

**‘ALMOST A SQUARE’: THE PHOTOGRAPHIC
BOOKS OF FRANCESCA WOODMAN AND
THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO SURREALISM**

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INTRODUCTION

Abstract, Preface and Acknowledgements

Abstract

My research investigates the work of the American 1970s artist/photographer Francesca Woodman in a framework of surrealist ideas materialised, though not exclusively, in photography.

Although surrealism is often interpreted as an historical movement, my understanding of it is as a way of life which continues as a practice, implying openness to the confluence between external reality and the unconscious. This is as relevant today as to the interwar decades when surrealist theories were evolved. In particular the Bretonian concept of *convulsive beauty* provides one way into my investigation of Woodman's work. I draw on some of the experimental techniques and poetic effects of this concept, focusing on innovations in the relating of image to text in Breton's 1928 work *Nadja*.

I argue that her five Books on found object templates are the optimum site for this specific investigation and within them pertinently, though not exclusively, the annotated images. This premise does not remove the potential of her wider corpus images to be placed in this framework and that of the extended surrealist sphere.

I provide an unprecedented and original close analysis of Woodman's six photographic Books. In these Books, only one of which has to date been published, Woodman superimposes 'found' text and diagrams with her own photographic images and scripted annotations. These result in objects which are

subtle, challenging and complex. Through them and her corpus of prints run themes, references and resonances like geological strata. In my argument her Books exemplify the Barthesian concept of *text*. Their components are multiple; they are trans-historical and trans-linguistic objects which elude straightforward classification and defy closure.

Selected comparisons of Woodman's work from both the Books and her wider corpus are made with first wave surrealist photographs. The relationship between Books images and the wider body of her work are also examined.



Frontispiece: Francesca Woodman's Photographic Books

Preface and Acknowledgements

Interest in Woodman's work is as a wave gathering momentum. The importance of her work is being increasingly recognised internationally. On a recent visit to Rome I visited the Palazzo delle Esposizioni to ruminate on the Woodman exhibition held there in 2000, the catalogue of which has so inspired me. In the café I found, by chance, an announcement, promoted with a Woodman image, of the mixed exhibition *Donna: Avanguardia Femminista negli Anni '70*. On reaching Rome's National Gallery of Modern Art I found its pillared front swathed with flagged banners of Woodman's blown-up *Self Portrait talking to vince*. A similar experience had presented itself in Manchester at the end of 2009 when a greatly enlarged image from Woodman's *Angels* adorned Manchester Art Gallery's imposing entrances to advertise (and include on their information sheet) their excellent *Angels of Anarchy* exhibition.

Her curatorial appropriation within the folds of surrealism is augmented too by the inclusion of eleven of her images, hung on a separate wall, in Jane Alison's *Surreal House* exhibition at the Barbican in 2010. The videos Woodman made at Rhode Island School of Art and Design alongside photographs originally given by her to an Italian friend were displayed in Tate Modern's *Memory and Dream* section for a year (2007-2008) and exhibited in the Murcia retrospective of spring 2009. The film by C Scott Willis, *The Woodmans*, was awarded the 'best documentary' prize in New York at this year's (2010) Tribeca film festival. Recently opened in Victoria Miro's London Gallery is the gallery's third one

person Woodman exhibition, drawn from the retrospective in Murcia in 2009, which toured to Siena in 2009 and to Milan in 2010. In response to a thirty year period having passed since the artist's death in 1981, next year, 2011, an important exhibition will be held in the US, first at the San Francisco MOMA (opening in November 2011) and then travelling to the Solomon R Guggenheim Museum in New York (opening in 2012).

I would like to thank my daughter Amy Lankester-Owen for her perspicacious editorial comments; my son Barnaby Lankester-Owen for his unstinting encouragement and his Italian translations; my daughter-in-law Isabel de Meiroz Dias for her advice about thesis mechanics; and Christina Dunhill, my sister, for always valuing the project.

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Above all I want to thank my partner Roger Bilder for his patient and thorough editing and his unswerving encouragement and humour when most needed.

INTRODUCTION

My research investigates a placing of the work of the American 1970s artist/photographer Francesca Woodman in a framework of surrealist ideas and their materialisation in photography.

I argue in this thesis¹, sustained by my parallel and comparative investigations of Breton's *Nadja* and Woodman's *Books*, that it is in the five *found object* Books that Woodman comes closest to her demonstration of her deep comprehension of the activating position of images to words in *Nadja*, thereby contributing to the extension of first wave surrealist ethic into her own era.

Methodology

A close descriptive and interpretative analysis of Woodman's Books as objects will form the core of my research.

I shall view each of Woodman's six Books as a separate entity and as an autonomous work.

My methodological approach to the six chapters of the thesis which analyse Woodman's Books (Chapters 2-7) is as straightforward and logical as possible. As these Books are objects of complexity I decided that my approach would need to be systematic and rigorous in order to prepare the ground for an ongoing thematic

¹ See <http://serlib0.essex.ac.uk:80/record=b1805431~S5>

appraisal. In consequence I have allotted a separate chapter to a description and an analysis of each one, with an interpretative framing in surrealism and where appropriate other historic or theoretical contextualisation.

Disregarding the disparity in their respective lengths I have addressed the Books predominantly in date order, after my selective prioritisation of those made from a found object. The absence of a found object base and the absence of a dialogue between image and word (either in printed or in written form) as well as *Portrait of a Reputation's* confined, settled history, are the reasons why this first Book defies my chosen chronology. *Portrait of a Reputation* is in consequence the last Book to be addressed in the analysis, in Chapter 7. I analyse each image in each Book following Woodman's chosen order. This constitutes the central Chapters, 2-7. My Chapter 1 will provide a comparative analysis between some photographs in André Breton's *Nadja* with some images from Woodman's Books. I place this analysis first as my knowledge of the importance of *Nadja* to Woodman and an investigation of the extent and depth of it is a primary driver of my research. I analyse her images in relation to selected first wave surrealist photographs in Chapter 8. Although I begin to address thematic links between images within individual Books, between one Book and another and from the Books out to Woodman's wider corpus in my analysis of the Books as they occur, I extend this focus in Chapter 9.

The Books function as independent artworks that are equal to the body of individual or series prints or *blueprints* now in circulation.

