

Dorothea Tanning: Erotic and Dark Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT

Inspired by the greatly stimulating psycho-dramas of gothic and erotic fiction and the revolutionary potential of Surrealism, Dorothea Tanning renovates images which aim to go into the nature of feminine (and infancy) sensual and corporal experience, falling down the frontier between the real world and imagination pro a smooth inventive world wherein all odds can imaginably exist. The most famous work of Tanning art is perhaps the one from the 1940s where the artist utilizes a specific vivid approach to represent eroticism. Nevertheless, in deviating from this method to a further theoretical way, the woman artist scatters her wish to depict the gothic just as she was illustrating a gothic tale, to remind the gothic appreciation of difference and disintegration via pensiveness. An erotic charge throbs throughout Tanning's work; youthful girls' clothes seem ragged and hair tackled a lavish life of its own as the boundary between inexperience and knowledge becomes blurred. A power rises above the specifically erotic and turns out to be a more broad desire to live in any of its demonstrations.

Key words: Aesthetics, Art, Erotic, Gothic, Surrealism, Tales

INTRODUCTION

A lot of researchers such as Susanne Becker and Diana Heiland have talked about the appearance of gothic responsiveness as a response to the socio-political alterations produced by the increase of industrialism and the clarification stress on empiricism and aim. Both David Punter's *The Literature of Terror* (1980) and Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy, the Literature of Subversion* (1981), especially talk about gothic fiction in connection with the inventive prospects of eroticism. Women of letters like Susan Suleiman's *Subversive Intent, Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (1990) and more in recent times as Susanne Becker *Filiation in Gothic Forms of Feminine Fictions* (1999) and Diana Heiland, *Gothic and Gender* (2004) are fascinated with the gothic for its capacity to challenge patriarchal culture through surrealism, the representation of changed physical and non-human conditions and attention in feminine experience (Carruthers, 2011: 134).

Becker employs the term "filiation" to explain the manner in wherein a gothic receptivity develops links with the internal, experimental, affecting and physical areas of the feminine. The concept of surplus, overstatement, the fantastic and the confused are profoundly implanted into the basis of the gothic, placing it as an element of a postmodern discussion which resounds with a late twentieth-century feeling of worry, break and hybridity.

The first art of Tanning in the 1940s and 1950s gathers up the drama and images of the gothic appreciation in her

concentration on restricted insides as well as household areas, where weird happenings are blended into other respects common places. She cultivates themes of doorways and wallpaper to symbolize entrances into further potential truths, hiding threatening otherwise extraordinary shifts, and menaces to infiltrate. A line of metaphors commences at this point:

Long strands of flyaway hair symbolize the notion of transformation and disruption that will themselves metamorphose into unfurling bolts of cloth and eventually become layers of kaleidoscopic space that mark the artist's move towards abstraction. These spaces are more often than not populated by girls or young women who represent an emotional and physical in-between: not yet fettered by the rigours of adult rationality and bourgeois constraint, these girls violently tear at the veneer of normality, coming into direct contact with otherworldly forces, and showing us their inner secretive fantasies.

(Carruthers, 2011: 139)

The woman artist was previously a disciple of Surrealism. Earlier, Tanning visited 1936 the "Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism" exposition, the result of which she portrayed in her autobiography *Between Lives the same* as her identification of an "infinitely faceted world must have been waiting for ... the limitless expanse of possibility" (Tanning, 2001: 49). Within 1942 she made Max Ernst's acquaintance, "then married him, who unintentionally together smooth the

progress of her ingenuity and slowed down her vocation” (Carruthers, 2011: 139).

Moreover, the artist’s literature has a constant gothic feature with a particular concentration on home areas – houses, hallways, rooms – which no further maintain their conventional task of defence and protection, however, look gloomy and menacing, concealing malicious power and malevolence spirits. There is an obvious link between feminine presences and a home surrounding, one which Tanning takes to bits and rebelliously re-translates: not just in her canvas, but in her fiction too, young women join in the invention of the odd ambience of insides, leaving their conventional part like representatives of stability and consistency.

Tanning’s purpose to lampoon her bourgeois background can be cited at this point additionally: “gothic fantasy was very influential in my life. It allowed the possibility of creating a new reality, one not dependant on bourgeois values but a way of showing what was actually happening under the tedium of daily life. Of course, I was always thrilled by terror and chaos also.” (Carruthers, 2011: 135).

