ART CRITICISM

Art Criticism

Prospective contributors are asked to send abstracts. However, if a manuscript is submitted, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope for its return. Manuscripts accepted for publication must be submitted on a PC computer disk. Please contact the managing editor for a style sheet. Subscriptions are $20 per volume (two issues) for institutions and $15 per volume for individuals in the continental United States ($20 outside the continental U.S.). Back issues are available at the rate of $10 per issue.

Table of Contents

Art Criticism

Metaphoric Duality, Psychological Parity, and the Crisis of Interiority in 20th Century Art and Literature

Francis V. O'Connor, Ph.D.

Introduction

My topic today is the idea of interiority in respect to the creative process. To the extent that this idea implies an exteriority, I shall discuss its intrinsic dualism. To the extent it involves consciousness and the unconscious, I shall discuss how that duality can be understood in a hermeneutic that acknowledges psychoanalytic theory. To the extent that artists today are reluctant to acknowledge roles for their interiority or unconscious in their creative process, I shall attempt to counter such attitudes by offering a theory as to how artists happen. Finally I shall offer a few suggestions, where needed, to refocusing artists on their interiority and its potential for the creative process.

I would stress, however, that I am talking from the viewpoint of hermeneutics or interpretive criticism when discussing interiority and the creative process. I am not talking about therapeutics—since as far as I am concerned, the creative process does not need to be cured—as Freud himself had to admit. Indeed, the creative process can cure, as I shall try to demonstrate. So any hermeneutic approach to the creative process must not be that of a curer, but that of a curator who is seeking to understand, to interpret, and above all, to preserve.

The following three papers were delivered at "The Fate of Interiority in Modern and Postmodern Art" conference on March 6, 2005 at Stony Brook Manhattan sponsored by the SUNY Stony Brook Art History and Criticism Graduate Lecture Series with a contribution from the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center.

Metaphoric Duality

       I shall first turn to the metaphoric duality that has dominated Western civilization's attitudes toward the creative process. Let me begin with a little story: Over at the Metropolitan Museum recently, I came upon a docent talking to a group of tourists in front of Jackson Pollock's *Autumn Rhythm*. I usually try to avoid such incidents but could not resist listening. The docent outlined the sordid life, explained the "drip" technique, and, referring to Hans Namuth's famous film of Pollock painting, stated that watching it "you could see creativity just flowing through him." I made a note of that phrase—especially its personification of creativity. Creativity here is not something flowing from within the artist; instead it flows through the artist from the outside. The artist is not a visionary but a vehicle for an inspiration or an influence outside the self—and indeed, artists have often, using different metaphors for the phenomenon, felt their creativity in just this way.

       Consider the word "to inspire." It means an in-breathing or in-spiriting from something outside the artist into the artist. Given that the first and greatest creation of humankind was the gods, this makes a sort of sense. The gods, or the one God, are projected outside humankind.[1] They preside over life and history. Thus the docent's—that is the culture's—rather specialized demigod, Creativity, presides over the arts imparting talent and genius that flows through the artist from the outside in, not the inside out.

       Of course, when the personified deity is claimed to be within, then the trouble maker is seen as a threat to civilization. We might start the history of that process with the execution of Socrates for seemingly giving precedence to his interior daimon and thus slighting the gods of the state.

       By the time of Socrates, the Greeks had also invented the idea of the Muses who inspire the various intellectual disciplines. Homer invokes the Muse at the start of the *Iliad*—Hesiod claims the Muses came to him as a boy and made him a poet. Plato the idealist saw creativity as an emulation by the artist of the preexistent forms or archetypes, which determined the design of man-made things—like works of art. From that time on, artists and authors have invoked muses as helpmates in their creative efforts.

       The pragmatic Romans exteriorized their daemons with the idea of the "genius" of a person or a place that takes on a more or less separate, inspiring identity. That history of repressing interiority by establishing a source of inspiration outside the self naturally evolved through to the Christian habit of claiming the pagan authors were inspired by demons. Later the Inquisition and its successors were avid in its persecution of the demons in its mystics—Joan of Arc's voices, for instance—or John of the Cross—or, in our own day, Pierre Tielhard de Chardin—bringing the cycle of daimon, daemon, to its most negative meaning in demon. And artists and critics will still speak today of a creative

person's "demons"—as Naifeh & Smith do in the very first chapter of their biography of Jackson Pollock.[2]

In the secular world, consider our recent putting down of the New Agers. Any flaunting of interiority is threatening, vide the eclipse of Abstract Expressionism by Pop Art and Color Field art—and the triumph of Marcel Duchamp's aesthetic of reduction to pure ideas and blank forms in Contemporary Art. There we have only to walk down through the new Museum of Modern Art to see the interiority flowing out of 20th century art—leaving us with what Donald Kuspit calls "postart"—an art made by artists who do not know their interiority or unconscious aside from popular psychobabble and who contrive a bleak landscape of nonlife that has no interior—that is all surface and no symbol—proving Oscar Wilde right in a way he could never have imagined.[3]

Obviously, what I am talking about is a Western culture that has projected outside of the artist the sources of creativity—which leaves creative persons in a way possessed. Part of that danger comes from the projecting of the metaphors as entities outside the self—and the implicit duality that entails.

For instance, Edward Hirsch, in his brilliant if problematic study of the creative process in literature and visual art, *The Demon and the Angel: Searching for the Source of Artistic Inspiration,* traces the history of inspiring entities outside the individual creator.[4] He waxes eloquent over several chapters about the Spanish poet, Frederico Garcia Lorca's ideas concerning the duende— a rare source of almost manic inspiration one ostensibly finds in all the arts from poetry and painting to flamenco dancing. Indeed, I first found the term in the critic John Berger's *The Success and Failure of Picasso.*[5] There he plausibly applied it to Picasso as a source of his work's energy and power. He later quoted from Apollinaire's *The Cubist Painters* (1915), who noted that there are poets who believe a muse dictates their works and artists whose hand is guided by an unknown being. These are different from those creators who reject such outside guidance and struggle through. He pointed to Picasso as one of the latter—who eventually regressed into the ranks of the former through his superstitions and acceptance of Marxism's similar dualistic tendencies.

Edward Hirsch goes on to discuss the role of angels in writers such as the poet Rainer Maria Rilka and ends up with Wallace Stevens' idea of a "Necessary Angel," and his poem "Angel Surrounded By Pysans." A needy skeptic to the end (when he converted to Roman Catholicism), he explained that he was thinking of an "earthy figure" not a heavenly one, his point being that "there must be in the world about us things that solace us quite as fully as any heavenly visitation could"[6]—and so onward and upward to a "supreme fiction."

In Hirsch's discussion of the Abstract Expressionists he rather grudgingly acknowledges that Jackson Pollock would attribute his creativity to the

unconscious. But he ignores psychoanalytic theory completely—as he also ignores his clear acceptance of the reality of the various exteriorized entities he discusses. He seems oblivious to the rampant duality in what he is describing.

Now, speaking of the unconscious, it is a common occurrence that young children project an imaginary companion who complements or supplements their parents' personalities. The projection of muses, demons, duendes, or necessary angels is the same thing psychologically and must now be seen as indicative of a certain infantile dependency or a fixation on such helpers on the part of artists and critics—indeed, on the part of Western civilization from its beginnings—especially from that time when it invented deity in its image and likeness.

Psychological Parity

These exterior entities have for the most part been put aside—but still lurk about at the Metropolitan, as we have seen. Let us turn to considering the interior entity of the unconscious, and whether it ought to be put aside when used as a sole source rather than a participating factor in the creative process.

This is the challenge of psychoanalytic interpretations of works of literature and art that replaced those old exterior entities with the idea of an interior unconscious—which does indeed seem a better way to explain the feeling an artist has of being in the control of some determining force when in the throes of creation. But all of these terms—whether projective or psychoanalytic—seem to establish an operative duality that needs to be integrated. Peter Gay states that Freud remained:

> . . . a firm dualist for clinical, theoretical and aesthetic reasons. The cases of his patients amply confirmed his contention that psychological activity is essentially pervaded by conflict. . . . the very concept of repression. . . presupposes a fundamental division in mental operations. . . . [and] his dualism had an elusive aesthetic dimension. . . the phenomenon of dramatic opposites seems to have given Freud a sense of satisfaction and closure: his writings abound in confrontations of active and passive, masculine and feminine, love and hunger. . . life and death.[7]

This reliance on a dual model of interiority needs to be amplified. Freud mistakenly thought Jung a monist because he posited libido as a universal energy. His rival Jung was, truth to tell, a hopeless dualist much given to religious beliefs and an almost Platonic view of his "archetypes of the collective unconscious," most of which were dualisms: animus and anima, puer and senex, mother and child." His theories of opposites, especially his personality typologies, are dualistic: such as his famous introverted / extroverted dichotomy.

But my main point is this: implicit in both Freudian integration and Jungian individuation, is the possibility of psychic parity if not unity, and the clinical and practical utility in achieving such an inner equivalence—a balancing of possibilities.

The psychoanalytic cure now perpetuated in various forms of psychotherapy, would also seem to imply such an integration or individuation of the conscious and unconscious poles of the psyche. One gets the popular idea that such processes induce a unity—even on the cognitive level. But that applies only to certain conspicuous complexes such as relational dysfunctions and obsessive-compulsive behaviors such as addictions—that are interfering with necessary behaviors. Getting the causal experience together with the repressed affect or the attitudinal defect can indeed allay inhibiting symptoms and eventually get that complex more or less allayed or "cured."

Let me suggest, however, that the apparent unification is better described as attaining a mid-point between monism and dualism—that is a parity between oneness and twoness or a tentative equivalence, like that between our eyes or hands—or, in the area of economics, between the value of the Euro and the Dollar. In other words, parity is getting things to work in a reasonable synch—and applies to our relation between consciousness and unconsciousness.

What the creative process feels like to the creator is specific to his or her psychodynamic—which includes a massive cultural dependency. It is thus a matter for clinical inspection, if necessary. What the creative process is in itself is the same in everyone open to it and can be hermeneutically inspected independent of individual idiosyncrasy—and the need to cure anything.

In this spirit, let me first very briefly address the matter of the unconscious and to suggest that applied psychoanalysis is one thing; applied psychodynamic theory something else. The latter essentially understands the unconscious not in terms of the models offered in various forms by classical Freudian or Jungian theory—or those of these masters' followers or revisers. The key to understanding the unconscious when discussing the arts is to realize that we are not dealing with therapeutics but hermeneutics—that is, we are seeking a theory of the artist. If you will, as said earlier, therapeutics seeks a curative function; hermeneutics a curatorial function.

The Crisis of Interiority

So, when addressing the crisis of interiority it is best to back off from the dogmas of the curative cults and try to perceive and preserve just what is interior for a creative person.

The classic forms of psychoanalytic theory long depended on a certain rationality in order to be accepted in a scientific culture. Permit me to suggest that the hermeneuticist, like the artist, must find it necessary to go

beyond the rational to find new ways of interpreting the process of creativity. This does not mean being irrational. It is rational to say 2x2=4; it is irrational to deny the validity of the equation. It is a-rational, however, to go beyond rational explanations and irrational denials and try to reexperience a world before the human mind knew how to count—or write—or tell time precisely—or travel the seas with a compass. It is a-rational to understand that the need for metaphor came before the need for logic—that the transfer of meaning from one thing to another, which is a-rational, came before the rational need to understand physical matter and its phenomena. The a-rational mind is not interested in "why"—but in "how"—not in calculation but in computation—not in causality but in process. In all this I have been greatly influenced by Stephen Wolfram and his great book *A New Kind of Science*—to which I shall return later.

We must nonetheless realize that metaphors wear out and become irrational when the transfer of meaning they imply—artistic inspiration to a muse or duende or necessary angel, for instance—loses its essential premises to a new, a-rational understanding of a non-dualistic individual. This is why a-rationality in the arts is so important and why old metaphors can be taken to fundamentalist extremes in order to survive.

A-rationality requires a great risk of certainty—and expenditure of exteriority—to create something original. This is why, threatened, most artists stick to reason to protect certainty, project their inspiration outward, and contrive to find old forms in simpler shapes to avoid complex new shapes that require new forms they themselves sometimes do not at first recognize as needed. No art movement based on inner awareness—as was Abstract Expressionism—ever knows what or where it is moving until it is over. Art movements that are consciously organized to challenge former movements normally take a very local course of action—as did Alan Kaprow's Happening Movement, or Andy Warhol and Pop Art, or Frank Stella and Color Field Art, or Sol LeWitt and Conceptual Art, in respect to Abstract Expressionism—they were all saying what Damian Hirst said recently in *The New York Times Magazine* about why he is now painting from photographs: "There are so many images in the world. An artist doesn't really need to create anymore."[8] So: free-for-all messes, easy on-the-eye soup cans and geometric patterns—sometimes laced with a little irony, and various forms of appropriation—always seem more reasoned when compared to a-rational gestural art and the high seriousness of interiority it implies.

To be a-rational about nature is to respect its capacity for maintaining parity in its survival tactics. Artists must risk making that parity their own within themselves and trust in their capacity to grow as interiorized individuals. Then they will have no need to project entities of inspiration and agency—muses or angels—outside themselves. Then they will see the artists who think

they are taking dictation from their necessary angel or unconscious, as no different as those athletes who point upward every time they make a useful play. They will see them as disparagers of their own wholeness in the name of an infantile deity.

As said, therapeutics seeks a curative function; hermeneutics a curatorial function. So it is best to back off from the dogmas of the curative cults, and reappraise the unconscious in neutral terms. The unconscious is made up of experiences, derived from being alive in nature among other living beings that have agency over our actions below the threshold of our awareness. They are unspeakable, both in the sense of sometimes being too horrible to recall, and also in the sense of being too difficult to express. But they are both part of a single experience. This ameliorates the seeming duality between consciousness and unconsciousness; rather it implies a parity of experience mediated by cautious awareness. Eros (as distinguished from erotics) in the form of creativity is the catalyst in all this, its vitality increasing our awareness of experience through forms of expression, the products of which can help to increase the awareness of others. Thus the value of art when it is shared as an expression of the artist's interiority is to demonstrate a survival tactic from which others may profit.

The enormous difficulty here for any hermeneutic process is that what is unspeakable—when it manages to "break the repression barrier" (to use Donald Kuspit's fine phrase when discussing the Abstract Expressionists[9])—can usually be expressed only in the covert formal structure of the work of art, not its overt content. As we shall see, only in old age can the artist sometimes manage, when there is nothing left to lose, to face the actual, unspeakable subject, and achieve a final, releasing parity.

The Interiority of Artists

Let us turn now to the interiority of artists and how they happen. Our contemporary art world has forgotten that creativity is rooted in interiority. Just how it is so rooted is the matter I want to address. It is of the greatest interest, when one looks at the psychodynamic processes of creativity, that they are all focused on interiorized psychic and somatic factors, not exteriorized projections—or even on exterior circumstances.

I shall do this by asking five questions about artists, and suggesting how their interior life is fundamental to our understanding of artists and their creations.

At this point, I shall put aside a long disquisition on the old Freudian notion of sublimation—that creativity is somehow a replacement for eros—because it has already been sufficiently rebutted—most conspicuously by artists themselves. Vide the erotic omniverousness of Picasso, for instance.

Note, also, that I am asking "how?" questions, because I am inter-

ested in the a-rational process in itself; the question "Why?" is reserved for the rational application of clinical method. As I said above, I am not interested in curing anything—just in showing how creativity can give us access to simple survival tactics that can be applied anywhere by anyone without feeling guilty about them.

1. How does an individual become an artist?

The root of an individual's creativity is almost always found in a compensation for some early trauma—in something unspeakable that can only be expressed in a non-verbal or formal manner. The trauma can be almost anything: sexual abuse, physical abuse, a bad illness, an injury to or loss of someone close. For example, the Academic muralist Kenyon Cox (1856-1919), had, as a boy, a tumor removed from the left side of his neck in 1866; the operation scared his face and neck and severed the sensory nerve on that side of his head. As an adult he always wore a beard, had portraits of himself taken from the right side, and painted absolutely symmetrical murals: goddess in center, allegories of the subject to right and left. He was mocked by his colleagues for his symmetrical absolutism.

The extremes to which he went to achieve such geometric accuracy can best be understood as compensatory for that imperfection and imbalance of body image he tried to hide from the world. Here, an acute awareness of the disfigurement of and lack of sensation in one half of his face motivated his desire to make a symmetrical, flawless art which would compensate for that lack of perfection.

The tendency to geometry in art is almost always a defense mechanism against the open, direct expression of experience. And, as we shall always see in the creations of an artist, the mode of formal expression is (once its code is broken) inevitably a self-portrait of that individual's deepest motivations.

I was once asked, having answered this first question in full detail with a wide range of examples, if I had ever met a happy artist? My reply: yes, almost all the time—and they are happy because they are artists and can alleviate through art the reasons they became artists.

2. How does an artist select a medium and change media over the life course?

Media are selected for the same reasons as creativity is needed; they change as the needs for what can be called compensatory dimensionality arise. Example: Michelangelo and Picasso switched back and forth between painting and sculpture over long lives. If you carefully trace these switches against the life development you begin to see that when Michelangelo the sculptor was in a dependent, passive mode he needed the aggressiveness of painting; when the painter Picasso was in a passive mode, at the end of an affair or during the war, he tended to compensate by bringing forth three-dimensional objects.—

Another example: Jackson Pollock the painter made his best sculptures when in occupational therapy in a mental institution in the late 1930s. He always claimed he wanted to be a great sculptor; he became a great painter.

His wife, the painter Lee Krasner, once went into an emotional fit when asked why she didn't make any sculpture. She ranted about how much she hated it and viciously mocked the women sculptors she knew as weak sisters. I had seen her in such a state of fury only once before; when asked why she had never had a child. She ranted against Pollock and said she had a child in him and did not need another.

The medium an artist chooses is used for bringing forth dimensional objects or illusions of dimensionality; internal needs for dealing with aggression and passivity can switch back and forth as the life course proceeds.

3. How are the components of an artist's style achieved?

All art being a form of self-portraiture, the style of an artist is determined by the body image of the artist. An ectomorph usually paints verticalities; an endomorph, rotundities; a mesomorph perfectly balanced canons that reflect the perfection of his or her physique. These self images can extend even to the style of a studio's architecture. In certain cases, self images can be modified with identifications with others—as with Philip Guston who, having watched, as a boy, his brother die of gangrene of the legs, later chose the colors of mortified flesh in both his figurative and abstract work.[10]

On this point of "abstraction," let me digress here to point out that even when we have sharp differences between culturally determined manners of painting, the "abstract" structures inherent in the works—symmetry or verticality, for instance—are inner-directed. One of the great gifts of modernist abstraction has been to reveal the bare bones of human interiority unencumbered by traditional or historicizing content. This helps us to go back with sharper eyes for the latent human interiority inherent in the infrastructure of conventionally "realistic" paintings. As said earlier: the most important symbolic material in any work of art is carried not by the overt pictorial content but by the form of the work of art acting as vehicle for what is going on covertly within the artist.

4. How does an artist develop over the life course, and what are the signs that mark that development?

Images of death and rebirth can be found in the work of almost all artists over a life course. An artist's life changes and its reinventions are continuously in need of representation. I have found that frontal self portraits, for instance, mark points of positive change in an artist's life course.[11] Similarly, I have found that dark shadows entering from the top of a work can signal either symbolic or actual death.[12] Symbolic deaths are often followed by frontal self

portraits as signs that self-reinvention and self-facing has been actualized. To the extent that I have been able to see the art work of young persons dying of AIDS, it is clear that this process can proceed in a concentrated manner along the lines of Kübler-Ross's well known process. In one case the symbols of life and death were fused into a single image.[13]

5. How do artists accommodate their old age?

Artists either abandon art since its compensatory needs are met; or else they recapitulate their development in more or less literal ways and finally come to face what once was unspeakable. Two examples—both involving Jews who suffered horrendous persecution in their young years.

Maurice Sievan, a male painter, as a child in Russia, had to be hidden behind a stove while his terrified parents barred the doors against the recurring Pogroms. The terror was introjected—and resolved only in this artist's later years, when he created a series of life-size, faceless, almost bodiless figures emerging from dark backgrounds. The last of these suddenly and explicitly showed one of these figures, now monstrous, facing the small face of a child who faced it down. This artist went on to a happy old age.[14]

Chaim Gross, a male sculptor, had been caught up in pogroms in Austria just before the First World War. He saw his parents nearly slashed to death with sabers—and was later impressed into the Austrian army at about the age of twelve to serve as an orderly in a military hospital. He finally escaped to America, where he became famous for his popular sculptures of circus acrobats. In his old age he filled a number of notebooks with horrendous drawings of slashed, impaled and otherwise wounded individuals. Seeing these atrocities, you came to realize that his happy circus performers were always balancing on the knife edge of oblivion. He too lived on to a happy old age.[15]

Not all artists achieve this parity with the past—with the unspeakable. But it is possible, since what is inside has a will to get out, and does so over a lifetime, sometimes with great drama. But all artists of integrity, however nurtured culturally, however in rebellion against the authority of fashion, and however talented, start from the inside out—however the exterior world may seem to win.

Refocusing Interiority in Art and Artists

With all that said, how do we approach retrieving that interiority in art that we see draining away like life blood from a corpse into the gutters of our museums and galleries.

First, let us start thinking on the level of parity, not duality. Let us get away from exterior entities like the muse or the duende or the angel—or even the unconscious when used as a sole source rather than a participating factor in the creative process, which has, as my brief list of examples implies, a so-

matic as well as a psychic origin.

Dualism is built into our ways of thinking. It is so habitual that the idea of an alternative to it—monism—is hardly able to be encompassed by the mind. Yet it is the fundamental reason that our image making is so lacking in interiority. We are so used to myths about art that we do not know how to be monists when making it.

I mentioned earlier how old fashioned writers used to invoke the Muse. The latest example I could find was that of Walt Whitman in the first lines of his *Leaves of Grass*:

One's Self I Sing (1867)

One's self I sing, a simple, separate person,
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.

Of physiology from top to toe I sing,
Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy for
    the Muse, I say the Form complete is worthier far,
The Female equally with the Male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse and power,
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws
    divine,
The Modern Man I sing.

But this is not exactly an invocation of the "Muse" or the "laws divine;" rather the poet is telling both where he gets off as a "simple, separate person," a "Form complete," "The Modern Man. . . ." This is monistic materialism at its purest—and least recognized.