Research beginnings

In the period immediately before writing my MA dissertation, in the spring of the year 2000, chance presented me with the inspiration and consequent affirmation of my dissertation topic choice of Francesca Woodman. This was the discovery of a catalogue of an exhibition of her work in Rome's *Palazzo delle Esposizioni* between February and March of that year.^{2,3} My discovery would lead to a strong desire to continue a more specialised work on Woodman's Books than the MA dissertation would allow, although it was during that research that I first connected her perceived allegiance to surrealism and to *Nadja* in particular as being exemplified in her Books. The volume was laid out on a display table in *Libreria Feltrinelli* in Bologna, pre-empting any need for shelf searching. I immediately bought it, after only a cursory look at the delights it contained for me. Within its pages I first saw reproductions of Woodman's marvellous photographic Books.⁴ In double page spreads, each on a single page of the monograph, examples were printed from each of her five found object-based artist's Books.

My first response to the reproductions was to them as aesthetic objects, within the context of another aesthetic object of the well-produced catalogue. Their astounding beauty was in no way hindered, was indeed enhanced, by their represented complexity. Each page of the catalogue, in an eleven inch by nine and

² Achille Bonito Oliva, curator, *Francesca Woodman: Providence, Roma, New York* (exhibition catalogue, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, 2000), Rome, Castelvevchi Arte, 2000. I subsequently refer to this volume as the Palazzo delle Esposizioni catalogue.

³ Although at this stage a wider appraisal of Woodman's work was relevant, I resolved soon after to activate further specialised research on her Books.

⁴ In fairness, the Fondation Cartier Woodman exhibition monographic catalogue, published two years earlier in 1998, had reproduced two double pages from *some disordered interior Geometries* (Woodman's capitalisation), placing them imaginatively before and after a section reproducing her *diazotypes*.

a half inch format, is of a satin-finished paper, in white. On this white page is printed one pale sepia double page spread in what is probably a first generation photographic reproduction of the page in the original Book. We know it to be part of a *book* as the shadows and edge-tears of the other, unrevealed, pages are grouped on the left (200, 203) and on the right (199, 202). After the wealth of black and white-toned, hard-edged prints of the artist's autonomous photographs reproduced formerly, the pale sepia base hue of these pages, in contrast to the white page base, moves into another level of fascination. Three of the reproduced pages show Woodman's annotations to her images; two of these, *winter landscape* and *almost a square*, are written in her own contemporary script (the latter one over erasing fluid) and the third, written in a strong vertical opposition to the found object's underlying horizontal copperplate script, *anxiously waiting*, is written in her spoof version of that underlying late nineteenth century script, over the original script.

Some examples of these pages and my response to them follow:

Transparencies over a sepia copper-plate scripted page (202, 203); an image figure's hand negated from form into the page's formlessness; modern italic script mimicking down-hanging folds of satin; subtly changing ink tones, sepia and pink and pale ochre; student script abruptly misaligned, a change-of-script alteration across the harmonic of a double human form: *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi*; *Quaderno Raffaello*.

A page of diagrams and formulae, tabulated and logical, opposite Woodman's audaciously emotional and eccentric comment on the quadrilateral; a one-legged figure trying to be a triangle standing before a fray-edged, bumpy, quilted kind of *square: some disordered interior Geometries* (201).⁵

Research Adventure

The roads of practical access to the original Books, at the point of starting my research at Essex University, proved to be insurmountably rock-strewn; finally blocked to the point of closure. The excitement of any tactile communion with them as objects was to remain beyond my reach for the duration of my project, as the archivist, Katarina Jerinic (who was later most helpful) at the Woodman Estate in New York, denied me access. She informed me of a compact disc she had recently prepared of Francesca's complete body of work, and that a copy of it had been donated to the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Consolation prize though this seemed, I went in hot pursuit of it and this compact disc was the source for my early research.

After this experience I was toughened to withstand setbacks and having for a period of six months sent emails and letters to the Estate, all with a negative outcome, I decided to put this behind me and start to re-direct my energy on researching the albeit compromised source material I had on hand for the research. I began compiling my own collection of the six Books, through photocopies of what were, luckily, high quality 'jpeg' images. The huge disappointment of access denial was in part counteracted by good fortune during

⁵ Woodman's capitalisation was often eccentric.

my research trip to New York, in the spring of 2006, when I was able to study, to hold and to turn the pages of the published copy of *some disordered interior Geometries* kept in the Special Collections of the New York Public Library. There I encountered kindness, respect and informed and inspired encouragement from the excellent archivist, Margaret Glover.

Early in 2006 I arranged a meeting with Chris Townsend whose monograph on Woodman was due to be published by Phaidon later that year.⁶ When he realised that access to the Archive had been denied me, he very generously volunteered to contact Woodman's parents and executors on my behalf and a month or so later, after their permission had been granted, my own copy of the compact disc of Woodman's entire oeuvre arrived by post.

Woodman and Surrealism

Three aspects of Woodman's work afford clear evidence of surrealism:

1. Images. Many of her images reveal sure knowledge of antecedent photographic surrealist images, particularly those from the first wave, interwar European period.
2. Found Objects. Her choice of found objects to form the templates of her photographic Books indicates an understanding of surrealism's involvement with the chance encounter (with an object or a person) as well as revealing a shared response to the potency of the vintage, out of date or exiled object. Woodman

⁶ Chris Townsend, *Francesca Woodman*, London, Phaidon, 2006. This book was of enormous help to me in this project.

activates the objects into a second different history by her intervention. Five of her six Books use this surrealist trope as their base.

3. Books. Woven into her Books project is the thread of her fascination with and knowledge of Breton's work *Nadja*, with which she desires to make a parallel project. Her engagement is most strongly with Breton's experiments in the interface between word and image in that work of 1928.

I will develop the argument, through my research and my close analysis of Woodman's work that the artist's statement in regard to *Nadja* is borne out in her work. In it I will demonstrate how the artist's deep knowledge of surrealism pervades her practice and provides the armature from which she is able to enact her enquiry into Breton's experiment which I argue is most intensively realised in her Books.

These connections will be investigated throughout the thesis but particularly in Chapters 1 and 8. In Chapter 8 too I will discuss the availability of surrealist material to Woodman through literature and exhibitions.

Woodman's Statement on *Nadja*

In the following statement, recorded by the photographic historian Roberta Valtorta during an interview with Woodman in the offices of *Progresso Fotografico* in Milan in 1979, Woodman expresses her desire to activate a project of energy between her images and their appended words that could in some mysterious or tangential way be parallel in effect, though achieved in a different

balance, to the relationship achieved between words and images in Breton's *Nadja*. The interview was conducted in Italian.

