole points out, these words were not only taken out of the context in which they were originally written but more tellingly, they were 'de-coupled from Anne's subsequent death in Bergen-Belsen (Cole:1999:35). As Lawrence Langer suggests, the 'myth' of the Holocaust adopts 'a discourse of consolation rather than a discourse of ruin' (Langer:1995:7).

Baron's location as a Holocaust artist is now being institutionalised. Slides of her work were shown in conjunction with a paper entitled *Holocaust Imagery in Contemporary Art* which was delivered by Matthew Baigell of Rutgers University at the symposium *After Auschwitz*, and her work is to be included in an academic survey of Holocaust art currently being written by Dr. Stephen Feinstein of University of Wisconsin. To categorise Baron as a 'Holocaust Artist' not only exiles her work from mainstream art discourse but forecloses potential understandings. It also situates Baron within a framework of pathology that may well be in keeping with cultural expectations about art, women, and/or the Holocaust, but which closer study demonstrates, both her life and her aesthetic project exceed.

## **2.2 Frame as Context**

Art is rarely received by its public in the form of discrete works but is, as Mary Kelly suggests 'constructed as a category in relation to a complex configuration of texts' (Kelly:1984:100). These texts then interlock to authenticate the work as the valid product of an original author. But such is the contingency of meaning (as the product of a variety of interchanges) that '(the author's) life is no longer the origin of his fictions but a fiction contributing to his work' (Barthes:1977:62). In the absence of any scholarly writing on Baron's work to date, the most recent catalogue (Mathes/Silverman:1995) co-published by Barbara Mathes Gallery in New York and

Manny Silverman Gallery in Los Angeles is an example of the kind of meanings attributed to Baron's work that this thesis will contest.

The catalogue as a text constitutes an artistic subject named Hannelore Baron about whom a particular narrative is constructed which mediates between her work and the viewer's response to it. As a significant discursive instrument, the 'logic' of the catalogue assigns meaning to what is essentially abstract expressionist work by constructing a specific biographical narrative which stresses particular events in the artist's life while omitting others. It constitutes the Text (in Barthes' sense) as the product of Holocaust suffering.

...there is a narrative organisation of what is seen in the exhibition catalogue; its written (editorial/critical) commentary fixes the floating meaning, erodes the apparent polysemy of the exhibition's imagined discourse. Within a specific order of the book, the catalogue confers an authorship, an authority, on the exhibition events. In it, positions and statuses are assigned for "agents" defined as artists, organisers, critics, and "the public". The authors/organisers impose a declarative order on the exhibition's evasive discursivity...(it) constructs a specific reading, opens the space of a possible reworking or perhaps effects a closure". (Kelly:1984: pp100-101)

The catalogue itself is a totalising narrative which establishes a causal relationship between Baron's life and her art not only in the stated text of the catalogue essay, but also through devices such as listing solo and group shows under the heading of 'Biography', and presenting a chronological 'life history' constructed within the nexus of trauma, breakdown and artistic development.

Mieke Bal (1996) reminds us that 'reading' visual art is a semiotic activity which always occurs in the present. Semiotic 'framing' refers to the prior or present discursive information which a viewer brings to a work of art. In other words, the viewer's drive to understand art means that purely visual work is always textualised to a greater or lesser extent by the workings of a narrative which is imported into the work by the act of reading.<sup>1</sup> This process takes place largely in the unconscious in the sense that the viewer is unaware of actively *doing* it, especially when the 'framing' conforms to

ideological assumptions. The viewer is then predisposed to read the narrative (in this case as donated by the gallery in the form of the catalogue) into the work. As Bal says:

Framing is a constant semiotic activity without which no cultural life can function. Trying to eliminate the activity of framing is futile, but it does make sense to hold readers accountable for their choice of frames (Bal:1996:33).

I am aware of course that the activity in which I am engaged - the production of this thesis - constitutes a competing narrative framework to the dominant reading of Baron's work. My intention however is to propose a frame that is sufficiently expansive to allow the work its fuller resonances, particularly at this potentially critical moment of the work being brought to the attention of a wider audience.

### **2.3 A Catalogue of Disaster**

The sole essay in the 1995 catalogue, commissioned and published by Baron's galleries, was written by the American critic, Peter Frank. It seems safe to assume that Frank's statements coincided with the galleries' interpretation of Baron's intent and in fact Frank draws heavily on the collection of biographical material entitled 'Hannelore Baron' compiled by the artist's son, Mark Baron (Appendix I:1993).<sup>2</sup> Mark Baron's purpose in bringing together this material was to assist an understanding of the work by interested parties such as galleries, essay writers, journalists and researchers. As a research tool it is immensely valuable, but, like Sylvia Plath's published letters to her mother (Aurelia Plath(ed.):1975), editorial control produces an image of its subject that is acceptable to the editor. (Rose:1991). In other words, the question must be asked: what kind of work has this document been asked to do? And to raise it necessarily invites its complement: what has been left undone? Is it possible that the absences in the text, the gaps, transpositions and omissions can make a difference to understanding Baron's art?

Frank's essay functions to reproduce authorised meaning through the act of inscribing words on paper in the 'disinterested' voice of critical authority. Meaning, thus formalised through reinscription, is then imported into the work (in Bal's sense) and disseminated to the public at large via the newspaper or magazine review. Frank's essay opens with the following statement:

In producing art that was and had to be small, Hannelore Baron followed in the diffident but tenacious modern tradition of intimism. Like Joseph Cornell ....Baron's adherence to the small scale and primary devotion to the techniques of collage evinced a hypersensitivity to external stimuli that in life proved crippling to normal social functions and relations. ...Unlike Cornell, however, Baron was concerned not with the manipulation of images but with the making of marks. Further, she was concerned not with dream or desire, fantasy or play as were her New York compeers, but with tragedy and transcendence, personal suffering and endurance of the soul. (Mathes & Silverman:1995:5)

The essay conforms to the proprieties of a modernist art history by stating Baron's formal concerns and influences and by making a claim for durable and universal meaning. The author grafts Baron onto the more widely known artist Joseph Cornell<sup>3</sup> as support for his thesis that the combination of small scale and collage signifies a personality crippled to 'normal social functions and relations'. He then goes on to sever that graft by stating that, unlike Cornell, whose work was concerned with 'dream, desire, fantasy and play', Baron's was concerned with 'tragedy and transcendence, personal suffering and endurance of the soul'.

This move, which forecloses the possibility of 'dream, desire, fantasy and play' being expressed in Baron's work, effectively negates her as an active, dreaming and desiring agent and relegates her to the passive term of 'tragedy and transcendence, personal suffering and endurance of the soul'. Desire<sup>4</sup> is located in the male body while Baron's body is displaced in a double locution which locates meaning only in relation to her alleged psychological state based on biographical details of filmic dimensions. Frank recounts Baron's childhood experience of Kristallnacht (9 November, 1938) when local German citizens, inspired by Nazi propaganda, formed vigilante groups to smash up

Jewish businesses, homes and people. Baron's parents were taken into custody for six weeks and the children sent to live with the one remaining Jewish family in the town. According to the Chronology published in the catalogue, Baron, accompanied by an S.S. officer, returned to the family home in order to retrieve a winter coat and the 'sight of the house with its furniture all destroyed and her father's bloody handprints on the wall is traumatic' (ibid.,p.31).

The events of Kristallnacht and the story of Baron's return to the family home has become a central motif in Baron's biographical narrative and the story is retold over four paragraphs in the catalogue chronology . Despite Frank's reference to a statement by Baron concerning the Holocaust which says that she 'did not want to be linked artistically to only (or primarily) that part of her experience' he concludes that Baron:

... drew strength from her wounds. As did so many others of her generation, the witness Baron bore to unspeakable inhumanities both sustained and hobbled her. It gave her phenomenal durability and made her particularly fragile. Her reaction to the onset of cancer in 1973 for instance was to have another nervous breakdown. But her response to the struggle she maintained with that cancer for the last fourteen years of her life was an outpouring of artwork and a resolve to put it in front of a public, in defiance of her own fears. (ibid.,p.17)

Frank establishes a dichotomy which poses (passive/feminine) wounds, unspeakable inhumanities, fragility, cancer, (another) nervous breakdown and fear against the characteristically (active/male) qualities of strength, durability, outpouring of artwork, resolve and defiance. The latter characteristics are in fact, constitutive of the romantic ideals of the avant-garde artist. The effort to negotiate the paradox inherent in the representation of Baron as suffering with Baron as possessor of artistic agency is a key feature of the essay and of the document which underpins it. However, Frank analyses Baron's work primarily in correspondence to her supposed psychological state, as in small scale = crippled social relations. Although he refers to the fact that she had cancer for fourteen years, he relates that important information solely to her psyche by citing her 1973 breakdown. Throughout the essay the focus is held on those aspects of her

life which can be interpreted as constitutive of a damaged psyche with little reference to either a formal consideration of her work, her physical experience of cancer, or her identity as a functioning, female, Jewish artist.

## 2.4 Art Press Reviews

In order to trace the development of the institutionalised meaning, as exemplified by Frank's essay, in which Baron's work has come to stand for Holocaust suffering, I am going to look at thirty three reviews of Baron's work which have been published in the art press from 1980 onwards. The reference to Baron's historical position as a German Jew whose family fled from the Nazis was related in twenty seven of them in terms which ranged from passing reference to lurid embellishment. One of the earliest published reviews of Baron's work was written by Hedy O'Bell for *Artspeak* in an article entitled *The Invisible Woman* which surveyed the work of women artists currently (1980) showing in New York galleries. Baron's work was seen by the writer at the Kathryn Markel Gallery and described as follows:

The terror of Germany in the thirties, seen and remembered through the eyes of a child, is totally captured and relived. ...mutilated figured are placed as graphic documentation of the violence done to a fragile thing. The stained and frayed edges of material and the spare empty ground express the awesome terror of a being stripped bare of human dignity. (O'Bell:1980:5)

O'Bell offers no explanation for her statement that 'stained and frayed edges of material and ...spare empty ground' signify 'the awesome terror of being stripped bare of human dignity' but interpretation in the mode of assertion is one of the defining characteristics of the writings on Baron's work. O'Bell's interpretation suggests that she was aware of the basic facts of Baron's history but as there was as yet no organised archive of Baron material to research, it is likely that some account of Baron's life was included in a press release issued by the gallery.

In contrast, a 1981 review of a Baron exhibition<sup>5</sup> at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York (Bannon:1981) refers directly to the press release prepared by the gallery but the writer takes issue with the assertion that the work derives from Baron's experience as a refugee.

As if in an unknown code or private map, the artist suggests private meanings that need not be decipherable to be enjoyed. That they may very well represent an 'emotional range' is fine, though, indeed, a simple message, such as reverence for the past - and distant past at that - or respect for humankind, or, more precisely, "you give me great joy or sorrow" is fine too. The point is that the message need not be known to be appreciated.

Bannon's reading of Baron's work is astute and the Albright-Knox press release is, in fact, restrained on the subject of Baron's biography, stating only: 'Born in Dillingen, Germany in 1926, Hannelore Baron fled Nazi Germany in 1941 with her family and came to the United States'. It goes on to describe her development of collage as a medium, her participation in group and solo shows and a brief, formal description of the work. The statement closes with a paradoxical claim for a direct relationship between Baron's history and the materiality of the work (which Bannon seemed to be objecting to) as well as a formalist claim for the autonomous integrity of the collages.

...The bits of paper, cloth and wood, all old and used, which are incorporated in her work, are precious to her. Each piece represents part of her own and other people's lives and histories - all to be collected, hoarded and preserved. The collages and boxes reflect the emotional range of the artist but at the same time each is a complete formal statement. (*Albright-Knox Gallery Calendar*, 1981)

By locating meaning within the latter part of that statement, Bannon challenges what he considers to be the foreclosure of meaning inherent in the conflation of the work with the artist's biography. Paradoxically, however, he writes in the review that Baron 'fled Nazi Germany in 1941' which is a different and more emotive statement than '...Baron fled Nazi Germany in 1941 *with her family*'. For Baron to have fled alone could imply that her family perished when, in fact, the family fled together from Europe in 1941 having left Germany in late 1938. This may be a small point but Bannon's review has

been published thus misleading biographical information is sedimented into the Baron discourse.

## **2.5 Anatomy of the Artist's Biography**

In November, 1981 (November 24 - December 24) Baron had her first solo show with the Gallery Schlesinger-Boisanté on Madison Avenue in New York. This show represented a move 'upwards' - not only to a gallery with a better Manhattan address than Markel's but also one with national and international connections. Among Baron's papers are two hand-written chronological accounts of her artistic career to date (1981) which were composed by the artist presumably at the request of Schlesinger-Boisanté prior to this show. These documents (Appendices IV and V) are revealing as cultural artefacts in that they demonstrate, via their transpositions, which 'facts' in Baron's account of herself as an artist have been considered unsuitable (by whom?) for inclusion in the gallery's representation of Baron.

The first version begins in 1945 and outlines the formal development of her work, her participation in group shows and her solo shows up to and including the 1981 Schlesinger-Boisanté exhibition (Appendix V). One award is mentioned in 1962 for work exhibited in a show at the Yonkers Art Association but apart from a loose account of her formal development, there is a complete absence of biographical or personal information.

The second version, which is slightly neater and written with a finer pen, begins in 1968 and the first entry for this year reads: 'Membership in National Association of Women Artist NAWA Award'. This is followed by 'Worked at Yonkers Jewish Centre' followed by 'first boxes of natural wood (driftwood)' (Appendix IV). The first two of the entries for this year have subsequently been scribbled out and there is no way of determining whether this was Baron's personal decision or if it was suggested

by another party. Whichever, the effect is that her self-identification as a *woman* artist (as evidenced by her membership in NAWA and the receipt of an award) is effectively erased from her re-presentation as a gallery artist as early as 1981.

The second chronology describes in more detail the kinds of work she was making each year and it includes many more awards as well as her inclusion in *Who's Who of American Women* and *Who's Who in American Art*. (1975 and 1976 respectively). It is as if someone had read her first draft and pointed out all the important achievements that she had overlooked or thought not worth mentioning and urged her to list them. The second account also includes personal details such as 'Park View Occupational Therapy Work (1970)' and for that same year, the statement 'Bought House' which is underlined. For the year 1972 she included 'Work with children Riverdale Neighborhood House'. The entry for 1973 lists - 'Mastectomy - Breakdown; Solo show at Hudson River Museum; Audubon Award; First (?) gallery show' (Baron's question mark). The last personal reference comes in 1978 which reads: 'lung surgery; chemotherapy; collages with monoprints on cloth and paper; Smithsonian purchase; Markel solo show' (Appendix V).

Now we have the (possibly reluctant) inclusion of the damaged body in relation to the artist's works. But what is absent from this account is any reference to Germany or to the Holocaust. The question then becomes, if Baron herself did not figure those events as fundamental to her self-identity as an artist, who did and when, how and why was it inserted into her 'biography'? Questions such as these point to the commodification of the art object wherein the 'facts' of an artist's biography are manipulated in order to serve the current fantasies of the marketplace. The stress placed on Baron's childhood in Nazi Germany considered as an adjunct to the commodification of her art may signal an aspect of the significance of the Holocaust in the cultural imagination.

The transposition from Baron's self-authored second version of her 'history' to the published 'facts' which accompanied her first show at Schlesinger-Boisanté is an unsigned outline entitled *Biographical Notes Hannelore Baron* printed on the gallery's headed paper (Appendix III).

- 1926 Born in Dillingen (Saar), Germany
- 1939 Crossed border illegally into France. Six months later went to Luxembourg to await eventual emigration to America
- 1941 Departed from Portugal for the United States
- 1946 Suffered nervous breakdown
- 1947 First abstract work in casein and water-colour
- 1950 Marriage to Herman T. Baron
- 1952 Birth of daughter
- 1956 Birth of son
- 1966 Nervous breakdown
- 1968 Began wood assemblages
- 1973 Surgery, breakdown
- 1978 Surgery, and chemotherapy
- 1981 End of three years of chemotherapy

It is worth pointing out that there were twenty years between Baron's first two breakdowns and seven years between the second and third. That does not look like a 'simple' narrative of damage and fragility, especially as her last breakdown was directly related to her initial experience of cancer. It is a stark account (despite the social nicety, contemporaneous with its time, of eliding the word 'cancer' into 'surgery') which operates by omission and offers a one-dimensional account of a woman's life. Baron's subjectivity as a (female) artist is kept in check by privileging the suffering body and

rather than the body being absent from the life, (as in Frank's text), the life has become the invaded body with her practice sandwiched between psychic and physical invasion.

1981 is deemed the 'end of chemotherapy' as if to signal the beginning of an alliance in which Baron, formally sanctioned by the gallery, could put her 'suffering body' behind her and enter the abstract, disembodied realm of the artist. All that notwithstanding, what is most marked in the biographical notes is the fact that although a relationship between the work and the artist as 'damaged' has now been established, the damage has not yet been located in the Holocaust.

## **2.6 A New Geographical Context**

Schlesinger-Boisanté organised a European tour of Baron's work - primarily to German galleries - which took place during 1982 and 1983. Included in the tour were exhibitions in the Moderne Galerie des Saarland-Museum in Saarbrücken, the region that Baron came from, and another at Kunstverein Dillingen, the town where she was born and lived until late 1938. Two extant reviews from German newspapers are interesting in the ways in which each writer unconditionally frames the work within the context of Baron's traumatic experience as a German-Jewish child.

Maria Schmitt-Rilling, in a review initially published in *Die Rheinpfalz*, (Nov. 26, 1983) and syndicated in newspapers throughout Germany states:

As exciting as the life story of emigrants might be, as moving is the work of the painter Hannelore Baron, originating in the trauma of her childhood and youth. It is the way in which in 1926 the daughter of a Jewish merchant went, born in Dillingen on the Saar. It is a way through a hell of many years suffering, the imprisonment, the taking of prisoners, the escape, the expulsion from her motherland and her home forever. It was a blood-ridden way for a ten year old girl, expelled from school in Dillingen, eye-witness to the destruction of her parents home and even worse, the violence done against her father...This suffering releases artistic energies which H. Baron-Alexander develops over many years without school or art studies in the New world. (Translated by S. Hutter)

and Dorothee Muller, in the Munich newspaper *Suddeutsche Zeitung* (March 19, 1983) writes:

In between, (her birth in Germany and current life in America), however, was a traumatic childhood, the escape of a Jewish family from Nazi-Germany and the emigration to America. There she discovered art as a form of therapy, as a medium to communicate about her emotional injuries. (Translated by S. Hutter)

Both these reviews offer evidence that Baron's identity as a Jewish child born in Germany was foregrounded during the tour and although this stress was to some degree initiated by Baron herself, specific emphasis arising out of a particular event should not then be transferred to a general understanding without careful thought. When the museum in Dillingen decided to exhibit Baron's work, they invited her to return to the town for the opening. According to Mark Baron, his mother had always said that she would never again set foot in Germany and her response to the forthcoming exhibition in Dillingen was to make an assemblage on a wooden ground which displayed various family documents such as her father's passport with the red J stamped across it; the receipt for payment of the Reich Flight Tax; and the many necessary transit permissions which testified to the Nazi proscription of their lives before they were able to leave Europe in 1941. Baron requested that this assemblage was included in the exhibition accompanied by a written statement in which she recounted her childhood memories of Kristallnacht and of the family's betrayal by the citizens of Dillingen because she did not want the Germans to just see her art and feel that 'everything was OK'.

## **2.7 Germany and the Holocaust**

The fact that German museums and galleries wanted to show Baron's work at that time is indicative of the corresponding stage of 'working through' the Holocaust by the German public in the early 1980s. The silence on the subject of the annihilation of the Jews in the years immediately following the war was initially broken in Germany by

the publicity surrounding the Nuremberg and other war crime trials and the launching of indictments of Germany's shameful recent history by historians and academics of that same generation.<sup>6</sup>

In 1961, a more sophisticated media network brought to light more details concerning the extent of Nazi atrocities during the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem but enough time had elapsed since the events described for Eichmann's subsequent execution to be potentially regarded as in some way redemptive. The philosopher Martin Buber called the execution 'a mistake of historical dimensions as it might serve to expiate the guilt felt by many young persons in Germany' (cited in Arendt:1963:251). In fact, by the 1960s, post-war indictments of National Socialism had changed key to become a 'message of moral and spiritual renewal, often combined with a critique of consumer society, (which) was picked up by the post-war generation and became the driving force behind the German youth rebellion' (Geyer & Hansen:1986:176). The journalist and philosopher Hannah Arendt, covering the trial for the American press, predicted the on-going centrality of guilt in the German cultural psyche (as manifest in their recent and continuing determination to memorialise the Holocaust), and the difficulties inherent in attempts to represent the Holocaust when she wrote:

The youth of Germany is surrounded, on all sides and in all walks of life, by men in positions of authority and in public office who are very guilty indeed but who feel nothing of the sort. The normal reaction to this state of affairs should be indignation, but indignation would be quite risky - not to life and limb but definitely a handicap in a career. Those young German men and women who every once in awhile - on the occasion of all The Diary of Anne Frank hubbub and of the Eichmann trial - treat us to hysterical outbreaks of guilt feelings are not staggering under the burden of the past, their father's guilt; rather, they are trying to escape from the pressure of very present and actual problems into a cheap sentimentality. (Arendt:1992:251)

According to Geyer & Hansen, until the mid-1970s, consciousness of the Holocaust remained publicly institutionalised in the form of official commemorations and academic histories. Personal memories were private, shrouded in silence until enough time and

distance had passed for the next generation to receive the Nazi period in the form of image and narrative rather than the living testimony of the war trials.

The transition from lived experience to representation...set loose an avalanche of public expression: in the mid 1970s an intense, embattled search for remembrance rocked German intellectual, cultural and repeatedly, political life. The moment of catharsis had arrived. (Geyer & Hansen:1986:177)

The film *Hitler: A Career* (1977), followed by television broadcasts of the American TV mini-series *The Holocaust* (broadcast in Germany in 1979) and the German counter-production *Heimat* (1984) were stages in this development of personalising and narrativising the Holocaust in ways which 'moved the German people deeply'. As Geyer and Hansen point out:

This recovery of the past through a moment of genuine contrition and moral politics, was also an exorcism in which damned up emotions were released into purgative images. Neither simply the force of the past or the rendition of the Holocaust as melodrama, but the market driven interplay between representation and receptive audience led to confessional memoirs that were the exact opposite of internalisation. They were external memories, expressive acts of a "spectacular" imagination combining technology to organise everyday experience. A civil society arose based on an image-filled collective consciousness that relieved individuals of their internal worlds. (ibid; p.187)

The Holocaust as representation was located in the distant past just as the German-Jewish people, whose cultural history, as well as individual subjectivities, had been obliterated by the Nazis, could only exist as figures of absence located either in the past or in Israel. It is within the continuing context of German efforts to come to terms with the past that will not go away (or renegotiate it through memorialisation) that invitations are extended to Jewish survivors to revisit their hometowns (Miller:1990). This is no doubt how Baron was invited to exhibit her work in Germany and, in particular, at the museum in her birthplace of Dillingen.

I am suggesting that German efforts to recover a positive national identity require a recuperation of the Holocaust narrative in which the actual *presence* of survivors,

physically marked by the transformation of time, is required in order to screen the memory of the black hole of Auschwitz. In Baron's case, because she refused to go to Germany in person, her work stands as an indexical trace of the traumatic childhood of a local Jewish girl which *represents* redemption by offering evidence, not only that the artist remained alive and well *elsewhere*, but that she realised transcendence through the healing process of making art. The transformative relationship between art and suffering has a long tradition in German Romanticism (Gillen:1997:16-17) and as a trope, it lifts the work out of the unsettling register of stark testimony into one of universal meaning - a slippage which ensures its seamless reception. Guilt is mitigated by reference to a particular biographical narrative which is in keeping with a cultural myth thus leaving the (German) audience free to enjoy a 'cathartic' aesthetic experience.

## **2.8 Holocaust Memory in America**

While the relationship between culpability and the desire for a narrative of redemption may go some way towards explaining the enthusiastic reception of Baron's work in Germany, the many possible reasons why that narrative was exported to and taken up by America must be untangled from a different network of relations of nationalisms and the Holocaust. It is, of course, impossible to assign any one stable reason for the marked proliferation of references to the Holocaust in the critical writings on Baron from 1981 onwards, for as James E. Young points out, the motives for remembering the Holocaust in America are 'as mixed as the population at large' and range from 'lofty to cynical, practical to aesthetic' (Young:1990:186).

The cultural amnesia evidenced in Germany in the post war decades was similarly entrenched in the United States where immigrant survivors were encouraged to put the past behind them and get on with building a new life (ibid; pp 220-223). The first World War historian, Jay Winter, discusses the ritual significance of local war memorials as providing a framework for and legitimisation of individual, family and

community grief (Winters:1995:93). For many of the dispersed Jewish survivors, knowledge or sight of the death of family members and friends remained abstract and lacked the ritual closure of religious tradition. Additionally, the cultural imperative to forget meant that survivors were denied the luxury of communal mourning. In 1964 an application for a Holocaust memorial submitted to New York City's Arts Commission by a group of Jewish survivors was turned down on the grounds that the Holocaust was not an American experience (Young:1993:292).<sup>7</sup>

All this has changed in the past two decades which has witnessed an escalating 'Americanisation' of the Holocaust in which it has been re-shaped into a story participating in the fundamental story of decency, democracy and human rights that America tells about itself. In 1993 (officially designated The Year of the Holocaust) The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opened in Washington, DC - the symbolic centre of the nation - attracting around two million visitors in the first year. In Los Angeles, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre's Museum of Tolerance also opened that year and by now (1999) there are more than one hundred Holocaust museums and research centres in the United States (and ironically, none in Germany) (Cole:1999:147). The greatest impact on the cultural imagination however was made by Stephen Spielberg's 1993 film *Schindler's List* which was watched by approximately 25 million Americans at the movie theatre and 65 million Americans when it was first shown on TV. *Schindler's List* 'has become for the present generation, the most important source of historical information affecting popular perceptions of the Holocaust' (Manchel, F. cited in *ibid*:74). It has also become the focus for a growing sense of unease on the part of some Holocaust scholars concerning the cultural products of what has been termed the 'Shoah business' (Loshitzky:1997).

Spielberg's Oskar Schindler is an exemplary Hollywood hero - a white, Anglo-Saxon, Christian male presented as a somewhat flawed human being who manages to save the world. He is a character we are used to encountering at the movies.

This 'Hollywood Holocaust' is one where the individual can make a difference, and where Schindler does...it is a 'Holocaust' that leaves us with an essentially optimistic belief...in human potential. Rather than facing the pointless, industrialised murder of six million which causes us to wonder at what human potential can lead to, we see Oskar Schindler and the 1,100 Schindler Jews and are comforted at the thought that flawed people like Schindler - and us - are after all basically good. (Cole:1999:79)

This kind of re-telling of the Holocaust by Hollywood embodies certain American (and humanist) ideologies which, when applied to Baron, would include the foundational myth of the nation's democratic embrace of persecuted refugees. But Baron and her family waited for over two years in an increasingly dangerous Europe for permission to enter the United States. Baron certainly understood the hollowness of those ideologies so, in a very important sense, her work is actually antithetical to the kinds of meanings that have been assigned to it.

Baron's art, particularly when framed by the Holocaust narrative, can serve the function of a memorial or ritual object by reflecting back to the viewer some expression of universal grief. This is due to her handling of the collage (and assemblage) forms: the reverent gathering of dirty scraps and fragments which not only honours the discarded and the overlooked but points out their beauty and fragility. In the case of her black boxes, Baron intended the work to be understood as memorials but the nature of the events they were meant to commemorate was more open-ended and less personalised than the Holocaust narrative would suggest. She wrote that the black boxes 'were in the nature of funerary boxes, they were memorials, evidence of a disaster, remnants of some kind of disaster' (HB/MB:1981:25). This statement supports the contention underpinning this chapter because it offers evidence of the centrality of compassion as a

motivation for Baron's work and is at odds with an interpretation based on personal suffering.

If however some of Baron's work function as memorials - a focus for collective grief - it helps the viewer to contain the magnitude of the affect if an orientating narrative is in place. Holocaust discourse is broad enough to provide a variety of possible subject positions which are in keeping with the heterogeneity of possible motives for engaging with it. To return to James E. Young who has written extensively about Holocaust memorials, 'Congress members support local monuments to secure votes among their Jewish constituency. Even the national memorial to the Holocaust in Washington, DC had been proposed by then-President Jimmy Carter to placate Jewish supporters angered by his sale of F-15 fighter planes to Saudi Arabia. All such memorial decisions are made in political time, contingent on political realities' (Young:1993:293).

The triangle of relations between the U.S. and Israel and the Zionist lobby in America is only one facet of this economy which bears on the figure of the Holocaust in the cultural imagination. Latent and blatant anti-Semitism is (still) rife in America and Baron's work could well trigger the repressed pain of assimilation carried by many American Jewish people (Pajczkowska & Curtis:1995:238-252). For non-Jews, perhaps experiencing Baron's work mitigates a sense of shame for thoughtless collusion with an anti-Semitism which is part of the currency of American life. But as James Young points out, to conflate an undifferentiated Holocaust with all Jews is not only to ignore the rich continuum of Jewish culture and history but also to maintain the figure of the Jew in the cultural imagination as a symbol of victimhood and suffering (Young:1990:pp 187-89).

## 2.9 Kristallnacht in America

During the three years of 1982-1984, Baron's work was exhibited six times in Germany, once in Holland and twice at the Basel Art Fair (once with a Cologne dealer and the other time with a Dutch dealer) - an exhibition record which would give the work cachet as 'European' but also identify it, for an American audience, as essentially German.

In fact, a review by Colin Gardner of Baron's first Los Angeles show (at Jack Rutberg Fine Arts; 25 February - 31 March, 1984) describes her as 'the spiritual sister of Paul Klee' and 'a strong cohort of Kurt Schwitters' although he qualifies those analogies by stating that she is 'mostly self-taught and without formal training' (Gardner: 1984). Formal comparisons *can* usefully be made between some of Klee's work and Baron's particularly in terms of such qualities as scale; a 'child-like' use of line; certain iconography such as X used as a form of erasure (discussed in Chapter One). Also, letters and numbers are commonly found in both artists' works (although Baron uses them cryptically); and both artists also often use unstretched cloth or canvas as a ground as well as a delicate, pastel palette. Despite the fact that Klee was born forty seven years before Baron, biographical similarities include persecution by the Nazis and the fact that they both died at the age of sixty-one from a debilitating disease<sup>8</sup>. However, the significant difference between them is the fact that Klee, unlike Baron, was always sited as an artist. By this I mean that he trained at various academies as a young man, was closely involved with other artists of his generation and he taught at the Bauhaus in the 1920s and later, as a professor at the Dusseldorf Kunstakademie. He also wrote about art, exhibited frequently, and was closely affiliated with important modern artists such as Kandinsky (Werckmeister: 1987; Gillen: 1997). Even his persecution under National Socialism was as a 'degenerate' artist<sup>9</sup>.

In other words, throughout his life, even while being forced into exile, Klee's identity as an artist was consistently reflected back to him from the external world and it is no coincidence that he is now firmly sited within mainstream art history. Baron, on the other hand, is so interesting precisely because of the ways in which she had to inscribe herself as an artist *despite* external conditions that for many years dictated against it.

Gardner's association of Baron's work with a European - specifically German - tradition, validates her work through the citation of an art historical 'genealogy' but fails to elaborate this connection in any meaningful way. Thus he misses an opportunity for understanding Baron's work in the context of a specific post-war German emigre' tradition that was characterised by a deliberate retreat from the world to an inner space 'which Hitler could not conquer despite all efforts' (Gillen:1997:17). This is especially relevant to Baron's collage process which functioned as an inner space with its own language and structure. Furthermore, Gardner's focus on Baron as an untrained 'outsider' effectively undermines a German genealogy by signalling a claim for a specific American-ness which reinforces the cultural ideology of America as unbound from stultifying European tradition and the country where anything is possible and people are judged solely on their merits. However, like so many reviews of Baron's work, this essentially masculine myth<sup>10</sup> is collapsed in Gardner's essay by his subsequent inscription of her practice in a narrative of suffering:

Her collages and boxed assemblages are intensely personal, introverted, private memos to herself that reflect the agonies of a childhood in an anti-Semitic realpolitik of concentration camps, pogroms and nationalistic fanaticism. Baron's psyche is a battlefield scarred by the horrors of her adolescence...(Gardner:1984)

Formal description dissolves once again into a literal economy of cause and effect when he states that her work is:

a metaphor for a fragile, disturbed psyche; the timeworn elements representing a lifetime of pain and struggle; the flimsiness of the construction, the essential precariousness of existence; and the boxed partitioning of the formal arrangement, the subdivisions of a mind striving for sanity by separating the painful from the bearable...(ibid.)

A comparison of Gardner's (and other) post-1981 reviews with those written prior to that time throws into sharp relief the extent to which the latter writers 'imagined' Baron's past history and considered themselves at liberty to project those elaborate fictions onto her present subjectivity as an artist. Such deliberate (or thoughtless) colonisations of meaning supports my hypothesis that there is a cultural desire for Holocaust representations that are linked to a quasi-redemptive narrative, in this case, across the body of the suffering (female) artist.

## **2.10 The subject cannot speak for herself**

It is worth considering the timing of the escalation of the Holocaust narrative as the framework for an interpretation of Baron's work because it coincided with a final (and fatal) recurrence of cancer and yet more debilitating chemotherapy. It is difficult to fight for meaning from such a weakened condition, particularly as the work was gaining wider recognition and selling well. In 1983 Steve Schlesinger allowed access to various statements written by Baron about her work to Roger Ramsey, who was preparing a Baron exhibition for his gallery in Chicago. Included in the material was the statement, referred to earlier in this chapter, which Baron had written expressly for the 1983 exhibition in Dillingen. Without consulting Baron, Roger Ramsey printed Baron's statement on the back of the invitation to the show. Baron protested to Roger Ramsey by letter:

...I was not prepared for the biographical note on my childhood on the back of the card. It was written by me and presents the facts as they were, but was meant only for a show this summer in Germany at the locale where the events occurred....There have been so many who have had to suffer through wars and tortures on a massive scale in the years since the 1940s that it seems redundant to remind people of what can be recognised now as just an early evidence of man's capacity for evil in the contemporary world. (Appendix V:7)

Despite Baron's protest, an interpretative framework was now officially established. In a review of the Chicago show, Sue Taylor wrote:

Born in Germany between the wars, Baron barely escaped the Nazi Holocaust with her family in the late 30's - and not without considerable physical and psychic trauma. Painful memories of those childhood events have always and inevitably informed her art...(Taylor:1985:60)

There is a growing emphasis on pain and suffering in the reviews from this time onwards and a picture begins to emerge as to the extent to which her galleries colluded with the 'Holocaust/Trauma' reading of her work. A 1986 review of a Baron show held at Jack Rutberg Fine Arts in Los Angeles not only makes associations between the work and her body as wound but also tells us something about the lay-out of the show:

Work by Hannalore (sic) Baron is as direct and easily understood as a flesh wound. A survivor of the Holocaust whose life has been a series of injustices, torments and nervous breakdowns, Baron has channelled terrible experiences into a distressingly powerful body of anti-war art.....Precisely what she experienced is recounted in text posted throughout the exhibition and it is as horrible as anything you could imagine. One can only hope that art has proven to be a source of solace to this beleaguered woman...One needn't read the explanatory text to grasp the meaning of this work. These charred boxes, fashioned of shabby bits of wood bound together with wire and dirty twine, look exactly like a broken heart. (*Los Angeles Times*:6 April,1986:10)

Here, Baron is not even an artist per se but a 'beleaguered woman' for whom art is a kind of solace. Despite the unknown author's disclaimer, the question arises as to how one would avoid reading at least some of the texts which, 'posted throughout the exhibition', signal the active effort made by the gallery to frame Baron's work within a narrative of suffering that had its origin in the Holocaust. After Baron's death in April, 1987, this 'staging' of her work was reinforced when Gallery Schlesinger-Boisanté in New York, Robert Brown Contemporary Art in Washington, DC, Roger Ramsey Gallery in Chicago and Jack Rutberg Fine Arts, Inc. in Los Angeles all held memorial shows and co-produced a catalogue for the occasion. It was, in fact, the first catalogue of Baron's work to be published in English and Colin Gardner's 1984 review was

chosen to be the catalogue essay. The elevation of Gardner's text from 'review' to definitive interpretation occasioned by its inclusion in the catalogue established a benchmark for future interpretations. A catalogue lives on as a cultural artefact unlike an exhibition, which is ephemeral. In the 1987 catalogue images of Baron's work, interspersed with edited and decontextualised statements, are juxtaposed with Gardner's emotive text to produce meaning which seems to be sanctioned, not only by the artist whose statements are included, but by the galleries as the artist's representatives.

The image of Baron as a Holocaust artist and her work as the expression of that experience has gradually been built up by the layered discourse of catalogue essays and critical reviews. Since her death in 1987, the emotive interpretation of Baron's work has sometimes escalated to the point of fantasy.

In a more recent review of a group show entitled *Fiber and Form: A Woman's Legacy* at the Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in New York, the two sentences allocated to Baron's work included the information that she 'survived the Holocaust and, crippled by agoraphobia, led a reclusive life in her Bronx apartment' (Cotter:1996). While it is true that Baron *did* survive the Holocaust it is not true that she was agoraphobic. Baron did, at various times and to varying degrees, suffer from claustrophobia but again, 'crippled' is a relative (and pejorative) term. Baron travelled, attended adult education classes and worked outside the home for many years. She lived in a house, not an apartment and the social relationships engendered by her various subject positions as wife, daughter, mother, sister and grandmother would no doubt affirm that she was not a recluse.

The fact that Baron and her immediate family got out of Germany well before the implementation of the Final Solution(1941-1945) raises questions as to the meaning of the term 'survivor' which, strictly speaking, designates those persons who survived the

death camps and the brutalities of the extermination phase. There is a danger however of minimising the considerable traumas of the progressive persecutions that began in 1933 if we only consider the most horrific atrocities that befell Jewish people post 1941 as appropriate to the term survivor. The confusion arises from the chaotic and undifferentiated notion of the Holocaust which attention to the specificity of Baron's life contests.

### **2.11 Suffering as a simulacrum**

Mythologising Baron as a Holocaust artist not only predisposes the viewer towards a definitive gloss which delimits meaning and forecloses authorial intention but also can provoke an imaginary memory of the work such as that found in a recent article (1996) published in *The New England Review*:

Baron, who died in 1987, came to the United State as a refugee from Nazism in 1941. She created small works, collages and assemblages out of used materials, fabrics and paper, or scraps of things that she treated so they would appear worn - throwaway stuff. There are two kinds of work: collages and shallow wooden boxes, usually not more than two or three inches deep, containing bits of wood or twigs or tiny painted canvases, or bits of paper with a suggestion of lettering and sometimes tiny sketched figures, people or birds, frequently in red ink. Some of the figures may be bound with tiny cords; in previous shows, some of the figures I remember were bound in barbed wire. (Schiffman:1995:pp143-148)

I have found no evidence of the use of barbed wire in any of Baron's work although she often drew short, spiky marks across the joins or overlaps of one material to another which look like mimetic stitches (Figure 10). When drawn across a horizontal join these marks could *possibly* be read as barbed wire although it is worth pointing out that similar marks in Klee's work are never interpreted so literally. Schiffman's reading not only exemplifies my argument that when the work is contextualised by the Holocaust the viewer is predisposed to read the marks as barbed wire (signifying a concentration camp) but more importantly, that such a reading closes off other, potentially more universal readings such as 'stitches' representing a symbolic attempt to bind fragments together. After all, Baron had no first hand experience of a

concentration camp (which does not of course preclude her from employing the cultural currency of such symbolism). My point however is not whether Baron's marks represent barbed wire or stitches, but rather, the way in which essentially subjective readings based on current and/or dominant discourses become inscribed into open and ambiguous texts, limiting their semiotic reach.

The shift from interpretation to 'fact' is exemplified by Schiffman's allusion to 'figures bound with tiny cords' which was, in fact, a motif used by Baron predominantly in the collages made during 1978. He initially describes the prints as 'sketches' or 'paintings' but then goes on to talk about the boxes containing figures that were 'bound with tiny cords' - a slippage between the language of image to that of the 'real' which effectively removes the figures from the realm of representation into a literal, albeit miniaturised, object world. Having conferred object status onto the 'tiny cords' it is an easy step to 'remember' the transposition of tiny cords into barbed wire. It seems more likely that Schiffman's 'memory' was born out of an accumulation of written texts thus illustrating how the stressed reiteration of Baron's childhood experience of Kristallnacht can invoke an imaginative response in the viewer/reader which mediates and controls that which actually *appears* in the work. It is an excellent example of the reductive force of cultural narcissism which in this case obliterates the ways in which Baron does investigate the real in favour of more easily consumed meanings. Baron's alleged inclusion of barbed wire in her work (with its attendant concentration camp connotations) is thus further inscribed in the discourse through the slippage from abstract representation to the delusion of visual memory.

These kinds of meanings when attributed to Baron's work create a closed circuit in which metonymy travels in both directions, pulling the viewer in and out of its vortex. Thus 'Kristallnacht' stands for the wider, impossible to imagine term 'Holocaust' while at the same time invoking the viewer's empathic response to the specifics of this event

as written in Baron's history. The singularity of her experience is then transformed in the viewer's mind by its passage through all the cultural representations of the Holocaust. Furthermore, the common currency of psychoanalysis is also mobilised and time is frozen as the trauma is *seen* to be continually re-enacted in the work through the mechanism of repetition compulsion. The work then stands in for all 'Holocaust suffering' and the viewer, despite some fleeting identification, remains intact, outside the circle of meaning.

The American psychoanalyst, Eric Santner, describes what he calls 'narrative fetishism' as it manifests in contemporary representations of trauma. As a term and a concept, it is relevant to a possible understanding of why the Holocaust narrative has been so successfully braided into Baron's work.

By narrative fetishism I mean the construction and deployment of a narrative consciously or unconsciously designed to expunge the traces of the trauma or loss that called the narrative into being in the first place....it is a strategy of undoing, in fantasy, the need for mourning by simulating a condition of intactness, typically by situating the site and origin of loss elsewhere. Narrative fetishism releases one from the burden of having to reconstitute one's self-identity under "post-traumatic" conditions; in narrative fetishism, the "post" is indefinitely postponed.  
(Santner:1992:144)

The proliferation of Holocaust texts in recent decades ranging from scholarly to sentimental entertainment suggests an anxious determination to understand and feel the 'meaning' of those events. It is as if there is a belief that the combination of logic and emotion brought to bear on that traumatic breach in western European history will somehow dispel its impact and reinstate cultural pleasure. But what if, as Lyotard suggests, the Holocaust exceeds language? What if we just have to live with that fact?

Seen from today, (Lyotard) argues, it is as if one senses that some great disaster had struck, a disaster so massive and at the same time so distant and foreign that no one can adequately articulate it: "Suppose that an earthquake destroys not only lives, buildings, and objects but also the instruments used to measure earthquakes directly and indirectly. The impossibility of quantitatively measuring it does not prohibit, but rather inspires in the minds of the survivors the idea of a very great seismic force. The scholar claims to know nothing about it, but the common person has a complex

feeling, the one aroused by the negative presentation of the indeterminate. (Kaes in Friedlander: 1992:207)

Or as Sande Cohen argues in the same volume:

The Nazi as the “failed child” and the victim as the “trapped infant” could only refer to our fantasy of symbolising and appropriating some cultural use-value for ourselves, whose narcissism lies in continuing to pretend that there is sense. (ibid., p.182)

Baron’s collages show us that there is no ‘sense’; no unified self or stable identity.

Perhaps this is one thing we have learned from the Holocaust but as Baron intimated in her writings and her art, the brutality and senselessness continues.

## 2.12 Woman as Wound

The high modernist aesthetic propounded by Clement Greenberg continues to influence many readings of contemporary art despite the incursions of postmodern theory.

Greenberg’s description of art as ‘...the pure preoccupation with the invention and arrangement of spaces, surfaces, shapes and colours...to the exclusion of whatever is not implicated in these factors’ (Greenberg: 1939:23) presupposes an autonomous (white, male) subject capable of producing art that is both universal and transcendent. The fantasised disembodiment of the (male) artistic subject is secured by assigning the disavowed body (actual and biographical) to the female artist and to all her productions. It is relevant to this discussion that the critical writings and curatorial practices that Baron’s art has been subjected to are understood as *limits* within which female art can be validated. The cultural emphasis on women’s bodies (physical and psychological) and on Woman as the body that is always pathologised, is exemplified by the connection between women and death that is consistently reiterated in art and literature.

Elisabeth Bronfen argues that this configuration is confirmation that

...Woman is constructed as Other than man; as that which is not the centre of a social or representational system. Hers is a position of non-coherence, of the void or an empty space between signifiers precisely because she is constructed as the vanishing point and the condition of western culture’s fictions of itself; as the object and

foundation of representation; as the telos and origin of man's desire to represent his culture; as the object and sign of his exchange with life and death, of his socio-economic exchanges and of his creativity. (Bronfen:1992:403)

What this points to is the difficulty in defining concrete, historical women such as Baron outside the terms of these discursive formations. But deconstructing these formations can release their cultural hold and open up a space for other, more heterogeneous understandings. Furthermore, the unconscious underpinnings of the masculine imaginary are a now familiar narrative but no less relevant for that to an understanding of Baron's positioning as a locus of Holocaust meanings.

Luce Irigaray argues convincingly that women's experience remains unsymbolised and outside of a symbolic order structured by the phallus (Irigaray:1974; Whitford,1991)). Freud and Lacan both consider the drive to symbolise as founded on loss but their theories privilege the masculine subject's relation to the symbolic. Irigaray argues that this formulation fails to take into account the female subject's *difference* from the male, a difference which rests on the fact that *she* is the *same* as the mother. Thus the Oedipus Complex and the castration anxiety that arises from it does not have the same structural significance for girls as for boys. The infant's separation from the mother is, in effect, the primary symbolic castration necessary for autonomy but it is an autonomy achieved at the price of loss. Irigaray writes that the problem for women lies in the non-symbolisation of the relation to the mother and to the mother's body as *same* because if the maternal body, as the source of origin, is the same as the female body then even the loss of separation will carry residues of connection and relationship that are foreclosed by the repudiation necessitated by the (male) subject's transit through the Oedipus Complex.

It is possible therefore to understand something of the unconscious dynamic whereby the overwhelming affects of loss are, in the masculine imaginary, displaced by the

phallus as signifier of the unity of the male subject. This disavowal of loss facilitates the production of desire in men (and the denial of desire in women.).

Lacanian theory employs an anatomically grounded elision between the phallus and the penis which implies the necessary patriarchal organisation of desire and sexuality. This organisation is as fixed as the Oedipal structure itself. Men, by virtue of their penis, can aspire to a position of power and control within the symbolic order. Women, on the other hand, have no position in the symbolic order except in relation to men, as mothers, and even the process of mothering is given patriarchal meanings, reduced, in Freud, to an effect of penis envy. (Weedon:1987:54)

Potential subject positions are thus split into those who *have* the phallus (the illusion of masculinity) and those who do not. Within patriarchal culture, to create is to possess the phallus as the organising principle of the symbolic order. Yet according to Lacan women can never *have* the phallus themselves, they can only *be* it (for the other). This double bind not only renders women 'passive' but positions them as recipients, not active producers, of culture. For masculine subjects, the Oedipal conflict is resolved by the recognition of the (M)other as lack - lacking the phallus - a recognition which expedites their subsequent alignment with patriarchal identity (and active creativity). However, the sight of the female genitals as lack gives rise to the threat of castration (castration anxiety) which is then repressed and disavowed only to be projected onto the female as Other or 'Wound'.

The actively creative woman is therefore regarded as a castrator who symbolically <sup>FN (PF)</sup>seizes the phallus of the father in an act tantamount to patricide. Thus the recognition of a woman as the creator of symbols will trigger anxiety and activate projection in the form of the 'wounded woman'. The cultural narratives concerning women artists such as Sylvia Plath (failed relationship, suicide); Frida Kahlo (physical pain, childlessness, bi-sexuality) and Virginia Woolf (sexual abuse, bi-sexuality, suicide) exemplify this dynamic whereby Woman, as lacking the phallus, stands in for the existential affect of loss (separation) as well as the threatened phenomenological loss (wound) of castration.

In the essay entitled *Another Hesse*, Anne Wagner (1996) examines the alleged relationship between the life and art of Eva Hesse in a project that echoes my own concerns. Hesse died of a brain tumour in 1970 at the age of thirty four, leaving behind a finite body of work and words that continue to attract critical attention if primarily from feminist scholars. Wagner traces the way in which 'woman as wound' is played out in the writings on Hesse and suggests that as a trope it involves a double insistence:

...first that the artist herself was literally wounded, as the victim all her life of bodily and psychic ill health, and second that, as an artist who was a woman, she embodied and bespoke the wound as the principle of female being. (Wagner:1996:55)

Wagner concludes her essay on Hesse by reminding readers that an important part of Hesse's personal memory was as a Jewish woman born in Hamburg in 1936 - a fact which has been sidelined in favour of an emphasis on Hesse as 'beautiful and tragic'. Baron was also German-Jewish, ten years Hesse's senior, and it is significant that the narratives surrounding Baron's work produce the opposite formation in that they highlight the Holocaust rather than the disease which eventually killed her. This reversal could be said to reflect the shifting status of Holocaust discourse but I think it also says something about the representation of women. Baron was sixty-one when she died, an age when women have long been invisible as objects of the male gaze. Hesse, on the other hand, at thirty-four was relatively young, beautiful and presumably still fertile. This age differential could well account for the shifting focus of 'the wound' from the external body of Hesse to the interior of Baron's psyche.

Hesse in late middle age, I feel certain, would have been a considerably less attractive cultural commodity (though no less interesting an artist, I wager) than the Hesse fate has provided. It is her (un)timely death that has meant that she has survived to play a special cultural role: forever under thirty-five, she answers a hunger for youthful, tragic death. She is the "dead girl," the beautiful corpse who counts for so much in so many cultural narratives. (Wagner:1996:197)

No matter what form it takes, the 'wounded woman', as a key structural myth of patriarchy, suppresses knowledge of the jouissance of the active female subject in order to maintain the masculine fantasy and desire for the female as weakened, passive, Other. The resultant lack of fit for female experience motivates a female preoccupation with autobiography as a way in which to locate oneself and write female difference into the patriarchal symbolic order. Unfortunately, it is precisely that autobiography, the drive to assert difference (in order to avoid psychosis) that the dominant culture pathologises, assigning solely to the female the loss that is fundamental to subjectivity. Discussing the ways in which critics have perceived Louise Bourgeois's work as 'confessional' - as an immediate expression of the artist's psychological state, Manuel Broja-Villel says:

From this methodological perspective, the sculpture remains completely absorbed in and subordinated to certain themes and to the artist's profoundly felt personal experiences. The work is refused its own character and, as a result, the fact that it could incorporate new linguistic possibilities is never introduced. (Broja-Villel:1991:224)

When Peter Frank wrote that Baron 'drew strength from her wounds' or the unnamed critic for *The Los Angeles Times* wrote her work 'was as easily understood as a flesh wound' they were refusing the work its own character in favour of projecting a 'wound' onto Baron and her work. I am proposing a far more difficult task which calls for a suspension of 'meaning' in favour of an attitude of encounter with individual collages that allows for the kinds of glimpsed and partial knowledges such an encounter might produce.

### **2.13 Sites of Self-Inscription**

Discussing the ways in which Holocaust survivors reconstruct an identity shattered by trauma, Dominick La Capra states:

A subject position is at best, a partial, problematic identity and is inextricably bound up with the other subject positions any social individual occupies. Certain subject-

positions may become especially prominent or even overwhelming, for example those of victim or perpetrator. But a subject-position becomes a total identity only in cases of extreme 'acting out' wherein one is possessed by the past and tends to repeat it compulsively as if it were fully present. Here identity is imaginary and maybe related to pathological disorders. The tendency for a given subject-position to overwhelm the self and become a total identity becomes pronounced in trauma, and a victim's recovery may itself depend on the attempt to reconstruct the self as more than a victim. (LaCapra:1994:12)

To read Baron's work through the lens of the Holocaust, without allowing for the multiple strategies and shifting subject positions which she may have deployed in relation to her experience as a Jewish survivor of Nazi Germany, negates the status of the collages as sites of self-inscription that allowed Baron to reconstruct herself as *more* than a victim. Baron was very much aware of the pitfalls inherent in pigeonholing art particularly when it is relegated to one of the so-called 'victim' categories particularly prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s. In a 1982 correspondence with a Dutch journalist she wrote:

Enclosed are the slides, as requested, and some material I wrote over the years concerning my work. I will add that I have had what I must call a rather difficult time of it during my life. The experiences as a child in Germany were only the beginning, and therefore I do not wish to be linked artistically to only ( or primarily) that part of my experience. I would rather think from a much larger scale, where later wars as well as my own emotional and physical struggles (and the effort to maintain myself through them) forced me to find a balance where everything is seen in perspective. (Appendix II:12)

and in a subsequent letter she replied to a question about the element of protest in her work as follows:

...I would not want the protest to be the most important. The artistic expression comes first, since I am an artist not a newsmedia person. In other words, my work belongs to me and I will have it my way first and never bend it to any other purpose. That also goes for women's art or liberation. I believe that art is art and the artist's sex or colour or background is unimportant. Any shows with work chosen along those lines have been second rate. (ibid; p.2)

In contrast to these statements in which her position is clearly articulated, the following one, written for a 1986 exhibition at the Jewish Museum in New York, elaborates a very different stance:

Because I am not a realist painter in the traditional sense, my work does not contain specific Jewish imagery such as ritual objects. Yet there is, in my work, a strong feeling of compassion and identification with the Jewish victim. The Nazi horror was a personal experience for me that I suffered through as a child, and that left me traumatised to the extent that it became a permanent presence in my work. (ibid; p.9)

These conflicting statements of artistic intent, rather than substantiating a one dimensional reading which posits the Holocaust as cause and Baron's art as effect, demonstrate the instability of meaning and the mutability of positions which any one subject can occupy. It is possible in the spaces between these statements to explore a whole network of relationships between Baron's biography and her art which can broaden understandings of her project. For her to align her work with the trauma of the Holocaust would be appropriate in the context of a show at the Jewish Museum and Baron, as an artist, was not averse to opportunism. But to maintain Baron's art wholesale within the context of personal suffering denies her wider political intentions as well as any active expression of fantasy, play and desire. Limiting the magnitude of her project to a reassuringly implicit psychotherapeutic framework may be in keeping with contemporary cultural narcissism but it denies Baron the degree of detachment necessary for the kind of compassion and identifications that motivated her practice. The blurring of fact and fantasy that is so much in evidence in the writings on Baron's work, has most recently reoccurred in the lavish hardback catalogue (Schaffner & Winzen (eds.):1998) that accompanied the exhibition *Deep Storage*.

A native of Saarland, Hannelore Baron witnessed a brutal attack on her father on Kristallnacht, November 9, 1938. That same year, *following a brief period hiding in their own attic*, the family fled Germany. (my italics) (Schaffner & Winzen:1998:63)

The only reference to an attic that I have come across in my research was that Baron's mother and younger brother were hiding in the attic during the attack on Baron's father

on Kristallnacht. But Jewish families 'hiding in the attic' is synonymous with the story of Anne Frank - a story that through various forms of cultural representation continues to have enormous emotional resonance. It is precisely this kind of slippage that reinforces the association in the public imagination between Baron's work and the Holocaust. Such a reduction arrests Baron in a frozen moment as the absentee subject of a childhood trauma and leaves little room for recognising the kind of active negotiations that are evident in her work, her writings and her life. Within traditional structures Woman cannot speak for or of herself without being collapsed into the univocality of the same. It is therefore necessary to carefully attend to the materiality of Baron's practice as part and parcel of her embodiment in order to generate new meanings and more fluid understandings. As the feminist art historian Griselda Pollock writes:

Since the subject is in a sense the effect of meanings a culture, its symbolic order, allows to be signified, the battle for meaning is also a struggle for kinds of subjectivity. (Pollock:1996:9)

If women are to be able to recognise in the wider culture positive aspects of their own condition then the narratives that reduce artists of such stature as Baron to the condition of wound need to be challenged. At the same time, the impact that the Holocaust had on her cannot be denied but her symptoms, as an effect of culture, can be re-addressed in terms of their function as a language. In the following chapter I propose a re-reading of Baron's Holocaust that underpins my conviction that her collages were fundamental sites of self-inscription which, as texts, can be open to a wide range of interpretation.

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<sup>1</sup>For a full discussion of this idea see Bal *Reading Rembrandt* 1991 and also Bal *Reading Art?* in Pollock (ed.):1996.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Baron has periodically up-dated this document and recently (1998) produced a supplement that takes into account some of the points raised during our discussions.

<sup>3</sup> The association between Baron and Cornell that is often made in critical reviews is primarily based on the fact that both artists worked with boxes despite the fact that there is little similarity in either treatment, materials or content. The other reason for the comparison is the idea that both artists were recluses. This is a widely accepted myth about Cornell despite the fact that his letters and diaries (ed. Caws, 1993) indicate that he was actively involved with many contemporary artists. The tendency for

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critics to position Baron as a recluse also is a further example of how artists have been used to represent their artistic processes.

