

## Beauty Lies in the Eye

1. It has become quite fashionable to talk about the Sublime, as it is presented in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, in relation to postmodernism. But it is rare to find anyone who similarly considers Kant's presentation of the Beautiful.
2. The Sublime seems more appropriate to contemporary taste because it is an aesthetic of immensity, excess, and disproportion. Whereas the Beautiful is one of harmony and proportion. It is as if Beauty were somehow old-fashioned, whereas the Sublime is considered more radical.
3. Among recent theorists, Jean-François Lyotard is the one who has talked most interestingly about the Sublime. In his account, the Sublime is what invokes the unrepresentable, what keeps open that which would otherwise be foreclosed by information technologies and by commodification. The postmodern sublime, he writes, "serait ce qui dans le moderne allègue l'imprésentable dans la présentation elle-même; ce qui se refuse à la consolation des bonnes formes, au consensus d'un goût qui permettrait d'éprouver en commun la nostalgie de l'impossible; ce qui s'enquiert de présentations nouvelles, non pas pour en jouir, mais pour mieux faire sentir qu'il y a de l'imprésentable" ("would be that which in the modern invokes the unrepresentable in presentation itself, that which refuses the consolation of correct forms, refuses the consensus of taste permitting a common experience of nostalgia for the impossible, and inquires into new presentations — not to take pleasure in them, but to better produce the feeling that there is something unrepresentable").
4. The Sublime in Kant is a double movement: a rupture followed by a higher recuperation. Postmodernists want to affirm the first moment, but defer or avoid the second. The breakdown of the imagination in the sublime can be compared to Bataille's notion of expenditure without return. It is an opening. But the appearance of Reason is a restoration of order and of closure.
5. But is it really possible to separate out the parts of the Kantian movement like this? Neil Hertz suggests that even the first moment of the sublime, the imagination's distress, seems "slightly factitious, staged precisely in order to require the somewhat melodramatic arrival of Ethics." Hertz has an important point here, though it is unfortunate that he chooses to denigrate melodrama.
6. Lyotard, unlike many recent commentators, respects both moments in the unfolding of the sublime. But such a reading has its own problems. Lyotard valorizes the Sublime only at the price of entirely devalorizing the aesthetic and

the Beautiful. According to Lyotard, "Kant écrit que le sublime est un *Geistesgefühl*, un sentiment de l'esprit, alors que le beau est un sentiment qui procède d'une 'convenance' entre la nature et l'esprit.... Ce mariage ou, du moins, cette fiançaille propre au beau est cassé par le sublime ... le sublime n'est autre que l'annonce sacrificielle de l'éthique dans le champ esthétique. Sacrificielle et tant qu'il requiert que la nature imaginative ... doit être scarifiée dans l'intérêt de la raison pratique.... Ainsi s'annonce la fin d'une esthétique, celle du beau, au nom de la destination finale de l'esprit, qui est la liberté" ("Kant writes that the sublime is a *Geistesgefühl*, a sentiment of the mind, whereas the beautiful is the sentiment that proceeds from a 'fit' between nature and mind.... This marriage or, at least, this betrothal proper to the beautiful is broken by the sublime ... the sublime is none other than the sacrificial announcement of the ethical in the aesthetic field. Sacrificial in that it requires that imaginative nature ... must be sacrificed in the interests of practical reason.... This heralds the end of an aesthetics, that of the beautiful, in the name of the final destination of the mind, which is freedom").

7. Beauty seems to offer none of these sublime possibilities of rupture and openness, however dubious they may be. Beauty is too ordered and harmonious for that. Nonetheless the topic of beauty continues to come up, both in everyday discourse (when we find some work of art — though probably not nature — beautiful) and in the overt strategy of many postmodern works.

8. Consider, for instance, Prince's underappreciated 1986 film, *Under the Cherry Moon*. This film is beautiful, and not sublime. It's set in a fantasy version of the French Riviera: a place where rose petals flutter through the air, and where men and women alike wear the most elegant costumes. This is a high-society world, and it is lily-white. The "bitterscotch" Prince and his "chocolate" sidekick Jerome Benton are almost the only people of color around. As if to underscore this, the film is shot in sumptuous black and white. The screen is suffused with light, which vanquishes all shadows. Sometimes this light is dazzling, at other times muted and low-key. But even the night is luminous. Everything is posed for maximum visibility. Everything glows, from the white bedding and white dresses that the women favor, to the black sheen of Prince's conked, pomaded hair.