Vorrei che le parole avessero con le mie immagini lo stesso rapporto che le fotografie hanno con il testo in "Nadja" di André Breton. Egli coglie tutte le illusioni e i dettagli enigmatici di alcune istantanee abbastanza ordinarie e ne elabora delle storie. Io vorrei che le mie fotografie potessero ricondensare l'esperienza in piccole immagini complete nelle quali tutto il mistero della paura o comunque ciò che rimane latente agli occhi dell'osservatore uscisse, come se derivasse dalla sua propria esperienza.⁷

[I would like words to have the same relationship with my images as the photographs have with the text in *Nadja* by André Breton.⁸ He can see all the illusions and enigmatic details of some ordinary snapshots and generates narrative from them. I would like my photographs to be able to re-condense this experience in small, complete images in which all the mystery of fear and whatever remained latent in the eyes of the observer, could come out, as if it emanated from their own experience.]

⁷ Roberta Valtorta, 'Francesca Woodman', *Progresso Fotografico* (Milan), 86: 10, October 1979, 46-50. My initial translation into English from the Italian in which Woodman and Valtorta spoke was subsequently improved by Barnaby Lankester-Owen and finalised having incorporated an English translation kindly provided me by Valtorta herself. I here quote Valtorta's description of the timing of her interview with Woodman, from my communication with her in February 2010: *I met Francesca in Milan, at [the] Progresso Fotografico office, a few months before the issue came out. So, as the issue came out in October, it might have been in May, or June, or July 1979. More or less.*

⁸ I speculate that Woodman would have read *Nadja*, in translation by Richard Howard, in the Grove Press, New York edition of 1960. By 1978 this edition had been reprinted twelve times. I do not surmise that the artist was sufficiently fluent in the French language, as she was in Italian, to have read it in the original.

Analysis of Statement

In the first sentence of her statement, Woodman neatly inverts her own and Breton's positions. She is lucid about the important point of those words' enacting function on the photographs. From her strongly self-affirmed position of photographer, she emphasises the mechanism of the *some ordinary snapshots* in *Nadja* to draw out drama from the word-text-narrative by providing the *evidence* (photography's old tool), in one empty setting or another, of the drama enacted between the protagonists. The emptiness of Jacques-André Boiffard's images in *Nadja*, the quality some have called *bland*, both intensifies the narrative drama present in the body text by the absence of that same quality in the photographs and offers an opportunity to the reader for imaginative participation.

What Woodman desires is that her images could contain and emit their own drama, either independently or with the addition of words. Words would sometimes function in her work as a *tabula scriptura*, as in the background of anonymous copperplate original script, its meaning in arrest, as in the example of the *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* Book. At other times the image would jump out in visual intensity from the base text, a nugget of whose meaning she might choose to pull out and re-phrase in her words; or a base text's phrase could be clenched by her into a short phrase that could be cryptic, reflective or humorous, but always punctures the skin of the photographic medium. This parallels the manner in which Boiffard's images puncture the skin of the unwinding document of *Nadja* in Breton's operation of generating narrative from the images through the caption text and its return to the main text.

As a photographer highly skilled in the manipulated image and very much aware of early surrealist manipulation of it, Woodman's description of Boiffard's photographs might at first seem less than flattering; but we might also consider her secondary talent as a poet (which I assert in my analyses of individual annotations in subsequent chapters) and her natural appreciation of literary works, as we assess the balance and perspicacity of her assessment.

Omitting the *words* at this stage of her statement, her vision is to replicate the word/image ratio and dynamic in *Nadja*, in her desire to *re-condense the experience* in the making of *small complete images*. Her primary accentuation of *words* at the outset of her statement reveals the essential part she requires them to play in the equation she intends. This equation refers to her whole practice, but is of paramount significance in her photographic Books.

Her omission of the word *words* in the last sentence of her statement, leading to an implication of a suggested autonomy of the image function, belies an inherent ambiguity. Either Woodman did not think it necessary to mention words a second time, because of her primary prioritisation of them, or, naturally from her position as a photographer, she wanted to emphasise and describe with zeal the making of her images. To argue here that her statement can be entirely and exactly supported in my enquiries in the thesis would be fallacious; rather her statement should be seen as a generative springboard and an essential armature for my enquiries.

Her statement at no time suggests a desire for a methodical application of her aspiration to reconstruct the generative impact of words on photographic image

and of photographic image on words in *Nadja*, however. Woodman makes use of annotations only when she deems them appropriate, that is when she judges them able to activate or *generate* narrative from or onto a certain image. She adds annotations to selected images in three of her six Books and to selected independent images.⁹ Given that Breton's and Woodman's primary positions are reversed, we might logically make the deduction that Woodman's words would form the parallel function to the images in *Nadja* of *some ordinary snapshots*, as she describes them. But in practice, her added words, which are usually her own lines and phrases of sometime poetry, inflect meaning/s away from and/or back to, her images' evocation of *whatever remained latent in the eyes of the observer*. If in some instances the images are judged by her to perform their full function independently, to be *small and complete* in themselves, then she does not add words.

I will provide evidence, through my investigations in this thesis that it is in her photographic Books that she best realises this aim in turning both image and text into spaces for inflection. My focus will extend beyond the close analysis I make of Woodman's six photographic Books to include my insights into how the images in them have been developed or repeated by the artist, in both sequences and individual prints, in her wider corpus. Her frequent use of sequence and serialisation can at times challenge or even obliterate the linear separation of a past, a present and a future. I will make some comparisons too between selected first wave surrealist photographic images and Woodman's dynamic responses to them.

⁹ These Books are *Angels*, *Calendars*, *Quaderno Raffaello* and *some disordered interior Geometries*.