On the other hand, Whitman was at the start of what has just ended. We might surmise that the lack of interiority in recent generations of contemporary artists might be attributed to the modernist rejection of dualistic religion and the introjecting or appropriation of the concepts of psychoanalysis and its various therapies to such an extent that the artists have rejected dualism to become monists, thinking they understand themselves without exterior theories to help in knowing themselves. We must face the fact that we no longer live in an age when the ideas of Freud and Jung and their followers were fresh and exciting as they were in the 1920s and 1940s. They now seem scientifically suspect and too dependent on the irrational or worse. Young artists, like everyone else, pick up psychobabble from the air and naturally find it easier to perceive repression, aggression, inhibition or mother fixation, in others than in themselves.

Further still, it now appears that the real dysfunctional nuts among

our young artists—like Jackson Pollock was back ca. 1943—who might with proper nurturing and patronage have some new wild kernel of a world to build within the narrow, mercantile art world, are now instead being drugged into a conformity by the very therapies that once released the creativity of earlier generations. Like the life blood of interiority, they literally litter the gutters of our cities and the wards of our mental institutions—and we do not know nor care about harnessing their creative vision and making something of it.

Another way of getting our artists back in touch with their interior selves would be to supply them with new sources of metaphors with which to inform and energize their art. The best of these sources are to be found today not in the humanities—but in the sciences.

The current crisis of interiority in art is just one aspect of a much larger situation: The face-off between our culture's rampant individualism within Nature's relentless determinism. There was something of a flap last year over a series of articles predicting the end of the world as we know it billions of years hence. This was, for many, unacceptable. Thirty odd years ago, a Nobel-Prize-winning French biologist, Jacques Monod, wrote an equally scary book called *Chance and Necessity*.[16] His title was taken from the Greek philosopher, Democrites, who said that "Everything existing in the Universe is the fruit of chance and necessity." Monod's thesis was "that the biosphere does not contain a predictable class of objects or of events but constitutes a particular occurrence, compatible indeed with first principles, but not deducible from those principles and therefore essentially unpredictable. . . . All religions, nearly all philosophies, and even a part of science testify to the unwearyingly, heroic effort of mankind desperately denying its own contingency."[17]

This bleak prognosis is what Wallace Stevens was dealing with when he posited a necessary angel and struggled with a supreme fiction. What do we do without the escape hatch of psychological projection? So the fundamental point to ponder today is this: what does art look like when created by monistic artists who accept their fate in Nature—and understand even their inner parity—their spirituality—to be contingent?

I have no answer for the angst of contingency—but I do want to make a few suggestions about the look of the art.

It seems to me that the really exciting metaphors are to be found in the recent "counting" of the genome, in areas of microbiology, in the face-off between traditional physics and string theory in finding a universal explanation with which to unite electromagnetic and gravitational forces, in nanotechnology, and with the adventurous solution proposed by writers such as Stephen Wolfram in eliding from axiomatic to algorithmic thinking and visualization—from old fashioned calculation to computation—from prescription to process[18]—not to mention the phenomenon of the Internet, which to my generation is indeed phenomenal, but to several generations of young people

today is perfectly normal. Do we here understand what that normalcy implies about interiority?

We must not underestimate the role computer technology has in the creation of monists—possibly despite themselves. We have two generations of young people—some of them artists—who have been raised with PCs, the Internet, e-mail and instant messaging, the wireless cell phone and other such devices—such as remotes for TVs and radios—that set up a sense of parity between the world, the screen and the brain. Technology is no longer just a mechanical servant—like a refrigerator or dishwasher. It is an extension of self literally around the planet. It is, to put a horrendously complex subject succinctly, an extension of self beyond any need for metaphor and infantile projections. In a sense, we have several generations of bright individuals who see no particular difference between exteriority and interiority: they are in a state of parity with the world—new modern men and women who do not know yet what Whitman meant by singing.

Looked at another way, who needs a Muse when young people today can operate on so large a scale and at a level of instantaneity known only to the projected deities of the past?

If we could face up to the unitary implications of modern genetics, to what the biologists, physicists and cosmologists are discovering, and the Internet is binding into a whole—we could find our own personal parity with other living things, with a cosmos that no longer needs a zodiac, and with a technology that transcends the local—which is the source of so much political and religious strife on our still territorially segmented planet.

These, for me, are the meta-themes for a future art in all its forms, but they need mature, interior acceptance, not infantile projections, to renew and encourage such adventurous creativity.

Finally, a personal note. Our artists need to know that it is possible to start a work of art without knowing how it will end. Art is not mental design, but listening to the self evolve. I have been writing poetry since childhood. These days my poems are mostly sonnets. You may think that a rather restrictive form—but it has the virtue of editing out the primary process effluvia while letting the interior parity prevail (and you don't have to pay by the hour). When I reread a sonnet I have just written I am almost always amazed at where the poem has advanced from what first prompted it. Now, in another age, I might well have thought that a muse or genius or duende or necessary angel was perched on my shoulder dictating into my ear. These days I feel the inner parity offering yet another lesson in self-awareness.

If the artist wants to enthrall an audience, the artist must first learn to surprise himself.

Notes

1. The idea that humankind created God—or the gods—in its image and likeness, goes back to classical antiquity in writers such as Zenophanes (570-475 BC) and Publius Papinius Statius (c. 45-90 AD), can be found among German philosophers such as G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) and Ludwig Feurbach (1804-72), and is implicit in both Freud's idea of psychological projection and in Jung's understanding that deity is a collective archetype.

2. Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, prologue to *Jackson Pollock: An American Saga* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1989), 1-8.

3. For "postart" see Donald Kuspit, *The End of Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), passim; for Wilde's quote, see preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) - various editions.

4. (New York: Harcourt, 2002).

5. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965/1980), 38-40; 98.

6. *Letters of Wallace Stevens*, edited by Holly Stevens (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 661. (Quoted in Hirsch, p. 154).

7. Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: Norton, 1988), 397.

8. "Pretty in Paint," interview with Deborah Solomon, 27 February 2005, 25.

9. See "Breaking the Repression Barrier," *Art News* (Fall 1988): 229-232.

10. See Musa Mayer, *Night Studio: A Memoir of Philip Guston by his Daughter* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988; reprinted, New York: Da Capo Press, 1997), 12-17—and the author's discussion of this on O'Connor's Page, Review No. 81, 30 November 2003, << http://members.aol.com/FVOC >>

11. See Francis V. O'Connor, "The Psychodynamics of the Frontal Self-portrait," *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Art* 1 (1985): 169-221. [Contains a theory of life course development. See also *PPA* 2 (1987) for "True Grit: A Note on a Frontal Self-Portrait by Queen Victoria," 307-311.]

12. See Francis V. O'Connor, "Albert Berne and the Completion of Being: Images of Vitality and Extinction in the Last Paintings of a Ninety-Six-Year-Old Man," in *Aging, Death and the Completion of Being,* edited by David Van Tassel (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 255-89.

13. See Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

14. See Francis V. O'Connor, "Maurice Sievan (1898-1981): An Artist of the New York School," in *Creative Lives: New York Paintings and Photographs by Maurice and Lee Sievan* (New York: Museum of the City of New York, 1997), 33-81.

15. See Samuel Atkin, *Chaim Gross: Fantasy Drawings, An Analytical Essay* (New York: Beechhurst Press, 1956) and Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, *Chaim Gross: Fantasy Drawings*, (New York, August 1-September 1, 1995; exhibition catalogue).

16. (New York: Vintage, 1972).

17. Ibid., 43-44.

18. See Stephen Wolfram, *A New Kind of Science* (Champaign, Illinois: Wolfram Media, Inc., 2002).

The Life and Death of the Unconscious in Modern and Contemporary Art

Steven Poser

Psychoanalysis and modern art are nearly contemporary movements in the 20th century. Freud first published *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900. Picasso began *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* in 1907 and in 1908 was already working with Braque to create the first Cubist still-lifes. Freud published *The Ego and the Id* in 1923, and in 1924 Andre Breton's *First Surrealist Manifesto* appeared.

By the end of World War II, psychoanalysis had achieved preeminence as the paradigm of psychotherapy and as the theoretical basis of psychiatry. Not long afterwards, New York could celebrate the so-called "triumph of Abstract Expressionism" as the achievement and prestige of Pollock, de Kooning, and Rothko began to receive international recognition.

Jackson Pollock died in 1956. By the mid-50's Abstract Expressionism was being challenged in New York by the first of what we can perhaps now, in retrospect, see as post-modern art and artists. The anti-psychotic drug, Thorazine, was introduced in 1954 and was followed, in the 70's, by a whole new range of anti-anxiety and antidepressant drugs that formed the basis of a "remedicalized" psychiatry that tended to undermine the validity of psychoanalytic thought and treatment.

The connection of modern art and the unconscious mind is largely an untold story. From an historical perspective, there is a reasonably clear line of influence from Freud's, and later Jung's, conceptions of the unconscious, beginning with the Surrealists and continuing on into Abstract Expressionism. What I should like to do in the very briefest way is to identify two strands in the psychoanalytic conception of the unconscious and show how they figured in modern art from the Surrealists to the Abstract Expressionists. Then,

beginning in the early 50's, I will trace the repudiation of the unconscious (or, at least the repudiation of what had come to be thought of as working from the unconscious) in Pop, Minimal, and Conceptual Art. From there, considering what was being attacked, and how it was accomplished, I hope to come to a better understanding of what is at stake in all of this and why it matters so very much.

Beginning with Freud, two strands run through the psychoanalytic conception of the unconscious; first, the unconscious as a source of imagery, as a storehouse of repressed thoughts, wishes, memories, and ideas; and second, the unconscious as rooted in the body, as the somatic reservoir of instinctual impulses, forces, and drives.

Associated with the first strand, the unconscious as a source of imagery, we have the idea of the dream as the expression of unconscious mental processes and of what Freud called the "dream-work," which conspires to conceal and distort the underlying dream-thoughts, thus preventing the dreamer from knowing their hidden meaning. The unconscious as a source of imagery is spontaneously revealed in the process of free association, whereby the voluntary, purposive selection of thoughts is abandoned in favor of allowing the mind to move and associate in an unpremeditated fashion, outside the control of rationality, the logic of relevance, and the constraints of self-censorship. Unconscious representations appear as projected in symbolic form, the manifest content of latent processes that are themselves hidden from view. Jumbled, cryptic, and archaic images appear, including condensations and residues from every era of our psycho-sexual development. Images and scenes that, on the surface, may have no overtly sexual content, can go proxy for our most deeply hidden erotic longings, fears, conflicts and wishes. Also, in Jung, the unconscious manifests itself in archetypal images of numinous power, conjoining the individual to a timeless, mythic, "imaginal" realm.

The unconscious as rooted in the body puts the emphasis on instinctual impulses as opposed to ideas. Here we find such concepts as primary process, libidinal and aggressive drives, energy discharge, and cathexis. This difference corresponds to a shift in Freud's thought from the earlier *topographical* model of the mind—the unconscious, preconscious, and conscious—to the later *structural* model of id, ego, and superego. The unconscious processes of the topographical model give way to the instinctual impulses of the structural model. There are no ideas in what Freud calls the id. Ideas are on the side of the ego, a large part of which is itself unconscious, that is, unknown to the "I" that thinks, and feels and acts. In conceiving the workings and expression of the unconscious, priority is given to affect over representation, to energy and movement over the content of ideas.

This shift in emphasis from unconscious ideation to instinctual impulses also parallels a specific movement in modern art from *illustration* to

enactment, or from *representation* to *discharge* in the process of rendering the image.

Here is Andre Breton's definition of surrealism, from the *First Surrealist Manifesto* of 1924:

> Surrealism, n. Pure psychic automatism, by which it is intended to express verbally, in writing, or by other means, the real process of thought. Thought's dictation, in the absence of all control exercised by the reason outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations.[1]

Breton's definition evokes the state of free association in which the expression of thought is subject to no rational, aesthetic, or moral constraint. Psychic automatism is understood as the "real process of thought," revealed by letting the unconscious speak through us, in perfect accord with what Freud describes as adhering to the "fundamental rule" of psychoanalysis whereby the patient is meant to say everything that comes to mind, selecting nothing and omitting nothing, even where this seems unpleasant, ridiculous, devoid of interest, or irrelevant.

In its emphasis on thought and language as the primary medium of expression of the unconscious, Breton's definition is totally in keeping with Freud's topographic model of the mind. It is worth remembering that, from the very beginning of interest in the unconscious on the part of modern artists, it was the poets and the painters who formed a natural alliance at every juncture. Indeed, one might even say that over these decades, roughly the 20's through the 50's, it was as though painting aspired to the condition of poetry as it had come to be conceived in these early years.

In 1928 Breton addressed himself specifically to painting:

> A work cannot be considered Surrealist unless the artist strains to reach the total psychological scope of which consciousness is only a small part. Freud has shown that there prevails at this unfathomable depth a total absence of contradiction, a new mobility of the emotional blocks caused by repression, a timelessness and a substitution of psychic reality, all subject to the pleasure principle alone. Automatism leads directly to this region.[2]

These qualities—a total absence of contradiction, a sense of timelessness in which past, present, and future coexist, a substitution of psychic reality for the objective, shared, ordinary world of waking life—all derive from Freud's conception of the unconscious and particularly how it comes to be expressed in dreams.

Giorgio de Chirico was immediately adopted by the Surrealists for the reason that his early metaphysical paintings so beautifully evoked the land-

scape of the unconscious, paintings with such titles as *Mystery and Melancholy of a Street, Nostalgia of the Infinite, Enigma of the Hour,* and *The Disquieting Muses.* A poet as well as a painter, de Chirico expressed in words the uncanny feelings of suspense, mystery, and presentiment found in his pictures:

> Life, life, vast mysterious dream, how many are the enigmas
> you propound: joys and sudden gleams!
> Porticos in sunlight. Slumbering statues,
> Red factory chimneys, nostalgias of unknown horizons.
> And the enigmas of the school, the prison and the barracks;
> and the locomotive whistling by night under a frozen vault,
> And the stars.
> Forever the unknown: the waking in the morning and the dream
> one's had: dark presage, cryptic oracle.[3]

There is a painting of Salvador Dali's from 1936 called *The Dream Puts its Hand on a Man's Shoulder.* In it, you can see Dali's hyperrealist technique, which he uses to render an erotic fantasy, completely exploiting the freedom to put together and compose according to the dictates of an inner necessity. In fact, the picture could be seen as illustrating the very process of artistic creation described by Breton. And this brings me to the idea of illustration, which I said earlier goes with Freud's topographic model of the mind. In these kinds of pictures, as well as in the kind of picture Magritte was painting in the same period, we have pictorial space being made to function as a projective field of the mind in a certain way. Projective space is assimilated to dreamspace and what appears in this projective space are representations of what might appear in a dream. The automatism or free association, as in the collages of Max Ernst, is exercised upon the content of imagery. The creativity of the unconscious is expressed by depicting something like a dream in a projective space which, though appearing outward to the eye, is inherently inner in its address to the mind.

Andre Masson produced the most sustained and original automatic drawings of all the Surrealists. These drawings evolved from erotic tangles of disconnected body parts to compositions of calligraphic marks which have all but let go of any pretense of representing their subject. "Line," said Masson, "is no longer essentially descriptive; it is pure élan; it follows its own path or trajectory; it no longer functions as a contour."[4]

Here one can begin to see new developments. The first is the emphasis on movement and touch, or gesture, over the depiction of mental contents. The second is the advanced nature of the composition—the pictorial space defined by the release of these calligraphic marks and gestures. Here we can

begin to see a shift from illustration to enactment, or from representation to discharge and a new conception of projective space which functions now not as revealing a dream-like scene, but rather as a projective field in which psychic automatism can register itself in the very process of its physical release. This is associated with the idea of the unconscious as rooted in the body and with Freud's structural model of the mind, with its emphasis on instinctual impulses and energy discharge.

Joan Miró transformed the conception of pictorial space as projective field of the mind. Consider his painting *The Birth of the World* from 1925. No longer things but signs of things appear in a space itself conjured out of stains accidentally formed by applying a thin wash of paint to a canvas irregularly covered with glue sizing. According to Harold Rosenberg, Miró's innovation consisted in abandoning the psychic automatism of dreams and chance combinations exploited by the Surrealists, in order to place his imagination under the guidance of the material of painting itself; the surface of the canvas or paper was turned into a creative force. "In a Miró," says Rosenberg,

> the figures are signs, but also is the background a sign as well as source: a yellow night, a blue abyss, the tawny earth of the artist's native Catalonia. The painted ground is no longer merely a hue intended to unify the composition; it has become a space, alive with energies, that throws up images, as the field planted with dragons' teeth brought forth warriors. . . . Miró's poetic wizardry . . . transforms his painting surface into an equivalent of the unconscious. A line, a dot, a stroke of the brush is sufficient to animate this space and set the image-forming activity into motion. . . . The conversion of the canvas into an active "field" represents a major revolution in the form of painting.[5]

What Rosenberg suggests here is that Miró's achievement was in transposing the field of operations wherein the unconscious manifests itself from inside the head to outside the body, that is, as a sequence of events occurring on the painting surface. And in so doing, the nature of that space was itself transformed from one in which an image was represented to one in which it was discovered in the process of free association, instinctual touching, and spontaneous invention.

Arshile Gorky found his mature style in the course of improvising drawings from nature after years of copying from other painters. He discovered a kind of projective space derived, in part, from Kandinsky and Miró, in which color, line, and shape organized themselves into pictures of enormous feeling while depicting no recognizable objects. These pictures were in fact triggered by emotion-drenched memories of his early life in his beloved Arme-

nia. Memory, one might say, functioned as energy, as a reservoir of feeling, which was then not so much illustrated as re-experienced through a freely choreographed, lyrical submission to unconscious processes in the application and handling of materials. Here is Gorky's description of a painting from 1944 entitled *How My Mother's Embroidered Apron Unfolds in My Life:*

> I tell stories to myself, often, while I paint, often nothing to do with the painting. Have you ever listened to a child telling that this is a house and this is a man and this is a cow in the sunlight . . . while his crayon wanders in an apparently meaningless scrawl all over the paper? My stories are often from my childhood. My mother told me many stories while I pressed my face into her long apron with my eyes closed. . . . Her stories and the embroidery on her apron got confused in my mind with my eyes closed. All my life her stories and her embroidery keep unraveling pictures in my memory.[6]

Just last year, a manuscript written by Mark Rothko around 1940 and 1941 appeared, entitled *The Artist's Reality.* This was a period when, without seeing himself as a Surrealist, he became deeply involved with ancient cultures, Greek tragedy, and the unconscious, particularly as conceived by Jung as a repository of archaic, timeless archetypes derived from the collective experience of the human psyche. Rothko puts forward what he calls "plasticity" as the paradigm of how art should come into being and how it should situate itself in the world. Plasticity has to do with achieving a tactile reality as opposed to representing the reality of appearances. Plasticity is found most readily in the art of children, primitives, and the insane.

> In painting, plasticity is achieved by a sensation of movement both into the canvas and out from the space anterior to the surface of the canvas. Actually, the artist invites the spectator to take a journey within the realm of the canvas. The spectator must move with the artist's shapes in and out, under and above, diagonally and horizontally. . . . This journey is the skeleton, the framework of the idea. . . . Without taking the journey, the spectator has really missed the essential experience of the picture. . . . [7]

Rothko did not move to pure abstraction until 1946-7, but even in such a painting as *Slow Swirl at the Edge of the Sea*, made in 1944, one can feel the sensation of movement he describes, as well as the permeability of the pictorial space to an inward journey. "[T]he whole purpose of art," said Rothko, "is to produce something which is inward." (Ibid.) In his later work, the entire pictorial field becomes a luminous, infinitely deep projective space suffused with

the grandeur, poignancy, and tragedy he seemed to distill from the ancients in himself.

It was through his interest in Jung that Jackson Pollock began searching out archetypal images, particularly in the early 1940's. He was, to the best of my knowledge, the only painter among the Abstract Expressionists to undergo psychoanalytic treatment, and this with the Jungian Joseph Henderson from 1939-40. During this period, he produced a remarkable series of drawings replete with American Indian motifs, Picassoid horses, mandalas, and a panoply of mythic, psychosexual and biomorphic images, which reveal tremendous psychic turmoil and a true gift for symbolic representation of the self. Such paintings of the early 40's as *Male and Female in Search of a Symbol* and *Moon Woman Cuts the Circle* exemplify Pollock's pull toward the primitive and the unconscious in its specifically Jungian, archetypal exposition.

Guardians of the Secret of 1943 was the centerpiece of Pollock's first one-man exhibition at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery. In connection with this painting, John Golding cites a passage from Jung's *Symbols of Transformation:* "Snakes and dogs are guardians of the treasure. The sacred cave in the temple consisted of a rectangular pit covered by a stone slab with a square hole in it."[8] Jung interprets the secret so jealously guarded as the unconscious; and the underworld and ordeals of death he sees as symbolic of the shadow world every human being is subjected to in the recesses of the mind. Jung interprets the sojourn of the hero in the underworld as his delving into his own unconscious.

According to Golding, what Pollock clearly got from primitive art and Jung was the concept of symbolization as a language of the unconscious. As the 1940's progressed, Pollock seemed to move further from this symbolic mode of expression toward a purely gestural abstraction. By 1947, gesture, as registered in the rhythm of his pourings, became itself the image—the process of the painting's coming into being became the armature or our experience of it. There is a remarkable projection of space as deep as Rothko's but alive with discharged energies—an image of pure enactment.

We know that many of Pollock's abstract works began with legible imagery. As he himself said, "When you're painting out of your unconscious, figures are bound to emerge."[9] So that even as this fugitive imagery becomes obscured and eclipsed by the dense skeins of paint that flow back and forth, there remains, as a psychic organizer of the process of improvisation, what the psychoanalysts call an "object"—that is, an emotionally significant "other" to which the cathexis, the discharge of instinctual energy, is directed. In this sense, these painting are engagements, both with the unknown in the self and with some projected reality. They are a feeling out into space for the object.