9. Throughout the film, Prince cultivates the art of being on display. He fashions himself into an exotic Other. His body, clothed in glamour, is the focus of all glances. We see him in bed, in the bathtub, at the piano, on the dance floor, and driving a car. Everywhere he manifests the same delicious languor. He moves with a slow, stylized grace. It is as if he were waiting to be ravished. He disdains work, he tells us, and lives only for "fun." The camera moves caressingly up the length of his body. It dwells longingly on the ample folds of his ass. His feet are sheathed in high-heeled shoes. His pants are flared at the legs, but nicely tight around the buttocks. His jackets and shirts feature rows of big buttons, and leave

his chest or midriff bare. A single lock of hair curls daintily over his forehead. Sometimes his eyes are hidden behind sunglasses. Other times, he bats his eyes coyly, or opens them wide in mock horror.

10. *Under the Cherry Moon* is also noteworthy for its exceedingly postmodern strategy of pastiche. It evokes in turn various past eras: the 1920s, the 1930s, the 1940s. But we are not sure if these decades are being alluded to as they were in life, or just as they were in film. This sort of evocation is quite different from modernist nostalgia. For, far from being about somehow lacking those pasts, Prince's pastiche of styles is about having access to them to an excess, and even to the point of boredom. This is why Prince feels so free to mix and match past styles almost at random, without any coherent principle or criterion to guide him. The sublime grows out of an anxiety about representation and its inadequacies; but in this beautifully simulacral film, representation just is not an issue at all.

11. *Under the Cherry Moon* is beautiful (and not sublime) even in its confrontation with death. Toward the end of the film, Prince is killed by a single bullet. He drops to the ground ever so gracefully. You would think he had merely fallen into an affected swoon. His limbs are carefully arrayed upon the ground. His lover cradles his head in her arms. He mutters a few last words; then his head daintily droops. In this film, death is not a limit-experience, much less a contact with the beyond. It is rather just another moment of immanence. Death is just another pose in the film's recycling of a previous *fin de siècle*'s aestheticizing, posturing, and posing. (Indeed, the film critic J. Hoberman rightly saw Prince in this film as a *poète maudit* in the tradition of Baudelaire and Lautréamont).

12. Seen in this light, Beauty is quite strange. It is a matter of great difficulty and great fragility. And yet its very difficulty is insubstantial. There is no more egregious and sterile waste of time than that spent by the dandy in front of the mirror, or parading his beauty for others to view. Yet in the perspective of beauty, even this waste of time does not matter. Warhol: "If people want to spend their whole lives creaming and tweezing and brushing and tilting and gluing, that's okay too, because it gives them something to do."

13. The flat immanence of beauty contrasts sharply with the residues of transcendence (even if only a negative transcendence) that continue to haunt the Sublime.

14. This strangeness, wastefulness, and sterility has something to do with the disinterest that for Kant is crucial in any judgment of beauty.

15. Melissa McMahon writes thus of Kantian disinterest: "the 'interest' that is lacking in the aesthetic experience is an investment in the object from a moral, utilitarian, or theoretical perspective.... Kant's notion of disinterest marks not a distance [such as that of the aura in Benjamin] but its loss, an encounter which precisely strips the subject of its habits of thought. In fact it is no longer clear that in the absence of such interests the 'what' that is operative in the aesthetic experience is an 'object' at all; it is more a 'sign,' a trigger. The attribute of beauty attaches not to the object but to the 'event' of the beautiful."

16. The flatness and immanence of beauty is a different sort of stripping away than the one that occurs in the sublime. Beauty cannot be identified with the aura that Benjamin posited in older, pre-industrial art. (Which is how Lyotard sees it when he praises the sublime for marking an end to any aesthetics of the beautiful). Beauty rather implies, quite strongly, the loss of the aura. But this loss is not the modernist and Benjaminian one of shock or trauma. It is more like a biased shrug of the shoulders, or like Andy Warhol's bland and oft-repeated judgment: "it's great."

17. By virtue of this indifference, the beautiful is more resistant than is the sublime to being appropriated by the discourses or forces of morality. Beauty, Kant says, is as free from any notion of goodness or perfection as it is from any notion of utility. A sensitivity toward the beautiful may, he suggests, indicate a disposition toward the good. But that is as far as Kant is willing to go. The aesthetic taste itself may not be subordinated to any pre-existing criterion of morality.