EARLY LIFE

Dorothea Tanning (August 25, 1910 – January 31, 2012) is an American writer, painter, sculptor, and poet. She did a lot of art during her 101 years of life. Her first work was affected and inspired by Surrealism. She is from a Swedish family, born in 1910 and brought up in Galesburg, Illinois. In 1926 the artist went to Galesburg communal schools. While she was frequenting secondary school, the woman artist “missed out” two ranks, which guided her to a permanent or lifetime feebleness in arithmetic. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothea_Tanning).

Following being in Knox College for two years (from 1928 to 1930), Tanning went to Chicago in 1930 and after that to New York in 1935 where she sustained herself as an ad artist the same time practising her painting, and found out Surrealism at the Museum of Modern Art’s determining 1936 display, *Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism*. After an eight-year rapport, she wed for a short time to the writer Homer Shannon in 1941. Stupefied by the artist’s inventiveness, originality and genius in representing style ads, the art manager at Macy’s section shop presented her to the store proprietor Julien Levy, who right away proposed to exhibit her work. Afterwards, Levy offered her two one-person displays (in 1944 and 1948), and in addition presented her to the group of emigrant Surrealists whose work he was displaying in his store in New York, comprising the German artist Max Ernst. (<https://www.wikipedia.org/>). Tanning initially encountered Ernst at a festivity in 1942. Soon after, he visited her place to see her work for a display of work by female artists at The Art of This Century gallery that was held by Peggy Guggenheim, the spouse of Ernst at the epoch. In her autobiography Tanning tells that Ernst was charmed and captivated by her emblematic self-portrait *Birthday* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1942). (<https://www.wikipedia.org/>).

Tanning and Ernst felt affection for each other and started a mutual life which carried them to Sedona in Arizona, then afterwards to France. Both artists resided in New York for

quite a lot of years before travelling to Sedona. There they constructed a home and had appointments from several pals going across the state, such as Henri Cartier-Bresson, Lee Miller, Roland Penrose, Yves Tanguy, Kay Sage, Pavel Tchelitchew, George Balanchine, in addition to Dylan Thomas. The two artists tied the knot in 1946 in a dual marriage with Man Ray and Juliet Browner in Hollywood. Furthermore, Tanning and Ernst spent 34 years married. (<https://www.wikipedia.org/>).

In 1949, they moved to France. Both artists spent their days between Paris and Touraine, getting back to Sedona for breaks and rests near the beginning of the 1950s. They resided in Paris and afterwards in Provence up to Ernst’s passing away in 1976 (he went through a cerebral vascular accident a year before). Following Ernst’s loss, the woman artist went again to New York. Tanning carried on making studio art in the 1980s, and after that rotated her concentration to her literature and compositions in addition to the verse in the 1990s and 2000s, creating and producing up to her last days. The woman artist passed away at 101 on January 31, 2012, at her Manhattan residence (<https://www.wikipedia.org/>).

ARTISTIC WORK

Except for three weeks Tanning attended at Chicago Academy of Fine Art in 1930, she was an artist that had skills and knowledge acquired through her art without formal training. The dreamlike images of her canvas from the 1940s and her intimate amities with artists and authors of the Surrealist Movement have guided several to consider woman artists like surrealist painters. Nevertheless, she cultivated her particular personal approach throughout the path of a creative vocation which covered six decades (<https://www.wikipedia.org/>).

The artist’s first oeuvres – canvas for instance *Birthday* as well as *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (1943, Tate Modern, London) – were accurate metaphorical images of the surreal state of affairs. Like further Surrealist painters, Tanning was detailed in her concentration on features and in rising exteriors with cautiously subdued brushstrokes. In 1943, she was comprised of Peggy Guggenheim’s display *Exhibition by 31 Women* in New York at the Art of This Century gallery (<https://www.wikipedia.org/>).

Towards the end of the 1940s, she carried on painting portrayals of dreamlike settings, several of which joined erotic themes with mysterious emblems as well as a gloomy plot. Throughout this epoch, Tanning developed permanent and stable amities with, among others, Marcel Duchamp, and Joseph Cornell, in addition to John Cage. She created collections plus outfits for quite a lot of George Balanchine’s ballets, comprising *The Night Shadow* (1945) at the Metropolitan Opera House. Tanning was also seen in two of Hans Richter’s forward-looking movies. (<https://www.wikipedia.org/>).