<sup>4</sup> In psychoanalytic terms, desire refers (in the Freudian sense) to a wish 'indissolubly bound to memory traces in disguised form' (LaPlanche and Pontalis:1998:482) whereas for Lacan, desire is a product of language existing in the gap between need and demand which is constantly subject to deferral. Lacanian theory assumes desire to be the motivating principle of human life (Weedon:1987:53). My argument is that Baron's collages were the site of her desire in that they were a space of recognition and inscription. Frank's use of the term suggests the common usage wherein desire bespeaks lust and he identifies it as one of the drives or concerns of the (male) artists he cites while closing Baron off to it.

<sup>5</sup> Hannelore Baron - Collages February 5th - March 1, 1981

<sup>6</sup> How the period of National Socialism was handled by German historians became, by the mid-1980s, a subject of controversy in itself referred to as The Historikersreit (Historian's Debate). The primary issue concerned whether or not the Holocaust was unique and incomparable or comparable to other contemporary atrocities such as those committed under Stalin in the Soviet Union. For a full discussion, see Baldwin (ed.) (1990).

<sup>7</sup> It is this aesthetic pleasure for the German public (or at least the people of Dillengen) that Baron wanted to undermine by insisting that her testimony and assemblage be included in the exhibition in her native town. This indicates something of the problematic significance exhibiting in Germany held for Baron.

<sup>8</sup> Young states that the 1964 proposal was rejected for two additional reasons: the design was too big and 'not aesthetically tasteful' and would, in the words of Arts Commissioner Eleanor Platt, set a 'regrettable precedent' and might 'inspire other "special groups" to be similarly represented on public land'. Definitions as to what constituted American History became a site of contested meaning with the rise of identity politics in the 1970s and 1980s. Gradually it shifted from its location in topography to accommodate the variously remembered pasts of the disparate groupings which make up its citizenry. Public monuments have come to embody this recognition of plural histories, a move which has political rather than ideological consequences (ibid). It also no doubt has a bearing on the way in which the Holocaust has been braided into Baron's art. As this chapter demonstrates, the timing of this process was contiguous with the demand for recognition of plurality that Young discusses.

<sup>9</sup> Klee died of sclerodermia in 1940. (Gillen:1997:522)

<sup>10</sup> There was also a question surrounding Klee's status as a 'pure' Aryan. His National Socialist enemies turned a detail of his biography - that his mother's ancestry was probably rooted in North Africa - into a charge of Semitic origins (Werckmeister:1987:48).

<sup>11</sup> The theme of the self-made man is a founding mythology of American culture that runs through its literature, film and even art. Hollywood continues to reinforce this trope particularly as the institution itself was founded by precisely the kind of self-made men it continues to celebrate. See Pajaczowska and Curtis, 1995 or recent Hollywood films such as *Jerry McGuire* or *Forrest Gump* both of which feature main protagonists who overcome all adversities to achieve success whilst remaining 'nice guys'.



**Fig. 10 C76-001 (mimetic stitches) 1976**

## CHAPTER THREE

### A GENDERED RE-READING OF BARON'S SYMPTOMS

Dear Dolly, I was so glad to get your tape. I like the way you expressed yourself about all the SHIT that happened to me and the way you called it a holocaust. I have all those lilylivered soft people around me, that don't ever call things by their right names so then I feel that maybe I'm over-reacting. But you're rightt. It's like going through hell, in the front door and out the back and they do it so fast that it's like a revolving door.<sup>1</sup>

#### 3.1 Introduction

The above quotation, taken from a letter written by Baron shortly after undergoing cancer surgery, illustrates the flexibility that the term 'holocaust' had for Baron who herself formed a complex link between it as an historical fact and her own mental and physical illnesses as experiences. In this chapter I intend to pursue further the argument that the effects the Holocaust had on Baron were far more indirect and complex than the critical writings imply and that furthermore, gender is a crucial element. As pointed out in the last chapter, positioning Baron as the victim of a *specific* trauma (Kristallnacht) instates her art as the product of that trauma and reduces it effectively to 'speaking' a generic Holocaust suffering. Baron's historical symptoms of anxiety and breakdown have been used as evidence for a particular interpretation of her work which supports the cultural tendency to conflate women artists and suffering. Whilst it is precisely these kinds of simplistic and overarching readings that this thesis contests the *fact* of Baron's symptoms still needs to be addressed. I am suggesting that it is possible to propose a counter reading of the evidence that can yield, however tentatively, a picture of Baron's symptoms as complex negotiations with conflicts that could have otherwise completely derailed her.

To reconsider Baron's symptoms in light of her position as the *daughter* of Holocaust survivors means that aspects of psychoanalytic theory that attend to

formations of femininity can be used to suggest ways that we can read in Baron's life story both the symptoms of her unresolved anxieties and conflicts and a particular set of strategies of resistance that enabled a creative subjectivity to be sustained.

Classic psychoanalytic accounts focus on the Oedipus Complex as the principal route to subjectivity but the passage through it assumes that both parents have stable gender identities in order for the child to make the necessary identification with the same-sex parent that ensures subjectivity.<sup>2</sup> However, the relatively recent discourse of second generation Holocaust theory (Freyberg (1980); Danieli (1985); Bergman & Jacovey (1992); Wardi (1992) Hass (1996) and Karpf (1997)) focuses on the inter-generational effects of the traumatic disruptions and dislocations caused by the Holocaust on the primary formation of subjectivity. For instance, it is possible to imagine that the distortion (by the cumulative affects of the Holocaust) of her parents' subject positions as *gendered* would have had an effect on their daughter's subjectivity. The ego is formed through a series of identifications with objects external to it, primarily the parents, and to be a subject is to take up a gendered position. Baron's position as a *daughter* depended on particular forms of imaginary identifications with each of her parents as actual and symbolically sexed individuals.

This line of argument developed from the observation that Hannelore, as the daughter of the family, experienced overt psychological suffering in adult life whilst her younger brother Hans grew up apparently untroubled. As discussed in the last chapter, many feminist theorists have cited the precarious nature of female subjectivity because it remains unsymbolised within the patriarchal symbolic order. The tentativeness of Baron's sense of agency (as suggested by her symptoms) may well be coterminous with the extraordinary circumstances

of her family history - including the trauma of Kristallnacht - but it is important to consider those circumstance in the context of her position as the *daughter* of the family. As a Jewish girl in Germany and a recently emigrated foreigner in the United States, Baron was outside and beyond the authorised significations of the Symbolic order. As her parents' *daughter* she was similarly marginalised, experiencing reduction as a bearer of meaning who could carry the kinds of parental needs and desires that recent attention to second generation survivors has highlighted. The fact that Baron found a way of negotiating these dislocations in order to produce a significant body of art and writings is productive of a radically different narrative: how a young Jewish refugee expected by her family to work in a department store battled with conflict and contradiction, trauma and psycho-dynamic collapse to reconfigure her identity as an artist - a maker of tiny worlds. The danger of course in focusing on Baron's family situation is to risk precisely the kind of collapse of her life into her work that I am trying to write against and it is reasons like this that the status of the life story is one of the difficulties of writing about women artists.<sup>3</sup> One of the reasons that Baron is important as an artist however is because her alterity means that her work can signify aspects of marginalisation and displacement that are relevant to contemporary struggles for meaning. By unravelling the web of inter-personal dynamics she was enmeshed in, it becomes possible to read her symptoms, not as the unmediated and direct result of trauma, but as a complex strategy of self-inscription.

### **3.2 Anxiety as Symptom**

According to psychoanalytic discourse, a symptom is a failed repression. Elisabeth Bronfen (1992) points out that 'any symptom articulates something that is so dangerous to the health of the psyche that it must be repressed and yet so strong in its desire for articulation that it can't be' (p. X). The specific

symptoms of what Baron herself referred to as 'the anxiety' were claustrophobia: manifested as the fear of being in enclosed spaces such as subway trains, restaurants or movie theatres; and a form of separation anxiety that rendered her unable for many years to go beyond the immediate vicinity of her home unaccompanied by a close friend or member of her family. It is worth noting that these two, quite distinct symptoms were conflated by galleries and critics (see Chapter Two) into agoraphobia which is literally the fear of open or public spaces.<sup>4</sup>

Baron's symptoms did not manifest until the year after she finished high school when she was working as a salesgirl in Hearn's department store on 14th Street in Manhattan. She worked on what was called the 'Flying Squad' which meant filling in for any department that was temporarily short staffed. After about a year at Hearn's she began to feel sick to her stomach at work and the nurse would give her an Alka Seltzer and tell her to go home. By the time she arrived home, she would feel fine. Until one day...

I felt sick the whole ride home, and it was such a long ride, from 14th Street to 225th Street, and I felt that I had to throw up. I was so afraid of doing it in front of the people...and I was terrified of throwing up because I almost never had to and I wasn't one of those people who could do that easily. . So finally I got to 225th Street...and as soon as I got off I had to throw up so this time I must have been really sick. But still, when I came home I felt better but the next day I got dressed to go to work, I went to the subway and the first train that came I couldn't get myself to go in and I think I waited for one or two trains after that and each time I couldn't go in. And I just turned round and I went...to my uncle, he's a doctor, and told him what happened....(and) much to my amazement, he said to me to stay home for a week or two and see if it got better....So when I started staying home, of course, then I felt there was something really wrong with me because it had taken me awhile to get that job...so after the week I still couldn't go back, and as a matter of fact, somebody had to go downtown with me to pick up the rest of my salary and to tell them I was leaving. And then started this whole big thing....My uncle said that he doesn't want me to take that as a way out because I have to learn to get back again where I was so I could go downtown but I was totally unsuccessful. As a matter of fact the thing got worse. After that...I couldn't go into elevators, then I couldn't go into

anything, then I got afraid to stay home alone, but I still had to do it anyhow. (HB/MB:1981:7-8)

In Baron's verbal memory/description of what has been categorised as her first 'breakdown' she maps a trajectory that runs from the bodily sensation of sickness to the association of that sensation with a feeling of dread. The transition from sensation to feeling is mediated by her Uncle Siegfried (a doctor) who, by his response, affirms the psychosomatic nature of her problem. Baron's narrative begs the question why, after making the identical journey to school for four years, did she suddenly become unable to ride the subway to work? It also draws attention to the way in which Baron's anxiety coalesced around her stomach: feeling 'sick to her stomach' and her fear that she might throw up in front of people. 'I was terrified of throwing up...and I wasn't one of those people who could do that easily'.

The fear of expelling that which is internal to oneself suggests, on the one hand, a drive to control at all costs what of the self can and cannot be seen, but on the other hand, nausea can be considered in the Kristevian sense as the expulsion of the self in a process of becoming. 'I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*' (Kristeva:1982:3). For Kristeva, to expel food (for example the 'skin' of milk) is to refuse assimilation with the desire of the parents and give birth to the self 'amid the violence of sobs, of vomit' (ibid., p.3). Considered in this light, Baron's anxiety about riding on the subway could be interpreted as the symptom of a psychic conflict between the desire for separation from her parents (as a fully fledged adult member of the work force) and a belief, inculcated from childhood (and confirmed by her Uncle's 'expert' advice to stay home) that the world outside the family was not a safe place. If one way of interpreting the impulse to vomit is as the refusal of the desire of the parents,

than Baron's inability to vomit could be understood as her inability to refuse the parental desire. The inter-generational dynamics brought to light by second generation Holocaust theory make it possible to suppose that Baron's parents needed her to remain a child and that this was the desire she could not refuse.

Kristeva's theories of subjectivity have roots in the writings of Melanie Klein whose work focused primarily on the developing infant's relation to the maternal figure. Unlike Freud's account in which the infant passes relatively unproblematically through the oral, anal and genital phases to reach the rocky shoals of the Oedipus Complex, Klein and Kristeva open up a space for a pre-verbal bodily form of knowledge which is more in keeping with contemporary understandings of subjectivity. For Kristeva, the abject marks the Thing of primal repression - knowledge of which must be disavowed (expelled) in order to constitute the self as a (speaking) subject.

The abject confronts us....with our personal archaeology, with our earliest attempts to release the hold of the *maternal* entity even before ex-isting outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language. It is a violent, clumsy breaking away, with the constant risk of falling back under the sway of a power as securing as it is stifling. (ibid.,p.13)

Rather than assuming that Baron was a 'normal' girl until Kristallnacht and that the onset of anxiety in her twenty-first year signalled the return of the events of that night as a hitherto repressed trauma, I am suggesting that her symptoms can be more broadly understood as manifestations of an irrepressible psychic pressure produced by the conflict between a complex knot of oppressive psycho/socio factors and a libidinal drive to create her own space from which she could fully articulate herself as a subject.

### 3.3 Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis has shown that the family, like language, is a vital relay between the various territories that make up subjectivity and the larger cultural field. Both Freud and Lacan place a heavy emphasis on those events in the life of a subject which can be grouped under the Oedipal rubric. Freud insists that not only the subject's sexuality, but its very identity is entirely determined by these events. Lacan reiterates this point, translating it into more recognisably semiotic terms: he asserts that the signifying activities of both the unconscious and the preconscious are centred on the Oedipal experience, and that the Western symbolic order derives its coherence from the phallus as the paternal signifier. (Silverman:1983:130)

No one psychoanalytic theory can satisfactorily account for all the specific events and dynamics of a person's life as, like any other epistemology, it is subject to the exigencies of particular cultural moments. It is also singularly inadequate when it comes to daughters' specificities. The current state of psychoanalytic criticism, while often very interesting and certainly productive, does not lend itself to an easy or homogeneous interpretation therefore I am starting from the applied point and adducing, for their explanatory powers, certain theories that help me to formulate a different view of Baron's relation to the Holocaust. The danger of course is in seeming to offer too pat an explanation when on the contrary I am proposing a reading or interpretation of those texts that constitute the artistic subject Hannelore Baron.

Psychoanalytic theories concerning primary subject formation allow me to imagine the complexity of Baron's position and to appreciate the radical nature of her response. I am not however attempting to elaborate the theories themselves but to deploy various aspects of them. For instance, the critical writings on Baron may well reflect the contemporary psychotherapeutic interest in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder<sup>5</sup> but to try and fit Baron neatly into one theoretical or diagnostic framework is inadequate to that complexity but fails to take into account the provisional and contingent nature of psychoanalysis. For

this reason, I find it useful to range across several different schools of psychoanalytic thought in order to suggest that to understand something of the ways in which Baron's art functioned as a practice, it is necessary to consider her position within her family of origin.

Lacan regards the subject as the product of a signifying transaction that occurs in the realm of the imaginary and depends for its constitution on an other (Grosz:1990c:50). The ego is initially formed through an imaginary identification with the external (m)other but that two-way imaginary structure is eventually mediated by the (internalised) influence of paternal identification - what Lacan calls the Law of the Father - enabling the subject to acquire a symbolic, thus social position. Although Lacan describes the family as a set of symbolic relations that always transcend the actual persons who are defined by their roles within it, it is the interaction (or signifying transaction) with real, actual parents, or parent substitutes, that underpins the constitution of the subject. Laplanche and Pontalis explain identification as:

(The) psychological process whereby the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides. It is by means of a series of identifications that the personality is constituted and specified. (Laplanche and Pontalis:1973:205)

As the parental gender roles of 'Mother' and 'Father' are policed by the culture at large, what are the possible effects on the development of a subject if those roles, as specific gender *positions* (with all the cultural loading that term suggests) are in some way distorted or degraded? More specifically, if 'Mother' and 'Father' are signifiers that are fundamental to identity, then it could prove productive to hypothesise that the ideological, social and physical violence perpetrated by the Nazis against the Jewish people might have resulted in a

corrosion of those socio/symbolic roles that would have consequences for a child particularly when that child was a female.

### **3.4 The Mother**

Friedel Alexander (Baron's mother) was a non-religious assimilated German Jewish woman who probably, like many others, blindly hoped for Germany's return to political sanity (Dawidowicz:1976). However, most of Baron's aunts and uncles (on both sides of the family) had left Germany when the National Socialists came to power in 1933 (VR/HB (1):1994: 1:6) and it was her father's brother, Uncle Siegfried, relocated as a doctor in New York, who sent the money needed by the family to get out of Europe.

It is possible to glean something of the impact that her mother's behaviour may have had on Baron as an adolescent by reading through the various accounts of the events of Kristallnacht and its immediate aftermath. According to Baron's husband, during the attack on the family home that took place in the middle of the night of November 9, 1938, Baron's mother and younger brother hid in the attic. This left the twelve year old Hannelore downstairs witnessing the destruction of the family home and the beating of her father with a hammer (VR/HB [1] 1:7). According to Laub and Auerhahn (1993) the absence of the protecting mother is a key ingredient in the formation of trauma, as the essential experience of trauma is the unravelling of the relationship between the self and the nurturing other. Baron's experience of the life-threatening absence of the mother was repeated several days after Kristallnacht (and the imprisonment of her father in Dachau), when the local police suggested to Baron's mother that she and the two children join other Jews on a designated night to cross the border into France. The same police, waiting at the border, arrested the group and incarcerated Baron's mother in Zarlouie (Appendix I:1). For possibly the

first time, Baron and her brother were separated from both their parents in a political climate in which separation was often final.<sup>6</sup>

While Friedel Alexander can hardly be blamed for believing the German police, one needs to consider her actions from the point of view of her daughter, an intelligent twelve year old whose world was rapidly falling apart. Klein and other object relation theorists such as Winnicott (1958) and Mahler (1963) chart the development of a child as it learns to negotiate the mother's absence and its own ambivalent desire for separateness and protection. Adolescence is, of course, a recapitulation of those early processes of separation and how adolescents cope with separation and the development of an individual identity largely depends on how successfully they have negotiated those early processes (Steiner:1993:25). As these developmental models are presumed to take place within the context of a 'normal' society one can only speculate that Baron's mother may have initially responded to the growing atmosphere of anti-Semitism characteristic of Germany towards the end of the Weimar Republic by discouraging her young daughter's 'strivings for independence' (ibid.,p.22) . The fear of engulfment that characterised Baron's adult relationship with her mother is certainly symptomatic of early maternal overprotectiveness but the separation anxiety she consistently re-enacted was consistent with a perception of emotional abandonment and the lack of protection by the mother.

These contradictory emotions were endemic to Baron's 'normal' relationship with her mother and not part of the vocabulary of 'breakdown'. The fact that she engaged with her mother on a daily basis while at the same time being critical and irritable towards her is a contradiction that often characterises the mother/daughter relationship but in Baron's case both positions were

emotionally heightened suggesting a defence against rage and fear that may have arisen from the knowledge of her mother's failure (or inability) to protect her.

### **3.5 A Kleinian Account of Subject Formation**

Infantile rage towards the mother is described by Melanie Klein as a primary developmental stage. In fact, Klein regards claustrophobia as deriving from 'phantasised attacks on the mother's body and on the father she is supposed to contain' (Mitchell:1986:50). Klein theorises the movement from the illusory bliss of omnipotent unity - the maternal dyad and the undifferentiated ego of the child - to what she terms the paranoid-schizoid position (for instance, the onset of weaning) which is when the infant splits the object (the mother's breast) into the good, sustaining, nurturing object and the bad, withholding, absent object and is filled with murderous rage. This primal aggressivity against the maternal body as 'the most ambivalently constructed other who bears the illusory traces of the self' (Kahane:1996:127) is a violent archaic affect that has as its goal not only the destruction of the 'bad' object but the incorporation of the 'good' object. According to Klein, the threat floods the child with paranoid anxiety because it is about either retaliation from the mother or the fulfilment of the child's phantasy - the mother's death. Either way leads to the same end: anxiety about the loss of the object or guilt feelings about the murderous rage. In Klein's account, subject formation depends on the child's ability to integrate and accept the 'realistic' fact that the good and bad objects are contained in one. Although this idea is no longer life threatening, it leads to what Klein terms the depressive position in which the infant discovers the fantasy of maternal omnipotence to be unreal and renouncing instinctual aims, mourns its loss and embarks on the search for a symbolic equivalent (Mitchell:1986).

### 3.6 The Holocaust: Beyond simple meaning

You talk about Kristallnacht and the blood on the wall but I think they are gimmicks to try and explain her depression, but it isn't that simple. I suspect that she was completely alone, because she thought about things and as best I could tell - Mark was very young - she had very little contact with her parents. These were not thinking people. The depression was from way back then - she must have sensed that she was alone. (VR/DH:(1)1994:8)

The above quotation is an excerpt from an interview with Dolly Honig, an intimate friend of Baron's who lives now in a small town near Syracuse, New York. The two women met in the mid 1960s when Dolly was head of art at a local primary school (P.S.81) where Baron came to work as a volunteer. I visited Dolly Honig (and her husband Arnie) on two occasions, each time staying for several days. She gave me access to a number of letters written to her by Baron which offered a view of Baron as insightful, humorous and active that was radically at odds with the picture I had received from her family and her galleries. Baron's letters and Dolly Honig's testimony provide an invaluable counterbalance to the dominant readings of Baron's work and her view of Baron is particularly relevant because Dolly knew her outside of the context of the family. She was also an artist and a German Jewish woman who never pathologised Baron's anxieties but regarded them, in light of their mutual experience of the Holocaust, as 'completely normal' (VR/DH:1995).

When Dolly Honig told me that '(Baron) had very little contact with her parents', she meant emotional, intellectual and physical contact. In fact, Baron had almost daily social contact with her mother, either in person or on the telephone, throughout her life. However, she regarded her mother as shallow and superficial, primarily concerned with keeping up 'feminine' appearances and the avoidance of anything 'unpleasant' (Appendix VI).<sup>7</sup> Female helplessness is a learned behaviour contingent upon particular social realities and it is possible to imagine that Friedel Alexander's strategy for negotiating an

increasingly powerless and vulnerable position as a Jewish woman in Nazi Germany and a refugee in New York was to perform those characteristics culturally coded 'feminine' (such as weakness, passivity and the avoidance of facing facts) in the hope of eliciting a 'masculine' (the Nazi as hyper-masculine) response of caretaking and pity.<sup>8</sup> Certainly, as her letters to Dolly Honig show, Baron considered her mother to be 'superficial' 'vain' 'shallow' and 'more interested in hair styles than politics'. Underlying these accusations is a fundamental rage towards her mother that ultimately targets much of what Baron perceived as 'feminine'.<sup>9</sup>

Baron's feelings towards her mother were particularly fraught with ambiguity as on the one hand, she could not separate from her (in addition to their daily contact it was her mother who would accompany her shopping or to doctor appointments when Herman - Baron's husband - wasn't available) and on the other, she frequently expressed (in her letters to Dolly) angry feelings of engulfment - the fear that her mother would somehow take over her life. In an undated tape recorded letter to Dolly, Baron described a 'big fight' with her mother over a veal roast which the latter had cooked for Baron's family:

....Instead of just making the veal roast and wrapping it in a piece of aluminium foil she had everything in pots and pans and she had made soup and vegetables and she had bought a cake - in other words she'd made like a big dinner that she had all packaged to bring over here. And now I visualised her giving this dinner to us all and sitting around the table and basking in her glory and how we'd have to say how everything was so delicious and how wonderful it was what she did and when I thought of that I just couldn't stomach it because I'm feeling very shitty and I couldn't stomach the thought of her being the big shot in the kitchen and you know, the glory that would be heaped on her in my house. (Transcript of undated tape recorded letter to Dolly Honig).

Considering Kristeva's account of the need to almost physically expel the mother in order to achieve autonomy, Baron's two references to being unable to 'stomach' her mother's behaviour are significant. The demarcation of space as

### 3.7 Psychoanalysis as a Discourse of the Parents

In psychoanalytic terms the mother's absence from her child indicates her presence, not just elsewhere, but somehow attending to or being attended by the father. That is to say, she is always seen from the viewpoint of those who lay claim to her, whether it be the father or the child. To see the mother's need in relation to other women or to her work is not a view that psychoanalytic theory helps to promote. (Wright:1989:145)

Whilst the mother is the structuring absence of psychoanalysis (and symbolisation) it is the father who dictates the terms in which symbols can be made. In Joan Riviere's seminal essay (1929), she cites a case study of a brilliant woman patient who, whenever she delivered an impressive and important speech (in a business context), would immediately respond to her male colleagues by performing the 'female masquerade' of helplessness, flirtation etc. Riviere suggests that the woman's behaviour was a fear response to the phallic act of speaking successfully in public and the vengeance that might be wreaked on her for transgressing the 'Law'. What Riviere (writing prior to Lacan) was referring to is the psychodynamic structure wherein the child only becomes a subject with reference to the law of the father and the (repudiated) absent body of the mother. It is the Name-of-the-Father in the form of the phallus as paternal signifier that is recognised as the support for the symbolic function - the Law (Lacan:1977). In other words, it is through identification with the paternal function as law that the subject can take up an authorised speaking position. For the daughter who lacks the phallus, identification with the actual or symbolic father as 'the discursive locus of intellect, ambition and privilege' (Kahane:1996:129) is far more problematic.

In one sense, in so far as she speaks and says 'I', she too must take up a place as a subject of the symbolic; yet, in another, in so far as she is positioned as castrated, passive, an object of desire for men rather than a subject who desires, her position within the symbolic must be marginal or tenuous: when she speaks as an 'I' it is never clear that she speaks (of or as) herself. She speaks in a mode of masquerade, in imitation of the masculine, phallic subject. (Grosz:1990c:71-72)

1938, as Hitler prepared for war, another cycle of anti-Jewish legislation came into effect and with the annexation of Austria (April, 1938), all Jews had to assess and report the value of their assets - a law which set in motion the total expropriation of Jewish property.

The Nazi discourse of anti-Semitism evolved from late nineteenth century Social Darwinism with its focus on specific corporeal signifiers as pseudoscientific paradigms. The association of Jews with disease can be traced back to Medieval thought but the nineteenth century drive to categorise (and hierarchise) social groupings according to physiognomy laid stress on Jewish male circumcision as productive of a form analogous to female genitalia (Gilman, 1985, 1991).

In Nazi Germany the rhetoric of anti-Semitism was mobilised to systematically strip Jewish men of their cultural and economic positions. Hitler's belief in the association of Jewish males with excessive and diseased sexuality was manifest in the 1935 Reich Citizenship Law which, among other things, made it illegal for any Jewish householder to employ female subjects of German blood under the age of forty-five (Dawidowicz, 1976).

In 1936, Jewish children were expelled from local schools and Baron and her brother were sent to a special Jewish school in Saarbrücken (Appendix I:1). Such a significant social event - in that her alleged 'difference' was articulated before the eyes of her local classmates - would no doubt affect a ten year old girl who might wonder why her father was so powerless to protect her. The culture (including psychoanalysis) demands strong fathers and the eventual subjection by Baron's father to beatings by Nazi supporters that penetrated the skin and caused him to leave 'the bloody handprints on the wall' was witnessed by Baron as a twelve year old girl. The fact that the sight of the bloody handprints

was significant for Baron is evidenced by its consistent inclusion in the various accounts about Baron's experience of Kristallnacht and as the details in those accounts most likely originated with Baron herself, then it is safe to assume that the image of her father's handprints on the wall was a powerful and lasting memory. It is also possible to suggest that the psychic significance of that sight for Baron lay in the fact that blood, the ultimate female signifier, became at the very time of puberty the blood of the father. The trauma for Baron may well have been that her mother was absent and ineffectual and her father was, in a symbolic sense, also a woman and equally ineffectual.

### **3.9 New York**

Less than a month after the family's arrival in New York Baron was already functioning in a second language and, according to Mark Baron, she was the first in her family to do so. Therefore it was the fifteen year old daughter who acted as interpreter for her parents and who negotiated finding unskilled manual jobs for them, literally taking her father 'by the hand' for job interviews (VR/MB:1994). This shift in subject positions not only contrasts sharply with the later, public image of Baron as a neurotic recluse but also testifies to the distortion of her father's cultural gender position first, as a Jewish man in Nazi Germany and later, as an immigrant in America. For Baron to be placed in the position of mediator between her parents and the outside world meant taking up, albeit temporarily, the subject position of a parent whose own parents were devalued as foreign, silenced by lack of language and difference.<sup>12</sup>

The family settled in the Bronx and Baron enrolled in the Straubenmuller Textile High School, a technical school that was selected by her uncle as suitable for a girl with artistic ability. Later in life, Baron related how her own lack of understanding led her to enrol on a course in fashion illustration (which she

hated) rather than a textile design course that in hindsight she realised would have been a better choice.(HB/MB:1981:2 and HB/JO:1982:4)). Nonetheless, only three months after the family's flight from Europe, Baron travelled alone every day from the Bronx to West.19th Street in Manhattan (the same journey that she later made to work). In the 1981 interview Friedal Alexander said that Baron hated the school and 'she was very nervous about it' (HB/MB:1981:2), but the evidence suggests that she did not suffer from the kind of separation anxiety that characterised her first breakdown and was in fact, functioning with an extraordinary degree of independence. Her report cards show that she excelled in Art History and in a subject entitled Colour Theory, consistently achieving grades in the high 90s in both subjects. Despite her later disclaimers, Baron seems to have enjoyed school where she formed friendships and was a good student. The attendance records also show that she barely missed a day during her four years at the school. It is as if as long as Baron was a 'schoolgirl' the equilibrium of the family, in terms of the gendered and cultural positions of 'Father' and 'Mother', was restored and there was no need for anxiety on Baron's part.

To attend school is to occupy the identity of a schoolgirl or schoolboy - an immature status which relies for its meaning on an adult opposite. Baron's position as a schoolgirl may well have bolstered her parents' images of themselves as powerful adults - self-images that must have been greatly damaged by the events of the preceding years. For Baron's father in particular, the reconstruction of his masculine self depended on his daughter remaining child-like, passive and powerless - in short, a girl. For his son to eventually attain masculine adult status was relatively unproblematic as it would serve to confirm his own masculine position (as adult, active and powerful). But it is telling that when Baron got married in 1950 for instance, her father said that he

wouldn't change anything in the house because 'she would be back within two weeks' (VR/HB(1):1994:11). Considering her father's need to view her as dependent, it is not surprising that Baron's entry into the working world of adults after her high school graduation precipitated a crisis.

### 3.10 The Second Generation

It is informative to consider Baron's position as the *child* of Holocaust survivors because the growing body of literature on the subject of 'second generation' survivors recognises that the (now adult) children of survivors often share certain personality characteristics (such as inordinately high levels of anxiety) that are directly traceable to their family dynamics. Each of Baron's parents had experienced a concentration camp and it was her father who had been beaten with a hammer during Kristallnacht. Intergenerational transmission is the term used to refer to the behaviours of survivors' offspring 'which are dynamically assumed ...to be shaped by their parents' Holocaust-related pathogenic behaviours' (Danieli:1985:280). For instance, the difficulty in establishing autonomy experienced by the children of Holocaust survivors is a recurring theme in the literature on the subject of second generation survivors and most likely has a bearing on Baron's breakdown.

Survivor parents are understandably suspicious of the outside world, by which they feel betrayed. There is a shared feeling in the survivor family, which the child learns at an early age, that the world is unsafe, uncaring and treacherous, that the family needs to band together in order to survive.  
(Freyberg:1980:93)

In the same study of survivor offspring (Freyburg,1980) patients described their mothers as emotionally 'detached' and 'as having difficulty relating to them' (ibid,p.89). In her generalised excerpts from the psychotherapeutic sessions with these patients, Freyberg characterises their responses to the mother figure as follows:

Later on, when the rationalisation and other obsessive-compulsive defences were more thoroughly worked through, the experience of anger at the mother figure provoked powerful feelings of depression, guilt and anxiety. Indeed, so powerful was the anxiety that the patients more and more frequently experienced an intense sense of panic and internal crisis, with resulting confusion about their identity and about what they were feeling. The confusion was usually resolved by a regressive boundary-blurring identification with the mother's position or mood state. (ibid., p.90)

In the case of the veal roast (which is just one of many examples), Baron's angry subversion of her mother's plans, her mother's response to it and Herman and Mark's attempts to intervene are all described by Baron on the tape. In the end, no one ate the veal roast. Instead, they all went out to dinner but neither Baron nor her mother could eat anything because they *both* had upset stomachs. Baron's initial angry outburst provoked a maternal response of silence and 'hurt feelings' causing Baron to attempt to resolve (her guilty conscience) by a 'regressive boundary-blurring identification with the mother's mood state'.

Dina Wardi also writes of 'the psychic closing off' of Holocaust survivors as the principal psychological defence for many of them. This defence compelled survivors to 'distance themselves emotionally from people in general and their relatives in particular'. (Wardi:1992:109). In other words, the family as a closed unit represents the only possible safety in an otherwise hostile world, yet the 'psychically closed off' parents at the heart of the unit are unable to provide much warmth, emotional support or nurturance. Anne Karpf, in her autobiography *The War After*, describes growing up in a family where her parents, who had survived the camps, could never allow the expression of any negative emotion.

'Depressed, what's depressed?' my father would ironically ask if my sister reported one of her schoolfriends to be low (vicarious depression being probably the closest we dared get), 'Her life isn't endangered, she has enough to eat.' If you weren't in a concentration camp, life must be a carousel. There was a hierarchy of suffering and normal, common-or-garden

depression, teenage disaffection, or the faint bothersome feeling that all wasn't well with your world came incontestably bottom. (Karpf:1997:10)

In Baron's case, if her parents were psychologically closed off and had strict limits on emotional expression, then her ability to internalise positive parental identifications may well have been impaired. That she lacked parental identification is indicated during her interview with Mark Baron when she said that she 'lived in very limiting surroundings' and the no-one in the family 'was in any way intellectual or knowledgeable about anything except the bare everyday existence' (HB/MB:1981:9). What is more to the point however is that Baron's efforts to assert her independence was so destabilising to her parents' precarious subjectivities that it was accompanied by anxiety, dread and the (imagined) threat of annihilation.

The crisis of her breakdown, which possibly could have been treated through the therapeutic process of revealing its unconscious meanings, instead became a founding moment in Baron's adult life cemented in place by the messages she received from her uncle.

He gave me some sedatives, even took me to some psychiatrists (that did not help the situation a bit) bought me two dresses and told me above all to keep my state of mind an absolute secret from the outside world. I understood the reason for this to be, that no one but me ever had any fears and depression like mine and I would be thought somewhat demented if anyone found out. (Appendix XIII:1986:7-8)

Despite her parents' consternation, visits to psychiatrists and uncle Siegfried's admonitions about being 'normal', Baron's symptoms persisted and she never returned to her job at Hearn's. She now stayed at home (alone) and did the cleaning and the cooking for the family, effectively displacing the mother. Baron also attended adult education art classes where she did oil painting - mostly landscape and still life - and she obtained several part-time jobs in her immediate neighbourhood that utilised her skills as an artist.<sup>13</sup> In her art class she

switched from oil to casein and from figurative to abstract and cubist painting (Figures 11,12,13). While it is not my intention to minimise her actual suffering, her sense that she alone had these problems, I am proposing that it was precisely Baron's breakdown that allowed her to embark on the kind of life she imagined for herself. She didn't want to be a salesgirl living at home and being treated as a child (for all the reasons discussed previously) but to be an artist was not only outside the scope of her family's limited horizons but also required her to take up a phallic 'speaking' position that would effectively displace her already emasculated father - the proscribed daughter's 'patricide'. This double bind, in which she could no longer tolerate the role she was expected to fulfil nor take up an autonomous identity as an artist, was, I am arguing, productive of the unbearable psychic tension that led to her breakdown.

As Elisabeth Bronfen (1992) suggests, a symptom is a failed repression. Baron would have needed to repress conscious knowledge of her desire because it was at odds with her parents' needs and would endanger the equilibrium of the family. However, the strength of her desire for self-inscription provoked a failed repression that manifested as a displaced anxiety which became the symptom that enabled her to fulfil her desire - a psychodynamic structure referred to as secondary gain. Baron's symptom (the anxiety) concerned her inability to go downtown alone but by staying home, she gained the advantage of pursuing her real career. In this sense her 'breakdown' can be seen as a 'breakthrough'. The price of fulfilment however, was the anxiety that plagued her for another twenty years because, in a sense, she needed to maintain it in order to deny the threatening knowledge of her own desire. Denial was sustained by her apprehension of 'the anxiety' as something separate, out of her control and disconnected from any form of explanation. By literally 'breaking

down' Baron managed to maintain a passive, weakened position (in keeping with her parents' desire) while at the same time utilise that position to actively negotiate her self-inscription as an artist.

Klein's follower Hanna Segal (1991) develops this trajectory further by theorising that the creative drive is an attempt towards reparation that springs from the child's anxious ambivalence towards the mother figure. Segal regards the artistic impulse as specifically related to the depressive position wherein the artist perceives that 'his (sic) inner world is shattered which leads to the necessity for the artist to recreate something that is felt to be a whole new world' (ibid.,p.86). Segal's view of art as a process that is directly related to ambivalence towards the mother is relevant to Baron because, as the story of the veal roast demonstrates, her aggressive feelings towards her mother were never fully resolved. Yet Segal's artists is male. Baron had the unsymbolised ambivalence of the daughter-father relation to contend with as well.

### **3.11 Creating an Inner World**

Dolly Honig stated that prior to meeting Herman Baron, Hannelore had never 'dated' in or after high school. This was most likely the result of both her 'foreignness' to American teen-age codes and conventions and the insularity of her immediate family. Eva Hoffman, in her autobiography *Lost in Translation* , movingly describes the lack of fit she experienced as a thirteen year old Polish girl newly arrived in Canada. Hoffman's account sheds light on what it must have been like for Baron as a teenager, operating in a new social milieu and a new language where '...the signifier becomes severed from the signified. The words I learn now don't stand for things in the same unquestioned way they did in my native tongue.' (Hoffman:1991:160) Baron's collages imply that it was precisely the severing of the signified from the signifier that fascinated her

because it enabled her to move *between* language(s) in(to) a mobile space of fluidity. If language is cast off from meaning then the possibilities open up for the creation of a different, cryptic and arcane visual language. Baron's drive to signify, channelled through collage-as-process, was motivated by a desire to subvert the symbolic order, de-stabilise the viewing subject and re-order and re-classify knowledges based on encounter and imagination.

Baron described herself in an interview as a 'typical armchair traveller' (HB/JO:1982:2) and between 1942 and 1950 she kept an alphabetised notebook in which she listed all the books she read, mostly borrowed from the local library. It is an impressive and eclectic list which includes many English and American 'classics' such as Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy* . It also includes many books about art: manuals of technique, art history, criticism and theory, and the autobiographical writings of artists as diverse as Gauguin and George Grosz. At least one third of the three hundred and fifty two titles in the notebook concern China and the Far East including nine titles by the Chinese scholar, Lin Yutang, ranging from novels and philosophy to compilations such as *The Wisdom of China* (Lin Yutang:1944). One of the things that this extraordinary document demonstrates is that Baron's wide-ranging and ravenous consumption of literature and philosophy was in direct, antithetical relation to the constriction of her external, social world. It is also an index of the magnitude of her imaginative inner world where her gathered knowledges (of the external world) could be reconfigured and transformed. This symbiosis of her external and internal worlds replicates the principle features of her practice which, as a process, allowed to gather, select and reject elements from the external world and reallocate them within the space of her inner world. As discussed in the previous chapter, it also typifies the drive of many post-war German émigré artists towards what Gillen (1997) characterised

as 'a retreat into an inner world'. But Baron's inner world was always in relationship with the external, object world, most literally as a resource that reflected her profound interest in other cultures. She discussed this in the 1981 interview with Mark Baron:

HB:...it started with the Chinese in the hospital. See, while I was working in the hospital there were some Chinese there that were dishwashers that had jumped ship. You see coming from Germany I was not exposed to...It was very exotic to me...I hadn't known any Chinese...I was just very interested and I went into their philosophy and I just became interested in the whole thing like Buddhism, Taoism and all of this. What I was looking for was some kind of answer to...what everything was all about.

MB: Like what question specifically?

HB: Well I hadn't really formed the questions but the thing is this, that I lived in very limiting surroundings like I didn't have anyone at all around me in the family or anywhere that was at all intellectual or at all knowledgeable about anything but the bare, everyday existence. I somehow must have guessed or known or something that there was a whole other thing besides all this everyday thing. That everyday thing wasn't very satisfying and it was also because of the immigration where if I had stayed in Germany I might have never thought of anything but going through these different countries, coming here into a new country and America being so different and all. I knew there were other different countries and other different things and when we came to America I didn't want to get off the boat because somehow I had liked...

Frida (Baron's mother): the gypsy life.

HB: Yes, despite this awful thing in Germany I did like the new experiences and the going from one thing to another...and I did to a certain extent like the uncertainty and so when we came here and I was sort of settled I continued on my own to travel. Only the way I travelled then was through books and so on instead of actually doing it. (HB/MB:1981:9)

This conversation offers an idea of the scope and ambition of Baron's imagination. Restricted by her family circumstances, the external world of books, artefacts and antiquities served as a screen on which she could project a fantasy identity that superseded the reality of those limits. Baron's art practice was the space in which those identities coalesced.

### **3.12 Marriage**

Hannelore Alexander met Herman Baron on Easter Sunday, 1947 while she was drawing in a park near her home. At that time Herman Baron was a handsome, loquacious, second generation American Jewish man who was ten years her senior. He owned a bookstore in Yonkers, NY, could talk intelligently about art and sported a beret. According to Herman Baron they became acquainted when he began talking to her about artists, particularly the French Impressionists, and she said 'I can't tell you how nice it is to talk with someone who knows these names' (VR/HB(1):1994:p.1). He must have presented a romantic figure to a girl who, isolated from her peers by the difference both of her 'foreignness' her anxiety, and her artistic yearnings, lived largely in her imagination. She did, however, tell Herman Baron that she never wanted to get married although she abruptly changed her mind several years later. The cultural pressure on American women in the 1950s to marry and have children is well-documented (Chodorow:1978; Friedan:1992; Harvey:1993) and for Baron, this was exacerbated by the stigma of her 'mental illness' reinforced by Uncle Siegfried's explicit directive that her state of mind 'must be kept an absolute secret'. Nonetheless, Herman Baron pursued her and the couple were married in 1950.

### **3.13 Highway**

There are few surviving drawings from Baron's early years but one, dated October, 1950, seems particularly relevant to this discussion. It is a pencil drawing, measuring about 6" x 4" that appears to have been torn out of a sketchbook (Figure 15). The simple, line drawing is of an open sailboat on water with its sail furled on the mast and the boom resting on a triangular crutch. A line trails diagonally from the boom and its end seems to circle back on the surface of the water some distance from the stern. The bow of the boat is

(also diagonally) 'anchored' to a triangular mooring but closer inspection reveals a break in the line where it joins the triangle. The drawing is entitled Highway which may have as simple an explanation as the fact that it was the name of the dinghy. But Baron rarely titled her work so the name seems important in this instance.

What is striking about the drawing is the solitude of the boat and the way in which the diagonal lines either end appear to be holding it fast yet are, in fact, detached. The drawing is relaxed, almost languid, although the lines are black and firm. Rather than a sense of isolation, this drawing of a solitary boat conveys a feeling of surety and strength. It could be argued that if the sea is the unconscious, the sailing boat represents the ego's relationship to the id. Within that framework, the drawing can be read as an image of Baron's conflicting desire for autonomy and safety, freedom and stability. Highway, with its implication of movement, seems a contradictory title for an image of an isolated boat that appears to be anchored. But if highway calls to mind a journey - a journey through life? - then perhaps (as it was made six months after her marriage) it was a metaphor for what Baron considered to be a new phase of her life. Considered within this context, the drawing of the boat makes perfect sense. A highway in itself is static but at the same time it holds the potential for travel. The sailboat in the drawing appears to be stationary - it's not going anywhere - yet the minute break in the anchor line works metonymically to suggest a voyage, a journey, the limitless plenitude of desire.

In Herman Baron, Hannelore found an idealised father who would keep her secure yet allow her an artistic identity. He was Jewish and American born, unconnected experientially to the Holocaust and with a stronger (than her father) sense of his own masculinity. He knew something about art, his profession was

books and he willingly accepted her anxiety and the limitations it imposed on her ability to take up some of the normal responsibilities of adulthood.<sup>14</sup> She never learned to drive a car, she did not shop or go far from home unaccompanied. Throughout her marriage it was her mother who accompanied her shopping and Herman (or later Mark) who took her to flea markets and thrift stores in order to find the materials she needed for her work.<sup>15</sup> Herman recognised that making art made his wife happy and as long as she took care of the house and the children and made his meals, she was 'free' to go to classes and to make her work. Given her circumstances - her truncated childhood, her foreignness, her anxieties and her ineluctable role as a 1950s American housewife and mother - marriage to Herman gave her a secure place from which to imagine and to create her art.

### **3.14 Death of the Father**

Julius Alexander died in 1956, four years after the birth of Baron's daughter Julie and the same year in which her son Mark was born. When I asked Baron's husband what he remembered about Baron's response to her father's death he said:

Outwardly she was fine and appeared quite normal - she didn't seem grief stricken. She had become accustomed to being married and living away from home by then...and she had her own ideas. I didn't talk to her about it. As a matter of fact she didn't go to the funeral. I saw to it that she wouldn't.  
(VR/HB:1994 (2):5)

Herman Baron's statement is revealing because to suggest that 'she was fine and appeared quite normal' supports what I have argued were her ambiguous feelings towards both her parents as to mourn her father she would need an intact paternal imago. The fact that Herman Baron could 'see to it' that she didn't go to her father's funeral might suggest that he now represented the (missing) paternal phallus. But rather than pointing to her lack of affect or her

submission to the phallic authority of her husband, evidence of her own desire can be found in the phrase 'she had her own ideas'. She was a wife and mother now with her own household and her own recently born son. By Freud's account, this means that she now had a phallus of her own but as Weedon (1987) suggests, to reduce maternity to an effect of penis envy is reductive. An important strand of my argument in this chapter has been the difficulty women have in 'speaking' themselves in a symbolic order that is structured by the phallus because to take up a speaking position is to speak as (or displace) the phallus. In 1976, twenty years after his death, Baron wrote a poem that is a bitter lament in which she mourns the death of her father (Appendix XIX). By the time Baron wrote it she was established as an artist, had survived cancer, and four years of therapy had 'straightened out' her symptoms. 'I wasn't anxious anymore or anything' (HB/MB:1981:17). Most importantly, in January of that year, Mark Baron began to manage his mother's work, an arrangement that involved him showing it to new galleries, arranging for shows and keeping track of sales. It seems especially significant that the appointment of her son as her representative in the art world coincided with the production of a poem mourning her father. It is as if the missing phallus of the father, knowledge of which had to be denied at all costs, was finally reinstated in the form of her son as her representative and spokesperson. Baron was free to produce her art (to speak her subjectivity) without fear of symbolically castrating her father and being annihilated in return.

The complex dynamics of Baron's inter-familial relationships sustained her in a clear determination to create an internal world of signification that was separate and of her own making yet still connected to the external world of objects. The importance of this connection between her intra and extra worlds can be seen not only in her relationships with people but also in the material - both

imaginative and real - that she transported back and forth between them. It has never been my intention to counter the dominant reading of Baron's work (as discussed in the previous chapter) with another singular interpretation of her symptoms. By arguing that the effects the Holocaust had on her were far more complex and multi-layered than the critical writings imply and by suggesting how they relate to gender, a space is opened up wherein Baron's original breakdown can be understood as a form of psychic resistance or unconscious strategy. Baron was unable to speak from the place of the father nor could she identify with a mother she largely disavowed but could not separate from. The breakdown facilitated compliance with her father's unconscious wish that she remain a girl-child in order to shore up his eroded masculinity while at the same time soliciting her phantasised desire for a nurturing protective mother. Such a double bind should have rendered Baron passive and ineffectual but she was able to turn her position of alterity into one of advantage by creating, through her art, her own imaginative space of free play. As active readers of the text that is Hannelore Baron, we are offered a privileged sight of what Baron's place of fantasy and desire looks like. In the following chapter I will map the trajectory of Baron's career and excavate a number of her collages in order to explore how (and what) it was that she was able to signify so productively from such a marginal position in relation to a symbolic order that for her was so seriously devalued.

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<sup>1</sup> This passage is from a letter written by Baron to her friend Dolly Honig in 1978 (letter number 50) after she had just undergone emergency lung surgery because cancer was discovered in her right lung. The letter is reproduced in full in Chapter Five (p.160) which focuses on the relations between Baron's collages and her experiences of illness.

<sup>2</sup> Of course the subjectivity born out of the Oedipal transaction is a culturally assigned gender position that corresponds to phallic law wherein the feminine is only ever signified as 'other' to the dominant masculine term.

<sup>3</sup> Another difficulty is the desire to make one's subject heroic despite evidence of conflicted and ambiguous behaviour and feelings. For an excellent account of this problem for the feminist art historian see Irit Rogoff (1993) 'Tiny Anguish' in *Differences*, Vol.4, No.3, pp 38-65.

<sup>4</sup> Although Baron claimed to dislike 'large open spaces (HB/JO:1982) she was also quite clear that she was not at any time agoraphobic (Author's conversation with Mark Baron, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> It was only in 1980 that PTSD was formally acknowledged as a medical diagnosis in the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders published by the American Psychiatric Association, Washington, DC, 1980.

<sup>6</sup> Contradictory accounts emerge as to the whereabouts of the children during the time of their parents incarceration as the biographical notes in Appendix I state that 'the children were sent to live with the one remaining Jewish family in Dillengen' Ibid.,p.1). However, Baron's husband Herman stated that they had been sent to stay with relatives in Luxembourg.

<sup>7</sup> In the same statement Baron wrote: 'My mother is an optimistic person and refuses to see or accept the darker side of life. I have been ill for a number of years with multiple surgery, but as I recite my aches and pains over the telephone, she always assures me that she has had the same many times and is sure I am in the best of health. Many a time I have been infuriated by her facile responses...' (ibid.p.1) This supports my supposition that Baron's mother consistently deployed the mechanism of denial to avoid any knowledge of anything that might threaten her emotional stability. Obviously, this behaviour from a parent would frustrate and infuriate a child seeking validation of her or his emotional state. Dolly Honig maintained that Friedal Alexander was alleged to have said 'Hitler was not so bad. He built the autobahns'.

<sup>8</sup> In Riviere's account, the performance is quite unconsciously enacted in order to hide the threat of castration that is posed by a powerful woman. 'Womanliness therefore can be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected' (Riviere:1929:38). In Friedal Alexander's case, the threat of reprisals was quite literal whereas I will argue that a similar dynamic was in play between Baron and her father but rather than the 'hyper-femininity' of her mother, Baron deployed the similarly passive strategy of psychological illness.

<sup>9</sup> During her interview with Jean Olds (1982) Baron remarked that for her haircuts she 'went to any kind of beauty parlour, any kind of girl' and that she wanted to 'get up one morning and have my hair all stand on end and the next morning it will be all flat and so on' (p.9). She also spoke about how her art 'saved me from (the monotony of housework) and it saved me from the fear of getting older, it saved me from the empty nest syndrome - it saved me from all these women's problems...and even along with the art I have always done alot of other things but some women don't have the foresight or the initiative to do anything'(p.3). Herman Baron stated that Baron 'wore mostly peasant blouses, loose clothes, flat shoes. She would never follow fashion' (VR/HB:1994:11). Although Baron accepted her 'female' role in terms of domestic duties, she was contemptuous of femininity (in Riviere's sense of 'masquerade').

<sup>10</sup> Julius Alexander was awarded the Iron Cross for bravery during W.W.I. The original document is included in Baron's papers and she refers to it in a poem she wrote about her father in 1976. As a symbol it consistently reoccurs in Baron's collages.

<sup>11</sup> September 15th, 1935 German citizenship was awarded only to subjects of 'German kindred blood'. The implementing decree (November 14th, 1935) addresses the status of *Mischlinge* (hybrids) and removed exemptions from war veterans (Dawidowicz:1976).

<sup>12</sup> See Penny Florence's essay *The Missing Myth* (1995) for an elaboration of the way in which for the daughter to usurp the father's power in the world constitutes a form of patricide.

<sup>13</sup> For one local store she painted flowers and other decorations on to baby furniture and for another, she designed embroidery patterns (HB/MB:1981:6-7)

<sup>14</sup> It could be argued that precisely because of the limitation imposed by her anxiety Baron was an ideal 'female'. She certainly managed to cook, clean and care for the children and it was only in relation to going far from home that she was 'limited' and then only up until the 1970s. In fact, she suggested in a letter to Dolly Honig (No.45) that her limitations suited Herman who had, what Baron referred to as an 'isolationist nature'.

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<sup>15</sup> As a second-hand book dealer Herman made weekly trips to downtown Manhattan to sell books to the Strand Bookshop on West 12th Street. Hannelore took advantage of these trips to buy art materials on Canal Street. In conversation, Dolly Honig told me that she and Hannelore would often go together to Canal Street as well which suggests that Baron frequented the lower East Side. Given that Baron was a reader and her husband a bookseller, the possibility is opened up for imagining that Baron may have been influenced (or at least aware of) the great explosion of Jewish American writers that took place in the 1950s and 1960s. As the first manifestations of a literary voice of 'otherness' within American culture their influence may have been part of an emergent permission to speak from a position of outsidersness which Baron may have been experimenting with as a visual language.



Figure 11. Abstract casein painting, c. late 1940s/early 1950s  
Baron estate



Figure 12. Cubist Still Life, c. late 1940s Baron estate



Figure 13. Cubist Still Life (No.2) c. late 1940s  
Baron Estate

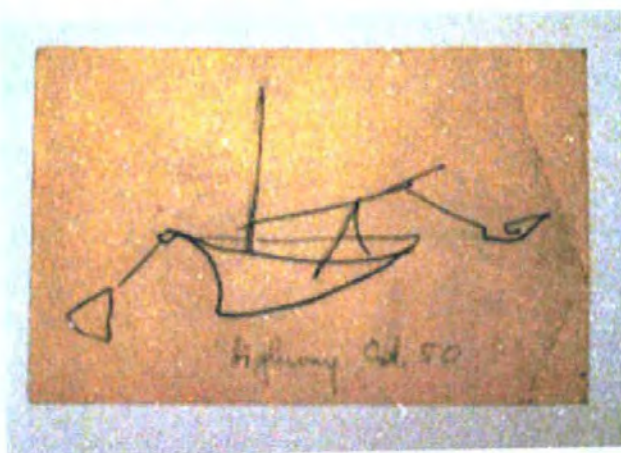


Figure 14. Highway pencil drawing dated. Oct.1950  
Baron Estate

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE SEMIOTIC AND THE SYMBOLIC

#### 4.1 Introduction

To consider Baron's symptoms as solely psychic maintains a current assumption that art is primarily the product of an interior life. Yet psychoanalysis and post-structuralism have shown us that the inner life of the mind is constituted through inter-action with the outer world of objects. Just as the corporeal surfaces of the body transmit sensations to the psyche so too the external world forms the changing 'stuff' of the internal world. Thus it is all the more important to recognise, for instance, that the recurrence of cancer during the last fourteen years of Baron's life would have been traumatic in so far as it could not only retrigger earlier injuries associated with death and destruction but also confront Baron with her own non-being.

To take account of Baron's corporeal and historical specificity *beyond* 1941 facilitates an expanded reading of her work that releases it from the specificity of Holocaust trauma, a label that hides as much as it makes visible, nor allows Baron a later history as a creative site of reflection and transformation. Viewing certain of Baron's collages through the lens of what is known about particular, synchronous life events illustrates the degree to which her process functioned as a 'safe house' existing simultaneously elsewhere and alongside her daily life. Attention to biographical material hitherto foreclosed by the preferred reading also reveals the extent to which that safe space was proportional to her lived experience of constraint. The unfolding of evidence in Baron's collages of her responses, not only to specific events in her personal life, but also to the wider political, historical and social issues that concerned her, gives form to the way

in which experience is interwoven with memory: both conscious and unconscious, semiotic and symbolic.

Drawing on Plato's concept of the *chora* as an archaic psychic receptacle, Julia Kristeva conceptualises the semiotic as a 'pre or trans-linguistic modality of psychic inscription...rooted in the Greek *semeion*: trace, mark, distinctiveness' (Kristeva: 1989a:22). Kristeva argues that attention to the status of semiotic inscriptions enables new ways of clarifying the heterogeneity of representations, including unconscious ones.

Insofar as we are speaking beings, we break with nature, and this doubling leaves us irradicably marked by the pre- or translinguistic, semiotic processes which are our only access to the species memory and to the bioenergetic neutron maps. These semiotic processes (archaic inscriptions of the ties between our erogenous zones and those of others, in as much as sonorous, visual, tactile, olfactive, and rhythmic traces) constitute, diachronically speaking, a presubject. Synchronically, this semiotic chorus is found in the catastrophic anguish (passion) of the melancholy psychosis. Their insistence undermines our basically fragile lucidity and fills us with forgetting, dizziness and phantoms. (ibid. p.23)

If, as I believe, Baron existentially understood the contingency of subjectivity and the loss that is fundamental to it, by what means does this melancholic 'loss' find its expression in her collages? Those scholars and critics who have so far written on Baron have done so without regard to Baron's (generally disregarded) early work from the 1960s. It is however essential to include it because, as I shall show, a change in emphasis becomes apparent from a primarily formal, experimental mode to what I am arguing is a more intuitive, semiotic register where content takes precedence over form. In fact, apart from later developments in her printmaking techniques (which evolved from classes and from the acquisition of a press), most of the iconography, techniques and formal devices found in her 'mature' work were first laid down in the 1966 and 1967 collages. 1966 was also the year in which Baron had her second

breakdown and for such an obvious disjuncture to be paralleled in her collages is certainly worth careful attention.