18. Melissa McMahon sees Kant's aesthetics of the beautiful as "replac[ing] Benjamin's loaded term of the 'here and now' with the 'any-moment-whatever' as emblem of artistic individuality and image of thought." This "here-and-now" is quite close to Lyotard's reading of the sublime as an event (Heideggerian *Ereignis*), a kind of open question: "is it happening?" The contrary notion of the "any-moment-whatever," is taken by McMahon from Deleuze's *Cinema* volumes. It is related, less to Heidegger and to Benjamin, than to Giorgio Agamben's sense of "whatever being" in *The Coming Community*. (Benjamin and Heidegger are indeed Agamben's greatest influences, but his peculiar inflection of them moves in a very different, more Kantian direction).

19. As a state of detachment from utilitarian and especially from moral concerns, Kant's disinterest is a kind of impassivity or indifference, something that is at once otherworldly (since it is detached, other-than-concerned-with-the-here-and-now, in terms of affect) and yet still very much of this world (since it is rooted in the immediacy of an event, and denies any *telos* or transcendence).

20. Beauty, therefore, is everything and nothing at once. Like the disaster invoked by Maurice Blanchot, it "ruine tout en laissant tout en l'état" ("ruins everything while leaving everything in place"). In Kant's own terms, the beautiful involves an antinomy. On one hand, the judgment of beauty is entirely singular. There is no concept to determine it. On the other hand, we see such a judgement as universal, and we demand assent from others regarding it.

21. The first half of the antinomy works like this. An aesthetic judgment must be made without a concept to determine it. This means that it is entirely singular. No rule can be applied to it or generalized from it. The singular object of aesthetic judgment cannot even be called a particular, because that would imply some sort of relation to more general instances.

22. The beautiful is composed of examples that nevertheless cannot be reduced to rules. Instances of the beautiful are examples in themselves, but not examples of anything. They are copies for which there is no original, or secondaries for which there is no primary. You can point to them as examples; but you cannot point to that of which they are examples. Each is a singularity: an instance that can be emulated, but not imitated.

23. Kant also expresses this paradox as follows. The Beautiful leads to aesthetic Ideas, intuitions for which there are no adequate concepts. Whereas the Sublime leads to rational Ideas, concepts for which there are no adequate intuitions.

24. Kant's idea of the singular aesthetic Idea, as an intuition for which there can be no concept, is quite close to the notion of singularity in Deleuze. Something absolutely singular breaks away from the hierarchical conceptual relations of genus to species, or of general to particular.

25. What is a singularity in Deleuze? A point in the graph of a function for which there is no slope or derivative; a point of phase transition in matter like the boiling and freezing points of water; a bifurcation point in chaos theory; a mutation in biology, understanding that, as Richard Dawkins says, the effect of a gene can be understood only differentially, in relation to all other alleles at the same location in the genome.

26. Or take the example of gender. Male and female are conceptual categories; neither could be called a singularity. They are particulars in relation to the "bi-univocal" generality above them. And they are generic terms which regulate the particulars or individuals beneath them. Both sides of this hierarchy are expressed in the Law (as Lacan might say) of gender: that every human being must have a gender, must be one or the other.

27. The two genders are privileged points, conceptual hinges around which everything else is organized. They are foci of stabilization. For that very reason, they are not what Deleuze in *La Logique du sens* (*The Logic of Sense*) calls remarkable points, points of transformation and of singularity. The singularity in Deleuze is not a specially privileged "here and now." For singularity can precisely arise at "any-moment-whatever." Any moment, unpredictably, can turn out to be a remarkable point where concepts break down, where the intuition exceeds the concept, where the distributive characterization operated by a bi-univocal arrangement like male/female (the concept of gender) stops working. The machinery gets jammed, and something else passes through. There is a scattering of singularities, an interpenetration between genders, their aconceptual transformations into one another.

28. The other side of Kant's antinomy is that the aesthetic judgment claims universal validity. But universality is not the same thing as generality. There is no mediation, no measured ascent from the immediate to some higher or broader point. The aesthetic judgment remains singular and subjective, Kant says; it refers only to this one singular point, even as it demands the assent of others.

"Nothing is postulated in a judgment of taste except a universal voice about a liking unmediated by concepts." This voice requires assent from everyone, but it cannot postulate such assent as actually existing. We cannot prove that the other must agree with us, since there is no concept to argue from. We are impelled to posit universal agreement, but we cannot actually enforce any such agreement.

29. As McMahon puts it, "the beautiful obliges us to think (its singularity poses a problem), without there being any concept for thought to settle on."