Subsequently, Tanning’s canvases progressed, growing to be less clear and further evocative. At that time working in Paris and Huismes, France, Tanning started to retreat from Surrealism and cultivate her technique. Throughout the middle 1950s, the artist’s work completely altered and her

painting grew to be progressively more disjointed and rainbow-coloured, demonstrated in canvas like *Insomnias* (1957, Moderna Museet, Stockholm). As Tanning gives details, "Around 1955 my canvases splintered. I broke the mirror, you might say." (Ibid) Near the late 1960s, her canvases were practically totally nonfigurative, nevertheless constantly evocative of the woman's shape (<https://www.wikipedia.org/>).

From the beginning of 1969 to 1973, Tanning focused on a body of three-dimensional work, yielding, cloth sculptures, five of which include the fitting *Hôtel du Pavot, Chambre 202* (1970–73) which is at present in the enduring collected works of the Musée National d'Art Moderne at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Throughout her period in France in the 1950s-70s, the artist grew as well to be an effective printmaker, working in workshops of Georges Visat and Pierre Chave as well as teaming up on some restricted edition artists' books with bards like Alain Bosquet, Rene Crevel, Lena Leclercq, in addition to André Pieyre de Mandiargues. Following Tanning's spouse's passing away in 1976, she stayed in France for quite a lot of years with a new focus on her canvas. This time comprised, for the woman artist, a concentrated and passionate five-year exploit in yielding sculpture. In 1980 she moved her house and studio to New York and began an active imaginative and inspired phase where she created canvases, drawings, collections, as well as prints (<https://www.wikipedia.org/>).

Tanning's work has been acknowledged in several one-person displays, together in America and Europe, comprising main nostalgics in 1974 at the Centre National d'Art Contemporain in Paris (which turned out to be the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1977), and in 1993 at the Malmö Konsthall in Sweden as well as at the Camden Art Center in London. The New York Public Library organized a backwards-looking of Tanning's prints in 1992, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art did a small backwards-looking display in 2000 named *Birthday and Beyond* to celebrate its achievement of the artist's famous 1942 self-portrait, *Birthday* (<https://www.wikipedia.org/>).

Her 100th anniversary in 2010 was commemorated by many displays throughout the year: "Dorothea Tanning – Early Designs for the Stage" at The Drawing Center, New York, USA, "Happy Birthday Dorothea Tanning" at the Maison Waldberg, Seillans, France, "Zwischen dem Inneren Auge und der Anderen Seite der Tür: Dorothea Tanning Graphiken" at the Max Ernst Museum, Brühl, Germany, "Dorothea Tanning: 100 years – A Tribute" at Galerie Bel'Art, Stockholm, and "Surréalisme, Dada et Fluxus - pour le 100ème anniversaire de Dorothea Tanning" at l'Espace d'Art, Rennes les Bains, France (Ibid).

Tanning was most famous for the manners in which she utilized mystery, nature, and infancy in her work. These subjects are quite dominant in both her artwork and literature, as well as in her novel *Chasm: A Weekend*. Critic Victoria Carruthers writes, "Tanning develops imagery that seeks to explore the nature of feminine (and childhood) physical and sensual experience, collapsing the boundary between reality and fantasy in favour of a fluid imaginative universe in which all possibilities can potentially exist" (Carruthers, 2011: 134).

Tanning illustrates disconcerting or triggering images, and does so in a discordantly fantastic way that shows the aspiration that the Surrealist movement had for her from the time she was a 'debutante' artist (Asif, 2016: 12). For example, Tanning includes a lot of imagery in her work; "this visual code, or visionary language, contains symbols or knowledge of the cult of the Great Goddess, the pagan religion that proclaims the image of the woman (Ibid) as the primary life source" (Lumbard, 1981: 50).