As significant sites of self-inscription, the products of creativity or intellect can constitute important aspects of identity. It is not just a case of the objects themselves reflecting back an artistic identity but rather, that as products of the imaginary, they function as extensions or projections of the self into the world. In other words, art (as such) is not the product of a unified 'self', it is actually productive of that self through its qualities of materiality and exteriority.

Baron's desire to make art was, in a sense, the effect of a symbolic order that was radically at odds with her own experience or sense of self.<sup>1</sup> The lack of 'fit' she experienced in terms of her positioning in the external, social world resulted in the creation of an alternative world of collage that was structured in a way that made sense to her. How she moved between these 'worlds' and more importantly, how effectively her collages function as messages, is the concern of this chapter.

#### **4.2 Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman**

A black and white photograph of Baron (Figure 15) - probably taken in the late 1960s by her daughter Julie<sup>2</sup> - shows a full-length profile of the artist bending over a table apparently absorbed in what she is doing. The table is in the corner of a room, side-on to a large window and on the floor behind Baron is a portable bin on legs (the kind used in playgroups or nursery classes for sand or water play) full of bits of material. Draperies at the window and a small table in the foreground with ornaments and a lamp on it indicate that the room is domestic. Baron is leaning forward on her arms with her left hand weighing something down and her right hand - in which she holds an implement of some kind - curved and active. She is wearing a short, plaid, sleeveless shift and flat

shoes; her arms are bare. The table and lamp in the foreground and Baron's complete figure in the frame indicate that the photograph was taken from a distance and Baron's absorbed posture suggests that she was perhaps unaware of the photographer until the shutter clicked. What we see in this image is an artist working in her (portable) studio. Her clothes and the bright light in the window signify that it's summer. She stands at her work (like Virginia Woolf) and the container behind her suggests activity beyond the surface of the table. I like this image of Baron at work as the evidence of active engagement it offers contradicts the textual reading of Baron as victim - of the Holocaust; of cancer; of domesticity; of being female and all that implies about the struggle to be taken seriously as an artist. This photograph attests to the fact that Baron found the space (and time) - albeit quite often only temporary and fleeting - to make her work, *despite* her adversities, *despite* her lack of a studio and *despite* the demands of family life.

Until the age of thirty-seven, Baron, her husband and their two young children lived in a two-bedroom apartment at 315, West 242nd Street where she made her work on a small corner of the kitchen table.<sup>3</sup> In 1963, the family moved to a larger apartment at 6300 Riverdale Avenue which is the one in the photograph. Baron bought a table of her own 'with a separate drawer' for her materials which she set up in a corner of the living room. In the interview with Jean Olds, Baron refers to her working practice during those early years:

I used to work in the evening because as a wife and mother or whatever there were no demands on me after supper.....For years we lived in an apartment and every time I wanted to work I had to take out the material - it was all packed away. And that was a big detriment to working. You always felt "I have only half an hour am I going to take this all out"? (HB/JO:1982:6)

In the interview with Mark Baron conducted the previous year he also asked Baron how much time she spent doing her artwork in an average evening:

**HB:** Oh, well, once I started it would be the whole evening because that's when Pop had the store<sup>4</sup> and he wasn't home in the evening so I would do it more or less the whole evening. Then later on when you kids went to school I also did it between 9 and 3 when you were away at school.

**MB:** Did you work everyday just about? Doing something?

**HB:** I don't think so, not everyday. I always thought it was sort of secondary. I don't know, I liked to work on rainy days or snowy days when there was nothing else. I always took the artwork as something to do when there was nothing else that was pressing. If the house was clean and I had no shopping to do and so on..." (HB/MB:1981:12)

The fact that Baron lacked a studio (or even of room of her own) for many years coupled with the precedence she gave to her family commitments makes it clear that in those early years her identity as an artist was marginal in comparison to her role as a wife and mother. The inability to take her work seriously, to treat it as more than a spare time activity, no doubt had a bearing on the comparatively small amount she produced during that time. Nonetheless, the fact that she still persisted in making art, no matter how little, is a good indication of the strength of her desire to make the work and its necessity in relation to her life. In the interview with Mark Baron, Baron described her relationship to the collages as follows:

I never wanted to give all of myself. I always wanted to keep some of myself back because I felt that if I gave all of myself I was afraid that there would be nothing left and that I wouldn't be able to collect it anymore. As if, somehow you stepped on a grenade and the pieces fly all over and there is no body and that's how I felt it would be if I gave all of myself so the small part that I wanted to keep had to be a sort of secret part of myself. That's why I always felt the work, the collages, were my own and like the secret part of myself that I knew nobody would ever want to interfere with.  
(HB/MB:1981:16)

If she 'gave all of herself away' there would be no body - the body fragmented by the grenade - which translates of course as nobody. In other words, if Baron was unable to maintain a space somewhere for her *Self*, she felt that she would cease to exist.

### 4.3 Language as Space

An early reference to figuration is found in the collage numbered C65-009 (Figure 16). The figure is uncharacteristic of this period (1965) because all the other collages made that year are abstract. It is more like her very early experiments with collage in which she tore up paintings and reassembled them.<sup>5</sup> In C65-009, a single, moustachioed male figure, made entirely from collaged painted paper, occupies nearly the whole of the picture surface. It is an oddity not only in terms of the technique but also in the unambiguity of the figuration. It is so different from her other work one wonders why she kept it? Who does the man represent? He seems to be dressed in an old-fashioned European style which at first led me to assume that the figure referred to her father but there was another European man significant to Baron who played an important role in the events of the following year.

Baron had a long-standing friendship with an Italian tailor named Guiseppe Magniani who she always referred to as The Tailor. Baron met Magniani in 1957 when she decided she wanted to learn Italian by speaking to Italians rather than the more usual route of attending classes. He was from Sicily and worked as a tailor in a dry cleaning store near Baron's mother's home and it was at Friedel's suggestion that Baron approached him for lessons. He agreed to help her in exchange for (her offer) of drawing lessons. Thereafter they met on every Tuesday and he telephoned her most mornings.

Baron's lack of identification with her family (as discussed in the previous chapter) resulted in an enriched fantasy life in which she explored and identified with other cultures and spiritual beliefs in a process of self-articulation. Self-articulation in this instance meant the articulation of her Self as 'different' (from her family) but in effect she was primarily articulating that 'difference' to herself

within the space of her 'inner world'. Her relationship with The Tailor afforded her the opportunity to articulate herself as 'different' to another person whilst still retaining the important separateness from and connection with her family. The space of language afforded by her relationship with the Tailor enabled her to immerse herself in Italian culture in order to imagine herself as an Italian. She read Italian novels, listened to opera, went to Italian movies and tried Italian cooking (Appendix VII:6). She also became interested in Catholicism and at one point even prayed to St. Anthony. She openly expressed her desire to be a strong Italian woman rather than a Jewish victim (Conversation with Mark Baron:1994). In this sense, the Italian language became a space of fantasy and identity and it was a space in which The Tailor saw her both as an exciting woman and an artist. If we consider, for instance, the way in which both Baron's husband and mother freely answered questions directed at Baron during the 1981 interview we are able to gain an insight into a dynamic in which Baron's subjectivity was consistently subsumed within the family (HB/MB:1981). That she would desire the 'free' space of a foreign language afforded by her relationship with the Tailor would be a logically consistent response not only to the threat of engulfment that I discussed in the last chapter, but, as an unregulated space of re-invention, it reinforced her sense of difference not only from her family but also from the cultural position in which she was located.

It is interesting that the beginning of both Baron's relationship with The Tailor and her relationship with collage (which I argued in Chapter One must be regarded as a process) coincided in the latter part of the 1950s. The Italian language that she was learning from The Tailor was the product of a symbolic order subject to (patriarchal) law while the move from painting to collage can be understood as a drive towards 'lawlessness' even if it was kept in check by

‘formal’ experimentation. Baron developed these languages (Italian and collage) and her own relationship to them, simultaneously. Each one can be conceived as a ‘space’ with inside (intra) and outside (extra) components that were integral to it.

#### 4.4 Art as Language

Kristeva’s contention that the work of art and the life of the individual that produced it are continuous means that the body, as the representative of the actions, reactions and interactions conducted in one’s ‘name’, is always present in the artwork. By including in my study Baron’s generally disregarded collages from the 1960s and early 1970s, it becomes easier to recognise developments in her language and to pinpoint shifts in the location of Baron’s speaking position from one of commentary to one of introspection.

Kristeva’s exploration of the ‘melancholic imaginary’ (Kristeva:1989b) focuses on the subject’s affective experience of contradiction and loss as it is expressed in visual art and poetic language. Although this imaginary is expressed through language *of some kind*, it originates in the semiotic order of drives and affects that cannot be harnessed to traditional linguistic structures. Julie Kristeva theorises art’s potential as a transitional space of forgiveness which enables one to traverse the depths of abjection in order to name it.

Forgiveness at the outset constitutes a will, postulate or scheme: *meaning exists*. This is not necessarily a matter of disavowal of meaning or a manic exultation in opposition to despair (even if in a number of instances this motion may be dominant). Forgiveness, as a gesture of assertion and inscription of meaning, carries within itself as a lining, erosion of meaning, melancholia, and abjection. By including them it displaces them; by absorbing them it transforms them and binds them for someone else. “There is a meaning”: this is an eminently transferential gesture that causes a third party to exist *for* and through an other. *Forgiveness emerges first as the setting up of a form*. It has the effect of an acting out, a doing, a poesis. (Kristeva:1989b:206)

Kristeva calls this space of poesis the *imaginaire du pardon* in which, through the process of giving form to affect, the subject is allowed to 'live a second life, a life of forms and meaning...which is the sole requisite for the subject's survival'. (ibid. p.208). Richard Kearney, discussing Kristeva's *imaginaire du pardon*, outlines the therapeutic potential of transposing destructive material into aesthetic form:

...it provides an affective experience of darkness and humiliation with the representational form of a work: a work which...has not yet been transposed into the symbolic order of explanation. In other words, it operates at the transitional level of 'art' which is still in contact with the body's wounded emotions - emotions which precede the verbal intelligence of logical understanding. But precisely as an aesthetic mid-way, this ambivalent *imaginaire* of sense and non-sense can act as midwife for an eventual translation into symbolic comprehension. In being able to play this dual role of linking us to both the real order of incomprehensible suffering and the symbolic order of understanding, the *imaginaire du pardon* enables the suffering body to undergo a transmutation ... (Kearney:1991:190)

Kristeva's account of the *imaginaire du pardon* as the 'midwife for an eventual translation into symbolic comprehension' suggests a mode of understanding Baron's practice as a generative space of self-inscription that allowed her to work through (make sense of) emotional material and alleviate the constraints of her social existence. Kristeva argues that the semiotic chora, as a pre-verbal space of maternal authority replete with chaotic drives and affects, is the pre-condition of the symbolic yet in artistic practices '(it) is revealed as that which also destroys the symbolic' (Kristeva (1984) in Moi:1986:103). By this she means that the semiotic can be understood as a transgressive force that is revealed in poetic language and visual art and it is this revelation that allows us to presume something of its functioning. The semiotic as co-equivalent producer of meaning (to the symbolic) re-instates the body into discourse (and into aesthetic production) as that which always informs, and has the potential to disrupt, the symbolic. In other words, the symbolic order, which for Lacan is the *exclusive* realm of language and meaning, is constantly ruptured or

punctuated by the semiotic - those bodily drives and impulses which prefigure verbal cognition. This is not to suggest a return to the pre-verbal bliss of the maternal dyad, but rather, the semiotic chora can be conceived as a repository for all those drives and affects that are remaindered by the acquisition of language and the constitution of subjectivity. Kristeva's conception of poetic production as a borderline site split between instinct and representation is useful as a way of understanding the relation between Baron's lived experience and her art. This relationship is particularly pertinent when Kristeva's theoretical position is supplemented by Irigaray's argument that the female experience of embodiment is more conscious and profound than the male's because women are able to perceive the maternal body as *similar* to their own as well as experience phenomenologically the fluidity and permeability of their own body boundaries (Irigaray:1989). If we expand Kristeva's account of the semiotic to include the relevance not only of female bodily specificity but also of woman's conditional place in relation to the symbolic order, it becomes possible to argue that female art *in particular* is sited on a semiotic edge between the body and the psyche; the real and the symbolic. It is Baron's gendered relation to the symbolic coupled with her historical marginalisation (for all the numerous reasons previously discussed) that underpins her access to the semiotic realm. As a result, it is possible to understand her collage process as sited on a complex and fluid interface between the symbolic and the semiotic and to read it for signs and traces of borderline inscriptions.

Kristeva posits certain forms of art and poetic language as arising from trans-consciousness, a transpositional space or state between the semiotic and the symbolic. This *imaginaire du pardon* can be considered as a passage of translation in which the 'wounded emotions'<sup>6</sup> of the semiotic body are transposed into symbolic representation. How those representations are read or

understood is one of the issues of this thesis. Baron's collages offer new forms of representation that are productive of different, heterogeneous meanings relevant to the present - not only Baron's - but our own. Traces of the real of emotional and physical trauma *are* evident in Baron's art and, as references to and from the semiotic body, those traces can puncture the illusion that confirms the "I" of the viewing subject. By assigning the destabilising affect 'elsewhere', knowledge of the fundamental lack that underlies subjectivity is deferred along with the possibility of new kinds of ethical understandings contingent upon that knowledge which, I believe, form the basis of Baron's practice.

#### **4.5 Language in the World**

It is necessary to contextualise Baron's life during the period under discussion in order to take into account the effect her immediate circumstances - as well as specific events - may have had on her practice at that time. In 1960 Mark would have been four years old and Julie eight. Herman Baron by his own admission (VR/HB:1994:(1):p2) worked upwards of seventy five hours a week so childcare and housework were considered to be his wife's sole responsibility. In 1962 Baron was finally granted compensation from the German government for the amount of \$35.00 per month<sup>7</sup> - money which she regarded as 'strictly her own' and which she used to buy materials for her artwork or to pay fees for evening classes (Conversation with Dolly Honig:1994). In the same year Mark started full time school and as most women who have been mothers know, the entry of the youngest child into full-time education holds the promise of renewed aspirations long subsumed beneath the exigencies of child care. Therefore, it is relevant that the earliest record of Baron exhibiting her work is found in the first hand-written CV which states: '1962 - exhibition with Yonkers Art Association - (Award)' (Appendix V).

In an undated statement (reprinted as the end piece in the 1987 Schlesinger-Boisanté Catalogue), Baron wrote:

I can only add that I have always worked only for my own satisfaction, and if the work is shown and accepted it is a wonder and coincidence to me because it was never intended for that. (Appendix I:27)

Although to the extent that Baron's work was constitutive of her identity this statement is true it is also open to debate because the evidence indicates that Baron made fairly consistent efforts to exhibit and market her work prior to Mark Baron's assumption of that role in 1976. For instance, in the 1981 interview with Mark Baron he asked about her early dealings with galleries:

**Frida:** (Baron's mother) In the meantime you entered the pictures in some shows like Armory or Downtown, little places. Then she had incentive to do these things.

**Herman:** (Baron's husband): There was a whole series of group shows and then eventually Mom started to market her stuff in a small gallery on 55th Street near Fifth Avenue, Croquis Gallery and the stuff sold for a very modest price but it was sort of an incentive....in the meantime she's won awards at various places, cash awards, for instance at the Hudson River Museum at that time Yonkers Art Association, Mamaroneck Artists' Guild and other places. (HB/MB:1981:12)

After some discussion about where (in the home) Baron actually worked, Mark returned to the Croquis Gallery by asking his mother what had made her go to them.

**HB:** We read a little write-up in the magazines, this friend and I, that this woman had opened up a gallery and that she was looking for sort of students or unknown artists that would be willing to sell their work for a low price and we both thought it would be a good idea if we went and took some work for her to look at. We did, and she took mine. She didn't take my friend's. So she took it on consignment and I was very pleased and that started my dealings with galleries where I was always so in awe of the galleries that I never questioned anything. I always let the dealers make the prices and decide whatever they were going to decide.

**MB:** When did you take your work to the next dealer after the Croquis? Was there quite a time that passed?

**HB:** She finally closed up shop. She's still a dealer but she closed up shop so I don't know if that was at that point possibly, that I decided to take the work somewhere else, so I tried several galleries. I went to the Betty Chamberlin Art Information Service and asked where she thought I should

go. She gave me a list of galleries. I did not at all know what any of the galleries handled or anything at all. 'Cause I just about never went downtown since I still couldn't ride the train alone and had no idea which gallery was which, so according to her list I just went to several and I finally left it with the A.M.Saks Gallery. (ibid:p 13)

By 1964 Baron was exhibiting in Manhattan with the Croquis Gallery although her first solo show was not until 1969 at the Ulster County Community College in Stone Ridge, New York. As the conversation quoted above implies, Baron *did* want to achieve recognition for her work even if it was only that the prospect of 'modest sales' would justify her equally modest expenditure. Such a reading would make sense of the catalogue statement in that the kind of national and international success that Baron's work achieved through her association with the Schlesinger-Boisanté Gallery (1981-1990) was quite possibly beyond Baron's expectations. Whatever her reasons, it is clear that she *wanted* to put the work out into the world even though her desire to do so involved very contradictory emotions as expressed in her apparent lack of concern as to whether or not the work was ever shown in public. She cared deeply about the work itself - a fact which is supported by the evidence of the care she took in preserving her work despite the lack of a studio or adequate storage space for many years. She seems to have kept most of her early work as far back as the casein paintings done in the late 1940s and early 1950s, despite moving house in 1963 and in 1970. But contrary to this evident concern for the specificity and materiality of her work as objects was her ambivalent attitude to the more commercial aspects of her practice such as cataloguing and record keeping. Prior to the early 1980s, she never titled, numbered or catalogued her yearly production and it was only in 1976 when Mark Baron took over the management of the work, that she began to sign and date (with the year) collages on the front. In 1981 when Steve Schlesinger began to represent Baron, he insisted on making a 'proper' inventory of all her work. Henceforth,

she was supposed to number each collage as she made it but, as she stated to Jean Olds: 'I resist numbering' as to number each piece of work was 'just too business-like' so she could only bring herself to do it 'at the end of each year' (HB/JO:1982:6).

Baron's estate (as currently [1999] represented by Mark Baron overall and the Manny Silverman Gallery in Los Angeles) considers the work from the mid-1970's onward to be Baron's mature work and it is those collages which are most consistently shown. When I began my research, Mark Baron kindly lent me a catalogue of 1274 slides of collages produced between 1976 and 1987.<sup>8</sup> A chronological code written on white card was placed beneath each collage as it was photographed. The code begins C (for collage) followed by the year in which it was made followed by a numerical sequence which reverts at the beginning of each new year to 001. Gaps in sequence indicate collages sold or on loan to a gallery or museum at the time the slides were made. There are 847 gaps in the collection which, when added to the 1274 existing slides means that Baron made *at least* 2121 collages during the last eleven years of her life. Compared to the (approx.) 300 collages made during the previous fifteen years, this volume of production could explain why the post-1975 work is considered to represent her oeuvre.

Baron made her first collage in 1958 and between then and 1976 there is really no way of knowing, apart from what remains in the estate, exactly how many collages she produced nor what has become of them. She frequently took collages apart and re-incorporated bits into other collages or boxes but this was part of her working process (as discussed in Chapter One) and probably why she resisted numbering a 'finished' collage. On the other hand, she would often

take apart collages that she has previously considered finished<sup>9</sup> because she no longer felt satisfied with them. As Dolly Honig said:

I would have fits because she would have wonderful things and they would just hang around and when I came back I would ask where they are and she said she'd taken them apart. She got some pictures back from the gallery and immediately took them apart. It would drive me crazy. (VR/DH:1994:6)

Additionally, Baron (like most artists) gave work away to friends and family or donated it to auctions for fund raising events.<sup>10</sup> Despite existing proof that she exhibited and sold work prior to 1976, there are no records or accounts of those sales. In a letter to Dolly Honig from the mid-1970's<sup>11</sup> Baron refers to a dispute with a Westchester gallery over how many collages they had on sale or return. A subsequent letter refers to the resolution of the dispute in which Baron received a cheque for the sale of two collages and she and Mark drove up and picked up the remainder (Letter to DH:20:March 11, 1976).

Baron also worked off and on throughout that period teaching art in a variety of places<sup>12</sup> and in reply to a question from Jean Olds about her 'yearly output' she explained the relationship between teaching and collage as follows:

....for a while I was working - this was before I was in a gallery - and when I was working I didn't feel such a tremendous need to do the collages because I was immersed - I was doing occupational therapy work in a nursing home and thinking up all these projects and working together with people and whenever I do anything I never do it just as a job - I'm really totally in it. If it becomes just a job that's when I quit. So that seemed to take the place of my own work and I worked there for three years. So those three years obviously I didn't do as much as three other years where I didn't work. See, it all varies - whatever happens. (HB/JO:1981:6)

This statement exemplifies Baron's reliance on the external world to mirror her 'separate' identity. The teacher-student relationship enacted in her occupational therapy work replicated the space of her collage process because it was a space where she could *speak with authority*. Thus, while she was working outside of the family home, there was no urgency to make the collages and her production fell as a consequence.

Having concluded that for a variety of reasons, there are no accurate records of Baron's production, the figures I am using must be regarded as guidelines or indicators of the amount of work which she was *likely* to have produced in any one year. Certainly after 1976, Baron's production was directly linked to her increasing sales as, according to Steve Schlesinger, whenever collages were selected and taken away for a show, Baron would work until 'she'd replaced the missing pieces' (VR/SS:1994). Baron herself refers to this practice in a letter to Dolly in which she says: 'I have been very busy, the people from the Scarsdale Gallery were here and picked out things for a September show and I am trying to replace them so I won't feel deprived' (Letter To Dolly Honig: No.24). Baron's drive to replace what was literally taken away is a way of forestalling the narcissistic wound of 'losing' collages that were constitutive of such an important aspect of her identity. It is reasonable to assume that this conscious need to replace missing work would have been in operation throughout most of Baron's career and an increase in sales would mean a corresponding increase in production. Thus the relatively small number of extant collages that remain from the years prior to 1976 can be read as indices of the probable quantity of transactions in those years.

There are one hundred and five collages made during the years 1960-1967 remaining in Baron's estate. In these it is possible to see Baron's early experiments with the medium and her gradual acquisition of the techniques emblematic of her later work. Briefly, the collages from 1960-1963 are all abstract; small, irregular sizes (such as 10 x 8 or 8 x 9) and made from torn paper on a paper ground with watercolour washes and markings. There are fifteen pieces in each of the years 1960 and 1961; nine in 1962; and in 1963, fourteen pieces. In 1963 (the year the family moved to a larger apartment) frottage prints were incorporated into the collages for the first time as well as the

spindly overdrawing with ink which is characteristic of much of her later work. In 1964 (thirteen pieces) Baron showed work for the first time in Manhattan at the Croquis Gallery. She was still working on paper but the ground was more sparingly filled and the 'found' paper collage elements tend to be clustered in one area with faint line overdrawing done in watercolour or ink. It was also in 1964 that she began to use illegible 'writing' - numbers and letters which, when linked up, make no sense. This form of 'writing' remained a consistent device throughout her oeuvre whereas in other collages made that year she incorporated newsprint but obviously rejected its effect as she only ever used it once again in a collage made very late in her career. Baron's dismissal of commercially produced text in favour of illegible 'writing' points out the difference between her use of collage and its more traditional association with early Modernism. Historically, collage as used by Braque and Picasso (and Schwitters) was concerned with the incorporation of elements from modern, urban life into the space of painting and as such was regarded as a hybrid form that breached the boundaries between fine art and popular culture. The incursions of collage into the well-policed arena of Modernist art necessitated the emptying out of all its meaning potential in favour of a rendering of collage *itself* as a 'sign' of modernity. Baron however had little interest in the everyday 'stuff' of modern life which is why I place such emphasis on collage as a process that correlates to the body as a coalition. The materials Baron sought and then manipulated and the gestural drawing she 'performed' within the spaces of her collages are affect-laden and resistant to categorisation, unity or position. This is particularly true of the collages made from 1966 onwards.

#### **4.6 Breakdown**

In 1966 Baron suffered a second nervous breakdown<sup>13</sup> characterised by severe anxiety,<sup>14</sup> depression, suicide thoughts and the inability to do any artwork. She

was never hospitalised for a breakdown nor medicated<sup>15</sup> with anti-psychotic drugs although it is likely, given the era, that she was prescribed tranquillisers. As far I as can determine from my conversations with family members and with Dolly Honig, the 1966 breakdown was precipitated by a marital crisis.

According to Herman Baron:

I think we had a pretty good marriage. She had these hang-ups when she was learning Italian - that was a bit messy. I didn't know what would intrude more - just to learn or the desire to be nice to the people who would help her linguistically. But it was just a natural feeling on my part to be jealous of the tailor. A shrimpy little guy, about 5'4", came from Sicily...on Tuesdays she went to the tailor's for him to discuss and correct her work. I wondered what went on in this back room. She wasn't unfaithful though. I wanted our relationship to stay the same with no doubts. (VR/HB:(2):1994:3)

I have no idea why, after nine years of this arrangement, Herman Baron suddenly put his foot down but in 1966, at his insistence, Baron agreed to end the relationship and it was that decision that led directly to her breakdown. Her symptoms were traumatic for the family. Herman remembers that she would just sit on the stairs and cry and Mark Baron (who would have been about ten years old at the time) told me in conversation that he remembers his father wresting a kitchen knife out of his mother's hands and he also remembers her crying passionately and banging her head on the floor. The space of language and fantasy that she constructed with The Tailor was an area of her *own*, under her *own* control. Baron's psychic resistance to that loss (of space, of language) was sited in her body (breakdown) as the only area of her own that remained to her. She used her body as a weapon and, as eventually Herman capitulated and telephoned the Tailor to say that it was all right for them to resume their relationship, the body triumphed. Although Baron's relationship with the Tailor continued uncontested until her death in 1987 Baron learned that the space of her relationship with the Tailor was vulnerable to her husband's law. I am arguing that it was at this point that she transferred the psychic investment she had in that relationship, as inviolable and her own, into the space of her

had in that relationship, as inviolable and her own, into the space of her collages.

#### **4.7 Horizon Lines and Free-Floating Shapes**

In one version of Baron's Curriculum Vitae (Appendix V) she characterised the work for 1966 as 'watercolours with horizon line' and then, on the next line, the 7 in 1967 is written over with a large 6 in an erasure that insists that 'free floating shapes - watercolours' also pertains to the collages made in 1966. This insistence suggests that both of these descriptions were significant particularly to 1966 as the year of her second breakdown.

The horizon line is a perspectival convention that confirms the unity of the viewing subject. As such, it can be argued that the inclusion of a horizon line is a form of address in which the collage becomes a message that is 'sent' with the expectation of a recipient. The work is no longer merely a formal arrangement because pictorial elements arranged in conjunction with a horizon line invite the viewer to 'read' the work. As discussed in Chapter One, Baron's use of the horizon line (and the grid) developed into invisible structures but as the point at which she introduced these structures into the collages coincided with the year of her breakdown it is possible to suggest that the drive towards structure signifies a re-structuring and a new emphasis on function whereby Baron's process *functioned* as a container in the same way that an envelope can contain *and* deliver affect. Baron's reference to the introduction of 'free-floating shapes' in the collages of that year returned me to the transcripts of my interview with Dolly Honig. In it, she describes Baron's family (father, mother, brother) as 'free-floating bodies':

I don't know if they ever met. They were like free-floating bodies. I don't think they would have understood her. So I think she was just so alienated and alone. This thing about not going downtown alone and not wanting to

be alone, I think that continued in her own family. She never connected except maybe Mark understood more but he was young and why was he going to sit around wondering what made his mother tick? (VR/DH (1):1994:3)

Free-floating bodies (or shapes) calls to mind the limitless condition of space - a site of primary fear for Baron who stated in 1981 'I like everything small. I can't relate to even large stores or outer space and large vistas' (HB/JO:1981:3)

Free-floating shapes also signify disconnection. Baron *needed* the fantasy and the space of self-articulation that the relationship with The Tailor provided but she also *needed* the safety of her connection with Herman. Once again, Baron is poised on the edge between autonomy and constraint and her use of the 'free-floating shapes' can be understood as a rehearsal for 'freedom' and a resistance to constraint.

My contention that she transferred her psychic investment from her friendship with The Tailor to the space of the collages is supported by considering that Baron's inclusion of a horizon line *as a mode of address* indicates a desire for transaction with the external world. This traffic between the intra and extra worlds was a necessary component of this 'space' for Baron. She had it with The Tailor who could act as a mirror for her fantasy and language and she needed to have it with the collages. It is important to remember that Baron felt that if she were unable to maintain a space somewhere for her Self, she would cease to exist (Appendix I:p.16). Furthermore, if the relationship with The Tailor represented a psychic space of her own making<sup>16</sup> in which she felt alive and connected (yet separate from her family) the dissolution of that connection could be represented pictorially as 'free-floating' (disconnected) bodies. The fact that in 1966 Baron also introduced compartments and drawn frames into her collages suggests not only compensation for feelings of loss and disconnection (as represented by the 'free-floating shapes') but also a re-structuring of her

external world within the picture space of the collage. The drive to compartmentalise the various components of any one collage is emblematic of an ambiguous relation to space as either potentially expansive (in the Irigarayan sense) or claustrophically restrictive as in Klein's theory of the fear of engulfment by the maternal body. Considering the experiential tension between Baron's desire for autonomy and her fear of disconnection, the compartments are particularly significant because they so clearly suggest the visual articulation of that conflict. I am not suggesting that Baron deliberately chose compartments as a way of imaging this emotional incongruence but rather, that her use of compartments was an intuitive visual response to the 'felt' chaos of semiotic drives. The introduction of these new forms of iconography *that were to remain an important part of her visual vocabulary for the rest of her career* clearly exposes the connection for Baron between collage-as-process and the body-as-coalition particularly as it was the threat of loss (redolent with semiotic affect) that effected such a significant shift in her practice.

Once again, Baron's breakdown became a breakthrough as she reformulated this imaginary space from the language of her relationship with the Tailor to the language of her art as process. Kristeva theorises that poetic language stems from the Imaginary - that moment prior to language when we recognise our subjectivity in the idealised form of the image. This pre-discursive moment, bounded by sight and recognition, is outside the restraining language and weight of the Symbolic order. For the artist (and writer) it is a *place* in-between the subject and object where the blank surface is a free zone available for semiotic play. The visual evidence of Baron's 1966-67 collages supports Kristeva's view. Just as Baron's breakdown twenty years earlier acted as a catalyst that enabled her to pursue her art, her 1966 breakdown, triggered by Herman Baron's penetration of the psychic and actual space created through her

relationship with the Tailor, marked a caesura that resulted in a visible shift in her art. This can be theorised as traces of non-intellectual, emotional material drawn from a semiotic register interfaced with the symbolic order in such a way as to make use of the illusory coherence of that order while effectively transgressing and renovating it.

#### **4.8 Frames and Cloth**

It was in 1966 that drawn 'frames' first appear in Baron's collages. What is a frame, after all, but the marking out of a territory or space? As a postmodern term, a frame refers to a particular discourse or reading (in Bal's sense) and I have used the term to describe the process whereby a Holocaust narrative is imported into Baron's work. However, if we stay with that 'frame of reference' it is possible to transpose that meaning whereby Baron 'framing' the ground of the collage signifies the setting down of a narrative that is specific to her - the announcement of the arrival of a subject. In this way Baron's frames can be understood as a kind of arbitrary sharp focus picked out from the life mass (although it can be argued that as humans we cannot *not* frame because we cannot comprehend the abstraction of the world). The frame can also be read as the boundary that defines art as that which is separate from all that surrounds it. Baron's statement (cited in Chapter One) 'I still have to do it somehow so it's framed and hung on the wall' (HB/JO:1982:1) indicates that for her the external, additive frame signifies that the collage as an object is 'art'. The inner, drawn frame could be interpreted as a reiteration or emphasis that refers to what, at the moment in which the frame is drawn, is only an *imaginary* external frame thus suggesting that Baron imagined the collage as art whilst in the process of making it. But such a supposition seems skewed in terms of the pressure of semiotic drives that I am arguing for. My understanding of the drawn frames interprets

them as inscriptions, a marking out of space which emphasises the collage as a space of enunciation, a 'free zone' of articulation.

In the twenty-six remaining collages from 1967 Baron substituted cloth for the paper elements used in previous years. In particular, the prevalence of cloth as the ground of a collage is a formal move that suggests the tactility of the semiotic register. Cloth also carries weight as an index, its materiality freighted with a prior history. While this might seem at odds with the notion of the blank surface as a free zone, I would suggest that Baron's use of cloth as a ground was redolent with semiotic 'memory' of connection (to the maternal body). That desire, of course, speaks of the death drive and as such, it is not without contradiction. But the use of found cloth also connected her to other, unknown lives whose meaning lay in their unlimited potential as sites of imaginary identification.

#### **4.9 Relationship with Dolly Honig**

As far as Dolly Honig remembers, it was the autumn of 1966 - when Mark was in the sixth grade - that she first met Baron. Dolly was teaching art at the local public school and sent out a letter to parents asking them to get involved with the art program.

She first got involved with me at the art classes when parents helped out. Then she started teaching some classes in the school. She got a tremendous kick about what the kids would do and she always got results. She was in charge for the first time. She had them come after school - sometimes the class teacher would stay but it wasn't needed...she was sure of herself and didn't have any outside influence and I was raving about the stuff with the kids. We saw the same way and loved the kids' stuff. If we went to exhibitions we'd pick out exactly the same things. I haven't had that with anybody since. I think I was the anchor to the outside world.  
(VR/DH:1994:p13)

The two women formed a close friendship that was in many ways instrumental in Baron's development and realisation of her identity as an artist. Dolly Honig

not only recognised and encouraged Baron's talent but their shared (yet different) histories alleviated Baron's sense of isolation to the point that her past became largely irrelevant:

We talked willy-nilly about everything - I don't remember anything special. You know all of us refugees went through (to outsiders) unusual traumatic events but to me it's sort of normal. Parents left, trains, the chaos and panic - that was all the same. Her fears all seemed very normal to me - that's why we were on the same level. (ibid. p2)

With Dolly, Baron experienced a rare fusion between her inner and external worlds. Their shared sense of history and their mutual immersion in art meant that probably for the first time, someone recognised and understood Baron's language. Speaking of her first visit to Baron's home, Dolly Honig described opening the door and seeing 'these beautiful things on the wall' (VR/DH:1994 (1):1). Her experience of Baron was in sharp contrast to the family's, as she said in the same interview:

When we were together we'd hit Canal Street...we went to galleries. There was a time when I lived in New York we saw a lot of each other...Hannelore was not depressed all the time - no way. There were jokes and laughs.... (ibid. p.5)

And it was Dolly who really encouraged Baron to take her work seriously.

Women weren't important (in that family), neither was art work. I was the first one to see how really-good it was and that she should be out there....When I first knew her she wasn't showing anywhere. She was completely overlooked in that family. Whatever they did was important, but I think it was then that they partially began to notice her. (ibid. p.11)

Baron's production figures increased correspondingly : twenty-six collages in 1967; twenty-three in 1968; twenty in 1969; twenty-three in 1970 and again in 1971. In 1968 Baron began making boxes as well as collage and she attended, with Dolly, an etching class at Columbia University (where Dolly was doing an MA).

Nam. Their feelings were undoubtedly heightened by their first-hand knowledge of the savageness of war but for Baron to have her feelings confirmed allowed her to express them more openly. Thus her visual language became more overt.

#### **4.10 The 'Protest' Collages: "It's Never Stopped"**

...I used to think of landscapes, still lifes, more traditional things and now it's the political and social situation that's bothering me. A few times I thought of getting away from that and going back to something a little more neutral but I don't seem to be able to go back to this former light feeling....I was very concerned with the Vietnamese war - it's never stopped - now there was a massacre in Lebanon - it's never stopped. (HB/JO:1982:1)

Baron's statement indicates the dis-ease and disorder she perceived in the external, social world and her response was one of compassionate concern for all victims of war and disaster. Analogous to the shift in Baron's practice discussed previously is a new emphasis on the work as the vehicle for a message. Beginning in 1968 (and continuing into the early 1970s) Baron made what she referred to as protest work - those collages (and boxes) that were directly expressive of her anti-war feelings. In 1968 American troop strength in Viet Nam was 540,000 and domestic anti-war demonstrations were rising. Viet Nam was in the news on a daily basis and although Baron was seemingly uninterested in news and politics<sup>17</sup>, she, far more than any 'average' American, understood the brutality of war. 1968 was also the year in which Martin Luther King (April 4th) and Robert F. Kennedy (June 5th) were assassinated (Karnow:1983: 693) and even the most disinterested citizens were shocked. That shock was deepened in November of the following year with the revelations about the Mylai massacre. The anti-war protest grew larger and more vociferous with the bombing of Cambodia (1969); the Kent State killings(1970)<sup>18</sup> and the publication by The New York Times of the Pentagon Papers in 1971.<sup>19</sup> It was within this climate of escalating civilian unrest and the

killings(1970)<sup>18</sup> and the publication by The New York Times of the Pentagon Papers in 1971.<sup>19</sup> It was within this climate of escalating civilian unrest and the loss of basic trust in the American government that Baron produced what she referred to as her protest work.

#### 4.11 Torn Flag Collages

There are three distinct motifs which Baron used for the collages of overt protest and each one relied (unusually) on the use of legible text: 'Torn Flag', 'War Letter' and 'No More'. She wrote about the first of these in an undated statement:

My abhorrence for nationalism and chauvinistic patriotism as well as all symbols thereof, lead (sic) to the early torn flag collages, and why there is much use of spotted and torn striped material. (Appendix 1:26)

The earliest example of a *Torn Flag* collage is from 1968. C68-009 (Figure 17) has an irregularly torn paper ground which has been stained the colour of pale cream. An almost round shape, cut from cloth and overpainted in dark, reddish brown, occupies the central top half of the composition. As far as I can determine, that piece is the only collaged element and most of the image is made up of direct marks made with either pencil or paint and transfer printing. The collage at first glance bears little resemblance to a national flag and it is only the words 'torn flag' (written almost illegibly in pencil above and to the right of her signature) which give a clue to her intent. Looking closer, however, it is possible to see tiny, distorted stars on the edge or outside of the main picture space as if they have been evacuated from the 'flag' itself. A referential yellow stripe bisects the composition horizontally and another partial 'stripe' enters the brown cloth ovoid like a nail or a pin, its end emerging further on. Dark reddish brown marks dragged across the picture plane combine with the paler brown ink and paint stains to give an appearance of scorch marks or charred remains in

reference perhaps to flag burning or the acts of self-immolation that occasionally occurred during anti-war demonstrations.

A comparison with the 1970 unnumbered scalloped edge collage discussed in Chapter One (Figure 3) reveals surprising similarities considering that the collages were made two years apart.<sup>20</sup> In both of them, Baron has restricted the palette to shades of brown (running from dark red to gold) and black on a pale ground. A large brown circle with smaller circles inscribed within it is the central motif of both collages but the metonymic stars and stripes of C68-009 are reduced in the 1970 collage to the outline of one five-pointed star in the top left hand corner. Again, 'torn flag' is written on the face of the collage in spidery writing although 'torn' is more hidden than 'flag' as it is written in black on a dark brown ground. The thin, vertical black mark to the right of the brown circle in the 1968 collage has been transposed into a much larger piece of black cloth in the later work while maintaining an almost identical shape and position. It also differs from the 1968 collage in that the ground is an end of sized canvas (as previously discussed). However, the most obvious difference between the two protest collages concerns the strength or conviction of execution. The imagery in the 1968 collage is more vague, tentative and oblique as if the marks were made with less pressure and certitude. Although it can be argued that, in an important sense, those qualities (vagueness, obliqueness etc.) are typical of Baron's oeuvre, there is still a difference that may well be to do with intention. What I mean by this is that as the political situation deteriorated in the United States and the general population became more outraged, Baron was moved to state her message more directly.

Far more ordered and overtly representational is the *Torn Flag* collage from 1970 (C70-014, Figure 18) which has the words: 'Won Award' written on the

back in Baron's hand. The paper ground is rectangular with no uneven edges and it is entirely saturated with an ink wash of dark grey, brown and black. The central 'figure' is also a large, flag-like rectangle with two wide, light brown vertical stripes separated by a thin red one. There are no stars but there is a small grey egg shape, anchored by a tiny black line, resting against a torn, pale scrap of cloth. In a fascinating study of her own resistance to the process of painting, Marion Milner suggests that 'the egg stands in for the sense of one's own separate identity, in so far as this is bound up with one's own personal urges towards the world' (Milner:1957:50). If this is the case then the ovoid appears to be very frail and vulnerable in relation to the 'flag' (read:Nationalism). The words: 'Torn Flag' are written, with no effort to obscure them, in large letters at the top of the 'flag' (within a flag), and all potential clear space, whether figure or ground, is densely saturated with dark colour evoking an atmosphere of despair. It is not, however, a representation of 'formless suffering' as the composition is highly structured (transposing the emotional content) through the use of a series of rectangles which combine to make up the central rectangle or 'flag'. The clarity of the structure has the effect of off-setting the heaviness of the colour values and gives the image a stability and coherence which renders its 'meaning' (unusual for Baron) direct and unambiguous.

This collage (C70-014) is so different from Baron's other work that I feel justified in speculating that it was made with submission to a particular competition in mind. The fact that the message is so clear and that she wrote "won award" on the back (as well as including a reference to this collage in her 1981 c.v.) seems noteworthy because many of her collages won awards and they were never marked out in that way. I think that the significance of this collage for Baron was its status as manifest proof of the value of her message and her ability to control an outcome. Working so (in)directly with the symbol

of a national flag, Baron disrupts the social contract that constitutes such symbols by severing the signifier from the signified. This poetic distortion of the structure of signification can be considered as the symbolic yielding to the 'residues of first symbolisation' (Kristeva:1984:103) that make up the semiotic drives. Therefore, to win an award for the *Torn Flag* collage also attests that her message, as a borderline inscription, can be understood.

Despite the tendency of critics to compare Baron's art to that of Schwitters, Cornell or Klee, apart from the latter (as discussed in Chapter Two) the comparisons do not hold up. On the contrary, Baron's aesthetic sensibility, with its stained, scratched surfaces and spindly drawing is closer in spirit and intention to the early work of the Dutch artist Anton Heyboer as well as to certain early drawings of the German artist Joseph Beuys.<sup>21</sup> Her use of old, damaged cloth is also comparable to work by the Italian artist, Alberto Burri (despite the significantly different scale of his work) but it is the spare and modestly introverted work of Julius Bissier, with its overlay of oriental art, that Baron was personally drawn to.<sup>22</sup>

What all of these artists (including Baron *and* Dolly Honig) have in common however is first-hand experience of the chaos and senselessness of war. Heyboer was imprisoned by the Nazis during the Second World War and Beuys' war time 'story' is well-known. Alberto Burri was a prisoner of war captured by the Americans who spent much of the war years incarcerated in a prison camp in Texas and Bissier was dismissed from his teaching position at the University of Freiburg as the result of National Socialist art policy and forced to flee to Italy (Gillen:1997:503). It is difficult for someone who has not experienced it to imagine the brutality of war, the justifiable fear of dying or the emotional impact of imprisonment. But it is clear that these artists share an

aesthetic sensibility that is related to an understanding of the symbolic order as unreliable, hypocritical and full of potential for violence, cruelty and injustice. In an effort to articulate one of the ways in which this understanding translates into visual language, Baron discussed the work of the Spanish artist Antonio Tapies:

What I like in Tapies' work is the feeling, I believe of sort of protest. That I also felt I have in mine. In other words, scratching walls, it's as if it was done in desperation. Do you know what I mean? Like a lashing and slashing out but he does it in a really nice way....Certain works I like. I always liked the scratches and....(HB/MB:1981:18)

What Baron is talking about is the bodily response to an emotional feeling (desperation) whereby certain marks such as scratching and scraping or even faint sketchiness of line are produced to release and convey the unnameable bodily (semiotic) sensations of fear, despair, desperation. The attraction to abject materials and the drive to include them in the space of art that is seen in work by Baron, Burri and Bueys in particular derives from the same impulse: the need to transform through the process of art what they regard as the awfulness of the external world. Adorno regards this as the necessary negativity in art 'where, in their expression, historically determined, the untruth of the social situation comes to light' (Adorno:1997:237). Many artists who have lived through these kinds of extreme experiences share a tendency to turn away from material culture in favour of an inner world of imaginative creativity that gives them access to a vocabulary in which to articulate what they experience as the disorder of the social and the pain of subjectivity. The state of close attention intrinsic to the art process allows for a dissolution of subjectivity that can momentarily relieve psychic pain.

#### **4.12 War Letters**

Occasionally Baron referred to a particular collage (or series) as a letter, either by entitling it on the face of the collage (C73-008, Figure 19) or by constructing

the collage itself in the format of an envelope. It may be that Baron thought of these works as protest letters but considering her deep regard for the marks of time (HB/JO:1982:9 and Appendix II:3) it makes sense that she might extend those temporal associations to include the marks of space, place and transit found on letters especially as marks of transit also carried such significance for her.<sup>23</sup>

Although the vernacular of the letter is not particularly overt in collage number C73-008 (Figure 19), the words 'war letter' are clearly inscribed alongside her signature towards the top of the collage. The large cross that takes up most of the picture space suggests a reference to her father who was taken prisoner by the British during the first World War and subsequently awarded an Iron Cross (see Chapter Three). This reference is reinforced by the crossed out black marks across the bottom of the image which are reminiscent of the inscriptions made by prisoners to mark off time. As pointed out in the previous chapter, Baron's hatred of war was not just based on her own experiences in Germany but was also influenced by her father's bitterness as she expressed in the 1976 poem she wrote about him that is included in the appendices (XIX).

It is not my intention to suggest that there is a definitive 'meaning' to any one of Baron's collages, but rather, that in the process of making a collage, a chain of subconscious or unconscious associations would be made that coalesced under the rubric 'anti-war'. What interests me here and supports this line of thinking is an unnumbered collage from 1973 that has the words 'Spring Letter' written on the front (Figure 20). There are only thirteen collages from 1973 left in the estate which is not surprising as that was the year Baron was diagnosed with cancer. But I think that the obvious relation between 'War Letter' and 'Spring Letter' (they are both 'letters') indicates that the trope of the letter, like the torn

flag, could be a term of disapprobation. It is well-documented (VR/HB:1994; HB letters to DH) that Baron hated the spring because it signalled that summer was close behind and she dreaded the summer because she found the New York heat unbearable. This would explain why Spring Letter, despite its promising title and the inclusion of prints of jaunty flowers, is such a sombre looking collage. Flowers of course are also associated with death like those found on the Egyptian cloth in the Metropolitan Museum and this association is more in keeping with the sombre tone of the collage. More brown than green, an envelope shape is drawn in ink on the surface of the collage but there is a curious two-sided flap that appears to form an opening into the 'body' of the envelope referencing its interior. The open flaps reveal a simple cruciform made with two lines that could be read as a sign of resurrection - the promise of rebirth that spring offers - except that she disliked the spring (for the reasons mentioned above). The cruciform is also related to death thus, like the flowers, it carries a double meaning. Rather than draw the conclusion that she hated war, hated spring and hated letters it is more important to point out the frequency in which her subject matter is related in some way to trauma yet it is always somehow ambivalent.

#### **4.13 Envelope**

In 1974, Dolly Honig re-married and moved to Syracuse, New York, a university town a considerable distance from New York City. Baron wrote to her nearly every day and the letters that remain in Honig's possession have provided me with many valuable insights into Baron's personality as well as the events and preoccupations of her daily life. C76-063 (Figure 21) is a cloth collage constructed (literally) in the form of an envelope and instead of the word 'letter' the word 'envelope' is written clearly on the front. The collage is mostly pink with faint scrawled arrows pointing upwards and there is an extra piece of

cloth laid across the flap as if to ensure additional security. If the 'e' is dropped from the end of the word 'envelope', a new meaning emerges: to wrap, to enclose, to conceal, to obscure. The play between the two words: envelope/envelop is the play of the split subject caught between two positions and the fact that the collage is the colour of the body's interior seems not without meaning.

Once there was the enveloping body and the enveloped body. The latter is the more mobile in terms of transports (maternity not really appearing to be 'transporting'). The subject who offers or permits desire transports and so envelops, or incorporates the other. It is dangerous if there is no third term. Not only because it is a necessary limitation. This third term can show up within the container as the latter's relationship with his or her own limits: a relationship with the divine, death, the social or cosmic order. If such a third term does not exist within and for the container, the latter may become all-powerful. ( Irigaray cited in Whitford:1991:170-171)

I am suggesting that Dolly Honig enveloped Baron in the most positive sense of the term (as safety) precisely because she understood (and permitted) Baron's desire by recognising (fusing) Baron's intra/extra worlds. The 'third term' was their art, their shared histories and their mutual concern for a better world. In a letter dated April 5th, 1976 Baron began by writing: 'Things are so lousy I don't want to remember the date' before cataloguing the events that led up to her gloomy mood. She ended the letter by saying 'I love you and am desperate without you. No shit.' What is pertinent is that the trigger for her desolation was a Brandeis study group<sup>24</sup> fund-raising dinner that she and Herman had attended the previous Saturday night. Baron had donated a matted collage for the auction ('not one of my better ones') and no one bid on it. Furthermore neither she nor Herman knew how to dance; and she resented paying twenty dollars for a meal that could be 'had in a delicatessen for \$1.75'. (VR/DH (2):1994:1) The combination of ignominy (no one buying her work) and alienation (they rarely socialised beyond the immediate family) points to the importance of Honig's friendship because it provided Baron with an enveloped sense of self as same-but-different that was independent of the family, based on

equality and reciprocity and in many ways functioned as an ideal mother/daughter relationship. Baron and Honig were the same but different and each could accommodate the other's difference without resorting to domination or subordination because they were the same. An example of the mutuality of their support for one another (envelope/envelop) is found in another letter to Dolly dated July 6th 1976, when Baron wrote:

You can be sure I think of you all the time even if you don't write or send tapes or anything. We have so much in common that every time I come across some great treasure I think you'd like it. And sometimes when I'm not too cheap I get it for you. And when I read the New Yorker I look for jokes for you....Have I got you convinced that I am with you? Let me see, what else? I eat fresh vegetables now to keep myself in shape for you, brush my teeth and go to bed early - no maybe I do some of these things with somewhat selfish motives - and all in all I lead a clean life, very difficult in New York and behave myself. (ibid;p.7)

Eventually the physical distance between the two women dictated that the intensity of their friendship dwindled. Abandoned by Dolly, Baron's work became more introverted with an unshared, increasingly singular language. The open protest of the earlier work disappeared but as the collages became more successful (and her production increased correspondingly) the mirroring that Dolly Honig had provided was supplanted by Baron's relationship with the work itself. In the 1982 interview with Jean Olds, Baron spoke (obliquely) about Dolly and the difficulty of maintaining a long distance friendship:

what about like oh I'm real disgusted today and I wish she was here or If a big thing happens and you need them they come. But when they're far away, what about the little things - what about the everyday things - what about I wish we could go somewhere together or I wish she could look at these collages - I mean all of that goes. OK they're there when you need them for a big thing but the little things, and just the thought 'she's here'.  
(HB/JO:1982:10)

#### **4.14 No More No More**

The final motif associated with protest in Baron's work is the words 'No More' (and sometimes) 'No More No More' written, stencilled or stamped across the face of a collage (or box). This device (Figures 22 & 23) first appears in 1974

and of the three motifs, it is the one that re-occurs most frequently. 'Torn Flag' and 'War Letter' are both descriptive statements that signify specific referents. In contrast, 'No More No More' is not anchored in direct reference and functions instead as a pain cry that marks the literally wounded (semiotic) body erupting into the work and dissolving the subject/object boundary. What I am arguing is that the collages which have been grouped together as 'protest work' are, in fact, three quite distinct 'voices' each of which articulates a different subject position in relation to a symbolic order that Baron knew to be powerful yet devoid in itself of true meaning. As discussed in Chapter One, Baron expressed a core belief in the futility of words that is analogous to a collapse of the symbolic order. Yet in the so-called 'protest' collages she used words - the tools of that order - to make her meaning explicit. However, unlike the 1983 *Hurtful Collage Mountain* series (which will be discussed in the following chapter) Baron's uncharacteristic drive to name the name - i.e. *Torn Flag* - was not done in order to maintain a distance from the work itself but to perform a subversive turning of the symbolic order back on itself. The *Torn Flag* collages mock the symbolic sanctity of the flag and call into question the public currency of nationalism. The signified/signifier break elaborated by irreverent stains and ragged edges and her use of seemingly interchangeable stock symbolic elements points out the absurdity of dying for a decorated piece of cloth. Lest anyone mistake her message, she used actual words to spell it out. The *Torn Flag* collages also aligned Baron with other contemporary artists who were engaged with making art as an explicit protest against the war in Viet Nam but her confidence to 'speak' so openly was motivated by her sense of a shared language with Dolly Honig.

The *War Letter* collages occupy a slightly different, more intimate register. Using the word 'Letter' on the face of the collage (as well as often referencing

its form) implies a limit - a private transaction between two people: the sender and the recipient. Coupled with the word War, the connotation is elegiac. The marked surfaces inscribe a journey between two subjects; the space is personal; the stains evoke bodily blood and tears. Despite her misgivings, Baron used language to fix meaning in order to pin down her viewers in an act of violence that does not let them off the hook. To consider the *No More No More* collages as equivalent to the *Torn Flag* or *War Letter* collages is however to simplify and misinterpret her 'message'. The potential for misrecognition afforded by the evocation of genre (i.e. collages with words) may well have been a deliberate strategy on Baron's part that would camouflage the depth of her direct personal expression within the overarching motif of 'protest'.

The fact that the *No More No More* collages began in 1974 and not in the late 1960's (like the others) suggests that the words refer to something far more personal than anti-war protest. The last American troops left Viet Nam in March, 1973 (Karnow:1983:686) but in the following autumn of that same year, Baron was diagnosed with breast cancer, underwent surgery for a radical mastectomy and subsequently suffered another breakdown. When Dolly Honig left New York for Syracuse in early 1974 it was another profound loss for Baron because she lost the every day pleasures of their friendship as well as the luxury of a 'shared language'. As Baron could no longer 'show her these collages' she enveloped herself by reinvesting the collage process with the 'secret part of herself' that was separate, different and hidden.

In Baron's 1982 correspondence with Leo Duppen, a Dutch journalist, in reply to his question about the expression of protest in Baron's work, she wrote:

As for the expression of protest in abstract work, the answer is that it satisfies my personal guilt feelings or feelings of urgency to express myself against certain events. If the public at large cannot read the work, that is too

bad. I would not want the protest to be the most important. The artistic expression comes first since I am an artist rather than a newsmedia person. In other words, my work belongs to me and I will have it my way first and never bend it to any other purpose (Appendix II:14)

This statement (excerpted from a long letter) underpins precisely what I have been arguing was Baron's sense of her work as her 'own' language. She no longer cares if the public can read the work or not because the shift in relation Baron marks with the phrases: 'feelings of urgency to express myself' and 'the work belongs to me and I will have it my way first' encompasses dual positions in a reciprocal transaction between the artist and her work as if Baron was the sender of the message but also its recipient. This clearly illustrates Kristeva's account of the processual nature of art as an *imaginaire du pardon* in which the act, the 'setting up of a form' brings into being a 'someone else'. The urgency to express something is a drive to externalise an internal feeling in order to 'get it out' as if the body can no longer contain it.<sup>25</sup> 'Getting it out' in this case involves the translation of the feeling into a significant visual form, significant in the sense that a potentially random coalition of materials and marks is made to *signify* what was a hitherto unnameable feeling. Through the process of making art, the chaotic and motile semiotic 'feeling' becomes structured into symbolic form as an *artefact* with a position and a meaning in culture. Because the unknowable affect has been structured by symbolic form it can be safely re-incorporated into the body (of the artist) because '(it) belongs to me'.

By establishing a relationship between Baron's actual historical body (including traces of archaic body memories and sedimented emotional material) and the collages she produced I have tried to demonstrate that the expressive (and material) content of Baron's collages was mutable and fluid, drawn from a range of resources both personal and cultural, conscious and unconscious. As sites of self-inscription, the collages provided Baron with the means to

transpose inchoate emotional material into symbolic form and thus gain a degree of mastery over previously unnameable affect. Baron's work enables me to visualise something of the 'real order of incomprehensible suffering' referred to by Kristeva who regards the imaginary as originating in despair - the affect of utter loss.