Titling of the Books

Her Books are *Portrait of a Reputation*, made in circa 1975-6; *Angels, Calendars*, circa 1978; *Portraits Friends Equasions*, circa 1978; *Quaderno Raffaello*, circa 1979-1980; *some disordered interior Geometries*, 1980; and *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi*, 1980.¹⁰

A brief explanation is appropriate here to justify the titles I have chosen to use while I list the variations between the titles used by the Palazzo delle Esposizioni catalogue (PE), Townsend (CT), and the author (AD) in the footnote, below.¹¹

I have based my system of titling on Woodman's own hand-written titles when these are in evidence (and without amending her sometimes idiosyncratic spelling and capitalisation), as they are on the covers of three Books: *some disordered interior Geometries*; *Portraits Friends Equasions*; and *Portrait of a Reputation*. In the other cases, I have followed the first description of the whole group of found object-base Books that I have found: the section of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni catalogue (PE), *Quaderni fotografici*, which reproduces a page each from all five of them, after a short paragraph of description.¹² Each double-page image spread

¹⁰ It will be noted that four of the six titles are written in English and two in Italian. Woodman's idiosyncrasies of letter case are intentional. The incorrect spelling of the English *Equasions* is probably a result of her fluent, mutually interchangeable use of both Italian and English; in fact it is impossible to distinguish whether Woodman has written *equasioni* or *equasions*. As a crossover of languages occurs in both cases I have chosen to adopt the misspelt English word in my system. I have based my dating of the Books by and large on Townsend's own (Townsend, *Francesca Woodman*, 2006, 51).

¹¹ *Portrait of a Reputation*, used by all three sources; *Angels, Calendars notebook* (PE); *Angels, Calendar Notebook* (CT); *Angels, Calendars* (AD); *Portrait Friends Equasions* (PE); *Equasioni* (CT); *Portraits Friends Equasions* (AD); *Quaderno Raffaello* (PE); *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* (CT); *Quaderno Raffaello* (AD); *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* (PE); *Untitled* (CT); *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* (AD); *Some disordered interior Geometries* (PE); *Some Disordered Interior Geometries* (CT); *some disordered interior Geometries* (AD).

¹² Bonito Oliva, *Francesca Woodman* (Palazzo delle Esposizioni catalogue), 2000, 197-203.

in PE is titled underneath it in the language, Italian or English, which Woodman has used. The *Angels, Calendars* Book, named *Angels, Calendar* by Townsend, gathers its title organically. Woodman's hand-written *angels* on the right-hand page of the inside cover, at the beginning, is developed into the *calendars* theme by the insertion of her hand-written annotation *calendars inside this door*, as the new theme begins. More problematical to title are the two late Books which use transparencies. Having started my research using the title *Untitled*, like the Woodman Estate, for the longer of these two Books, I subsequently reverted to PE's *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi*, which is a direct reference to the original book's subject title, as it seems to me that Woodman significantly bounces her project off its title. I differ here from Townsend, who uses *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* as his title for the shorter Book which I call *Quaderno Raffaello*, following PE, and the Estate calls *Quaderno*.¹³

Essential Terms; their Clarification and Relevance to Woodman's Work.

The term *photographic book* exists as a generic term in the sphere of art criticism and practice implying that object which encloses a more systematic representation of the photographic images in it than that of a collection or an exhibition of photographs. Text may or may not be present in the photographic book. Although Breton's *Nadja* ticks certain boxes here, it is decidedly not operating within art criticism's sphere and hence cannot be categorised as such an object. Woodman's Books are *photographic books*. When the term is shortened to *photobook*, the indication is that the object in question becomes more fashionable and even more avant-garde, as in the case of Ed Ruscha's *photobooks*, in their deliberate

¹³ Townsend, *Francesca Woodman*, 2006, 51.

contravention of the twentieth century photography-as-art tradition and their reappraisal of the status of the *artist's book*, as described here:

*Bypassing traditions of singularity, fine printing and expressive layout in his deadpan inventories of everyday buildings and structures, Ruscha presented particular challenges (and opportunities) to those working in the context of fine-art photography.*¹⁴

The term *artist's book* immediately denotes the choice of the artist to contain their work in a space which is more intimate than the space of a walled exhibition. The *artist's book* can function as a multiple, or as a singular, unique object. First used as an exhibition title in Philadelphia in 1973, the term *artist's book* has come to signify a transition beyond the development of the *livre d'artiste*, which, despite the synonymy of the terms across the languages, had generally been a more publisher-lead venture. Jean Khalifa's essay has enriched my knowledge of this development, particularly in his encapsulation of the 1970s (Woodman's working decade) as the *rich creative years* of its pinnacle. If conceived as a multiple the aim of publishing as distribution is not a prerequisite of its definition.

In spite of Woodman's willing participation in the publication of her Book, *some disordered interior Geometries*, and its consequent status as a multiple, her five unpublished Books exist currently as unique singular objects. We do not know whether or not the artist wanted to have the other five Books published. The

¹⁴ Douglas Stockdale, review of Margit Rowell, *Ed Ruscha - Photographer* (Göttingen, Steidl, 2006), 5 April 2010. Online at *The PhotoBook*, <http://thephotobook.wordpress.com/2010/04/05/ed-ruscha-photographer>, accessed 22/04/2010.

artist's book can be an object over which the artist keeps a higher degree of control over the decisions in all stages of its making and distribution than occurs in a collaborative venture between a gallerist and an artist or a publisher and an artist.

A possibility implied by the term *artist's book* too is the ideal of an intimate and responsive participation in the product by the audience, leading to a haptic and tactile, fingers-with-the-page, relationship.¹⁵ *Made up of a 'set of surfaces' its skin-like pages' metaphors are of containment, of concealment and exposure.*¹⁶

This participation would involve the choice of the pages' order, the time spent on each page and a choice over whether to return to it.

Inevitably, however, this ideal is unattainable in many instances as the *artist's book* has become an archive item to be handled only with gloved hands in an overseen appointment. It might lie horizontally, encased in glass, halted at one selected page; withdrawn in display from the participatory rhythm of a codex-plus-reader format.

Woodman's Books bleed into both the categories *photographic book* and *artist's book*. They reach out from their identity as found objects to emit a poetic force from the cross-weavings of their original sources in parallel, diagonal, intersecting and horizontal activations in these objects; these texts. Sometimes the Books'

¹⁵ I talk about a codex format. A discussion of the many permutations in re-thinking this format by artists in the 20th and 21st centuries is not appropriate here.

¹⁶ Harriet Riches, 'A Disappearing Act: Francesca Woodman's *Portrait of a Reputation*', *Oxford Art Journal*, 27: 1, 2004, 109. Riches here cites Susan Stewart, *On Longing, Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, 37.

cross-weavings deliberately disrupt, alarm, or surprise. They are singular objects with multiple constituents.

She enacts a manifold deconstruction of the book's and the art object's subject hierarchy in her simultaneous appropriation of found text, the photographic book and the *artist's book*.