Tanning's allegory is frequently shown in the form of animals and plants, "combining elements of nature with the human life cycle" (Asif, 2016:12) and especially the female experience. In addition, Tanning utilizes young girls, which critic Paula Lumbard clarifies as being possible "a response to the Surrealist ideal of '*la femme enfant*' ... the works are testimonies to an inward searching, to a confrontation never touched upon by her male colleagues" (Lumbard, 1981: 50). Thus, Tanning employed her art form as a way of attempting towards a better comprehension of herself as a person and woman. By way of her artwork and literature, Tanning assumed herself, and other women, as being Muses through which she could reach the Marvelous. Location is as well amazingly significant to comprehend Tanning's art and her mission as an artist. For Tanning, the desert and the gothic were two important locations, for the reason that the desert symbolized the immensity of nature and its mysteries, and the gothic permitted her to deconstruct patriarchal systems. Moreover, Carruthers says that "feminist [scholar] Susan Suleiman," among others, is "attracted to the gothic for its potential to subvert patriarchal culture through anti-realism, the depiction of altered physical and non-human states and an interest in the feminine experience" (Carruthers, 2011:134).

Tanning's work is distinctive in that she blends both the desert and the gothic. This creates a world in which patriarchal foundations are being swallowed by the endless mystery that is the desert. Her triumph was to a certain extent because she had quite exclusive insight and execution of Surrealist ideas, in that her artwork and literature satirizes the movement while still keeping its characteristics, such as the Muse, *la femme enfant*, and the Marvelous. Her work represents and jabs fun at male-generated, Surrealist beliefs, and as a result, takes possession of it. Simultaneously, nevertheless, it is central to note that although Tanning concentrated a lot on the female experience, she attempted as well to maintain a public space from it (Asif, 2016: 13).

Tanning's pictures represent her thoughts very powerfully since they are very metaphorical and have fantastic though disconcerting stories that deal with topics about sexuality, dreams, and gender relations. Her first painting from the 1940s mainly visibly summarizes Surrealist beliefs, chiefly for the reason that it was around that time that she was largely implicated with the movement. Nevertheless, her painting following the 1940s kept on displaying Surrealist images, such as *la femme enfant*, in addition to other distracted female bodies, as well as a broad mood of dreams (Ibid).

The painting *Voltage* is one of Tanning's (1942) first paintings which displays Surrealist aesthetics. For example, the theme of the work is a beheaded woman who is nude

not including the thin scarf that freely covers her body. It is indistinct where she is located; it can only be said that the setting is gloomy and a little turbulent as if it was made of waves. The decapitated woman grips a tiny pair of glasses that contain eyes implanted into them. A tress of blond hair appears to be fixed to her left tit, stretching up on her detached neck (Asif, 2016: 14).

The impression of the beheaded woman recalls the picture of the model, a multifaceted female body that the Surrealists frequently utilized to represent the Marvelous. Thus, it is the same as how Tanning is seizing the model as a woman painter, intending to make use of control and obtain possession over the woman personage in a world in which men artists frequently utilize it (Asif, 2016: 14).

Later on, the artist's painting keeps on exemplifying some Surrealist ideas, such as *la femme enfant*. As earlier stated, *la femme enfant* grows to be one of Tanning's most persistent motifs, a canvas which includes such images is *The Guest Room* which she painted between 1950 and 1952. (Ibid) This picture illustrates a naked girl at the door of a bedroom, practically as a guard. In the back, there is a girl in bed with a doll. The gloom covered in the background indicates that the events unfolding in the picture are warning. The crushed porcelain and the small fake figure whose skull is hooded by thick cloth further show that something is going wrong (Asif, 2016: 15). The ambience of disquiet that this picture infuses shows Tanning's significance to join the gothic, a style engaging attention to structure amalgamated with the weirdness of dreams.

Painting a nude *femme enfant* is maybe to get possession over the character and make it beyond reach for Surrealist men. She offers as well a narrative about woman's sexuality, particularly among youthful girls, that a lot of Surrealist males frequently pass over from their works. The artist situates a location in her image, as well as includes figures that look as if they were composed and proceeded out of their agreement. Simultaneously, male artists paint females or adolescents for their particular examination, lacking to give them any action. In this manner, the artist attempts to deal with the woman's experience, using offering her figures an air of self-possession and unfolding (Asif, 2016: 15).

AESTHETICS

Prematurely in 1943, Tanning and Ernst "fled" the societal, emotional and environmental boundaries of the states by staying in Sedona, Arizona, a tiny wasteland "in the middle of nowhere, isolated and unsophisticated but, in many ways, it was incredibly freeing for us" (Unpublished interview with the artist, New York, 2009). Within 1946, the two artists settled in Arizona for good. In the heart of the stony arid region, they constructed a home that "remained curiously unfinished in a way that never entirely left the desert outside" (Tanning, 1986: 82).