30. Thomas Wall suggests, in an unpublished essay, that the claim to universality in a judgment of beauty is, actually, an active demand. I actively impinge upon the Other. I insist that she share my judgment that something is beautiful. The aesthetic judgment is not my spontaneous thought, so much as it is something that forces me to think. And even more, it forces me to demand the Other to participate together with me.

31. Why this turn to the Other? It is a question of communication. In the absence of any concept it is as impossible to communicate an aesthetic pleasure to myself, as it is for me to communicate it to someone else. In an aesthetic judgment, I only demand of others what I first demand of myself. In the aesthetic experience, I am being obliged to conceptualize and communicate, while the very means to do so are withheld from me.

32. Kant's very demand for the universal communicability of aesthetic judgment thus presupposes its own conceptual impossibility. The actual pleasure or sensation of beauty cannot be communicated. It is precisely the singularity left over when all concepts are removed.

33. This argument has much in common with the question of private language in Wittgenstein. In *Philosophical Investigations*, he writes, speaking of the inner sensation of a toothache, or of the color red: "It is not a something, but not a nothing either! The conclusion was only that a nothing would serve just as well as a something about which nothing could be said."

34. For Kant, too, the singularity is not a something, but not a nothing either. Communication can neither grasp it nor exclude it. It is an excess in relation to what language can express. So it is impossible to talk about it directly. But it is equally impossible not to endeavor to refer to it. What IS communicable and communicated in the aesthetic judgment must be "the subjective conditions for the possibility of cognition as such."

35. How, then, can I make the demand for agreement in matters of taste? How can I posit aesthetic universality? Kant says that the universality of a subjective aesthetic judgment must reside in whatever of it is universally communicable. The trouble is that communication almost necessarily involves cognition, but the aesthetic judgment is non-cognitive. What is communicated in an aesthetic judgment, therefore, is not the singular experience of beauty itself, but merely the harmonious free accord of the powers of the mind that is the condition of

possibility for there to be such a thing as a disinterested and singular judgment of beauty. Beauty is always singular, and what is communicated of this singular beauty is the presupposition that alone makes it possible: the presupposition of a *sensus communis*.

36. Lyotard links Kant's insistence on communicability — his positing a *sensus communis* — with Adorno's insistence that "no work of art should be described or explained through the categories of communication." What such (seemingly opposed) formulations have in common, Lyotard says, is that they alike reject the universality of the concept, and of conceptual communication, such as one finds in Hegel and Habermas. According to Lyotard, Kant and Adorno share "a thinking about art which is not a thinking of non-communication but of non-conceptual communication."

37. The universal communication of a free harmony of the faculties thus paradoxically implies a pre-existing separation. Indeed, what is communicated publically is the formal condition of possibility for there to be such a thing as a private aesthetic pleasure at all. But only that private pleasure, incommunicable in itself, is the actual precondition that can impel me to endeavor to communicate in the first place, or to posit possible comprehensibility for my communication.

38. This paradox is similar to the one that animates the writings of Pierre Klossowski. He draws a distinction between the unique sign — the height or depth of affect, which is entirely singular and incommunicable — and the meaning that is communicated through the exchangeable signs of language. The latter presupposes the former, but also marks the former's otherness to, and exclusion from, any possible discourse.

39. This Klossowskian exclusion is the flip side of the Levinasian obligation, the demand upon the Other, that Wall sees in the paradox of the aesthetic judgment. Both of these dimensions imply the need for a radical separation.

40. How can Kant's antinomy be used to help define a postmodern or Deleuzian notion of Beauty? I can only sketch out some of the places in which we might begin to look for such a notion.

41. In *Le Pli (The Fold)*, Deleuze sees modern and contemporary art as a sort of neo-Baroque, akin to the Baroque of Leibniz's time. With the difference, of course, that modernist music rejects the pre-established harmony of Baroque music, and instead affirms a primordial dissonance.

42. But there is another way that Deleuze conceives dissonance, this time in association with Kant. In *La Philosophie critique de Kant (Kant's Critical Philosophy)*, he remarks that "les facultés s'affrontent, chacune à sa propre limite, et trouvent leur accord dans une discordance fondamentale: un accord discordant, c'est la grande découverte de la *Critique du jugement*, le dernier renversement kantien.... Une musique nouvelle comme discordance, et comme accord discordant, la source du temps" ("the faculties confront one another, each

stretched to its own limit, and find their accord in a fundamental discord: a discordant accord is the great discovery of the *Critique of Judgment*, the final Kantian reversal.... A new music as discord, and as a discordant accord, the source of time").