„there is no meaning aside from despair. The child-king becomes irremediably sad before proffering his first words: it is being separated from his mother, despairingly, with no going back, that makes him decide to try and recuperate her, along with other objects, in his imagination and later, in words. The semiology interested in the degree zero of symbolism is unfailingly led to pose itself questions concerning not only the amorous state but also its sombre corollary - melancholy. Thereby to recognise in the same movement, that if no writing exists that is not amorous, nor does an imagination exist that is not, manifestly or secretly, melancholic.  
(Kristeva:1989a:13)

Kristeva's notion of the *imaginaire du pardon* as 'the transposition of destructive experience into aesthetic form' makes sense of the ways in which Baron inscribed in her art her references to the commonality of loss that characterises subjectivity. As an artist with a fractured personal history and later, a specific experience of illness, loss was not confined to an abstract yearning for maternal reunion but endemic to her real life experience. Thus she was in a unique position which she turned to her advantage by exploring the possibilities for aesthetic transcription of the real from a semiotic edge interfaced with the symbolic.

Baron's work, with its attention to heterogeneous materiality, was always process led. Considered within a Kristevian framework, process can be understood as the realm of semiotic sound, tactility and visibility prior to, or alongside the 'sense' of language and meaning. It is the delimitation of the 'clean and proper' body that ensures subjectivity by abjecting all that threatens the illusory coherence of the 'whole'. In a statement made by Baron during the interview with her son she said that 'art has to have a trace of something human

in it....every human has sweat, excrement, spit, hair' (HB/MB:1981:19). This statement indicates Baron's profound lack of illusion about stable subjectivity as well as her knowledge of art's potential to reveal its constitutive processes.

All my work...I was always trying to have it say a specific thing and finally a few years ago I thought that now the work was saying exactly what I want it to say...You see, there was a long time when I wasn't completely satisfied with what I was doing and, not that I didn't think each collage was good but they didn't have the message and finally, when I felt it had the message, then I thought, okay, now. After that I got the message across more and more or in different ways or in different work and I finally thought that now I'd like to show it. (HB/MB:1981:14)

Baron's message is as obvious *and* as vague as the means by which she conveys it. Her language is structured to vocalise specific meanings yet gaps, hesitations and repetitions in the structure yield semiotic traces constitutive of feminine inscriptions. Collage-as-process is intrinsic to that vocalisation because, just as the *imaginaire du pardon* translates emotional material into symbolic form, collage enabled Baron to literally translate (re-order) objects from the external world into the personal syntax of her intra-linguistic world in a way that made sense to her. Baron's gift lies in her ability to make private affect legible in terms broad enough to resonate with both the personal and the collective experience of her viewers.

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<sup>1</sup> Whilst Baron's sense of 'self' is an important component of this thesis, I am well aware that post-structuralist theory has problematised the term. The concept as I am deploying it is not an extant self that is 'Baron conscious of her own intentions' but rather (as I will demonstrate) a 'split subject' who nonetheless produces a 'self' which may well be fictive but is never perceived as unified. For an elaboration of the modern subject see Drucker:1994.

<sup>3</sup> Asked if the kitchen and the table were big, Herman Baron replied: 'Well not especially but Hannelore was able to make use of something someone else would overlook...I think she would have done her work in a shoebox if necessary. She never did anything on a large scale and I think she preferred to work small because it is more intimate than something on a gigantic scale' (VR/HB:1994:(2):1). Dolly Honig described visiting Baron for the first time: 'She was very shy and would say -"this is where I work" - and it would be a tiny little corner in the kitchen' (VR/DH:(1):1995:2).

<sup>4</sup> In the early years of their marriage Herman Baron owned a second-hand bookstore in Yonkers.

<sup>5</sup> This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

<sup>6</sup> Here Kristeva is talking about wounded emotions not only in the sense of the primal separations of birth and early infancy, but also of repressed trauma as the mark of trauma is the absence of self, the wound is, in a sense, sustained at a bodily level. It is interesting that a recent study suggests that fear responses produce cortical lesions that, once formed, are indelible thus 'emotional memory may be forever' (LeDoux,Romanski,Xagorano:1991).

<sup>7</sup> see Reardon, V.J (1995).

<sup>8</sup> These were made by Mark Baron after his mother's death in 1987.

<sup>9</sup> I have come across references to 'a series of large cloth collages' in her letters to Dolly Honig but according to Mark Baron, his mother later destroyed them. In her hand written c.v. there is an entry for 1969 that reads: 'large cloth collages (later destroyed except for very few)' (Appendix V) and a photograph of Baron published in the Riverdale News in 1972 (Appendix VI) shows her in front of a large collage which may have been one of the pieces mentioned although I have never seen one like it either photographed or in the estate.

<sup>10</sup> In a 1976 letter to Dolly Honig, Baron described a fund-raising dinner that she and Herman attended for the Brandeis Study Group and complained that 'not one person bid on my collage for \$25.00'.

<sup>11</sup> It is difficult to accurately date many of Baron's letters to Dolly because she wrote almost daily but rarely dated her letters. As Dolly Honig moved to Syracuse early in 1974 I know that their correspondence began in that year. However, the Honig's farmhouse burnt down some time after Baron's death in 1987 and all the tapes of their correspondence were destroyed in the fire. Also the letters that were saved are generally quite damaged thus reading them is often difficult.

<sup>12</sup> The clipping from the Riverdale Press (referred to previously) states: 'She has taught at Kingsbridge House, P.S.81, Jewish Community Centre, P.S.27 and the Yonkers and Park View Home'. The clipping refers to a new course she would run at the Riverdale Neighbourhood House in the autumn (1972).

<sup>13</sup> This fact is inscribed in most of the biographical material about Baron, most recently in Appendix I and the Mathes/Silverman Catalogue:1996.

<sup>14</sup> Herman Baron described how he asked his wife 'what is the anxiety really?' and she said 'It's as if something is terribly wrong and you can't shake it off' (VR/HB:(2):1994:9)

<sup>15</sup> According to Herman Baron, his wife was, on occasion, given medication but 'it didn't agree with her so she didn't take it' (ibid).

<sup>16</sup> The Tailor no doubt provided Baron with a useful screen on which to project her fantasies. She could be 'herself' in Italian and have that image mirrored back to her through the affirming connection.

<sup>17</sup> Herman Baron said that while he read the newspaper every day and watch the news on TV in the evening, Hannelore 'wasn't interested although she often couldn't avoid seeing (or hearing) the TV news' (VR/HB:(2):1994:6-7). It is not hard to imagine that her alleged uninterest in politics stemmed from a deep (and understandable) cynicism towards political motives such as she expressed in many of her letters to Dolly Honig.

<sup>18</sup> On May 4th, 1971, National Guardsmen shot and killed four student protesters at Kent State University (Karnow:1984:685).

<sup>19</sup> the purloined collection of secret government documents concerning the Viet Nam War.

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<sup>19</sup> the purloined collection of secret government documents concerning the Viet Nam War.

<sup>20</sup> Baron consistently 'returns' to previous work and reworks or extends former techniques, materials and iconography. This is why attempts to impose a coherent developmental narrative onto the work are futile and the more fruitful approach seems (to me) to be an exploration of particular themes and motifs that emerge throughout the oeuvre.

<sup>21</sup> Baron saw at least one show of Heyboer's work at the LeFebvre Gallery in New York (1967, 1969) and his work was also shown at MOMA in 1971/72. In 1984 Mark Baron curated a drawing show at the Willard Gallery in New York which included works by Heyboer, Beuys and Baron.

<sup>22</sup> Bissier was one of the only books on artists that I saw in Baron's home which is not to say that she did not look at many but as Herman dealt in second-hand books, it is likely that they passed in and out of the family home. Thus it is significant that she held on to the book on Bissier and in the interview with Mark Baron, she said that she liked his work because it had 'reverence' and 'it's modest, it's very small and quiet. I think he must have felt very much like I did when he did his work' (HB/MB:1981:18).

<sup>23</sup> Baron saved all the documents concerning her family's flight from Nazism. These papers include various transit documents and permissions to stay in a country for a given period of time etc. Some of them are the documents she used to make the collage which was included in the exhibition in Dillingen discussed in the last chapter.

<sup>24</sup> This was a reading group that Baron attended for many years.

<sup>25</sup> The drive to express is different from the drive to abject as the former presupposes an object - the thing that is expressed or the audience it is expressed to - whereas the latter involves a denial and displacement of the thing itself.



Figure 15. b/w photograph of Baron working. : C.1960s



Figure 16. C65-009 ('European Man') 1965

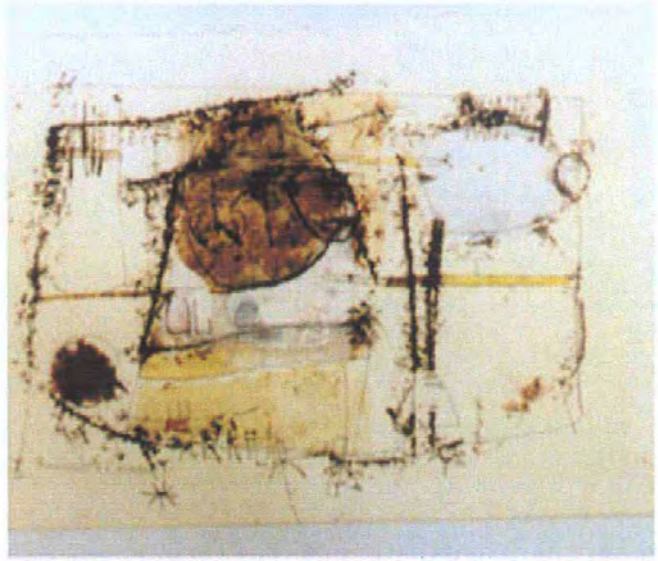


Figure 17. C68-009 ('Torn Flag') 1968



Figure 18. C77-014 ('Torn Flag') 'won award' on verso 1977

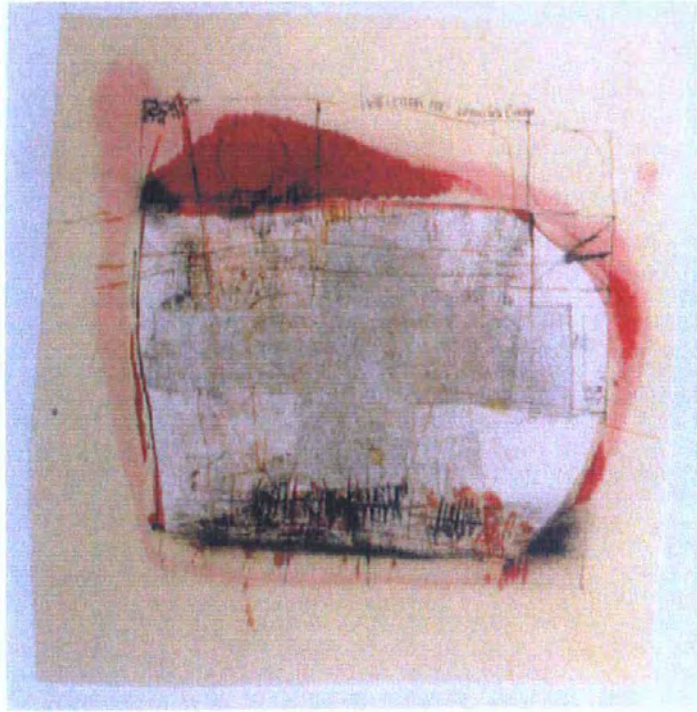


Figure 19. C73-008 (War Letter) 1973

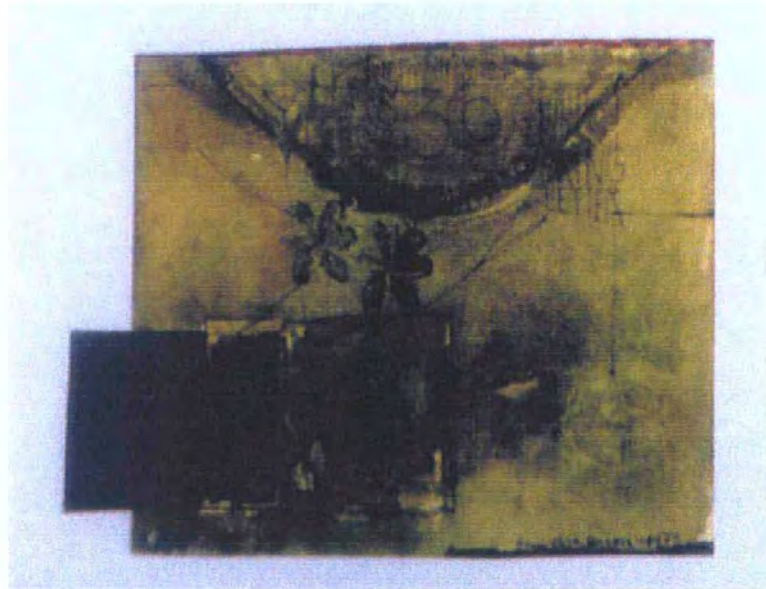


Figure 20. unnumbered collage ('Spring Letter') 1973



Figure 21. C76-003 (envelope) 1976

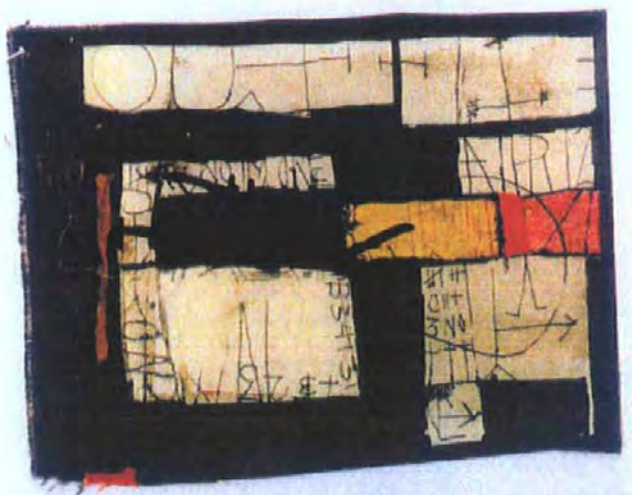


Figure 22. Unnumbered collage ('No More') 1974



Figure 23. Unnumbered collage ('No More') 1974

## CHAPTER FIVE

### WRITING THE 'REAL'

#### 5.1 Introduction

Susan Sontag wrote that 'cancer is a rare and still scandalous subject for poetry; and it seems unimaginable to aestheticize the disease' (Sontag:1991:15). This fact may well account for the way in which Baron's illness has been sidelined in favour of a more familiar and frequently represented narrative but it is important to bear in mind that in 1973 there were no models for an art practice which dealt directly with these issues. Like most cancer sufferers, Baron was alone in her efforts to integrate the meaning and manifestations of this disease which was, particularly at that time, the antithesis of a suitable subject for art.<sup>1</sup>

As I have argued throughout this thesis, the corporeal body is only one facet of the body-as-coalition, but the physical body-in-pain can override all other aspects as interiority is invaded by neural pain messages. In this chapter I intend to link some of Baron's specific experiences of cancer (which recurred with increasing frequency over a period of fourteen years) with particular collages in order to highlight what I consider to be the encoded traces of her response to that illness. Of course, it is impossible to map a neat linear progression that would encompass all Baron's feeling about the disease and the eventual negotiation with death which was its corollary for neither of these emotional states is immutable. Instead, there are recognisable themes and indices in the work that are indicative of a movement in and out of various emotional states which, I will argue, were linked to Baron's bodily sense of being. The evidence for this assertion is found primarily in Baron's introduction of 'humanoid' figures which, I will argue, were at least partially autobiographical in orientation. The link is also apparent in two hitherto private series of collages that came to light during the course of my research. These works were not intended for a public audience therefore they are

ungoverned in the sense that they are free of the kinds of internalised constraints (veiling, illegible writing etc.) more usually imposed by knowledge of the gaze of the 'other'. They are very important to her oeuvre however because they offer a more transparent access to her intra-linguistic vocabulary and as such, clearly expose the alliance between Baron's 'lived' body and her collage process.

Bodily death is the ultimate abjection - that which we must withstand in order to survive (Kristeva:1982:3). To perform as speaking subjects we must deny the precarious and contingent nature of identity as that which is inside and outside of the body proper. An interior (to the body) psychic life is projected onto the external world at the same time that the body's external materiality is introjected. The skin, as a kind of 'body ego', polices the boundary between inside and outside and protects us from knowledge of waste, decay and death. The skin as a membrane assures us that we are intact - a coherent, ordered and relatively stable identity. Cancer threatens precisely because it exceeds that coherence as cells multiply irrationally and surgical incisions penetrate the body's interiority. In Lacan's formulation, the mirror phase sets up a gap between an idealised self-image and an internalised sense of the self as less able, less coherent, and not 'good enough'. If this dynamic sustains a breach in our self conception which it is our life mission to hide and/or heal, what could be the effect on the psyche of a literally diseased body? If we internalise our material exteriority, in what form do we represent to ourselves a body mutilated by surgery?

With the exception of the 'European Man' collage of 1965 discussed in the last chapter, the year that Baron was first diagnosed with cancer, 1973, was the year in which Baron introduced figuration into the collages - a fact that supports my hypothesis that there is a relationship between her bodily experience of cancer and her representations of the human body in the collages. I am thinking of this body as a coalition of the semiotic body, the literal (physical) body and representations of the historical body. None of

these terms is meant to imply a direct transposition of the events of 'real' time. Rather, I am using them to suggest a way in which to understand how Baron may have used particular collages at particular times as fields on which she could inscribe her pain, her sadness and her eventual acceptance of death. I am not suggesting that all the work she produced in the last fourteen years of her life concerned her struggle with physical illness. But certain works 'speak' in an altogether different register and it is these works that are the primary focus of this chapter.

## **5.2 1973: Cancer, Breakdown**

In 1973, at the age of forty-seven, Baron developed breast cancer in her right breast and underwent surgery for a radical mastectomy. Friedal Alexander moved in with the family during her convalescence in order to look after Baron and relieve her of domestic responsibilities. Baron's response to the diagnosis, the surgery and the prolonged presence of her mother in her home was to suffer another debilitating nervous breakdown with the result that her mother stayed on living with the family for nearly a year. Herman Baron considered the breakdown to be caused by Baron's womanly concern with losing a breast, but Dolly Honig offered a different reading:

What does it mean - depression? The implication is that it's unreasonable...I would not say that she had a mental illness. Mental illness seems to mean that you don't function - I never saw her that way. I saw her very unhappy after the mastectomy, with all good reason. I cannot imagine anyone coming out of that without - she didn't know she had fifteen years ahead of her. She thought maybe she had a year - how can you expect it? She thought she was going to die. (VR/DH(1):8)

The trauma of mastectomy - the surgical removal of a breast - is an enforced (for health) bodily mutilation in a culture that signifies the breasts (and there must be two) as the symbol of female sexual attractiveness. Perhaps more relevant than the loss of 'sex appeal' would be the quite normal fear response to a diagnosis which is often considered to be fatal. The existential psychotherapist Irvine Yalom considers anxiety and claustrophobia (Baron's primary symptoms) to be thinly veiled signs of death anxiety (Yalom:1980:201). It is possible to suppose that Baron's early life-threatening

experiences in Europe, coupled with her perception of her parents as unable to protect her would have rendered her unable to erect normal defences against death anxiety and made her view herself as vulnerable and fragile. Nonetheless, the presence of cancer means that death can no longer be exiled to a distant realm and masked by everyday fears.

What does it feel like to think you are going to die? Would the idea of non-being motivate translation into symbolic form? Baron's reaction to the illness was to succumb to the psychic death and immobility of 'breakdown', a long period of almost catatonic depression. According to Herman Baron:

For close to a year she couldn't do her artwork - 1973 - and she would cry and nothing would help her and I suggested she take apart a collage and try and put it back together and when I finally prevailed on her to do it, it was like a miracle - it took three or four minutes - she tried to put it together again after she took it apart and she said she'd be OK now. (VR/HB:1994:(2):4) <sup>2</sup>

The story testifies to the fact that the *process* of art making (in this case begun by taking something apart) facilitated a release that was strong enough to jolt Baron out of a place of breakdown - a place which is no place - outside and beyond the signification of the symbolic order. The relief of signification enabled Baron to *take apart* a collage - a symbolic object that represented a time and place before she knew that she had cancer - in order to translate the senselessness, the non sense of her experience, into a new aesthetic form. It was the process of inscribing hitherto unsignifiable emotional pain (catatonia) in the space of a collage that gave Baron relief and, in a sense, returned to her a self that could make meanings.

Baron made only thirteen collages in 1973 and of these, one stands out as an autobiographical inscription using iconography that seems specific to her illness. A close reading of C73-001 (Figure 24) allows me to illustrate this point.

Ten discrete line drawings - eight on paper, two on cloth - are arranged on a linen ground that has been stained a pale pinkish brown. The allusion to flesh is reinforced by irregular patches of denser colour that invoke bruising. The drawings, separated by their individual edges, appear to be in compartments all of which are unified by a single, encircling line. A drawn arrow connects the base of one drawing (positioned left of the central axis) to another drawing of two spike-edged spheres which sit centrally beneath the horizontal axis directly above Baron's signature. The explicitness of the arrow (as a form of connection) and the involved proximity of the author's signature (which was uncharacteristic of this period) supports a reading of the collage as a totemic form of autobiography. The left hand drawing appears to be an aerial view of a figure with outstretched arms lying in a bed. The line which represents the 'foot' of the bed extends left beyond the picture space, curves around to the right and becomes an arrow which is pointing to the drawing of the two spheres. The two spike-edged spheres can be read as two breasts - the right one of which is smaller, darker and *injured*. It is as if the lines marking out the spheres are corporeally connected to an image of her body as damaged. Two other elements sited at the top of the collage reinforce this reading. On the top central axis is a small, vertical, red piece (the only red in the collage) which shows a brown sphere inscribed by four vertical black lines. To the right of this piece is a shallow, brown rectangle containing what could be read as a supine faceless figure. Unlike the figure in the bed which gains life through verticality, this horizontal figure is abject. The remaining four drawings are more totemic and look like shields or inscriptions of an arcane cosmology but, like the other drawings, they are also compartmentalised. As I have argued previously, Baron's art practice provided her with a sense of separateness and autonomy but to achieve this, she required a concept of the Self as unified that the experience of cancer would have undoubtedly breached. Thus the compartments in this case could signify a desire to return to a space of containment (despite its claustrophobic underside) but in another, more specific sense, the obviousness of the compartmentalisation could *describe* the fragmentation Baron herself

experienced as the result of the surgery and the breakdown. The entire arrangement of ten drawings is held together - encircled - by a spindly line which is almost dotted at the top yet reinforced at the bottom with an overmarking of orange ink. Considered in relation to the flesh tones of the collage ground, the frail, encircling line becomes the skin which holds it all together. The line highlighted with orange ink suggests a need for reinforcement (can the skin keep it all together?) while simultaneously alluding to a scar.

The outstretched arms of the figure on the bed signify vulnerability and the lack of a mouth (the introduction of what will become a recurring theme in Baron's work) an inability to speak. Read in this way, C73-001 could be interpreted as a symbolic representation of an experience of cancer and surgery. The boundary of the body ego is breached and the dis-ease within is revealed. The psyche has no words for this as yet, only the body surface inscribed with a wounding dis-figuration. In this collage - which could quite possibly be the first one she did after nearly a year of break down - Baron restages the trauma of her mastectomy. She replicates the surgical wound by applying colour; patches up the fragments by marking them with ritual symbols (in a kind of psychic propitiation); and enacts her speechless, vulnerable self and her sick, excised breast. All are bound together by the skin line in a holistic gesture of renewed integrity.

### 5.3 Hugo Beigel

Before Dolly Honig moved away to Syracuse she arranged an appointment for Baron with a German Jewish psychologist (a friend of Honig's family), named Dr. Hugo Beigel. The relationship proved successful and Baron continued to see Dr. Beigel (although gradually less often as she begrudged the money) until his death in 1978. Hugo Beigel was the founding Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Sex Research* which emanated originally from his office on East 94th Street before being associated with Syracuse University. The scientific study of sexuality re-emerged in the United States

with Kinsey's 'objective' collation of an archive of sexual behaviour in the 1940s. Judging by the few copies I've seen, *The Journal of Sex Research* occupies an uneasy intersection between extending the paradigm of 'normal' sexual behaviour (in keeping with the so-called sexual revolution of the 1960s) and exercising moral judgements thinly disguised as psychotherapeutic law. In a paper entitled *Changing Sexual Problems in Adults* Beigel relates the increase in cases of male impotence to the rise of feminism.

The attitude assumed by many women in conformity with statements published by pathologic man-haters rouse feelings of guilt, fear, and hostility in those predisposed to these responses by mother domination and the father's inadequacy or disinterest. ...And when MS (magazine)...declares that woman alone 'has the right dosage of testosterone...enthusiastic female readers compensate with exaggerated imitation of masculine equality in their behaviour, the culturally weakened male's sexual functioning is inhibited not only in his contact with one who so tries to prove her value and superiority over him, but with any woman with whom he desires intimacy (Beigel:1975:427).

I have included this extract in order to illustrate that Dr. Beigel had quite definite opinions about gender roles - even though he did refer to them (in the above article) as 'genetically and culturally assigned' (p.428). As Dr. Beigel definitely helped Baron to overcome many of her fears and anxieties it is possible to speculate that this was at least partially the result of the very clearly defined gender roles he subscribed to. As I argued in Chapter Three, the instability of her parents' gendered positions (culturally) necessitated that Baron, as the daughter of the family, remain in a weakened, passive position. Dr. Beigel, as a strong father figure, related to Baron as a woman, not a girl and for the first time since her 1946 breakdown, it is significant that Baron was happy to travel downtown alone. She flew with Herman several times to Syracuse to visit Dolly and in 1978, Baron, Mark and Herman flew to Washington, DC to see her work hung in a show at the New Museum of American Art.<sup>3</sup> It would be simplistic to suggest that she was suddenly 'cured' of a habit formation which had taken years to develop. She still found certain things difficult, but with Dr.Beigel's support, she could and did do them. She was able to be more assertive in her dealings with her family and

her correspondence with Dolly chronicles - with great humour and imagination - the daily interactions and events in what she referred to in one of her letters to Dolly as 'the soap opera of my life'.

#### **5.4 'Red Roof' Collage**

In the collage discussed previously (Figure 24) I made a case for interpreting one of the drawings as a figure in a bed thus making a connection between Baron's work and her first experience of cancer. In the collage No. C74-008 (Figure 25) the figure is entirely legible as a representation of a (female) figure and signals a relationship between the collages and her autobiographical body as articulated through her use of the figure. This collage in particular reflects that relationship as it is the product of the increasing sense of independence she experienced as a result of her therapeutic work with Dr. Beigel.

The collage is small (about 9" x 6"), irregularly shaped and constructed on a cloth ground with a red painted 'frame'. The composition is divided both vertically and horizontally in that a central vertical tower/house/phallus with a red roof(?) and open black window/hole on its top half stands in the centre of the picture plane and a narrow strip of red cloth, laid from the right-hand edge horizontally across the picture plane, bisects the tower but falls short of the left-hand edge. The part of the tower that lies beneath the red strip is brown, suggesting earth or something buried, while the top half is grey. To the left of the tower, filling the adjacent space beneath the red strip, is a small print of a childlike figure with a large head, two open eyes and two stick legs but neither mouth nor arms. The interior of the torso is filled with intricately detailed drawings of primitive diagrams and plant forms as if the body were open for inspection and contained an almost decorative anatomy. The spatial relationship of the figure to the tower is one of constraint and confinement although the space to the left of the figure is open and empty apart from the small written symbols IIXI which are adjacent to the 'neck' of the figure. As the figure is printed on rice or other very thin paper with its

edges trimmed, it is difficult to determine exactly how this print was made but the detail of the lines in the torso suggest that it is a small etching. The position of the figure within the overall composition is 'beneath' the surface and coupled with the absence of a mouth from which to speak it suggests the unconscious. The open-eyed proximity of the figure to the tower/phallus suggests a 'knowing' recognition or acknowledgement particularly as Baron 'claimed' the tower/phallus by signing her name beneath it rather than signing under the figure, or more characteristic of this period, on the back of the collage. Considered within the context of what has been previously discussed concerning Baron's internalised position as a daughter in relation to her father's threatened masculinity, this collage suggests that the transference implicit in her therapeutic relationship with Dr. Beigel enabled her to act with more authority (as an author) because he provided her with a non-threatened (or threatening) male figure. C73-001 (Figure 24) also represents a shift from the kind of introverted language that I pointed to at the end of the last chapter, to one of *direct appeal* in which the autobiographical thrust, as an orientating narrative, assumes an audience. In other words, I am suggesting that Baron's introduction of figures into the collages coincided with a newly experienced confidence resulting from her release from the anxiety that I have argued was the effect of the burden of her parents' desire. The idea that the figures are a form of *direct appeal* means that in some sense they acted as autobiographical 'stand-ins' for Baron in which she could 'speak' directly to her audience. This differs from the collages with horizon lines for instance, in which the horizon line can be understood as a form of address that assumes a viewer. The figures, as 'stand-ins' have a message to communicate in reference to her gendered body imago. This is not to say that *all* of Baron's collages are autobiographical, telling her 'life', but rather that the figures can be interpreted as representations of her body as a site where gender and illness coalesce.

## 5.5 Interim

The gradually improving state of Baron's health (both emotional and physical) is reflected in her production figures for the years immediately following her surgery. Compared to the thirteen collages from 1973 which remain in the estate, for 1974 there are only eleven including the *No More No More* collage referred to in the last chapter and the *Red Roof* collage discussed above. In January of that year, Baron's first grandchild (Julie's son, Evan) was born. Baron was being treated with radiotherapy for much of the year and it was in the latter part of 1974 that she began seeing Dr. Beigel. In 1975 there are eighteen collages left in the estate and her letters to Dolly make reference to her recuperation and to looking forward to beginning classes in the fall.<sup>4</sup> In January, 1976, Julie gave birth to a daughter (Tara) and in that same month, Mark began to manage his mother's work. The slide documentation undertaken by Mark Baron after his mother's death begins with the work produced during 1976 and the collages for that year, eighty slides in all, are numbered up to one hundred and twenty five. This represents a significant increase in production which suggests not only that Baron was feeling fully recovered from cancer but that she was also optimistic about the future. Surviving cancer often gives patients a new, richer perspective on life (Sontag, 1978; Yalom, 1980) for to face death and conquer it can endow one with a sense of personal mastery which, certainly in Baron's case, would have made many of her past fears and anxieties seem comparatively insignificant. The marked increase in Baron's production is also noteworthy in that the drive to create can be seen as a drive towards life - to outwit death by leaving something of yourself behind. In 1976 Baron had her second solo show at the Katonah Gallery in Katonah, New York (the first was in 1973) and Mark arranged representation for Baron's work with Kathryn Markel who agreed to give Baron a solo show in her Manhattan gallery the following year.

Of the eighty slides from 1976 Baron used a figure only once in the form of a bound, open-mouthed bird which features in an undated paper and ink collage from that year.

Working from a slide, it is difficult to determine exactly how the print was made<sup>5</sup> but it appears to be an early version of the wrapped copper prints. Early in 1970, Baron introduced a figure which she used frequently over the next couple of years. This is the figure found in the collage numbered C77-005, (Chapter One, Figure 1), that appears blindfolded with spindly legs and outstretched bone-like arms.

## **5.6 The Print as a 'One-Off'**

1977 marks a definitive shift from the primarily colour field abstract cloth collages of 1976 to a more narrative, figurative form produced by the appearance of one or more figures in a collage. In order to discuss Baron's use of figuration in a more tangible and less poetic way, it is useful to differentiate between the various techniques she used to represent the human figure. The figures bound with tiny cords referred to by Schiffman in Chapter Two were no doubt the prints Baron made by cutting out anthropomorphic shapes from thin copper sheet, wrapping or binding portions of the figures with either bits of cloth or string (or sometimes both), then inking the figure directly for printing onto rice paper. Figure 7 (Chapter One) is a photograph of some of Baron's copper cut-out figures that illustrates the slight variations between them and their substantiality as objects. When bound and printed, the impression of the inked material against the flat surface of the figure creates the appearance of an almost three dimensional surface texture. In an undated written statement Baron describes her impetus for this technique:

At first when I got my press I tried traditional etchings but the results were too predictable and so I did no prints for a long time. Then I saw photos of very thin pieces of copper in the shapes of people which were dug up somewhere at an archaeological dig, and they were eroded and broken up into parts. So I got the idea to use very thin copper sheets and cut them into the shapes I wanted, and applied ink. Printed that way the results were somewhat unpredictable because their surface was uneven, I wrapped cloth and string around them for texture and because I like wrapped things like Egyptian mummies, American Indian burial costumes and other archaeological finds...(HB/MB:1981:: 25) <sup>6</sup>

The copper figure prints generally have fairly distinct characteristics of shape, size, form and density therefore it is possible to recognise certain figures despite the fact that

the prints themselves vary due to factors such as the amount or colour of ink left on the surface during a particular pull or changes in the binding or wrapping of a particular figure. Also, Baron frequently drew over a figure, emphasising either its outline or tracing some suggestive marks thrown up during the printing process. She also occasionally used the same figure twice in one collage, flipping it over before printing, thus making no distinction between front or back.

In addition to the copper figures (which are the most unambiguous of the prints) Baron made etchings which were usually child-like outline drawings of figures or figures with exposed interiors of bodies of which the *Red Roof* collage is an example. Another print technique was a form of reverse drawing when she would lay the rice paper face down on a surface coloured with ink or oil stick and draw into the back of it thus picking up the colour from the paper underneath. She also made simple pen and ink drawings which she incorporated into a collage often with the reverse side of the paper face up. What is apparent from nearly all of Baron's prints is that she wanted the figuration to be indistinct, veiled and slightly illegible. Many of the prints make reference to the damaged body and all of them share a quality of incompleteness, corrosion or lack of realisation similar to that found in her 'child-like' outline drawings. In fact, it is almost erroneous to refer to the many reproductive techniques she used as 'prints' because the term can imply reproducibility at least popularly. While this was the case for the etchings she originally made on plates, strictly speaking, many of her techniques were monotypes, a technique which by refusing the reproductive potential of the medium draws attention to the uniqueness of the work.<sup>7</sup> While still deploying the print technique of indirect transcription, monotypes are usually made by placing paper directly onto a painting made on a sheet of glass or metal. The ink or paint is then transferred to the paper but the print cannot be duplicated or repeated. This is an interesting contradiction to her use of recycled materials because it inscribes the unique into the process rather than the re-formed. But it could also be argued that Baron's use of this technique

implies a desire for her mark making as inscriptions to be mediated in such a way that an element of chance, as a gateway to the psyche, is introduced into the work allowing access to the sense of hiddenness or secrecy that she alluded to when speaking about her art work. The space between chance and control that is opened up by techniques like this is also a comparatively uninhabited area making the 'one-off print' an oxymoron where Baron could exist in the space between two concepts.

Apart from the very few works discussed previously, Baron only began referencing the human form with any consistency in the collages made during 1977. Of the eighty slides in the collection, twenty-four include figures in various forms, produced by different techniques. Some of them appear to be gendered as previously discussed, some as 'children' in relation to larger 'adult' figures but their common traits are indistinctness, lack of mouths, and some form of binding.

### **5.7 Binding as Hypercathexis**

The collage process with its drive to unify disparate elements can be understood as a form of binding. When coupled with Baron's impulse to bind the copper figures, binding can be seen as a significant feature of Baron's work. Freud offers an explicit account of binding as a way of mastering trauma that is useful for theorising Baron's drive to bind.

We describe as 'traumatic' any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield. It seems to me that the concept of trauma necessarily implies a connection of this kind with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli. Such an event as an external trauma is bound to provoke a disturbance on a large scale in the functioning of the organism's energy and to set in motion every possible defensive measure. At the same time, the pleasure principle is for the moment put out of action. There is no longer any possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus, and another problem arises instead - the problem of mastering the amounts of stimulus which have broken in and of binding them, in the psychical sense, so that they can be disposed of. (Freud, S. Beyond the Pleasure Principle S.E. XVIII, 29-30)

Of course Freud is referring to 'psychical binding' whereas Baron's binding is physical and literal but Kristeva (1989a, 1989b) makes no distinction between the two when she conceptualises art as the transposition of emotional (interior) material into symbolic (material and external) form and this is the framework in which I am positioning this discussion. The idea of binding the figures with string, wire or cloth no doubt initially arose from the archaeological images Baron had seen, but for the images to have attracted her in the first place suggests that they sparked a psychic charge or recognition that she *needed* to act upon. Thus the process of binding the figures worked for Baron not only as a metaphor but as an invocation of the psychic binding Freud speaks of which ensures the unity of a subject under threat.

The prevalence of bound figures in the collages of 1977 and 1978 in particular (four to five years after Baron's mastectomy and breakdown) poses the question: why is there such a gap between the traumatic experience of cancer and the evidence of an unconscious drive to work through or master it? Obviously there is no one answer but if these collages are viewed as an intuitive working *towards* something rather than a re-working of the past, then there is a useful correlation between Baron's act of *making* and Freud's concept of hypercathexis which could shed light on their meaning. In his essay *The Unconscious*, (1915) Freud distinguishes between an unconscious and a conscious presentation as the difference between the cathexis of memory-images, or remoter memory-traces, of the object (or thing) in the unconscious and the thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it found in a conscious presentation. The movement from unconscious repression to consciousness is therefore a translation into words, a process which Freud terms hypercathexis. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) Freud discusses hypercathexis as a 'preparedness for anxiety' which, by focusing attention on a specific object or idea, permits the subject to mitigate the fright that is endemic to trauma. In other words, hypercathexis is a form of binding inflowing amounts of excitation.

It will be seen, then, that preparedness for anxiety and the hypercathexis of the receptive systems constitute the last line of defence of the shield against stimuli. In the case of quite a number of traumas, the difference between systems that are unprepared and systems that are well prepared through being hypercathected may be a decisive factor in determining the outcome; (Freud:1920:303)

What is interesting is Freud's emphasis on the transition from feeling to *word* as fundamental to the process which is similar to Kristeva's account of the *imaginaire du pardon*. But Freudian hypercathexis differs in terms of its aim which is to 'bind inflowing amounts of excitation' suggesting containment whereas in Kristeva's conceptualisation, the aim is transformation through sublimation. What is relevant in Baron's case however is that the transition is from feeling to image, not word. The image may or may not have the word 'cancer' consciously attached to it, but as pictograms, Baron's bound figures perform the same function as Freud's words. In fact, Kristeva does not specify the symbol as necessarily linguistic. Of further interest is the fact that Baron's more consistent use of bound figures coincided with a contiguous increase in her use of illegible writing in other, more abstract collages from the same period. This coincidence seems to suggest that Baron's unconscious was 'covering all its bases' by seeking to articulate or symbolise some deep sense of bodily apprehension.

What this also points to is the possibility of another way of knowing that is outside spoken language and constitutes a way of assimilating knowledge prior to naming it. During one of my visits to her home, Dolly Honig showed me a series of small prints that Baron had sent to her as a gift, enclosed in a letter. One of the figures in the series is particularly illustrative of this idea. The figure (Figure 26) is nearly four inches in height with a cycladic head and truncated outstretched arms. There is a central oval void in the torso which is partially filled by what looks like a stone held in place by repeated binding. A strip of loosely woven cloth hangs down from the base of the void barely

covering the legs but the central focus is the open chest cavity. When Dolly Honig showed it to me she said:

These things here she made just before the cancer spread to her lungs. I always thought - there's a whole series of them - they had the tying around the chest, and that was before she knew. (VR/DH:1:6)

A way of knowing that is *beyond* or *beside* language and cognition *and yet able to be symbolised* challenges the widely held model that without language there is no thought, memory or Self. In a recent study of synesthesia, the scientist Richard E. Cytowick comes out in support of this feminist view (Griffin: 1978; Grosz:1994) by refuting the idea that there is no knowledge that is not intellectualised in its filtration through the body. He makes the claim that 'inner knowledge that is largely inaccessible to language is often more valid than what you think or say about it' (Cytowick:1994). In other words, as soon as we speak (or write) about something it is relegated to the past, to memory or history, whereas intuitive 'knowing' corresponds to Kristeva's account of the semiotic body as the repository for affects remaindered by the acquisition of language. However, the emphasis of Kristeva's conceptualisation is on the link to the maternal body which, in itself, is a historical link situated in the past (perfect?). The body 'knowing' that I am trying to write about here occurs in the present, prior to 'figuring it out' with its implication of cognition. I am suggesting that it can be 'figured' out through interaction with or manipulation of objects in the external world. An example of this is found for instance in ritualistic actions such as binding which may not make 'sense' without the imposition of cultural structures and meaning (Freud's hypercathexis) but which nonetheless are driven or motivated by a non-linguistic body 'sense'. I am not proposing that intuitive knowledge can be understood as a kind of mysticism but rather, as the result of an embodied interaction with external objects that dissolves subject/object boundaries and effects a form of healing because it is processual, situated in the present and obliterates the ego as a separate entity of loss.

By early 1978, Baron was consistently including printed figures in the collages most of them bound or damaged in some way. Chest binding was particularly prevalent as was a kind of interior fragmentation reminiscent of medical/anatomical illustrations.

Although the overtly figurative collages constitute a small fraction of Baron's oeuvre they are important because the narrative potential of a human-like figure allowed Baron to 'speak' in a more direct and exoteric manner. When these particular collages are linked to knowledge of Baron's emotional and physical state at the time of their production, a fruitful account of the unconscious processes at play in her practice is generated that illuminates something of the way in which art can work to alleviate suffering. These collages, with their obvious reference to more ancient and totemic forms of figuration, were also simultaneously embedded in the broad reach of Baron's aesthetic and cultural relation to art as contemporary, historical and ancient. As undisguised signs of loss, torment and despair, they were produced as direct appeals in an assumed dialogue with a constituency of viewers. It could also be argued that, just as working small involves the viewer in a demand from Baron, so too the figurative collages can be seen as a means of re-directing pain onto her viewers. Freud discusses this dynamic as a shift from passive experience to one of active mastery that is often found in children's play. He also regards it as a component of artistic activity aimed at an audience, when the artist '(does) not spare the spectators...the most painful experience and can yet be felt by them as highly enjoyable' (Freud: 1920: 17).

If these specific works are, as I am suggesting, an expression of Baron's experience of cancer (albeit underpinned by historical loss) then it would explain the tendency for their meaning to be attributed to the Holocaust. For her audience to transfer the very real threat of cancer to a threat that is distant both in time and space is a displacement of anxiety in keeping with the dynamics of the pleasure principle.

## 5.8 Cancer Again

According to Herman Baron, in the autumn of 1978, Baron was admitted to hospital for a D & C and 'the doctor looked at the X-rays and said it looked a bit suspicious and she should see an oncologist or a thoracic surgeon....So we went to a Japanese thoracic surgeon and he did the surgery and removed one quarter of her right lung, because it looked suspicious' (VR/HB:2:9-10). In a letter sent to Dolly while she was still in the hospital Baron wrote :

I am writing this in the hospital on some nice paper. Mark brought me my art supplies in a beautiful box with drawers he bought for me on his last trip. He is such a great help. I have been doing some work. What else is there for me? ...I don't quite know how I feel as yet. It all happened so fast that I have not fully reacted. I was told that this time I'll have to follow this operation with some sort of treatments when the surgery heals a bit more. Maybe the kind with the hair loss. They don't know yet. ...The doctor said I should go out alot - maybe I'll have a great time although he told me the incision will hurt for three months and not heal completely for three years. ..I called Hugo Beigel's colleague - the one who informed me of his death - and will see her just so I don't get depressed and so have someone to talk to. She seems very nice and offered to come to the hospital to see me but I told her not to bother. What can she say to blow it all away? (Letter to DH:7:Tape Transcript:4)

The poignancy of her final question reaffirms Baron's disregard for words and suggests that she had a certain amount of emotional strength to deal with the psychological impact of the recurrence of cancer. But the physical trauma of the surgery was acute for in a subsequent letter she wrote:

I am ok except for the pain in my back from the operation which involved a cut around my shoulderblade and makes it hard for me to move my right arm alot. While in the hospital I did some artwork - a set of back and white collages like drawings - and three others but nothing since I came home. I can't settle down until my back is a little better and I am not much in the mood. ...I am doing the cooking for us here but so far there has been no cleaning. Herman and Mark plan to try their hand at it tomorrow. We managed to keep my mother out this time as you can see. Julie was here today and very considerate. She washed the dishes and did not stay too long. Everyone is trying to help all they can - especially Herman....I still have doctors' appointments - Tuesday with Beigel's successor and Thursday with the surgeon for the check up. Then second week in October the horror treatment starts. Well good thing I don't worry in advance. (ibid; letter No.8: 5)

In both of these letters Baron seems extraordinarily calm, as if she were in shock from the speed of the events which overtook her. She is fairly submissive, a 'good' (if

facetious) patient, grateful for the ministrations of others and seeming to accept the pain and injury of her illness. The fact that the recurrence of cancer did *not* propel Baron into a state of breakdown corroborates not just the efficacy of the therapy with Dr. Beigel but more significantly, that her collage process may well have prepared Baron psychologically by facilitating the hypercathexis of intuited knowledge and its non-cognitive transposition into symbolic form.

Apart from the collages made during her stay in hospital (which will be discussed in more detail below) Baron's seemingly passive, post-operative state was initially unproductive. A subsequent letter<sup>8</sup> to Dolly Honig is written in a very different mood and the post script registers a conscious connection between the collages and Baron's autobiographical body.

Well, don't worry about not having been here. I was just passed from one hand to the other mostly not knowing who was where. Today I saw the Jap surgeon. They are all so cool. He asked me if I resumed my former existence in every way and the way he looked at me I knew he meant sex, and told him no. Whereupon he reprimanded me. I'd like to see him have sex with the sore I have and still all shook up etc. He also told me that I'd gained weight since leaving the hospital. A downright falsehood and anyway, what am I supposed to do, stop eating. He told me when I left not to gain any weight and I lost eight pounds. So you can see what I mean, never a good word or a pat on the back. I can't stand those son of a bitch doctors all so fat and expensive and critical of everything....I have to see this other imbecile of a doctor. He told me he makes all his patients buy a wig before the treatment. Let him try that with me! You can see I can still get MAD, but your tape was nice. Glad you had some good days in England. About a trip to Israel - who knows? Anyhow, don't worry, I'll hold on until you get here.

Love Hannelore

P.S. Still making collages but they are so bloody and gutsy they scare even me.

(Letter to Dolly Honig: No.50)

This letter indicates that Baron was now actively and creatively angry. Her anger was directed at the doctors who not only seemed incapable of understanding how she felt but also imposed on her the cultural dictates of femininity. Once again, her use of the tragic bound figures which are still prevalent in the 1978 collages can be seen as a 'direct appeal' to the doctors (symbolic order) that misunderstand her. Baron's reference to 'bloody and gutsy' collages is also pertinent to Freud's account of the rage

that often underpins tragedy. 'they scare even me' implies an intent on Baron's part to 'scare' her audience in a displacement of her rage about having cancer again. It also indicates a level of detachment that is arguably an important component of artistic making.

Gillian Rose chronicles similar experiences with the medical profession in *Love's Work* (1997) a book written immediately prior to her death from cancer. It could be equally argued that Rose's book contains similar evidence of displaced rage.

Medicine and I have dismissed each other. We do not have enough command of each other's language for the exchange to be fruitful. It is as if, exiled forever into a foreign tongue, you learn the language by picking up words and phrases, even sentences, but never proceed to grasp the underlying principles of grammar and syntax, which would give you the freedom to use the language creatively and critically. You cannot generate the grammar of judgements in order to pursue alternative questions and conclusions. This, of course, assumes that there is a grammar at stake and not simply a pragmatics, presented with the spurious legitimacy of a structure. (Rose:1997:96)

The spurious legitimacy of the language of medicine was similarly useless to Baron and she responded to it in her own language of collage. That she was able to inscribe this language in such a way that we, as viewers can read and understand it (albeit with the benefit of hindsight) clearly exemplifies Kristeva's configuration of the *imaginaire du pardon*. The potential this offers for ways of thinking about critical art practice, trauma and the body is the necessary acknowledgement that there is a significant relationship between the non-verbal, non-cognitive body; unconscious loss; and the marks and signs produced as art. It is as if the artist (or anyone who identifies with an aesthetic imaginary) has access to a trance-like privileged space of knowing that is prior to and indeed productive of conscious knowledge. It proposes the possibility of another meaning and opens us to the promise of an *other*, who as Richard Kearney (citing Kristeva) suggests 'may listen, speak, comprehend, absolve, deliver us back to ourselves as subjects of a 'second life'' (Kearney:1991:191).

## 5.9 The Hospital Collages<sup>9</sup>

The series Baron made whilst in the hospital (which she referred to in the letter to Dolly quoted above) were never intended for a public audience. There are seventeen works in all and Baron numbered each one consecutively in pencil on the bottom left-hand corner. In the letter to Dolly, Baron distinguished between what she called 'a set of black and white collages, like drawings' and 'three others' which would mean that the first fourteen were one set and the 'three others' another. However, my interest lies in the first six collages of the series which I will discuss in detail while the remaining eleven will be referred to only collectively.

Simply executed with minimal materials, the first six collage/drawings are simple abstracts that speak from a deep place disconnected from the world of the conscious mind. As such, they are a powerful evocation of the death drive - the regressive drive towards the inertia of a real that cannot be represented in words. Primacy of the death drive often involves the overturning of object relations, the severing of bonds of desire that are directed towards the outer world (Eros). Instead, there is a turning inward whereby the self, on the very borderline of life, seeks to merge with the Thing<sup>10</sup> in a kind of entropy. This archaic backward move, in which the bonds that ensure the subject's unity become meaningless, is characterised by disintegration of the ego, a self which literally falls into pieces. As productions of her psyche these collages fulfilled an important function for Baron in that they enabled her to take up a position outside of herself thus presenting her self with a non-verbal integrity that was separate from the Thing (the real) thus, as Kristeva argues, meaning exists. This is important in view of the fact that it is the deployment of language as a set of signifiers standing in for the absent object which is meant to ensure subjectivity. Language permits a kind of double negation in which loss is covered over by words which allow the subject to deny or negate the loss. As Lacan claims, 'the symbol manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing.' (Grosz: 1990c: 61)

According to Mark Baron, not long after her surgery, his mother asked him to purchase whatever drawing supplies he could find at a Woolworth's near the hospital. He returned with a cheap sketch pad, tracing paper, glue, sellotape, crayons and soft black pencils. It was a few days after that visit that he brought in the box containing some of her own materials and paints. It is crucial to consider the conditions of *limitation* in which these collages were produced. Firstly, there is the obvious simplicity of the 'five and dime' store materials which had none of the 'history' or associations of her more usual materials. They were neutral and passive and not anchored in the kinds of accrued meanings emblematic of most of her work. In this important sense, these materials were transparent, able to act as uncommitted conduits of expression. It is also worth considering the actual physical orientation of the artist to these drawings in that it is likely that Baron produced them from her bed (or possibly a chair) but nonetheless from a sitting position. This is in contrast to her more usual standing position and would have meant she had a different visual relation to the work both in terms of proximity and eye level. In other words, she would have been *closer* to the work than was usual. Most importantly would be Baron's state of 'mind' as she attempted to integrate the death anxiety prompted by the recurrence of cancer and the violent surgical removal of one quarter of her lung. If we consider also that her post-operative condition would have rendered her still subject to the effects of anaesthesia (and the painful body traces of the surgery) we can begin to appreciate the value of these collages as manifestations of transconsciousness. As Kristeva points out:

Does...dread of dying - which henceforth is not summed up in castration fear but includes it and adds to it the wounding and perhaps even the loss of the integrity of the body and the self - find its representations in formations that are called "transconscious" in the imaginary constructions of the split subject, according to Lacan? Doubtless so. The fact remains that another reading of the unconscious might locate within its own fabric, such as certain dreams disclose it for us, that nonrepresentative spacing of representation that is not the sign but the index of the death drive. (Kristeva: 1989b:26-27)

I am proposing a reading of these collages as inscriptions from a borderspace rendered in the voice of the semiotic chora. At the time they were made, Baron was at the very

limits of life, hovering between life and death - (not literal death as the operation was 'successful') - but the 'death' memory of anaesthesia and the loss of a vital part of her body. The lungs, after all, are the seat of breath and it is breath that signifies life. She was in pain and would most likely have been on pain medication. There was also, psychologically, the renewed proximity to death signalled by the return of cancer which Baron had to somehow integrate. At this point in time, Baron would no doubt have been the 'shocked subject' of trauma which Hal Foster posits in *Return of the Real*. (Foster:1996:130-136). Foster draws on Lacan's definition of the traumatic as a missed encounter with the real, in order to argue that Warhol's repetitions 'serve to screen the real understood as traumatic'. (p.132) Repetition in itself, therefore, points to the real (in Foster's account) and it is at this point that the real ruptures the screen of repetition. Lacan (and Freud's) account of trauma depends for its meaning on events external to the subject overwhelming the ego. In Baron's case, both lung surgery as the event and the psychic drama it triggered, can be imagined as primarily internal and apart from the outside world. As the physical and psychic traumatic damage occurred *within* her body it is possible to argue that her perception of the outer world was suspended in favour of a turning inward towards a deeper level of being. It was this 'deeper' level - the limits of life - where death and the return to the real seem an attractive option that serve as the wellspring of these works.

The entire series is predominately black and white with little added colour which, when it occurs, is mostly towards the end of the series. The works are primarily drawings and the collage element comes into play when the original drawing is executed on tracing paper which is then collaged onto plain white paper. Although I saw the original works (albeit briefly), I have necessarily relied on slides that I copied from a set of Mark Baron's and the reproductive quality is very poor thus making it difficult to accurately assess which specific works were done on tracing paper or directly onto white paper. In this sense, the works could be called either collage or drawing and so

my discussion will utilise both terms. Nonetheless, in discussing the first six collages of the series my principle concern is with *what* is being figured rather than *how* it has been achieved. Five of the six share the formal characteristic of two rectilinear shapes and, in keeping with Kristeva's notion of spacing as an index of the death drive, it the articulation of the connection/disconnection between the two forms that is my concern.

Number One (Figure 27) shows two rectangles, the left one large, faintly outlined and dissected into four unequal quarters. The edges of this form are uneven and overdrawn and within it is a mass of faint marks and scrabbled areas. Next to it on the right is a smaller black angular figure with a larger circle drawn over it in white which overlaps the sides. The interior of this figure is also marked in white as if the black crayon ground had been scraped away. Three lines with large black dots on the end of them *almost* join the two units. There is another line to the right of the smaller figure which hangs in space alongside it before making a right angle turn away from its lower edge. The figures occupy the centre of the sheet of white paper with a faint horizontal pencil line about one inch below them. This first collage sets out the terms of the struggle by presenting us with two disconnected objects: the smaller black object on the right (and Baron always regarded herself as small) *overwhelmed* by the large left hand object which is faint with illegible markings. Is this the world of external objects - the symbolic order which often made no sense to Baron? There is an attempt at connection signified by the lines which *almost* join the two forms but more intriguing is the circular line which encases the smaller object, containing it and referencing the envelope of the maternal body. The free-floating line to the right of that shape is reinforced with a tiny version of the small, black form as to acknowledge that to turn away is always to return.

Number Two is not reproduced here because the drawing itself is so faint and the slide so overexposed that it is impossible to reproduce. It is similar to the left-hand form in

the first drawing in the faintness of the execution and the polyvalent signs which are incoherent and indistinct. Non-meaning is contained by the format of a book - a symbol of meaningful signification. As a single form, the image could be understood as a representation of the symbolic order (the format of a book) but equally, it might represent the allure of the real where affects are unbounded and incoherent and where the ego does not exist. If this were the case, then the book format could be understood as a container which holds or binds chaotic affect. As an unconscious strategy, the faintness of the form is symptomatic of her conflicted desire for containment, a conflict that in this specific instance can be interpreted as a split between a desire to return to the real (Thanatos) or Eros: to return to the living state of a differentiated ego.<sup>11</sup>

In collage Number Three (Figure 28) a powerful single black form occupies the central top half of the paper. The form is almost square with a 'window' that reveals an interior of circular stained and drawn marks. The entire form is encased (like a protective wrapping) in a larger, indistinct rectangle made up of lines extending horizontally from the central shape. Five dotted lines of progressively longer length (reading from left to right) hang down from the bottom edge of the form appearing to dangle in space. The drawing as a whole is an almost frightening depiction of the incorporation or internalisation of the Thing - a desire to return to the undifferentiated real which would, in effect, mean death. As in the first collage of the series, this form too is encased by a fainter outline which 'contains' it and calls to mind what Bracha Lichtenberg-Ettinger (1994) calls 'the matrixial borderspace', a relational borderline between mutually knowable and unknowable entities which I will elaborate on in the following chapter. The three interior circular shapes are all connected to one another which further emphasises a matrixial borderspace. But the five, dangling dotted lines which hang down from the bottom edge of the black form itself (interceding into the space of the container) suggest a remainder of desire for individuation and productivity (to stand on one's own feet) which resists the force of the death drive.