The artist's reply to the "vast openness of the land and sky" (Tanning, 1986:84), the high temperature as well as segregation, was to retire into a mental inside. Subsequently, Tanning cultivates imaged symbolism which strengthens her fixation with the gothic the same as responsiveness de-

voted to creative immoderation and corporeal sense, at the same time as well giving their deal means of expression for the woman artist to obtain an expression for her infancy remembrances and happenings of femininity. This dry and sensational setting remained itself space which brought to mind the ultimate passion and fear for Tanning. In her memoir *Birthday*, the artist noted down the rough luminosity and high temperature, of the windowpanes which were not at all covered, as well as of hot wilderness twilights filled with resonances and shades: "Then as now the decibels of nature can crush an artist's brain ... So I lock the door and paint interiors. Great events...Chilly and secretive paintings typify my response to the diabolical landscape outside" (Ibid).

Tanning employs this combination in her single novel, *Chasm*, which started in 1943 and was considerably amended for publishing in 2004. The story may just be portrayed like a gothic production where the writer utilizes a numeral of standard images of the sort: an impressive mansion frequented by the phantoms of the ancient times; "a principal male of 'abnormal' obsessional penchants, depicted like the presentation of evil powers, dark, and rather supernatural; and a joyful end where the fair proprietors are brought back to their properties" (Carruthers, 2011: 140).

Inside the core of this sentimentality, Tanning creates the fascinating and rather supernatural principal character in the personage of Destina who is seven-year-old, an infant who effortlessly controls the mysterious universe of the child's room in addition to the huge and magic wasteland neighbouring the domicile. The girl is inevitably connected with the very old and healing forces of the wilderness, gathering intuitive and magic pieces from the beasts inside it as well as taking pleasure in every night date in the company of a cliff lion with whom the girl is inseparably and mysteriously linked. The protagonist Destina is the personification of the infants and teenagers who inhabit the weird as well as the enigmatic home settings which come up once more in canvas starting 1942 to the middle 1950s, while the couple artist Ernst and Tanning start hanging out for long periods in Europe, and at last shift in this area near 1954.

In these paintings, Tanning's fixation with infancy individuality which is full of metamorphic would-be is displayed in young women frequently placed on the angle of their corporeal adulthood as well as every part of what it entails. (Ibid) They dwell in modes of living psychological and emotional power which allows entry to seemingly supernatural forces. This is not astonishing, in that case, that the imaginary tale and gothic fright fictions of the artist's adolescence, which provided her fantasy so extravagantly, are cited to supply the scenery where to a great extent this action happens. Tanning utters:

In many ways, my early paintings always represented a challenge to me. Sometimes they are wicked and full of traps and sometimes they are illustrations, if you like, of childhood fairy tales and fantasies that are of my own making. I still dream about them and get frightened by them, probably because anything, terrifying or joyful, or preferably both, can happen to them.

(Unpublished interview with the artist, New York, 2009)

Within 1953 the most important paintings starting this epoch were gathered collectively and exposed “at the Alexander Iolas Gallery in New York” (Carruthers, 2011: 141). The call to the display was an illustration “of a window with surrounding frame and blind. ‘Where the glass should be’ was a poem written by Tanning (Ibid).

A picture named *Interior with Sudden Joy* (1951) portrays two little young girls wearing just their Edwardian “clothing worn under outerwear” (Ibid) and little pairs of red, high-heeled court shoes, face plastered with make-up, provocatively arm-in-arm and smoking cigarettes» (Ibid). It is a mysterious inside evocative area, with pallid shaded terms and emblems on a chalkboard in the backdrop of playful messages cited from “Rimbaud’s secret notebooks” (Ibid). Slight outbreaks of action are in this space in which the act seems abruptly discontinued at a point in time. Nevertheless, further great pictures in the exhibition show splendidly tinted, graciously vivid paintings where frightening happenings occur in common settings.

The Guest Room (1950-52) is taken over by a nude child that stays at the unlocked door of the “guest room.” The girl’s anatomy is visibly juvenile, and has no other option than to raise in the mature hands and feet Tanning has provided her. The little girl stares straightforwardly, though inertly, at the watcher, just as if implying that she is escorting the viewer into her confidential room. The character is hopeless and has a cheerless appearance rather than endowed with sex (Ibid). A vast ribbon of cloth is wrinkled and swathed into a setting for the picture, like a drape which has been retreated to permit the viewer to perceive something in other respects veiled (Ibid).