Pollock's contemporary, Philip Guston, captures this sense of painting as a process of discovery, both of the self and the object:

> What is seen and called the picture is what remains—an evidence.
> Even as one travels in painting towards a state of "unfreedom"
> where only certain things can happen, unaccountably the unknown
> and free must appear. . . . In this sense, to paint is a possessing
> rather than a picturing.[10]

Perhaps no painter of the period conveyed more convincingly the sense of feeling out into space for the object, of manifesting the embodied unconscious in the very handling of paint than Willem de Kooning. He appeared to take a skeptical view of all the elevated talk about myth and the unconscious. In one well-known statement, he said, "Of all movements, I like cubism most. It had that wonderful unsure atmosphere of reflection, a poetic frame where something could be possible, where an artist could practice his intuition."[11] De Kooning practiced his intuition in creating a sense of presence on the canvas. In his *Woman* paintings of the early 50's, the figure emerges in her horrific combination of sexuality and ghastliness out of an accumulation of stabs, slashes, gropes, and scrapings-out. He believed in fighting his way into intimacy with an image and the authenticity of that struggle was inherent in the picture. As he progressed, his figuration became more enmeshed with landscape but never moved into the deep space of Rothko or Pollock. If anything, de Kooning's projective space became more and more intimate, visceral, voluptuous and close to the body.

Of his paintings of the 70's, Richard Wollheim has observed that de Kooning found ways of incorporating into a painting objects of the senses other than sight, and also sensations of activity, sensations of moving the limbs or muscles. Wollheim sees this in what psychoanalysts understand as a regressive mode, that is, as a return to infancy:

> The sensations that de Kooning cultivates are, in more ways than
> one, the most fundamental in our repertoire. They are those sensa-
> tions which gave us our first access to the external world, and they
> also, as they repeat themselves, bind us for ever to the elementary
> forms of pleasure into which they initiated us. Both in the ground-
> ing of human knowledge and in the formation of human desire, they
> prove basic. De Kooning, then, crams his pictures with infantile
> experiences of sucking, touching, biting, excreting, retaining, smear-
> ing, sniffing, swallowing, gurgling, stroking, wetting. These expe-
> riences, it will be noticed, extend across the sense modalities, some-
> times fusing them, sometimes subdividing them: in almost all cases
> they combine sensations of sense with sensations of activity. And
> these pictures of de Kooning's, particularly the later ones, ...con-
> tain a further reminder. They remind us that in their earliest occur-
> rence, these experiences invariably posed a threat. Heavily charged

with excitation, they threatened to overwhelm the fragile barriers of the mind that contained them, and to swamp the immature, precarious self.[12]

With regard to de Kooning's engagement with the unconscious, it will be enough to note that his pictorial space was a projective field of the mind made into a repository for the widest range of primitive, instinctual impulses discharged onto the canvas through a virtuoso ability to impart movement, feeling, and life in the handling of paint. He discovered what he called a "countenance" or presence in the process of painting and the final image, in effect, recounts the drama of its own coming into being as a picture. So the process of creation is itself a journey of discovery, both of the true subject of the work and of its emotional significance, none of which could be entirely known in advance. And this is the heart of the psychoanalytic understanding of how the unconscious expresses itself through us.

In March 1953, de Kooning's show of *Woman* paintings opened at the Sidney Janis Gallery. The Museum of Modern Art bought *Woman I* from the show. Not long afterwards, a young painter named Robert Rauschenberg appeared at de Kooning's studio. He asked de Kooning if he might have a drawing. But Rauschenberg wanted the drawing not to hang in his studio, but to erase it, which he eventually did, although de Kooning made a point of giving him a drawing that was particularly difficult to erase. Rauschenberg said that it took him two months, and even then it wasn't completely erased. He wore out a lot of erasers.

This erased de Kooning, signed by Rauschenberg, was later exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art along with Marcel Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.*, or Mona Lisa with a moustache. Though the Duchamp was made some 40 years earlier, the two pieces are connected in the spirit of the Dadaist subversion of art, a gesture seeking liberation from the past. In Rauschenberg's case, there is no doubt an element of symbolic murder, insofar as he was ridding himself of a burdensome father figure who stood in the way of his own fledgling ambition. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the erasure could be seen as an act of aggression against an object that aroused feelings of jealousy, inferiority, and a fear of castration. In erasing the drawing, he both acknowledged and discharged those feelings, writing his own name, so to speak, over the ghostly remainder of the father. Shortly thereafter, Rauschenberg began the combine paintings that made him famous, works that owe a great deal of their look, their vitality, and their touch to de Kooning.

I would like now to trace a progressive repudiation of unconscious processes in the making of contemporary art. And this will have three aspects which can be illustrated chronologically. First, then, the repudiation of pictorial space as a projective field of the mind, that is, the attack on the interiority of

the picture plane. Second, the repudiation of object-seeking, or the discharge of instinctual energy—a feeling out into space for the object. And last, a repudiation of creative process as a discovery or revelation of the self.

To begin with space, then, consider a Rauschenberg combine painting from 1953-4. Gone is the dream-space, the imaginal projective space of Gorky, Rothko, Pollock, and de Kooning. In its stead, there is foreclosure. The picture is all gesture but no projection. The surface is touched but not penetrated. It is literal. In many of the combine paintings there are collaged clippings from newspapers and magazines and actual pieces of various kinds of debris attached or suspended. The field is not so much pictorial as an organization of things which are objects in themselves.

Jasper Johns painted things which were themselves already flat—targets, maps, flags, letters, and numbers—things, he said, "the mind already knows." There is touch, feeling, a tremendous sense of pathos for the unrepresentable, the unsayable, but again, there is no space beyond the picture plane, no presence, no projection. There is instead a repudiation of the entire pictorial culture of European painting with the sole exception of the communication of feeling through painterly touch.

In Cy Twombly, one can observe a similar process of reduction, flattening, and foreclosure. Twombly's paintings have the informal, private feeling of someone talking to himself. David Sylvester compares a Twombly of this period to pages from a notepad "in that it seems to juxtapose different kinds of things that need recording: a name, a shopping list, a diagram, a phrase."[13] It is fundamentally a space of no depth.

Now for the repudiation of the object. In Rosenquist, Lichtenstein, and Warhol, what is represented is itself a cultural artifact—Rosenquist painted commercial advertising signage, Lichtenstein the comics, and Warhol matchbook covers, soup cans, and Brillo boxes. What is shown is an absence rather than a presence, the found image rather than the thing itself. In these paintings, one can observe the elimination of touch as a registration of emotional significance. There is a psychic regression from the object, a de-erotization, decathexis, flattening of affect, and withdrawal from experiential contact.

Finally, we have the attack on process. Frank Stella's so-called "black paintings" of the early 60's were made by carefully filling in a measured-out design derived from the overall shape and dimensions of the stretcher. Stella, in 1964, had some revealing things to say about painting:

> When I first started painting, I would see Pollock, de Kooning, and the one thing they all had that I didn't have was an art school background. They were brought up on drawing and they all ended up painting or drawing with the brush. . . . Still it was basically drawing with paint, which has characterized almost all twentieth-

century painting, . . . It was the one thing I wasn't going to do. I
wasn't going to draw with the brush.[14]

When asked how he came to this conclusion, Stella replied: "Well, you take a
brush and you've got paint on the brush and you ask yourself why you're
doing whatever it is you're doing, what inflection you're actually going to
make with the brush and with the paint that's on the end of the brush. It's like
handwriting. And I found out that I just didn't have anything to say in those
terms. I didn't want to make variations. I didn't want to record a path. I wanted
to get the paint out of the can and onto the canvas."[15]

The interviewer then asked him if he was trying to destroy painting:
"It's just that you can't go back," replied Stella. "It's not a question of destroy-
ing anything. If something's used up, something's done, something's over
with, what's the point of getting involved with it?"[16]

What had been used up, done, and over with was a basic understand-
ing of artistic creativity as the manifest expression of something going on in
the psyche—the idea that what gives an image form and content is a reflection
of the artist's interiority. Here, by contrast, we have something made by fol-
lowing out a formula or an algorithm. This directly opposes and eliminates the
imaginal, freely associative, and outwardly projective processes we associate
with working from the unconscious.

By the late 60's the conceptualists had begun to articulate a vision of
art-making in which the resultant object was secondary to the idea. The idea
was the art, and the resultant object, if any, was only information, documenta-
tion, or as Sol Lewitt described it, the output of the idea, which "becomes a
machine that makes the art."[17]

I complete this sequence on process with a painting by Gerhard Rich-
ter. Richter paints photographs. *Man Shot Dead* shows the body of Andreas
Bader in his prison cell. Bader was part of a gang of radical terrorists that
operated in Germany between 1968 and 1977. The death was reported as a
suicide but many on the Left have never accepted this. The photographs were
reproduced in newspapers and magazines. Richter made a meticulously painted
rendering of this one in 1988. The paintings of this series have much in com-
mon with Warhol's silk-screens of car crashes and electric chairs insofar as
they take a totally impassive and distanced view of a horrific bit of reality. But
it is a reality not twice but three, four, or five times removed. For Richter, the
photograph is the subject, not the event it represents. It is blurred to the point
of anonymous immateriality. The surface of the picture is completely
uninflected, cold, and inert. There is no expression, no depth, no invention, no
life. It is all about death—of the subject, of the object, and by implication, of
painting itself.

According to Donald Kuspit, "It is this feeling of unreality and insub-

stantiality—the sense of an inner vacuum in reality . . . that Richter captures in his paintings. . . . He seems to have no self, that is, no inner profile. . . . He is a blank, and his blankness infects everything he touches, as though it, rather than he, was empty."[18]

At the beginning of this paper, I said I was hoping to come to a better understanding of what is at stake in all of this and why it matters so very much.

It is not my purpose to trash the whole of postmodernism. The situation is far too complex and there are many artists now working who cannot be subsumed under the characterizations I have described. It is, however, important to recognize that the dominant sensibility in the visual arts today is coming from a different place in the psyche, that it tries to do something different from what art tried to do in the not-too-distant past. In particular, postmodern art does not aim to symbolically represent subjective states. Postmodernism embodies a profound alienation from the uniquely personal, unconscious sources of imagery, which are ultimately rooted in the body. So, too, it is alienated from the processes of free association, projection, and object-seeking, not only as sources of imagery, but as generators of the very form in which imagery is configured.

We live in a time of widespread general contempt for unconscious life. Attacks on psychoanalysis are thinly disguised attacks on the unconscious itself, on the very idea that we may be motivated and determined by forces, fantasies, wishes, and impulses beyond what we can know, think, or control. And yet the denial of the unconscious in art, as in life, leaves us estranged and disconnected, not only from the source of our being, but from the possibility of encountering something which is entirely new.

The whole purpose of psychoanalysis is to make it possible to have new feelings, new thoughts, new experiences in living. The unconscious is what moves us. It moves us in the sense of taking us from one place to another. It moves us in the sense of arousal to feeling, to expression, and to growth. It is the unconscious in art that moves us to an emotionally significant response without our knowing why or how. Modern art found ways of letting the unconscious become formative. In the best examples, this means that our understanding of the work - its human significance - is shaped by the process of its coming into being in the hands of the artist. Artistic form that results from the operation of unconscious processes holds the possibility of being truly original, being the enacted expression of a unique sensibility, mind, and vision. The "newness" in this is not the same as the latest fashion, the novelty, but is genuinely transformative.

When we disavow the unconscious, we are unable to move or to be moved in this way. We foreclose the possibility of encountering the new— seeing it, feeling it, thinking it, saying it, or painting it. We risk stasis, stagnation, and psychic inertia. In repudiating the unconscious, we go against life itself.

Notes

[1] In Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 412.

[2] Originally published in Breton, *Le Surrealism et La Peinture* (1928). English translation by David Gascoyne in Andre Breton, *What is Surrealism?* (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), 9-24.

[3] The poem appears in Patrick Waldberg, *Surrealism* (Lausanne: Skira, 1962), 30.

[4] The quotation appears in William Rubin, "Andre Masson and Twentieth Century Painting," in *Andre Masson* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1976; exhibition catalogue), 68.

[5] In Harold Rosenberg's essay on Miró, "Fertile Fields," in *Art on the Edge* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 24-26.

[6] In Michael Auping, *Arshile Gorky: The Breakthrough Years* (Fort Worth: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 1995; exhibition catalogue), 20.

[7] Mark Rothko, *The Artist's Reality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 47.

[8] John Golding, *Paths to the Absolute* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 124-5.

[9] In Selden Rodman, *Conversations with Artists* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1957), 82.

[10] Artist's statement in *12 Americans*, edited by Dorothy C. Miller (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1956), 36.

[11] Willem de Kooning, "What Abstract Art Means to Me," *Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* 18 (Spring 1951): 4-8.

[12] Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art: The A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1984* (Bollingen Series XXXV, Princeton University Press, 1987), 348-9.

[13] David Sylvester, *About Modern Art* (Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1996), 374.

[14] "Questions to Stella and Judd," interview by Bruce Glaser, edited by Lucy R. Lippard. In *Minimal Art, A Critical Anthology*, edited by Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1968), 156-7.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum* (Summer 1967).

[18] Donald Kuspit, "Richter D.O.A.," review of 2002 MoMA exhibition, http://www.Artnet.com/Magazine/features/kuspit/kuspit2-21-02.asp.

Art Criticism

From Max Ernst's *Oedipus Rex* To Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Monroe*, Or Why The Sphinx No Longer Has A Secret

Donald Kuspit

It's a rather startling contrast: Max Ernst's *Oedipus Rex*, 1922, and Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Monroe*, 1962 seem to have nothing in common, neither conceptually nor perceptually. And yet, I will argue, they are both images of the Sphinx, updated in modern terms, that is, given a fashionable new look—in the case of Ernst's picture, a psychoanalytic look, in the case of Warhol's picture, a popular culture look. It is this difference in outer appearances that is inwardly telling—that suggests their emotional difference. Their difference in appearance signals a fundamental difference in attitude, and ultimately in Weltanschauung. I will argue that Ernst's tragic, enigmatic King represents the last gasp of the romantic interest in the unconscious, with which modern art begins—the inaugural work was Goya's *The Dream of Reason Produces Monsters*, ca. 1794-99—while Warhol's lurid, ironic Pop Queen represents the dissolution of modern fascination with—one might even say willing seduction by—the unconscious. Redon, who declared that the artist must wait upon the unconscious, and Pollock, who declared that he was the unconscious, are the alpha and omega of the modern conception of the unconscious as muse, that is, the belief that the unconscious is the fons et origo of art, at least to the extent that it is genuine art.

Broadly speaking, Warhol's work symbolizes the postmodern rejection of the unconscious dynamics of the self—the idea that the self is a kind of organic creation rooted in unconscious processes innate to the human organism—and its replacement by the idea that the self is a social construction with

no biological foundation. What is seductive about Warhol's Marilyn is her social superficiality, and with that her complete lack of inner life. She is not simply an image, but an image with a manufactured identity. Billy Wilder once said that "The question is whether Marilyn [Monroe] is a real person or one of the greatest synthetic products ever invented." Warhol's answer comes down decisively on the side that she is a great synthetic product, more particularly, a social invention with no personal substance. She is a great product because she deceives us into believing that she is a person even as we recognize that she is only pretending to be one: she is performing being human, like E. T. A. Hoffmann's famous mannequin, rather than really human.

The psychoanalyst Robert Stoller once wrote that one of the distinctive features of pornographic imagery is that the sexual performers frequently have no blemishes on their skin. These have been airbrushed away, giving the skin an aura of slick, schematic perfection, as though it was a kind of ideal, even otherworldly surface—a surface so unrealistically beautiful, that is, so removed from reality, it seems to imply that there is no such thing as ugly reality. Such consummate idealization of surface certainly precludes thinking realistically about the human body and sexuality. The pornographic treatment of skin suggests that Freud was mistaken when he thought that the skin is the primary sexual organ, for the point of pornographically perfect skin is to suggest that the sexual performers are untouchable. That is, however much they touch each other's bodies, they remain sexually unaroused, and feel nothing in general. It is as though their perfect skin is a defense against interior as well as exterior reality—against the sexual feelings aroused by being touched by their sexual partners—suggesting that their performance is asexual however ostensibly sexual. It is generally anhedonic and unfeeling—a mechanical performance of pleasure accompanied by simulated feelings. Pornography is ironically transcendental and utopian, that is, a subliminally puritan and peculiarly antiseptic disavowal of sexuality. "Dirty" acts are performed in a "clean," self-conscious way, as the scrubbed, knowing look of the actors confirms, losing their unconscious import: pornography debunks the emotional and physical messiness of sexuality by showing it to be matter-of-fact and straightforward, that is, looking at it from the convenient outside rather than the unsettling inside, in effect turning both inside and outside into an act. Authentic passion, with its uncanny projections and identifications, is deplored and rejected as a handicap of good performance—flawlessly putting on a good sexual act. The message of pornography is that one can perform well sexually if one feels nothing—if one is completely indifferent, or perhaps a well-trained animal performing a familiar routine, not to say sleepwalking through the sexual performance.

All this brings to mind Warhol's remark that he wanted to become a star so that he could meet real stars in person. He could then see that their skin

wasn't as unblemished as it appeared in their photographs, suggesting that they weren't as sexy as they seemed to be in them, thus confirming that the airbrushed, posed photographs make them look sexy. Sexuality is thus not as important as it seems, indeed, it is an illusion, that is, an expected performance, under complete social control, rather than an unexpected eruption of uncontrollable passion. This disillusionment undoubtedly made Warhol feel more comfortable with himself and his sexuality, since his skin was conspicuously blemished and he was homosexual. Warhol may have wanted to debunk the perfectionist pornographic photograph, that is, the photograph retouched so that blemishes disappear, but this does not mean that he wanted to disclose the real person "behind" the photograph—the true human self behind the false social self (always methodically pornographic, as it were). However mischievous his re-representation of the star's photograph—however ironically flawed Marilyn's mask-like face seems—Warhol was only interested in her performance, that is, how good an appearance she made. The flaws become part of her artistic performance, giving her a touch of human vulnerability. Warhol invariably re-represents Marilyn Monroe and other stars in the act of performing, as the fact that he re-represents their publicity photographs—this is particularly evident in his re-representation of Elvis Presley—indicate. He is fascinated by their artificiality—their animated mannequin look, as it were, confirming that they are puppets on a social string. This is the secret of their fame and fortune, even as it finally destroyed them, for they become so concerned with keeping up their act that they lost all sense of themselves as true selves. They came to feel unreal, that is, completely false to themselves, to the extent of being unable to recover the spontaneous gesture and personalized idea that the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott said are the core of the true self. Becoming all exterior, they lost touch with their interior, in effect committing psychic suicide, which could not help but lead to physical suicide. Warhol was perhaps the ultimate pornographic artist, for his celebrity portraits suggest that he regarded the performance of the unfeeling false self as the sum and substance of life, indicating his anti-human and anti-life attitude. He couldn't care less about the person behind the skin, real or photo-artificial, nor, for that matter, behind the sexuality, assuming there was a true or real person and intimate sexuality—which he didn't assume.

With perverse Solomonic wisdom, Warhol destructively split being-human into simulated interpersonal performance and intense personal feeling (inauthentic and authentic being, as it were), discarding the latter as irrelevant to the point of life, which is to become a social success. As though ironically confirming Warhol, Winnicott notes that only the false self achieves social success, implying that existential success in living, which for Winnicott meant being a facilitative environment, that is, creating a good enough relationship with others—a sort of fluid dialectical reciprocity, as I would say—is impos-

sible in success-driven society. For Warhol, art's role was to help one look good enough to be socially successful, that is, a socially compliant false self, suggesting that art betrays the true self, and as such lacks existential purpose. It is a way of socially surviving in a society that is not interested in psychic survival. In short, for Warhol the task of art is the construction of the false self rather than the expression of the true self. This is the real irony in Warhol's supposedly ironical re-representation of the look of social success.

Warhol's Marilyn is thus a caricature of a human being. She is the perfect exemplification of Warhol's well-known view that the self is a surface without a depth—the strange, complex depth that Ernst's peculiarly secretive, puzzling picture of Oedipus Rex symbolizes. There's nothing secret about Warhol's picture of Marilyn Monroe. There's no serious mystery to it: Marilyn's face is glossy and upfront, however oddly soiled and macabre (the pseudo-tragic part of her pseudo-comic act, as I have suggested). But her pseudo-Mona Lisa smile suggests she knows something we don't know. I think she knows that there's nothing to know, that is, there's no secret to life, more particularly, that there's no secret to being a self: it's a social performance that can be learned. More insidiously, Marilyn's face implies that what Winnicott calls the incommunicado core of the self is an illusion. Know-nothingism about the self, along with the belief that it's make-believe, is the secret of her superficiality and social success. Her head stuck in the ostrich hole of the make-believe popular culture, Marilyn has, at best, the nominal sense of ste-reotyped self necessary for success. She was indeed what William James called the American "bitch goddess of success" in all her cosmetic glory—which is no doubt why Warhol, aesthetically a cosmetician, was fascinated by her appearance. Indeed, he kept retouching it, as though to keep up its lustre.

Like the Sphinx, Marilyn consumed all those who could not solve her riddle, that is, answer the question of her existence that Billy Wilder raised—who mistakenly thought she was a real person rather than a plastic product, more particularly, a pathetically true self rather than the consummate false self—a suffering human being rather than a masterpiece of social construc-tion. Taking her on face value—literally—they missed the point of her life. Thus, however much Marilyn may be a modern Sphinx, the answer to her riddle is completely different from the answer to the traditional Sphinx's riddle: the "man" that is the secret of both riddles is not the same. Indeed, they are absolute opposites—fundamentally irreconcilable. One might say that they are not answerable to life in the same way. The ancient Sphinx's traditional idea of "man" is not the same as the modern Sphinx's modern idea of "man." This is perhaps to be expected, but the difference is such that it it becomes unclear what and who man is. The unfathomable mystery of traditionally conceived man is that he organically develops—he is born, matures into an adult, and ages—while the fathomable mystery of modern man is that he exists in and

through his unchanging social appearance and identity. He exists all at once as a fixed immortal product, rather than a being in continuous mortal process.

Of course, whichever Sphinx man worships does not guarantee success in living, that is, either successful personal development or successful social development—yearning for the Sphinx's embrace, which is what the worship of her implies, is not the same as solving the riddle of human existence (and of her monstrous existence)—confirming that she is a cruel goddess, as success always is. The Sphinx is the ultimate femme fatale one can never possess—both Marilyn and the ancient Sphinx are projections of the success-worshipper's self-doubt—however much the wish to possess her haunts man's life. Sphinx and Success in one personification, Warhol's Marilyn is doubly bitchy—a double-edged sword, as it were, like the Magna Mater, who lures one even as she rejects one, indeed, whose allure is a form of rejection. In an act of attraction-repulsion, the Magna Mater's ancient worshippers castrated themselves, as though to cut the Gordian knot of her dangerous doubleness— the resulting sexlessness confirmed that they only had eyes for her—but this ironic "detachment" made her seem all the more sublime and seductive at once, remote and close, just as the hyper-glamorous, "mystifying" veil of yearning color—the color of desire, frustrating yet fulfilling in itself—in Warhol's re-representation of Marilyn does. Indeed, Warhol's homosexual worship of Marilyn looks like a kind of self-castration from a heterosexual perspective, for it suggests fear of a direct sexual encounter with the phallic pre-Oedipal mother—heterophobia compounded, as it were—and thus permanent sexual immaturity and incompleteness.

