

from *Galerie de Difformité*  
Gretchen E. Henderson

## EXHIBIT D

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Reimagine the gallery: resonant with echoes and pedestals edged by sky. Through shadows, bodies focus. Asymmetric and angled, scattered in all directions. The nearest stands, armless, with severed foot, torn nipples, stub nose. Fraught with flesh: a mutt of bones. Becoming. Another body focuses, another and another, animating wrecked hands and heads, cocks and breasts. A flock of skulls. Near a pyre of arms and legs, a wall flames. Outside frames, more bodies reassemble: fractured figures, penitent postulants, beckoning fingers. A torso twists. A set of eyes follows:

### YOU ARE HERE

...in this catacombed dream, where psyches clamor to be moored. Marooned, I grope within and without: *Hand of Fatima, Hand of Glory, Hand of Fate. Hands upon hands upon hands*. Disarmed by swarming (in Botticelli and Blake, Doré and Dalí), a part suggests her hole, boring into my brain. (“...watered innards that seed me from weeds & vines...”)<sup>i</sup> Knocked about strained refrains, can I repiece her peace? And what of my seams, dormant but gleaming (*teeming*), as phantoms bear “no part of yourself you can separate out”—<sup>ii</sup>

### HEAR

(*Blight turns light; fright to flight...*) Facing edifices, lines hatch and shade—*egress into egret, erasing regret*—as easily dun as undone. More than dreaming: *Mit ale zibn finger*.<sup>iii</sup> My errors stitch vestibular tricks, tentacled oracles, “inscribed on the tongue...in our eyes, in our ears, in our marrow, in the lobes of our brains, in the nervous system of our bodies.”<sup>iv</sup> Cerebrally shunted, I wonder if the “quality of our dreams suffers in consequence,” lacking what?<sup>v</sup> Harking back: before Gutenberg and after Gregory, “seeing visions—a practice now relegated to the aberrant and un-educated—was once a more significant, interesting, and disciplined kind of dreaming.” And so, I turn (*how to now*): “the partial truths of each age differ from those of other ages,” Rothko writes, “and the artist, like the philosopher, must constantly adjust eternity, as it were, to all the specifications of the moment.”<sup>vi</sup> *Hand to mouth; mouth to...*

### HEART

More than a gallery or tomb: as memory palace, each statue revives so “all these places are visited in turn and the various deposits are demanded from their custodians... linked one to the other like dancers hand in hand,” Quintilian claimed, where thoughts are

entrusted “not merely to bedrooms and parlours, but even to the care of statues.”<sup>vii</sup> Like the Hope Hygieia (a healer, de- & re-restored), my swarm of statues “lay hands on the shudder of a past that is still vibrating.”<sup>viii</sup> Implicating & implicated, custodians re-cover curated crimes. ...*reaching, groping, feeling*... “In a museum or gallery, all the great and famous objects of world culture are ‘at hand,’” Josipovici writes, asking “if the attendant is not looking, [we may] actually touch them—but can they touch us?”<sup>ix</sup>

## BE(E)

Part of this whole, laced with holes: another hive may mislead, towering above a gown. (Or bomb: shell of error, buried.) Bearing sleights-of-hand, my inlaid lives mix liars with lyres, airs with prayers, tongues in cheeks: to dream of an audience.<sup>x</sup> Auditing, I beg for accompaniment, to follow Boccaccio and Petrarch through maniculed marginalia, re-membering: “The Tongue and Heart th’intention oft divide: / The *Hand* and Meaning ever are ally’de.”<sup>xi</sup> Round and round, which came first? Or, are we begging to begin again, with variations on the question: *Which came first—hand or heart—or are they too innately tied to be unbound?*<sup>xii</sup>

*Vide cor meum.*<sup>xiii</sup> Take this and eat: my Heart, my Hand, my Brain. My body, teeming at these seams:



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 NOTES

<sup>i</sup> Artistic renderings of Beatrice appear in many sources, including *Images of the Journey in Dante's Divine Comedy*, eds. Charles H. Taylor and Patricia Finley (New Haven: Yale UP, 1997). The italicized lines come from "The Beekeeper's Apprentice: *Invocation*," *Caketrain* 6 (Winter 2008): 210. As a whole, "Exhibit D" echoes selections from the collection-in-progress entitled *Galerie de Difformité*, with deference to da Vinci: "If the sound is in 'm' and the listener in 'n,' the sound will be believed to be in 's' if the court is enclosed at least on 3 sides against the listener." Analogy may be made with *Galerie de Difformité*: if a sound is made in one Exhibit while Gentle Reader resides in another, (s)he may seek out additional Exhibits to coordinate the orchestrations. For further reading in this manner, consult instructions at: <http://difformite.wordpress.com/>. Da Vinci's words come from Emanuel Winternitz, ed., *Leonardo da Vinci as a Musician* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1982) 119.