Gen Doy *Drapery, Classicism, and Barbarism in Visual Culture* (2002) and George Banu, *Le Rideau ou La fêlure du monde* (1997) in their volumes on the utilization of cloth in ocular symbolic representation, perceive the drape in a picture as a depiction of a doorsill amid diverse sorts of discernment. Doy perceives the employment of veils, hangings and cloth-like as a verge between the existent and the elusive, the observable and the unobservable (Doy, 2002: 11). In the dark space, is a twin bed, a girl holding a full-size figurine, “dwarves, broken eggs and other signs of a struggle. The painting expresses all the mysterious and inscrutable aspects of fables, gothic tales and odd wishful thinking filled with threat and allusion to intimate induction.

Linda Nochlin proposes that “in all Tanning’s iconography, women’s sexual initiation is depicted as at once ominous and attractive, and in either case inevitably implicated with death ” (Nochlin, 1974: 128). This feeling is evocative of Jean Christophe Bailly’s portrayal of how the artist appears to describe a disquieting strangeness of infancy, “at once desired and dreaded “Jean Christophe Bailly, “Image Redux: The Art of Dorothea Tanning” in (Tanning, 1995: 18). Nochlin carries on depicting the happenings of the picture like “oddly juxtaposed obscenity and cosiness” (Nochlin, 1974: 128). Not a terrible depiction of the habitually scary or extreme events which can occur in the most ordinary, home sceneries.

In addition to the painting, *Some Roses and Their Phantoms* comprised in the Lolos Gallery show a fantastically

characteristic instance of a “still life” (Carruthers, 2011: 142) that joins the ordinariness of daily realism with an enigmatic further universe. The painting portrays a home space altered by enigmatic outbreaks and occupied by frightening human-like beings. (Ibid) The cloth napery proposes domestication, and home life, in addition to the similar mid-caste society and moderation very recognizable to the woman artist herself.

Tanning recalls the chronicle home custom of describing the crunchy, white cloth napery concerning its transformational feasibility: “laying it over the family dining table, so smooth and cool and heavy. It was fascinating to me. The table was transformed by a pattern of sharp creases etched onto the surface, of peaks and troughs that fell over the sides and folded in and around our laps” (Unpublished interview with the artist, New York, 2001).

The topic of banal family life is both toughened and damaged by the sole white cover in the forefront which seems to come out of and retreat into the fabric at the same time. That is a gothic fiction: a home actuality wherein the paranormal menaces occupy. As for the evocative scenery of the table pinnate, three-spatial apotheosis comes out semi-shaped, deformed, in a range of phases of derivation or floral alterations. Inside the setting, interruption, like discoloration, a menace to infiltrate the wallpaper, at this point a common design. At the back of the table, a big flower-like living thing glares at the watcher with a gloomy, sad eye. For the artist, *Some Roses and Their Phantoms* have

an almost primitive, fundamental acceptance of a primarily sensorial world, one in which powerful supernatural forces inhabit the eerie landscapes of both the natural environment and the recesses of the imagination, particularly the childhood imagination, where the extraordinary can exist unhampered by disbelief or logic.

(Unpublished interview with the artist, New York, 2005)

Accustomed that the picture is wider than common for the artist at this period in her vocation, maybe the purpose is for it to be “full-size.” The evident inquiry is whether this painting is intended to be an infant’s vision of the encircling real world, wherein the boredom of everyday eating dinner has been substituted by a fantasy setting of opposition: “At the back of the table, the big flower-like living thing glares at the watcher with a gloomy, sad eye presented as a dining attendant” (Carruthers, 2011: 142).

Evocative of Breton’s reflection in “The Great Transparent Ones” latterly of the *Prolegomena to a Third Surrealist Manifesto*, where he proposes that an entire world of “creatures” mysterious, and obstinately invisible by grown persons can be real, veiled in covert disguise till adults deliberately release of assertion to a leading point of view (Carruthers, 2011: 143).