Warhol's Marilyn is certainly not psychologically minded: she has little or no psyche to mind, only a social look to keep up. There's no obscene behind her scene: the scene itself, that is, Monroe's surface appearance, is in and of itself obscene, confirming that there's no dirty, unconscious secret to her being, for she has no inner being. Nor does she have much consciousness: it's limited by—one might say an extension of—society's consciousness of her. That is, she's only as conscious of herself as her audience is of her— perhaps her most important psychic trait is that she desperately needs an audience, that is, she has profound mirror-hunger (that's the hidden obscene thing about her, her dirty secret, only it's not hidden and socially sanctioned)— indicating that her consciousness is as much a social construction as her appearance. Society has constructed them according to a certain paradigm of female glamor and sexuality. She is its emotionally ideal exemplification, for she exists only to the extent that she completely conforms to or unconditionally mirrors—a mirror mirroring the mirror-hunger or feeling of narcissistic inade-quacy or unhappiness that everyone who lives life entirely in false self terms unconsciously feels—society's conception of what it is to be beautiful and successful, indeed, beautiful because one is successful. This is postmodern

otherdirectedness in all its morbid purity: Warhol's Marilyn is nothing but what she seems to be, that is, her looks, which reify a popular cultural idea of beauty. Lacking a self of her own—however indeterminate a self, it would represent a certain margin of freedom from social as well as biological determinisms—she epitomizes the sense of the meaninglessness and dispensability of individuality, and even of human life, that informs the postmodern attitude. Her emptiness—relational lack—is quintessentially postmodern. Paradoxically, so is the ancient Sphinx, for hidden in her riddle is a threat to human dignity and agency, as Oedipus was forced to realize.

In contrast to Warhol's portrait of Marilyn Monroe, Ernst's portrait of Oedipus Rex seems to hide a secret it itself doesn't know. It is secretive to the extent of seeming incomprehensible—a code that cannot be broken. It demands interpretation, like any dream image, but the symbols seem too obscure and private to make common public sense, especially because we don't have the dreamer's—Ernst's—associations to them. If the work is a self-portrait, as I think, it suggests that Ernst was a riddle to himself. But we all know that Oedipus became famous—became King Oedipus—because he solved the Sphinx's riddle, suggesting that Ernst identified with Oedipus Rex to become a famous artist, a king artist. But in Ernst's picture, Oedipus himself is a riddle, suggesting that the Sphinx was referring to him when she confronted him with her riddle: as Elizabeth Legge's analysis of Ernst's picture demonstrates, he himself—as person rather than social product, one might add—is the answer to the question raised by the Sphinx's cryptic words.

The secret of the Sphinx is that she understood human nature and destiny, which always present themselves as an existential riddle, that is, an anxious predicament: how is it possible that the infant who crawls on all four limbs, the adult who stands and walks upright on two limbs, and the old person who needs a third limb—a prosthetic cane, as it were—to continue to stand and walk upright, that is, to be a man, are one and the same person? Do they really have anything in common? An even more difficult issue is implicit in the Sphinx's riddle: why are human beings destined to die after growing old? Death is the unmentioned joker in the Sphinx's riddle, as it were: it is the last step in human life—the step that seems to make all that went before it irrelevant and meaningless. In short, behind the riddle of human development—the connection between the stages of life—is the riddle of death. Even the gods don't know the secret of death, for they never die. The Sphinx's riddle implies that mortal human beings can never know the raison d'etre for their existence. The riddle outlines the familiar stages on the journey of life, inviting us to speculate about their existential significance—which is unclear. Is there another end to life than death, which is its ostensible end? The Sphinx's riddle asks the same old, seemingly unanswerable questions, at once universal and personal, that Gauguin's *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are*

We Going?, 1897-98 does.

One might say that the men who failed to solve the Sphinx's riddle—to interpret it successfully, as we would say today—and were thus destroyed by her, were so completely baffled by the riddle—and thus, implicitly, themselves and existence—that they developed an existential neurosis from which they never recovered. Unable to solve the puzzle of the Sphinx's riddle, that is, interpret life to gain insight into its meaning—indeed, to give it meaning—they unwittingly showed their lack of insight into their own lives. This failure of interpretation conveys their unconscious feeling that their existence had no meaning. Thus they were dispensable, and the Sphinx dispensed with them. Viktor Frankl, who formulated the concept of existential neurosis, and thought that creativity was the only cure for it, argued that the sense of the meaninglessness of existence is the most serious, that is, self-destructive, mental illness, and regarded it as pervasive in the modern world, indeed, the subliminal signature feeling of modernity. The belief that life has a higher purpose or end—however mysterious and beyond the ostensible end which is death—was destroyed by modern reason. It is no doubt enlightened, but, as Frankl implies, emotionally benighted. Existential neurosis is certainly inescapable for those who want to make serious sense of their lives, that is, save themselves from the modern sense of the futility of living, which intensifies as one personally approaches death, which is much more emotionally complex and unsettling than the abstract recognition of universal mortality.

To be face to face with the Sphinx is to be face to face with one's own death, as those who failed to solve her riddle quickly discovered. Indeed, it is as though their risky encounter with the Sphinx, and their acceptance of the challenge of her riddle, expressed an unconscious death wish, suggesting that, like Dante who found himself in the dark wood of depression half way through his life, they had reached the impasse of meaninglessness, life having unexpectedly lost meaning once they had grown up and taken their place in society. Why, after all, had they left their own societies, to wander restlessly in the world, as though in a desert. Oedipus also wandered, in search of his true parents, as though to find them—to find his true, original home—giving meaning and purpose and thus value to his life, thus giving him a reason to exist. The fantasy of the Sphinx is the personification of existential confusion and self-destructive despair, that is, the sense of meaninglessness experienced when one realizes that fulfilling social obligations is not necessarily existentially fulfilling. It was because the social contract rang emotionally hollow that the wanderers found themselves face to face with the Sphinx, forced to answer the riddle of existence—their particular existence included. One might say that they were on the verge of becoming conscious of the unconscious, and with that discovering life's most intense feelings and deepest meanings. But they never did, which is why they were destroyed by the Sphinx, the guardian at the

entrance of the unconscious just as Cerberus was the guardian at the entrance of the underworld.

To find the inner meaning of life—to solve the Sphinx's riddle—is to become a hero of humankind, for there is no greater gift that one can give one's fellow human beings than a sense that human life is inherently meaningful, however disturbing its meaning. It is the most existentially important gift one can give any man, for it is the foundation of all the meanings and values that one can give to life. More particularly, when Oedipus solved the Sphinx's riddle, he came into his own as a mature, independent, confident, conscious human being. If the Sphinx is indeed a symbol of Magna Mater, as psychoanalysts have argued, then Oedipus overcame his separation anxiety, liberating himself from the universal mother—or at least he thought he did until he learned that he never separated from his own particular mother, but was unwittingly drawn to her. It is as though he had risen above fate by declaring that human existence is more meaningful and purposeful than its maternal instrument— that to be a man with a strong sense of self is more meaningful and purposeful than to be a mother. But as Oedipus came to discover, life proved to be meaningful in an unexpected way, causing him to lose the confidence in himself he gained when he solved the Sphinx's riddle. The solution was not as liberating as Oedipus first experienced it to be, for he had only half understood the riddle. He had become conscious of man, and that he was a man, but he remained unaware of the inner truth that man had an unconscious which seemed to have a will of its own—indeed, which determined his destiny, socially as well as emotionally. Ironically, Oedipus did not become conscious of his own unconscious, that is, did not truly understand what it meant to be a man, and thus achieve insight into himself—which, ironically is what his blindness symbolizes (the connection of self-knowledge to self-castration is telling, especially because it suggests that one always feels guilty, that is, punishes oneself, for gaining self-knowledge)—until he had fulfilled his unconscious destiny, that is, unknowingly acted out his unconscious wish to possess his mother sexually, confirming that he never wished to separate from her, indeed, wished to return to her womb. Only then did Oedipus realize that he had never really escaped the Sphinx—she had destroyed him, after all. He seemed to have solved her riddle, but he had to face death, in the form of the unrelenting plague that was destroying Thebes, before he understood its full meaning, and with that the inner meaning of his life. Afterwards he would have to live as though dead—an impotent outcast—until he actually died.

Where the Oedipus story—and Ernst's excruciatingly complicated symbolization of it (yet it is as oddly terse as the answer to the Sphinx's riddle)—stretches the tension between exterior and interior reality to the breaking point, Warhol collapses the tension between them. The psychoanalyst Donald Meltzer regards this tense difference as the fundamental aesthetic conflict.

But in Warhol there is none: Warhol displays exterior sensory reality with an exhibitionistic fervor that cancels interior reality—and precludes any attempt to imagine it (it is only available through inferential imagination)—to the extent of suggesting that it is beside the social point. In a sense, his works compulsively repeat the moment when he suddenly realized that he could avoid his problems by watching television. He was on his way to see a psychiatrist, but opted out of introspection and self-knowledge, preferring to defend himself against himself—indeed, to deny himself—by going public, as it were. His art can be understood as a complete denial of personal individuality and existential self-awareness. He even defends against death by becoming a voyeur, representing photographs of it that suggest that it is just another appearance, and also that it not a blemish on life, indeed, that one remains unblemished even in death, as some of his works, and above all their impersonality, suggest.

It is all just theater for Warhol. Let us never forget that Marilyn Monroe was an actor, that is, an impersonator and pretender. Actors are implicitly envious of the real persons they portray, using them as alter egos because they don't have much of an ego of their own. One might say they turn spontaneously true selves into false performing selves. The actor simultaneously empties and appropriates the reality of another person to believe in his own reality. Perhaps more than any other actress of her generation, Marilyn Monroe played to—indeed, ingratiated herself with—the audience, teasingly showing her face and body off to excite envious mirroring, a transaction that gave her a nominal sense of self even as it deprived her audience, however temporarily, of its self-possession. Behind the defensive desire to possess or emulate her—American male desire for her, American female desire to be like her—was an enraged sense of being narcissistically injured by her which ironically echoed her own unconscious sense of narcissistic injury. In a sense, it was because Marilyn injured the audience with her seemingly triumphant—not to say impenetrable—narcissism, that she was able to gain the use of the self it forfeited when it was "beside itself" watching her perform. Introjected by her audience, she deprived it of its sense of self—it forgot itself watching her perform. She created the illusion of being the most meaningful self it was possible to be—a socially successful self—when in fact the only self she seriously had was her performing self. I am suggesting that Warhol's Marilyn is not only an example of his necrophilia—I think this is true of his portraits in general—but of what the psychoanalyst Leon Wurmser calls "theatophilia," namely, "the desire to watch and observe...to merge and master through attentive looking."

Such looking tends to stay on the socially rationalized surface, avoiding the irrational depths. It is worth noting that the words "theater" and "theory" are both derived from the Greek "theasthai," which may help explain why Warhol's theatrical art struts around on higher theoretical cothurni—

theoretical seven league boots, as it were—than any other Pop art. Theory has made Warhol's art seem like a grave and elevated style of acting, when it is only little theater exhibitionism spiced up with a bit of ironical morbidity. Warhol suggests that all successful people are actors on a social stage. He also suggests that there is nothing behind the act: they are all inorganic facades, putting on a show for the audience, whose reality as living persons they are ultimately indifferent to. As I have suggested, Marilyn has no interest in her audience except to the extent it mirrors her interest in herself, or rather her appearance.

In contrast, Ernst's Oedipus is all absurd depth with no socially rationalizable surface, however familiar the symbols in his picture are. Legge brilliantly interprets them—she notes the allusion to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, particularly to Hamlet's feigning insanity ("I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw" (II.2.362) and his assertion "O God, I could be bounded in a nut-shell, and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have had bad dreams" (II.2.247)—but, they nonetheless continue to remain perplexing, perhaps because they seem un-conventional to the point of arbitrariness, as though given by a wild throw of the psychic dice. As such, they suggest that the self is subject to forces beyond its control—a bizarre composition, like Ernst's picture—which it expe-riences as the ironical spontaneity of universal chance. In a sense, Ernst's painting brings to a climax what began with Goya's print, and, more decisively, with his so-called black paintings: the attempt to exteriorize interiority through art, that is, to articulate the seemingly inarticulate, more particularly, to use spontaneously generated symbols to become conscious of the unconscious, in recognition that it is the ultimate serious subject matter, and that without such consciousness one has an incomplete sense of oneself, indeed, lacks fundamental self-knowledge. If Goya's print was the first work that explicitly acknowledges that dreams are a legitimate subject matter of art, and as such the first work to explicitly turn inward—that recognizes that dreams are as real, indeed, more emotionally real, than everyday reality—then Ernst's work is an ingeniously constructed self-deceptive dream that acknowledges the inge-niousness and deviousness of the unconscious, which is something that Oe-dipus experienced firsthand. Warhol turned art back toward conventional everyday reality—or rather a media version of it—but before that happened—defensively, as I have argued—there was a surge of artistic interest in and homage to the unconscious, and with that to its cunning and to Freud, who first mapped the unconscious and outlined its mechanisms and workings.

The difference between Goya and Ernst is that Goya stayed on the surface of the unconscious, which had not yet been named in his day let alone systematically studied, while Ernst, under the guidance and tutelage of Freud, attempted to articulate and explore its depths. The difference is evident in the

fact that Goya's so-called black paintings use familiar everyday scenes to convey the destructive effect of the unconscious on human behavior and perception—the outward distortion of the figures in the nightmarish world of the black paintings suggests the inherent insanity of everyday life—with no comprehension of the reasons for it, while Ernst's much more completely enigmatic and uncanny painting uses symbols, as the unconscious itself does, to cunningly suggest the unconscious reasons for human insanity and suffering. (It is worth noting that Goya's enlightenment figure is insane only when he sinks into the darkness of sleep and begins to dream. Also, he is not distorted, suggesting that he will become a man of reason once again when he wakes up from his nightmares—which, incidentally, are more vividly represented than he is.) Where Goya experienced actual people and politics firsthand, inferring the madness of society—and with it the folly of human existence—from social behavior and human expression, Ernst experienced symbols as though they were living people, suggesting that he entered into a kind of psychotic state—the dream state—to make his mad picture.

Ernst's painting is unintelligible and socially unfamiliar compared to Goya's black paintings, which remain on the level of everyday intelligibility and social familiarity—to which Warhol's picture returns with a vengeance. His human beings are not haunted by unconscious forces beyond their control, as Goya's are, nor are they conundrums as Ernst's bizarre representation of Oedipus is. In contrast, the mystery of Warhol's Marilyn's is instantly comprehended, for it is socially familiar: it is the mystery of society not of sexuality. Warhol's Marilyn is a banal social invention, while Ernst's Oedipus remains emotionally estranging and enigmatic because it articulates the ambiguously social problematic of childhood sexuality. I am saying that Ernst's painting is more ultimately inward—more directly and exquisitely expressive of the unconscious, however much it is a constructed dream (but then all dreams are exciting unconscious constructions)—than either Goya's or Warhol's.

As is well-known, Ernst's work is heavily indebted to Freud, who realized that the unconscious expresses itself in symbols, available in the form of dream-like representations. But Ernst's symbols are uniquely his own, suggesting that while "art is the using of symbols by which an otherwise unstable subjective reality is made manifest," as Jerzy Kosinski wrote—a neat summary of the romantic idea of art—the symbols become increasingly personal and uncivilized, as it were, and thus increasingly unclear in their import, and thus more unconsciously resonant, as romantic modern art develops through Symbolism into Surrealism. It is as though the Surrealist was determined to break down the difference between his personal dreams and civilized works of art, thus sabotaging Freud's idea of the sublimation necessary to make art. And also suggesting that in modern times art has lost its civilizing purpose.

The brilliance of Ernst's work is that it is as subtly unstable as the

subjective reality it makes symbolically manifest. Compared to Warhol's Marilyn, which for all its flimsy, thrown together look—her features barely hang together (they look like blemishes on a fractured face, as though mocking the proverbial strangeness in beauty)—seems like a stable illusion, Ernst's Oedipus resembles a house of cards about to collapse, suggesting a certain unease in its construction or composition. Warhol shows the transcendental become commonplace—Monroe, a popular love goddess, is the vulgar version of the eternal feminine—and with that an all the more ineradicable part of collective consciousness and popular memory. An icon with a common touch, Warhol's Marilyn seems to have miraculous—redemptive—powers, as the field of heavenly gold in which she is sometimes embedded suggests. She's full of the promise of a mundane eternity—an everyday dream girl. But by using a mass-produced symbol of socially sanctioned selfhood—otherwise known as a popular role model—Warhol also signals the hollowness of social selfhood as such, suggesting that Marilyn's socially stable appearance, and with that the staying power of her image, is ironically entropic. She comes to represent the omnipotence of ephemeral public imagery—not just advertising and publicity photographs, as has been said—rather than the eternal truth of beauty, thus giving the lie to Keats's Platonic idea that "beauty is truth and truth is beauty and that's all you need to know." You certainly have to know much more in modern society, in which ugliness is the hard truth and truth is unvarnished ugliness. Ugliness is certainly more realistic than beauty, and more evident in modern art, however much we have come to see its ugliness as beauty, as though anestheticizing ourselves to the truth—the ugliness of life—it wants to make manifest. Warhol's art suggests that the popular culture, with all its emotional ugliness, is a fact of collective life that is here to stay, indeed, a more stable social fact than any other, as his redundant representation of—not to say devoted attention to—Marilyn Monroe and other household or brand names suggests. In contrast, Ernst's romantically obscure and peculiarly obscene painting turns out to have a peculiar staying power and emotional hold over us. Indeed, it continues to haunt us even after one has awakened from it, that is, interpreted it, suggesting the lasting power interior reality has over exterior reality. And, ironically, the greater stability of subjective reality—what Freud called the conservative character of the instincts—than objective reality.

I will conclude anti-climactically and art historically by way of a quotation from Elizabeth Legge. She writes: "As a reinforcement of the notion that *Oedipus Rex* is a hybrid image of the Sphinx, it may be noted that Picabia identified a Sphinx theme in Ernst's painting. Interestingly, for his 1923 gouache *The Sphinx*, Picabia adopted Ernst's vocabulary to create a 'sphinx': large-eyed and overlapping heads of bird and bull. Picabia was sensitive to Ernst's abilities, and may have set out to rival Ernst's oedipal Sphinx. The overlapping

of transparent layers was Picabia's experiment in trying to fashion a new kind of image-'sign,' and it is analogous to the unconscious processes that create the hybrid vision of the Sphinx." Legge also notes that Breton referred to the Sphinx in a 1920 review of de Chirico's work, and in 1949 reaffirmed his 1920 opinion that "It is indeed to de Chirico that we owe the revelation of the symbols that preside over our instinctive life." Breton also referred to the Sphinx in a 1922 lecture in Barcelona, noting the "inevitable fatality" of the monster's question, which "weighed heavily," according to Legge. She also notes that Ernst's 1937 collage *Oedipus and the Sphinx* was reproduced on the cover of a special issue of *Cahiers d'art* devoted to him. The 1937 Sphinx is taken from Ingres's painting *Oedipus and the Sphinx*. The Sphinx "forms the *head* of Oedipus," as Legge emphasizes. Finally, Legge regards the 1922 Oedipus Rex "as a manifesto of Ernst's ideas about picture-making"—this before Surrealism became an official movement of the unconscious, so to speak.

It may be, as has been argued, that the difference between European Surrealism and American Pop art is a cultural difference, which in part has to do with the movement of the official center of the art world from Paris, where Ernst was based, to New York, where Warhol was based. That is, it may have to do with the hegemony of America and the collapse of Europe—a self-destructive collapse that began in the First World War and was completed by the Second World War. The disjunctive, fragmentary character of Ernst's *Oedipus Rex* reflects the former war, in which he fought, and prefigures the latter war, which he fled, coming to America. But I also want to suggest that something much more important is at stake: the replacement of Oedipus Rex by Marilyn Monroe symbolizes the triumph of anti-intellectual American popular culture over imaginative European high culture, and with that the triumph of exteriority over interiority. Marilyn Monroe is the example par excellence of what Erich Fromm calls a "marketed personality," that is, an individual whose personhood is a marketing phenomenon, and as such has no inherent value—only exchange value. Such an individual "relates to the world by perpetually asking how he [or she] can best sell himself [or herself]." In contrast Oedipus Rex gave his name to the Oedipus complex, for Freud "a situation which every child is destined to pass through and which follows inevitably from the factor of the prolonged period during which a child is cared for by other people and lives with his parents." Fromm writes: "Although exchange is one of the oldest economic mechanisms, the marketing orientation that is shaped by exchange did not become a dominant influence in relations to the world until our own [twentieth] century....The marketing orientation is the social character of present-day Western industrial civilization generally." In other words, Marilyn Monroe is socially specific, while Oedipus Rex is universal.

To function successfully, a marketing society has to discredit and discard interior existential values—that is, to ride roughshod over human na-

ture. Warhol's great success—which involves a predatory marketing of the success of such celebrities as Marilyn Monroe—indicates that art has become a major part of the marketing society. It indicates that the basic issue of art in a capitalist society is whether it sells, not whether it gives existence meaning. Art that attempts to represent ultimate inwardness is neutralized by being marketed, which is what happened to one of Jackson Pollock's all-over paintings when it was used as a backdrop for a fashion model in a photo shoot. It is finally denied altogether, which is what happens in Warhol's *Marilyn Monroe*. Warhol's work symbolizes the American success ethos and displays the American success aesthetic—the American look: one might say that Marilyn Monroe is a symbol of the market's absolute power over life in America, that is, an expression of the idea that "the business of America is business," as a former head of General Motors once said. Marilyn's sexual glibness is a symbol of American glibness about the fundamental issues of existence. Her seemingly eternal youth and glamor signify America's proverbial youth and glamor—a successful marketing of itself as an ever new world in comparison to pathologically old Europe. It has been said that Warhol's Marilyn is a gay man in sensational drag, and thus a joke on the audience, perhaps like Duchamp's Rrose Selavy. If so, the idea that one can choose one's gender at will is a reflection of American free enterprise, that is, the belief that one can become anything one wants to be in America. Unfortunately, human nature suggests otherwise, as Warhol discovered when he was shot—in effect castrated by an angry Sphinx, but without the accompanying gain in self-knowledge and existential meaningfulness, as his continued attempt to market himself indicates, which is why, like Marilyn Monroe, there continues to be a market for him even in death.