Number Four (Figure 29) shows two, hollow abstract forms connected again by dotted lines only in this one the dots are large and irregularly spaced and the lines are definitely in contact with each form. The markings inside both forms suggest facial features with the right hand one in profile. The place where the lines connect to the left-hand form is reinforced with sellotape as is the right-hand edge of that form. The drawing on Number Five (Figure 30) is similar in size and format to the previous one as both forms are also hollowed out although the left hand one is smaller and seems to be 'standing' on three legs on top of a heavy, deep, black horizontal shape which abuts the bottom edge of the larger form on the right. The right hand form looks almost like a washing machine with a large blacked in circular shape appearing as a 'front opening'. One very clear line (with no dots) joins the two forms together and the line is straight and appears very strong. It is the firm connection between two forms as reiterated in both collages that is particularly relevant. Number four in particular (which looks like two faces) not only has the 'extra' connection of a piece of sellotape, but the right hand figure, read as a profile, is turned *towards* the other form. This could well indicate a movement beyond the crisis point (as represented in the third collage) to a point when Baron's attention began to turn *towards* external objects in a reinstatement of her will to live. In number five however, there is the black 'ground' mentioned previously (beneath the left hand figure) and there is also the large black circular shape within the right hand figure which is puzzling. Is this the Thing incorporated as an absence? If so, then it would relate to the void in the figure in the following collage (as well as to the void in her body resulting from lung surgery). On the other hand, to read the entire right hand figure in number five as a washing machine, calls to mind Warhol's famous statement: 'I want to be a machine' (cited in Foster:1996:130). To be a machine means to be without feeling or desire as broken (body) parts can be replaced and machines mended and made whole again. What is also interesting about this drawing is the resemblance between the left hand figure and the ascending figure in number three (Figure 28) except in this one the figure is not blacked in. Its 'legs' however are standing on black ground and there is

also a large circular shape in the interior of the figure that echoes the black shape on the right hand form. If the blackness of this shape articulates something of the Thing, then the drawing as a whole depicts the internalised loss and the fantasy of incorporation of the Thing that is endemic to subjectivity.

In collage Number Six (Figure 31) there are also two connected forms but the drawing is more muted and less definite than in the previous two. The large left hand rectangle has a filled in black cruciform - a symbol that for Baron also had associations with the Iron Cross awarded to her father (see Chapter Four). The verticality of the right hand figure in particular relates it to a human body, a reading that is reinforced by the position of the two lines that connect the forms. The upper line is in the position of an arm reaching out to the left hand form while the lower one is positioned at 'hip' height evoking an umbilical connection. Although number six is probably the most ephemeral rendering of two forms, the forms themselves are more overt in their reference to human subjects. This interpretation is based on Baron's use of the sign of the cross as signifying her father and on the more humanoid appearance of the right hand figure. It is as if this collage is an overt representation of Baron's decision to return to the world of subjectivity knowing it is a subjectivity that is situated, incomplete and always bound to the past.

Beginning with and following on from Number Seven (not illustrated) an entirely different mood predominates. The two objects are gone in favour of a form that is singular and unified and there is more use of collage than in the first six. There is also, in most of the remaining works in the series, the important addition of colour which could be attributed to Baron having access to her own materials again except that there are two tiny dots of brown in drawing Number Two which suggests that she did have prior access to colour but chose not to use it. The almost total absence of colour in the first six drawings may well signify the 'non-emotional' (yet 'feeling') realm of pure

form prior to the acquisition of language. If this were the case and these drawings are the product of a semiotic chora in its purest form, then they visually encode the operations of trauma as precipitating a reluctance towards life and a desire for merging with the Thing that is death. Baron was contending with the loss of one quarter of her lung and the loss of death denial but her immediate sense of loss was no doubt compounded not only by originary loss but also by a precarious sense of security as discussed in Chapter Three. Object relation theorists such as Klein (1964) and Winnicott (1971) and also, in a sense Freud, posit that subjectivity depends on the relation of the subject (ego) to the objects external to it. In other words, our sense of self relies for its meaning and coherence on our actual and imaginary relation to the objects (people and things) in our environment. That is, the drive of the id is always a drive *towards* something external to us. Considered within this framework it becomes clear that these works articulate the tenuousness of that relation to the outside world, particularly at a time of crisis.

When studied as a chronological series, the *Hospital Collages* convey a transition from a state of detachment of the libido from its objects (the two, disconnected forms) to the reinstatement of that connection to the external world that is necessary to survival. The play between detachment and connection is mapped out within a *space* -the space *between* two forms. Thus space is seen to be an important syntactical element in Baron's collages and one that, in its play between attraction and negation, is redolent with the energy of the death drive.

These collages demonstrate that empathic indices of the real (of trauma, of emotional suffering) can be alluded to or 'pictured' not as mimesis or metaphor but as *process* understood as the relationship *between* forms. In the *Hospital Collages* there is no 'screen' to puncture, just pure marks on a raw surface that inscribe the play of repulsion and desire. The fact that Baron used tracing paper is also relevant because the smooth

and translucent surface facilitates the mark as a trace of bodily energy and reveals that Eros and Thanatos are *not* polarised in their aims but constantly shifting positions. I am arguing that the first six works in particular are manifestations of the role of the death drive in the trans-action that is fundamental to subjectivity. Similar evidence of the workings of the death drive are apparent in the frequent presence of empty space in many of Baron's collages. In the *Hospital Collages* however we can clearly see transcriptions of the memory-trace of the wound or breach that marks our separation as subjects thus they exemplify precisely the emphasis I place on collage-as-process in relationship with the body-as-coalition. This connection is amplified by the fact that Baron made these collages from a literally borderline condition and it was the *making* of them as *meanings* that enabled her to once again turn towards life. Kristeva's concept of the *imaginaire du pardon* by introducing the notion of forgiveness into the aesthetic process, postulates the presence of a loving other who does not judge as integral to the process. The other is a transference to a new other or new ideal made possible by the split subject's separation from their own unconscious which is inscribed in the process of articulation. 'Because I am separated from my unconscious through a new transference...I am able to *write* the dramatic unfolding of my nevertheless unforgettable violence and despair' (Kristeva:1989b:206).

To survive five separate recurrences of cancer over fourteen years is an extraordinary achievement that testifies not only to Baron's enormous will for life but also to her access to spiritual or metaphysical processes that enabled her to mobilise that will. I am convinced that the aesthetic process, as an *imaginaire du pardon*, was fundamental to Baron's many recoveries. Kristeva's complex theorisations about the aesthetic process include and extend Klein's formulation of art as reparative in that she formulates an understanding of art process as regenerative not only in its reconstitution of subjectivity but also in terms of its potential for the renovation of symbolic meaning. As Baron

herself once said: 'Great art should hurt you on the one hand and heal you on the other'.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the formidable constraints of illness and the demands of family life, Baron's production increased substantially following her second cancer surgery. For 1979, the catalogue that I am working with includes one hundred slides numbered up to one hundred and thirty seven. In 1980, there are only sixty eight slides although the numbering goes to two hundred and one. For 1981, there are two hundred and eleven slides numbered up to two hundred and ninety two; and for 1982, two hundred and sixty four slides numbering up to three hundred and ninety one which means she was producing on average at least one collage per day. The marked increase in production between 1979/1980 and 1981/1982 suggests not only that her health was improving (although she had never made that much work even in the best of health) but also that the work was selling more and more with a contiguous need to replace 'missing' collages. More fundamentally perhaps, the increase also substantiates Kristeva's account of art process as a form of psychic healing (Kristeva: 1980, 1989<sub>a</sub>, 1989<sub>b</sub>).

## 5.10 Exhibitions

Baron's art exceeds language in what it can utter and focusing on specific experiences of illness has allowed me to suggest that for her, collage-as-process was fuelled in part by an unconscious drive to repair or transform narcissistic wounds. But there is more to Baron's practice than a negotiation with the allure of the death drive. Baron's desire to make art was fundamentally productive of her sense of self thus the increasing success of her work would have significant impact on her production. Early in 1979 Baron's collages were exhibited in Europe for the first time in a group show entitled *Formations on Paper* at the Gallery Alexandra Monett in Brussels and towards the end of that year, her work was also included in *The Art of Collage Today* at the Impressions Gallery in Boston. The majority of the collages from that year are characterised by a sense of

lightness with a palette tending towards pale pinks, creams and yellows. They are mostly constructed on cloth grounds. The larger, bound figures of 77/78 are gone and in their place are the small, outline drawings of strange animal-like shapes that look like cave paintings. Baron also introduced flower motifs into the collages which, along with her bird motifs were intended as an eco- reference (Appendix I: pp.26 & 28). The 'flowers' are often in the form of a series of spindly single blossom stems or a clearly articulated and highly stylised single tulip-like blossom similar to those found on the Egyptian cloth discussed earlier. There are also many long horizontal collages that look like friezes as well as several paired collages originally conceived as pages from a book (HB/JO:1982:8). 1979 was also the year that Mark Baron moved from the family home and his mother took over the large attic to make into a studio.<sup>13</sup> Baron was now established as a gallery artist with a studio of her own and all that that signified.

In 1980 Baron had another solo show of collages at Kathryn Markel Gallery in New York and her work was also included in a group show at Markel's of artist's books which travelled to the Hoshour Gallery in Albuquerque, New Mexico. That year Baron changed her support once again from cloth to paper generally working in a vertical format with straight, rectilinear edges. There is a new tendency towards the geometric division of compositional space with single or grouped large fabric rectangles making the 'grid' completely apparent and calling to mind Louise Bourgeois' comment (cited in Chapter One) that with the grid 'there is no room for anxiety, everything has a place' (1982).

Strange, abstracted figures appear (slightly) more frequently than in 1979 but the figures are generally smaller and more fully integrated into the composition rather than its central focus. One figure, found in the collage numbered C80-071 (Figure 32), stands out in particular because it is so unusual for her work from that time. It is a small phallic figure which appears to be 'lifting off' like a rocket. As an obvious stylistic

change (particularly from the fully realised, bound creatures of 1977/78) it foreshadows Baron's articulation in subsequent years of the 'lighter', less substantial figures which I will discuss below. In general, however, the work from this year is characterised not by her conceptualisation of figures but by a new attention to symmetry, as well as by the precedence of drawing and painting over collage. Of course, having said that, it is important to add that with Baron's collages there are always many exceptions to any coherent formal description because the various mark-making techniques and strategies which she built up over the years functioned as a thesaurus of visual language which she drew on at will and seemingly at random.

The rocket figure referred to above was a precursor to a new vessel-like figure found in the collage numbered C81094 (Figure 33) which Baron continued to develop in subsequent work. In this collage, the print is slightly to the left of centre collaged on top of a piece of pink spotted cotton. It is an image of an open-necked, crudely drawn vessel with a 'transparent' surface showing a knotted and tangled rope-like line. The print is unusual not only for its content but also because it seems to have been made with two different techniques having a pale grey, more printerly interior (suggesting an etching) and a thick rough brown outline that is more like a monoprint or tracing. To relate this bottle-like form to a human figure may seem far-fetched but, despite her occasional use of the more familiar bound figures, the vessel-figure is a harbinger of her later figuration and as such, it is a key image.

In January 1981 Baron showed collages and boxes in a one-person show at the prestigious Albright-Knox Gallery in Buffalo, New York. She also had her fourth solo show at Kathryn Markel Gallery the following Spring. Running simultaneously with that exhibition was a group show entitled *Sixty Years of Collage* at Gallery Schlesinger-Boisanté. This show marked the beginning of Baron's long association with the gallery and her inaugural solo show opened the following November and ran until Christmas

Eve. Baron's work was selling well and for higher prices (see Chapter Two) as well as travelling in a number of group exhibitions. In addition to the New York shows, Baron's work was exhibited for the first time in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Ann Arbor and Paris, France (Appendix I:pp.35-43). 1981 was also the year in which the interview with Mark Baron was made (HB/MB:1981) and her work began to receive consistent positive attention from art critics (see Chapter Two) in publications such as *Artspeak* (10th and 19th December, 1981) and *The New York Times* (30th August, 1981). The increasing approbation garnered by the collages served to validate the self (Baron as artist) that the work, in a sense, had produced - a vital connection that Baron alluded to in the interview with Mark Baron when she referred to the work as containing 'a secret part of myself' (HB/MB:1981:16). She was also less inclined to take collages apart because, as she told Jean Olds, 'I'm much more satisfied with them' (HB/JO:1982:7). This suggests that Baron's need to replace missing work - the object as an extension of the Self - was superseded by her identification with a positive critical response to the work.

... I somehow felt that to have something that's my own and approved of was better than to have something of my own that's not approved of. Because it's more valuable when it has the approval. (HB/MB:1981:16)

Once again, it is the inter-relationship between Baron's inner world and the external world that is significant to her. In a letter written in late 1985 when she was very ill, Baron related that the Director of the Brooklyn Museum had remarked to a mutual friend how much he liked Baron's work 'but I am too sick to do anything or care very much, except for the praise, that I like' (Letter to DH:No.46).

### 5.11 1982

In the Spring of 1982, seven months after Baron finished chemotherapy, cancer was found once again this time in her ovaries which were removed along with the fallopian tubes. Doctors suggested that she have one more year of chemotherapy but Baron was 'ripe for a new approach' (Appendix XIV:3)

Well meaning friends, whose judgement I respected, explained to me that the medical profession operates quickly to remove the symptom of the disease, but the cause will remain in the form of wrong nutrition and produce new symptoms such as cancerous tumours unless there is a radical change in diet. This change, at one point will release the toxins in the body and once cleansed and kept in that state there will be no further problem. (ibid:pp.2-3)

Baron wrote twenty-five hand pages chronicling her year long involvement with macrobiotics that began in September 1982. The account ends abruptly and either she stopped writing at that point or the remaining pages have been lost but neither myself nor Mark Baron know the answer to that. As far as I can determine<sup>14</sup> Baron wrote it in the fall of 1983 and it provides important direct evidence of such things as the chronology of her surgeries and treatments for cancer (pp.2-3); her 'normal height and weight (pp.6)<sup>15</sup> ; the fact that she and Herman went on holiday 'to the shore' for a week in the summer of 1983 <sup>16</sup>(p.18); as well as references to almost constant pain (p.10, p.23). It also contradicts the statement written in the original chronology (and duplicated in the catalogues) that after the hysterectomy she 'rejects doctor's suggestion of one year of chemotherapy' (Mathes/Silverman Catalogue:1987:31) because, as the document shows, she was having chemotherapy when she started on the macrobiotic diet:

In the meantime, I had informed my doctor that I was on this diet and asked him if we could stop the chemo after 6 months instead of the originally suggested year. Much to my amazement, he was agreeable to terminating the chemo, even though a bit dubious about the diet, but not truly negative. (ibid; pp11-12)

Baron's narration of these events gives valuable insights into aspects of her identity such as the value she placed on her relationship with Herman (particularly as it was articulated around mealtimes) and the appeal that all things 'Eastern' still held for her. The latter could possibly account for her initial attraction to macrobiotics as, writing about her first visit to Mrs. Y. (the macrobiotic specialist she consulted), Baron said:

I always was drawn to all things exotic and noticed her little devotional Buddha statue with the incense container near it, enjoyed the fact that as in Japan everyone had to remove their shoes on entering etc. (ibid; p.11)

Despite the recurrence of cancer, Baron's production peaked in 1982. There are two hundred and sixty four slides of collages from that year and the numbering goes up to three hundred and ninety one. She had a solo show at the Roger Ramsey Gallery in Chicago in May of that year followed by a New York show in November at Schlesinger-Boisanté. 1982 was also the first year that Baron had solo exhibitions in Europe as well as a two-person show in Toronto and a group show in Luxembourg (see Appendix XXII).

Considering that Baron's surgery, followed by chemotherapy, was in the late Spring and that she hated the summer heat it is likely that Baron did not produce a significant amount of work between June and September. However, not long after she embarked on the macrobiotic regime, Baron experienced a 'high' which she described as follows:

At this point I felt good, there was a high, just from being off the chemo and having lost a bit of weight at that time. I had a good feeling about my body despite the disfigurement of my operations. I seemed to have more energy and a new good feeling about life in general. Pure and cleansed and being told by Mrs. Y. that my appearance would change much more for the better and a more youthful look, the future seemed golden. (ibid; pp.13-14)

Baron's markedly prolific outpouring of work during 1982 can no doubt be attributed to her renewed sense of well-being and the increasing critical success of her work. The etymology of the word prolific is 'fruitful', to produce offspring; giving life. I draw attention to this because it supports my argument that the process of making art was life-affirming for Baron because the work she produced reflected back to her an integrated identity. Her collage process enabled her to create a psychic space which ensured her *being* as well as allowing her (as in the *Hospital Collages*) to transpose the emotional abyss of the real into the symbolic order - and thus 'enter' culture. The strength of Baron's will to live is also indicated by her rigorous adherence to the stringencies of a macrobiotic diet even though it meant that she had to cook separate foods for herself and her family.

Certain features distinguish the collages made during 1982 from her previous works such as the prevalence of works made on paper rather than cloth, and the fact that there are very few of the bound humanoid-type figures (although several of the collages have repeated prints of a new form of head and shoulder figure reminiscent of a portrait.) Mostly, the prints are small images of archaic bird-like forms and other primitive 'animals' that are similar in style to cave paintings. These images appear to be monoprints rather than the more clearly defined copper-figure prints or etchings of previous years. In collage number C82-105 (not illustrated) a 'vessel' figure appears again for the first (and only) time that year in a composition which is not only dissimilar to other collages of that period (in terms of the centrally placed figure) but also for the large amount of empty surface space as well as for the completely *closed* frame drawn within the 'frame' of the edges.

#### 5.12 1983

In 1983 Baron had six solo shows, three of which were in Germany, including a 'retrospective' held at her birthplace of Dillengen (see Chapter Two). She produced two hundred and seventy eight collages (one hundred and fifty nine slides) and in March, flew to Washington DC to see her solo show at Robert Brown Contemporary Art. Afterwards, she described in a letter to Dolly Honig her amazement at seeing the words 'Hannelore Baron' on a full length banner fluttering in the snowy street outside the gallery. Despite the fact that her work was reaching a consistently widening audience and achieving both critical and commercial success, she did not alter the pattern of her daily life. Baron still cleaned and cooked and looked after her grandchildren most weekends and she generally avoided openings and interviews, preferring to visit her shows unobtrusively once they were 'up and running'.<sup>17</sup>

By the summer of 1983, the macrobiotic diet had begun to take its toll. Baron had lost nearly thirty-five pounds (ibid;p.1), she was barely able to eat and in almost constant stomach pain. In the collages from 1983, the figure I have referred to as a 'vessel' is a relatively frequent icon suggesting that there is a relationship between the articulation of a more ethereal humanoid form and Baron's own gradually loosening corporeal connection.

C83-044 (Figure 34) demonstrates most clearly the open-mouthed vessel transformed into 'human' form through its metaphorical dimensions (such as the elongated neck) and the addition of legs. The transparent torso shows wounding or damage and the tangled line is similar to the interior of the vessel in Figure 33. C83-227 (Figure 35) is partly a contact print taken from Figure 34 (as indicated by the reverse letters and arrow towards the bottom right) and although, according to the numerical sequence, there are nearly two hundred collages between them, it shows how Baron constantly developed and progressed her work by making experiments and accumulating the results for eventual use as components in other collages. In this collage the figure is truncated to a head and shoulders 'portrait' with reference made to a posture of outstretched arms which is a recurring symbol in Baron's iconography.

Baron frequently used the motif of a figure with outstretched arms as signifying vulnerability or abandonment but the connotations become more layered and complex when the figure is confined in a compartment-like space. In this case, the arms suggest a double meaning - either pushing away 'walls' that are closing in, or filling the space in an almost celebratory stance. There are five collages from 1983 that show the open-mouthed vessel structure and in three of them the figure has outstretched arms. The figure in the remaining two collages have arms at their sides and one (C83-161, Figure 36) appears to be floating upwards like the floating figures found in some of Chagall's paintings. There are no marks of wounding either, just a feeling of light groundlessness

that could well have mirrored Baron's own sensation of her body. C83-210 (Figure 37), which was made towards the end of that year, is more direct however in that it shows the same figure with outstretched arms but in a horizontal, abject position. A thick ochre line crosses the upper chest and the cruciform at its feet reinforces the funereal signification. Verticality relates to life as the up-right figure mirrors the posture of the viewer. The horizontal figure on the other hand, is laid out *across* the ground in an attitude of lifelessness and a reminder of the ground we will one day return to. Apart from the reclining female nude (who signifies available sexuality), the horizontal figure represents death, the ultimate abjection.

In July 1983, Baron, encouraged by Mark Baron and by Steve Schlesinger, made what was for her a large etching (38 x 29cms) which was printed in an edition of 21 (although she subsequently destroyed most of them). The image (Figure 38) appears to be a body laid out on a catafalque that bisects the paper horizontally. The figure is shrouded and tightly bound apart from the 'face' which, although oval, shows only one eye suggesting the profile of a figure on a tomb. The scaffold beneath the body is made up of random letters and large empty ellipses that look like stones. There are intensely scrabbled marks in the groin area of the figure from which springs a tall, single stemmed flower, its head nearly obscured by the marks (illegible letters, arrows, circles and a cruciform) that range across the top of the page. Two inwardly curved marks frame the 'body' either end like parentheses. They invoke an understanding of life as an interval that is in keeping with Baron's lifelong interest in Eastern philosophy. The flower that 'springs forth' suggests that all that ultimately remains is what is left behind. The etching is unambiguous in its reference to death thus making it possible to argue that, like the bound vertical figures of previous years, the etching represents a hypercathexis in which Baron used her art as a form of unconscious preparation or rehearsal for death. Although Baron lived for nearly four more years, the extreme weight loss she experienced as a result of the macrobiotic diet as well as the almost

constant pain she suffered seemed to shift her into another register of being that was less corporeally anchored. As I have argued throughout this chapter for a reading of Baron's humanoid figures as obliquely autobiographical, the introduction of the 'vessel figures' into the late collages makes sense as they are characterised by a lack of solidity and the appearance (in many cases) of floating.

By the end of June, the monotony of the macrobiotic diet coupled with the divided kitchen and the fact that she no longer had anything to do with Herman's meals, meant that Baron was eating less and less. Alarmed by her loss of appetite and with 'a permanent stale taste' in her mouth, Baron went to see Mrs. Y. who informed her that this was all part of the cure.

She had originally told me to come to her when the real bad toxin discharge time comes, but now she informed me that she would not be available at all during her vacation in July and August. She did give me a number to call in case of emergency, besides a last warning not to go off the diet under any circumstances. I called her once more the last day she was available to tell her that I could not eat the food anymore and did not feel good, to which she answered with 'what do you want me to do?' (Appendix XIV:1983: 16-17)

It is easy to imagine how Mrs. Y.'s seemingly indifferent response would have been experienced by Baron as a betrayal and plunge her into deep depression, but she struggled on through the summer still unable to reach Mrs. Y.'s colleague. When the woman finally did return Baron's call, she warned her of the dire consequences of going off the diet.

At this point I felt that I must consult my medical doctor, since I had undergone a pain in my upper stomach I feared was a heart attack in its severity. He informed me, that I am much too thin, something I was very much aware of, and his advice was to get off the diet. But the problem is that somewhere along the way...I so firmly accepted the fact that the diet is a cancer preventative that I am unable to eat the "forbidden" foods. At this point my condition is frightening and resembles anorexia except that I see clearly what is wrong, but like the anorexic I am unable to set things right. (ibid. pp23-24)

By the end of September Baron was dangerously thin and she was in pain a great deal of the time. Worst of all she had to give up her belief that macrobiotics could save her.

She was once more admitted into hospital where it was discovered that cancer had spread to her liver and was considered by the doctors to be inoperable. Weak and dispirited, she returned home and resumed chemotherapy treatment.

She made little, if any, work during this period, but towards the end of October, Baron returned to her studio and made the first of an extraordinary series of twenty four collages which, like the *Hospital Collages*, have never been shown in public. Nor are they considered to be part of her oeuvre in the traditional understanding of that term.

### 5.13 The *Hurtful Collage Mountains*

The most notable feature common to all twenty four of the collages in this series is that they are all signed and *dated* (with the year *and* month). Furthermore, sixteen of them are legibly titled on the face of the collage. Apart from the so-called 'protest' collages made in the late 1960s/early 1970s (discussed in Chapter Four) these are the only collages that Baron ever consistently titled. They are certainly the only ones (to my knowledge) that she dated with the *month* as well as the year. The second collage of the series has the exact date on it: Oct. 27th, 1983. This locates them chronologically as shortly after her return from hospital (and the discovery of liver cancer). Also, like the 'Hospital Collages', a complete series allows access to Baron's process insofar as it reveals some of the formal connections made between one piece and the next. In this case it is the *naming* of the collages that is so revealing because it provides direct evidence of how Baron's art process was grounded in her emotional state.

Written on the face of the first collage of the series (Figure 39) is the phrase: 'the very first of the hurtful collage mountains'. Beneath it, 'the hurtful collage mountains' is written again as if to underscore or emphasise the meaning. Here, the actual words perform the function of the underlining referred to in Chapter One. Line becomes word in a refusal of abstraction that speaks of the direct address of the work, a drive to

communicate her psychological state through the medium of the collage process. It could be that her motivation for writing those words was the feeling that all her efforts to order, organise, repair, make whole and make sense of the external world were exhausting and ultimately futile. The title could also refer to the way in which Baron used the collage process as a channel for her pain which, in Kristeva's sense, allowed her to gain mastery over inchoate emotional affect. Thus she would no longer need to displace to the same extent and could be more explicit. Also of interest is the linguistic space of 'hurtful collage mountain'. To which noun does 'hurtful' refer? It is as if the three words as language in space are equivalents, like the figures in the *Hospital Collages*. Psychoanalysis and poststructuralism have shown us that the subject, split between consciousness and the unconscious, can never fully know itself but whatever it was that Baron *meant* by the words, it is possible to assume that having had a fatal diagnosis of her condition, she would have been in a space of depression where nothing has a point and everything is meaningless. But as Kristeva shows us, to *make* art is to make meaning.

Imagination is that strange place where the subject ventures its identity, loses itself down the threshold of evil, crime, or asymbolia in order to work through them and to bear witness...from elsewhere. A divided space, it is maintained only if solidly fastened to the ideal, which authorises destructive violence to be *spoken* instead of being *done*. (Kristeva: 1989a:200)

Part of Baron's legacy is her ability to show us, through the rhythms of her gestures, the selection and placing of her materials and the fluid transitions from one piece to the next, how this interior space is organised and what it might *look* like.

The 'hurtful collage mountain' of the first collage is abbreviated in the following three works to 'Collage Mountain'. The first work bears the sideways monogram 'HB 83' on the bottom left hand corner, but the rest of the series are signed with her full name and the month and year. The full date on the second collage and the month and year dates on the others determines that Baron began the series in late October, 1983 and

continued it through to some time in November. A vessel figure appears in the final 'Collage Mountain' (the fourth collage in the series) as a line drawing or print in which the figure is severed in the middle into two distinct halves (Figure 40). It occupies the bottom right-hand third of the picture space and is encircled by a line that extends beyond the borders of the print and draws attention to the figure by setting it apart from the rest of the composition. The split body parallels Baron's illness (with cancer now located in her liver) and reaffirms the apparent link between Baron's use of figuration and her own embodiment.

The next six collages are simply entitled 'Collage' and signed 'Hannelore Baron' and dated Nov. 1983. The first of these six includes a print of three horizontal figures that are stacked on top of one another like dead bodies (Figure 41) recalling images of the Holocaust which can be linked as well as to her own 'holocaust' of cancer. Despite the morbidity of this representation, both this collage and the next in the series share identical soft palettes of pale cream, pink, yellow and blue with very little added cloth. Both collages are made up of faint prints and drawings overlaid with pale washes and the familiar indistinct writing - apart from the title and signature which in each case is clearly written. There is altogether more cloth added to the next four which, as a small series themselves, share a predominately pink palette and seem to shrink into the centre of the pictorial space.

*Still Life on Table*; *Still Life with Table and Writing* (signed and dated at the top); *Still Life on Table Top with Cloth and Writing* and *The Tabletop with Yellow Patch* (not illustrated) all point to Baron's desire to alleviate the weight of her inner life by returning to a more detached form of observational 'drawing'. During her interview with Jean Olds the previous year, Baron spoke about her occasional wish to return to the traditions of landscape and still life rather than a concern for the political and social

ills of the world (which, I have argued, veiled her more personal and introspective feelings).

A few times I thought of getting away from that and going back to something a little more neutral but I don't seem to be able to go back to this former light feeling.  
(HB/JO:1982:1)

What is more to the point, especially with these collages, is Baron's ability to transform even the most morbid feelings and materials into something beautiful and elegiac.

...Sometimes I think of making a change just for the sake of change or whatever but there is this kind of romantic thing I guess that - and I also think for my own sake - what I think is the awfulness has to be made sort of acceptable and beautiful in some way - because it has to be sort of sandwiched in because to take away the last remnant of what I call beautiful - you know like soft colours and things - and just have the starkness - it would be too terrible for me to accept. (ibid:p.1)

The transformation of the awfulness can be sensed, for instance, in Baron's deliberate use of stained and damaged materials ('the feeling of life having gone over them') that suggests the workings of a reparative imaginary rooted in pain and anger that is not locked into melancholic aphasia but seeks forms of enunciation.

The last two of this grouping are simply entitled *Still Life* like a pun in defiance of death. As long as Baron was making her collages there was 'still life'. Eight untitled collages conclude the series, each of which is still signed in full and dated with the month and year. The transitions from one group to the next make it possible to understand something of her thought processes and the way in which one image may have suggested another. For instance, the first four collages of the series are made up of many different cloth and paper elements that initially fill the entire ground then gradually lessen and shrink away from the edges as the series goes on. The broken vessel figure of the final 'collage mountain' references previous work and signals a shift to the next sub-group in the series, six pieces entitled simply *Collage*. Again, the first few of these seem more familiar in style but gradually they too start to recede from the edges (apart from the painted 'frame') until the final collage which has no frame, just a large central

square-shaped composition with a piece of grid-patterned fabric covering more than half of it. Baron, in a characteristic gesture of muddying the distinction between the 'real' and the fictive, picked up the woven lines that formed the grid and with ink extended them from the edge of the fabric to the bottom of the page. The result looks like a table with a cloth on it and the loosely drawn grid lines she added are positioned to look like the table legs. The next collage in the series indicates that Baron also made this connection because it is entitled *Still Life on Table* and, as a transitional piece, it introduces the next sub-group of six still life collages. The following three collages in particular (referred to above) are most explicit and call to mind Steinberg's remark about the flatbed picture plane as relating to the theme of the artist observing and rendering the objects on her or his studio table. In this case (as Baron usually worked on the flat anyway) it suggests a disciplined act of containment wherein Baron was able to control the translation of despair into a recognisable poetic form that still managed to convey her poignant message.

The still life table top collages evolve into simple still lifes (each entitled *Still Life*) of painted and folded cloth pieces clustered in the centre of the white paper ground such as Figure 42. This collage is predominantly pink with pink writing and a very small amount of drawing (in pink ink) is scattered across the top edge. It is arrestingly sparse, especially in comparison to the almost cluttered surfaces of the early 'collage mountain' works and the simple composition of the single central shape is reminiscent of the third *Hospital Collage* (Figure 28) in which a single black form dominated the picture space. There, I argued that the single shape represented Baron's lack of desire for relation to the external world. The transition from black to pink however suggests a changed conception of that desire as pink is an altogether *lighter* and less 'earthbound' colour than black. This reading is also supported by the way in which the lines that dangle from *beneath* the black form in the *Hospital Collage* are, in Figure 42, replaced by the fragile writing across the *top* of the collage. What I am suggesting is that her articulation

of desire for withdrawal from the world is different in the 'Hurtful Mountain Collages' than the 'Hospital Collages' because the latter concerned her struggle between desire for death and desire for life whereas the former seems to move towards acceptance, surrender and spiritual transformation.

The last sub-group of eight untitled collages are more like her usual work with the occasional appearance of familiar icons suggesting that as well as allowing Baron to psychically prepare for death, on a more mundane level the series enabled her to work her way back to a studio routine after the blow of discovering that she had terminal cancer. It is possible to suppose that the titles which she gradually eliminated were a conscious way of naming what it was she was doing, as if that was *all* it was about. In other words, Baron's titles may have functioned as a form of denial in which her most unusual emphasis on stating that this was a 'still life' or a 'collage' or even a 'collage mountain' meant precisely that. It was not about pain or suffering or being depressed but about making collages based on the observation of her surroundings. However, Baron's inclusion of the word 'hurtful' in the first few works inflects the reading of all of the collages in the series and attests to the way in which the process of making the collages was a way of working through the unconscionable reality of the return of cancer and the subsequent threat of death.

The collages (and boxes), as expressive objects, reflected back to Baron a sense of integrity (a 'second self' ) which mitigated her experience of fragmentation. That these objects, as art, were achieving more and more recognition in the form of exhibitions and sales, not only meant that the drive to restore the (literally) lost object was more urgent, but that the fractured sense of self resulting from the cancer was in some sense holistically repaired by the enthusiastic response to her art. Therefore, in spite of circumstances which might warrant a more 'ordinary' artist to give up on work, Baron worked *as if her life depended on it* which, in a very important sense, it did.

As previously discussed, the triad 'women, creativity and suffering' has a long history. But it could be argued that the disembodied transcendentalism that characterises most modernist (and post-modernist) art histories is founded on neurotic repression and disassociation, the aim of which is to elevate the (material) status of the art object as unique, the message as universal and the artist as (divine) genius. It is perhaps time to call such denial to account. Focusing on the personal aspects of Baron's oeuvre and teasing out the relationship between her biography and her art does not diminish the importance of her work. On the contrary, it gives us valuable insight into the power of all forms of poetic language as an *imaginaire du pardon* both for the senders and receivers of the messages conveyed. As Baron herself commented:

...this message is...what I've found out through my own life about the human condition and so on. The truth is, you see, just the way I taught myself to do the work and it took me longer and then after I knew how to use the materials I found out I could have learned this easier. That it is written in many books and taught in many schools and many people learn it immediately. It is the same thing with the message. A lot of my message is extremely naive and has been written about in many places and is nothing new at all. None of it is new really but to me it was new and when I say I got the message in the pictures, at the same time that I got the message in the collages I also straightened out myself. I wasn't anxious anymore or anything. It was simultaneous but the message came across and then I knew what it was all about for myself. But the thing is, it all suddenly fit together. What had been unclear to me in myself and what was unclear all over, it all, everything, became clear, the collages and myself. And now even though sometimes I might be anxious or depressed or whatever, it's not the way it was before. It's like I understand what's on the bottom of it all now. And I truly believe there is a big difference between knowing everything superficially, reading about it in books or having figured it out for yourself. (Appendix I:1981:14-15)

Baron 'figured out' what she knew through collage-as process in relation to the body-as-coalition. It is interesting too that 'figuring it out' also involved figuration wherein her 'figures' acted as stand-ins or voices for a particularly personal aspect of her message that, at times, concerned her own suffering body.

Although Baron never claimed to be religious in any way, her early grounding in Eastern religion and philosophy was fundamental to her life view and may well have facilitated her ability to maintain her integrity in the face of continual disappointment and

suffering. Her practice was shaped by an ethical perspective that concerned her care for the weak, the underdog and all those who suffered.

By drawing attention to some of the specifics of Baron's illness I have been able to argue that her collage process enabled her to invent a grammar and a syntax with which to articulate aspects of her personal mental and physical suffering that were a significant consequence of the disease. But for Baron, the personal was always political in the sense that she regarded all of her work as messages of protest against what she perceived to be a destructive social system. When considered in this sense, it is possible to understand Baron's art as works of mourning. By this I mean that the collages allowed her to mourn for the 'lost object' of maternal unity (as well as the eventual loss of life itself) which is not to suggest that Baron's art represents a kind of regressive nostalgia. Baron mourned for a world that she understood to be insane and the ability to express that negativity was intrinsically bound up with the formal structures of collage. As Adorno (1997) suggests 'expression is the negativity of suffering and construction is the effort to bear up under the suffering of alienation' (p.257). Mourning as a process per se, particularly in the poetic form of art, can lead to a symbolic acceptance which no longer commands the kind of fruitless yearning expounded by Freud and Lacan. Like Adorno, Kristeva believes that one way for the melancholic imagination to find its expression is through art. Baron's intra-linguistic representations resonate at the affective level of bodily experience - 'where the word can at every moment profoundly touch and affect the living flesh' (Kristeva:1989a:23).

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<sup>1</sup> Jo Spence's powerful and pioneering work about breast cancer did not begin until 1982 and only began to be visible within a small feminist community in Britain in the mid 1980s. (See Spence:1986,1995).

<sup>2</sup> This story is indicative of Herman Baron's paternalistic attitude towards his wife and the way in which he considered himself able to 'fix' her.

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<sup>3</sup> In 1978, the National Museum of American Art (Smithsonian Institute) purchased a collage by Baron that was exhibited in a show entitled New Acquisitions. In a letter to Dolly Honig (No.38) Baron described the trip to Washington, DC and wrote: 'Of course I saw my collage which was hanging with first-rate things and some of them big names like Nevelson, Dine, Motherwell etc. So I was well satisfied.'

<sup>4</sup> Baron attended adult education classes quite consistently and in 1975, she enrolled in a stained glass making class. She also belonged to a Brandeis reading group and attended classes not only locally but also at the 92nd Street YMCA in Manhattan. This information has mostly been gleaned from references to various classes and groups in Baron's letters to Dolly Honig.

<sup>5</sup> The slides in the collection I am primarily working from are generally over-exposed (too light) which adds to the difficulties inherent in the translation of what is essentially a three dimensional medium (collage) into a two dimensional image. Poor quality photographic reproduction lies by omission - in this case, the erasure of the raised surface of the edge - so crucial to Baron's collages. This 'deception' has been apparent on those occasions when I was able to see the collages 'in person' and gain valuable understanding about their construction.

<sup>6</sup> According to Mark Baron, *National Geographic* was an important visual source for Baron. This is verified by a number of hand-made notebooks I saw in her studio which were filled with cut out images of all kinds and many were similar to those published in *National Geographic*.

<sup>7</sup> The print as a 'one-off' is, of course, entirely in keeping with the break with traditional printmaking conventions that was occurring in the United States at this time. (Watrous:1984). Again, I would cite the similarity between Baron's collages and Rauschenberg's combines particularly the way in which both artists valued the happenstance effects of unorthodox techniques for image transfer.

<sup>8</sup> The first section of this letter was quoted at the beginning of Chapter Three.

<sup>9</sup> I didn't see this series or the Hurtful Mountain series until about two years into my research when Mark Baron showed them to me during my trip to New York. Prior to that time, I hadn't known of their existence as they were not included in the slide catalogue of Baron's work. Neither series has ever been shown in public nor are they considered a relevant part of Baron's oeuvre. The reason for this is most likely that they are considered to be too personal for public consumption and also that that family would not want to break up the series by offering the works for sale. Nonetheless, I feel that they are an important key to understanding Baron's work because they are so direct and 'raw'.

<sup>10</sup> Kristeva posits the Thing as 'the real that does not lend itself to signification, the centre of attraction and repulsion, seat of sexuality from which the object of desire will become separated' (Kristeva:1989a:13). It is in this sense that I am using the term and attempting to make a case for the Hospital Collages as in some way representing Baron's psychic relationship with the Thing. Of course, by its very nature as unrepresentable - particularly in words - the Thing is quite a difficult concept to discuss.

<sup>11</sup> Eros refers to love or the Greek god of love while Thanatos refers to death. These terms are used by analogy in Freudian psychoanalysis to designate the 'life instinct' and the 'death instinct'. (LaPlanche & Pontalis:1973)

<sup>12</sup> Baron was quoted by Linda Hooper during a conversation with VR in New York City on August 7th, 1995. Linda Hooper worked for Schlesinger-Boisanté when they represented Baron and now works for The Manny Silverman Gallery in Los Angeles where she was instrumental in exhibiting Baron's work there.

<sup>13</sup> Although spacious and beautifully set up as a studio with a smaller ante-room, Baron couldn't use it in the summer because it was too hot. Two air conditioners were installed but she didn't like the noise they made. At one point, Mark Baron helped her to set up a 'summer' studio in the large, glassed in porch at the front of the house but she didn't like it because she felt that people could look in. (VR in conversation with Mark Baron:1995)

<sup>14</sup> Although the document is undated and incomplete, there are various clues within the text as to when it was written and I have based my dating on these.

<sup>15</sup> Baron wrote: 'At the time I weighed 132 pounds, maybe 10 pounds more than my 5'2" called for'.

<sup>16</sup> The holiday was on Cape Cod (VR/HB(2):1994:7).

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<sup>17</sup> Steve Schlesinger tells the story of Baron coming to one of her first openings at his gallery with a plate of home made cookies and how the guests generally overlooked her not realising that she was the artist who had made the work.



Figure 24. C73-001 (breast cancer) 1973

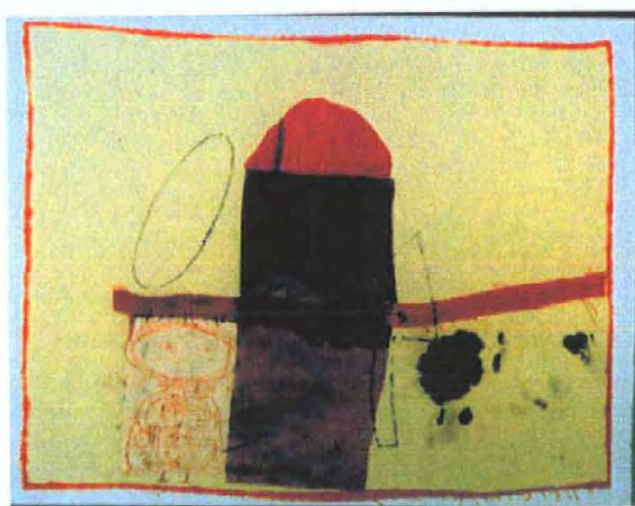


Figure 25. C74-008 ('Red Roof') 1974



Figure 26. Print of 'damaged' figure c.1977/78



Figure 27. Hospital Collage No.1, 1978

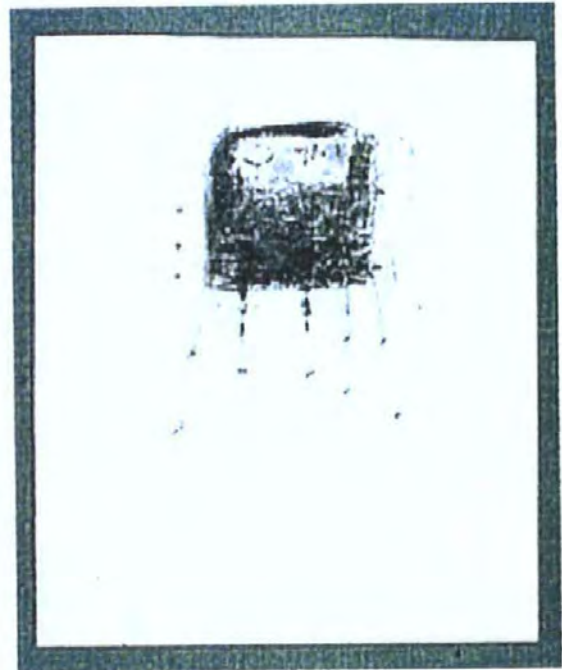


Figure 28. Hospital Collage No.3, 1978



Figure 29. Hospital Collage No.4, 1978



Figure 30. Hospital Collage No.5, 1978



Figure 31. Hospital Collage No.6, 1978



Figure 32. C80-071 (rocket figure) 1980



Figure 33. C81-094 (vessel figure) 1981



Figure 34. C83-044 (vessel figure) 1983



Figure 35. C83-227 (contact print of C83-044) 1983



Figure 36. C83-161 (floating vessel figure) 1983



Figure 37. C83-210 (abject vessel figure) 1983



Figure 38. Untitled Etching, 1983 (38 x 24 cms) Collection of the Author

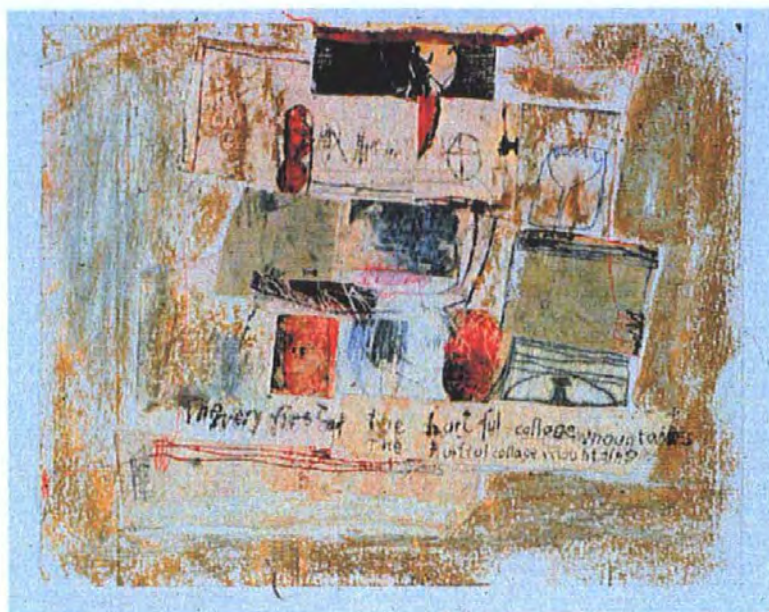


Figure 39. Hurtful Collage Mountain No.1. 1983. 'the very first of the hurtful collage mountains' written on recto.



Figure 40. Hurtful Collage Mountain No. 4., 1983 (split vessel)

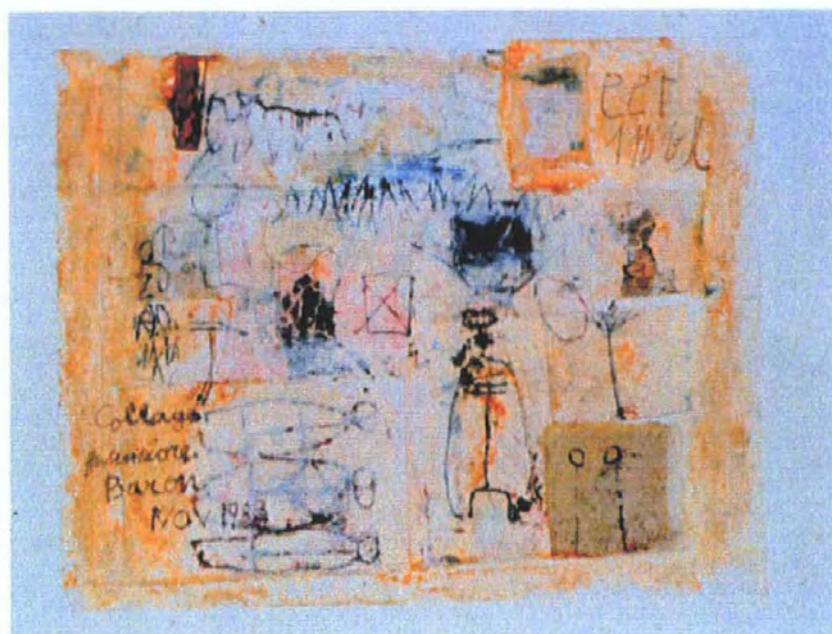


Figure 41. Collage Mountain 1983. (stacked bodies)

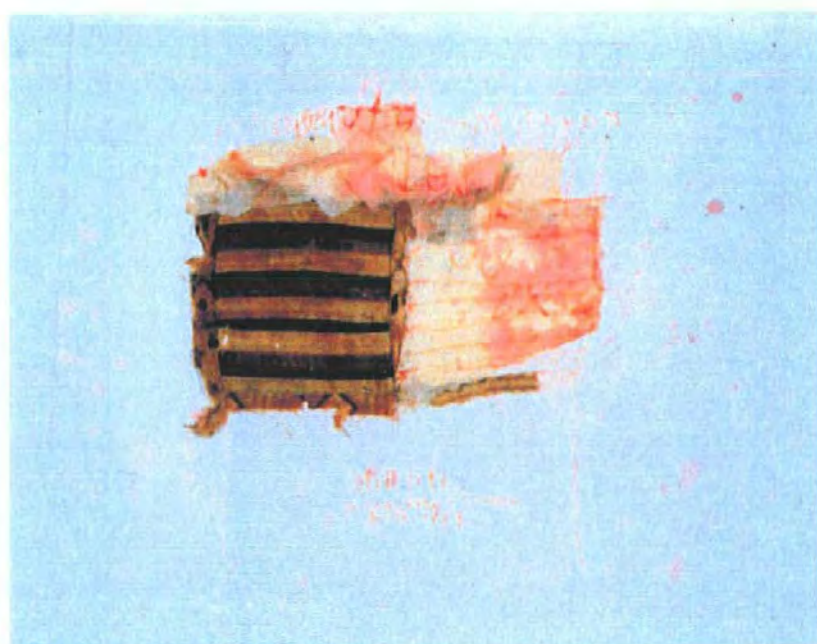


Figure 42. Still Life, 1983

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **BENEATH THE INVISIBLE AND THE REAL: Baron's Collages as Process and Negotiation**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

For Baron, the lack of fit that many women experience between the cultural signifiers of femininity and their experience of themselves as women was compounded by her lack of fit as a foreigner in America and by the fundamental breach of trust that caused her to leave Germany. The latter was a highly specific predicament for German-Jewish refugees like Baron who, despite a deep sense of rootedness in German language, culture and geography, were alienated from it not only by emigration but by the horror and trauma of their own national neighbours turning so violently against them and literally expelling them from their own national identity. Baron once described herself as an 'artist removed from my source' (Appendix XXI) claiming an identity as an artist yet suggesting a sense of location and foundational memory that cannot be reclaimed. This breach inscribed her difference from American artistic and general culture and in previous chapters I have pointed out the way in which her difference has been translated by galleries and the art press as either (or both) 'self-taught' and 'suffering' - a recuperation that confines Baron's collages to the devalued realms of 'outsider' and/or 'personal'. Both these terms are constructed categories that serve to mark out and contain difference and as such, attempt to define the limits of signification - how or what meanings can be deduced from what is represented or symbolised.

Baron managed to negotiate the dislocations of gender and German-Jewish identity by the invention of the space 'artist' which, I have argued, was a defensive strategy that resisted psychic disintegration. Yet at the same time she kept that domain 'secret', privatising it as representative of a 'secret' part of herself separate from her family.

Thus she existed not as a front line professional but as a split subject outwardly performing the dutiful roles of daughter/wife/mother with certain kinds of familial support but able to slowly take more space and time to devote to a practice that was gradually recognised by her family (particularly after her second breakdown) as necessary to the condition of being Hannelore Baron.

To relieve Baron of the stamp of Jewish victim artist it has been necessary to re-examine and hypothesise about the meaning of Holocaust trauma in relation to other factors. This has required a certain kind of psychobiographical study which draws together documentation of particular events in Baron's history and specific works made during those times in order to propose readings or suggestions that create another way of seeing the work of the collages. I have argued that Baron is a subject both shaped by the trauma of the Holocaust and obliged, in order to continue living, to work on and through that historical situation in relation to broader engagement with cultural and historical issues. But Baron's life and work also enters into another space, the space of the body and its illness which has become so significant for feminist discourse in recent years through belated work on taboo topics such as cancer. In Chapter Five, I proposed some readings of particular collages as representative of Baron's sense of her body as fragmented by illness and, in the *Hospital Collages*, the ambivalence of her will to live shortly after surgery for lung cancer. I have also made a case for a relationship between Baron's use of the figure and her perception of her own changing body. These proposals rely on a theorisation that the body-as-coalition is intrinsically bound up with her practice of collage-as process. Collage provided Baron with a syntax for her language because of the way in which, as a process, it enabled her to render coherent and to hold a world in pieces as a secondary structure that could be undone and remade. Collage-as-process also provided her with the means to signify the fragile nature of connectedness.

Although I have argued that certain biographical moments can be read into Baron's collages I have also maintained that the work embodies a socio/political critique that not only transcends specific historical events but, it can be argued, is the condition of collage itself. Eddie Wolfram points out the political implications of the gesture of collage as a 'rejection of the process of apprenticeship and all that is based on - hierarchy, order, the political economy of liberalism' (Wolfram:1975:214). Once Baron discovered collage, her break with painting was sudden and complete and she never returned to it as a practice per se only to its intermittent use as one among many collage elements. This suggests that she responded to the kind of 'lawlessness' that Wolfram highlights and to the subsequent potential it held as a form in which to create a new language.

Baron regarded her life as 'always in two parts'(Appendix XXI) but as Elisabeth Grosz argues, the borderline position of exile, despite its difficulties, has many strengths:

The marginalised position of the exile, at the very least, provides the exile with the perspective of an outsider, the kinds of perspectives that enable one to see the loopholes and flaws in the system in ways that those inside the system cannot. The position of the exile automatically has access to (at least) two different kinds of discourse and history, one defined by exclusion from a social mainstream; and one provided autonomously, from its own history and self-chosen representations. This is a position uniquely privileged in terms of social transgression and renewal. (Grosz: 1990a:87)

To consider the limits of Baron's life as a young Jewish refugee in New York is to appreciate the magnitude and strength of her desire (and need) for signification. What follows is a consideration of the question: why did Baron make collage in particular? What it is about the collage process that resonated with her experience? I have suggested in previous chapters that for Baron collage-as-process not only traversed space and time but also enabled her to re-present the tenuous transactions between intra and extra worlds that are fundamental to subjectivity. In this chapter I will consider

some of the wider meanings of collage particularly in relation to the writings of the artist and psychoanalyst Bracha Lichtenberg-Ettinger which alert me to the possibility that collage can also function as a visual metaphor for an ethical re-ordering of the social world and open up a space of insight into the possibility of peaceful co-existence.

## **6.2 Collage and Modernity**

The impreciseness of the term *collage* - which comes from the French verb *coller* meaning to stick down or glue - allows for a flexibility of practice which, with its juxtaposition of miscellaneous materials on the picture surface, and its introduction of the 'real' into the space of art, has been interpreted by a number of critics as reflecting the fragmented experience of modern life (Perloff: 1986; Hughes: 1991). Collage has played a key role in the construction of Modernism<sup>1</sup> but as the experience of modernity at the turn of the last century is very different from our post-modern millennial understanding, it is useful to chart some of the shifts in meaning in both the production and reading of collage in order to highlight the way in which collage as a practice remains marginalised within the discourses of art history.

Until it was taken up by Picasso and Braque in the early part of the century, collage was considered to be the (devalued) product of domesticity. It was elevated to an art form in 1912 when Braque and Picasso began introducing industrially produced elements such as newspaper and oilcloth into their Cubist paintings in a move which is regarded 'as an important transition between Analytic and Synthetic Cubism' (Waldman: 1992:42).

Despite the fact that much African art, for instance, deploys the techniques of collage and assemblage, and the influence of African art on Picasso is well-documented, the claims for originality of the Cubist collages and their significance as a founding moment of modernity are underpinned by the patriarchal and eurocentric ideologies that ensure cultural hegemony.

Strictly speaking - and here art historians seem to be in unusual agreement - the first collages, Picasso's *Still Life with Chair Caning* and Braque's *Fruit Dish*, were both made in 1912, although collage composition is prefigured in Cubist painting at least as early as 1908 when illusionistically painted nails, guitar strings, letters and numbers were introduced into otherwise non-representational picture surfaces with its oscillating and ambiguously defined planes... Within a few years, collage and its cognates - montage, construction, assemblage - were playing a central role in the verbal as well as the visual arts. (Perloff: 1986:47)

Within these *strict* terms, collage is validated as art when it is used by a European male artist of stature as part of a larger, more traditional practice. It is the aura of the signifier 'Picasso' that endorses Cubist collage. Furthermore, Perloff's equation of collage with the 'verbal arts' contaminates collage with language - a conjunction which, when placed in opposition to the traditionally 'pure' practices of painting and sculpture, renders it the lesser term in a dichotomy. Even if the terms of its validation are agreed upon, the meaning of collage as a signifying system is open to debate. The introduction of elements from the 'real' world into the picture space means that the collaged elements carry meaning in themselves and the artist manages the signs through devices such as juxtaposition, repetition, obscuring and overlapping which convey new meanings. In Cubist collage, however, the signs are often legible and anchored in language whereas Baron's bits of cloth relate to the body through tactility and association. Thus their meanings are more open-ended, more amenable to the imagination of the individual viewer in relation to the artist.<sup>2</sup>

In the Paris of the early decades of the twentieth century artists inhabited a dislocated milieu, made up of elements such as the rise of competing ideologies, psychoanalysis, nuclear physics and the impending threat of a European war, that we now recognise as the condition of modernity. Paris was populated by refugees from the Balkans and the modern sense of rootlessness was compounded by newspapers and telegraphic communications that transmitted images and fragments of news from around the world. All of these factors contributed to the pervasive sense of change and instability which characterised modernity and informed the art practices of the avant garde. Picasso, cited

in Perloff (1986) indicated something of the underlying atmosphere of the avant garde when he stated:

If a piece of newspaper can become a bottle, that gives us something to think about in connection with both newspapers and bottles, too. This displaced object has entered a universe for which it was not made and where it retains, in measure, its strangeness. And this strangeness was what we wanted to make people think about because we were quite aware that our world was becoming very strange and not exactly reassuring. (in Perloff:1986:46)

The ability of collage to articulate displacement becomes even more pertinent when we consider Baron as a displaced *subject*. Yet these kinds of social meanings were largely evacuated by Modernist art history, principally in the writings of Clement Greenberg. In an essay entitled *Collage* written in 1951, Greenberg discussed the form in terms of the literal flatness of the picture surface.