Some Roses and Their Phantoms was exhibited in 2000 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art as a piece of an exposition of women artists’ art. In the supplementary tone for the painting the artist fuses the pictures of the napery with that of the image to depict how the inspired procedure appears from the curved, fair exteriors of both:

Here are some roses from a very different garden sit? lie? Stand gasp, dream die?—on white linen. They may

serve you tea or coffee. As I saw them take shape on the canvas I was amazed by their solemn colours and their quiet mystery that called for—seemed to demand—some sort of phantoms. So I tried to give them their phantoms and their still-lifeless. Did I succeed? They are not going to tell me, but the white linen gave me a good feeling as if I had folded it myself, and then opened it on the table.

(Tanning, 2000: 22)

Tanning's declaration explains how contrasting powers are reunited in the fantasy: yet existence possesses the capability to melt into not a single item except an ethereal, eerie oppressive atmosphere. This odd imagination is the plain passion of the customs of domestication, the odour of newly washed cloth, the convenient arithmetic of the crispy pleats. Designs from infancy are not at all very distant from these first paintings. The drawing of the restricted inside as a phase in which happenings guide to a sort of release of the fancy is done again and again (Carruthers, 2011: 144). This fusing of high dramatization with imagination is apparent in two of the woman's artist greatest famous paintings created throughout this epoch: *Children's Games* (1942) and *A little Night Music*, (1943). In the painting *A little Night Music*, two petite lasses generate chaos by ripping the wallpaper of a small hallway with a sort of hyperactive force. The forms of the girls' knotted and crazily locked in the air reverberate in the extent of ragged paper that shows both the physical stomach of a lady with only: "a fringe of pubic hair peeping over the ripped paper on the one hand and on the other, what appears to be the belly of a flame-haired monster" (Carruthers, 2011: 145).

A wide strip of fabric is also torn away from one of the girl's clothing, exposing the pale curve of her back from buttocks to a thick skein of sumptuous hair that begins at her nape and travels upwards above her head and into the 'navel of the glossy red hair contained under the paper (Ibid). Thus, essentially linked to it through the inexorable gesture of her reddish-brown hair, this girl shows an intense, intuitive link with her personal imaginative, mystic fantasies. Once more one perceives prospects as well as similar universes prowling beneath the facade of ordinariness. The wall cloth functions like an image of common people's orthodoxy, ripping the wallpaper to expose a mysterious world which is rupturing with bizarre imaginations which were, maybe, all nearby. At this point in the limits of a differently ordinary home inside a basaltic change of motive is happening (Ibid).

The utter brutality of the kids' deeds: slashing, undressing, shredding as well as attacking remains in extreme hostility to the concept of purity, obedience and submission over and over again ascribed to the youthful. The vibrant and influential occurrence of Tanning's imagination guides the woman artist to position juvenile and teenage lasses as a representation of a likely strong troublesome power. (Ibid) This concept is once more investigated in *A little Night Music* (1943), one of the most famous canvases of Dorothea Tanning's first work. The girls at this point live in a ramshackle motel hallway with broken stucco, flaking plaster and counted doors, the utmost of which is partly open, permitting a secretive, bright glow to decant into the faintly

light, restricted place. The picture of entrance and entryways is persistent in the artist's art, acting like a symbolic doorway by which one may go into mysterious new universes or the oblivious. On the stairs of this hallway, a huge sunflower and pieces of its torn stem lie on the landing. One girl relaxes next to a door, with shut eyes, an outfit ripped and a bare upper body. The second lass stands up rebelliously with her backside to the watcher, hand closed tightly and curls flying crazily in the air. The torn flower and the outfit of the girls imply combat or a confrontation in which the flower was beaten. Here is a letter to Tate in 1999, Tanning affirms:

It's [the picture] about confrontation. Everyone believes he/she is his/her drama. While they don't always have giant sunflowers (the most aggressive of flowers) to contend with, there are always stairways, hallways, even very private theatres where the suffocations and the finalities are being played out, the blood-red carpet or cruel yellows, the attacker, the delighted victim

(Carruthers, 2011: 146)

Parallel to Carrington's memories of the devilish "Lord Charlton," there are once more the topics of threat and wish, mental fears and paranormal fights between acceptable and malevolence altered by the forces of the mind's eye and rising consciousness of physical occurrence. The painting is, she utters, "like a dream, anything can happen. You might be confronted by your worst fears or greatest joys but you are awake ... so you must be vigilant." (Ibid) The artist utilizes the idea of the sunflower as a representation of threat and attraction in several paintings during the 1940s and 1950s. Omnipresent all over the agricultural societies in Galesburg, Illinois, she evokes her first reminiscences of the flower are greatly manlike. Tanning produced the painting *Sunflower Landscape in 1943*, the single of just two accessible portrayals by the artist of Ernst (Ibid).