A Mouthful of Air:
A Freud Shakespeare Dialogue

Eugene Mahon

Time: 1939. Place: Maresfield Gardens, London.

The scene opens with Freud sitting at his desk reviewing a manuscript. There is music playing: Bach's preludes and fugues. Freud interrupts his poring over the manuscript to listen thoughtfully and eventually comment to himself:

Freud: Bach's preludes and fugues! How did Goethe put it, describing their effect on him: "It is as if the eternal harmony were conversing within itself, as it might have done, in the bosom of God at the creation of the world."

The clock strikes ten, and Freud pulls out his pocket watch to see if he has the time right. Suddenly Shakespeare enters. Freud is startled, the way the virgin is represented as being startled in Renaissance depictions of the Annunciation.

Shakespeare: It is ten o'clock.
             'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,
             And after one more hour 'twill be eleven;
             And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,
             And then from hour to hour, we rot and rot,
             And thereby hangs a tale.

Freud: (Indignant and a little ruffled) You startled me!

Shakespeare: (Humorously) You thought it was an Annunciation, the angel Shakespeare come to impregnate the virgin Freud one last time?

Freud: I've been impregnated enough, *inspiration* like a promiscuous bawd opening herself to all comers.

Shakespeare: You don't mean a word of it. We are whores of Time, you and I, all experience mere seeds of our creativity. And because your death is a mere curtain-call away, you've summoned me to guide you, like Virgil and Dante in the theater of the afterworld.

Freud: (Somewhat arrogantly) Odysseus went to Hades alone.

Shakespeare: (Sarcastically) You don't need company or any sop for Cerberus, you mean, you splendid isolationist. Your death instinct has prepared you that well in advance. What impressive self-deception!

Freud: "A coward dies a thousand times before his death.
    The brave man never tastes of death but once."

Shakespeare: I put those words in Caesar's mouth. Now you return them to mine.

Freud: (Dismissively, rudely) You say I summoned you?

Shakespeare: Yes. Close to death a man's unconscious, like a drowning man's, can resurrect all images of the past and future to comfort him as he slips through the lattice of mortality into the entropies of eternity. You could have summoned Aristotle or Harold Bloom, but you had good judgment and summoned me. (He removes his Elizabethan hat with a flourish and waves it theatrically).

Freud: (Reflectively, as if trying to make sense out of all this mystifying strangeness) I summoned you out of repression I suppose. You must be another version of the return of the repressed.

Shakespeare: Yes. Out of that fertile unconscious creative vinyl of your mind you *repressed* one final LP or CD from the warehouses of memory and intuition, and hey presto, here I am.

Freud: (Indignantly) You've put a new spin on my theory of the repressed, you double talking, double meaning Bard!

Shakespeare: (Mischievously) Yes. And I strewed my plays with your parapraxes three hundred years before you invented them.

Freud: (Warming up to his mischievous visitor) And I applaud you for it. What I had to drag screaming on to the couch, fell into your lap like a swooning lover!

Shakespeare: Oh, I wouldn't complain. Your insights fill 23 volumes. A Standard Edition no less.

Freud: Standard Edition is a vile phrase! I wanted my words to generate more words, more argument, more light in the seductive corridors of darkness and ignorance. There is no Standard Edition of truth. The very idea of it is anti-Freudian.

Shakespeare: Truth begins when self-deception cannot stand itself another moment. But the irony is, the Freudian irony actually is that deception is essential if defense is to have any leg to stand on, any place to hide. (Mischievously) Truth isn't all it's cracked up to be, my dear Sigmund!

Freud: A post-modern Shakespeare! I must be drunk or dreaming or dead already perhaps!

Shakespeare: Post-modern, pre-modern. Really, my dear Sigmund, how could you fall for such provincialisms of thought masquerading as the categorical. There's only one big bang of creativity and when you experience it, you know it. It has no half-life and it doesn't come with labels.

Freud: (Warmly, expansively) I'm glad I summoned you. "Others abide our question. Thou art free. We ask and ask. Thou smilest and art still." You are for the ages. I hope I am.

Shakespeare: Of course you are. If nothing else, the bashing proves it. Puritans can close the theaters and bowdlerize the plays, but the texts of truth can break through cracks in the concrete, like the sprouts of spring. The murder called Truth and Beauty will out.

Freud: (Indignantly) You call it murder this tender thing called Science and Art that philistines pull to pieces?

Shakespeare: Yes. Love and Science and Art are worth dying for. There is a ferocity about their tenderness and that's why I say their murderous beauty will out. Anyway, without ambiguity where would an artist be?

Freud: In the Vatican perhaps?

Shakespeare: The White House, too, it seems.

Freud: Truth without ambiguity is like Time hiding its face from the sun.

Shakespeare: You should have been the poet and I the scientist.

Freud: (Explosively, excitedly) That's it. That's it. That's why I summoned you.

Shakespeare: (Confused, surprised) Oh. Explain. Explain.

Freud: It's that gadfly Bloom saying that you are the center of the canon and that I, like all other writers under the influence of the massive anxiety all of us in your wake experience, am merely derivative.

Shakespeare: He's a critic, Sigmund. They're all envious artists manques; why does it bother you so much?

Freud: But I actually agree with him about your status. You are the center of the Western Canon. But he treats my science as literature and my therapeutic innovations as exercises in shamanism. What's more, by judging my entire oeuvre as literature, he ridicules the science of it and throws the scientific baby out with the literary bathwater, if that metaphor makes any sense at all. (Becoming exasperated) And besides, he addles my head! If I use your procrastinating Hamlet to illustrate how the Oedipus Complex can immobilize the human spirit, he infers that I have a Hamlet Complex, my envy dragging Oedipus on stage to upstage your creation and celebrate my own.

Shakespeare: (Teasingly) He must have a point since methinks the analyst doth protest too much!

Freud: Oh Will, how could you even humorously identify with such sophistry? Bloom's suggestion that Science and Literature are at loggerheads is ludicrous in the first place. If Truth is their mutual quest, the poet uses beauty as his palette knife, the scientist presses any phenomenon under the sun, even beyond the sun, into the service of investigation. They're both trail-blazers and ignorance busters. Literature is not decorative and science cannot be dismissed as shamanism.

Shakespeare: I agree with you. I tried to dissect the human soul with all the skill of a surgeon.

Freud: And I tried to portray the human mind with the scalpel of a poet, the non-solar, oneiric vision of a poet.

Shakespeare: "We are such stuff as dreams are made on and our little life is rounded with a sleep."

Freud: I couldn't write lines like that but I burrowed into the meaning of dreams even deeper than you did, no matter what Bloom says.

Shakespeare: Yes you did. (Slyly) I anticipated you by a few hundred years in certain matters. By the way, did you know that I even anticipated your discovery of transference in my play *The Two Noble Kinsmen*?

Freud: (Incredulously) No!

Shakespeare: Well, I will let the fictional facts speak for themselves. The play is a re-telling of Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*. But I add a subplot. A jailer's daughter who tends one of the imprisoned knights (Palamon) falls in love with him and becomes psychotic with lover's malady. A doctor, sensing that unrequitable love is at the root of the psychosis, suggests that she can be cured if her attention (you would call it libido), which has become autistic for want of a satisfying object, can be re-routed toward a substitute who must pretend that he is Palamon. In this way, she can be gradually returned to the world of reality. The treatment works and her affections return to their pre-Palamon state. Does it not sound like an Elizabethan version of transference to you?

Freud: (Flabbergasted) What took me hours of clinical labor to arrive at, with midnight oil and unique preconscious readiness and plasticity, you pull from the unconscious with an aesthetic ease that is astonishing!

Shakespeare: I had great respect for the lunatic, the lover and the poet well before you discovered the unconscious glue that binds us all together, the glue we carry out of the womb, building, like spiders, the webs that scaffold and ensnare us.

Freud: When I burrowed into dreams and discovered the primary processes of our most primitive logic of desire, my science had turned me inside out and I was all raw flesh with only fear to guide me where roads had never gone and wilderness was but a name for wordless awe and wonder.

Shakespeare: It's the place where poetry begins.

Freud: Science too!

Shakespeare: It has no local habitation, no name until flesh stumbles on it, and stooping to pick it up, finds itself as if for the first time.

Freud: Yes, the first time treasured and savored and not turned into habit so fast and jaded into repetition. Experience is a complemental series of perceptual moments: momentary gods of perception and intuition! (Emphatically) The only religion I ever believed in!

Shakespeare: (Incredulously) A godless Jew who believes in the gods of moment to moment!

Freud: (Mischievously) Speaking of which, were you anti-Semitic in *The Merchant of Venice*?

Shakespeare: Were you anti-female in your depiction of an inherent weakness in female morality?

Freud: (Philosophically) "I am become a name" as Tennyson said of Ulysses. I am no longer myself. History is the only bier to carry my corpse, or at least the corpus of my ideas into the future.

Shakespeare: I am more used to oblivion than you. I have passed through Nature to Eternity centuries ahead of you, but my "drowned books" keep washing up on the shores of existence, over and over. Why Bloom even suggests that it was I who invented the human! Did you ever?

Freud: You did. Hamlet has walked off those Elizabethan pages into the consciousness of the ages. If it all started with your dead boy Hamnet (as Joyce was the first to suggest), you certainly resurrected him, immortalized him! That eleven-year-old will live for ever!

Shakespeare: (Broken-heartedly) You have made me sad. There is no ink that can bring him back, no flights of angels can ever sing me to my rest.
> Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
> Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
> Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
> Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
> Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form.

Freud: (Genuinely, sadly) I am sorry. I should have known better. My child was a woman when she died: yet she lives on in my sorrow, like an endless echo or a recurring dream.

Shakespeare: Art has its limitations.

Freud: Science too.

Silence. They both weep.

Freud: (Pulling himself together) Tears and the thoughts too deep for tears — these I tried to put under oil immersion, the psychoanalytic microscopy of the soul.

Shakespeare: (Trying to recover from his sadness) A vile phrase "microscopy of the soul": that which we call grief, by any other name, would still be the shiver of death in us, reminding us of fear in a handful of dust.

Freud: Especially the grief for which we cannot find the cause, Hippocrates' definition of depression thousands of years ago.

Shakespeare: Has it been with us that long! Fancy that!

Freud: Since we assumed the erect posture. Nose in air we couldn't smell the sphincters of mortality any more and we lost our bearings, the death we couldn't face buried inside us. (With dark humor) But it knocks on the door or the window-pane. About 3 A.M. usually! It's always 3 o'clock in the morning in the human heart, as Scott Fitzgerald said.

Shakespeare: "Of all the wonders that I yet have seen
It seems to me most strange that men should fear
Since death a necessary end shall come
When it shall come."

Freud: But you see, my dear William, it's not just the fact of death that strikes fear in our hearts. It's our death wishes. My ideas about unconscious identification and unconscious ambivalence are crucial: We identify with the dead and carry on ambivalent dialogues with them: (Becoming more and more animated) In this way the mind turns an external dialogue into an internal drama, the unconscious constantly expanding its territoriality as it swallows relationships and conflicts it cannot process immediately and mulls them over secretly,

intrapsychically, as if to better digest them.

Shakespeare: Sometimes it never quite digests them?

Freud: You could say that: a kind of prolonged intrapsychic indigestion. But I'm stressing the importance of identification. It's an idea that's become so jaded, the beauty of it is almost forgotten. (Becoming animated again) It incenses me to hear my piece of ingenuity so casually, so glibly, so thoughtlessly used without due consideration for the originality of thought that launched it.

Shakespeare: But that's what happens to all metaphor: the poetry of a trailblazing word gets lost in common usage. I invented so many words myself. Why! I expanded the wingspread of the English language almost singlehandedly, but who remembers? There is no patent on a new word, my dear Sigmund. A mouthful of air: that's what Yeats said he made his poetry out of, the caprice of the wind his plaything.

Freud: (Becoming animated yet again) But the mind is the sail that bends the wind to its purpose and my concept of identification is a product of my unique mind and not an attribute of the wind. Science cannot be forgotten as words get bandied about.

Shakespeare: That which we call a rose, by any other word would smell as sweet.

Freud: Yes! Yes! Yes! There is a reality to a rose before we word it. Theory is all well and good, but it doesn't stop things from existing.

Shakespeare: You were an existentialist before it became fashionable.

Freud: Fashionable philosophy is like polite psychoanalysis: oxymoronic! There are more things in earth and heaven, you said, than are dreamt of in our philosophy. Wasn't resignation to the inevitable, inexorable forces of nature one of your great themes?

Shakespeare: Defiance yours?

Freud: (Addressing the question seriously) My wish to wrest death from mother nature's provenance you mean, my theory of death instincts making flesh the master of its own entropy? (Now more emphatically) Yes. While you were content to hold a mirror up to nature I held up a fist!

Shakespeare: (Mischievously) Maybe you had problems with your own mother, cleverly concealed in this mother nature complex.

Freud: (Sarcastically) A Freudian Shakespeare, no less!

Shakespeare: A Shakespearean Freud, no less!

Freud: The anxiety of influence Bloom would call it, stealing from me without ever acknowledging his debt of course!

Shakespeare: Respect for the history of ideas I would call it —history as memory that survives its own demise. In that context how profound and elegant your theory of memory was, my dear Sigmund. Macbeth asks the physician why he cannot "pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow." But you make it clear that no one can pluck until they know where the roots are and how complex are their intertwinings.

Freud: Exactly. Now some of my colleagues believe they can spot the roots quickly, or they make a fetish out of certain roots to the exclusion or neglect of others; some even start new movements, with an almost religious zeal, proclaiming the discovery and veneration of the one true root of all life's problems.

Shakespeare: You believed there was a complex complemental series of genetic events that stamped neurosis with its unconscious branding iron. Would you say the same about all development, like my "Seven Ages of Man"?

Freud: Yes, but in your seven ages you start with "At first the infant mewling and puking in the nurse's arms" and then you skip to "And then the whining school-boy with his satchel and shining morning face, creeping like snail unwillingly to school." You skipped over the first five years of infantile sexuality quicker than you can say Little Hans.

Shakespeare: In my defense I could argue that these are the words of Jaques, a character who clearly had a bad case of the Elizabethan Malady (so well described, by the way, by your colleague Babb). But I concede the point: I don't think the world knew about the sexual dramas of the first five years of life until you spelt it out. One thing puzzles me however. You invoked Oedipus as the great metaphoric conflictual hero who unriddles the Sphynx, but cannot escape his fate. But I think the concept of the Sphynx got short shrift in your thinking. Wasn't the whole existential tragedy of the human condition already

encoded in the cryptic language of the Sphynx? "What begins on all fours, then stands upright on two feet, but needs three to keep it up in the long run?" The pre-Sophoclean weaver of that philosophical knot was the first existentialist in my opinion, a mind that looked life and death between the eyes and did not flinch, a mind that saw the spider in the cup and swallowed hard, a mind that came to grips with the inexorable entropy of the flesh of Homo Sapiens, twisting the insight into an aesthetic knot, a riddle that homo ludens would have fun and grief unraveling. Enter Oedipus taking it all so personal as if nature's indifference to man's suffering was meant only for him. Enter Freud, the Unraveller, who pulls the mask off the aesthetic mind to reveal the Sphynx and Oedipus, two characters in search of meaning in a cosmic playhouse as the curtain rises.

Freud: (Thoughtfully) A Sphynx complex, you mean, even deeper than my Oedipus Complex in the labyrinth of the mind.

Shakespeare: Art and Science need each other, you see. Sometimes a blind poet can see further than a sighted seer.

Freud: Science can build a piano, you mean, only Art can tune it.

Shakespeare: Exactly. A well-tempered piano defies the exactitudes of science. To make all the octaves in any key on a well-tempered piano sound right, you have to flatten all the fifths, as any piano tuner will tell you.

Freud: These are the concessions science yields to Art so that an accompanist can keep up with the soprano and not sound like a crow chasing a nightingale.

Shakespeare: Science chasing Art you mean, like the mind chasing itself in the mirror of the body, never recognizing its own image!

Freud: Yes. Two sides of a coin disputing their common currency.

Shakespeare: Irony, conflicted on your couch.

Freud: Irony, tragic on your stage. Look: the unconscious mind is a theater also, a theater that never closes its doors since the stage is so invisible and the exits and entrances so unseen.

Shakespeare: A round O, but imaginary.

Freud: Precisely.

Shakespeare: But I have put characters on the stage you would have called scoundrels and dismissed. Psychopathic characters had no place on your bourgeois stage. Sigmund, you were a closet reactionary. Admit it.

Freud: (Defensively, but aggressively) I object. You misunderstand me. I dismissed scoundrels from my consulting room since I was a realist and acknowledged that my psychoanalytic method could not touch them, certainly not change them. It was reality and humility that drove them away, not prejudice. I even argued that some criminals were criminals from a sense of guilt they couldn't acknowledge to themselves, their criminality an ironic expression of their own innocence: all they were really guilty of was a sense of guilt. An ironic drama of guilt and innocence, I suppose you would call it.

Shakespeare: Yes. I wrote a few of those in my time. But you have slipped the noose of the snare I had prepared for you: so let me try to entrap you one more time. I depicted evil on the stage: Aaron the Moor, Edmund, Iago, Richard the Third and I did not whitewash it. You dismissed scoundrels as untreatable. Admit it!

Freud: My dear William, I acknowledged my limitations as a clinician. (With great emphasis) As a philosopher of the human mind I dismissed nothing, tried to flinch from nothing. It's the bashers and revisionists who find my sexuality too polymorphous, my death wishes too biological. I insisted that man is an animal full of rampant sexual desire and equally rampant death wishes. He tries to repress and whitewash and ends up a fool with war-stained flesh. What he represses returns as widows and orphans and sectarian revenge that tears the fabric of society apart. I weep for human nature. It is doomed by its own blinders. You banish the child of repression in the wilderness and he returns with swollen feet to screw his mother and murder his father. And the wheels of history and irony keep turning and turning.

Shakespeare: So why write? Why analyze?

Freud: Because there is a romance at the core of us. We want to screw our mothers and kill our fathers and then we want to sit them down and discuss it all with them! It's madness and it needs a stage, it needs a couch to give it a . . .

Shakespeare: A local habitation and a name.

Freud: (Emphatically) You said it!

Shakespeare: Words, words, words.

Freud: They are as mysterious as water, as fluid as feelings, as liquid as the soul itself, a mercury we cannot hold but perish if it slips through our fingers.

Shakespeare: We are such stuff as *words* are made on.

Freud: And our little life is rounded with a *speech*.

Shakespeare: And death is no parenthesis.

Freud: No. Death is a sentence, a life sentence, in fact, until doom, with sudden, unexpected punctuation makes a full stop. (Sorrowfully) And the script of my life, my dear William, has little ink left to scribble it further. (Profoundly, but almost innocently, in a whisper) I have heard the chimes at midnight.

Shakespeare: And you fear it as the ink runs out?

Freud: (Snapping angrily) You had an afterlife to fall back on. (Philosophically, soberly) I drank my darkness neat. (With a sudden, feigned casualness) But I console myself by turning anxiety into a signal.

Shakespeare: And what does the signal point to?

Freud: The unknown. (Dramatically, theatrically) The ultimate lonely place where a dog and a river and a boatman are the only props and dramatis personae we can come up with to fill an empty stage called oblivion.

Shakespeare: All the world's a stage.

Freud: And I am weary of my part.

Shakespeare: We have Art, as Nietzsche said, so that we do not perish from the truth.

Freud: And we have truth to guide us when Art has lost its way.

Shakespeare: Still, since I don't believe in spirits or spiritualism, Art is the only medium, the only aesthetic séance that can raise the dead, not like Lazarus perhaps, but the way current speech can preserve an ancient phrase, "as in

wild earth a Grecian vase."

Freud: Or the way a dream, like caves in Lascaux, preserves the wishes etched on the vanished walls of childhood, sleep's gift to the frantic lost and found shop of the human mind.

Shakespeare: *Exegi monumentum aere perennius* as Horace put it: I have built a monument more lasting than bronze.

Freud: And to think it's all the product of a mouthful of air.

Shakespeare: (Changing the subject) Come, my dear Sigmund, we need one final spat before we part. Let me see. Ah, yes. Your crazy theory of my identity. (Laughing and laughing) You couldn't believe I was Will from little Stratford on Avon. You had to pour some blue blood in my veins, you ridiculous snob!

Freud: (Thoughtfully) I suppose it was my own family romance projected onto you: I couldn't believe Sigmund Freud came from a little Stratford-like town in Moravia, picking up scraps of metal from Zajic's work-room floor, my first playthings. I reinvented myself and so I reinvented you.

Shakespeare: You were a snob and yet you played in the gutters of the mind and gave new dignity to the slobber and ooze of flesh that most of us had turned away from in disgust. What majestic irony! I could have immortalized you in a play if only I had known, if only Time allowed such anachronistic cross-roads and meeting places. What a shame we didn't meet sooner.

Freud: We will share an entropy together, my dear William, our molecules like sand on the fringe of the ocean, drying their tears in the sun.

Shakespeare: Goodbye, dear Sigmund. There's that knocking at your door, we spoke of earlier, and it's not even three o'clock in the morning!

Freud: Let me exploit the final piece of dramatic irony: That's Dr. Schur. He's come with something for me. Do let him in as you leave.

Shakespeare leaves.

But the knocking at the door continues, as the curtain falls and the sound of Bach's preludes and fugues begins again.

Art Criticism

Robert Gober: From Reality to Restitution

Susan Van Scoy

According to Donald Meltzer and Meg Harris Williams, there is a lack of intimacy in human relationships in contemporary society. When we venture into the world, we adhere to all the social rules and functions; conversely, we remove this defense system when we are "at home," in order to create freely while secluded from societal inspection. Meltzer and Williams identify two groups who are unable to adapt to this process: the mentally ill and artists. Artists have an intimate relationship with the world's beauty so the myriad inhumanities that threaten it inhibit their development of protective armor.[1] Artists such as Robert Gober use art to expose meaning in the world, while also struggling to form intimate relationships with the people in their lives.