Because of the size of the area it covers, the pasted paper establishes flatness *bodily* (his italics) as more than an indication or sign...the actual surface becomes both background and foreground, and it turn out - suddenly and paradoxically - that the only place left for a 3-D illusion is in front of, upon the surface. In their very collages, Braque and Picasso draw or paint over and on the affixed paper or cloth, so that certain of the principal flatness of their subjects as depicted seems to thrust out into the real, bas-relief of space - or to be about to do so - while the rest of the subject remains embedded in, or flat upon, the surface. And the surface is driven back, in its very surfaceness, only by this contrast. (Greenberg:1951:71) (his underlining)

Greenberg insists on the flatness of the surface and the projection of the subject into the space of the real subsuming evidence to the contrary into paradox. Yet as Baron shows, collage can bring the real within by highlighting depth and interiority, using torn paper or cloth to reveal fragments of what lies beneath. Greenberg's particular interpretation, as well as suppressing the semiotic and psychic disruptiveness of collage, side-steps the political implications of the self-consciously breached boundaries between high art and popular culture that collage embodies.

The proliferation of mass culture afforded by reproduction impinged on Picasso and Braque's collages in that fragments of newspaper, wallpaper, etcetera were literally included in the construction of the image thus eliding the real with the pictorial and calling into question the nature of artistic representation. Quite literal text is in evidence

in the collages of Italian Futurists such as Carlo Carra and Umberto Boccioni who, while certainly influenced by Cubist form, incorporated large areas of text from popular advertising in order to express the lived experience of modernity with its proliferation of visual noise. Found text, signage, photographs and illustrations were also used by post-war Dadaists as well as the post revolutionary Russians in a collage based technique which the Dadaists called photomontage. Although the Futurists, the Dadaists and the Constructivists held very different political positions, they all considered collage, or its derivative, photomontage, to be the exemplary medium for dismantling the dominance of easel art and its heavy overlay of intellectualism. Collage was regarded as accessible in terms of both its message and its making and, for the artists in these groupings who were generally impelled by anti-establishment sentiments, collage constituted a refusal. Despite the various political and social meanings that adhered to collage in the early part of this century however Greenberg and other formalist critics have constructed a history of Modernism in which a singular view of the paper collages of Braque and Picasso stand in for all collage, particularly from that time period. Collage which was driven by social critique or political refusal has been recuperated into high art discourse under the rubric of Cubist collage.

This leaves collage in general as an uneasy hybrid ever tainted by accusations of impurity. Whether these are to do with text, illusionistic space or even speed of production is irrelevant as the terms of indictment are interchangeable (although its position is fixed). For instance, Briony Fer cites the American Minimalist Donald Judd in an essay on Malevich written in 1974 where Judd suggests that the reference to depth implicit in the layering of collage makes it a function of an 'older naturalistic space which had been overcome in post-war American art' (Fer:1997:31). Rather than the parvenu of modernity, by the mid 1970s, collage was considered to be hopelessly out of date superseded by the total eradication of depth achieved by hard-edge abstractionists like Ellsworth Kelly and Barnett Newman.<sup>3</sup> It is ironic of course that it

was lack of depth that Greenberg cited when claiming collage for Modernism but this is one example of the shifts in meaning that contain collage in a sub-altern position within the hierarchies of art history.

### 6.3 Why Collage?

The formalist position presents a paradox when the nature of collage-as- process is considered. Factors such as the 'everyday' found materials drawn from a seemingly endless reservoir of signification, the potential speed of its execution (underpinning assumptions about lack of rigour) and the convergence of fragments that range across space and time thus collapsing those distinctions, all attest to the fact that collage, perhaps more than any other medium, is always, and on many levels, in a dialectical relationship with the external world. Embedded in collage itself are referents that extend *beyond* the picture surface and, correspondingly, *beyond* the individual psyche of the artist who brings those elements into play. As I have demonstrated, Baron was unable or unwilling to make the compromises necessary for adaptation to what she regarded as a dysfunctional world. According to Adorno, the work of art 'is uncompromising in the deepest sense: it refuses the compromises, inner and outer, that are necessary for adaptation to the world' (cited in Kuspit:1991:12). Baron's refusal is articulated in collage-as-process because it enabled her to re-order the external world in such a way as to reveal aspects of the profound suffering that is implicit in the normal unhappiness that Freud suggests is necessary for civilisation. In his book, *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno contends that 'the socially critical zones of artwork are those where it hurts; where in their expression, historically determined, the untruth of the social situation comes to light' (1997:237). Baron's fractured history attuned her to the plight of the marginalised and rendered her ill at ease with the positivism characteristic of American capitalism. Collage-as-process opened up numerous possibilities for enunciating her deep disquiet that were not available to her through painting. As stated earlier, Baron's break with painting, which she had been practising and studying

throughout the 1950's, was sudden and complete and henceforth collage was the defining medium for her art.

MB: So I want to ask Mom, when did you first think of collaging one piece of paper on another and why did you start doing it?

HB: Well that was when I saw Helliker's<sup>4</sup> show and in his show he had collages combined with painting. You see, I found it easy to do that. I had thought until then that (I don't know why I thought that) that collage was a thing in itself and it wasn't combined with painting. (Interview with MB:1981:11)

Prior to seeing John Helliker's show Baron did not know that painting could be combined with collage but the possibility excited her. Like the sight of the mosaic tiles that her alerted her to the possibilities of the aerial view, Helliker's work sparked a major transition for Baron that could be interpreted as a form of *permission* to break the rules. Up until that point Baron had been working in a linear tradition in keeping with the methods expounded by her adult education instructors and it is significant that this period of her training was one she latterly erased from her history.

...so after I graduated high school I decided that never again did I want to be in this school situation as far as art is concerned - where anybody could tell me what to do or where I'd have to do a certain thing. I detested it, I couldn't wait to finish. So that's why I never studied art after that. I'm strictly self-taught. (Interview with Jean Olds:1982:4)

If we read this statement in terms of the blind spot alone, Baron's selective memory could be interpreted as an attempt to present a 'pure' artistic identity untainted by formal education. In a sense this is in keeping with the way in which Baron's gallery perceived and presented her only theirs was a 'pure' artistic identity inflected by Holocaust suffering. But her assertion of self-determination might equally contradict this: the 'I' that Baron declares is 'self-taught' - 'I' (Baron) as a subject in her own right, who broke the rules and transgressed phallic Law and Order (the 'rules' transmitted by her art teachers). The freedom to break *those* rules was especially liberating because up until that point, art for her had been the one space beyond the rules (or roles) dictated by the circumstances of her complex history (as discussed in previous chapters). The fact that after her first breakdown she was left alone to pursue her art studies was because her

parents were 'impressed' by her ability to draw (in keeping with the cultural capital of art) but they also recognised that her art work kept her from falling into a worrying state of anxious depression. Thus Baron was able to invent for herself a literal space of art practice in which she attended adult education classes and practised drawing and painting in her free time as well as an imaginary space in which she could 'see' herself as an artist. But even within that emancipatory space of art, she had to follow the rules laid down by her instructors and, in a wider sense, by the dictates of art history. To realise that she no longer had to work to other people's rules and could make or break rules according to her own desire would illuminate why her discovery of the possibilities collage held as a medium was initially so exciting and marked a turning point where she was finally able to signify her conflicts and concerns.

#### **6.4 First Collage**

As far as I have been able to determine, C95-2206 (Figure 43) is one of the first collages Baron ever made.<sup>5</sup> It appears to have originated as an abstract watercolour painting that was then torn up and reassembled as a collage. Broad, black marks, reminiscent of Kline or DeKooning, describe a face - two eyes (with eyebrows), a nose and a mouth. An overall blue watercolour wash integrates the 'pieces' with the paper support. It is smaller than her paintings from that period yet at nearly 14" across, it is larger than her later collages and is, in a sense, a bridge between the two techniques.

The execution of the figure (which nearly fills the frame) is child-like, direct and impulsive. Although it was the *sight* of Helliker's collages which initially sparked Baron to make collage, she literally tore up a painting in order to re-create it in collage form. The gestures of tearing and repairing involved Baron in a physical proximity to her work which had been previously mediated by her teacher's advice (which up until then she had obediently followed) and by the physical distance imposed by a paintbrush. Sight (and hearing) are distance senses that develop later than the proximity

senses of touch, smell and taste. Both pleasure and disgust are more intimately linked with the latter and tend to be tabooed in Western society. Collage, particularly as Baron went on to develop it, evokes the senses of touch and smell more intimately associated with the pre-oedipal state. It is not difficult to see that this is both relevant to Modernism and suppressed by it.

Tearing and repairing also call to mind the Kleinian account of the process of art making as an attempt to repair the lost object (the Mother) 'destroyed' by the child's murderous impulses. Creativity becomes a culturally acceptable way of containing destructiveness (Pajackowska:1995:84). Such a reading would make sense of the crude figuration executed for the first time in the style of a child's drawing - a style which was to become a key feature in much of Baron's later work. These gestures of deconstruction and child-like drawing whether or not driven by the unconscious motivation of Kleinian reparation confirm what Briony Fer, drawing on Bataille, suggests: 'doing violence to representation forms the basis of any representational act' (1997:79). The changes made from one drawing to another always involve the destruction of the drawing that preceded it. Baron's habit of taking collages apart and re-incorporating elements into new collages exemplifies her ambivalence in the sense that the gesture to re-pair or make whole covers over aggression.

Thus it is interesting that her first painting is made to serve the discourse of collage. It is as if the *permissive* nature of collage-as-process freed her to act upon aggressive and destructive impulses yet it is through the very process of transformation afforded to her by collage that the kind of reconciliation that Kristeva suggests as an *imaginaire du pardon* is achieved.

Baron combined painting with collage in ways in which each step of the transaction was transformative. She physically transformed the image by tearing it up and reassembling

it in an entirely different form. To tear up one's own creation is an act of violence that goes against the ideal of the value of an art object, but to use the shards of the original as a starting point for a new creation implies that it is the transformation, rather than creation itself, that is significant. What this points to is that collage-as-process embodies a transformative potential that does not exist (at least to the same degree) in traditional painting and sculpture. Although Bataille regards painting as an equally destructive act, I am suggesting that collage *in particular* can afford the artist an opportunity to re-order (sometimes violently) extant material. The material as such is not only transformed in a physical sense (which could be argued is the case in painting and sculpture) but the physical pleasure of tearing and cutting as a release of aggression is counterpoised by the equivalent pleasure of repairing, making whole and engendering new encounters.

These sensual pleasures relate to Kristeva's account of the semiotic body as a transgressive presence in the symbolic order and allow for a 'sense' of the corporeal nature of Baron's collages which are often dense with many and uneven layers, scratches, torn edges and stains. It is their sensuous, almost erotic sense of transgression that evokes bodiliness and, as Donald Kuspit remarks, (it is) 'art's sensuousness (that) subverts or breaks the frame of the work's conventions' (Kuspit:1991:7). The sensuousness of collage-as-process *and* of Baron's collages as material objects is a sign of a motivating transgressive force that clarifies Kristeva's account of the semiotic body enabling as it does the elucidation of psychic/biographical elements that maintain the necessary connection to the real without reduction to it.

### **6.5 Matrixial Borderspace**

Like Kristeva, the artist-psychoanalyst Bracha Lichtenberg-Ettinger emphasises that memory traces of the physical link to the maternal body make up a substratum of subjectivity that has been forecluded by traditional psychoanalysis with its emphasis on absence, castration and separation. Lacanian psychoanalysis reveals the way in which

the phallus stands for a symbolic principle that signifies difference conceived as absence. As the phallus is the only imaginary representation of (sexual) difference, castration becomes the only route to subjectivity. In this thesis thus far I have relied on classic psychoanalytic models of the acquisition of subjectivity in order to argue that, in a very profound sense, Baron was an *effect* of a phallic symbolic order not only in terms of her immediate family dynamic but also as the displaced victim of Nazi persecution.

The writings of Julia Kristeva allowed me to open up a space for the influences of the pre-oedipal maternal body when considering Baron's art work by introducing the concept of the semiotic chora as the repository of archaic drives that continually break into or puncture the symbolic order. Lichtenberg-Ettinger's project, while similar in some of its fundamentals to Kristeva's, differs from the latter's position that the abjection/expulsion of the mother is fundamental to subjectivity. Instead, Lichtenberg-Ettinger proposes the existence of archaic traces (which we all experience regardless of gender) of the co-emergence of maternal and infant subjectivities as a way of conceiving difference, not as absence but as 'almost encounter'. She refers to this dimension as the matrixial borderspace and proposes the Matrix as a symbol that is beyond the phallic paradigm of assimilation or rejection but can stand alongside it as a structuring principle of the Symbolic. The merit of Lichtenberg-Ettinger's theory seems clear; not least of which is the potential it offers for an ethical re-thinking of how we relate to the 'Other': the stranger, the foreigner, the 'different'. To think in terms of the several in co-existence without domination and subordination is to radically re-envision subjectivity from the binary paradigm of similar and different to one of plurality based on same and same-but-different. Clearly, collage-as-a-process, with its drive towards the importation and displacement of 'foreign' elements into a pictorial space of equivalence performs this kind of shift towards the several as same-yet-different. Lichtenberg-Ettinger's 'matrixial borderspace' concerns the co-equal relation between mutually knowable and

unknowable entities rather than the assimilation or rejection of difference proposed by the (dominant) phallic model. She relates this space to the inscription of/from feminine corporeal specificity but is clear that neither motherhood nor mother/child relations is at issue.

The phantasmatic matrixial web of I/non-I includes traces of whoever was there, as an inscribed subknowledge that is not just traces of "nothing" but also what is beyond and yet inter-with-me. Inasmuch as the matrixial stratum emerges first of all in the experience related to the womb as inside *or* outside *me* and as outside *and* inside *us*, it spreads out between trauma and phantasy of each becoming-subject together with the specific trauma and phantasy of its specific becoming-m/Other-to-be. This stratum is bounded through singular feminine/prenatal encounters as inscriptions with-in-dialogue with the desire of an *assembled* woman-Other. The desire of the woman as subject within such singular series of encounters is already a *webbed* desire, further composited but not fused or mingled with the Name of the Father. *Her* -desire is both phallic and matrixial. (Lichtenberg-Ettinger:1994:101)

Lichtenberg-Ettinger's writings allow for another kind of sense to be made of the materiality of collage as a web-like structure that can accommodate multiple histories and complex heterogeneous relationships. For instance, layering one piece on top of another is intrinsic to the collage process even if it is just a single piece glued onto the surface ground which means that there is always a *beneath* and an *invisible* referenced as a surface 'trace'. Claire Pajackowska compares the beneath and invisible as an important part of matrilineal theories of culture that have been traditionally relegated to silence and thereby symbolic non existence.

Invisibility can also be a form of silence, and it is both possible and necessary to *differentiate between different qualities of silence, invisibility and absence.*  
(Pajackowska:1995:86)

The trace may be physical in that it can be seen (as a mark or a slight protrusion) or it is left to the viewer's imagination to 'know' that there is something beneath. The trace indicates other potential stories or spaces - the ones that the paper, cloth, print etc. occupied *before* entering the picture plane. In Baron's collages one (or more) element(s) might have arrived via a different collage, or several different collages, picking up

traces along the way. Baron described how much she liked the *damage* that occurred when a piece was pulled off a collage.

...when I take the pieces off a collage I don't like and they become like a little torn and its like really hard to get them off - like stamps from a letter - and only the top layer comes off and it gets thin - but that's the great thing for the next collage - it's much better than the way it was before. I just love the way in the process of reworking things get even more stained and more torn and more messed - terrific.  
(HB/JO:1981:7)

The traces speak of a history that becomes part of the identity of the piece itself and the passage back to origin is further obscured with each new location. Recognition of the aesthetic value of these kinds of transpositions is also pointed out by Briony Fer (1997) who discusses how, when asked to exhibit some of his old collages, Jean Arp brought them down from the attic and found they were all deteriorated from the damp and he loved the decay. After that, when he made new ones, he said, 'if the ink dissolved and ran I was delighted'.<sup>6</sup>

When any individual element finally settles as part of one collage, under glass, in the frame, it takes on a new identity as part of a whole. Yet traces of its history are still visible as a sub-stratum. Their meaning(s) are further altered by juxtaposition - through relationship with everything that surrounds it in which no one term is either dominant or subordinate. Close attention momentarily fractures surface unity as the eyes rest on a small portion of any one collage imagining its history and wondering what lies beneath it. In Baron's collages sometimes the latter is visible through a tear or a hole in the surface (screen) that opens the way for *another* encounter with a *different* set of histories.

Reference to what is 'not' there, beneath the surface, is found in the collage numbered C76-055 (Figure 44). Here, Baron circled the two tears in the cloth as if to emphasise the fact that the dark green ground is showing through. Yet the larger, torn piece appears to be laid on top of a narrow pink strip of cloth which disappears beneath it on

the left hand side. The green showing through the tear is like a memory or even an illusion, particularly when considered in relation to the small piece of cloth positioned beneath the larger one whose edges are 'connected' with drawings of stitches. The same drawn 'stitches' (signifying the futility of attempts at closure?) are also used to try and close or hide the gap on the bottom right so on the one hand, there is an effort to repair while on the other, the very damage intrinsic to the material is highlighted. Baron's collages play out notions of difference which are always maintained as ambiguous. Damage and repair, inside and outside, visible and invisible, significant and insignificant space (as demarcated by frames) all constitute a play *between* the signifying oppositions that underpin language and a symbolic order structured by the phallus. Similarly, According to Greenberg's formulation, in the Cubist collages of Braque and Picasso 'the actual surface becomes both background and foreground' thrusting their depicted subjects 'out into the real, bas-relief of space' (1951:71). I am suggesting that Baron's use of collage is different in that her emphasis is not on depiction and illusion but on the (nearly) invisible or sensed interstices of language, history and the material world.

The invisible is also at play in many of the figurative prints which make the interior of the body visible as if by X-ray. X-rays have medical connotations that are in keeping with Baron's long experience of illness but more generically they are used to access what can not be seen by the 'naked' eye. The opaque, blank surface that refuses knowledge of depth is penetrated by the X-ray to reveal its interiority. In fact, many of Baron's collages look like X-ray's of luggage on a conveyor belt - those surprising images of haphazardly packed personal possessions seen on the screen at airport security. The elevation of the invisible and the beneath that is so prevalent in Baron's collages can be understood as a visual metaphor that intervenes in the destructive convention of making judgements at 'face value' the effects of which are articulated, for instance, in the dominant discourses of race, age and gender.

Similarly, edges are crucial in Baron's collages because to think about the edge as a potential *encounter* not only clarifies what I have argued was Baron's ambivalent relation to space but also suggests the kinds of metaphorical socio/psychic re-orderings that were integral to her practice. In many collages the pictorial elements are clustered together, edges touching or often overlapping but in continuous interaction. Edges are rarely neat and symmetrical, but rather they are ragged and mis-shapen, so that some parts of two edges are connected while others stand apart. The same is true for the paper prints which are often irregularly shaped with one (or more) torn edge, and for the material used as the ground of many of the collages. This lack of regularity in relation to what is *beside* any one form suggests such things as the permeable nature of boundaries; the lack of uniformity of individual elements yet the consistent potential for melded encounters that can be simultaneously experienced as total separation. Often, edges are reinforced either as a drawn line around a particular element or, more typically, as a drawn frame around an entire collage. But these 'frames' are usually left open which, I have argued, signals the transit between Baron's internal and external worlds in that materials from the 'object' world were rearranged and incorporated in to the collage space of her inner world. The open frames also attest to the fluidity of this process as the gap or opening allows for the metamorphosis of objects from one collage to the another. The latter suggests that no single collage was sufficient as a 'space' in itself but rather, the space occurred within the process which effectively begins with the gathering.

## **6.6 'Gathered with Great Care'**

In Chapter One I quoted two statements by Baron concerning her materials in which she wrote 'the materials I use...are gathered with great care' (Schlesinger-Boisanté:1987:9) and, 'I feel compelled to save all small bits of cloth and paper as if I were rescuing them to make them part of a whole' (Appendix II:4-5). It is as if Baron regarded the symbolic order as inherently dysfunctional and negative but, unlike painting, collage-as-process

enabled her to bring overlooked and discarded materials from the external world into her most intimate space and re-configure them in such a way as to endow them with significance.

The use of cloth was primary to Baron's practice despite the fact that she often used paper as a ground for a collage and some (relatively few) works are made entirely from paper. Integral to her process was travelling to flea markets and thrift stores in order to search for new materials for the collages. Because Baron didn't drive, these frequent trips were made with either Herman or Mark and they were planned in the sense that she looked in the local papers for sales and flea markets or spotted a thrift store on the way to somewhere else and made a note to visit it at a later date. This restless searching speaks of her desire because she never knew what she was looking for until she found it. Robin Lydenberg (1989) discusses the eroticism of the unexpected encounter of disconnected objects in Surrealist collage when, 'there is a momentary gap that separates them...(which) for Breton...is analogous to the moment when his desire at last recognises and possesses its previously unknown object' (p.274).

Unlike the found 'texts' of Schwitters or Picasso, the pieces of cloth Baron used in the collages are not signs made up of signifiers and signified. In the case of Schwitters or Picasso, the signification of a sign usually has a direct meaning (i.e. newspaper or bus tickets) although their *significance* is open to debate depending on who is reading the collage. Baron's use of cloth, on the other hand, carries more open-ended meanings. As a 'blank' surface, in the sense that unlike a bus ticket its exact reference cannot be known, it provides a screen on which to project all kinds of imaginary meanings, associations and identifications. Besides the obvious connection between cloth and the feminine, cloth as a symbol and product of culture is primarily associated with the body thus it can be argued that it is freighted with connotations. Made for protection (and/or decoration) it is, in a sense, a second skin. It connotes connection to a person - the

wearer - and as such, it is significantly different from mechanically produced paper texts which only come into contact with the body via vision. Some of the cloth Baron used in the collages is patterned lending it either domestic connotations or the more direct, human association with female clothing. More often than not however it is the weave or structure of the cloth which is highlighted by either threads from the weave left to dangle or by the replication of the pattern of the weave via transfer printing. These devices have the effect of magnification with the viewer required to stand still and peer closely at the work in order to determine exactly what it is that is being seen. Magnification and 'peering closely' evoke, as Briony Fer suggests 'the effects of a microscopic lens that makes the most insignificant forms take on huge proportions' (1997:74). The magnified proportions of texture also evoke the tactile sensations which precede visual perception and give the work a corporeal address - the kind of 'body knowing' discussed in the last chapter.

'Rescuing' the cloth and making 'insignificant forms take on huge proportions' suggests that Baron particularly related the cloth to the experience of the overlooked or marginalised. This connection is reinforced by the fact that the flea markets and junk stores where she looked for materials contain things more generally regarded as detritus by the dominant society. These are old and damaged objects and materials that have been discarded yet her care and attention as evidenced by the search indicates a sensibility tuned to recognising beauty in the abject. The process of selecting and rejecting materials was also a way of bearing witness to her own and millions of others embodied experience as 'discarded Jews' as well as to all the other victims of war and disaster who suffer under existing regimes of power.<sup>7</sup> By reusing the discarded, the cast-aside stand-ins for human lives, Baron was able to magnify their individual importance whether real or imagined, past or present. The base materiality of the fabric pieces bear the marks of the passage of time and a collage such as C84-095 (Figure 45) attests to the fragility and richness of life while simultaneously collapsing temporality.

In this sense, the work becomes about *survival*, with Baron as curator, guide and celebrant collecting together and pointing out these ‘terrific’ things that have managed to survive and are made significant (with history and affect) in the process. The vulnerability of cloth to time not only connected Baron with abstract humanity but also with her own history. In Germany her father was a fabric merchant and it is possible to imagine that the tactility, smell and pliability of cloth resonated with shards of early childhood memories. But the ethical component important to Baron’s process is also apparent in her treasuring of old things for, as Heidegger describes in his later work, the task is to ‘open up the simplicity and greatness’ of entities and be ‘for the sake of the being of entities in totality’ (Guignon: 1993:35). As Charles Guignon points out ‘What is suggested here is the idea of treasuring things for what they are rather than what they can do for us’ (ibid.).

## **6.7 Space/Time**

I have argued throughout this thesis that collage-as-process provided Baron with a *space* of her own invention in which she could access the language of exile in order to inscribe traces of the ‘secret part’ of herself. This non-physical space was concomitant with the lack of psychic space she experienced within the family. But there is another dimension to this dialectic in which the work Baron produced can be understood in terms of a literal lack of space and of time. Baron’s collage-as-process articulates a play across the dual axis of space and time (both in a material/social and psychic sense) that is suggestive of their simultaneous expansion and collapse. What I mean by this is that the space and time of *process* is a space of expansion in which subjectivity (as an effect of inter-relationships) is dissolved by close attention to the ‘free space’ of the picture surface. Yet space as distance is also collapsed through the process of bringing objects (from afar) into the intimate space of the collage. Similarly, time can distort and expand

through an act of total concentration yet the collages themselves are redolent with references to ancient and pre-historic cultures as if to time immemorial.

As we have seen, Baron had no studio of her own until relatively late in her career which meant that she not only had to improvise working spaces within the family home but also that the work she produced needed to be small. Griselda Pollock (1992) argues that the studio is the privileged space of modern art but unlike large abstract paintings created in the dedicated space of the studio, collage, as a working process, enabled Baron to at least expand her artistic territory within the domestic environment - the 'space of femininity'.

It is easy to assume that Baron's identity as an artist was fundamentally at odds with the conflicting claims on her identity as a wife, a mother and a daughter because although the family acknowledged her need to make art, there were none of the allowances made that are ostensibly common to most (male) artist's working lives. Baron was a product of her time and her particular history yet she deals with the prevailing expectations of female identity with a light irony as she indicated in the interview with Jean Olds:

I used to work in the evening because as a wife and mother or whatever there were no demands on me after supper. Well now it's sort of a little different somehow. I thought that I would work in the morning... although when I work in the morning there's the thing about lunch - see my husband is home and we eat lunch together but still, there's more of a possibility now in the morning. (Interview with Jean Olds:1982:6)

Further on in the interview, Baron returned to this subject in a monologue which is worth reprinting in full for what it tells us about the difficulty women artists often have in over riding the cultural expectations of marriage and motherhood.

HB: It is important to have some encouragement but on the other hand you also have to realise that sometimes you can't get it. And I've gotten encouragement from the family but that's only because - besides doing the collages - I did all the other things I was supposed to do - like clean house and make the meals and take care of them. OK, they give you encouragement if you do all your regular things and you do this in your spare time. If I neglected the normal duties I don't know if I would have gotten that much encouragement. (Laughs). Also, there are no allowances made at all for giving me extra time or anything - not by the children or let's say - if I'm working up here and someone, like my son - he has supper here every night, well I'll just come down and give him his supper and they never think that that might be a little

hard that I just have to leave everything here. I suppose I could say I don't want to come down but it would seem very - considering my past performance as a mother or whatever - it would seem most unusual. (Laughs).

JO: So you have to work in the daytime when the family isn't here for meals?

HB: Yeah and since my daughter is divorced I have the grandchildren every week-end and there too, I'm not considered anything but a grandmother. The thing about the artist, that's something that they don't even think about (ibid, p8)

The gender implications of Baron's lament are obvious and many women, finding themselves in a similar predicament, have given up trying to make art altogether. For Baron the collages were a lifeline, the space where all demands were aesthetic and of her own choosing but the dynamics of family life were equally important to her and in this sense it could be argued that the collages could only be produced in relation to that dialectic. What is significant is that collage, as a hybrid object, enabled her to symbolise the complex (and occasionally conflicting) connections, disconnections and re-connections of her various 'lived' identities. For instance, it is obvious that by necessity Baron tended to work in short bursts of time often working on three or four collages in once session. Collage enabled her to handle constant interruptions because, as they could be produced quickly, she wasn't risking a great deal on any one piece. If she wasn't satisfied with a collage she would take it apart as readily as she might have put it together.

...I'm very prolific...I don't think much, I'll just put the blue there. I don't think it will ruin it. First of all, since I do collages, if I put the blue there and I don't like it, I'll glue something over it. (Laughs) When I say I don't take it that seriously, I don't mean I don't take the work seriously but not any one collage that it will stop me from - that I'll be worried I'll ruin it....I almost never throw anything out... since I treasure old things and the feeling I want to get across is this feeling of life having gone over it...(ibid., p.7)

Baron's collages are characterised by their irregularity and spontaneity and the relished torn, stained and damaged material that revealed the effects of time. But at the same time, paradoxically, the 'messiness' of the execution is productive of a particular aesthetic that reveals its own hurried process. Time as duration is visualised as being simultaneously fast and slow which interferes in the logic of linear time and is much

closer to the way in which time is experienced as both 'running out' and sedimented with memories.

## **6.8 Women's Time**

Baron's statement that her collages should express 'the feeling of life having gone over it' suggests a sensed connection and acceptance of the rhythms of life including ageing, illness and death. This awareness may well have had its roots in her understanding of Eastern philosophy but Baron's collages, as an oeuvre, testify to the interconnectedness of human beings not just in the present but over time. As stated previously, Baron drew much of her inspiration from visits to the Metropolitan Museum in New York where she studied archaeological artefacts of North American Indians, ancient Egyptians and early African civilisations. She also collected old dolls and handmade doll's quilts; small African handmade baskets; African and Native American artefacts and other assorted items as long as they were old, small, handmade and inexpensive. In the family home in Riverdale<sup>8</sup> there were several glass-fronted cabinets filled with Baron's carefully arranged trove as well as doll's quilts and samplers that were framed and hung on the wall along with (very few) of Baron's collages.<sup>9</sup>

The influence of African art is particularly clear in the bound figures that Baron printed from cut-out copper sheets which bear a resemblance to African fetish objects particularly when isolated as a single print (Figure 46). But as I have argued in Chapter Five, the visual similarity is not based on mimicry so much as a recognition of their psychic function and a desire to create ritual objects of her own. In both Baron interviews (HB/MB:1981 and HB/JO:1982), she stated that she was not very interested in the art of her contemporaries, preferring instead the unauthored artefacts of ancient and pre-historic cultures. This suggests that Baron's influences, rather than being scopic and linear and based on dichotomies such as present/past or western/non-

western, were more reciprocal in the sense that she understood that in some fundamental sense she was the *same* as the people who made the objects she looked at. Of course she 'knew' that she was different in her present, experienced reality but in the looking at and being with the objects she understood that it was the *same for her* and in Heidegger's sense, she was able to 'unearth' their hiddenness (Guignon:1993:54).

Despite Baron's stated agnosticism, she appreciated art's mystical and sacred potential and was interested in ancient religious texts such as 'Tantric art, the illuminated pages of the Koran and Persian miniatures'<sup>10</sup>. She explained her attraction to these ancient art forms during her interview with Mark Baron.

I like the diagrams and I like the mysticism....because it is like a secret map. I mean, to them of course it is not secret, they knew what it was all about but it's still secret in a way that these are religious diagrams and it means that they have figured out some kind of way and I guess that is where it is similar to my message. You see, it is like something they figured out and put down on paper, in what I think is a very beautiful fashion....It's the same thing in the African art as in the Tantric art....the spirituality that's shown in the work itself, not by it being secret and mystic but like elongated and the wooden pieces being weather-beaten. There is an obvious feeling of spirituality...the combination of spiritualism with the materials that (are) so crude. (HB/MB:1981:15-16)

Baron's intuitive response to the authenticity of ancient texts resonates with an elaboration of the multiplicity of time put forward by Julia Kristeva in her influential essay *Women's Time* (re-printed in Moi:1986:188-213). Linear time in Kristeva's definition refers to time as project, teleology, the prospective unfolding of history which she associates particularly with patriarchal 'masculinity' although she acknowledges women's need to enter or reconcile with it. On the other hand, cyclical time (repetition) and monumental time (eternity) are other temporalities that exist mythically and are associated with and derived from the feminine body and its sexuality. Kristeva's articulation of *different* modes of understanding or experiencing time highlights the interwoven meanings of the sexual, the symbolic and linear time. The first two, she argues, are present within monumental and cyclical time, but repressed and denied within patriarchal culture. Although she sees both monumental and cyclical time as traditionally linked to female subjectivity she points out that these are often the

fundamental (and only) conceptions of time in numerous civilisations and experiences, particularly mystical ones. (Minsky:1996:183). According to Kristeva, it is the 'sensed' conception of time which not only underpins women's mourning - so often maligned as melancholia - but also breaches the desire for transcendence that is crucial to patriarchal chronology. Baron's concern with the mystical, hidden message in art aligned her spiritually with the unauthored texts of 'Other' civilisations rather than the personal careerism of her contemporaries. While opting out, in a sense, from the drive towards a place in linear art history, her process of re-working and re-incorporating found materials provided her with a sense of narrative that enabled her to read a history into any one collage. Many of the works are like palimpsests, the visible image scarcely covering over the layered evidence of sedimented histories containing secrets of her own making that lie *between* presence and absence. This is significantly *different* from the binary presence/absence which is founded on denied maternal connectivity and the fearful spectre of castration. Baron's collages consistently deny these binaries via (for instance) allusion to the presence *within* absence (the green cloth in Figure 44); the synchronicity of past and present (monumental time); and the permeability of borders (dangling threads, uneven edges, fake stitches). These are just a few of her signifying practices that can lead us to a way of thinking and speaking about art as a *process* that is not necessarily founded on the sublimation of castration anxiety but is created in a state of suspended receptivity that is open to the psychic remainder of memories and affects of proto-subjectivity, prior to language and loss. To designate this space *feminine* must not be interpreted as a form of biological essentialism, rather, it is predicated on the maternal body as *origin*, irrespective of gender.

The psychic space Baron created for herself acted as a form of container or holding space in which she was able to articulate some dimension of her engagement with the world and with her own historically traumatised subjectivity. Baron's identity as an artist was a complex amalgam of phantasy (gleaned from reading about art and artists'

lives); a pressure towards self-inscription (as described in previous chapters); the family dynamics in which art was the one territory she could precariously claim for herself; and her intimate relationship with the work itself. In this sense her identity as an artist was relatively self-contained and for the work to be exhibited, sold and praised only confirmed what she already knew. But in another sense this self-positioning evidences her awareness of the art discourse she implicitly challenged.

Although as discussed earlier, Baron's identity as a wife and mother often took precedence over her activity as an artist it also provided her with the stable reference points she needed in order to *be* an artist. As Baron herself suggests her life would 'always be in two parts' yet it is precisely this in-between space of fragmented identity that enabled her to imaginatively play with identity in games with her son, in her letters to Dolly Honig and in her writings. Her evident perception of the fluidity of identity is not only relevant to her choice of collage but also essential to understanding how she developed it as a medium able to articulate the unstable bricolage of phantasy and identifications that make up the shifting ground of any one identity. It also allowed her to explore the kinds of transactions with the real world that are vital to its construction; in Baron, identity affords means of negotiation, object identifications are structured as incorporated into the internal world of being.

## **6.9 The Last Collages**

Sometime during 1986 Baron made a group of collages that she jokingly referred to as her *Out of Africa* collages. It is difficult to be certain which ones she was referring to because they were only titled in conversation and some of them would have been dispersed prior to Mark Baron photographing the work. The film *Out of Africa* was released in the United States in 1985, and it made such an enormous impression on Baron that she went on to read the Isak Dineson book that the film was based on. At the time, she told Linda Hooper (who was working at Gallery Schlesinger-Boisanté) that

she meant the collages to be 'like letters from the tribespeople to the white world'<sup>11</sup> which indicates that Baron aligned herself with African tribespeople and was tempted in fantasy to adopt their (imaginary) viewpoint.<sup>12</sup> It is also possible that, as an 'armchair traveller', Baron identified with Dineson's romantic spirit of adventure and with the tragic circumstances that forced Dineson to give up her farm in Africa. The story confirms the plight of gifted and heroic women who are defeated by circumstances beyond their control and perhaps Baron found solace in this and also related to Dineson's vantage point of looking back over her life because she wrote:

There comes a time when we know that the most colourful part of our life lies behind us. Isak Dinesen knew, when aged and ill, in the cold climate of Denmark, she wrote loving remembrances of a farm she once had in Africa. Her words evoked strong images for me, and out of those came this series of warm, sunlit landscape collages. (Appendix I:34)

The most striking thing about these collages is their expansiveness and the use of light, pale blue and a radiant golden yellow that seem to visually transcribe Dinesen's written descriptions of the African plains. To accept that the 'most colourful part of our life is behind us' is to begin to reconcile oneself with death. Baron's equanimity in the face of death is apparent in her last collages. She made twenty three collages in 1987 and in general, they mark a return to the feeling of immense light and space that characterised the 'Out of Africa' collages made during the previous year. There are comparatively few elements of construction and some of the collages are like very pale, abstract watercolours. The minimum of collaged material reflects a sense of surety and ease of expression as well as a turning away from the external world in favour of a more direct inscription of marks and traces. The collages numbered C87-014 and C87-016 (Figures 47 and 48) illustrate a kind of clarity of her vision during the remaining weeks of her life. In their plenitude of gold and blue, there is a feeling of hope and spiritual renewal.

Even though Baron was only sixty-one when she died, the trauma of the Holocaust and her long struggle with cancer has taken their toll. In a letter to Dolly she wrote:

How are your problems, don't do like Tara's bear<sup>13</sup>, get help in time. Mine are hard to solve and I have pulled my sweatshirt hood over my eyes many times and cried my stomach wet...Old age is a terrible trial!! It is suddenly thrust upon us when we least expect it (do we ever?) and then, we are left to cope with it. If only someone would apologise, say they are sorry, but instead they blame you if you are surprised. (Letter to DH:No.48, June, 1986)

The artist Michael Hoffka, a childhood friend of Mark Baron's, remembered Baron telling him 'they're chopping off pieces of my body and I'm sick of it' and Linda Hooper recalled that Baron rang her shortly before her death and said: 'Today I don't have the energy to brush my teeth and I know I'm going to die so I wanted to call and say good-bye'.

Baron entered Columbia Presbyterian Hospital for the last time in March, 1987.

Herman Baron stayed by his wife's side throughout the days and private nursing care was arranged for the nights because Baron did not want to be alone. She died fifty-one days later on the 28th of April, 1987 but not before making a last pencil drawing with the words, written in German, 'death is coming for me'. According to her wishes she was cremated without ceremony and Herman Baron scattered her ashes from a beachfront park in New Rochelle where they used to go and sit together.

### **6.10 Conclusion**

According to Mark Baron, before his mother died, he asked her what she wanted him to do with the collages and she told him to 'throw them in the Hudson River' because 'they've done their work now'.<sup>14</sup>

How the collages 'worked' for Baron has underpinned much of the discussion in this thesis which began with a formal analysis intended to prioritise the site of artistic inscription in order to discern some of the patterns, syntaxes and habits that constitute Hannelore Baron as author. I then identified the terms of the analysis within which Baron's work has been critically legitimated and identified the problems of that criticism

in the troping of victim art. To work against that trope I have had to risk a certain kind of psychoanalytically informed reading of Baron's life in order to create the kind of enlarged possibilities for the signification of the collages as both a longterm practice through which a certain kind of subjectivity on the edge maintained itself and a series of different kinds of works or groups of work that were shaped by and gave form to specific events, personal concerns and social issues. The concept of the body as coalition acknowledges the split nature of the subject of history as both known and unknown to itself which nonetheless enters the text not just as a conscious producer of meaning but as a filter through which traces of semiotic and symbolic activity can register.

Kristeva's theorisation of art as a space of translation and forgiveness enabled me, with the evidence of my research, to formulate an understanding of some of Baron's collages as a working through of traumatic material particularly her experience of cancer. The concept of the *imaginaire du pardon* also opened up a space for readings that take into account traces of the semiotic body as a drive energy inscriptions of which can disturb or disrupt the symbolic.

An important part of the work of this thesis has been the weaving in of Baron's written and spoken testimony to the systematic study of her collages. As pointed out in Chapter Two, Baron's words and opinions could change according to their intended context but, considered in total, they provide enough evidence to contradict the dominant interpretation and I have, for the most part, accepted these words as reliable in a direct way:

At the same time that I got the message in the collages I also straightened myself out...it all suddenly fit together. What had been unclear to me in myself and what was unclear all over, it all, everything, became clear, the collages and myself.  
(HB/MB:1981:14)

In theorising the relationship between Baron's life (the body-as-coalition) and her practice (collage-as-process) I have argued that her choice of collage as a medium was bound up with the traumatic circumstances of forced exile, the fantasy of her *difference* and a desire for self-inscription all of which could be accommodated by collage-as-process. Collage, as opposed to any other medium, enabled her to best articulate the necessary connection between her external and internal worlds via the literal movement of objects and the metaphorical transcription of marks and traces. This freedom of movement was further enhanced by the open-endedness of a process that included searching and gathering and the introduction of a seemingly endless reservoir of materials and media into the intimate and expansive space of the image generating new relationships and, as a corollary, ethical understandings.

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<sup>1</sup> Of course as Wolfram (1975) has pointed out, by the early 20th Century collage as an art practice already had a long history in western and eastern cultures and as Polkinghorne argues the attribution of its invention to specific early 20th Century artists 'must itself be examined as a coded move to...create Modernism categorically' (Polkinghorne: 1989:214).

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting that when Baron was attending art classes in the late 1940s, she switched from figuration to the 'cubist-type thing'. In the 1981 interview with Mark Baron she talked about how the teacher explained 'how the cubists tried to picture the object from all sides and top and bottom on a flat plane' and that she found it 'sort of easy because he had given me these literal instructions' (HB/MB:1981:7-8). For examples of Baron's cubist painting, see Figures 13 and 14.

<sup>3</sup> In the interview with Mark Baron, he asked his mother what feelings she had for the New York School hard-edged abstraction and she replied: 'I can't relate to any of that...It's too clean, too pure, too sterile...*nobody's that cool*'. (HB/MB:1981:19) The italicised statement is on the original tape of the interview but has been omitted from the transcript.

<sup>4</sup> John Helliker was a friend of Herman Baron's brother Oscar. He taught in the Fine Art Department of Columbia University and Herman occasionally took Hannelore to Helliker's studio to show him her work.

<sup>5</sup> I saw this collage in an exhibition in 1995 at Louis Stern Fine Arts in Los Angeles in a group show entitled *Pasted Papers: Collage & the 20th Century* which was curated in collaboration with Peter Frank. Baron's Los Angeles gallery (who lent the collage) dated the collage 'circa early 1960's' but I am sure that it dates from the late 1950's and would even suggest more precisely that it was made in 1958. The last dated casein painting remaining in Baron's estate is from 1957. C952206 looks to me

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like a torn up abstract painting that has been reassembled in collage form and by 1960, Baron was already producing collages from many disparate elements.

<sup>6</sup> Arp, 'Looking', in *Arp* (exh.cat.), ed. and intro. by James Thrall Soby, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1958, p.14 . Cited in Fer (1997:73).

<sup>7</sup> Baron often expressed outrage about current world events in her letters to Dolly. In one such letter she talked about the disaster in Bhopal in India and wrote: 'it's the worst thing I can ever remember and should shake up the entire world. Instead, its just going to be settled with some money or cheap talk I imagine'. (Letter to DH:44)

<sup>8</sup> The house was sold in 1999.

<sup>9</sup> In the interview with Jean Olds Baron stated that she never bought contemporary art 'for some reason or other' need a constant change and I'm always afraid I'll get tired of everyone's work except my own or the African or American Indian or Oriental...It's as if when I look at those - the feeling never changes - it always looks the same to me as when I acquired it. Anything else, I think it would change. After awhile there wouldn't be anything in it anymore' (HB/JO:1981:2)

<sup>10</sup> Undated written statement by Baron (Appendix II:26).

<sup>11</sup> VR in conversation with Linda Hooper in 1995.

<sup>12</sup> In the same letter to Dolly Honig that was quoted in the Introduction, Baron described her refusal to submit to the prospect of chemotherapy as like the young slave in *Roots* who was shackled in an iron collar until he would lose his will and submit to his masters.

<sup>13</sup> This refers to a story Baron related in a previous letter about her grand daughter's stuffed bear that Baron had dressed in a sweatshirt. When Baron commented to Tara that the bear looked lonely, she replied that he had to learn to solve his own problems.

<sup>14</sup> VR in conversation with Mark Baron, June, 1994.



Figure 43. C95-2206 (first collage) c. late 1950s



Figure 44. C76-055 (tear in fabric) 1976



Figure 45. C84-095, 1984



Figure 46. Untitled Print 1978  
(Note: Horizontal Lines are a printing fault -  
Not in the original.)

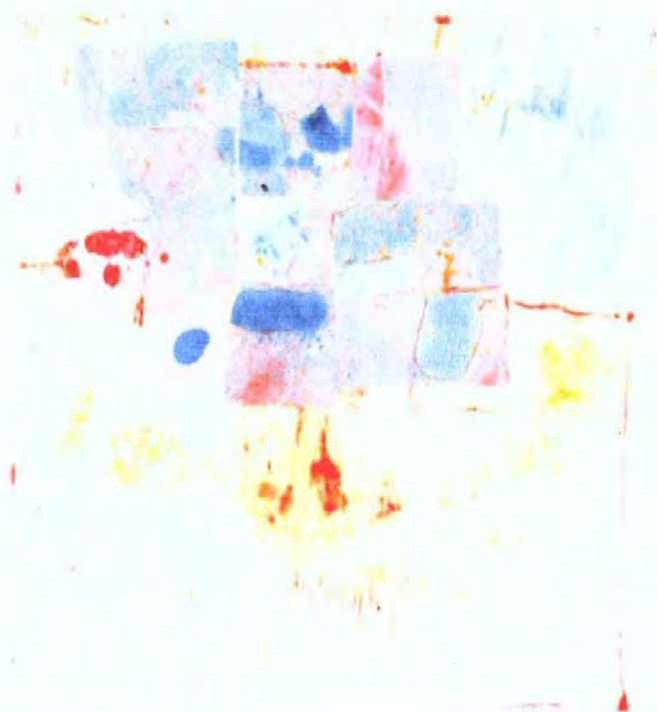


Figure 47. C87-014, 1987

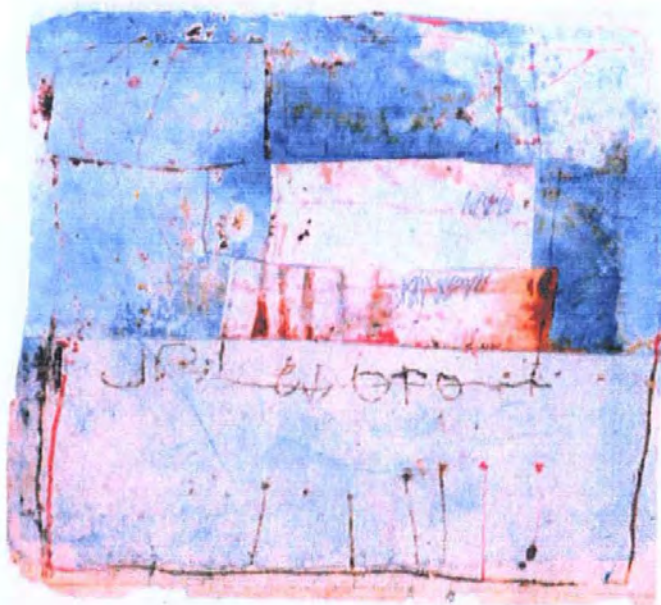


Fig 48. C87-016, 1987

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## APPENDICES:

The appendix contains photocopies supplied by Mark Baron of original documents stored in the Baron archive that are referenced in the text. Additionally, some biographical documents that are not directly referred to are included for their historical relevance. Also included are examples of Baron's narrative writing in order to demonstrate the scope of her creative activity.

The appendices are numbered on the top R/H corner. Where an appendix includes more than one page, the number of pages is indicated.

Where a particular page of an appendix is referenced in the text, the reference delineates the page number in the sequence of the individual appendix rather than the overall thesis.

All hand-written notes in the appendices are by Mark Baron.

## **INDEX OF APPENDICES:**

**Appendix I:** 41 page document entitled 'Hannelore Baron' that contains biographical notes; excerpts from the HB/MB:1981 interview; written statements by Baron; list of solo and group shows and a bibliography. This document was compiled by Mark Baron in 1993.

**Appendix II:** 14 pages of mostly undated written statements by Baron about her work.

**Appendix III:** Biographical notes about Baron typed on Gallery Schlesinger-Boisanté note paper.

**Appendix IV:** Hand written (by Baron) biographical notes - undated.

**Appendix V:** Different version of the above.

**Appendix VI:** 1972 newspaper cutting (Riverdale Press) of a photograph of Baron and an article about her teaching in the local community.

**Appendix VII:** Ten pages of up-dated biographical notes on Baron including excerpts from her personal writings. Compiled by Mark Baron in 1998.

**Appendix VIII:** Letter dated September 8th, 1941 written by Baron's father (Julius Alexander) to the Principal of the Textile High School.

**Appendix XIX:** Baron's school report cards (7).

**Appendix X:** Receipt for Baron's application for naturalisation as an American citizen.

**Appendix XI:** Baron's High School Diplomas (2)

**The following documents were all written by Baron in the form of autobiographical narratives.**

**Appendix XII:** Journal entitled 'How we came to the USA' dated June 21, 1941. (Photocopied from the original lined exercise book).

**Appendix XIII:** Fourteen pages telling the story of Uncle Siegfried.

**Appendix XIV:** Twenty-five pages (incomplete) telling the story of her involvement with macrobiotics.

**Appendix XV:** Two pages (typed) about her brother Hans.

**Appendix XVI:** As above, about her mother (Friedel Alexander).

**Appendix XVII:** One page (typed) about her neighbour Estelle.

**Appendix XVIII:** 'On the Outside Looking for an In'. Article by Baron published in the The New York Times, October 6th, 1985.

**Appendix XIX:** Poem about her father dated 1976.

**Appendix XX:** Final draft of story about her memories of the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War.

Appendix I  
(41 pages)

**HANNELORE BARON**

biographical notes

1981 interview

written statements

list of exhibitions

bibliography

- 1926 Hannelore (Alexander) was born in Dillingen on 8 June to Julius Israel Alexander and Friedel Sara Alexander (Lichtenstein). The family lives at 9 Huttenwerkstrasse where her parents have a small fabric shop.
- 1928 Brother Hans born.
- 1936 Jewish children were expelled from the local school, Baron and her brother attended a special Jewish school in Saarbrücken.
- 1938 9 November (Kristallnacht) German citizens, responding to a national campaign, formed vigilante groups and destroyed Jewish homes and shops. Baron witnessed the destruction of her home and the beating of her father with a hammer. The family, scared that the mob would return hid in their attic. Latter the same night police took Hannelore's father into custody and he was later imprisoned in Dachau.

At the suggestion of the local police Baron's mother with the two children joined other Jews to cross the border into France by foot on a designated night. The same police, waiting at the border, arrest the group and Baron's mother is jailed in Zarlouie. Baron and her brother are sent to stay with the one remaining Jewish family in Dillingen.

Later Baron is allowed to reenter the house with an S.S. officer to get a winter coat. The sight of the house with its furniture destroyed and her father's bloody handprints on the walls is traumatic.

Mid December both parents are released by showing fake Greek visas and promising a quick emigration.

Ⓔ  
9  
Through her husband, Baron meets the artist John Heliker. At a Heliker exhibition she sees mixed media collages and becomes interested in the idea of combining collage and painting.

"in his show he had collages combined with paintings. You see, I found it easy to do that. I had until then thought that, I don't know why I thought that, that collage was a thing in itself and it wasn't combined with painting".

Baron and her brother are sent to stay with an Aunt in Luxembourg, their parents join them later.

1940 Completed primary school in Walferdange, Luxembourg.

1941 Family travels by bus to Paris, then by train to Lisbon.

10(?) June family boards the ship Mouzinho in Lisbon to sail to New York, they arrive 21 June.

Family lives with Baron's aunt and uncle in the Bronx. Father works as a dish-washer, then a carpenter, mother works in an orphanage sewing.

Hannelore is enrolled in Straubenmuller Textile High School, N.Y.

1945 Paintings in casein and oil paint, pencil drawings. Becomes very interested in Chinese philosophy, Buddhism and Taoism for the next five years. Graduates high school.

1946 Job in Hearns department store. Beginning of claustrophobia leads to first nervous breakdown.

1947 Meets Herman Baron (who she will marry 3 years later) Still life and landscape paintings, first abstract paintings.

1950 Marriage to Herman Baron, 16 April. He has a small bookshop in the Bronx and they move into an apartment nearby.

1952 Daughter Julie (Delyannis) born 12 January.

- 1956 Son Mark born 3 February  
Father dies.
- 1960 First works with collage.
- 1962 Begins to receive reparation money from the German  
government.
- 1964 Collages with watercolor, found paper and ink.
- 1965 Baron becomes increasingly interested in Italian  
culture and eventually learns to speak Italian  
fluently. Immersed in Italian literature, music,  
movies, cooking, etc., she develops an interest in  
Catholicism and occasionally visits the local church  
to light candles for Saint Anthony who she considers  
her patron saint although she says she does not  
believe in organized religion of any kind.
- 1966 Beginning of second nervous breakdown.
- 1968 First wood assemblages.
- 1969 Large cloth collages (most of which were later  
destroyed), collages with crumpled paper.  
One-person exhibition at the Ulster County  
Community College Visual Arts Gallery.
- 1970 Family buys a house in Riverdale, Bronx, N.Y. where  
Baron will live the rest of her life and where she  
sets up a studio (in the attic) for the first time.
- 1972 Small collages with watercolor on canvas  
Work purchased by Hudson River Museum
- Baron*  
*P...*

- 1973 Cancer first discovered and mastectomy performed,  
beginning of third nervous breakdown.  
One-person show at Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, N.Y.
- 1977 First one-person show at Kathryn Markel Gallery, N.Y.  
three more would follow in 1978, 1980 and 1981.
- 1978 Part of one lung removed due to cancer  
begins three years of chemotherapy
- 1981 One-person show at Albright-Knox Member's Gallery,  
Buffalo, N.Y.  
First one-person show at Gallery Schlesinger-Boisante  
where Baron would have ten shows, one each year,  
between 1981 and 1990
- 1982 Cancer found in ovaries which are removed,  
rejects doctors suggestion of one year of chemotherapy  
and begins strict macrobiotic diet in an attempt to  
cure cancer.  
Exhibition in Moderne Galerie des Saarland-Museums,  
Saarbrücken, Germany
- 1984 Ends macrobiotic diet and resumes chemotherapy  
when cancer is again found (below liver).
- 1987 Dies of cancer, 28 April, New York.
- 1989 One-person show at Guggenheim Museum, N.Y.
- 1991 First one-person show at Barbara Mathes Gallery, N.Y.

Hannelore Baron interview, 1981 (edited)

Hannelore Baron, Mark Baron (son), Frida Alexander (Hannelore's mother)

Mark to Frida

Let's talk about when Mom first made art, she made pencil drawings

Frida

Pencil drawings, yes.

Mark

When was that, how old was she?

Frida

Oh, maybe 11 or 12 years old or so, even younger maybe.

Mark

In Germany.

Frida

Yes, in Germany and when we came here she said she would like to paint and she would like to chose a school where she could do that so we didn't know anything about the schools here. The next thing we could figure out was the...(to Hannelore) what was the name of that school?

Hannelore

Textile High on 19th Street.

Frida

She joined that school and she went there and she was very unhappy there. This was more fashion drawing like dresses and dress designing and she was very unhappy and she could hardly do it but she suffered through her time.

Mark

Mom, what do you remember about that school?

Hannelore

She's right, I hated it.

Mark

Then at one point you couldn't ride the subway anymore?

Hannelore

*I was a salesgirl, parttime...*  
No, I didn't get the claustrophobia until after I graduated school a year later. I couldn't ride the subway to work. See, after I finished with four years of school on 19th Street I got the job on 14th Street so it was the same ride down for another year to Hearn's. I was a salesgirl, part-time. It was what they called the "Flying Squad". It meant wherever anybody was missing in any department some one of us was put there.

Mark

How long was that?

Hannelore

A year, but towards the end of that year that's when I got the claustrophobia and I couldn't ride the train anymore.

Mark

And that was just all of a sudden?

Hannelore

No, while I was working I would suddenly feel sick, like sort of sick to my stomach. I don't know...just generally sick.

Mark

And thinking about it now, what do you think it was, just anxiety or what?

Hannelore

Yeah, anxiety. And so then I would go upstairs to the nurse and then she'd say "well if you don't feel well go home" and then I'd go home and as soon as I got home I'd feel okay, so this one time it happened again and she gave me an Alka Seltzer and she told me to go home and this time I felt sick the whole ride home, and it was such a long ride, from 14th street to 225th street, and I felt that I had to throw up. I was so afraid of doing it in front of the people and I just didn't know what to do...everytime we got to a station and the door opened I thought, well, I could run out now, but then I always thought, well, I'd only have to get back on the train and I was terrified of throwing up because I almost never had to and I wasn't one of those people who could do that so easily.