Found Object

The *found object*, in the surrealist reading first evolved by Breton in *Nadja* and further developed by him in *l'Amour fou*, is the talismanic transference of unconscious fantasy into a materialisation that can be, at its most perfect, imbued with satisfaction for the participant. To some extent, the activity of the verb 'to find' can be an impetus shared by the participant and the object, so that the object could be able, in a manner of speaking, to find that participant who is ready for the fulfilment of its intercessionary role. It is in the city that *found objects* are most likely to be found. Search is never involved in the finding of the object, which may have been previously desired, anticipated or hoped for. It may enter the experience of the participant in an unexpected manner, by serendipitous chance: *the found object is essentially singular or irreplaceable, and both lost and found.*¹⁷ As a catalytic emblem of reciprocity between the rich source of the external world and the complexity of dreamed and imagined states, the *found object* is sometimes picked up and held, sometimes observed in situ and sometimes made into an artwork.

¹⁷ Margaret Iversen, 'Readymade, found object, photograph', *Art Journal*, 63: 2, Summer 2004, 48.

Woodman's *found objects* emit nostalgia; her own nostalgia, perhaps, for the childhood primary education she received in Italy and a wider nostalgia for another epoch, from and for which, although excluded in time, she yearns. The used school books forming the templates of her photographic Books and *found* during the student year she spent in Rome, were a very special nest of trophies. Their *givens* of printed diagrams and text and drawn and written inscriptions by the first student, would excite and propel Woodman's imagination into the complex intersections and interventions she would make. *Found* in her favourite Roman bookshop, *Maldoror*, which was owned by some of her favourite Italian friends, these objects exude an immediate aesthetic delight.

Barthes as a Bridge to Woodman

Woodman's aptitude in her practice to move across boundaries between word and image confirms my choice of selected theories of Barthes as an instructive template from which to read both her Books and Breton's *Nadja*.

Notably Barthes's concept of *Text* is situated close to the etymological meaning of *text* meaning woven fabric. It evolves to simultaneously include not only both image and word but a multitude of disparate sources, even sound and clothes, in a *heterogeneous variety of substances and perspectives*.¹⁸

Barthes's *Text* is non-hierarchical. Its structure accords equal agency to all its component elements. The threads of the component elements can be as individually diverse as its whole can sustain.

¹⁸ Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', in *Image Music Text: Essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath*, London, Fontana Press, 1977, 159. Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 3rd revised edition, 1973, reprinted 1990. 2273: *texere*: weave; *textus*: tissue, style of literary work.

This diversity is exemplified by Woodman's found object Books and by *Nadja*. In both works the diversity can encompass deliberate contradictions in the surrealist mould.¹⁹

Necessarily open-ended, multivalent and plural in source, substance and signification, Barthes's *Text* is a structure which strongly depends for its development on the interaction with it by a reader.

Appropriate too is Barthes's idea of the *Text*'s position as being outside the confines of history and criticism. Its existence extends beyond those category boundaries. The *Text*'s innate ability to self-contradict enables it to project a ludic nature. This ludic aspect can be self-transformative and can result in a *Text* which can inflate and deflate itself and keep its own signifiers, its *weave of signifiers*, mutable.²⁰

Susan Sontag responds here to Barthes's ideas in her own rich description:

*He speaks of the quiver, thrill or shudder of meaning, of meanings that themselves vibrate, gather, loosen, disperse, quicken, shine, fold, mutate, delay, slide, separate, that exert pressure, crack, rupture, fissure, are pulverised.*²¹

¹⁹ I address the constituent components of *Nadja* in more detail in Chapter 1, *Photography Intervenes*.

²⁰ Barthes, 'From Work to Text', 1977, 159.

²¹ Susan Sontag, 'Writing Itself: On Roland Barthes', in Susan Sontag, ed., *A Roland Barthes Reader*, London, Vintage, 2000, xiii.

Barthes's premise that...*the Text is that space where no language [nor, for my purpose, medium] has a hold over any other, [the space] where languages circulate ...* is helpful in understanding the organic, generative and propulsive effects between and amongst the components of Woodman's Books. In these she enacts a process that is an interplay of self-reflexive responses threaded and studded with manifold cultural references.²²

Woodman's found object templates include words written by an anonymous author whose first context undergoes a quadruple displacement and retrieval by history, geography, language and theme as a result of her intervention.

A Survey of the Critical Literature on Woodman

In the thirty or so years of critical study extant on Woodman's work, only a little attention has been paid to the group of aforementioned photographic Books which she made in the period of approximately 1975-1980.²³

The exception to this and in fact the only three in-depth readings of individual Books so far, are the analyses by Giuseppe Casetti in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni catalogue in 2000, and by Chris Townsend in 1999, of Woodman's only published Book to date, *some disordered interior Geometries*; and Harriet Riches's discussion of *Portrait of a Reputation* in 2004. *Some disordered interior Geometries* has been addressed, though not fully analysed, by several critics,

²² Barthes, 'From Work to Text', 1977, 164.

²³ I calculate this thirty year period of critical study to start from the publication of Roberta Valtorta's paper 'Francesca Woodman' in *Progresso Fotografico* in 1979 to the (clearly ever moving) present. The scholarly appraisals of both Rosalind Krauss and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, writing in the catalogue of the first posthumous one person show of the artist's work at Wellesley College Museum, Massachusetts, and Hunter College Art Gallery, New York and on tour in the US in 1986, helped to kick-start the current considerable international interest in Woodman.

including Peggy Phelan in 2003 and Martha Gever in 1981 (the year of its publication). Chris Townsend, in 2006, extends of his very good analysis of it from 1999 and includes brief descriptions of all the other Books including his take on their chronology. He also reproduces the whole of *some disordered interior Geometries* in a fine double page printing.²⁴ But up to this point in time, only scant attention has been given by critics to the other four Books; none to their constitution as a group, with likenesses and dissimilarities as objects; and heretofore no systematic or comprehensive analysis of their contained images and base texts. These Books are *Angels, Calendars; Portraits Friends Equasions; Quaderno Raffaello*; and *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi*.

The significance of Woodman's annotations has not been recognised by all publishers.