Robert Gober's artistic world consists mainly of memories from his childhood and home. He is a sculptor who fashions objects from American household items: tissue boxes, Armour lard, porcelain sinks, and garden statue Madonnas. While he renders these items true to their original form, they are still manipulated in some artificial way such as being intersected by a culvert pipe, or lacking some important physical feature (such as a sink without faucets, or a vacant dress). Gober's art reveals more than mere nostalgia for yesteryear; rather, Gober re-created these objects as symbols from his internal world in an effort to restore his ego to a unified whole. Usually these objects are arranged as part of an environment reminiscent of a home complete with doorways, wallpaper, and household objects, or a church with crucifix, altars, and windows, but accompanied by a sense of eeriness. Freud referred to this phenomenon as the uncanny or *heimlich*: settings that conjure familiarity but don't reveal the whole story and bring a once-repressed memory to the forefront.[2] I will discuss three installations by Robert Gober: one at Paula Cooper Gallery installed in 1989, one at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles installed in 1997, and his most recent at Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

installed in 2005. By invoking various object-relations psychoanalytic theories, I will describe how he practiced his art as a means of therapy in order to form a connection with the underrepresented gay world, to forge a mature, intimate relationship with his mother, and to achieve peace with his inner world.

Robert Gober was born and raised in Yalesville, a community of Wallingford, Connecticut, in 1954. His mother was a nurse before she had children and his father worked in a factory. Wallingford was, and still is, the embodiment of the small American town. It is home to many industrial companies due to the prevalence of natural resources and boasts an important historical connection to the American Revolution, fulfilling two distinct American ideals. In Wallingford, one can visit the trail where George Washington traveled twice, the oldest brick house in Connecticut, and the birthplace of Lyman Hall, a signatory of the Declaration of Independence.[3] Gober had a Roman Catholic upbringing and worked as an altar boy in his youth. His family even lived across the street from their church. Early on in his life he realized he was homosexual and vividly remembered struggling to reconcile his religion and his sexuality. Concurrently, American homosexuality was being exposed and vilified by the media, causing the Roman Catholic Church to publicly address its stance on the issue. In 1964, *Life* magazine published "Homosexuality in America: The 'Gay' World Takes to the City Streets," which focused on the alienation of homosexuals from the rest of the world, their immorality, and their conflicts with the law. It was this article, generously accompanied by images of a leather bar, a gay clothing store, and a transvestite, that introduced the gay sub-culture to mainstream America.[4] Before 1975, the Church ignored homosexual's existence claiming that they were just heterosexuals involved in immoral acts. In 1975, in a statement issued by the Vatican, it distinguished innate, incurable homosexuality from confused heterosexuals who had been falsely educated and who could be converted back. The Church chose to focus on the immorality of the homosexual act as opposed to the individual, resulting in a kind of psychological splitting by the congregants.[5]

Not surprisingly, when Gober renounced Catholicism, he turned to his art. He recalled that it was in his early teens when he decided to abdicate his faith. Looking back, he said, "I wish that other people could see how damaging it is to children to be raised with that image of themselves as doomed, when we are in essence all God's children."[6] He first knew he wanted to become a painter when he glanced next door and saw the priest's underwear hanging on the laundry line; it was the realization that this priest was a person, subjected to daily tasks like washing dirty clothes that he had soiled, that allowed him to see that the Church was no longer unassailable.[7]

Throughout his teenage years, Gober was constantly drawing. The catharsis involved in drawing frequently results in being able to control objects that those holding the pencil are not necessarily in control of in reality.

Presumably, Gober was grappling with the knowledge that if he told people he was gay, he would alienate his family and his friends; this was a frightening proposition having already lost his religion. Gober would observe and absorb full possession of an object and, rather than copy it, would recreate it as his own. Fusing destruction and construction, whereby reducing an object to selected parts and forming an image, he could draw a person when he was afraid of losing them, and cross out those whom he imagined would reject him.[8] This is what Hanna Segal defined as the reparative process of the depressive position. The depressive position of an individual occurs when their harmonious internal world is destroyed; the creative impulse impels one to possess and recreate the lost world. As he matured, Gober relied on symbolism to express unconscious phantasies, reconciling them with real material sharing the same characteristics.[9] When asked what his sculptures meant, Gober replied, "I feel that unless you know what it's physically made of, you can't begin to understand it. A lot of times the metaphors are embedded right in the medium and the way that you work."[10]

In his early adult years after college, Gober spent a brief period of time painting and managed to support himself by working as a carpenter, sometimes building dollhouses. His choice to become a carpenter and an artist was also influenced by his father and the fact that he worked as a factory worker. Edith Jacobson posited that a father's narcissistic ties to his son could try to dictate his position as father, husband, and occupation to the son. If the son's natural inclinations were against the father's way of life, this would lead to considerable conflict.[11] The fact that Gober's father built their family house himself is noteworthy in that respect. Because Gober is a homosexual and thus could not be following in his father's footsteps as a husband and a father, his building dollhouses reiterated the notion that art worked as a reconstruction. By building dollhouses, Gober recovered and recreated a home in his own way, eschewing his father's standards. Since homosexuality didn't figure into his father's concept of a home, the dollhouse symbolized that Gober aimed to exert total control over its exterior appearance as well as its inner domestic happenings. Although he first constructed dollhouses solely to earn money, Gober started to incorporate houses into his sculptural work, such as *Untitled*, 1979-80.

As a sculptor, Gober's objects were always handmade, even though they appeared as if they were found objects. Again, this was in stark opposition to his father. In response to people who remarked that his objects were labor-intensive, Gober commented, "It doesn't actually take me that long. I'm not interested in being bored; that's why I don't work for someone else or have a job. My dad worked in a factory; I want to entertain myself."[12] In his choice of being a free-agent "craftsman," Gober chose the polar opposite of what was his father's profession. Moreover, Gober revealed, "you learn as a young boy

unconsciously about being a man and a person from your father."[13] Here he was hinting at his father's assembly-line mentality: every object should be the same and if an anomaly surfaced, it was defective and should be cast-off, whereas Gober's handwork was more akin to what Merleau-Ponty called "the chiasm of the touching-touched," or the intertwining of the visible and the tactile worlds. Compared to his father, Gober's objects were a form of meditation in that, rather than repeating the self, he preferred the "irreducible uniqueness of the other."[14] This subverted the notion of the idealization of heterosexuality and the derogatory nature of the homosexual as "other."

Gober's conflicts with his father's attitude regarding masculinity threatened his own sense of masculinity in his adult artistic life. Although many psychoanalysts dismissed the notion of the homosexual's father's hostility and distance as a stereotype, Gober's defensive attitude towards being a craftsman and doing women's work is highly instructive. In response to critics calling his art "homespun" or "quaint," Gober remarked that, "I thought it was used to diminish me, because I was not doing the respected masculine act, which was hiring other people to do your labor for you." This sense of inferiority echoed his conflict with his father's line of work. This aversion was further revealed when Gober was asked who his favorite artists were, and he listed female artists Sherrie Levine, Barbara Kruger, and Cindy Sherman, stating, "It's the women who affected me. The men were all bad examples, and then the women were all good examples."[15] Gober's identification with women could be detected in his work and used to gain insight into its meaning and the mechanics of his inner world.

In his first critically-recognized installation at Paula Cooper Gallery in 1989, Gober created two rooms, one that contained a floating, hollow wedding dress and bags of kitty litter leaning against the walls. The wall was covered with wallpaper patterned with alternating vignettes of a sleeping white man and black man hanging from a tree. The second space was marked by black walls with white chalk-like drawings of genitalia. Drains were embedded in the walls at chest-height along the perimeter of the space. In the center of the room, a pedestal stood with a white paper bag full of donuts.[16] The structure of the two rooms was similar, with one central object, many peripheral objects, and the wallpaper acting as an enclosure.

Gober's inner world in this installation touching on homosexuality revealed his identification with his mother, and his fear of dying alone from the AIDS virus. In constructing the wedding dress, Gober conducted research in bridal magazines for the design and modeled the dress to his body. He emotionally readied himself, explaining that, "For days I would wear a bra around my studio...to help me begin identifying with the form."[17] Gober created the wedding dress himself out of silk, satin, muslin, linen, tulle, and welded steel. Although the act of sewing the dress had destructive elements in that the

exercise involved piercing fabric with a needle, the thread also symbolized a transitional object that connected him with his mother. In addition, wearing a bra was a symbol of unconscious identification with his mother, and signaled his homosexuality through the resolution of the negative oedipal complex where the male identifies with his mother and seeks the father out as a love object.[18] Freud also characterized homosexuality by narcissistic object choice because it functioned as a passive way of being loved. These objects occurred frequently in Gober's work; for instance, sculpted figures in his installations were usually modeled from Gober's body.[19]

During the same year, Gober wrote an essay, "Cumulus from America," in which he described the effect of the AIDS epidemic on his life. In his writing, it seemed as if everyone around him had been touched by the deadly disease in one form or another: "If people aren't themselves sick, they know someone who is, or they are struggling to assimilate the loss of someone who was. For me, death has temporarily over taken life in New York City."[20] However, there were myriad responses to the disease: some blamed the United States government for their ineffectual response to the crisis and lack of preventive measures, while others saw AIDS as a punishment to immoral behavior and they blamed the victim. Jerry Falwell, leader of the Moral Majority, commented, "AIDS is a lethal judgment of God on the sin of homosexuality."[21] Gober likened opinions such as Falwell's to the treatment of other persecuted minorities, such as African Americans. With the image of a lynching in mind, Gober created the hanging man/sleeping man wallpaper by juxtaposing an advertisement for bed sheets showing a white man sleeping peacefully and an image of a hanged black man from a political cartoon from the late 1920s.[22] The wallpaper expressed the brutal and unjust attacks on homosexuals by the religious right who believed they should be killed for a condition that was as innate as skin color. Ultimately, since homosexuality was being equated with death, Gober was anxious and harbored a severe death instinct.

According to Melanie Klein, when an infant experienced the death instinct, they split anxious, hateful, and frustrated feelings or "bad parts" from the ego and projected them onto an external object, usually the mother's breast, in order to help the ego deal with anxiety. However, the projected bad part of the self and the external object would get introjected back into the ego, making the infant feel bad and persecuted, which became the demanding superego. Loving, gratified feelings or "good parts" of the ego were also split off and projected onto an external object and would get introjected back into the ego as an internal object. This process resulted in the idealization of the external object to counteract the persecutory aspects of the breast, which perpetuated the idea of the "inexhaustible breast."[23] For Klein, this occurred during the paranoid schizoid position, when the infant was unable to fully separate themselves from the external object (the breast). Klein also believed that symbolism

took place with projection and identification, but Hanna Segal understood that an individual could not achieve true representational symbolism if they were unable to discern between the ego and the external object. Segal refined the idea of projective identification and true symbolism by locating it in the second developmental position, the depressive position. When the individual was in the depressive position, they had to deal with separation and loss of the external object. Segal offered that art is used as a way of dealing with this loss of the object by recreating objects and ideas belonging to the internal world, *both* internally as well as externally.[24]

In the installation at Paula Cooper, Gober split his bad feelings about homosexuality and death from his ego and projected them onto his mother, symbolized by the wedding dress. The amalgam of the bad part of the ego and the mother was introjected back and became internalized by Gober, representing the superego and his inability to get married and have a family. To counteract these persecutory feelings, Gober idealized and projected his satisfied good feelings onto the bag of kitty litter, which symbolized the mother as caretaker or diaper-changer, which in turn, became introjected back into Gober's ego. Together—the wallpaper, wedding dress, and kitty litter—illustrated how Gober dealt with the death instinct and solitude caused by his homosexuality, by desiring the pre-oedipal relationship with his mother that ensured unconditional love and nurturance.

In the other room, the wallpaper with penises and vaginas was a testament to his struggle with his sexuality during adolescence. The sculpture in the center of the room, a white paper bag filled with chemically preserved donuts was what Richard Flood, in an interview with Robert Gober, called, "the lowest form of quick gratification imaginable."[25] In essence, he was right, the shape and function of the donuts recalled two actions associated with homosexual sex: fellatio and sodomy. The bag of donuts on a plinth stood as a symbol of Gober's father as a love object. According to Richard Isay, homosexual males possessed an erotic desire for their father in early childhood, causing the father to withdraw, and created intimacy issues with male lovers when they became adults.[26] Perhaps Gober related doughnuts to his father, who might have bought them as a treat on Sunday morning after church, harking back to a time when he felt his warmth and attention.

In his essay, Gober concluded, "And should gay men succeed in moving through discrimination that has nurtured this pandemic, their achievement will be remarkable—because for the most part they will have succeeded without the support of family and religion, two mainstays of succor and strength."[27] In the installation, the loss of the family was twofold: the first, the triangular situation of him, his mother, and his father; the second, his own wife and offspring. Ultimately, Gober was dealing with the destruction of his internal world, fearful that he would never marry and achieve that level of caring

from another person that he first experienced with his mother and father. He achieved this in addition to providing a voice protesting the treatment of gays in America. Gregg Bordowitz, a gay right's activist wrote, "Gober's work opens up the possibilities for non-heterosexual viewers, thus inviting participation from audiences not recognized by dominant culture."[28]

Eight years later, Gober created an installation at the Los Angeles Contemporary Arts Museum that accomplished his previous goals, in addition to providing him with restitution. Set in a warehouse environment with cement floors and gray walls, Gober placed a life-sized plaster Madonna garden statue in the center of the room, frontally pierced with a six-foot long culvert pipe. Behind the Madonna was an ascending staircase with a flood of water rushing down into a sewer drain at the bottom, which one could observe through the Madonna. The statue rested on a large sewer grate placed over a water world replete with rocks, seaweed, and pennies, nickels, and dimes from the year the artist was born (1954). The Madonna was flanked by a pair of old-fashioned open suitcases whose bottoms were sewer grates that glimpsed into another underwater scene of a bottom half of a man and a diapered baby.[29]

In order to analyze this installation, it was necessary to depart from Klein, and instead draw from Wilfred Bion's concept of the container/contained. Bion introduced the religious and metaphysical concept of "O," which stood for "ultimate reality, absolute truth, the godhead, the infinite, the thing-in-itself." While the Kleinians and the Freudians started with a pre-conceived notion of drives, Bion commenced with the unknown "O" during the analytic session. Although Bion focused more on greed and envy, he also studied how mankind was progressing into the future with a more positive approach than the Kleinians.[30]

According to Bion, when the infant feels discomfort caused by hunger, guilt, and anxiety, it expels these primitive, inexpressible elements, called "beta elements," into the breast that acts as a container. If the mother is a "good mother" she receives these fears and transforms them into alpha elements and the infant reintrojects them. The mother and the child form a "thinking couple" who are represented by Greek symbols because Bion felt that words were too saturated with meaning and the symbols could be interpreted only by personal experience. The infant also introjects the container that could perform the alpha transformation, enabling them to handle anxieties on their own.[31]

The Madonna intersected with the pipe represented the container/contained relationship between Gober and his mother. Interestingly, this was not the first time that Gober pierced an object with a pipe: previous sculptures included a pipe with a box of tissues, a box of Armour lard, a basket, and an armchair. For the Madonna, the length and width of the pipe was the size of Gober's body, and according to him, served "as a stand-in for myself."[32] The

pipe also could be interpreted as a cannon because as a child, Gober lived next door to retired circus performers who were famous for inventing "the human cannonball." Gober recalled how they didn't exactly fit in with the Wallingford crowd: "The boys were raised in circus tradition. Their hair was not cut until they were two years old. They were given Christian names, but then they were called by their circus names." He remembered how the cannons were mounted on the family car that would get parked in front of the house, which was across the street from the church.[33] Gober felt an affinity to these people and adapted the pipe/cannon as a true symbol for himself as the "other."

The penetrated objects—box of tissues, box of lard, armchair, and Madonna garden statue—shared the commonality that they were all probably found around his home and they were objects that could be associated with his mother. Madonna with the pipe illustrated Gober's projection of beta elements (the pipe) onto his mother, with the sculpture as a whole representing his mental apparatus, comprised of both his intuitions and experiences with the external world. The mental apparatus was integrated into an inner space where thoughts could flow in and out. Gober explained that the pipe: "…is a twisted vessel that things pass through—similar to your body." Unbeknownst to many critics, the act of combining the pipe and Madonna was not violent. Gober did not take a whole Madonna and thrust a pipe through her; instead, he built up the Madonna from chicken wire and plaster modeled around the pipe. The creative process mimicked Bion's description of the transformation of beta to alpha elements as a sort of digestion, or a swallowing up.[34]

Hanna Segal built on Bion's concept of container and contained to include a third party: the father. Disagreeing with Bion, who felt that the mental apparatus involved an oscillation between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, Segal believed that in order to form alpha elements, the infant must be in the depressive position so the mother would be identified as a whole, separate person that possessed a relationship with the father. This resulted in the triangular relationship between the child and the mother, the child and the father, and the mother and the father. However, she still believed that alpha elements were directly related to dreams, phantasy, and symbolization.[35] Acting in the depressive position, Gober addressed and symbolized the notion of the triangular relationship in his installation, which also revealed ambivalence towards his father. The male who was holding a baby in the water was a symbol for Gober's father. However, if one contrasted the container/contained relationship of Gober's mother, one could see that it was never realized with his father. While his mother was out in the open making a connection with her son, the father was underground, accessible only by peering through the grate at the bottom of an open suitcase. For Gober, the suitcase functioned as a symbol of a defunct container associated with leaving and separation. In the installation, the projection of beta elements onto his father is

an impossibility caused by distance and the metal bars of the sewer grate.

Through this installation, Gober's behavior recalled patterns that have been observed in other artists, such as Leonardo da Vinci. The artists actually share some similarities: both engaged in homosexual acts and painstakingly created their art through the use of religious imagery. In Leonardo's painting *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne* (1508-1510), his depiction of two maternal figures reflected his childhood upbringing since he was raised by numerous women (his biological mother, wet nurse, and stepmother) due to his illegitimate birth. This scene took painful memories of Leonardo's childhood and elevated the status of those involved: his mother became the Holy Virgin, his stepmother became a doting maternal figure, and he was raised from an illegitimate child to the Son of God.[36] Gober achieved a similar feat due to his presence in the installation, demarcated by the pennies dated to his birth year, suggesting that he was the son of the Virgin, raised up from the dregs of society. Coincidentally, Gober's first occupation, a carpenter, was also the same as Jesus'. Through his art making, he could recreate himself, an outsider of the Catholic Church, into Jesus Christ. When Gober received criticism that this installation was an assault to the Virgin and the Catholic Church he explained, "I was trying to get close to the Virgin." He further commented, "My mother had a sophisticated reading of the show. She told Daphne that she thought the whole piece was about me making a sculpture of my own birth."[37] In therapy, when a patient feels that the analyst understands his projections and could process them, it results in a mentally contained state for the patient.[38] For Gober, art is his therapy session and the people he affects play the role of the analyst. When Gober saw that his mother understood his art and processed the projections, Gober felt that he was finally understood and accepted.

During both installations Gober worked in the depressive position, recreating an original version of his shattered internal world. Segal posited that successful artworks contain ugly and beautiful elements that attest to the destructive and constructive processes of creating art. In Gober's two installations, the fabric pierced by the needle for the wedding dress and the pummeled clay for the Madonna attested to the destructive nature of art. The kitty litter, the sleeping man/hanging man wallpaper, and the sewers could also be construed as ugly and unpleasant, whereas the beauty rested in the environments created by Gober—united either by wallpaper, placement of the sculptures, or the sound of flowing water. These installations were a product of real psychic work that provided restitution to Gober. They both gave him an opportunity to express repressed memories that released the tension between the repressed impulses and the ego. In the Paula Cooper installation, Gober released tension about his homosexuality, but it wasn't represented in a positive light. On the other hand, the installation at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art

accomplished both principles of restitution: it relieved the tension between repressed impulses and the ego, and it relieved the tension between the ego and the ego ideal. By "getting closer to the Virgin," Gober recreated a forbidden realm, while illuminating his existence and capturing his salvation.[39]

Gober didn't produce another major installation for eleven years, which further demonstrated that he achieved restitution with his "Madonna" installation. According to W.R.D. Fairbairn, when a person experiences true restitution, the tension caused by the ego-ideal is pacified—thus quelling the destructive appeal to create art.[40] After the full-fledged production schedule for the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art installation, Gober felt that he needed to simplify and scale back his studio practice. He relocated his Manhattan studio to the garage of his Long Island home. He explained that he wanted to work by himself again and that he "wanted to be alone in nature."[41] During this respite, Gober struggled with the stresses of aging and the death of his beloved maternal grandmother. However, the events of 9/11 impelled him back to the city and provided raw psychological material for the sculptural works that would result in his installation at Matthew Marks Gallery, four years later.[42]

The installation was located in the gallery's large white rectangular room. It consisted of sculptures arranged to form the outline of a church basilica with a nave, flanked by two columns of three "altars" of cast bronze Styrofoam slabs with various offerings. The first column of altars contained a glass bowl of wax fruit, two packages of Drypers-brand diapers set in a milk crate and a cast bronze piece of driftwood melted to the shape of it. The second column of altars contained a glass bowl of wax fruit, the driftwood, and a package of diapers directly on top of the altar. The entrance was marked by a pedestal wrought from two nested garbage cans and topped with a piece of plywood, a priest's shirt and collar, and a newspaper clipping with a picture of a woman wearing a band-aid depicting a purple heart. The wall of the apse area was decorated with a crucifix holding a decapitated Jesus spouting two streams of water from his nipples into a sandblasted hole in the floor. A porcelain sculpture of a plastic beach chair was on the crucifix's right, and to its left two yellow Bug Lites light bulbs rested. Two inner "chapels" located behind the apse contained symmetrical scenes of a bather, one male, one female, with running faucets, and copies of *The New York Times* Starr Report tossed on the floors beside the tubs. Eight pastels on reprints of the September 12, 2001 *The New York Times* hung in place of traditional stained glass windows and two sculptures, each of a half man, half woman with a leg jutting out of the anus, sat in the front corners of the church.[43]

This installation takes Gober's personal mourning for his grandmother, and possibly his youth, connects it with the collective mourning resulting from 9/11, and expresses it through the framework of Christianity: baptism, com-

munion, death and resurrection. Because many of the sculptural objects are either modeled after, or contain parts of, his grandmother's belongings that he acquired after her death leads one to believe that Gober is mourning her. For example, the crucifix in the installation is modeled after her crucifix (although hers had a head), the fruit bowls are reminiscent of the glass bowls of wax fruit that she kept on her kitchen table, and the collar from the priest's shirt was cut from one of her white linen tablecloths.[44] However, Gober is not just dealing with the mourning of his grandmother, but also the primal internal objects of his childhood. According to Melanie Klein, in her paper, *Mourning and its Relation to Manic Depressive States*, dealing with the loss of a loved one in real life can trigger feelings of loss for internal objects from the earliest years of life, and these love objects become linked.[45] In Gober's case, he fuses his mourning of the object loss of his grandmother with the separation from his mother as an internal object.