43. According to Deleuze, the whole problematic of Western philosophy changes with Kant. In his theory of the beautiful, Kant gives a new status to the notion of harmony. Harmony is no longer pre-established, as it was in all thinkers from Plato to Leibniz. Kant does not see harmony as given or intrinsic. Instead, he claims to trace its actual genesis. Harmony is now seen as a product of the free accord of the faculties (rather than as the source of their accord). This reversal is the great accomplishment of the critical program.

44. Deleuze further recounts how the post-Kantians reproached Kant, but only for betraying his own critical program. "On réclamait un principe qui ne fût pas seulement conditionnant par rapport aux objets, mais vraiment génétique et producteur ... on dénonçait, chez Kant, la survivance d'harmonies miraculeuses entre termes qui restaient extérieurs" ("They demanded a principle which was not merely conditioning in relation to objects but was also truly genetic and productive.... They also condemned the survival, in Kant, of miraculous harmonies between terms that remain external to one another").

45. In Deleuze's account of the history of philosophy, it is left to Nietzsche to fulfill the demands of the post-Kantians, and to carry out the critical project in its full radicality. This is the repeated theme of *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (*Nietzsche and Philosophy*). Nietzsche stands to Kant, in this early book, much as, later in *Le Pli*, Whitehead stands to Leibniz, or Boulez to Bach.

46. According to Deleuze, Nietzsche performs "une transformation radicale du kantisme, une réinvention de la critique que Kant trahissait en même temps qu'il la concevait, une reprise du projet critique sur de nouvelles bases et avec de nouveaux concepts" ("a radical transformation of Kantianism, a re-invention of the critique which Kant betrayed at the same time as he conceived it, a resumption of the critical project on a new basis and with new concepts"). And again: "Finalement, il en est de Nietzsche par rapport à Kant comme de Marx par rapport à Hegel: il s'agit pour Nietzsche de remettre la critique sur ses pieds, comme pour Marx la dialectique" ("Finally, Nietzsche's relation to Kant is like Marx's to Hegel: Nietzsche stands critique on its feet, just as Marx does with the dialectic").

47. The interrogation of limits in Kant is rewritten in Nietzsche as affirmation, instead of as self-reflection. As Deleuze says: "Une pensée qui irait jusqu'au bout de ce que peut la vie, une pensée qui mènerait la vie jusqu'au bout de ce qu'elle peut. Au lieu d'une connaissance qui s'oppose à la vie, une pensée qui *affirmerait* la vie.... Penser signifierait ceci: *découvrir, inventer de nouvelles possibilités de vie*" ("A thought that would go to the limit of what life can do, a thought that would lead life to the limit of what it can do? A thought that

would *affirm* life instead of a knowledge that is opposed to life... Thinking would then mean *discovering, inventing, new possibilities of life*").

48. The will-to-power is, according to Deleuze, the differential and genealogical element behind manifestation. As such, it is Nietzsche's rewriting of Kant's transcendental syntheses in the First Critique.

49. Similarly, the Eternal Return is read by Deleuze as a principle of selection and singularization. As such, it is Nietzsche's rewriting of the categorical imperative in the Second Critique. It is a new conception of universality. We must will, not the event's generalizability as a law of reason, but its singular return, that is to say its literal infinite repetition.

50. Though Deleuze does not do this explicitly, we could similarly extend Nietzsche's rewriting of Kant to the Third Critique. The *sensus communis* would be seen as the cultivation and sharing of the highest possible degree of singularity, rather than as something generalizable into a "community." Aesthetic Ideas are what Deleuze elsewhere calls Powers of the False. They are modes of the virtual, as projected by the imagination. As Brian Massumi puts it: "Imagination is the mode of thought most precisely suited to the vagueness of the virtual."

51. Postmodern art might then bear the same relation to the severe, dissonant "neo-Baroque" late-modernism favored by Deleuze, as the "romanticism" of Kant (revised and extended by the post-Kantians, and especially by Nietzsche) bears to the Baroque of Leibniz. In *Le Pli* and other late works, Deleuze expresses his fondness for such artists as Samuel Beckett, Carl André, and Pierre Boulez. A postmodern sensibility might prefer to dwell on such figures as Kathy Acker, Cindy Sherman, and Sonic youth. Their postmodern works would give singularity a new status, one that transforms, or goes 'beyond,' modernist dissonance.