So finally I got to 225th Street where I had to get off anyway and I got off and as soon as I got off I had to throw up so this time I must have really been sick. But still when I came home I felt better but the next day I got dressed to go to work, I went to the subway and the first train came and I couldn't get myself to go in and I think I waited for one or two other trains after that and each time I couldn't go in. And I just turned around and I went home but instead of going home I went to my uncle, he's a doctor, and I told him what happened.

So when I told him what happened, much to my amazement, he said to me to stay home for a week or two and see if it got better. I had expected him to say "get back on that train!" because the job and the money were of the utmost importance, and now when I think back on it maybe it would have been better if he had said that but I don't know if I could have done it.

So when I started staying home, of course, then I felt there was something really wrong with me because it had taken a while to get that job. I had asked all kinds of people, even though it was just a salesgirl's job, work wasn't that plentiful and I didn't have any particular skills and to not go to work for a week or whatever, I

felt that you have to be really sick for that to happen. So after the week I still couldn't go back, and as a matter of fact, somebody had to go downtown with me to pick up the rest of my salary and to tell them I was leaving. And then started this whole big thing.

My uncle (the doctor) said that he doesn't want me to take that as a way out because I have to learn to get back again where I was so I could go downtown but I was totally unsuccessful. As a matter of fact the thing got worse. After that, a while after, I couldn't go into elevators, then I couldn't go into anything, then I got afraid to stay home alone, but I still had to do it anyhow.

Mark

Could you think of anything to do about that?

Frida

Yeah, Hanna went to a psychiatrist. It cost us five dollars an hour at that time...she wasn't too happy with him but not very unhappy.

Mark

Was the psychiatrist any good?

Hannelore

No, ...I didn't think he was very good. The reason I didn't think any of them were any good, until this last one I went to, is that none of them ever...made me understand just what was troubling me...of course by that time...I was much more knowledgeable and I had seen many others, but he was the only one who spoke to me as if I was on his level. All the others talked down to me...never explained to me what the problem was, never explained to me that there were other people who have my symptoms or anything at all. All the time I felt as if there was something wrong with me and I didn't know what it was and I thought that I was different from all the other people, that there was no other

person that had what I had. I didn't know how I got it, I didn't know how I'd get rid of it and I didn't know if I got rid of it if I'd get it again. I just didn't understand it. I had no idea and so I believed that none of the psychiatrists were good because none of them explained to me what was going on.

Mark

And at this time what kind of work were you doing, were you painting?

Hannelore

I did oil paintings

Mark

What kind of oil paintings, landscapes?

Hannelore

Yes, landscapes and still lifes.

Mark

When was that?

Hannelore

I graduated school in 45 and then I worked as a salesgirl until 46, and then from 46 on I had this problem

Mark

So in 1946 you were doing representational work...did you know of artists like Jackson Pollock?

Hannelore

No, I didn't know anything about anything and I went to an adult education class...over there I started to do watercolors with pen and ink. A teacher suggested I try to do sort of the cubist type thing. You see I was never interested in the subject matter. I was always interested in the execution, like what materials I was using, or colors, or whatever, and I was sort of very surprised with the cubist thing. You see, the teacher explained to me

...I didn't even know enough about it...he explained to me how the cubists tried to picture the object from all sides and top and bottom on a flat plane and it was sort of easy for me to do some how because he had given these literal instructions but I didn't do too many of those. At that time though, you know, I liked Braque and Matisse and I really liked Braque's colors, earlier colors, and I liked what he was doing and so what I call the cubist still lifes, they are sort of very reminiscent of Braque. And even though I liked Matisse there wasn't much of his in my work.

Frida

You were very interested in Chinese drawing and were reading about Lin Yutang so much, Papa said "she's going crazy with that Chinese business",

Mark

Any connection between that and your work?

Hannelore

No, you see there were two sides. I was interested in their philosophy, not in Chinese artwork, and that was even when I went to high school.

Mark

How did that start?

Hannelore

Well I think it started with the Chinese in the hospital. (note: Hannelore worked in the kitchen of Montefiore Hospital, along with her mother, for a short time) See, while I was working in the hospital there were some Chinese there that were dishwashers that had jumped ship. You see, coming from Germany I was not exposed to...it was very exotic to me...I hadn't known any Chinese. To me this was like the way other people investigate the Aborigines or something. I was just very interested and whenever I'm interested in something

then I go into every aspect of it and so I went into their philosophy and I just became interested in the whole thing like Buddhism, Taoism, and all of this. What I was looking for was some kind of answer.

Mark

To what question?

Hannelore

Well, I lived in very limiting surroundings, I didn't have anyone at all around me in the family or anywhere that was at all intellectual or at all knowledgeable about anything except the bare everyday existence. I somehow must have guessed or known that there was a whole other thing besides all of this everyday thing. That everyday thing wasn't very satisfying and so it was also because of the immigration where if I had stayed in Germany I might have never thought of anything, but going through these different countries, coming here into a new country and America being so different and all, I knew there were other different countries and other different things and when we came to America I didn't want to get off the boat.

Mark

When did you first think of collaging one piece of paper to another, how did you start?

Hannelore

Well, that was when I saw (John) Hilker's show and in his show he had collages combined with paintings. You see, I found it easy to do that. I had thought, until then, that, I don't know why I thought that, that collage was a thing in itself and it wasn't combined with painting.

Mark

Was there a point at which you realized, all of a sudden, that your work was something unique, rather than influenced by one person or another?

Hannelore

Well, it was a long, long time after, really. It was just a few years ago from now that I suddenly...

Mark

Not in the sixties?

Hannelore

No, you see, I wasn't looking at it from that angle. All my work...I was always trying to have it say a specific thing and finally a few years ago I thought that now the work was saying exactly what I want it to say and I thought that now it would be nice to exhibit it because I was now happy with it. You see, there was a long time when I wasn't completely satisfied with with what I was doing and, not that I didn't think each collage was good but they didn't have the message and finally, when I felt it had the message, then I thought okay, now. After that I got the message across more and more or in different way in different work and I finally thought that now I'd like to show it. That's why I don't sign it in the front. I don't look upon it only as artwork. I want to get the message across and now I wanted to show it to get the message across because I felt the message was clear now.

Mark

What is the message?

Hannelore

Well, this message is what I've found out through my own life about the human condition and so on. The truth is, you see, just the way I taught myself to do the work and it took me longer and then, after I knew how to use the materials, I found out that I could have learned this easier, that it is written in many books and taught in many schools and many people learn it immediately, it is the same thing with the message.

A lot of my message is extremely naive and has been written about

in many places and is nothing at all new. None of it is new really, but to me it was new and when I say I got the message in the pictures, at the same time that I got the message in the collages I also straightened out myself. I wasn't anxious any-more or anything. It was simultaneous but the message came across and then I knew what it was all about for myself. But the thing is, it all suddenly fit together. What had been clear, the collages and myself.

And even though sometimes I might be anxious or depressed or whatever, it's not the way it was before. It's like I understand what's on the bottom of it all now. And I truly believe there is a big difference between knowing everything, superficially, reading about it in books, or having figured it out for yourself.

Frida

...One day you were on the telephone and you said to me "Mama, I think I have made it." I remember that, "I have made it" she said to me.

Hannelore

But the thing is that if I thought it was unique it was because it's so highly personal, because it is my message, figured out by me, for myself...it is very personal and that is why it is unique. See this, what I call the message, is composed of many parts and it was worked out over a great number of years just as in my way of doing my collages. That's why it is personal and probably why I have great confidence in my work because the solution didn't come only from my head either, it was lived out and worked out. It is a complete thing.

Mark

As personal as your work is it is also important that is shown.

Hannelore

Yeah, for two reasons. One is because I have more incentive to do the work when there is some feedback and it makes it good for

me to do it and therefore I want to do it and without the feedback I don't do enough of it. The other reason is [ I have been so twisted so much of the time in my life, what I would call twisted, although I found out later that a lot of people feel the same way, and I read all about the existentialists, that's what they're talking about, but at the time I didn't know it. For some reason in my family nobody understood what it is all about and I would like to somehow through the collages explain myself to everyone as if to say "This is it! This is what was behind it. This is what was bothering me. This is how I feel."

Mark

You like things that are secret. You have made some wooden boxes which are games with rules that are not known or secret rules. Also you have said about some of your boxes it is as if there's something hidden in the middle and it's sort of covered and walled over and tied up with something secret in the center. So you like things that are mysterious, why is that?

Hannelore

Well I cannot quite explain that. The closest thing that I could possibly interpret is that I am a total contradiction. I don't like to be alone but I do want to have privacy. The true me wants to have privacy but because of the anxiety and so on this fear of being alone was foisted upon me. So when I got married, I must say I was a little worried about how it would work out that I wouldn't be as alone as I was. On the other hand, I also wanted to get married I wanted to have children. I sort of felt that this was a twenty-four hour job and there wasn't much time to be alone. In other words, you see, you have to give all of yourself. I never wanted to give all of myself. I always wanted to keep some of myself back because I felt that if I gave all of myself I was afraid that there would be nothing left and that I wouldn't be able to collect it anymore. As if you somehow stepped on a grenade and the pieces fly all over and there is no body and that's how I felt it would be if I gave all of myself so the small part that I wanted to keep had to be sort

of secret part of myself. That's why I always felt the work, the collages, were my own and like the secret part of myself that I knew nobody would ever want to interfere with. And at first, because of that, I was very reluctant to market them or have them be in a gallery because I felt the minute I gave them to the public they'd no longer be my own, but there again came the other contradiction, with the incentive, and also, not only the incentive but also I wanted official approval of them at one point. Because I somehow felt that to have something that's my own and approved of was better than to have something of my own that's not approved of because it's more valuable when it has the approval.

Mark

You like early textiles also. What do you like about them?

Hannelore

Oh, I like that they're so fragile.

Mark

Why?

Hannelore

Well, because that in itself makes it so...everything beautiful and fragile is twice as precious somehow as something beautiful and made out of metal.

Mark

Do you remember the first time you saw a Franz Klein?  
Klein

Hannelore

No, I don't remember where or when but I always liked Franz Klein. I like the immediacy. I like when there are no big thoughts between the conception and the doing. In other words, not even the conception. You decide right now that you're going to do it and you do. And the others that look as if they worked on it so long and thought

about it so carefully, I can't relate to those.

Mark

You would never make large works?

Hannelore

Not very large, No.

Mark

Why couldn't you make a collage three feet by four feet?

Hannelore

I don't relate to large things. I don't like anything large. large things sort of dwarf me and when I had the anxiety and all that, I felt so small and unworthy and such a nothing and I don't like anything that makes me <sup>feel</sup> small now. I don't like large buildings, large stores, I don't even like very tall people. Not that I don't like them as people, but, what I mean is, I don't feel comfortable with them. I don't feel comfortable when they have to bend down to speak to me.

Mark

Where do you find inspiration?

Hannelore

The thing is that it's very seldom that I'm inspired by something outside from what I'm doing now. Most of the time now when I change direction, which I would say is frequently but in a small way, always small changes, the small changes occur very frequently because I myself get bored from doing always the same thing. X In other words, the message stays the same, the subject matter, everything remains the same and the changes usually are either the materials I use or the format or a different view of something I've done before. The changes are usually only obvious to me.

Mark

Would you like to become famous?

Hannelore

No, I mean, if it were to happen I wouldn't let it bother me. I wouldn't let it change anything I'm doing.

Mark

How do you know that would be the case?

Hannelore

If I thought that would change me I wouldn't want it. The reason I don't want it to change me is that because of my past, where I have been so nervous, anxious and troubled, and believe me it was very, very bad. I wouldn't risk a change. You see, I finally achieved a point where I am reasonably comfortable with myself, not totally, but reasonably comfortable enough to feel integrated and normal. I would not risk this feeling for anything, not for money, not for fame, not for anything. The only reason I am even willing to chance it and don't pull all my work out of the galleries is I think I can cope with it and I've had the capacity, lately, to put things out of my mind.

Mark

When did you first make the monoprints?

Hannelore

...I saw in a book of primitive art that they had dug up these very, very thin copper shapes of persons and they were eroded and broken into parts and I just got the idea to buy very thin copper sheets and to cut them into the shapes I want and print it that way. The results were rather unpredictable which is what I always like. I like a lot of accidents, unpredictable results.

Mark

Why did you wrap cloth around some of them, and string around some?

Hannelore

Mostly for texture. There are limited things I could do with the cut out figure and wrapping it up was one of them, besides that I

was always interested in Egyptian mummies and sometimes certain things I see before I do them and certain things after that relate to the work I'm doing. In other words I very often like to see something afterwards that relates to the work and gives it more meaning. A meaning that I really didn't have in mind when I started but that applies to it in retrospect. So I started out thinking of the mummies and certain American Indian burial costumes, other things that were found in remote areas, archeological finds, but later on, during the Vietnam War, when I saw all these bodies in plastic bags...like Vietnamese women sitting there crying with their husband lying next to them in the bag...then I thought of that whole thing too. Like the burial at sea, where they throw the body off the boat in a bag and so on, but as I was doing them I somehow related what I was doing to all of that.

...the string does have to do with imprisonment. You see a lot of the work is done on a totally subconscious level and then I try to think up later why I might have done that and I can't really tell how much of it is subconscious and how much of it is conscious. I don't try to analyse it and I don't think about it that much. It has partially to do with the visual effect and partially with the subconscious and partially with the conscious and it's all sort of together. I am very concerned about the political prisoners all over the world and of course it has to do with my own past experiences where I was not tied up but it does not mean literally physically tied up, as I've experienced for myself, you can be in prison without being in a locked room. You are imprisoned by your own fears, inhabitions, phobias. It's the same effect as if you're tied up with ropes so it isn't always a literal meaning.

Mark

How come some of your boxes have glass?

Hannelore

As far as the boxes are concerned they have really different

seperate meanings. First af all, in the very beginning I made them out of found wood and those had sort of a sentimental meaning because I just liked the idea that the pieces of driftwood had been washed over and had gotten their shape by weathering and so what I was using them for was just a glorification of the wood itself. After that I started to make some boxes that were put together as if something was nailed shut or built up. It had that sort of meaning.

I kind of like, let's say, a tresure or secret room where it is in the middle of a conglomeration af all kinds of pieces that sort of hide it further. In other words, let's say, there is a room, then there are four walls around it and a door and a roof on top then we'll put another four walls and another roof and put criss-cross bars over the door, then more nails and more wood, until the secret core is all the way in the center surrounded by all this stuff.

Mark

This is symbolic.

Hannelore

Well, it is symbolic of hiding something away, somehow an inquisitive feeling. After that came the black boxes and they were in the nature of funerary boxes, they were memorials, evidence of a disaster, remnants of some kind of a disaster.

Mark

Some look religious also.

Hannelore

Any memorial would have something religious in it too. It's all part of being a memorial, not necessarily, but in my mind. I had, also, these few long boxes, the early ones, that were still of the natural wood, that were meant to be shrines with remants of sainted figures. Then, after <sup>the</sup> black boxes, there were a series of games, mysterious games that had no rules, no specific way of playing, but

they had game pieces. Then the boxes started to merge much more with the collages. That's more or less what I'm doing now.

Mark

Some of the boxes have string around them, how come?

Hannelore

Well, the thing is, after the black boxes, the boxes ran along side the collages. In other words, whatever I was doing in the collages I also used in the boxes. If I was doing prints of bound figures in the collages I also used them in the boxes. If I was doing cloth collages I put cloth in the boxes. If I was doing paper collages I put mostly paper in the boxes. They started to merge. At the present...it's at a stage where if the contents of some of the boxes were put in a frame they would be a collage and there's almost no difference except that I feel what looks like a collage in the boxes is bolder than it would be in a frame and it's more immediate. Although, in some of the boxes I've put entire collages as part of it but then the other part is wood.

The collages are always under glass obviously. When the boxes are all wood I didn't feel that they needed any protective covering, but as soon as I started to put in paper or cloth I felt they needed some type of protective covering. Also, all along I liked work under glass, in general, because since my work deals with memorials to a great extent I feel it is sort of like, it's exhibited under glass like memorabilia usually is. Also, that it's too fragile but it's very natural to be left open. And so originally I put plastic which is just a protective thing and seemed not a part of the box, then I put glass but there were some technical things there where I didn't like the sharp edges and I had to find ways to put the glass within the frame and this is one of the reasons to why I put the leading on it. Then I had boxes where I put glass only over the paper part and left the wood uncovered.

Mark

You sometimes rework the boxes

Hannelore

I have re-done the boxes more that I ever re-did the collages. I put them away and then, after a while, I take them out. I want to strip away all extraneous matter, if I feel they're too romantic or too cutesie,...also I really enjoy taking them apart.

Mark

Your work is romantic.

Hannelore

It's not deliberately so. I don't want any of my work, neither the boxes or collages, to be deliberate. In other words, I want it to be a very sincere thing and if it looks at all as if it was made for some kind of special effect I take it apart. It has to have an immediacy or urgency in it and a total sincerity...when I take apart a box I put in less than I take out. In other words, let's say I have three or four different things in there, when I re-do the box there might be only one and the other two I might use in two separate new boxes. I usually simplify it, I never really..unless I take apart two small boxes and make one big box. ..The material I take out remains as it is, it's just the surrounding that's changed.

I think there are, even today, three very different kinds of boxes. I still do boxes that are mostly wood, where I still, to some extent, as I said before, glorify the wood, but it's no longer found wood, it's wood that has traces of ware or paint<sup>or wire</sup> on it. Then I still do the black boxes and white boxes. The black boxes are showing the grief. In other words, they are in mourning. And the white boxes have the same grief but it's been purified. It's the difference between a burial and a cremation. The burial has all the fanfare and the flowers and the music and with the cremation you just push it through and that's it. That's the difference.

...The string or wire tied around the boxes is sort of a finishing

off of a memory that can now be put away. It's as if a feeling or a sentiment has been put in the box and it's tied up and that's it and now we go on to the next one.

...Everything I've done is a statement on the, as they say, "human condition", and so on. The way other people marched to Washington, or set themselves on fire, or write protest letters, or go to assassinate someone, well I've had all the same feelings that these people have had about various things and my way out, because of my inability to do anything else for various reasons, has been to make the protest through my artwork hoping that it will reach the same ends. And it probably will have the same effect which means ~~nothing~~ <sup>here</sup> at all.

But it clears my conscious. I feel that as long as I know <sup>about</sup> all the things that have happened and are happening (which) I consider totally terrible, I feel that if I keep silent I am part of this terribleness and if I make a statement I've done my share. And that's why I'm doing them. That's not the only reason, the other reason is that I absolutely need another dimension to my daily existence and have for many years. Especially since I'm rather isolated I just have to have this way of expressing myself. I'm the type of person who must express herself, either verbally or through my work or some way or other. I have a feeling always that when my experience is digested then it comes out in another form, that I'm just in the middle. That there's an input and an output and I'm sort of making the change in the middle. Like a meatgrinder, really. And it's really like a meatgrinder also, the way it's screwed to the table.

Mark

Why, what's screwed to the table?

Hannelore

I am because I always feel like I would have liked to live much

more open without being sort of stuck. I've always been stuck through my own fears, my own circumstances, but I think it's my own fears

Mark

What kind of fears?

Hannelore

Well, I'm a total contradiction. My life is one way and my inside urges are another way. I'm so timid and quiet and so small in my outlook...I'm so confined. I'd like to always expand but I can't. I tend to blame the people around me but it really has nothing to do with them because if I wanted to I could, but I can't and I never could. Also, I want to be so big, but on the other hand big things scare me, so there's a tremendous contradiction.

I think that's what some people like in the work, the work is very small in dimensions and big in feeling and that's, I think, exactly how I am. When I say I'm small in dimension, naturally I don't mean physical dimensions, but I think this is one thing that will always keep me working.

Mark

What keeps you from being large and loose?

Hannelore

Fear, fear of letting go, I can't let go.

Mark

What do you think would happen

Hannelore

I always think that if I let go and go into the large outer space I won't find my way back. Also, I'm afraid that it's too big an experience for me. It's just fear of the unknown. Because

it's unknown and I don't know if I could come back and I don't know what I'd find there. I have fear of the unknown in general, where as other people want to go out and explore the unknown.

Mark

Are there two real divisions?

Hannelore

Yes, there definately are, because this is why, for a while, I couldn't go downtown alone, because downtown, or anything away from home was unknown. So when the fear takes on larger dimensions, which is when I had the breakdowns, the division is very literal. Anything outside the home, even visiting someone, becomes fearful because to some extent it's unknown and unfamiliar. And at those times I could only stay with what was absolutely familiar and the only way I could face the outside world was to take something very familiar with me, which was either the children, my husband, my mother, or someone like that. So that I felt that the familiar was with me and when I went out into the unknown I was still surrounded by the familiar and there was something familiar between me and the unknown.

Without that I wouldn't leave the house, at those times. At other times, like now, when I don't have a specific breakdown, the division is still very clear like everytime I go out and go downtown it is as if I'm launching myself into orbit but my reason tells me that I'll be alright and I will get back and I sort of don't have the fear that's so overpowering that I can't face that.

Mark

7  
Do you have preference for the earlier or later work?

Hannelore

As far as a true preference, there are certain ones of any phase that I like better than others because they somehow seem to express

exactly what I want them to say at the time. Otherwise it's just that I like to keep the early ones because I can't really ever go backwards. I can never repeat, at a future time, what I did in the past. Everything I do is just done at that moment, even though I change the boxes around they become of the new period.

Should I turn this thing off now (the tape recorder)?

Mark

Okay.

one-person exhibitions

- 1969 Stone Ridge, Ulster County Community College, The Visual Arts Gallery, "Hannelore Baron, Paintings-Collages", 27 October - 26 November
- 1973 Yonkers, Hudson River Museum, "6 solos", 11 March - 22 April
- Katonah, Katonah Gallery
- 1976 Katonah, Katonah Gallery
- 1977 New York, Kathryn Markel Gallery, "Hannelore Baron", 10 May - 2 July
- 1978 New York, Kathryn Markel Gallery, "Hannelore Baron",
- 1980 New York, Kathryn Markel Gallery, "Hannelore Baron", *Collages*  
5 February - 1 March
- 1981 Buffalo, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, The Member's Gallery, "Hannelore Baron Collages and Boxes", 28 Jan. - 15 Mar.
- New York, Kathryn Markel Gallery, "Hannelore Baron, Collages and Boxes", 7 April - 2 May
- New York, Gallery Schlesinger-Boisante, "Hannelore Baron, Boxes", 24 November - 24 December
- 1982 Chicago, Roger Ramsay Gallery, "Hannelore Baron, Collage", 8 May - 19 June
- New York, Gallery Schlesinger-Boisante, "Hannelore Baron, Selected Collages, 1982", 2 - 27 November

one-person exhibitions, continued

Waalwijk, Louis Dijkstra Kunsthandel, "Hannelore Baron, gouaches/collages", 6 November - 3. December

Saarbrücken, Moderne Galerie des Saarland-Museums, Studiogalerie, "Hannelore Baron", 12 November - 5 December

Reutlingen, Galerie Domberger, "Hannelore Baron, New York, Textilbilder + Textilcollagen", 2 - 22 December

1983 Munich, Galerie Alvensleben, "Hannelore Baron, New York, Collagen", 19 February - 31 March

Washington, D.C., Robert Brown Contemporary Art, "Hannelore Baron, Recent Collages", 8 March - 2 April

Dillingen, Kunstverein Dillingen, Galerie im Rathaus

Basel, Louis Dijkstra Kunsthandel at Art 14-83 (Basel Art Fair)

Bonn, Galerie Pudelko, "Hannelore Baron, 60 Arbeiten 1976-1982", 6 May -

New York, Gallery Schlesinger-Boisante, "Hannelore Baron, Boxes", 5 November - 3 December

1984 Los Angeles, Jack Rutberg Fine Arts, "Hannelore Baron, Collages & Boxes", 25 February - 31 March

New York, Gallery Schlesinger-Boisante

Basel, Galerie Domberger at Art 15-84 (Basel Art Fair), "Hannelore Baron, New York, Collagen", 14 - 18 June

Dillingen, Kunstverein Dillingen, Galerie im Rathaus "Hannelore Baron, Collagen", 17 - 31 October

one-person exhibitions, continued

1985 Chicago, Roger Ramsay Gallery, "Hannelore Baron, Collage"  
22 October - 19 November

New York, Gallery Schlesinger-Boisante, 12 Nov. - 7 Dec.

1986 Los Angeles, Jack Rutberg Fine Arts, "Hannelore Baron,  
Collages & Boxes", 15 March - 19 April

Zurich, Galerie Lopes AG, "Hannelore Baron", 20 Mar. -  
23 May

Stockholm, Galleri Zero, (catalogue)

New York, Gallery Schlesinger-Boisante, "Hannelore Baron,  
27 Collages", 5 November - 3 December

1987 Washington, D.C., Robert Brown Contemporary Art, "Hannelore  
Baron, Recent Collages", 29 January - 7 March

New York, Gallery Schlesinger-Boisante, "Hannelore Baron,  
The Last Ten Years", 4 November - 2 December

Chicago, Roger Ramsay Gallery, "Hannelore Baron, In  
Memoriam", 6 - 28 November

Los Angeles, Jack Rutberg Fine Arts, Inc., "Hannelore  
Baron, The Last 10 Years", 13 November -

1988 Ann Arbor, Alice Simsar Gallery, "Hannelore Baron, 1926-  
1987, The Last Ten Years: Collages and Boxes", 16 Jan.  
- 17 February

Zurich, Galerie Lopes AG, "In memoriam, Hannelore Baron,  
Collagen und Box-Assemblagen", 28 January - 17 March

one-person exhibitions, continued

New York, Gallery Schlesinger "Hannelore Baron, Bird Imagery", October

1989 Los Angeles, Jack Rutberg Fine Arts, "Hannelore Baron, Collages & Boxes", 13 May - 24 June

New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, "Hannelore Baron", 19 May - 9 July

New York, Gallery Schlesinger, "Hannelore Baron", 22 May - 30 June

Washington, D.C., Robert Brown Contemporary Art, "Hannelore Baron, Collages", 6 - 24 June

New York, Baron/Boisante, "Hannelore Baron, monoprints 1978-81", 6 - 30 June

Tokyo, Fujii Gallery, "Hannelore Baron", 8 - 21 June (catalogue)

Chicago, Roger Ramsay Gallery, "Hannelore Baron, Collage", 23 June through August

1990 New York, Gallery Schlesinger, "Hannelore Baron, Assemblages", 10 March - 21 April

Chicago, Roger Ramsay Gallery

1991 New York, Barbara Mathes Gallery, "Hannelore Baron", 9 March - 20 April

1993 New York, Gallery Schlesinger, "Hannelore Baron" January - February

one-person exhibitions, continued

New York, Barbara Mathes Gallery, "Hannelore Baron",  
10 Sept. - 16 Oct.

Minneapolis, John C. Stoller & Co., 2 October - 11 Dec.

1994 Los Angeles, Manny Silverman Gallery, "Hannelore Baron",  
4 Mar. - 9 Apr.

selected group exhibitions

*"New Acquisitions" National Museum of Art Wash, D.C.*

1978 New York, Goddard-Riverside Community Center, "Collage  
1978", 21 April - 9 May

New York, Kathryn Markel Gallery, "Contemporary Collages"  
8 September -

1979 Brussels, gallery alexandra monett, "Formations on paper:  
Michele Stuart-Z.Ben Haim-D.Barlow-M.Ayars-E.Stavitsky-  
A.Dobek-H.Baron-R.Tuttle", 17 January - 17 February

Boston, Impressions Gallery, "The Art of Collage Today"  
10 November - 15 December

1980 New York, Kathryn Markel Gallery, "Artist's Books", also  
-Albuquerque, Hoshour Gallery.

1981 New York, Gallery Schlesinger-Boisante, "Sixty Years of  
Collage", 24 March - 9 May

Katonah, Katonah Gallery, "Selections 81", summer

Philadelphia, Philadelphia Art Alliance, "Words and  
Images", also *18 May - 18 June, also*  
-Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts;  
-Loretto, Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art.

Stone Ridge, Ulster County Community College, "Women  
Artists"

New York, Pratt Graphics Center

Cleveland, The New Gallery

selected group exhibitions, continued

Los Angeles, Joyce Hunsacker Gallery

Rohnert Park, Sonoma State University, University Art  
Gallery

Ann Arbor, Alice Simsar Gallery, "Contemporary Collage"  
14 November - 23 December

New York, Kathryn Markel Gallery, "Artist's Books",  
1 December - 2 January

Paris, Galerie Caroline Corre

1982 Luxembourg, Galerie La Cite, "Small Sizes"

Toronto, Rosenberg Fine Arts Ltd., "Hannelore Baron,  
Collages and Wood Assemblages and Paul Harnett,  
Collages", 26 June - 17 July

1983 Amsterdam, Galerie Gamma

Paris, Galerie Caroline Corre, "Les Etats du Livre", 22  
April - \_\_, also:

- Rouen, Contemporary Art Center
- Paris, Le Grand Palais

Bonn, Galerie Pudelko

Waalwijk, Louis Dijkstra Kunsthandel, "uitnodiging",  
7 - 28 May

1984 New York, Willard Gallery, "Selected Drawings by Eleven  
Artists", 5 September - 6 October

1985 Paramus, Bergen Museum of Art and Science, "Collage, The  
State of the Art"

selected group exhibitions, continued

Columbia, S.C., Columbia Museum of Art and Science,  
"Dealers Choice"

1986 Zug, Kunsthaus Zug, "Collagen", 15 June - 31 August

New York, Lever-Meyerson Gallery, "Paper Variations"  
16 June - August

New York, Jewish Museum, "Jewish Themes/Contemporary  
American Artists II", 14 July - , also:

-Chicago, Spertus Museum of Judaica

New York, Lang & O'Hara Gallery, "Small Format",  
9 September - 4 October

Chicago, Roger Ramsay Gallery, "Fifth Anniversary  
Exhibition", 7 November - 21 December

New York, Forum Gallery, "For the Holidays, Collages",  
3 December -

Rockford, Rockford Art Museum, "Fetish Art: Obsessive  
Expressions"

1987 New York, ACA Gallery, "Joseph Cornell and His Legacy"  
6 December - 10 January 1988

New York, Schrieber/Cutler, Inc. "Crime and Punishment"  
2 - 30 May

Jackson, Mississippi Museum of Art, "Collector's Choice,  
1987"

selected group exhibitions, continued

1988 San Antonio, San Antonio Museum of Art, "The Poetic Object", 9 Sept. - 30 Oct., also;

-Boise, Boise Art Museum, 1 Dec. - 29 Jan. 1989;

-Corpus Christi, Art Museum of South Texas, 17 Feb. 9 April 1989;

-Amarillo, Amarillo Art Center, 13 May - 25 June 1989.

1989 Zurich, Galerie Lopes AG, "Werke auf Papier",  
26 January - 15 March

1992 New York, Gallery Schlesinger, "Papers", November

Hannelore Baron, bibliography, periodicals

- 1973 Louisa Kreisberg, "6 local artists and some gravestone rubbings", *The Herald Statesman*, p. 26, 22 March
- 1978 John Russell *The New York Daily Metro* (during a New York Times strike), 17 September
- 1980 Hedy O'Beil, *Artspeak*, 14 February
- 1981 \_\_\_\_\_, "Hannelore Baron at the Member's Gallery", *Albright-Knox Art Gallery Calendar* January
- Anthony Bannon, "Box Exhibit Holds a Range Of Emotions", *Buffalo Evening News*, section I, p. 13, 2 February
- Vivien Raynor, "Works by 84 Area Artists in Katohan Exhibition", *The New York Times*, (Westchester section ?), 30 August
- Palmer Poroner, "No Hiatus for This Season", *Artspeak*, Vol. III, No. 11, 10 December
- Palmer Poroner, *Artspeak*, 19 December
- 1982 Harold Haydon, "Baron Memoriaolizes Victoms of War" *Chicago Sun Times*, weekender, p. 73 & 77, 11 June
- Maria Schmitt-Rilling, "Leidensbilder und Lebensfunken, Malerei von Hannelore Baron im Saarlandmuseum Saarbruken" *Die Rheinpfalz*, No. 273, 26 November
- Leo Duppen, "De Collages van Hannelore Baron, Getuigenis Van Een Bewogen Leven", *Kunstbeeld*, 7 November
- B.R.U., "Lebenszeichen Aux der Eimgration", *Reutlinger General Anzeiger*, 16 December

1983 Dorothee Muller, *Seddeutsche Zeitung*, 10 March

\_\_\_\_\_, *Washington Post*, 1 April

— Denise Arnot, *New Art Examiner*, \_\_\_\_ April 1983

Monika Juhlen, "In Gedenken an die Opfer", *Reutlinger  
General Anzeiger*, 22 June

Viola Drath, "Arts and Artists", *The Washington Dossier*,  
\_\_\_\_ July 1983

1984 Marlena Donahue, *Los Angeles Times*, 9 March

Colin Gardner, "Illuminating the Human Condition, Poignant  
Collages by Hannelore Baron", *Artweek*, Vol. 15, No. 12,  
March 24, p. 4

\_\_\_\_\_, *Images and Issues*, July/August

Kay Larsen, "The Cooked and The Raw", *New York  
Magazine*, p. 103, 24 September.

Judd Tully, "Selected Drawings by Eleven Artists",  
*Art News*, December

1985 Gerrit Henry, "Hannelore Baron, Scheslinger-Boisante",  
*Art News*, February, p. 151

— Sue Taylor, "Baron creates poignant collages", *Chicago  
Sun Times*, 6 November, p. 60

Vivien Raynor, "Hannelore Baron", *The New York Times*,  
section C, p. 27, 6 December

1986 Nancy Grimes, "Hannelore Baron, Schlesinger-Boisante",  
Art News, Vol. 85, No. 2, p. 125, February

\_\_\_\_\_, "Hannelore Baron in der Galerie Lopes",  
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K.M., Los Angeles Times, 4 April, part VI, p. 10

Betty Ann Brown, "Dark Prophecies", Artweek, Vol. 17,  
No. 13, 5 April

Michael Anderson, "Pick of the Week", Los Angeles Weekly,  
11-17 April

Michael Lawrence, The West Hollywood Paper, 17 April

Elenore Lester, Jewish Week, 25 July

Michael Brenson, The New York Times, 3 August

Vivien Raynor, "Contemporary Collages", The New York Times,  
Section C, p. 38, 19 December

1987 Jo Ann Lewis, "Baron & Solman at Brown", The Washington  
Post, section C, p. 2, 7 February

Marge Bulmer, "Critic's Choice - Hannelore Baron",  
Reader, 20 November

Michael Brenson, "Two Artists Tempered in the Crucible  
of War", The New York Times, 29 November, section 2,  
p. 37, p. 43

K.C., "Assemblages Out of Turmoil",  
Los Angeles Herald Examiner, 4 December

Marlena Donohue, Los Angeles Times, 18 December

1988 John Carlos Cantu, "Joint Exhibition Reveals Art's Dichotomy", The Ann Arbor News, 31 January, section G, p. 3

Lauren Shapiro, "Artist Reveals Private Personal Collection", The Michigan Daily, 5 February

Pamela Hammond, "Los Angeles, Hannelore Baron, Jack Rutberg", Art News, April, p. 126

Fred Stern, "Letter from America", Mizue, No. 949, Winter, pp. 94-95

Jeanette Ross, "Redeeming the Flotsam", Artweek, 24 December, p. 3-4

1989 Michael Brenson, "Hannelore Baron's Collages", The New York Times, 2 June, section C, p. 24

Barbara A. MacAdam, "New York, Hannelore Baron, Schlesinger, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum", Art News, October, p. 195

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, Art News, October, p. 106

1990 \_\_\_\_\_, "Hannelore Baron", The New York Times

1993 Michael Kimmelman, "Hannelore Baron", The New York Times, 1 October

\_\_\_\_\_, "Hannelore Baron", The New Yorker, 11 October, p. 27

public collections:

Illinois  
New York

The Art Institute of Chicago  
Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo  
The Brooklyn Museum, N.Y.C.  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, N.Y.C.  
The Hudson River Museum, Yonkers  
The Jewish Museum, N.Y.C.  
The Museum of Modern Art, N.Y.C.  
New York Public Library, N.Y.C.  
St. Lawrence University, Canton  
Ulster County Community College, Stone Ridge  
The National Museum of Art  
Milwaukee Art Museum

Washington, D.C.  
Wisconsin

Germany

Modern Galerie des Saarland Museums,  
Saarbrücken  
Kunstsammlung der Stadt Reutlingen,  
Reutlingen

(letter to a Dutch magazine writer (with answers to specific questions which were sent), 1982)

Appendix II  
(4 pages)

Dear Mr. Duppen,

I realize now, having received your letter, that I just presumed you knew the basic facts about my life and work and should have known enough to include certain relevant items.

Yes, I am Jewish and therefore had to leave Germany. We left there in 1938, my parents, brother and myself, and settled in Luxemburg waiting to be called by a quota number for emigration to the U.S.A. Unfortunately we had to suffer through the German occupation of that country before we were able to leave from Portugal for the U.S.A. in June 1941.

I was 15 years old at the time and entered a N.Y.C. High School the following September where I was enrolled in Fashion Illustration. That form of art was never of interest to me and after graduation in 1945 I never used any training given me in High School in connection with my later very personal artwork.

I never work anywhere but in my home and am unable to do so in a group or class situation. Whatever I do seems to just come about by some sort of intuition or subconscious thought or experience and I cannot explain what makes me use cloth or paper or so on. The closest I can come is an explanation based on the technical aspect of my work, such as the fact that I liked the edges of the torn cloth with the threads coming out, etc., versus the torn paper. Then, later I liked the smoothness of the paper's surface in contrast to the texture of the weave in cloth. I like the spontaneity of the reverse drawing in some collages as contrasted to the self-consciousness of an ink

or pencil line and so on.

As for the expression of protest in abstract work, the answer is, that this satisfies my personal guilt feelings or feelings of urgency to express myself against certain events. If the public at large cannot read the work, that is too bad, I would not want the protest to be the most important. The artistic expression comes first, since I am an artist rather than a newsmedia person. In other words, my work belongs to me and I will have it my way first and never bend it to any other purpose. That also goes for women's art or liberation. I believe that art is art and the artist's sex or color or background is unimportant. Any shows with work chosen along those lines have been second rate.

As for Pattern Painting, I have no interest in work that is totally (to me anyway) involved with surface texture or pattern. Only work with what I would call a soul appeals to me. The soul or sentiment must not be too obvious or evident in too graphic a way, but has to do somehow with the artist's involvement with the work. In other terms, somewhat expressionistic work appeals to me rather than op or pop or minimal etc. I can not relate to any such things, well done as they might be.

As you can see by this letter, I do have rather strong opinions where my work is concerned and will not compromise. Not being a young artist looking for fame and or fortune, I am pleased to be in a position where I can be all together independent as to what I want to do and it is in that kind of climate that I believe the best work can be done. I am very careful not to let any success I might have influence me in any way where I might want to please some unknown public.

Thanks for your good wishes,  
Sincerely,

(answer to a letter from the Kunstverein Galerie Im Rathaus, Dillingen, sent in connection with a 1984 exhibition, asking for a discription of H.B.'s home, studio, life in the U.S., etc.)

I am Hannelore Baron, daughter of Julis and Frida Alexander from Dillingen (Saar). We lived at 9 Huttenwerk Str. and I was born the 8th of June 1926 in Dillingen.

In 1938 my family left Germany because of the persecution of Jews and after a stay in Luxemburg we emigrated to America in 1941.

It is difficult for me to speak German because for many years I did not have any opportunity to do so, since my husband is American and my children speak only english.

In 1941 I spoke German but was accepted by a vocational High School in New york. I had a letter explaining that I had talent for art and was given a course in fashion illustration that of course was not what I wanted and after finishing the four years of High School I decided to do only what pleased me in the field of art and in my own way.

At the time it was mostly landscapes and still life done in watercolors and then later the collages I am doing now and the wood constructions.

I feel compelled to save all small pieces of cloth and paper as if I were rescuing them to make them part of a new whole. The work that is created from them must however show the original tears and wirinkles found in its components and give a feeling of reverence and care. That is how I see life, full of brutality

almost annihilating and still one must try to preserve parts and anchor them somehow.

The work of course speaks in a larger sense for all mankind and a fate that at times (is) more than one can live through.

My studio is very simple. I like the old and used, with a past, and it is with that feeling (that) I furnished my studio. It contains two desks, one of metal on which I work and another wooden one, some chests with drawers for the collages and an etching press, that I use in my own fashion. Our house has three floors and the top one, under the roof, is my work space. In the summer it is warm and I have two airconditioners but in the winter it is comfortable.

I have two children, a son and daughter, and the latter again has two, my grandchildren of eight and ten years.

If I speak honestly I must say that I think very seldom of my former homeland. Here in America and especially in these times, one is occupied with the present. Besides that, my health is not the best and I need all my strength to get along.

I hope my show is of interest to Dillingen.

With best wishes

H.B.

(written statement, no date)

I don't believe that children should be taught art. I was fortunate, however, in having the opportunity of working with them and was amazed and delighted with their spontaneity and clarity of vision.

There is in children's artwork a warmth, beauty and purity that only they can still achieve in their naivete, and which I have tried to recapture in my collages on children's themes such as the letters and games.

(written statement, no date)

I am a pacifist and find the world as it is almost intolerable. There is a strong feeling in me that as an exhibiting artist it is my duty to make a statement for peace. At one period I did what I called protest pieces, timed with the protest marches against the Vietnam war that were occurring in the United States. At the present, with nuclear bomb stockpiles and other developments, I have not much hope left and believe that protests might not hold back what seems inevitable.

(written statement, no date)

Living in New York is a great advantage for an artist. There are many ethnic groups and museums, and one can be in touch with everything of interest to oneself. I have been drawn to shows of African and American Indian art in particular, even though all old or ancient art is of interest to me, because this art is usually of a religious mythical nature, filled with love and care, and ornamented with material thought to please the gods. that is what appeals to me, together with strength and directness the pieces seem to have. All this, unlike so much of the gallery oriented, almost commercial art of today.

(statement written for an Exhibition at the Jewish Museum, 1986)

In Memory of the Jews Who Perished  
at the Hands of the Germans: 1941-45

My work is highly personal and speaks of my total life experience. The early formative years as a Jewish child in Nazi Germany have left a permanent imprint on my life and work. I feel I must speak out in behalf of other victims, protest their fate, and carry with me the memory of those who succumbed.

Biographical Notes

Gallery Schiesinger-Betzart  
622 Madison Avenue  
New York, N. Y. 10021

HANNELORE BARON

Appendix III

- 1926 Born in Dillingen (Saar), Germany
- 1939 Crossed border illegally into France. Six months later went to Luxembourg, to await eventual emigration to America
- 1941 Departed from Portugal for the United States
- 1946 Suffered nervous breakdown
- 1947 First abstract work in casein and watercolor
- 1950 Marriage to Herman T. Baron
- 1952 Birth of daughter
- 1956 Birth of son
- 1966 Nervous breakdown
- 1968 Began wood assemblages
- 1970 Surgery, and breakdown
- 1978 Surgery, and chemotherapy
- 1981 End of three years of chemotherapy

1968

~~Membership in Nat Assn~~  
~~Nat Award~~  
~~Woodcut paintings~~  
First boxes of natural wood  
(Briewood)

Appendix IV  
(2 pages)

1969 Large cloth collages (later destroyed)

~~YAA award~~  
~~Woodcut paintings~~  
Gummed paper coll.  
~~Byadall Books Gallery~~

1970

Park View Occup. Therap. work  
Bought House  
Torn Flag coll.  
And. Artists award

1972

Work with Children Riv. Neighbor  
House - Small collages on  
canvas (watercolor)  
Hudson Riv Purchase award  
New Roch. Art Assn Award

1973 Mastercopy - Breakdown  
Solo show at Hud Riv Mus.  
Audubon award  
First Gallery Show

975 Letters Envelopes Games  
Small Cloth Coll.  
who's Who of Am. Women  
Audubon Award  
YAA award  
Gallimaufry Gallery  
Mamaroneck Art Assn Award

976 Markel Gallery  
who's Who in Am. Art.  
Collages with etchings  
stitching No More +  
Black Boxes  
Katonah Rental Solo show

1977 Hud. Riv Mus. 2nd Purcell  
+ Contemp. Artist award.  
Markel Solo Show

lung surgery  
chemotherapy  
collages with monoprints  
on cloth & paper  
Smithsonian purchase  
Markel Solo Show

79 Collages with reverse drawings  
Gallery Alexandra Mouett Brussels

80 Large Collages with reverse  
drawings on Rice Paper  
Long narrative collages  
small metal hinged boxes  
Markel solo show

81 Albright Knox Gallery show  
Pratt Graphics Center award  
for monoprint. Edition 25  
Poisant Group show

- 1745 Start of casein work Appendix V  
(3 pages)  
1947 First abstract work casein  
still life + landscapes  
LATE 50'S  
~~1950~~ Casein aerial views

~~1951 Mr. Goussier Gallery - paper collage show~~

1962 Exh. with Youbiers Art Assn.

1964 Goguin's Gallery - (award)  
watercolor  
collages with found paper  
+ ink

1966 Watercolors with Horizon line

1966 Free floating shapes W.C.

1968 Nat. Ass. Wm. Artists - first bot.  
natural wood

1969 Large cloth coll. (later destroyed  
except for very few)  
Ulster Count. Conn. coll show  
Crumpled paper coll.

1970 Torn Flag coll.

~~1974 Small book coll ages~~  
1975 Letters - Envelopes Games  
Small cloth coll.

1976 Marbell Gallery  
Coll with Etchings  
No More No More  
Black Boxes  
Kahouahi Rental Solo Show.

1977 Hands. Riv. Mus. 2nd Purch.  
Marbell Solo Show.

1978 Coll. with Monoprs. on  
cloth + paper Smithsonian  
purchase  
Marbell solo show

1979 Coll with reverse drawing  
Gallery A. Monett Brussel

1980 Large Coll with Reverse  
Dr. on Rice Paper - Long  
coll. small metal  
hinged boxes.  
Marbell solo show

... .. Knott Gall show  
Pratt Graphic Center Print II  
Series of small expressive  
coll.

1981 Group show at Schlesinger Bosant  
1981 Solo at Kathryn Markwell

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# Art Auction Planned by Local ORT

An Art Auction will be sponsored by the Spuyten Duyvil Chapter of Women's American ORT on Sunday, Jan. 23, at the Whitehall, 3333 Henry Hudson Parkway.

Exhibits will be seen at 1 p.m. prior to the sale which will begin at 2 p.m.

Featured will be oils, water colors, lithographs, drawings, and etchings, signed and numbered. These are the works of famous artists such as Picasso, Chagall, Amen, Goldberg and others.

Proceeds will be allocated to the rehabilitation and education of youth through the world.

More than 50 percent of New York Telephone's 102,000 employees are women.



Riverdalian Hannelore Baron, who will instruct children in art this semester at Neighborhood House, is shown here with one of her works.



## Neighborhood House Offers A Wide Variety of Classes

The Riverdale Neighborhood House will begin its second semester on Jan. 31, offering classes for children, teenagers and adults.

Although many of last term's courses will again be offered, a wide variety of new classes have been added to this semester's program.

In the children's division, a Pantomime Class will be taught on Fridays from 3:30 to 5 p.m., designed for children between the ages of 8 to 10 years old. The

instructor will be Miss Zahava Gratz, a professional performer who has studied the arts of dancing and pantomime in Paris for five years.

"Experiment in Art," another course for children, is scheduled for Wednesdays from 3:15 to 4:15 p.m. Mrs. Hannelore Baron of Riverdale is the new instructor.

Mrs. Baron is well known to the community for her Holiday Art Shows held each year at Neighborhood House. Her work is represented in numerous private collections throughout the country. Mrs. Baron's awards include: National Association of Women Artists, 1968; Yonkers Art Association, 1962, 1963, 1965, 1966, 1969 and Audubon Artists, 1970.

She has taught at Kingsbridge House, P.S. 81, Jewish Community Center, P.S. 27 and the Yonkers and Park View Home.

"Experiment in Art" will introduce children to a variety of art materials with the aim of showing them their own capabilities. A large variety of materials will be used to cover such techniques as collage, painting, drawing, printing and three dimensional construction.

of Music, she has studied teaching of group piano Robert Pace at Colu Teachers College and pedagogy at the Diller-Quaile School of Music. Her publications include: "Rote Teac and its Advantages" for Classroom Magazine, and "New Changing Methods of Teaching Piano in the U.S." for a broad to Europe by "The Voice of America."

Mrs. Cornfield's extensive teaching experience includes group and private lessons in her own studio, as well as in various music schools. She was a Board member and co-chairman of the Performing Arts Committee of the Bronx Council on the Arts.

The Piano Lessons will be taught in groups of four, beginners as well as those with some experience. Interviews will be held at Neighborhood House on Monday, Jan. 31 between 1 and 2:30 p.m.

Registration for the second semester of classes at Neighborhood House, 5521 Mosholu Ave., will begin on Monday, Jan. 17 for members, and Jan. 24 for non-members. For further information, call (212) 549-8100.

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- 1926 June 8, Hannelore (Alexander) Baron is born in Dillingen, Germany, to Friedel (Lichtenstein) and Julius Alexander. She is the first of two children. Her father has a small fabric store. The family lives at 9 Huttenwerkstrasse, Dillingen.
- 1928 January 19, birth of brother Hans
- 1936 Jewish children are expelled from the local school, Baron and her brother attend a special school for Jews in Saarbrücken.
- 1938 Evening of November 9, (known as Kristallnacht) German citizens, responding to a national campaign, break into Jewish homes and businesses. Baron witnesses the destruction of her home and the beating of her father with a hammer. The family, scared that the mob will return, hide in the attic. Later the same night police take Baron's father into "protective custody" and later imprison him in Dachau.

Dillingen police tell the town's Jews to illegally cross the boarder into France, by foot, on a designated night. The group, including Baron with her mother and brother, are find the same police at the boarder and all are arrested. Baron's mother is jailed in Zarlouie. Baron and her brother are sent to stay with the only remaining Jewish family in Dillingen.

Later Baron is allowed to reenter the house at 9 Huttenwerkstrasse with an S.S. officer to get a winter coat. She later said she believed that returning to the house and seeing it's destroyed furniture and her father's bloody hand prints on the walls was more traumatic for her then the actual night of November 9.

Mid December Baron's parents obtain fake Greek visas on the black market and by showing the visas and promising a quick emigration, both parents are released.

- 1939 Baron and her brother are sent to stay with an aunt in Luxembourg, they then illegally enter France to stay with relatives (?) there but are caught when they are enrolled in school and are sent back to Luxembourg.

Baron's parents arrive in Luxembourg.

- 1940 July 20, completes elementary school in Walferdange, Luxembourg.

- 1941 March 25, the family receives an emigration quota number from the American Consulate in Luxembourg. The Germans invade Luxembourg and the American consulate closes. With the help of a Jewish organization and the local Rabbi in Luxembourg, the group travels to the American Consulate in Belgium for their final papers and it is decided that they will leave as a group. Baron spoke a limited amount of French and became the interpreter where ever German was not understood. Her father is made responsible for everyone's luggage.

Late May they travel by bus to Metz, France; then by train to Paris, to Hendaye, (France), to Irún (Spain), to Villa Formosa (Villa Vermosa) (Portugal), to Pampelmosa; and they arrive in Lisbon June 2. June 10 they board the ship Mouzinho in Lisbon to sail to New York, they arrive on June 21.

from an undated writing:

In Lisbon we were assigned a room with board where we could wait out the week it would take for the ship to sail. Everyone believed of course that all could go wrong until the very last, this country too could be invaded. America

could not want another ship of Jews, or mines in the ocean could blow up the ship. when the day of embarkation came, other Jews in our position also awaiting a boat, accompanied us to the pier, where we parted from them with encouraging words.

Baron wrote the following account of her family's trip to America shortly after arriving, probably as an English language exercise (transcribed here with corrections):

"How we came to the United States, translated from the german, written by Hannelore Alexander, in the english.

When we went away from Walferdange we saw again how nice everybody was. Our apartment was a mess because we had everything we needed and all the other things were laying on the floor. Our neighbors had come and took all the things they liked home. We said goodbye for the 100th time and went away in a trolley-car....we were still waving with our handkerchiefs. Our things were already in Luxembourg City. When we came to the Esra most of the people who were supposed to come with us were there. They all said goodbye to everything.

The bus was in front of the door and we went in. There was a terrible rain. Papa was the transportfuhrer and he was sitting next to the driver. We went from Luxembourg to Alsace now and the first station was Metz. We climbed out and went with our things into the Bahnhofs restaurant. We took our sandwiches out and started eating them. 1/4 past 11 p.m. we were waiting for the train. There was a blackout, naturally, in the station, no benches, and we were cold. But 20 minutes to 1 a.m. the train came finally. The train was filled with soldiers (german) but we had the luck to find four seats. Most of the time we stood because we didn't want to (take) risks. The soldiers were lying on the floor and you had to climb over them to get to the girls room. Then the customs came and put the light out after they saw our papers.

At 10 o'clock, twenty minutes late, we came to Paris. Mr. Kahn, a man from the Esra, was waiting for us there. Everything was all right and we went with the subway (the first time for me) to Austerlitz station. There we started eating again and had a lot of fun with the french language. We understood much but couldn't talk. We went a little bit downtown and at night we went to Hendaye. There the customs looked us over again because we entered Spain and went to Irun. All 20 of us ate there in a Bahnhofs restaurant, a very good dinner. Then we went to look at the city. All the houses were broken from the burgerkrieg and you saw only four walls. For very little money you can buy everything on the street. In fact people hold on to you and talk a lot, we couldn't understand. In Irun we got a special train just for the transport. The train was terribly dirty and very uncomfortable. We had to sit there from 3 p.m. till 11 a.m.

Then we were in Villa Vermosa. We passed a few stations with only 2 or 3 houses. The big villages had 20 or 25 houses. Every time the train stopped we had to give bread to half naked children, 50 or more of them came on the train holding their hands out and asking for something to eat. People pick old cigarettes up on the streets and make new ones out of them. In Villa Vermosa we went into another train to get to Pampelmosa. In that train was a very cute conductor and so I enjoyed the ride very much. When we went into the Bahnhofs restaurant in Pampelmosa he climbed out and went with us. He thought I would take a walk with him but I certainly didn't. We took the train to Lisbon at 1:50 in the night. There people from the Esra were on the train and a

man brought us in a pension where we had coffee. Then came our things and that kept us busy the morning. We ate lunch at 12 o'clock and slept till 6 p.m. After we had our dinner we wanted to see the ocean but couldn't find it and finally we had to take a taxi home.

In Portugal women go on the streets with baskets in which are fish on their head. They sing nicely in order to make people buy their things. In Portugal you eat fish every meal, but always cooked in another way. I met a very nice young man, he lived on the first floor of the house next to us and we spoke french from window to window. That is why I felt very sorry when the eight days were over and we had to go away with the ship. He gave me his address and promised to write (but never did).

The ship's name was Mouzinho. It was Portuguese. On our ticket was marked that we had four cabins, but when we came into the ship we just couldn't get them, the ship was over crowded and we had third class tickets and had to sleep with a few hundred other people in one big room. The first day my mother and I were very sea-sick and all four of us slept on deck. In the morning we were very dirty and had only little space to wash. We did that for 3 days, then my mother and Hans slept in their beds and my father and me on a couch. We had to keep our eye on the couch for the evening or somebody else would lie down on it. The food was no good and the room where they served it even worse. I went always with one of the machinists, he was very nice. We talked french together. We were on the ship for 14 days and did I love these days even though we had to live in dirt. Then we came to the USA.

It was very hot and we didn't have all (the) valises (we heard later that one was in Portugal but we got it over here). The machinist took my address when we said goodbye and he promised to come and see me (he did everyday and my aunt Lilly didn't like it)."

The family stay first with Hannelore's aunt and uncle at 2871 Heath Avenue, Bronx. By September they move to 2820 Baily Avenue, Bronx, where Baron will live for the next nine years (until her marriage in 1950). Her Father works as a dish-washer, then as a carpenter. Her mother works in an orphanage sewing.

September 8, She is sent to enroll in Straubenmuller Textile High School, West 18th Street, Manhattan, with the following note:

Dear Principal,

Please accept my daughter Hannelore Alexander, 2820 Baily Ave., N.Y.C., in your High School. We immigrated to the United States on July 21, 1941. Please excuse me for not being with her. I am employed and cannot get off. My daughter has abilities in drawing and likes to become a designer.

Respectfully,  
Jul. Alexander

"the first year was all right because it was what they called Applied Art and it didn't have the dress design thing, that came later...and when I went for that I really didn't know what it was. It was called Costume Illustration and I wished later on I had at least taken the fabric design which was an alternative but, I don't know, somehow I didn't know I was going to hate it so much until I got started doing it. That's when I first realized how much I hated it and by the time I knew how much I hated it, it was too late to switch because it was what they called a major" (MB interview, 1981)

- 1942 Baron spends most of her time reading and begins to keep a notebook in which she enters the author and title of each book she reads (until at least 1951). At least one third of the approximately 350 titles concern China and oriental philosophy. During the next ten years she becomes increasingly interested in China, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism.