In the installation, Gober plays on the metaphor of church as mother, because it provides birth through baptism, nourishment through the Eucharist, and provides shelter, guidance, and a family. Nonetheless, Gober offers viewers his own interpretation by recreating and reincarnating Catholicism's symbols and ceremonies. For baptism/birth, he presents the bathers as a mother and son pair, united in their absolution of original sin. The addition of the newspapers with the Starr Report detailing President Clinton's affair with an intern represents a type of extramarital sexual act forbidden by the Church. The way in which the facts exist in writing, but are never spoken between the mother and son, is reminiscent of Gober's struggle with revealing his homosexuality (also forbidden by the Church). Two bowls of fruit are used to represent fertility and "the fruit of thy womb," and, as Brenda Richardson tartly points out, the word "fruit" is commonly used as a derogatory name for a gay man.[46] Nourishment and care within the church can be detected with the presence of the disposable diapers and the milk crate. Even so, the most dramatic presence of his mother is the chair beside the crucifix. Traditionally, crucifixion scenes place Mary on the right side of the crucifix and St. John the Evangelist on the left. Gober doesn't seem to stray from the Christian iconography with his placement of a plastic chair to denote Mary and the packages of Bug Lites to signal the Evangelist. During the medieval period, sculptures and paintings would often depict Christ sitting in Mary's lap, a typology known as the *Theotokus*, or "Throne of Wisdom." A yellow glove, the kind usually worn for scrubbing floors or doing dishes, is draped over the left arm of the chair, to further identify his mother.[47] In this case, the throne is reduced to its suburban counterpart, the mother as "Queen of the House."

Gober's reason for including the crucifixion scene reveals the relationship between the loss of his mother as an internal object that Gober experienced as a result of his grandmother's death. In Catholicism, the crucifixion

scene denotes the separation between a mother and son and is the most traumatic and well-known representation of this particular event in human history. In this instance, the crucifixion symbolizes Gober's independence from his mother. Klein suggests that when we experience a loss, we must decide whether to die with the love object or to survive and mourn it— which is called manic triumph. By triumphing over the love object, we relinquish our omnipotence and resign ourselves to our helplessness in order to survive ourselves. In other words, accepting your deepest internal object loss allows you to accept other losses as well. This, in turn, forces people to contemplate their own mortality. By confronting and accepting the loss of his mother as an internal object, Gober is now able to accept all other forms of loss and separation, including the death of his grandmother.[48]

Simultaneously, Gober ventures out from his own separation issues to address the thousands of people dealing with loss after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. He hung eight prints of pages from the September 12, 2001 *New York Times* and covered the bold headlines and shocking photographs with pastel drawings of couples in various sexual positions. As disparate as these images may seem, they do reveal actual reactions to traumatic events such as 9/11. According to Masud Khan, trauma threatens attachment, and the degree of damage depends on the amount and quality of internal and external relationships existing at the onset of trauma. People with strong childhood attachments have a stronger level of resilience to trauma than people with weak childhood attachment relations. The latter may identify with the thing that has caused him to suffer or may lose the ability of symbolic functioning. 9/11 caused many people with high levels of resilience to reach out and form attachments with others. Gober claimed that he moved back to Manhattan after 9/11 so he could be nearer to his lover. In a fictional scene in the novel *Double Vision*, Pat Barker wrote that, "sometimes when you're so saturated in death that you can't soak up anymore, only sex helps;" coincidentally, Brenda Richardson noted that there was an upsurge of births in New York City nine months after the attacks.[49] By including the content of 9/11 in his drawings, Gober facilitated a dialogue with the outside world by forcing his mourning into a communicable media. Moreover, he appropriately hung them where windows are usually located in a church to symbolize his "looking outward."

Although Gober's successful separation from his mother is symbolized by the crucifixion, he didn't emerge unscathed. In addition to the wounds from the nails, his Christ on the cross is headless. There are depictions in the history of art where a crucified Christ was afflicted with more than his mortal wounds; one example is the *Isenheim Altarpiece*, 1510, by Matthias Grünewald, a work that contains many parallels to Gober's installation. The *Isenheim Altarpiece* was created for the hospital of the monastic order of St. Anthony of Isenheim, which cared for patients suffering from the plague and syphilis, the

latter caused by disreputable behavior. Many art historians concede that Grünewald painted Christ, replete with lacerations and gangrene, suffering from syphilis in order to provide the sick with hope and forgiveness. The AIDS virus, a stigmatizing malady, is our contemporary version of syphilis. In Gober's installation, there is a feeling that Christ is suffering from something besides the crucifixion, something seemingly shameful like AIDS. The rubber glove draped on the chair, as well as the Bug Lites leads to a feeling of pestilence and fear of contagiousness that characterized the onset of the AIDS epidemic in the early eighties. Gober illustrates that although we may be forgiven from original sin, given the bather/baptism scene behind it, sexuality is conveniently discarded, with its newspaper of the forbidden tossed from the tub. For humans, sexuality is wounding emotionally and physically, and even mortally. Grünewald and Gober, albeit the latter less successfully, reinsert the aftermath of sexuality into religion to show that "sexual preference and behavior becomes irrelevant: the issue is sickness and death."[50] Gober emphasizes that suffering is a part of life, as evinced with the insertion of images of 9/11 in the installation.

In another panel on the *Isenheim Altarpiece, Resurrection*, Grünewald achieves an antipodal mood compared to the *Crucifixion*: Christ has risen up against an orange and blue orb wearing a flowing, colorful robe; his legs and arms are in a graceful pose, his musculature is less defined, and he has an air of gaiety. Eugene Monick labels him as "an effeminate Christ," and an androgyne.[51] Indeed, Gober admits a similar version of resurrection into his installation: two sculptures of androgynes with tree stumps for legs and a male leg projecting out of the anus. The tree trunks refer to the mythological tale of Daphne, who had prayed to stay chaste against Apollo's advances so her father, the river god Peneus, responded by turning her into a laurel tree. Laurel leaves are always green so they were adapted to represent immortality and victors would crown their heads with it.[52] Gober imagines an afterlife free of gender and sexuality constraints that unite humans and nature. Following Klein's analysis of mourning, Gober employed the installation to accept the death of his grandmother, but also to cope with his own vulnerability caused by getting older and nearer to his own death.

In terms of using the art as a means of restitution, Segal and Bion both agree that, like the relationship between analyst and analysand, the artwork can never fully express the artist's inner world and the full realization of the work depends upon the viewer. Adrian Stokes identifies this as "the incantatory process," where viewers are grasped with an artwork's rhythm and the way it corresponds to the inner processes of the viewer. Although Stokes mostly speaks in relation to painting, he did broach the subject of environment that can be applied to Gober's installations. According to Stokes, in a normal environment, humans are constantly surrounded by the severely mechanical;

they are shocked by it, but never get to move beyond the blinking, beeping, and the frenetic that replicates the paranoid-schizoid position. He argued that the depressive position of great modern art "stimulated awareness of otherness in harmony with the hopes of an integrated object, outer as well as inner," and he bemoaned contemporary art for trying unsuccessfully to keep up with the new, the glittery, and the superficial. Although Gober strays from abstraction, he accomplishes the incantatory process by creating a silent place for contemplation in our interiors—our homes, our churches, our bodies, and our psychic spaces.[53]

Notes

[1]Donald Meltzer and Meg Harris Williams, "Aesthetic Conflict: its place in the developmental process," in *Psychoanalysis and Art: Kleinian Perspectives*, ed. Sandra Gosso (New York: Karnac, 2004), 185.

[2] Nancy Specter, "Robert Gober: Homeward-Bound," *Parkett* 27 (1991): 80.

[3] Town of Wallingford, Connecticut, "Welcome to the Town of Wallingford," www.town.wallingford.ct.us/, accessed March 22, 2005.

[4] Peter Nardi, Davis Sanders, and Judd Marmor, *Growing up Before Stonewall: Life stories of some gay men* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 12.

[5] Gary David Comstock and Susan E. Henking, *Que(e)rying Religion: A Critical Anthology* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1997), 241.

[6]Robert Gober, Interview with Richard Flood, in *Robert Gober: Sculpture + Drawing* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1999; exhibition catalogue), 135.

[7]Ibid., 143.

[8]Ernst Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* (Madison, International Universities Press, 1988), 53.

[9] Hanna Segal, *Dream, Phantasy and Art* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 41.

[10] Robert Gober, "Interview," in *Vija Celmins* (NewYork: Phaidon, 2004), 11.

[11]Edith Jacobson, *The Self and the Object World* (New York: International Universities Press, 1964), 195.

[12] Gober, "Interview with Richard Flood," 124.

[13] Gober, "Interview with Richard Flood," 130.

[14]Maureen Sherlock, "Arcadian Elegy: The Art of Robert Gober," *Arts Magazine* 64, no. 1 (September 1989): 46.

[15] Gober, "Interview with Richard Flood," 123.

[16]Richard Flood, "The Law of Indirections," in *Robert Gober: Sculpture + Drawing*, 16.

[17]Gober, "Interview with Richard Flood," 122.

[18]P. Tyson & R.L. Tyson, cited in Jack Drescher, *Psychoanalytic Therapy and the Gay Man* (Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 1998), 126.

[19] Ibid., 53.

[20]Robert Gober, "Cumulus from America," *Parkett* 19 (1989): 169-171.

[21]Mark Kowalewski, "Religious Constructions of the AIDS crisis," in *Qu(e)erying Religion: A Critical Anthology* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1997), 367.

[22]Robert Gober, "Hanging Man: Sleeping Man: A conversation between Teresia Bush, Robert Gober, and Ned Rifkin" in *Parkett* 27 (1991), 93.

[23]Melanie Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," in *Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. Juliet Mitchell (Free Press, 1987), 181-183.

[22]Segal, *Dream, Phantasy, and Art*, 38, 96.

[23] Richard Flood, "Interview with Robert Gober," 134.

[24] Richard A. Isay, *Being Homosexual: Gay Men and their Development* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1989), 38.

[25]Robert Gober, "Cumulus," 169.

[26]Gregg Bordowitz, "Against Heterosexuality," *Parkett* 27 (1991): 100.

[27] Paul Schimmel, "Gober is in the Details," in *Robert Gober, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles* (New York: Scalo, 1997; exhibition catalogue), 43.

[28] Joan and Neville Symington, "The Theoretical Disjunction between Bion and Freud/Klein," in *The Clinical Thinking of Wilfred Bion* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 10-12.

[29] Segal, *Dream, Phantasy and Art*, 51.

[30] Gober, "Interview with Richard Flood," 129.

[31] Ibid., 135.

[32] Nicola Glover, "The Legacy of Wilford Bion," in *Psychoanalytic Aesthetics: The British School, Free Associations*, http://human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap4.html (accessed April 24, 2005).

[33] Segal, *Dream, Phantasy and Art*, 51-59.

[34] Bradley Collins, *Leonardo, Psychoanalysis, & Art History* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 101.

[35]Gober, "Interview with Richard Flood," 142.

[36] Segal, *Dream, Phantasy and Art*, 53.

[37] W.R.D. Fairbairn, "Prolegomena to a Psychology of Art," in *From Instinct to Self: Selected Papers of W.R.D. Fairbairn*, Vol. II, eds. Ellinor Fairbairn Birtles and David Scharff (Northvale,NJ: Jason Aronson, 1994), 393.

[38] Ibid., 394.

[39] Robert Gober cited in Brenda Richardson, *A Robert Gober Lexicon* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2005), 99.

[40] Brenda Richardson, *A Robert Gober Lexicon* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2005), 99.

[41] Ibid., 7.

[42] Ibid., 92.

[43] Susan Kavaler-Adler, *Mourning, spirituality, and psychic change: a new object relations view of psychoanalysis* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2003), 58.

[44] Richardson, *A Robert Gober Lexicon*, 94.

[45] Ibid., 52.

[46] Kavaler-Adler, *Mourning, spirituality, and psychic change*, 56-57.

[47] Richardson, *A Robert Gober Lexicon*, 95, 97.

[48] Eugene Monick, *Evil, Sexuality, and Disease in Grünewald's Body of Christ* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1993), 105.

[49]Ibid., 174.

[50] Richardson, *A Robert Gober Lexicon* , 76.

[51] Adrian Stokes, "The Invitation in Art," 121-122.

Art Criticism

Alter egos and hidden personas: A psychoanalytic critique of Roee Rosen/Justine Frank

Sarah Plymate

At an exhibition in the Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art in Herzliya, Israel in 2003, the Israeli-born artist Roee Rosen presented a compilation of letters, essays, photographs, a sketch book, and photographs attributed to a Jewish Belgian artist, Justine Frank, who arrived in Palestine in the first half of the twentieth century and died in 1943. According to Rosen he was "reviving" Justine Frank whose work had been completely forgotten in Israel. But Frank is actually an artistic creation of Rosen—an alter ego through which he examines multiple identities, feminine characters, the modern era in art, and the Holocaust itself.

Roee Rosen, a second generation Holocaust survivor, is known as the "Zionist ventriloquist." But his creation, Justine Frank, insults and negates Judaism. For example, Frank repetitively depicted stereotypical anti-Semitic profiles of religious Jewish males with elongated noses and head coverings that turned into phallic imagery.

Why did Rosen create a character that portrays Judaism in such a negative light? Does this represent an internal conflict for Rosen, projected through the character of Justine Frank? As the son of Holocaust survivors, what is Rosen saying about the Holocaust?

Justine Frank was schizophrenic. She is certainly aware of the Nazis, and flees from Nazi power in 1934. But she avoids confronting the repression, denying it. Freud writes in his essay "Negation," "The subject-matter of a repressed image or thought can make its way into consciousness on condition that it is denied. Negation is a way of taking account of what is repressed..."[1]

In this manner, the absence of the Holocaust in Frank's life makes it more of a presence.

Freud's theory on negation is commonplace among those who survived the Holocaust. Frank's negation of the Holocaust is similar to documentation of those who survived the Holocaust. Rosen, as a child of survivors, experiences the transference of negation through his parents. By creating an early twentieth century, European Jewish character, who negates the Holocaust, he reacts to growing up in a generation who negates the Holocaust.

In Part I, I will consider Justine Frank through the psychoanalytic clinical lens of Melanie Klein and the literary framework of Wolfgang Lederer. By analyzing Justine Frank's art, the historical, literary, and religious influences of Rosen can be understood. In Part II, I will reintroduce Justine Frank as Roee Rosen's creation. Based on the research on second generation Holocaust survivors and psychoanalytic theories on the Holocaust, I will discuss Rosen's identity and why he created Justine Frank. By exploring this psychological aspect of Rosen's identity, we can see that the mirroring maze of Rosen's work is not only a commentary on the Holocaust, but also on contemporary Israeli society.

Part I. Justine Frank: The artist lost in time

Psychoanalytic theory helps to explain the complexities of Justine Frank's life. Born in Antwerp to a secular Jewish family, Frank was part of the surrealist art movement in Paris before moving to Tel Aviv during World War II. However, her combination of erotic imagery and Jewish iconography repelled the surrealists. She was inspired by medieval theology and art, Elizabethan literature, psychiatry and racial sciences, specifically anti-Semitic texts and illustrations which she first transcribed then erased from her sketch book.[2] By exploring the meaning of four of her paintings through the psychoanalytic perspective of Melanie Klein and Wolfgang Lederer, one can make sense of her seemingly psychotic life and art.

A Jew's celebration of anti-Semitism in pre-World War II Europe and Palestine?

Unlike other surrealist artists during the early twentieth century, Frank exploited the negative stereotype of the Jew. According to the critic, Roee Rosen, it is not clear in her art "…whether she asserts her "Judaism" from within a traditional Jewish perception as an empowered, self-willed and individualistic stance or as a cultural construct devised, for the most part, by European Christian culture."[3] Rosen presents Frank in two possible ways: either she celebrates the Jews of Europe by painting them, in which case her depiction of Jews would have been a positive aspect in her life, or she believed in the portrayal of the "dirty Jew" in European society.

From a Kleinian perspective, Rosen's two theories relate to the paranoid position. This position is first established in the infant, through the relationship with the mother's breast. The infant splits the breast into two instincts, the life or libidinal instinct and the death or aggressive instinct. Ambivalence is the fusion of the contradictory relationship between the libidinal and death instincts that produce feelings of love and hate. The infant's first partial object, the breast, is split in two: the good and bad object. Each object is subject to introjections (consumed or internalized), and projections (externalized or eradicated). The good object is introjected into the subject in order to defend the subject against persecutory anxiety, while the bad object terrifies the subject.[4] The ego works in limbo, limiting the tolerance of anxiety through splitting, idealization, and denial.[5]

The next stage of normal development is the depressive position. Normal adults reach the depressive position and then oscillate between the two positions throughout their life. However, after certain traumatic experiences, an adult can remain fixed in one of the two positions.[6] Frank was either never able to create feelings of ambivalence in the paranoid position and never made it to the depressive position or regressed to the paranoid position. Similarly, her hatred as well as mothering feelings towards the Jews, as will be discussed in her art, are polar opposites. She essentially split her Jewish identity into two parts: good and bad. Rosen reveals little of Frank's childhood, but according to Klein's theories, one would expect that she experienced trauma with her mother, who did not adequately satisfy Frank's needs as an infant.[7]

To further understand the Kleinian analysis of Justine Frank, the symbolism of her prepatory sketch *La Guilde de Frank* from 1927, will be discussed. In this sketch, Frank has depicted four self-portraits behind a table. Three of the figures are depicted as different types of Jews: one with a yarmulke, one with a black hat, and one with an eastern-European styled hat. The fourth figure is Frank as herself. On the table is a miniature coffin with a Star of David and the initials "JF" on the tombstone as well as a bowl with feces inside of it. All four figures gaze sadistically out at the viewer with dark shadows of their eyebrows creating a negative stare.

The feces in a bowl on the table represent both good and bad objects. They are the product of expunging material from the body. According to Klein, feces are symbolic of the bad object that is introjected, but then needs to be controlled through holding.[8] The ejection of feces represents control over the power to expunge the bad material. By placing feces in a bowl, it is possible that Frank is trying to control i.e., contain, her deteriorating life. It is also possible that she is stating that she is trapped inside of herself. She cannot seem to get rid of the feces by projecting them in her art, because her unconscious fantasy is impinging on her sense of reality and the objects she depicts look at her and offer her the bowl in return.

The tombstone next to the bowl of feces attests to castration anxiety, which is affiliated with the death instinct. Thus the tomb, the Jewish symbols, and the bowl of feces all have a sense of death and decay. As Rosen points out, in Frank's later years, she called her studio "a paintings' cemetery."[9]

Klein explained that the infant envies the breast because of the power of the breast. This theory explains the consciousness of a self-hating individual. The theory also describes the breast in terms of death. If the subject is persecuted and does not receive the nutrients necessary for normal development, then this can lead to an awareness of death. For example, during the Holocaust, the Jews were denied basic necessities required for survival. The breast was not providing nutrients to the Jews. The subject (child) envies the object (breast), which the subject then tries to spoil by projecting all that is bad into the object. Most Jews in the concentration camps would have seen the Nazis as the bad object. The projection includes defecation or a sadistic penetrating look known as the "evil eye."[10] By mirroring herself, Frank is trying to get rid of the negativity inside of her by projecting it outwards. In Frank's self-portraits, her reflection glares back at her. Not only does she project bad feelings out onto other objects, but they are internalized and reflected back inside of her. The negativity inside of Frank is her self-hating Jewish consciousness. By projecting it onto the canvas, she is trying to rid herself of her inferior, detestable identity. But she cannot destroy her negative emotions, because the figures she creates glare back at her.

Wolfgang Lederer's theory, stemming from Klein, that the mother is capable of not only creating life but also destroying it helps us analyze *La Guilde de Frank* as well as Frank's identity. Lederer equates the mother's womb to a tomb. Since the mother creates life, she can also take it away.[11] After the child is born, he or she recognizes the fact that its life can just as easily be taken away from them by mother, who with the milk of her breast, can either starve or nurture the child.

Like Klein, Lederer believed that the mother had the power to invoke fear and persecution.[12] Lederer explains that the bad mother can be equated to the witch. According to Lederer, "witches were supposed to possess the highest degree of the feminine quality of changeableness, or metamorphosis, and to the least degree the virtue of motherliness."[13]

Frank never had children, was not capable of sustaining a friendship, and represented herself as multiple characters. Thus, she embodies the qualities of Lederer's witch. Her ability to change can be seen in her sketches for *La Guilde de Frank* and was a reoccurring, compulsive theme throughout her life. Her sketchbook contains multiple pages of self-portraits of her morphing into a stereotypical, religious Jew, a phallic witch, a sadistic gimp, and a moss-like organic creature, sprouting weeds. This helps explain the absence of that which defines gender in a positive light. It also heightens Frank's feelings of

self-alienation.

For Lederer, the feces and moss-like object are signs of "parasitic thinking."[14] Lederer gives the example of Thomas Mann's story of "The Holy Sinner." In the story, Gregory commits incest with his mother and sister, is then cast away for seventeen years, and turns into a filthy, bristly thing covered in moss. "Sex and woman (parasitic thinking) cause a man to loose his soul and salvation."[15] In a sense Justine Frank is a parasite to society. Perhaps she realizes this subconsciously and thus often depicts herself as a moss-like creature. According to Rosen, she lives off of a relative's money until she moves to Israel and moves in with her only friend from whom she borrows money. Paradoxically, she is completely against Zionism, yet was it not for the Zionists she would have died in a concentration camp in Europe. The stereotypical religious Jewish men Frank depicts in her painting also do not believe in Israel. They and the artist essentially live as parasites off the land, unable to distinguish between internal and external objects, reality and fantasy.

Perhaps we can further understand the complexity of Justine Frank by looking at her landscape painting, *Nymphomaniac Jewish Landscape*, dated 1929, which may have its origin in the anti-Semitic slander of the Jewish whore. Influenced by the landscapes of Casper David Friedrich, Frank creates a series of obscene variations of landscapes, connecting the land to the body.[16] The root of the word nymphomaniac, nymphe, means vulva. On the right hand side is a tree, shaped in the form of a menorah. On the left hand side of the painting, darkened land swells in two mountains with a valley or vulva, containing red earth situated below ground, with grasses sprouting above ground. The background sky is an unnaturally cloudy lavender color with two moons surrounded by yellow haloes, which radiate dull light.

