

APORIA: texts

left mirror

Ressentiment: "a self-poisoning of the mind...a lasting mental attitude caused by the systematic expression of certain emotions and affects which, as such, are normal components of human nature. Their repression leads to the constant tendency to indulge in certain kinds of value delusions and corresponding value judgments. The emotions and affects primarily concerned are revenge, hatred, malice, envy, the impulse to detract, and spite." None of these feelings necessarily leads to resentment. It develops "only if there occurs neither a moral self-conquest... nor an act or some other adequate expression of emotion...and if this restraint is caused by a pronounced awareness of impotence...Through its very origin, resentment is therefore chiefly confined to those who serve and are dominated at the moment, who fruitlessly resent the sting of authority ...the spiritual venom of resentment is extremely contagious."

Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*, referred to by D. Kuspit, "Crowding the Picture -- Notes on American Activist Art Today," *Artforum*, May 1988, p. 117.

centre mirror

I would that we were, my beloved, white  
birds on the foam of the sea!  
We tire of the flame of the meteor, before  
it can fade and flee;  
And the flame of the blue star of twilight,  
hung low on the rim of the sky,  
Has awaked in our hearts, my beloved,  
a sadness that may not die.

A weariness comes from those dreamers,  
dew dabbled, the lily and rose;  
Ah, dream not of them, my beloved, the flame  
of the meteor that goes,  
Or the flame of the blue star that lingers  
hung low in the fall of the dew:  
For I would we were changed to white birds  
on the wandering foam: I and you!

I am haunted by numberless islands, and  
many a Danaan shore,  
Where time would surely forget us, and  
Sorrow come near us no more;  
Soon far from the rose and lily, and fret of the  
flames would we be,  
Were we only white birds, my beloved,  
buoyed out on the foam of the sea!

The White Birds    William B. Yeats

right mirror

The expression 'muted group' has been used by the anthropologists Edwin and Shirley Ardener to explain the relation of subordinate ('muted') groups to the "dominant modes of expression in any society which have been generated by the dominant structures within it." (They comment that the 'mutedness' of one group may be regarded as the inverse of the 'deafness' of the dominant group.) Their ideas accord quite well with the arguments of French feminists, that women are perched precariously in men's discourse and have to mimic male language in order to be heard.

L. Tickner, "Images of Women and la peinture feminine," in Nancy Spero, London, 1987, p. 17.