Only comparatively recently, in the Roman Palazzo delle Esposizioni Exhibition catalogue of 2000, in Townsend's 2006 monograph and in the 2009 Murcia exhibition catalogue, have the reproduced hand-written annotations been systematically included in tandem with the images.²⁵

The volume of discursive literature to date on Woodman's main corpus is extensive and consists mainly of journal articles and independently authored essays within exhibition catalogues. The exception to this is the extensive analysis in a mono-authorial framework by Chris Townsend, in 2006: a monographic

²⁴ For the convenience and clarity of this printing in Townsend, *Francesca Woodman*, 2006, 238-239, I am grateful to Townsend.

²⁵ Isabel Tejada, ed., *Francesca Woodman: Retrospectiva/Retrospective* (exhibition catalogue, Espacio AV, Murcia, 2009), Murcia (Spain), Espacio AV, 2009.

volume which also prints a considerable number of previously unpublished images. The catalogue of the first posthumous exhibition of Woodman's work, in 1986 in the US, at Wellesley College in Massachusetts drew immediate serious academic interest to her work by its inclusion of essays by the eminent scholars Rosalind Krauss and Abigail Solomon-Godeau. The catalogue of the second solo exhibition, held in Zürich in 1992, contains essays by Harm Lux and Kathryn Hixson. Six years later, in 1998, the first monograph/catalogue was published on the occasion of the comprehensive solo exhibition in Paris which contained essays by Philippe Sollers, David Levi-Strauss and Elizabeth Janus, as well as a contribution from the artist's friend and companion, Sloan Rankin.²⁶ Levi-Strauss's surrealist reading of Woodman was the most stimulating and instructive for me. This Fondation Cartier catalogue also reproduced two double page-spreads from *some disordered interior Geometries*, the first reproduction of these after the images in contemporaneous reviews of the book's publication by Martha Gever and Faye Hirsch. This 1998 exhibition and catalogue created a consolidation of Euro-American interest in Woodman. After Paris the exhibition toured in Europe extensively and was certainly still on tour (in Dublin in 2001) after the next major exhibition of Woodman's work opened in Italy in 2000.

The catalogue of this exhibition, held at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, has been a particularly inspiring source to me during this research. Out of the collection of essays therein Giuseppe Casetti's analysis of *some disordered interior Geometries* has provided a foundational source from which to project my own analysis of this published work, in my Chapter 4.

²⁶ Hervé Chandès, curator, *Francesca Woodman* (exhibition catalogue and monograph, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, 1998), Paris, Fondation Cartier/Zurich, Scalo, 1998. I subsequently refer to this volume as the Fondation Cartier catalogue.

The catalogue to accompany the solo retrospective exhibition in Murcia, Spain in 2009 is the third to constitute a monograph on Woodman and, like Townsend's monograph, includes printings of hitherto unpublished images. I have found Mieke Bal's Proustian framing in her analysis of Woodman's videos particularly stimulating.

Once I had emphatically decided that my road into and out from Woodman would be that of surrealism (and arguing in my MA dissertation in 2000 that she was a surrealist), I was extremely interested to read in Ann Gabhart's essay in the first American catalogue that Woodman had been deeply influenced by Breton's *Nadja*.²⁷ Pursuing this thread, I encountered, in the first published article written on Woodman's work, the aforementioned artist's statement recorded in an interview with the artist in Milan by Roberta Valtorta. Reading this article for the first time was an exciting experience. My recent discussion with Valtorta and my consideration of her fresh, very slightly altered translation from my original (see footnote 6, page 8), has been helpful in my understanding of this vital motivator of my research. Harboured within it was the key to the potential unravelling of some very specific and extremely exciting links from Woodman's Books to an extraordinarily innovative and influential first wave surrealist work. Jean Arrouye's essay on the photographs in *Nadja* has illuminated my argument on this subject.

²⁷ Ann Gabhart and Rosalind Krauss, curators, *Francesca Woodman: Photographic Work* (exhibition catalogue, Wellesley College Museum, Massachusetts, and Hunter College Art Gallery, New York, 1986), Wellesley (Mass.), Wellesley College Museum/New York, Hunter College Art Gallery, 1986, 55 and 58 note 1.

Before this however, I had considered Solomon-Godeau's tentative suggestion, within the framework of her feminist reading in 1986, that Woodman could be placed within surrealism. Her refutation of her own argument because of her conjecture regarding the inaccessibility of surrealist photographic images (*[T]he great majority of [Surrealist photographs] were until recently unpublished...*) during Woodman's working period made me more determined to explore the unanswered quest of both this premise and those links.²⁸ These are investigated in my Chapter 8, *Connections, Intersections and Coincidences*. Before 2000, when my project began to evolve, David Levi-Strauss had also argued for a surrealist placing of Woodman. In Whitney Chadwick's *Mirror Images*, also from 1998, Susan Rubin-Suleiman's essay had given a reading of Woodman's work as surrealist, forging direct visual comparisons between the artist and surrealist figures such as René Magritte and Hans Bellmer.²⁹

Reflecting Solomon-Godeau's conjecture about the inaccessibility of surrealist images in the 1970s, Suleiman remained for me too tentative about Woodman's outstanding and comprehensive knowledge of these seminal figures and I therefore found her comparisons good as springboards but ultimately limited. Her title hypothesis is pertinent however; *Dialogue and Double Allegiance: Some Women Artists and the Historical Avant-Garde* captures the ironic sense of humour with which Woodman encases her responses to the surrealist images selected by Suleiman and the *dialogue* Woodman confidently maintains is testament to the artist's high self esteem.

²⁸ Gabhart and Krauss, *Francesca Woodman: Photographic Work* (Wellesley College Museum exhibition catalogue), 1986, 36 note 4.

²⁹ Susan Rubin Suleiman, 'Dialogue and Double Allegiance: Some Contemporary Women Artists and the Historical Avant-Garde', in Whitney Chadwick, ed., *Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism and Self-Representation*, Cambridge (Mass.), MIT Press, 1998, 128-154.

Helaine Posner's contribution to the same publication, *Mirror Images*, though superficially more considered than Suleiman's piece, does not advance beyond a replication of Solomon-Godeau's underlying hypothesis. The feminist foundation of Posner's reading has not been sufficiently developed to encompass the fourteen year span that has passed between Solomon-Godeau's reading and her own. Her summary of Woodman's series *House* reveals for me more about the writer's presuppositions than the artist's intentions:

*Woodman also appears to be at risk of disappearing into the supposed sanctuary of the home, her fragile identity finally engulfed by a threatening world.*³⁰

Rosalind Krauss's key 1986 essay very usefully cast light on one of Woodman's essential practice methods. Her sourcing and confining of the deemed 'problem sets' method to art school practice is somewhat restricted by its lack of mention of the historic background of conceptualism and minimalism's fascination with the rubric and its variations. I find her assessment of Woodman as immature, a little too dismissive of the work and person capable of such sophistication.

