the other, where man becomes regular either way. In the former he is a predictable material object and in the latter a predictable mathematical concept. This is post-enlightenment philosophy in a nutshell, and schizophrenia is the embodiment of such a phenomenological state.

The emergence of left-hemisphere dominance has been a process of increasing doubt in immediate and embodied subjective reality, which, according to Blake, has subsequently led to a separation of the human from the divine. It is important to note here that Blake thought of divinity as an empathic mode of attention in relation to another, which, the author adds, can be accessed through the right hemisphere. This severance from what Blake referred to as Energy, or the bodily and imaginative (the right brain), is responsible for the loss of emotion, spontaneity, and vitality, and the consequent enslavement to a state of rationalizing and egoic compulsion. Blake identified the traditional 'Satan' as a personification of this state. The controversial assertion is that the devil resides not in hell but in the human brain, and more specifically in the left hemisphere. Blake exposed the concealed moralistic dimension of rationality: that Reason is evaluative and ego-centric and not neutral or objective. The author empirically corroborates this by demonstrating that Reason and Morality have a common neurological source rooted in left-hemisphere networks, where the complex of processes that are commonly referred to as 'ego' are located. Therefore, there is no actual opposition between Science and Religion, because these two systems are two versions of the same thing 'battling for supremacy over the left hemisphere' (p. 93). Instead, 'the real clash [is] … between rationality and imagination' (ibid.), which is to say between the left and the right hemisphere.

To summarize, the greatest trick the devil pulled was not only to convince human kind that he does not exist, but to be worshiped under the guise of Morality by the theistic adherents of religion and under the guise of Reason by the atheistic adherents of Science. Needless to say, this thesis is challenging to both parties. Nevertheless, there is hope, the author reassures the reader. Salvation lies in repentance: by returning to the God of the right hemisphere, and thereby silencing the left hemisphere. But be not alarmed, for this kind of repentance does not depend on supernatural grace but on neuroplasticity. The author is calling for an end to the discrimination against the right hemisphere, and recommends the educational system as a good place from which to start.

The divided female

I love Dick, by Chris Kraus, Los Angeles, CA, Semiotext(e), 2006, 244 pp., £10.95 (pbk), ISBN 978-1584350347

Reviewed by Amy Croft, artist

The book begins with the simple scenario of husband and wife meeting up with a friendly acquaintance. The character 'Chris Kraus' and the homonymous author

share similar biographies, skewing the definition of reality and fiction from the start. 'Chris Kraus, a 39-year-old experimental filmmaker and Sylvère Lotringer, a 56-year-old college professor from New York, have dinner with Dick _____, … an English cultural critic who's recently relocated from Melbourne to Los Angeles' (p. 19). During the dinner, the two men engage in an intellectual exchange, while Chris notices Dick being flirtatious to her. When Dick suggests the couple stay the night at his home in Antelope Valley desert, 'the night unfolds like the boozy Christmas in Eric Rohmer's film *My Night at Maud's*' (p. 20). That evening, Sylvère and Chris share the sofa bed and Chris dreams of Dick all night. In the morning they wake to discover Dick is gone; Sylvère and Chris leave his house and spend the following days deconstructing what Chris describes as 'a Conceptual Fuck' (p. 21). A message they are privy to on Dick's answering machine, left by an assumed recent hook-up apologizing for 'how things didn't work out the other night' (p. 22), leads Chris to hypothesize, 'if Dick *is* lost, could he be saved by entering a conceptual romance with Chris?' (p. 22).

The book is divided into two parts. Part 1, 'Scenes from a Marriage', consists of a series of 'Exhibits' sequencing letters, faxes and telephone transcripts written by Chris, Sylvère or together, to and about their muse. These are woven together by a third-person narrative recounting the waves of turmoil and exhilaration the couple experience writing a new genre which, in one letter, Sylvère defines as 'something in between cultural criticism and fiction' (p. 43).

Part 2, 'Every Letter is a Love Letter', marks the moment Chris separates from her husband Sylvère and pursues her desire for Dick. Although still addressed to Dick and written solely from Chris's first-person perspective, the writing in Part 2 is ingeniously essayistic, and Chris's voice gains a disarming authority, performing the sense of freedom she feels:

> for years I tried to write but the compromises of my life made it impossible to inhabit a position. And 'who' 'am' 'I'? Embracing you and failure's changed all that 'cause now I know I'm no one. And there's a lot to say. (p. 221)

In one of these letters in Part 2, called 'Monsters', Chris ruminates on what is so private about her emotions towards Dick or 'my neurosis' (p. 21), as she keenly suspects he would call it, and her desire to expose her experience: 'I think the sheer fact of women talking, being, paradoxical, inexplicable, flip, self-destructive but above all else public is the most revolutionary thing in the world' (p. 210). These are skilfully incised and drawn in parallel to a very sensitive account of the career of artist Hannah Wilke, who, for exposing her own naked body in her works during the 1970s, was deemed by some critics as narcissistic, producing nothing more than personal therapy and lacking theoretical rigour.

Chris's quote taken directly from Hannah Wilke could also describe her own project: 'If women have failed to make universal art because we're trapped within the "personal", why not universalize the "personal" and make it the subject of our art?' (p. 211). Chris signs off this letter to Dick, 'I aim to be a female monster too'. But 'Monsters' also explores how themes of self-degradation, ridicule and erasure come hand in hand with exposing the personal, especially when you are a woman. At the beginning of *I Love Dick*, Kraus piercingly labels this position 'The Dumb Cunt' when Chris writes her first letter to Dick. 'Since Sylvère wrote the first letter, I'm

thrown into this weird position. Reactive – the Dumb Cunt, a factory of emotions evoked by all the men. So the only thing I can do is tell the Dumb Cunt's tale' (p. 27). The resignation felt in the tone of this first letter is replaced in 'Monsters' by an intelligence and purposefulness, as Chris describes the situation again: 'It's the story of 250 letters, my "debasement," jumping headlong off a cliff. Why does everybody think that women are debasing themselves when we expose the conditions of our own debasement?' (p. 211).

