

Through Actaeon's Eyes: Klossowski's *Diana at her Bath*

In *Diana at her Bath* (originally published 1956), a work that can best be described as sprawling and eclectic, Pierre Klossowski (1905-2001) explores the myth of Actaeon and Diana. Through nineteen varied chapters, Klossowski meditates on Actaeon's glimpse of the divine. A testament to the expansive nature of his work, these range from commentaries on Ovid's Latin, philosophical essays driven by readings of Augustine, Plato, and Hermes Trismegistus, to erotic tableaux featuring the goddess and the stag.

A prolific and incredibly original artist, thinker, and painter, Klossowski has often been overshadowed by those he knew (he was Balthus's brother, André Gide's secretary) or influenced (Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Jean-François Lyotard). However, in recent years, his works have garnered more attention, and *Diana at her Bath* is a rich display of his philosophy. Throughout media-spanning corpus, he explores interactions between art, artist, and subject, particularly in its ability to communicate the incommunicable. For several scholars, *Diana at her Bath* is a focal point of these ideas, as a meditation upon his own male artist's gaze (Castanet: 2014) or as critique of an image of self through the language of simulacra (McGinnis: 2017). While the influence of antiquity on Klossowski's *Diana at her Bath* is undeniable, not much work has been done on this reception.

In my paper, I shall examine Klossowski's interaction with ancient myth, literature, and philosophy. I shall argue that he uses that momentary gaze of Actaeon to stage meta-discussion of the nature of reception of mythology, creating a kind of theory of the powers and limits of reception.

Bibliography:

Castanet, Hervé. 2014. *Pierre Klossowski: The Pantomime of Spirits*. New York: Peter Lang.

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McGinnis, Darin S. 2017. "Klossowski and his Simulacra." *Philosophy Compass* 12: 1-9.