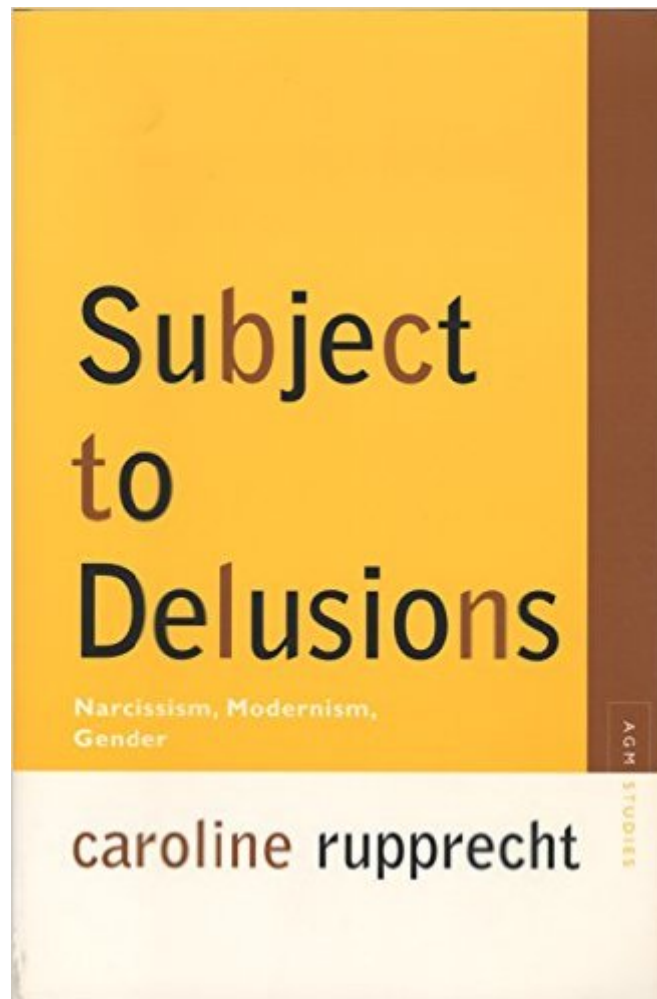


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Subject To Delusions: Narcissism, Modernism, Gender (Avant-Garde & Modernism Studies)



Synopsis

A figure of reflexivity, narcissism describes a relation between self and other mediated through the mirror or reflection. As such, the concept might help us to consider how what we come to know as the other, or the object, is always the result of a process of image-making. It is in this suggestive sense that narcissism interests Caroline Rupperecht in *Subject to Delusions*. Because the other, or the object, is constructed, Rupperecht finds in narcissism the possibility of rewriting notions of identity. She then pursues this possibility through modern literary texts in which narcissism acts as a structuring principle - works by the expressionist poet Henriette Hardenberg, the American avant-garde novelist Djuna Barnes, and the surrealist writer Unica Zurn - reading each within the critical framework of the evolution of the idea of narcissism in psychoanalytic theory. All written by women, these works also raise questions of gender and sexuality. Moreover, because each of these authors belonged to or was influenced by a particular literary movement, Rupperecht's analysis advances our understanding of the poetics of these movements and of the movement of modernism itself. Freud, his contemporaries and rivals Jacques Lacan, Melanie Klein, and many other theorists, Rupperecht interrogates preconceived notions of identity and subjectivity through her readings of the transgressive potential of narcissism as it is enacted in the texts under study. Bringing the works of literary modernism and psychoanalysis together in an innovative and provocative way, her book succeeds in enhancing our sense of both, and in clarifying the complex role of narcissism in our cultural narrative.

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