Kraus works throughout with skewed, merged, fictionalized and documented subjects. As Chris and Sylvère enter into their frenzy of writing *billet doux* letters, their dwindling *real* sex life is replaced by a newfound fictional togetherness, with Dick 'the reality of unreality' (p. 31). Within this fiction, at times their pronouns almost collapse into one another: one letter begins 'I, we're writing you this letter…' (p. 68). In another memorable moment, Chris draws a rather comical yet disturbing similarity between her and Sylvère's advances towards Dick, and an art project she developed in her 20s where 'Liza Martin and I invited a famous rock star … to fuck us as if we were one person' (p. 52).

There are also more concrete times when Chris and Sylvère's identities become entwined: those occasions when Chris is admitted to parties as Sylvère's plus one. 'Who is Chris Kraus?', she screamed. 'She's no-one! She's Sylvère Lotringer's wife! She's his "Plus One"!' (p. 118). These explorations of inter-subjectivities are taken to a new literary level in a letter Sylvère writes to Dick subtitled 'Exhibit N: Sylvère thanks Dick for his new-found sexuality'. Here he refers to himself as 'Charles Bovary' (p. 110) and describes the new passion he has discovered thanks to his wife Emma's love for Dick. It is also not only between Chris and Sylvère where such blurrings are used. In Part 2, Chris writes to Dick about his own book *Aliens and Anorexia*, which in fact is a book the *real* Chris Kraus goes on to publish in 2000 after *I Love Dick*.

It also cannot be ignored that *the* 'Dick' that is the object of Chris and Sylvère's infatuation increasingly becomes an empty subject, 'a blank screen onto which we can project our fantasies' (p. 29). And even the need for his presence is questioned when the couple discuss their next move after he has not returned an answering machine message left by Sylvère: 'In a sense Dick isn't necessary. He has more to say by not saying anything' (p. 59) and Chris increasingly embraces Dick's non-presence in the narrative, as she explains to him in Part 2: 'you're a perfect listener. My silent partner, listening so long as I stay on track and tell you what is really on my mind' (p. 96).

In each of these instances Kraus brings into question the idea of taking a single position. This fuels a drive that builds throughout the book to explore themes of multiplicity, complexity and contradiction particularly in female subjectivity, where Kraus identifies these traits as historically being women's downfall '… because our [women's] "I's" are changing as we meet other "I's" we're called bitches, libelers, pornographers and amateurs' (p. 71). This comes to a head in the final letter Chris writes to Dick called 'Add It Up', consisting of an extensive list of 36 numbered paragraphs introduced as 'some notes I made about Schizophrenia' (p. 222). It is here she pulls all the pieces of *I Love Dick* together, but not with the intention of making sense of her project, but to fulfil her own desires to expose for her reader's

interpretation 'an experience that was so completely female' (p. 235) and that she directly likens to schizophrenia; 'R.D. Laing never figured out that "the divided self" is female subjectivity' (p. 241).

Concerns of sincerity and being true to oneself come hand in hand with Kraus's drive to embrace and expose the multiplicity of being a woman. In 'Add It up' Chris critiques another woman writer's work: 'It was the kind of story (dare I say it) that women are supposed to write because all its truths are grounded in a single lie: denying chaos' (p. 238). In another letter, Chris recounts a radio interview where her male counterpart was judged by her friends listening, as being more sincere than her: 'Nick was just one thing, a straight clear line … and I was several. And-and-and …', Chris protests, '… isn't sincerity just the denial of complexity?' (p. 181).

Yet Kraus suggests that in order to fully express our complex and personal selves as women (which throughout reading the book I have reeled in excitement at the potential of performing), we need to disregard the other's feelings and perform what we feel is a certain act of cruelty. She asks: 'when does empathy turn into dissolution?' (p. 234). This provocative statement brings to mind the female conditions of erasure or loss of voice discussed throughout the book as a warning. Perhaps more directly, there is a distinct moment in the book where Chris teeters on the edge of being horrified about what she is doing: 'I feel ashamed of this whole episode, how it must look to you or anyone outside', but discounts these possible readings of her actions: 'just by doing it I'm giving myself the freedom of seeing from the inside out. I'm not driven anymore by other people's voices. From now on it's the world according to me' (p. 81). Later, she also acknowledges the pain her actions could cause Dick: 'My will had ridden over all your wishes, your fragility. By loving you this way I'd violated all your boundaries, hurt you' (p. 236). The act of cruelty exists in the real facts of *I Love Dick*, which are that very quickly having established the semi-biographical nature of the novel, a reader can also identify the real Dick, who through first-hand conversations with friends in common, I am aware was completely devastated by the contents of Kraus's novel.

I have been enthralled by the unique form of writing Kraus puts forward – a smart, direct and witty interlayering of fiction, fact, philosophy, art criticism and feminist critique – and I have enjoyed page by page the moments that I, as a woman in her early 30s yielding a tepid-if-not-yet-simmering artistic career in London, have immediately identified with Chris and drawn strength from her growing fearlessness. The question still left turning over in my mind is this: was there not another way to explore the wholeness of intensities and desires for which female subjectivity should be appreciated and critique the conditions which repress this, without it knowingly causing pain to another individual?