Inquisitively, the painting depicts a likely Ernst at approximately ten years old, investigating to a certain extent the sumptuous position of gigantic manlike sunflowers, the majority of which are more than double his tallness; the stalks and facades of the sunflowers shape a knotted huge number of nude women. The infant walks through the moonshine setting hand by hand in the company of one of the smallest flowers (Carruthers, 2011: 146).

Grinning mysteriously, Ernst looks at his accomplice's big, ring-shaped bosom and into the gloom of a plant of big stalk flowers. The mood is evocative of privacy and erotic investigation. For the woman artist, the flowers in this painting are together threatening and appealing simultaneously. The latter are symbols for the powers which may, at the same time, attract and wreck. Nevertheless, rather than the secretive and exploratory ambience of *Sunflower Landscape*, the beaten flower in *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, denotes that a further aggressive fight has previously occurred, causing the death of one of the figures, like a doll, with ripped garments. Despite avoiding any try to divide female artists from the conventional "by their sex" (Carruthers, 2011: 147), the artist has proposed that these two pictures were created in the 1940s:

To some extent reflect the vastly different ways boys and girls experience early childhood desire and the relation-

ships they have with their changing bodies which are primarily dictated by moralistic and religious views. Boys are encouraged to be sexually experienced and girls are supposed to be passive.

(Carruthers, 2011: 147)

For the lasses in *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, there is to some degree further emerging menace and fighting. Nochlin's remark about the paintings of this epoch is that female's erotic and sensitive start is portrayed as equally threatening and seductive. One lass in this painting seems to be in a sort of post-sexual faint, and the other girl remains rebelliously in opposition to the attacker/flower, with clenched hand (Ibid), *Body erects, and the familiar motif of the seemingly alive tendrils of flying hair now appears more akin to the snake-like locks of a medusa that has turned her would-be attacker to stone. In this ordinary setting an incident has occurred that defies reason, strange and supernatural, excessively sensual: it is a "little night music," whether a lullaby, nightmare or grand drama on an operatic scale, it is a scene of that which goes "bump" in the night.*

(Ibid)

And yet 1946 denotes, for Tanning a return to the erotic fantasies of her adolescence, trapped among Lutherans in Galesburg, Illinois. During the decade after the war, she amassed an extraordinary body of paintings depicting girlhood as a time of dangerous appetites and uncanny erotic power. For example, in Tanning's *Chasm* (2004), the original story becomes the centre of a remarkably suspenseful tale of sex and violence in the desert. Had she followed the example of Destina's great-grandmother in *Chasm* and lived to see another generation. Indeed her novel *Chasm*, reworked the material from "Abyss" in which, eroticism is more diffuse, evoking less the physicality of sex than a more dreamy sensuousness.

CONCLUSION

Certainly, Dorothea Tanning was first considered a surrealist painter. In the 1940s, when she was one of the artists-in-residence of Julien Levy's Gallery, Dorothea Tanning used the language of surrealist representation. Her best-known work is *Petite Musique de Nuit*, a dark painting steeped in symbolism. In the mid-1950s, her work changed dramatically.

As she explains, "around 1955, my paintings burst... I broke the mirror, you might say." (Ibid) She then becomes one of the first women who dare to reverse the erotic point of view in art and not the last one to transgress for human love fulfillment and artistic enjoyment.

Tanning utilized images of gothic art for reason that gothic authorized women artists to eradicate patriarchal values since gothic is placed on the threshold between the real world and fancy. Her work expressed the fantasies of any woman, who stands as an individual in her own right and no longer just as the projection of man's desire, an object, a muse. Certainly, her complicated and energetic writing vision of female sexuality still seems to have much to communicate because it remains so determined and morally neutral. The woman artist does not tell what to think, or even what she thinks: she unveils only some shades of meaning which are the translation of undefined elements of desire that cannot be explained or even described as the arcades of art and intuitive perception are ineffable. Probably the artistic journey of Tanning evokes a world of both fear and hope where a woman can solely live with the innocence and imagination of children who see the unseen and feel the invisible.

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