"I was interested in their philosophy, not in the Chinese artwork, and that was even when I went to high school, that was in '45 of so...it started with the Chinese in the hospital...while I was working in the hospital there were some Chinese there that were dishwashers that had jumped ship.

You see coming from Germany...it was very exotic to me, I hadn't known any Chinese. ...and whenever I'm interested in something then I do go into every aspect of it and so I went into their philosophy, and I just became interested in the whole thing ...Buddhism, Taoism, and all of this. What I was looking for was some kind of an answer to what everything is all about

...I hadn't formed the questions, but the thing is this, that I lived in very limiting surroundings, I didn't have anyone at all around me in the family, or anywhere, that was at all intellectual or at all knowledgeable about anything except the bare everyday existence. I somehow must have guessed or known that there was a whole other thing besides all of this everyday thing. that everyday thing wasn't very satisfying." (MB interview, 1981)

- 1945 June, graduates Straubenmuller Textile High School with a diploma for the "technical course of four years in applied design."

Makes pencil drawings and representational paintings in oil paint on canvas board.

Landscape paintings in casein on heavy paper gradually become abstract and colors become muted.

- 1946 Job in Hens department store. Beginning of claustrophobia which leads to first nervous breakdown.

"while I was working I would suddenly feel sick, like sort of to my stomach...and so I would go upstairs to the nurse and then she'd say, well if you don't feel well go home, and then I'd go home and as soon as I got home I'd feel okay. So this one time it happened again and she gave me an Alka Seltzer and she told me to go home and this time I felt sick the whole ride home. And it was such a long ride, from 14th street to 225th street, and I felt that I had to throw up. I was so afraid of doing it in front of the people and I just didn't know what to do

....every time we got to a station and the door opened I thought, well I could run out now, but then I always thought well I'd only have to get back on the train and I was also terrified of throwing up because I almost never had to and I wasn't one of those people that do that so easily. So finally I got to 225th street where I had to get off anyway and I got off and as soon as I got off I had to throw up so this time I must have been really sick.

But still when I came home I felt better. But the next day I got dressed to go to work, I went to the subway and the first train came and I couldn't get myself to go in and I think I waited for one or two other trains after that and each time I couldn't go in. And then I just turned around and I went home but instead of going home I went to my uncle. He's a doctor and I told him what

happened....much to my amazement, he said to me to stay home for a week or two and see if it got better. I had expected him to say "get back on that train" because the job and the money were of the up-most importance and now when I think back on it, maybe it would have been better if he had said that but I don't know if I could have done it.

.... so when I started staying home of course, then I felt there was something really wrong with me because it had taken me a while to get that job. I had asked all kinds of people, even though it was just a sales-girl's job. work wasn't that plentiful and I didn't have any particular skills and to not go to work for a week, or whatever, I felt that you have to be really sick for that to happen. So after the week I still couldn't go back and as a matter of fact somebody had to go downtown with me to pick up the rest of my salary and to tell them I was leaving. And then started this whole big thing...my uncle said that he doesn't want me to take that as a way out because I have to learn to get back again where I was so I could go downtown ....but I was totally unsuccessful. As a matter of fact, the thing got much worse. After that, a while after, I couldn't go into elevators, then I couldn't go into anything, then I got afraid to stay home alone. but I still had to do it anyhow." (MB interview, 1981)

- 1947 April, Easter Sunday, while sketching in Van Cortland Park, the Bronx, meets Herman Baron, he is thirteen years older and works for the publisher Philosophical Library as a salesman.

Paints abstract works in casein on paper, based on the idea of still-lifes and landscapes

July 15, applies for naturalization. November 20, receives her certificate of Naturalization.

- 1949 Herman Baron opens a bookstore at 5997 Broadway.

- 1950 April 16, Marriage to Herman Baron. They move to an apartment on Spuyten Duyvil Parkway, the Bronx then, in late 1950 or 1951, to an apartment at 215 West 242 Street, the Bronx, where they will live the next thirteen years.

- 1951 Abstract paintings in casein on heavy paper in greys and browns, based on the idea of aireal views. Work exhibited at Creative Gallery, New York.

- 1952 January 12, daughter Julie (now Delyannis) born.

Herman is acquainted to the painter John Heliker who teaches painting at Columbia University. During the mid 1950's they bring Baron's work to Heliker for a critique every 3 or 4 months.

(asked how she began to make collages) "Well that was when I saw Heliker's show and in his show he had collages combined with paintings. You see, I found it easy to do that. I had thought until then, (and) I don't know why I thought that, that collage was a thing in itself and it wasn't combined with painting."

(MB interview, 1981)

Since John Heliker had been a friend of my husband's, I went to see his exhibit at the Kraushaar Gallery. I was very impressed by the fact that he had paintings, drawing, and collages, all in one show. Also, that the collages were a combination of collage material with watercolor, etc. Somehow I had wanted to do collages but never thought of mixed media just that way.

(from an undated writing)

- 1956 February 3, son Mark is born. Father dies of heart failure.

- 1958 Work exhibited in Art Directions Gallery, New York
- 1960 Collages with torn paper and casein.
- During the next several years works are included in annual exhibitions of the Yonkers Art Association (at Hudson River Museum), the National Association of Women Artists, the National Society of Painters in Casein (at Riverside Museum), and the Audubon Artists. Works are also shown at the Croquis Gallery, NY.
- 1962 Begins to receive reparation money from the German government.
- 1963 Moves to an apartment at 6300 Riverdale Avenue, Bronx.
- 1964 Works on paper with collage of found paper, ink and watercolor.
- 1965 Baron becomes interested in Italy and Italian culture. By the early 1970's she learns to speak Italian fluently and becomes immersed in Italian literature, music, movies, cooking, etc.. By the late 1970's she develops an interest in Catholicism although she says she does not actually believe in Catholicism or any other organized religion.
- 1966 Beginning of second nervous breakdown.
- Works on paper with collage and watercolor
- 1968 First wood assemblages made from found pieces of weathered and worn wood.
- 1969 Large cloth collages (most of which she later destroyed), collages with crumpled paper. Exhibition at Ulster County Community College, Stone Ridge NY.
- 1970 Moves from apartment to house on Delafield Avenue (Riverdale section of the Bronx) where she will live the rest of her life and where she sets up a studio for the first time.
- Collages with the theme of torn flags.
- Works as an Occupational Therapist at Park View nursing home, the Bronx.
- 1972 Small collages with watercolor on canvas.
- Hudson River Museum purchases a collage.
- Works with children at Riverdale Neighborhood House, a community center in Riverdale, the Bronx.
- 1973 Cancer is discovered in one breast and under arm. Mastectomy is performed. Begins a period of chemotherapy.
- Beginning of third nervous breakdown.
- Exhibition at Hudson River Museum, Yonkers NY.
- 1975 Cloth collages with the themes of war letters, children's letters, envelopes, children's games
- 1976 Collages with etchings, black boxes.

- 1977 Exhibition at Kathryn Markel Gallery (also 1978, 1980, 1981). Hudson River Museum purchases a second collage.
- 1978 Part of one lung removed due to cancer. Begins three years of chemotherapy.
- Cloth and paper collages with monoprints. The Smithsonian Institution purchases a collage from the Kathryn Markel Gallery.
- 1979 Cloth and paper collages with transfer drawings.
- 1980 Large collages on rice paper with transfer drawings. Assemblages within small hinged metal boxes.
- 1981 End of three years of chemotherapy.
- Exhibition at Albright-Knox Member's Gallery, Buffalo. First of ten yearly exhibitions at Gallery Schlesinger-Boisante (later Gallery Schlesinger), NY.
- 1982 May (?), cancer found in ovaries which are removed. Begins a chemotherapy treatment (prescribed for one year).

Steve Schlesinger arranges a Baron exhibition in Dillingen Germany at the Kunstverein Dillingen. Dillingen is where Baron was born and lived until age 12, and where she experienced traumatic events prior to the war. For this exhibition Baron writes a one page text outlining these events. Baron also makes a box construction which includes her father's passport, stamped with a large red J (designating Jew) and other German documents. According to her instructions, the text and box construction are separated from the rest of the exhibition and are hung in a hall out side of the room containing the exhibition.

Baron felt strongly that the meaning of her work should not be linked simply to these experiences and this is the only time during her life that she allows a text of this sort to be made public. This exception is made because of the special circumstance of her work being exhibited in the place where these events took place.

Without her knowledge, this same text is printed on the announcement for her exhibition at the Roger Ramsay Gallery, Chicago. Following is an excerpt of her letter to the gallerist:

Dear Roger:

Thank you for the letter and enclosed invitation.....

What I was not prepared for was the biographical note on my childhood in back of the card. It was written by me and presents the facts as they were, but was meant only for a show this summer in Germany at the locale where the events occurred. I am aware that you were given this material in a folder with other things and that possibly the fault lies with me for not having explained myself on the subject to Steve.

There have been so many who have had to suffer through wars and tortures on a massive scale in the years since the 1940's that it seems redundant to remind people of what can be recognized now as just an early evidence of man's capacity for evil in the contemporary world. Also, I am a strong believer in not mixing the artist's private and professional life if possible.

I am sorry that I will be unable to be in Chicago for the opening of the show, and appreciate your kindness in understanding my difficulties when traveling a distance.

My thoughts as well as best wishes are with you, and again, many thanks for all the efforts in my behalf, of which I am well aware.

Cordially,

from an undated writing:

At this point, I will state that although having had much illness and the early persecution, this alone should not be taken as motivation factors in my work. Violence, war, and the human condition have affected me as much. Distressing ecological problems, the massive nuclear buildup, and an all-pervasive insensitivity by those in power have made us all victims.

from an undated writing:

I have had what I must call a rather difficult time of it during my life. The experiences as a child in Germany were only the beginning and therefore I do not wish to be linked artistically to only (or primarily) that part of my experience. I would rather think from a much larger scale, where later wars as well as my own emotional and physical struggles (and the effort to maintain myself through them) forced me to find a balance where everything is seen in a perspective....

September 16, at the urging of friends, she begins a strict macrobiotic diet in an attempt to cure her cancer.

October (?), discontinues her chemotherapy treatment (having undergone six months of chemotherapy, half of the twelve months of treatment prescribed by her oncologist). She follows the macrobiotic diet under the guidance of a specialist, Ms. Shizuko Yamamoto.

November 12 - December 5, exhibition in Saarbrücken Germany at the Moderne Galerie des Saarland-Museums, Studiogalerie

1983 June, no longer able to eat, she ends macrobiotic diet. Cancer is found below her liver and she once again begins chemotherapy.

Baron wrote the following just prior to the diagnosis of cancer below her liver (not dated):

There was the movie Betrayal, showing a love affair backwards, with the lovers meeting some years after the end of their relationship. I could start this account from that direction, with the facts that I lost about 35 pounds, my bones stick out so I am uncomfortable in bed, where I spent most of my time lately. But I'll go back to the beginning of my involvement with Macrobiotics and how it took over my life and reduced me to what I am now. There will be the facts without a clear conclusion, because I just don't know enough even at this stage to totally condemn the macrobiotic regime. All I can write about is what happened to me, with my particular personality and make up and background.

That background is important. I had 3 cancer operations in 10 years. the first a mastectomy, 6 years later the same breast cancer removed with part of the lung it was situated in, and then after 3 years of chemo and 7 months off the chemo, the breast cancer was found once more in the ovaries that were removed with the

tubes. It was suggested after that to have one more year of chemo therapy, but I was ripe for a new approach to my problem. Well meaning friends, whose judgment I respected, explained to me that the medical profession operates quickly to remove the symptom of the disease but the cause will remain in the form of wrong nutrition and produce new symptoms such as cancerous tumors unless there is a radical change in diet. this change, at one point, will release the toxins in the body and once cleansed and kept in that state there will be no further problem. There was a mention of a very unpleasant period during the discharge of these toxins or poisons, as they call them. I was told that the discharge could be in the form of a severe cold, a boil, of what seemed to me no serious form that I would not be able to cope with. Also, the time element when this change for the better will occur is very vague and depends on a person's age, activity and quantity of accumulated toxins, etc.

I was guided to a Japanese woman, an expert in shiatsu (a form of exercise and massage) who performed her treatment on me, told me that I had a tremendous accumulation of animal fat from all the animal food I had eaten in my 57 years, or even from what my mother ate while carrying me. At that time I weighed 132 pounds, maybe 10 pounds more than my 5 foot 2 called for. Mrs. Y. gave me a few xeroxed papers that listed the foods I could eat, the foods I could eat only occasionally, and the foods I must never eat. the latter were all dairy foods, butter, milk, cheese, etc., all forms of meat, and all frozen or canned food as well as anything with chemicals or any refined ingredients such as white flour, sugar, etc. But the diet was not only one of deleting foods, there were also foods to be added. These were mostly Japanese and all unknown to me. After the first shopping trip, I was quite nervous hoping to know how to use the miso (soy bean past), the Kombu, Hiziki, Arame (seaweed), Azuki beans, Daikon (Japanese radish), Tamari sauce, etc.

It was very soon evident that our kitchen and even the contents of the refrigerator had to be permanently divided between my husband's (who refused to participate in this experiment) and my territory. We were unable to take our meals together, because there was not room on the stove or any where for all this simultaneous activity. The results of my cooking at that time seemed palatable. I am told that with proper instruction the most delicious meals can be prepared with these limited ingredients but I was going by 2 cookbooks I had bought from Mrs. Y. (after buying them I found out that one just duplicated the contents of the other for a large part). the seaweed I could never appreciate and what tasted best were the fresh vegetables. I learned to bake my own bread, without either yeast or baking powder and make all sorts of teas, where the basic ingredient was a Japanese green tea with appropriate additives to soothe whatever the pain at the moment. There were the hot ginger compresses (ginger root grated and dipped into very hot water), that is applied to my kidneys where the first rather annoying pain recurred quite frequently. All along, I was seeing Mrs. Y. and she radiated confidence and assured me that whatever I felt in any part of my body was of the greatest benefit and part of the purification.

I always was drawn to things exotic and noticed her little devotional Buddha statue with the incense container near it, enjoyed the fact that as in Japan everyone had to remove their shoes on entering, etc. In the meantime, I had informed my doctor that I was on this diet and asked him if we could stop the chemo after 6 months instead of the originally suggested year. Much to my amazement, he was agreeable to terminating the chemo, even though a bit dubious about the diet, but not truly negative. Mrs. Y. was pleased that I had ended the chemo, because the macrobiotic healing has the purpose of balancing

the Yin and Yang in the body (that is the opposites, such as male and female, etc.). the chemo seemingly is Yin and threw everything off, besides being made up of all chemicals rather than natural substances. At this point, I felt good, there was a high, just from being off the chemo and having lost a bit of weight at that time, I had a good feeling about my body, despite the disfigurement of my operations. I seemed to have more energy and a new good feeling about life in general. Pure and cleansed and being told by Mrs. Y. that my appearance would change ever more for the better and an ever more youthful look. The future seemed golden.

Nine months later, the end of June (I had started the diet September 16th) for some still inexplicable reason I found myself eating the rice, beans, vegetables and seaweed diet with a tremendous reluctance. Developed a permanent stale taste in my mouth and began to eat less and less. Here, I must fill in this narration of facts with some conjectures as to what might have happened there. It could be simply that it was a form of rebellion against the monotony, the divided kitchen and the fact that mealtime my husband and I were going our separate ways to an ever greater extent bothered me. he was now doing his own grocery shopping, cooking, and I no longer had anything to do with his meals. On weekends when the grandchildren came, I made them all the forbidden foods and felt it an injustice to them, but lacked the stamina to try and persuade them towards the rice.

I took my problem to Mrs. Y. who informed me as usual that my lack of appetite was part of the cure and that there was still a large amount of old fat the body could live on. The motto in this diet is to eat and drink as little as possible. She had originally told me to come to her when the real bad toxin discharge time comes, but now she informed me that she would not be available at all during her vacation in July and August. She did give me a number to call, in case of emergency, besides a last warning not to go off the diet under any circumstances. I called her once more the last day she was available to tell her that I could not eat the food anymore and did not feel good, to which she answered "what do you want me to do." It was time now for me to plan a new way of coping and I felt that I was too impatient and bad times had been foretold and I just must bear up.

We went for a week's holiday to the shore, where the efficiency apartment we had reserved, so I could cook, was not available and I was forced to somehow make my way with restaurant food. Actually, the first odd thing was my delight at not having to cook, yet, I could not decide to order anything in a restaurant that truly was against the diet. somehow, the week passed, with the constant vague pain in my intestines and a series of lettuce and tomato sandwiches, where the bread, the tomatoes, and the bit of mayonnaise, were forbidden by the macrobiotic followers.

Once we were home things got no better. My husband continued to make his meals and I ate just about nothing. Once in a while I would take a few bites of what he had prepared but then felt that I could blame the still persistent stomach ache on that. In my earlier enthusiastic days I had subscribed to the East + West magazine put out by the Michio Kushi Foundation, the founders, at least here in America, of this diet which is actually based on a way of eating in an ancient oriental monastery. there was a listing of other experts such as Mrs. Y that I felt I should consult in her absence. at random I chose a Mr. M. in Queens, I had already called the number Mrs. Y. left but was unable to reach (her) and my message on the tape was never answered. Mr. M. seemed in a great hurry, he mentioned at the end of the session that he had to get to Manhattan and all I got

from that visit was the same original list of what foods to eat all the time, which occasionally, and which to avoid at all costs, plus some scribbles on the side, to increase the percentage of onions and beans, etc. Somehow, the fact that had brought me there, my total lack of any appetite was not gone into.

When I got back home there was, by great coincidence, a call from R.H., the number Mrs. Y. had left, and although she was very sweet on the phone and understanding, she let me know right off that she does not have the experience of Mrs. Y. and that Mr. M. who I had just seen has even less and that they are all worried about him giving any advice at all. She warned me that if I got off the diet in my present circumstances there would be dire results since my digestive system is no longer accustomed to my former diet.

At this point I felt that I must consult my medical doctor since I had undergone a pain in my upper stomach I feared was a heart attack in its severity. He informed me that I am much too thin, something I was very much aware of, and his advice was to get off the diet but the problem is that somewhere along the way I feel (I) must (have) so firmly accepted the fact that the diet is a cancer preventative that I am unable to eat the "forbidden" foods. At this point my condition is frightening and resembles anorexia except that I see clearly what is wrong, but like the anorexic, I am unable to set things right.

Just on a chance that there is a physical cause for my weight loss and lack of appetite I have undergone some tests that so far were negative. As far as the diet is concerned, I no longer have any enthusiasm for it, even if the claims should be true, and (I) now have a great desire to return and be under the auspices of the medical profession where there is a clear road to follow, a practitioner available, a way of everyday existence that is not contrary to most people's and where things are (text ends here).

- 1987 Dies of cancer on April 28 in Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, NY.
- 1989 Exhibition at Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY.
- 1991 First of three exhibitions at Barbara Mathes Gallery, NY (also 1993, 1995)
- 1994 First exhibition at Mammy Silverman Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1997 First exhibition at ACA Galleries, Munich. Work included in the exhibition "Deep Storage, Collecting, Storing and Archiving in Art" which is shown in the Haus der Kunst, Munich, the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, the Kunstmuseum Dusseldorf, P.S. I, New York, and the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle.

September 8, 1941

Appendix  
VIII

Textile High School  
18th Street, New York City.

Dear Principal,

Please accept  
my daughter Kamelore Alexander,  
2826 Bailey Ave, N.Y.C., in your  
High School. We immigrated to  
the United States on July 21, 1941.

Please excuse me for not seeing  
with her. I am employed and  
cannot get off. My daughter has  
abilities in drawing and likes to  
become a designer.

Respectfully,  
[Signature]

for Valerie,  
found these old  
School report cards of  
mine among some things  
in my father's basement.  
Most of the abbreviations  
are a mystery to me but  
thought they would be  
interesting.

Best,  
Mark

I photocopied them  
for Valerie's collection to  
add to her collection of old  
report cards to read.

65 IS PASSING MARK				
Name	Alexander Hamelore			
Reports	First	Uniform Exam.	Second	Final
Date 19 41	10/20	12/1	12/1	1/29
Days ab. to date	1	1		3
Times late to date	0	0		0
English	78	78	78	75
Physical Tr.				10
Hygiene				10
Music				80
Civics				80
General Science				75
Mathematics				75
Art				85
PERSONAL & SOCIAL				
QUALITIES				
1-EXCELLENT	S			
2-GOOD				
3-POOR				

Fall Term, 1941/42

(Oct 20 '41, Dec 1 '41 Jan 29 '42)

65 IS PASSING MARK				
Name <u>Alexander, Hammelore</u>				
Reports	First	Uniform Exam.	Second	Pt
Date 1942	3/17	4/27	6/3	
Days ab. to date	X	X	X	0
Times late to date	X	X	X	0
English 2	K. C. DISTAS 80	K. C. DISTAS 83		83
Physical Tr.				75
Minor Art	85	88		85
Fash. Tr.	90	90		90
Speech	65	65		65
App. Math	82	90 PA		85
Gen. Sc.	80	80		75
MUSIC				85
PERSONAL & SOCIAL QUALITIES				3E
1=Excellent 2=Good ✓ 3=Poor				82 90

Spring 1992 —

March 17'42 / April 27'42 / June 30'4.

Course		PROGRAM CARD B	
Name	Room		
Alexander	7B	Room 6 R	
PD	Recitation Classes	Grade	Room
1	A-28	24	527
2	A-28	24	527
3	A-28	24	527
4	A-28	24	527
5	A-28	24	527
6	A-28	24	527
7	A-28	24	527
8	A-28	24	527
9	A-28	24	527
10	A-28	24	527

The Student will make out two copies of A CARD on these cards which the Section Officer will sign.

Card A bearing all signatures filed with

Section Officer

One copy will be given to the student, and one filed in the Office.

Date 9/11/44

Registration card for fall term, 1944

Card 65 IS PASSING MARK 47

Name Alexander, Hannelore

Reports	First	Uniform Exam.	Second	Final
Date 194	10/26		11/30	
Days ab. to date	1			5
Times late to date	0			0
English	3	75	80	80
Physical Tr.				
Port. Ill	70	75	75	75
Sp. F.A.	65	70	70	70
Fash. Fr	85	90	90	90
Des + Col.	77	77	77	77
Class Style	70	70	80	80
Music				80
				559
PERSONAL & SOCIAL QUALITIES				
1=Excellent				
2=Good				
3=Poor				

Fall 1942

Oct. 26 '42 / Nov 30 '42

65 IS PASSING MARK 5F				
Name Alexander, H				
Reports	First	Uniform Exam.	Second	Final
Date 194 3	/	4	/	/
Days ab. to date	5	7		9
Times late to date	0	0		0
English	78	82	82	80
Physical Tr.				70
Hygiene				
Health				
Type I	73	73	80	85
Des. + C.	78	78	80	80
C. I. W.	78	79	90	90
C + S	73	74	75	75
Music				at
PERSONAL & SOCIAL QUALITIES				
1 = Excellent 2 = Good 3 = Poor				

2 / April 43 /

65 IS PASSING MARK 6				
Name Alexander, H				
Reports	First	Uniform Exam.	Second	1
Date 194	10/25	12/1		
Days ab. to date	4	4		
Times late to date	0	0		
English	5	80	80	
Physical Tr.				75
C. I. W.	82		80	82
Hist. of Art	85		90	88
Cl. of Shop	75		75	74
First Aid				80
PERSONAL & SOCIAL QUALITIES				
1=Excellent				
2=Good				
3=Poor				

20 1943

Oct. 25 '43 / Dec. 1 '43 / ?

65 IS PASSING MARK <b>70</b>				
Name <b>Alexander, H</b>				
Reports	First	Uniform Exam.	Second	Final
Date 1944	3/10	/	/	
Days ab. to date				
Times late to date				
English	90 Editor	82	74	
Physical Tr.			79	
Hygiene				
Health				
C. I. W.	F. CONNERY 78	E. CONNERY 84	79	78
Hist. of Art	95	95	90	95
Am. Hist	75	75	75	75
PERSONAL & SOCIAL QUALITIES				
1 = Excellent				
2 = Good				
3 = Poor				

1944

March 10' 44 / ? / ?

328 8

65 IS PASSING MARK

Name *13 Alexander Kanke*

Reports	First	Uniform Exam.	Second
Date 194 <i>5</i>	<i>10/16</i>	<i>11/21</i>	<i>12/4</i>
Days ab. to date	<i>3+2</i>		<i>3</i>
Times late to date	<i>0</i>		<i>0</i>
English <i>79.1</i> <i>A. DANIEL</i>	<i>79.1</i>	<i>75.0</i>	<i>83</i>
Physical Tr.			<i>70</i>
F.H. <i>211</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>78</i>
C.I.W. <i>30.51</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>75</i>
T.W.C. <i>172</i>	<i>105.00</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>95</i>
Nut. <i>181</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>KRANK</i>	<i>98</i>
PERSONAL & SOCIAL QUALITIES			
1 = Excellent			
2 = Good			
3 = Poor			

*Cell 1944/45*

*Oct 16 '44 / Nov 21 '44 / Dec 4 '44*

D-10

384

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE  
RECEIVED  
JUL 15 1947  
NEW YORK CITY

HANNELORE ALEXANDER  
2820 BAILEY AVENUE  
NEW YORK CITY

A 425

0300 K 76933

PLEASE QUOTE THIS NO. IN CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO THIS PAYMENT OR APPLICATION.

APPLICATION FORM		DATE REC'D
N 400		7/15/47
GERMANY 6/8/26	NEW YORK 6/21/41	7624451

2-1064465

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

RECEIPT OF APPLICATION FOR NATURALIZATION

RECEIPT IS ACKNOWLEDGED OF YOUR APPLICATION FOR NATURALIZATION AS INDICATED ABOVE. NO FURTHER ACTION WILL BE REQUIRED OF YOU UNTIL YOU RECEIVE A NOTICE FROM THIS SERVICE.

FORM G-271 B  
(REV. 12-4-46)

Appendix X

University of the  
Education



State of New York  
Department of Education

Be it known that

Hannalore Schuchman

having satisfactorily passed examination in the subject of *Technical Subjects*  
approved for entrance into the

Textile High School  
is thereby entitled to this

High School Diploma  
in Technical Subjects

In witness whereof the Regents of the University of the Education  
under seal of the University at Albany this 14th day of June 1945

H. Norman Ford  
Principal

Charles M. Lister  
Associate Commissioner of Education

335

Board of Education  
of the City of New York

Straubenmiller Textile High School

This Diploma is awarded to

**Kannelore Alexander**

who has satisfactorily completed the

Technical Course of Four Years  
*in Applied Design*

and by proficiency in scholarship and by integrity of character  
has merited graduation

June 1944

President Board of Education

Superintendent of Schools

Principal



Show me come to the  
U S A  
in the year of 1941

6/21/1941

Paris - Iran - Villa Vermeza  
Lissabon - New - York

\*  
How we came to the  
United States Translated from  
the German written by Heinrich  
Alexander in the English.

When we went away from Walter  
we saw again how nice every-  
body was. Our Apartment was  
a mess, because we had everything  
we needed and all the other things  
were laying on the floor. Our  
neighborhood came and took  
all the things they liked here.  
We said good by for the 100th  
time and went away in a  
Trolley-car Schless + Kaufmann  
went with us to Lux-City  
— — —

We were still wearing with our  
bund gerchief. - Our things were  
already in the City.  
When we came to the Esna  
most of the people who were  
supposed to come with us  
were there. They all said  
good bye to everything. The  
bus was in front of the door  
and we went in. - There  
was a terrible rain. - Papper  
was the Transportführer and  
he was sitting next to the  
chauffeur. - We went from  
Lux. to Esch-sur-Alzette, and  
the first Station was Metz.  
We climbed out and went

III  
with our things into the Balu-  
his restaurant. We took our  
sandwiches out and started  
eating them.  $\frac{1}{4}$  past 11 PM we  
were waiting for the train.  
There was a blackout naturally  
on the station. no benches and  
we were cold. But 20 minutes  
to 1 AM the train came finally.  
The train was filled with Soldiers  
(German) but we had the luck  
to find four seats. Most of the  
time we stood so, because we  
didn't want to make issues.  
The Soldiers were lying on  
the floor and you had to  
climb over them to get  
to the Girls-room. Then the

Goll ( ) came and put the  
light out after they saw our  
papers. - At 10 o'clock 20 minutes  
late we came to Paris - Mr.  
Kahn a man from the SS  
was waiting for us there.  
Everything was all right and  
we went with the Guide (the  
first time for me) to Auster-  
litz Station. There we started  
eating again and had a lot  
of fun with the French language.  
We understood much but  
couldn't talk. - We went a  
little bit downtown and the  
night we went to Sunday.  
There the Goll ( ) woke  
us over again, because we

entered Spain and went to Juan  
All 20 of us ate there in a  
Balmhofer's restaurant a very good  
dinner - Then we went to  
look at the City - all the  
houses were broken from the  
Bürgerkrieg and you saw  
only 4 months - For very  
little money you can buy  
everything on the street. In  
fact people look at you and  
talk a lot we could not under-  
stand.

In Juan we got a special train  
just for the transport. The  
train was terrible dirty and  
very uncomfortable. We had  
to sit in there from 3 PM till

11 A.M. Then we were in Villa  
Verona. We passed a few Stations  
with only 2 or 3 houses. The  
big villages had 20 or 25 houses.  
Every time the train stopped  
we had to give bread to  
half naked children 50 or more  
of them come on the train  
holding their hands out and  
asking for something to eat.  
People pick old cigarettes up on  
the streets and make new  
ones out of them.

In Villa Verona we went  
into another train to get to  
Pompeii. In that train  
was a very cute conductor  
and so I enjoyed the ride.

VII

very much. When we went into  
the Bohnhof restaurant in  
Pampeluna he climbed out  
and went with us. He thought  
I would take a walk with  
him. But I certainly didn't  
We took the train to Lissabon  
at 152 Pm the night.  
There people from the Esna  
were on the train and a man  
brought us in a pension where  
we had coffee then came our  
thing and that kept us busy  
the morning. We ate lunch  
at 12 o'clock and slept till  
6 P.M. After we had our dinner  
we wanted to see the ocean  
but couldn't find it and

VIII  
Finally we had to take a taxi home

In Portugal women go on the streets with the basket in which are fish on their head. They sing nicely in order to make people buy their things. In Portugal you eat fish every meal. But always cooked in an other way.

I learned <sup>to know</sup> a very nice young man, he lived ~~to~~ on the first floor in the house next to us and we spoke french from window to window.

That is why I felt very sorry when the night songs were over and we had to

Appendix XII  
(13 pages)

was delivered into this world  
ago by my uncle Siegfried. I  
seemed unusual to me, that my mother  
called on her brother-in-law to do.  
But, it was in Germany, in the  
middle twenties and my uncle, he  
reached the pinnacle of success and  
became a doctor. would have been  
offended if any family member he  
consulted a stranger on a medical  
problem. Then too, there was the  
question of money, never to be used  
on an outsider if ~~the~~ someone in the  
family had the expertise that  
was needed. - My uncle had  
rather unusual medical training  
as far as I know. The beginning  
of his practical part was ~~as~~  
~~he~~ a commissioned officer in  
the medical corps during the  
first world war. After that, he

Asylum. Therefore, when he felt re-  
to set up private practice, it was  
without any knowledge of the  
common ailments ~~for~~ or situat-  
confronting a small town N. A. H.  
older sister (being a mother), and  
midwife helped him with the  
rudiments of childbirth and the  
rest he sort of absorbed by  
experience or from books.

He was rather unlucky in  
the circumstances of his marriage.  
He, being not bad of appearance &  
having an assured future,  
although not much of an in-  
tellectual capacity or better edu-  
cation, could have hoped for  
a pretty girl of his choice. As  
happened though, he had a  
rather ~~for~~ undesirable single  
sister, red haired (a nega-

one in Germany, and a very  
educated that had to be married.  
Well there was a solution, in  
another family they had an equi-  
valent sister and an  
attractive brother, & the double  
wedding was arranged, both  
young men sacrificed them-  
selves for their sisters' behalf and  
became victims of an arranged  
match. - This created somewhat  
of an upheaval in my uncle's  
life, when full realization is  
in, but my aunt, his wife  
all together survives me and am  
by the honor bestowed on  
and also, the Nazi horror  
gan at that time and as a  
few, there were other from  
ahead for my uncle Siegfried

and with the low American gold  
numbers in the early years, my  
uncle wisely decided to emigrate  
to America. He was the first of  
our rather extensive family  
to do so. - Miraculously, he passed  
the required test in the U.S.  
could set up a new practice  
here - Before leaving, he pro-  
my father (his brother) that he  
would get him out of Germany.  
his help was needed, since my  
father with his family had  
neither money nor a profession.

Uncle Siegfried did come  
through, as soon as possible,  
put the necessary money in  
brow here in America and  
had to do the same in a  
bank ~~at~~ in Luxembourg.

the quota number. Neither the government in Luxembourg, nor the U.S. wanted any Jews that were not financially secure. - As it happened the Luxembourg bank failed and the money was lost, but at the same time the German's invaded and none of the old rules meant anything. We moved in a relative and managed to get a Portuguese boat in 1941 to take us to America. Uncle Siegfried had paid the boat and was there to meet us, also helped to get us an apt and managed to get my parents low paying jobs in a Jewish orphan home. We were given to ~~not~~ understand, that our he was very busy and had his practice in the downtown

The front part was converted to office and waiting room, with to come in through the back or on occasions when it was absolutely necessary to see him. I must say that he was extremely popular and his waiting room always filled with patients.

~~At this point, four years ago~~  
~~we had arrived.~~ In those days of course, practicing medicine was a simple matter of a rather quick cure or death. There were no antibiotics or certainly not like today no by-pass operations kidney machines chemotherapy or any of the so-called wonders of modern medicine. Which much was disappearing.

was more or less the same wisdom and skill that he had used the small German town where he began. — At this point, 44 after our arrival, I had, or might be called a nervous breakdown, anxiety, depression and claustrophobia were the symptoms. Naturally, this was brought to the attention of my uncle Siegfried. He gave me some sedatives, even took me to some psychiatrists (that didn't help the situation a bit) bought me two dresses and told me above all to keep my state of mind and absolute secret from the outside world. I understood the reason

1 I've had any ~~of~~ fears and depre-  
like mine and I would be thou  
somewhat demented if anyone  
found out. — I sort of hung  
around and managed as best  
could, met my future husband  
and cheered up considerably.

We got married, thinking  
all would be wonderful  
now and <sup>that</sup> we had a great  
future before us. — My uncle  
had mentioned to me once  
that he in my husband's  
position would not marry  
me, but I asked no further  
questions. Suffice it to say  
at this point that my  
husband has had quite  
a bit of ups & downs since

These fears every really left me  
any length of time. Yet, I was  
able to have two children, del-  
by my uncle, because again  
it was thought in the family  
to be insulting if an obste-  
trician or obstetrician had been  
consulted. Besides, with  
claustrophobia I myself  
insisted in this arrangement  
where I felt my uncle  
sign me out of the hospital  
if necessary. - Six months  
after my second child was born  
my father died. He had counselled  
his brother about his heart,  
just did not feel right, no  
sense. He said the good doctor  
said you are nervous, that was it

the second time he diagnosed a heart attack as indigestion and sent my father back to ~~the~~ factory work. Finally when my father was unable to work anymore, he was in his early sixties, uncle Siegfried told me privately that there was no much hope and the situation was terminal. - Shortly after my father died, without ever having been in a hospital for observation or in the care of a specialist. - Some years after having ~~been~~ heard of another case similar to my father, where anticoagulants prolonged the patient's life for a number of years, I asked my uncle why they were not used on my father,

10 he replied that my father would  
not have wanted to undergo the  
laboratory work, necessary to  
maintain a patient under those  
circumstances. The decision of  
course had been made not  
by my father, but by his  
brother, the doctor, still the  
all knowing in the family. -

I must say that he brought  
over quite a number of relatives  
besides us, from Germany,  
saving them from certain  
death, and that <sup>despite some shortcomings</sup> he was  
a good person, acting out  
of a false sense of values  
and a limited intelligence.  
By this time he was

no longer young & army nursing.  
Most of the other German Jews  
were getting some compensation  
from the German government for  
economic loss due to the perse-  
cution or damage to their health.  
~~He~~<sup>much</sup> was very embittered because  
he lost out on both counts,  
economically the Germans  
claimed, that he had not  
suffered by the migration  
because of his successful  
practice in the States. What  
hurt him most though, was  
the fact that the Germans  
blamed his physical  
problems on a old case  
of Syphilis. He was

1 now, no longer working and suffered a stroke. The ensuing tremors of his hands etc. so embarrassed him, that he stopped socializing and what is worse, would not go for physical therapy. His wife now became his beloved nurse, her brief time of glory and he wasted away. He had told me once, that he would have liked to do more with his life in the way of travel education etc. ~~Yet, I thought he died~~

rather well; considering the assets he had to start out with. A peasant family, no money and the usual lack of control in our human condition.

Did he have the capacity or opportunity? Born of wealthy educated parents, his life might have had a better turn, but still, it must be that he had some satisfactions and moments of great pride, there were there for the doctors of years ago.

There was the movie Betrayal, showing a love affair back-wards, with the lovers meeting some years after the end of their relationship. I could start the account from that direction, with the facts that ~~in~~ I lost about 35 pounds, my bones stick out so I am uncomfortable in bed, where I spend most of my time lately. But I'll go back to the beginning of my involvement with Macrobiotics and how it took over my life and reduced me to what I am

<

now. There will be the facts without a clear conclusion, & cause I just don't know how even at this stage to totally condemn the macrobiotic regime I can write about it is what happened to me, with my particular personality and make up — ~~still~~ and background. That background is important I had 3 cancer operations in 10 years. The first a mastectomy, 6 years later the same breast cancer removed with part of the lung it was situated in

and then after 3 years of  
chemo + 7 months off the chemo  
the breast cancer ~~had to be~~  
was found once more in the  
ovaries that were removed  
with the tubes. - I was  
suggested after that to have  
one more year of chemo tho  
but I was ripe for a new  
approach to my problem.  
Well meaning friends, with  
judgement & respect, ex-  
plained to me, that the  
medical profession operate  
quickly to remove the  
symptom of the disease  
but the cause will

1  
remain in the form of worn  
nutritive and produce new  
symptoms such as cancer  
tumors unless there is a  
radical change in diet. The  
change, at one point will  
release the toxins in the  
body and once cleaned  
and kept in that state  
there will be no further  
problems. There was a  
mention of a very unpleasant  
period during the discharge  
of these toxins or poisons  
as they call them. I  
was told that the dis-  
charge could be in the

form of a severe cold, a  
boil or what seemed to  
me serious ~~the~~ form that  
would not be able to cope  
with. Also, the time when  
this change for the  
better will occur is very  
vague and depends on a per-  
son's age, activity + quant-  
ity of accumulated toxins  
etc. - - - I was guided  
to a Japanese woman, an  
expert in shiatsu (a form  
of exercise + massage) who  
performed her treatment  
on me, told me, that  
I had a tremendous

accumulation of animal fat  
 from all the animal food  
 I had eaten in my 57  
 years, or even from what  
 my mother ate while carry-  
 ing me. At that time I  
 weighed 132 pounds, was  
 by 10 pounds more than  
 my 5 ft. 2 called for. ~~the~~  
 Mrs. Y. gave me a few  
~~2~~ printed papers that  
 listed the foods I could  
 eat, the foods I could  
 eat only occasionally and  
 the foods I must never  
 eat. The latter were all  
 dairy foods, butter milk

cheese etc. all forms of  
~~meat~~ meat, and all frozen or  
canned food as well as  
anything with chemicals  
or any refined ingredient  
such as white flour, sugar  
etc. But, the diet was in  
only one of collecting food  
these were also foods to  
be added. There were  
mostly Japanese and  
all unknown to me.

After the first shopping  
trip, I was quite nerve  
hoping to know how  
to use the miso (soy  
bean paste) the Kombu

... ginseng (seaweeds) Azuki  
beans, Daikon (jap. radish)  
Tamari sauce etc. - It was  
very soon evident that our  
Kitchen and even the con-  
tents of the refrigerator had  
to be permanently divided  
between my husband's  
(who refused to participate in  
this experiment) and my  
territory. ~~So soon as~~ we  
were unable to take our  
meals together, because the  
room was not room on the  
stove or anywhere for at  
this simultaneous activi-

The results of my cooking  
 at that time seemed palat-  
 able. I am told that with proper-  
 structure the most delicious in-  
 can be prepared with the  
 limited ingredients <sup>but I was</sup>  
 going by 2 cookbooks <sup>I had bought for</sup> (at  
 buying them, I found out the  
 one just duplicated the  
 contents of the other for  
 a large part). The resources  
 I could never appreciate an-  
 what started best were the  
 fresh vegetables. I learned  
 to bake my own bread, with  
 either yeast or baking powder  
 and make all sorts of

tea, where the basic ingredient  
 was a Japanese green tea with  
 appropriate additions to soothe  
 whatever the pain at the  
 moment. There were the hot  
 ginger compresses, (Ginger  
 root grated and dipped into  
 very hot water) that's applied  
 to my kidneys where the  
 frost rather annoying pain  
 recurred quite frequently  
 — All along, I was reassured  
 Mrs. Y. and she radiated  
 confidence and assured  
 me that whatever I felt  
 in any part of my body  
 was of the greatest benefit

and part of the purification  
I always was drawn to the  
exotic and noticed her little  
devotional Buddha statue  
with the incense container  
near it, enjoyed the fact that  
as in Japan everyone had to  
remove their shoes on entering  
etc. - In the meantime, I  
had informed my doctor  
that I was on this diet &  
asked him if we could  
stop the chemo after 6  
months instead of the  
originally suggested year.  
Much to my amazement  
he was agreeable to

terminating the chemo, even though a bit dubious about the diet, but not truly negative

Mrs. Y. was pleased that I had ended the chemo, because the macrobiotic health has the purpose of balance the Yin + Yang in the body (that is the opposites such as male + female etc.) the chemo seemingly is Yin and threw every thing off, besides being made up of all chemicals rather than natural substances - ~~At~~ At this point, I felt good, there was a

high, just from being off the  
chemo & having lost a bit  
weight at that time, I had  
a good feeling about my  
body, despite the disfigure-  
ment of my operations.  
I seemed to have new  
energy and a new good  
feeling about life in general.  
Pure and cleansed and  
being told ~~so~~ by Mrs.  
Y. that my appearance  
would change ever more  
for the better and a  
even more youthful look.

... you see seemed gold  
9 months later ~~the~~ end of  
June, I had started with  
the diet Sept. 16th. For some  
still inexplicable reason  
found myself eating the  
beans veg. & seaweed diet,  
a tremendous reluctance. I  
developed a permanent stale  
taste in my mouth and  
began to eat less and  
less. - Here, I must fill  
in this narration of facts  
with some conjectures as  
to what might have  
happened there. It could  
be simply that ~~it~~ was a

form of rebellion against the  
monastery. Possibly the divi-  
ditcher and the fact that  
mealtime my husband & I  
were going our separate  
ways to an ever greater  
extent bothered me. He is  
now doing his own gro-  
cery shopping, cooking and I  
no longer had anything  
to do with his meals. On  
weekends when the grand-  
children came, I made  
them all the forbidden  
foods and felt it an  
injustice to them, but

but lacked the stamina to  
try ~~it~~ and persuade them toward  
the rice. I took my problem  
to Mrs. Y. who informed me  
as usual, that my lack  
appetite was part of the cure  
and that there was still  
a large amount of old fat  
the body could live on.  
The motto in this diet  
is, to eat and drink  
little as possible. - She  
had originally told me  
to come to her when the  
real bad toxin discharge  
time comes, but now

She informed me that she would not be available, all, during her vacation in July and August. She did give me a number to call, in case of emergency besides a last warning, as to go off she died under an circumstances. — I called her once more the last day she was available to tell her that I could not eat the food anymore + didn't feel good, to which she answered with a : why do you want me to do  
It was fine now,  
for me ~~to~~ to plan a new

1 way of coping + I felt th  
I was too impatient and  
bad times had been foret  
and I just must bear up

We went for a week's  
holiday to the shore, w  
the efficiency apt. we h  
reserved so I could cook  
was not available and  
I was forced to somehow  
make my way with res  
aurant food. Actually, th  
first ~~and~~ odd thing w  
my delight at not hav  
to cook, yet, I could not  
decide to order anything  
in a restaurant that  
truly was against the

with the constant vague  
pain in my intestines +  
a series of lettuce + Tom.  
sandwiches, where the  
bread, the tomatoes and  
the bit of mayonaisse were  
forbidden by the macrobio  
followers. — Once we were  
home, things got no better  
my husband continued to  
make his meals and I  
ate just about nothing.  
Once in a while, I would  
take a few bites of what  
he had prepared, but  
then felt that I could

blame the still persistent stom-  
ache on that. — In my  
earlier enthusiastic days, I  
had subscribed to the East  
+ West Mag. put out by the  
Michio Kuchi foundation  
the founders ~~at~~ at least here,  
America, of this diet which  
is actually based on a w.  
of eating in an ancient  
oriental Monastery ~~the~~. The  
was a listing of other ex-  
such as Mrs. Y. that I felt  
I should consult in his  
absence. ~~So, at~~ At random  
I chose a Mr. M. in

Queens, I had already called the number Mrs. Y left, but was unable to reach the place and my message on the tape was never answered. Mr. M. seemed in a great hurry he mentioned at the end of the session that he had to get to Manhattan and all I got from that visit, was the same original list of what foods to eat all the time, which occasions & which to avoid at all costs, plus some scribbles on the side, to increase the percentage of onion.

... views etc. Somehow, the fact that had brought me there, my total lack of an appetite was not gone into. When I got back home there was, by great coincidence a call from R. H. the number Mrs. Y. had left and although she was very sweet on the phone & understanding, she let me know right off, that I do not have the experience of Mrs. Y. and that Mr. L. who I had just seen has even less & that they are all worried about him giving any advice at all.

She warned me that if I  
got of the diet in my present  
circumstances there would  
be dire results, since my  
digestive system is no  
longer accustomed to my  
former diet. — At this point  
I felt that I must consult  
my medical doctor, since  
I had undergone a pain  
in my upper stomach  
I feared was a heart attack  
in its severity. — He informed  
me, that I am much too  
thin, something a was

~7

very much aware of, and his  
device was to get off the diet for  
~~Now here is the~~ problem, <sup>is that</sup> ~~you~~  
where along the way, I feel,  
must I so firmly accepted  
the fact that the diet is a  
cancer preventative that I am  
unable to eat the "forbidden"  
foods. At this point my con-  
dition is frightening and  
resembles Anorexia except  
that I see clearly what is  
wrong, but like the Anorex,  
I am unable to set things  
right. Just on a chance that  
there is a physical cause

For my weight loss & lack of  
 appetite I have undergone some  
 tests that so far were negative.  
 As far as the diet is concerned,  
 I no longer have any enthusiasm  
 for it, even if the claims should  
 be true and now have a  
 great desire to return and  
 be under the auspices  
 of the medical profession  
 where there is a clear  
 road to follow, a practice  
 available, a way of every  
 day existence that is not  
 contrary to most people  
 and where things are

By Hannelore Baron

Appendix  
XV  
(2 pages)

This Spring my brother brought me a tomato plant. We have a small city-type back yard, and I found no place to plant it except in a large pot. He came around to check on it and didn't like the pot idea at all, nevertheless he assured me I would have lots of tomatoes from that plant.

My brother Hans! He calls himself Charlie, now that we are in America. We are one and a half years apart in age; he was 10½ years old and I was 12 when the Nazis destroyed our home and imprisoned our parents.

My mother had always seen to it that I watched over him in situations where she was not present. Kids would push him in the schoolyard, there were streets to cross, and he learned to depend on me to allay his fears. During the time we were alone, I felt stronger because I had to protect him and he felt safer because I was there.

After six weeks my parents came back, and sent us ahead, out of Germany, to stay with relatives. We had been scared, but we had made it together.

Eventually our family was reunited in America. My parents went to work. Hans was 13 years old and all he had from Germany were short pants. No one his age wore them here, so with an older cousin he delivered groceries and earned the money for his first long pants.

Around that time he became independent and the relationship between us changed. He no longer depended on or listened to me.

-more-

It was hard for me to accept his resistance, and I occasionally threw things at him. One time a window was broken that way; the panic once more drew us together, and he ran to the superintendent pleading to have it fixed before our parents would return from work.

The years passed and I got married first. He began working, then also eventually married. We both have two children now, grown up. Many times I tend to forget I have a brother, or that the man he is now once was the boy Hans. The news I get of him comes mostly from my mother.

We don't see each other much now. I have gotten ill in the meantime, a 13-year struggle with cancer. He stands on the sideline, wishing to help; I know that. Maybe he remembers how we made it together years ago when I was his big sister. Even though I am still that in years, I am frail now and he is big and strong. He wants to help me and when he brought the tomato plant, he made a promise. Next year, he said, we will take a whole corner of the back yard and he will bring me the very best tomato plants from Montauk. He will help me, and I'll see the miracle we will help create.

###

By Harnelore Baron

My mother is now 91 years old, and still lives alone and manages all her affairs. She is cheerful and in good mental health, perhaps partly due to a situation my husband and I created 30 years ago and have kept going ever since.

When my father died, we started to take her out with us on Sunday afternoons. Our children were small, and we made many trips to beaches, parks and picnic areas. Grandma coming along was no extra burden.

Now when I think of this permanent Sunday involvement, it is amazing to me how it lasted through all the changes that took place in our family over the years. Our son and daughter have moved out to be on their own, and even though my mother seems to be the same as 30 years ago, we have gotten much older. We have become grandparents and senior citizens. Our energy level has dropped together with our enthusiasm for beaches, parks or picnics. Yet on the rare occasions when we duck out of the Sunday routine, whatever we undertake in its place is marked by a rather guilty conscience.

What is most trying about the commitment is the sameness of it all; the telephone call setting a time, the trip to pick her up and the tenor of the conversation full of trivialities. We also feel that we were amiss somewhere along the line in not asserting a right, at one point in our lives, to some free Sunday.

There are also nightly phone calls I make to my mother to hear the events of her day, and show her that I care. It is those

- More -

Hannelore Baron

ESTELLE

Everyone on the block called her crazy, but I always knew her to be smarter than all of them. When her house burned down, right next door to us, I thought of nothing but how sad it would be having her move away. I didn't want to be left with only the proper people all around me.

For her there had never been any rules, she did what she wanted when she thought it was time to do it. It all made so much sense, when there were the two of us.

The fire, she told me, was a lesson sent by her husband George, a poet, and by then dead two years, to teach her what he always said. Material things clutter your life and are without value. She felt relieved after the fire to be rid of it all, the baby clothes from her grown-up children, her mother's things. What wasn't burnt she gave away. Even George's hat, which she held in her hands a long time not saying a word.

Then, when she had cried all her tears and nothing was left of her past, she told me that she felt very light and happy leaving for California with a small bag.

After that, I got one postal card, and always wonder if she is there. I have all her memories and that a part of me went with her when she left.

THE NEW YORK TIMES SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1985

# WESTCHESTER OPINION

By HANNELORE BARON

**F**OR many years now, my husband and I, two long-time New Yorkers, have been infiltrating the city of New Rochelle. The place we picked out as our more or less permanent special spot is Hudson Park, a lovely beachfront area with a view of the many oaks sailing Long Island Sound. There, behind a wall where the cold winds cannot reach us, we mix with a lively group of people who outwardly seem to be no different from ourselves. We do not join the rave Polar Bears who go into the water all year-round, nor are content merely to sun-worship and join in the tending job of bird-feeding. Seagulls, ducks, swans and, of course, pigeons are regular visitors there. When we became grandparents and our grandchildren went weekends with us, we took them along. They, too, seemed to blend in with the group. They took off their coats, turned up their pants and went wading, looking for eels and crabs. They found it fun, too, to climb the rocks. The secret, though, that no one knows is that we are behind the invisible line that divides New York from New

Rochelle. We are, alas, New Yorkers. If it matters, our grandchildren are worse than that — they are from New Jersey. The question is, how can we explain to the kids, 8 and 11 years old, that they cannot be near the water during the Memorial Day to Labor Day interval — more than three months. They can sit in the park and look down at the other children playing where they always played — but they can't join them. Each year we try and go up to the gate, hoping that maybe things have changed, but no such luck. The most logical thing would be for us to move to New Rochelle — but all that expense and relocation for the few summer months of pleasure? I have had other ideas. How about being made honorary citizens of New Rochelle, because we had virtually estab-

lished squatters' rights as a result of years of sitting along a New Rochelle wall? Or is there perhaps some place in New York City where New Rochelle residents would like to go in exchange? I can't think of a place that would keep them out: our zoo, museums, etc., have an open-door policy. If New Rochelle decided on a fee for out-of-towners, it would be acceptable to us and would protect them somewhat from the fear of having multitudes of New Yorkers overrun their city. I personally believe that most New Yorkers don't even know about the attractions of New Rochelle and there is little danger of a full-scale invasion. Of course, seen from another angle, against the major political and economic problems, the cold war and assorted other national headaches, this is just a very minor

thing. At worst — or best, whichever way one looks at it — we can just save our bread crumbs for three months and keep our folding chairs in good order, and then when we finally go and sit by the wall in Hudson Park with those New Rochelle residents, I would dare anyone to pick us out as New Yorkers, even when the grandchildren from as far away as New Jersey are with us. In some ways I have learned a lot from this situation. I can understand how they feel in Berlin where they have the wall, and I appreciate the fact that we do not have to cross any actual borders. As a matter of fact, even though immovable, everyone in their little guardhouses is friendly and, as I mentioned, aside from the forced estrangement between us during the summer months, we have the best of relations with New Rochelle.

## On the Outside, Looking for an In



Appendix  
XVIII

1976

## My Father

He died some twenty years ago  
Too soon for me

Not having had a taste of life  
To understand his bitterness.

I never go to where he lies,  
And was not there to see them put him in the ground  
The flesh I know has long since gone,  
The name in stone will last forever.

He fought a war

~~He~~ 18 four hard years and a bullet,  
And then was spat upon

By the very ones who gave the Iron Cross to him.  
A cross with metal numbers  
That never wear away.

I can't accept

Conventional memorials

Not for my father  
Who knew them for the fraud they are.  
And so he's gone and there is nothing  
But the truth at last.

1. A documentary about the Spanish<sup>U-206</sup> Civil war on public Television some weeks ago, brought ~~me~~ <sup>me</sup> back to some personal memories of a trip through Spain in 1941. We were a group of Jewish refugees on our way to Portugal, where we hoped to get a ship to the United States. I was 14 years old and politically unaware, except for what had happened to us in Germany. What I saw in Spain at that time formed an unforgettable impression. The country was in total ruin, the people starving and desperate. Children jumped up onto the train stretching out their hands for food. Now, the T.V. program moved me back in time and showed just what led up to and went before the destruction.

~~Now~~ In retrospect, I can see <sup>②</sup> the way it all fits together and how the Spanish people and the Jews were all victims of the same atrocity. Our family, my father mother & brother, had escaped Nazi Germany and found asylum in Luxemburg, only to have the Germans invade that country and once more put us in a position of helplessness. The American Consulate, where we had hoped our quota number would come up was closed. The Gestapo ~~and~~ ~~more~~ threatened us with deportation to Poland. We had no true idea exactly what that would entail, but sensed some great evil awaiting us. Things in Germany had been bad in 1938, just before we left. On Nov. 12, when there was an organized <sup>had</sup> ~~was~~ ~~over~~ vandalism against all Jews, my parents ~~were~~

been taken prisoner. My father<sup>3</sup> spent six weeks in Dachau and even though he never truly spoke much of ~~about~~ that time, his appearance on his return said more than words could have conveyed. It was only with the help of our relatives who had been able to emigrate to the United States earlier that our family was reunited and could now make one last attempt to get out in time. We were all desperate, a ~~small~~ <sup>small</sup> group of Jews, all starting out from Luxemburg with the local Rabbi and the help of Jewish organizations. - I had very strong feelings about leaving Europe and knew right then, that I'd never come back.

~~Robinson had forever lost its meaning.~~

Since then, I have married, have had children suffered through nervous crisis with great anxieties and claustrophobia and I never went back to Germany. I often feel, that I don't fit in where I am and like those stunned people in the Spain of 1941, ~~I just wonder~~ must have wondered how it all happened as it did, I can't believe the way it was. My children speak only English, my husband is American, I speak English better than any other language including German, but am I an American? I am an artist, ~~without a~~ ~~heritage~~ removed from my source. My work is expressionistic, full of scribbles and ~~irrational~~ <sup>symbolic</sup> writing. My collages are made of bits of

found material there<sup>⑥</sup> is the attempt to find an elusive whole by putting patches over patches. When the survivors of the Spanish war spoke on television, it was without passion of a distant past. They seem~~ed~~ to feel now, that they expected too much. I am not that removed from what happened then, I remember my reluctance & when it came time to leave the boat in New York, the last look at the German countryside, separating the land from what was happening there. My life will always be in two parts, what it is and what it might have been.