52. Postmodern beauty would be the event in which the free play of the faculties turns inside out to affirm singularity and multiplicity. The faculties are not harmonized, but each is pushed to its limits. In the beautiful this interrogation of the limit, turned into an affirmation, takes place entirely immanently, without the negativity and the hints of transcendence that are still present even in Lyotard's postmodern sublime. Beauty will be singular and immanent, or not at all.

53. All this points to an aestheticism somewhat similar to those of the late Barthes and the late Foucault. Such aestheticism is often criticized as being apolitical. But it stands as a reproach to the endeavors of the William Bennett and others on the Right to reduce culture and beauty to matters of virtue and morality.

54. "Beauty Lies in the Eye" is a song from Sonic Youth's 1987 album *Sister*. The sound is dissonant and thickly layered. There's no melody to speak of. The tempo is moderately slow. Steve Shelley's drums keep up a steady beat. Thurston Moor's and Lee Ranaldo's guitars twang in unison. The guitars have been treated

to produce a muddy, reverberating sound. They drone through a series of unresolved minor chords. Everything seems fuzzy, slightly out of focus.

55. This music does not go anywhere. It does not build to a climax. It ends as uncertainly as it began. It just drifts, for two minutes and fifteen seconds. Yet it is not laid back. It's too nervous and edgy. It exudes an air of restlessness, with a hint of violence. Something could explode at any moment. Something has just happened, or is about to happen. The music is heavy with premonitions. Overtones ring out. The drums speed up to double time. A single note insistently repeats. An extra guitar line snakes through the wall of sound. These variations unfold at the very edge of hearing. They appear briefly. Then they fade back into the mix. They seem to portend a greater change in the offing. But the future they look forward to does not arrive. The song remains distant and impassive. It inhabits an empty time, a time that never passes. This music lies suspended between memory and anticipation.

56. The video for "Beauty Lies in the Eye" confounds things even further. It is a dazzling blur of strobe effects, overlaid images, and vivid colors. Dropped frames make for ripples of jerky motion. The camera tilts to extreme angles. It zooms in on the smallest details. Thurston Moore's fingers pick out chords on the guitar. Kim Gordon's lips caress the microphone. Waves churn in the ocean. Two, three, or more images appear at once on the screen. They pass through each other, like ghosts. They bleed into each other, leaving tracks of light in their wakes. They melt into smears of highly saturated color. Everything wavers and flows. Everything dissolves into a synesthetic haze.

57. Kim Gordon's voice alone emerges intact. Her words come through clearly, with an almost palpable presence. She speaks the lyrics, more than she sings them. She recites them slowly, nearly without expression. Her intonation is flat and matter-of-fact. The blankness of her voice seems at odds with what she is saying. For the lyrics themselves are laden with emotion. They are all about loss, regret, and yearning. Kim is taken by surprise. An old, forgotten love comes back to haunt her. "Something in the air there ... brings you back to me. It's been so long." The past returns, unbidden and unwanted. "It's coming coming down over me." It sweeps through her, in an overwhelming rush. It seizes her, beyond all hope of forgetting. She is troubled by feelings long dead and gone. She is seduced by a lover who is no longer there. She searches out the eyes of someone who cannot return her gaze.

58. That is why Kim Gordon's voice is blank. The passion is real enough. But she cannot claim it as her own. This love does not unfold in the time and space of the present. It happens in an empty time, a time that is not now. It takes place in a space removed, a space that is not here. It draws Kim outside of herself. It lures her into its own alien depths. She cannot contain the "explosions in [her] eye." She cannot possess the vision that drives her mad. She can neither recover the past, nor free herself from its spell. The memories that haunt her belong to

somebody else. "Beauty lies in the eyes of another's dreams. Beauty lies lost in another's dream."

59. No song has the power to recover such a dream. No song can compensate for loss. No song can bridge the gap between one person and another. "Beauty Lies in the Eye" doesn't even try. Its words, like its sounds, are forever incomplete. Beauty is not a recompense for anything that has been lost. Beauty is rather the pang of loss itself, its truest expression. It cannot be shared, and it cannot be preserved. It vanishes in the very act by which I apprehend it. I can only cry out, a witness to its passing. At the end of the song, there is a subtle shift in tone. Kim Gordon's voice is no longer entirely blank. It becomes imploring, almost wistful. She calls to someone who is not there and who will never answer: "Hey baby... Hey sweetheart... Hey fox come here... Hey beautiful... Come here, sugar."

61. Any theory of beauty is always inadequate to its examples.

62. I would like to thank Thomas Wall, Stephen O'Connell, Melissa McMahon, and William Flesch. This essay could not have been written without them.

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