In 1996, Margaret Sundell, in Catherine de Zegher's *Inside the Visible*, constructed a compelling Lacanian analysis of Woodman's self-imaging and her confrontation of vulnerability. I have found the empathetic depth of her enquiry thought-provoking and inspiring.

³⁰ Helaine Posner, 'The Self and the World: Negotiating Boundaries in the Art of Yayoi Kusama, Ana Mendieta, and Francesca Woodman', in Chadwick, ed., *Mirror Images*, 1998, 156-171.

Peggy Phelan's paper of 2002, published in the *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, has strongly influenced my thought processes throughout the formation of the thesis. Her bold and disturbing hypothesis that Woodman's work can be read as the performative rehearsal for her imagined death, as both its primal memory and its anticipation, has reached a place in my unconscious which I am unwilling to admit, in particular as I have urgently desired not to include any romanticising of her suicide nor any ensuing heroizing of the artist. But her hypothesis is subtle and complex and her grasp of Woodman's refined imaging of co-existent simultaneous time spans is unparalleled. With regard to my specific project of the Books, Phelan's investigation has been of inestimable value to me in trying to assess Woodman's use of past images to confront the future in the present.

Phelan's analysis has been alluded to only in a cursory manner by critics, for example during the lively round table discussion in 2003 by Margaret Sundell, George Baker, an *October* editor, and the three artists Nancy Davenport, Ann Daly and Laura Larson. Providing a clear summary of past framing and calling for potential new framing, this discussion takes the participant, Sundell's, Lacanian placing of Woodman in 1996 (originally written in 1993) as the main point of progression after Solomon-Godeau's now-considered canonical 1986 reading. The group argues for a development of Solomon-Godeau's placing of Woodman within the feminist canon, as existent at her time of writing, to be extended to include her 1970s peer artists, as well as into the post-minimalist sphere of which she worked at the cusp. The discussion ends, admirably, with an important

question: *What are the things about her work that are important to rearticulate now?*³¹

Two good points generated in this discussion are expanded in Townsend's monograph of 2006. The first is the idea of Woodman being *a photographer's photographer*, including a link made between her work and Gordon Matta-Clark's.

A year after the discussion between the above five participants was published, an analysis of Woodman's work by another *October* affiliated scholar, Benjamin Buchloh, was written for the catalogue of a show at the Marian Goodman Gallery in New York in 2004. Using Philippe Sollers's reading of Woodman as a foundation, Buchloh posits an interesting analogy between a Woodman image and the process of photography and makes one unusual link from the artist through to the work of Cy Twombly, which I find lyrical and satisfying.

It is possible that Woodman met Twombly during her year in Rome as his studio was not far from hers. Twombly's process of visceral transposition of words in his paintings contains links to Woodman's process of interrupting script flow with an image, as she does in the two Books *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* and *Quaderno Raffaello*. In Twombly's own recorded words, *(He) understood*

³¹ Margaret Sundell et al., 'Francesca Woodman Reconsidered: A Conversation with George Baker, Ann Daly, Nancy Davenport, Laura Larson and Margaret Sundell', *Art Journal*, 62: 2, Summer 2003, 67.

*scripture, text, quotations and words themselves both as forms, or as allusions to visual forms, and as emotional symbolic images ...*³²

Harriet Riches published a very good critical analysis of Woodman's unpublished Book *Portrait of a Reputation*, in 2004, in which her description of the analogy between its paper pages and the texture of skin, *the haptic appeal of the artist's book*, has informed my chapter.³³ Her analysis is both profound and multi-layered.

I shall return to arguments of the above critics and scholars in my forthcoming chapters, in particular to Phelan and Sundell in Chapter 2, to Casetti in Chapter 4, to Riches in Chapter 7 and to Townsend in Chapters 2-7.

Chris Townsend's monograph has already become a valuable resource in the discursive field around Woodman. For my project, its reproduction of two Books, *some disordered interior Geometries* and *Portrait of a Reputation*, in their entirety has been of inestimable help. His publication of extracts from the artist's journals, edited by her father George Woodman, has been of incalculable value to me.

These extracts have not only provided an insight into how Woodman wrote and thought, which particular impacts on my study of her annotations to images, but have provided a playful framework for my own discussion of *Portrait of a Reputation*.

³² Richard Shiff, 'Charm', in Nicholas Serota, ed., *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons*, London, Tate Publishing, 2008, 26. Shiff himself quotes from a conversation between Twombly and Heiner Bastian.

³³ Riches, 'A Disappearing Act', 2004, 110.

Townsend's publication of four images from the brilliant *Swan Song* series in his monograph probably helped the Murcia exhibition's curators decide on their imaginative reconstruction of the original display at Woodman's Rhode Island School of Art and Design Degree show.

But the wave of interest in these magnificent works has only gathered momentum since Victoria Miro unearthed the rolled works from storage and restored them so carefully into a superb digitalised version, in over a year's work for a new consumption. Six images were beautifully exhibited at her London Gallery six months after the publication of Townsend's book (in the summer of 2006).

Townsend's dating of the Books has to remain somewhat speculative, as it does for the Woodman Estate and all critics, but I have found his system informative and though I differ from him on some points I largely agree with his dating and will use it as my model.