<sup>ii</sup> Diane Di Prima, "Rant, from a Cool Place," *Evergreen Review Reader, 1967-1973* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1998) 432.

<sup>iii</sup> Barbara Mann explains Marc Chagall's *Self-Portrait with Seven Fingers*: "To do something *mit ale zibn finger* [with all seven fingers] means to do it wholeheartedly, with all of one's faculties and senses, with the rational apparatus of the mind as well as the emotions." Chagall included seven fingers, he said, "to make fantastic elements appear beside realistic ones." See Barbara Mann, "Visions of Jewish Modernism," *Modernism/modernity* 13:4 (2006): 678, 697.

<sup>iv</sup> Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Life of the Bee* (1901), qtd. in Juan Antonio Ramírez, *The Beehive Metaphor: From Gaudí to Le Corbusier* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000) 77. Maeterlinck continues: "it is inscribed in...our bodies, that we were created in order to transform that which we absorb from the things of the earth...it has a thousand names."

<sup>v</sup> Dante Alighieri, *The Portable Dante*, ed. Paolo Milano, trans. Laurence Binyon (New York: Viking, 1947) xxi.

<sup>vi</sup> Mark Rothko, "Particularization and Generalization," *The Artist's Reality: Philosophies of Art* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004) 22.

<sup>vii</sup> Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Penguin, 1984) 6.

<sup>viii</sup> This is how Dr. Matthew O'Connor defines "crime" in Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (New York: New Directions, 1961) 119: "the door to an accumulation, a way to lay hands on the shudder of a past that is still vibrating." In 2008, the J. Paul Getty Museum hosted an exhibition on "The Hope Hygieia: Restoring a Statue's History," visually chronicling the ancient statue's restoration (c. 1800), its de-restoration (1973), and re-restoration (2006-8), illustrating changing philosophies of art conservation.

<sup>ix</sup> Gabriel Josipovici, *Touch* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996) 17. In "Museums and Historical Amnesia," curator William H. Truettner writes that "most museum administrators are willing to group works under broad historical settings, but more critical insights, the kind that dig deeply into the darker, more destructive events of an era, are still out of bounds....not because museums wish to deny shifting historical perspectives, or the misdeeds they may uncover, but because they

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wish to keep art clear of history—the kind that would seem to degrade it. And works of art, many recent scholars have noted, are complicit in this strategy.” See Daniel J. Sherman, ed., *Museums and Difference* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2008) 360.

<sup>x</sup> Theresa Hak Kyung Cha said of her piece, *A Ble Wail* (1975): “I want to be the dream of the audience.” Qtd. in *The Dream of the Audience: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-1982)*, ed. Constance M. Lewallen (Berkeley: U of California P, 2001) 3.

<sup>xi</sup> In *The Handwriting of Italian Humanists*, A.C. de la Mare writes: “[Petrarch’s] hands are *distinctive*: they have long index fingers, generally with the nail marked, a cuff is indicated by two parallel lines, and although no thumb is shown there are often five fingers, which makes the hand look very odd,” and “[Boccaccio’s] elegantly drawn pointing hand with a long index finger, and sometimes a buttoned sleeve, is *distinctive*, and so are the lines which often curl at the end into a flower or spray of leaves that he uses to bracket sections of text.” See A.C. de la Mare, *The Handwriting of Italian Humanists* (Oxford: Oxford UP for the Association Internationale de Bibliophilie, 1973) 8, 20. In the year 1644, William Diconson described the alliance of tongue and heart, hand and meaning, qtd. in William H. Sherman, “☞: Toward a History of the Manicule,” *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2007) 49.

<sup>xii</sup> The italicized line comes from “Exhibit U,” published originally in *Double Room* 8: <http://doubleroomjournal.com/8/Henderson.html>

<sup>xiii</sup> *Vide cor tuum* (“See your heart”) appears in Dante Alighieri’s *La Vita Nuova* (“The New Life”), when Dante’s dreamed vision of Love forces Beatrice to eat the poet’s flaming heart. See Paolo Milano, ed., *The Portable Dante*, 550-51.

\* “Exhibit D” first appeared in *American Letters & Commentary* 21. **Please send this “Exhibit” back to the Undertaker in metamorphosed form: [diformite@gmail.com](mailto:diformite@gmail.com).** For further instructions, see <http://diformite.wordpress.com/>.