The three chapters in Townsend's book which have particularly invigorated, informed or challenged my project are *Woodman and Surrealism*, *Feminist Photography* and *A Post-Minimal Photography*. Strong on post-minimalism, excellent on her critique of photography from inside the medium and determined to extract Woodman from the bracket of feminisms, his case for a surrealist placing is marred by his sidestepping of the issue of the first wave's impact on her and indeed her comprehensive knowledge of the era's art. On this last point I strongly disagree with Townsend when he says *Woodman's encounter with*

*Surrealism was often tangential and intermittent.*³⁴ His suggestion that *she had only limited formal instruction in the movement's history* seriously reduces a knowledge so extensive it was activated as a kind of vocabulary and denies her father George's claim, quoted elsewhere in my thesis, that *Francesca had a high appreciation of Dada and Surrealism by the time she was eleven years old.*^{35, 36} Townsend mainly equates surrealism with its *aesthetic legacy within mass culture* and seems to pin the key figures of contemporary surrealism's influence to Duane Michals and Deborah Turbeville.³⁷ While I acknowledge these two figures as having had a substantial influence on Woodman, I shy clear of describing them as surrealist, even 'surrealist'. This is not because I want to *presume some point of purity for Surrealism beyond mass culture...*, or that I dismiss the importance of the artist's contemporaneous influences, but that the backbone to my argument is Woodman's knowledge of surrealism's first wave manifestations; a knowledge that is as profound as it is accessible to her.³⁸

Townsend's chapter *Feminist Photography* straightaway belies some restriction in its choice of title, which it seems to me is at once too narrow a classification and somewhat too portentous a category. The author's examples of Turbeville and Sherman presuppose some neglect of feminism in favour of their status as photographers. Townsend also briefly places Woodman in relation to Carolee Schneemann, Ana Mendieta and Judith Miller. These links are only alluded to, not explored in depth. His trove of artists and photographers with some links to

³⁴ Townsend, *Francesca Woodman*, 2006, 28.

³⁵ Townsend, *Francesca Woodman*, 2006, 28.

³⁶ Gaby Wood, 'The Lady Vanishes' (preview of Woodman exhibition at the Photographers' Gallery, London, 1999), *Observer Magazine* (London), 25 July 1999, 20-23.

³⁷ Townsend, *Francesca Woodman*, 2006, 28.

³⁸ Townsend, *Francesca Woodman*, 2006, 69, extract from note 4 to his chapter *Woodman and Surrealism*.

Woodman is however impressive and useful as a resource. But his somewhat cursory investigation of feminist ideology reveals a lack in the underpinning of his arguments in the previous chapter which aim to unleash Woodman from inclusion in this particular canon.

A Post-Minimal Photography is the chapter in Townsend's monograph which I have found the most useful. His analysis of *some disordered interior Geometries* is rigorous and perceptive. It is above all the passages in Townsend's book which describe Woodman's critique of photography from inside the medium which have the most originality and depth. I am convinced and inspired by his contention which is comprehensively examined in the chapter. Her use of seriality, the transference and negation of meaning between signs through repetition and contra-position are proof, Townsend argues, of the framing of her work in the post-minimalist field. The examples he gives to substantiate his claim are amongst the most complex and the most compelling of her oeuvre: *Swan Song* from 1978; *Tree Piece*, *Temple Project* and *some disordered interior Geometries*, all from 1980 the last full year of her practice.

A critical study that I have found useful in my investigation of the development of the artist's book is Jean Khalifa's *The Dialogue between Painting and Poetry*. From its strongly Euro-centric position it is the essay in it by Yves Peyré, which addresses the transition between the long twentieth century's Franco-European development of the *livre d'artiste* and the emergence in the late 1950s, predominantly in the US, of the artist's book form. This form vigorously advances, in a temporary closure of the *livre d'artiste* form (where a poet and an

artist might work together) a *versatility in the use of materials*, a *built-in complexity and intertextuality as well as multimedia experimentation*.³⁹ The book's superb image reproduction has however vitalised my knowledge of the subject's history and is a potent reminder of the inspiring exhibition I saw in the New York Public Library in 2006.⁴⁰

Another key critical work that has informed my discussion is Liz Kotz's *Words to Be Looked At*, which, in spite of its wider field of enquiry (though narrower time span), has both pinpointed and made more fluid my understanding of the foundations of minimalism which underpin Woodman's practice.

For its clarification of surrealist interpretations of the book, I am indebted both to Renée Riese Hubert's marvellous *Surrealism and the Book* and her later co-written *The Cutting Edge of Reading: Artists' Books*, which investigates the growing multi-dimensionality in the field before and after Woodman's time.

My short week of research in the Special Books Collection at Edinburgh's Dean Gallery, under the direction of Ann Simpson, was extremely stimulating. I found the wealth of new information I gained there extremely painful to excise from my thesis. Clearly a separate piece of research covering the influence of Duchamp's *Green Box* on Woodman, for example, has to wait its turn.

³⁹ Renée Riese Hubert and Judd D Hubert, *The Cutting Edge of Reading: Artists' Books*, New York, Granary Books, 1999, 7.

⁴⁰ This exhibition, *The Dialogue between Painting and Poetry 1874-1999, Artists' books from the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris*, was originally shown at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 24 April-24 June 2001.

I discuss the subject of the artist's book in relation to Woodman's *some disordered interior Geometries* in Chapter 4.

Chapter Order

My thesis chapter order has evolved into a form in which the historical and philosophical sections will, I hope, provide a sustaining and objectivising shell around its kernel of Books' analysis. Because of its key position in my argument I have placed first, as Chapter 1, *Photography Intervenes*, my analysis of links between the operative functions of word and image in Breton's *Nadja* and Woodman's Books, thereby entering the thesis through a door with vital and very specific hinge-pins. The door's jamb must be Woodman's all-important statement regarding *Nadja*, explored earlier in this Introduction. Chapter 8, *Connections, Intersections and Coincidences*, will provide a wide plateau in which I will demonstrate Woodman's conversance with surrealism. My final chapter, Chapter 9, will look at the occurrence of serialisation and sequencing in her images between the Books and her wider corpus. I will try to place Woodman in frameworks contemporary to her practice such as feminism and post-minimalism.

The kernel of the thesis is in Chapters 2-7; in these I make a close analysis of the individual Books. Where possible these chapters are ordered in the chronological sequence of the making of Woodman's Books, in tandem with the dating suggested by the Roman Palazzo delle Esposizioni monograph and by Townsend, with both of which I largely agree.⁴¹ Each of these chapters will provide a consecutive analysis of each image in each Book and where appropriate each

⁴¹ Please see page 2 for the two instances when I have over-ridden this chronological system.

image sequence and my interpretations of it in regard to influences and sources I perceive.

I hope that this thesis will elucidate an element of Woodman's practice which has heretofore been under-emphasised by most scholars and that it will augment the increasing field of literature on Francesca Woodman's work.

More and more brilliant, Woodman's Book images disarm, are complex, formed in filmic sequences, in which each image is close, but just different from another like the moon's phases. Or an image might stand in glorious autonomy. These are multi-layered and multi-referential images; but this aspect never dilutes their autonomous beauty.

My fervent hope is that my enthusiasm for these objects, remaining as strong after these years of research, could be transmitted to a future and wider audience this research might find.