The two mountains can be seen as either the bottom or the breasts of a woman. The mountain on the left side is rocky and appears to be lifeless, hard or shriveled. The mountain on the right side is smooth earth and has the nutrients to grow grass. The two mountains or breasts represent Klein's paranoid position. The rocky mountain stands for the death instinct while the smooth mountain stands for the life instinct.

The menorah tree is rooted in the nutrient rich side of the mountain. It could present a positive view of Judaism as a tree of life. But there are no leaves on the tree. Judaism is barren. Thus, the mountains and breasts could both reflect Frank's destructive emotions towards Judaism.

If *Nymphomaniac Jewish Landscape* is analyzed in Lederer's terms of mother earth as a life giving force, then Frank's depiction of the rocky mountain without any life on it must be considered. The red valley between the two mountains could be a sign of fertile ground or "mother earth", which would provide nutrients for life. Lederer notes that a branch could be a symbol of life. He declared that "in some instances a branch may be seen emerging

from the cleft, as if to clarify the symbolism; and the cleft itself, as it may seem to be naturally reproduced in rock formation sometimes became a temple or the site for a temple, and an object of veneration."[17]

Lederer explains, however, that one can be fooled by mother earth because of her beauty, but "behind the makeup ...there still works the force of nature; there still resides the Eternal Mother who does not care for her crowded, choking creatures as much as for the process of giving birth."[18] Just as an infant's life is dependent upon the breast and without milk she or he will die, the living world's dependence upon mother earth and the earth's ambivalence towards providing for her creatures is expressed in famine as well as in abundance.

The two moons in the painting could allude to the duality of life and death. According to Lederer, a new moon was affiliated with the goddess of birth and growth while an old moon was associated with the black goddess of death. The duality of the two moons is parallel to the symbolism of earth as provider and destroyer. It is possible that Frank was using the symbols of the earth and the moon to describe the land of Palestine. On the one hand, it is geographically the birthplace of the Jewish people, while on the other hand, most of Israel during that time was barren.

Using these analytic tools, a comparison of the *Nymphomaniac Jewish Landscape* and *La Guilde de Frank*, reveals two different personalities. In *La Guilde de Frank*, Frank seems to be subjugating herself to racist preconceptions of the Jew based on her own self-hatred. Based on Klein's psychoanalytic theory, Frank and her sketch illustrate symptoms of the schizophrenic person. In *Nymphomaniac*, Frank portrays herself as a mother earth with both positive, life giving aspects, and "deconstructive" aspects of death. In this painting she can be seen as a visionary, who recognized the power of life and death, through the disguise of an artist.

Although Frank's depiction of female genitalia can be seen in a positive manner in *Nymphomaniac*, if we compare it to her *Physiognomies* series, a different view of genitalia is revealed. In *Physiognomies*, Frank painted symmetrical animals and objects, which can also be seen as animated faces. This can further be interpreted as the opening of the vagina that occurs with the spreading of the legs. Like *La Guilde de Frank*, *Physiognomies* would have been offensive to Jewish European society. At a time when there was an attempt to classify criminals, the mentally ill, and racial types based on eugenics and phrenology, Frank's series would have represented a contribution to the continuation of stereotypes.[19] Furthermore, her "portraits" lack an inner soul and are direct reflections of genitalia, as if to comment that the Jews have no souls.

In *Physionomie IV*, Frank created a portrait that can be viewed as either a female body or a monster. Both the left and right sides of the portrait

are the same. If viewed as a figure, the head is composed of two menorahs that create hair or antlers. The eyes are brown circular blades with red pupils. The head resembles the head of Medusa, with the "evil eyes" containing the power to kill and the menorah hair appears as if it could pierce through skin. The arms are two knives, again alluding to the ability to kill. The breast and vagina are swollen with organic, decaying floral patterns inside, and the legs resemble a claw. The legs are associated with castration and decaying floral patterns, and allude to a sense of death even before birth.

In *Physiognomies*, the bad-mother-earth symbolism, which Frank used in *Nymphomaniac*, seems to have taken over the entire composition. Frank's reality appears to be increasingly persecutory and painful. Rosen points out, "the title *Physiognomies*, must have struck a morbid chord with the work's audience, at a time when European anti-Semitism's most disastrous fermentation saw the proliferation of related disciplines."[20] Frank believed that the Nazi's were going to take over the world and the bad-mother-earth symbolism could have represented her prediction. If this is the case, was Frank incapable of socializing her art, or were her fantasies related to reality?

Frank's complex relationship to society can be further explored in the use of the word within the image in her painting *The Guillotine Alphabet* (1935). Two guillotines composed of Hebrew letters appear to be floating in space. According to Rosen, the juxtaposition of Hebrew letters, representative of the Jewish people, with the horror of the guillotine, are evidence that Frank is a descendent of the Sabbetaian mystic Rabbi Jacob Frank. He believes "the Alphabet and double guillotines allude to a relative of Jacob Frank, one Jacob Dobruschka, whose head was guillotined, alongside his brother's, in 1794 ..."[21]

The actual historic person, Jacob Frank, founded a new sect of Judaism, which believed that certain people were exempt from rabbinical law and, like Satanists and pagans, could indulge in sexual activities including prostitution, homosexuality, incest, and orgies. He proclaimed himself the "holy lord" and a Frankist woman the supernal mother. Familial and sexual imagery pervaded Frankism, as well as all Jewish mysticism. The Frankists were persecuted throughout Jewish Poland and turned against the Orthodox by claiming that the ritual-murder libel was true.[22]

According to the psychoanalyst Avner Falk, Jewish messianic movements were characterized by psychological fantasy in order to escape the reality of Jewish life in non-Jewish lands. There was a longing for redemption, salvation, and rebirth, which both Jacob Frank and Sabbatai Sevi attempted to provide. The Father was the Messiah figure, who, in a literal sexual act within Frankism, would reunite with the Holy Mother Land.[23] Rosen postulates that the assimilation of Justine Frank's parents into gentile Belgian society was a cover for a sect of Judaism that was thought to have been persecuted to

extinction in the early nineteenth century. Rosen continues, by claiming, "the artist's licentious, lawless and capricious behavior is clarified as a willful and calculated personal practice intended to hasten a third Messianic coming (after those of Sabbetai Zevi and Jacob Frank)."[24] Similarly, in Justine Frank's *Nymphomaniac Jewish Landscape*, she depicts her body as the mother land, waiting for the messianic father figure to enter. However, Rosen provides no physical evidence that Justine Frank was involved in this cult or that it still existed.

I believe that Jacob Frank was suffering from the same delusional schizophrenic illness as Justine Frank. Just as Jacob Frank confirmed lies as truths about the Jews, Justine Frank's depiction of Jews was based on classic anti-Semitic portraits. Tired of the harsh reality of being Jewish in a non-Jewish, anti-Semitic land, Justine and the self-proclaimed messiahs felt displaced from personal and public spheres of life. By internalizing the negative energy, they began to project evil qualities onto external aspects on the self, essentially agreeing with the persecutors. As Avner Falk stated, "it is a sad chronicle of fantasy life and delusion repeatedly taking hold on a mass scale and leading to disillusionment, loss, and destruction."[25]

In light of Rosen's speculation, Frank's negative view on religion can also be seen through her derisive use of Hebrew letters. According to Kleinian theory, Frank's religion, similar to the guillotine, cuts off her head and takes away part of her identity. Furthermore, the Hebrew letters are transformed into symbols that are almost grotesque in the disparity between the meaning they carry and their animated form. Within the iconoclastic context of Judaism, the inscription of manuscripts is central to Jewish art. Frank twists the letters into primal forms, creating creatures. What some would view as a "consolation" of having a nationalistic language becomes a beast for Frank.

By analyzing the complexities of the artist Justine Frank, through the psychoanalytic lenses of Melanie Klein and Wolfgang Lederer, I have attempted to explain her complex nature and possible reasons for her seemingly offensive and self-loathing art. Her self-hatred is seen through her use of anti-Semitic images, sadistic self-portraits, and hatred towards Zionism. Although little is revealed about her childhood, her portrayal of the mother as having been a negative figure suggests that she had a difficult childhood. Albeit the evidence that her mental health deteriorated through her life in Tel Aviv; her artistic technique shows no signs of progression or regression. She is stuck in a mode of painting and continues to use the same symbols throughout her life, whether in Europe or Tel Aviv. She ultimately seems to have little concern with the outside world, constantly focusing on self-portraits.

Since Justine Frank never existed but was a creation, by taking a step back and looking at "Justine Frank" in relation to her creator, Roee Rosen, her purpose can be further understood.

Part II. Roee Rosen: The man behind the woman

By examining Roee Rosen, the man behind the woman, as a contemporary Israeli artist as well as a second generation Holocaust survivor, the mystery of Justine Frank may be resolved. I will discuss contemporary Holocaust psychoanalytic theories in relation to second generation survivors, and finally will contextualize Rosen as "the Zionist Ventriloquist."[26] The theories were developed by the work of Milton E. Jucovy's development of trauma, J. S. Kestenberg's work on how children remember what parents forget, and childhood trauma in writings by both Nanette Auerhahn and Dori Laub.

The effects of trauma on second generation Holocaust survivors

According to Milton Jucovy, Freud's definition of trauma includes any experience or external excitation that succeeds in breaking through a "stimulus barrier." This excitation is based on a lack of gratification, related to the instinct. Although humans are equipped with a barrier that protects against over-stimulation, subjection to a massive dose will break down the barrier and a state of shock and disorganization will occur.[27] However, based on clinical studies of Holocaust patients, a new psychic reality was noticed. Grubrich-Simitis (1981) noted that narcissistic depletion was due not only to the deprivation of external supplies, but also "to superego changes derived from massive assault on the victim's psychic apparatus ...and sometimes led to severe changes in the ego ideal."[28] This new psychic reality is based on a jarring of the perception of reality. Stories that some survivors tell of their experience are self-created fantasies that do not accurately depict historical realities. Splitting occurs in which the actual events that the survivor experienced are separated from the story he/she tells of his/her experience. In Kleinian terms, the splitting is a means of becoming ambivalent instead of remaining in a constant state of trauma.

The result from the severe changes of the ego ideal is that the victim often identifies with the aggressor. Jucovy stated, "The devalued image, promoted by the persecutors and felt intensely by the victim, became established insidiously in the ideal self of the victim."[29] Victims identify with the persecutor because of feelings of complete hopelessness. Their narcissistic sense of self deteriorates, leaving them with a void that is then filled by merging themselves with the persecuted.

According to this theory, survivors then relate to their children by either telling them everything or remaining silent. In both of these seemingly polar responses, the trauma and change in the ideal self is transferred to the children. In turn, the children have the same traumatic emotions as their parents, without understanding why. The children become a ventriloquist for their parents, trying to recollect and understand their past.

Although it seems adaptive for survivors to report how they sustained themselves through fantasies of rescue, the parent's experience influences the development of the ego function in the child. During the child's ego development, he/she accepts the experience as if it were his/her own memory, without the full capacity to absorb what his/her emotions and his/her parents' histories mean. In this case, the child often develops more banal and trite fantasies, in order for their ego to deal with the histories, than the actual experience.[30]

Parents who chose to remain silent to protect their children, as well as their own personalities, are ultimately viewed as being counterproductive. The children's own fantasies fill the gaps of their parents' histories with more appalling possibilities than what actually existed.[31] In a sense, the more elaborate fantasies of the child are the opposite reaction of the child whose parents tell them everything.

Auerhahn and Laub stated, "The trauma that can be neither fully told nor remembered by the first generation, shapes the psychic world of the second generation."[32] The primal scene becomes knowledge of the Holocaust for children whose egos are not developed enough to adequately handle the horrors. This knowledge becomes a fantasy, combining both destructive and sexual instincts because of the child's inability to deal with the trauma. The child's structured universe is damaged and the normal split that would arise within the ego collapses.[33] Thus the primal knowledge of the destructive/death instinct and sexual/life instincts remain bound together.

According to Kestenberg, the child's awareness of the secrets of the adults often causes aggression towards the parents who chose to ignore the child's symptoms.[34] The child, like the parent, will relate to the persecutor. Defense operations, such as the internal aggressive stirrings that reach all the way into the earliest and most primitive layers of aggressive experience, are projected onto others in order to purify the ego and rid it of the intolerable tension of containing the destructiveness in itself. The child often projects the negative energy onto the victims, thus relating to the aggressor.[35]

Kestenberg also noticed that the children of survivors often live their lives in a way where the horror of the past intrudes excessively into the reality of the present. This state of living in a time tunnel is known as transposition.[36] The second generation is often burdened by the need to fulfill the lives of the relatives who died in the Holocaust, consol mourning parents, and fulfill the goals of their own fantasies.[37] Often their goals exceed the rigorous standards set by their parents. This situation is magnified when the child has been named after a dead relative, which is a well-known Jewish custom.

Shattering the mirror:
Rosen's art in relationship to psychoanalytic theories on the Holocaust

Although little is known about Rosen's personal life, we do know that he is the child of Holocaust survivors. He was born in Israel in 1960, at the time that the public was beginning to speak about the Holocaust. His life's work revolves around issues having to deal with the Holocaust. Along with the retrospective on Justine Frank, Rosen created *To Live and Die as Eva Braun* for the Israel Museum in 1997 and has written for Israeli magazines, including the *Jerusalem Review* and *Studio Art*. As Melanie Klein wrote, "to remember or re-collect, survivors must gather together the fragments of the event and create a whole memory. But bringing the fragments together risks not only activating them, but also perceiving the experience in its entirety, in a fearfully new gestalt or perspective, perhaps for the first time. For the very fragmentation that is traumatizing is also protective in that it may have allowed the victims to survive by never seeing the event as an overwhelming whole ..."[38] By connecting Rosen's work with the psychoanalytic theories of second generation survivors presented above, I believe that we can answer the question: Why did Rosen feel the need to create Justine Frank?

If Rosen's parents discussed the Holocaust, his creation of Justine Frank could have been a trivial representation of the Holocaust, because, according to Jucovy's research, his ego would have developed the defense mechanisms necessary to handle his traumatic fantasies. Seen from this perspective, Rosen does avoid directly addressing the Holocaust. He creates a character that leaves Europe before World War II. Although Frank lives in constant fear that the Nazis are going to take over the world, the horror that Rosen chooses to depict is completely internal to Frank. Furthermore, Frank does not experience any persecution from the outside world. Also, Rosen feels comfortable presenting the exhibition to a Jewish, Israeli, and Holocaust survivor audience (including the Herzliya Museum in Israel and The Jewish Museum in New York). This would mean that he feels that the rawness of Justine Frank, which may be seen as insensitivity, is acceptable in society.

On the other hand, Rosen's fantasy of Justine Frank is shocking. If his parents did not discuss the Holocaust, Frank could be an intense fantasy made up by Rosen. The sexual and anti-Semitic aspects of the Jew, Justine Frank, reintroduce horrors from a new, twisted internal perspective that may go beyond the extreme atrocities of the Holocaust. Rosen may be yelling at the silence of his parents. From this view, he is demanding a response from the viewer to look at the Holocaust from a realistic perspective, instead of memorializing the event and forgetting about the previous Jewish life in the diaspora.[39]

Roee Rosen, whose themes for his major bodies of work are based on the Holocaust, can be explained through the hypotheses of Kestenberg, Auerhahn, and Laub that the psyche of the second generation is shaped by

the first generation survivors. By creating a woman who lived during World War II and making her schizophrenic personality reflect the problems of the silent response to the Holocaust that have only been brought to the forefront since the late 1960's, Rosen is living in the "time tunnel," described by Kestenberg.

Interestingly, Rosen was influenced by the German writer Thomas Mann, who had a controversial love/hate relationship with the Jews during the same time as Justine Frank's life. Rosen actually uses the name of the main character in Mann's book *The Magic Mountain*, "Castorp," as the main art historian specializing in the life of Justine Frank. There is also an interesting affinity between Kestenberg's theory of transposition and the forward to *The Magic Mountain* that explains the overlapping of time:

> The exaggerated pastness of our narrative is due to its taking place before the epoch when a certain crisis shattered its way through life and left a deep chasm behind. It takes place—or, rather, deliberately to avoid the present tense, it took place, and had taken place—in the long ago ...Is not the pastness of the past the profounder, the completer, the more legendary, the more immediately before the present falls?[40]

Rosen does not create characters that are victims of the Holocaust. Rather, they either remain ambivalent or geographically escape the Holocaust. For example, Justine Frank left Europe for Palestine right before the war broke out.

In Rosen's project, *To Live and Die as Eva Braun,* created for the exhibition "Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art" at The Jewish Museum, he made a similar interactive space in which the viewer becomes Eva Braun, Hitler's last lover. By becoming Eva Braun, viewers wonder if they, too, are naïve and are capable of sleeping with evil. Eva Braun is not evil herself, but remains ambivalent, like Justine Frank, about what is going on around her. Neither character is a victim of the Holocaust.

Rosen's characters mirror his fantasized involvement in the Holocaust. Through the transference of his parents' anxieties and other instincts into his own ego function, Rosen experienced the emotions associated with the Holocaust even though he wasn't physically there. Similarly, Justine Frank fears the Nazis, and eventually goes completely mad, as if she were experiencing the atrocities of the Holocaust, but was never actually there. However, this does not explain why Rosen would depict an aggressive, anti-Semitic character as opposed to the victim.

Milton Jucovy explained, "the devalued image, promoted by the persecutors and felt intensely by the victim, became established in the ideal self of

the victim ...and identified with the aggressor."[41] The double images of Justine Frank as both the good and bad mother represent the split in Rosen's view of the Holocaust. On the one hand, he does not want to live his life as a "victim" but nevertheless he cannot escape the fact that he is the child of victimized parents. On the other hand, through Justine Frank, Rosen is attacking religious Orthodoxy and political Zionism as aggressors. By creating a believable character, Rosen, as well as the viewer, pities and becomes the anti-Semitic, self-hating Jew. However, the question remains, does Rosen's creation, Justine Frank, go beyond providing appropriate content to the time-honored developmental conflict of the Holocaust? Or does his art acquire a life of its own, subtly changing the actual objects and processes they stand for?

Rosen's article *The Visibility and Invisibility of Trauma: Traces of the Holocaust in the Work of Moshe Gershuni and in Israeli Art* addresses these questions, even attacking the silence that he may have experienced as a child. The article discusses a shift in the portrayal of Israeli Holocaust art in 1980, as well as reflections on Rosen's personal beliefs on the Holocaust.[42]

In the first section, Rosen states that until the artist Moshe Gershuni presented two installations, at the Venice Biennial and the Tel Aviv Museum in 1980, direct depictions of the Holocaust had previously been excluded from the realm of "high art" in Israel.[43] He further explains that the Holocaust has not been depicted in art because of the silence of despair based on the trauma and guilt felt by Jews after the Holocaust and by the antagonism towards allowing artistic emotions within the ideology of "high art." Rosen explained these feelings of helplessness as he wrote:

> The impact of the Holocaust on Israeli consciousness is often painful and overwhelming. And the danger is ever present that this burden might engender a revolting slippage: existential anxiety associated with the Holocaust is translated into a sort of nationalist rhetoric which presents itself as innately just and right, because of that terrible historical wrong, the Holocaust. By default, this utilization is ambivalent: the Israeli national myth disavows the ruins of the diaspora even as it mourns it; it perceives the victims stereotypically as weak, even as it uses them to gain power.[44]

For Rosen, the nationalistic ideology can be experienced through Holocaust monuments which are masculine representations of strength and eternity. These monuments deny the individual's right to speak out against their community. In the case of Israel, they do not allow the viewer to remember life in Europe or the atrocities of the Holocaust, but instead reinforce nationalism. Historically, Israel has viewed itself as the victim, unwilling to admit any problems within its own government, yet negating its diasporic past.

According to Rosen, it wasn't until the artist Moshe Gershuni covered the floor of the Venice pavilion with puddles of blood-like fluid, smearing the walls with German words in Hebrew letters connoting Auschwitz that Israeli art began to address direct depictions of the Holocaust.[45] However, I would argue that Holocaust art had existed in the realm of high art before the eighties. Although Gershuni was innovative in the choice of media, he was certainly not the first artist to make direct depictions of the Holocaust. Ever since the rise of the Nazis to power, artists have been depicting the Holocaust and its atrocities.

What exactly does Roee Rosen mean when he states that until Moshe Gershuni, Israeli art did not directly depict the Holocaust? Based on the current psychoanalytic work on the Holocaust, I believe that Rosen is rebelling against the silence of the first generation Holocaust survivors. This stems from his own childhood in which his parents would have transferred their own feelings of trauma and the aggressive drives onto their son. Rosen, incorporating these drives into his own ego in his youth, but not understanding his feelings because of the silence then projects these negative drives out onto his work. He wants to experience what he is feeling, while simultaneously identifying with the aggressor. Thus, he creates characters who were alive during World War II, but like him, were not directly involved with the Jews who remained in Europe.

He relates to Moshe Gershuni because of Gershuni's direct use of symbols such as bodily fluids and Nazi imagery. The symbols of the transgressors and violent imagery relate back to the primal scene. In his own art, the creation of Justine Frank, Rosen also attempts to create the primal scene through sexual imagery, such as the mountains in *Nymphomaniac Jewish Landscape* as well as through scenes of death, as seen in the use of the coffin in *La Guilde de Justine Frank*.

Through the use of explicit imagery, Rosen is stating his need to project and discuss the Holocaust in a society where anything but memorializing the Holocaust is considered taboo. Rosen stated, "contemporary representations of the Holocaust would require a reevaluation of the collective identity through the recognition of fragmentation within the group and the multiple identities of the individual."[46] The advantage of a diverse group should be the expansion of self-criticality.

Based on Rosen's artistic creations, Holocaust psychoanalysis, and his article on Moshe Gershuni, we can see that he is addressing the question of identity. To create Justine Frank, Rosen had to return to pre-World War II Europe and Palestine. He recreated the past by becoming his own mother, who also developed his sense of identity in the present. His statement "I believe Justine Frank is as real as I am," further attests to how Rosen sees Frank as a mirror image of himself.[47]

By creating installations and books that portray his characters as human, Rosen invites viewers to question their own sense of reality and identity. I believe that Rosen has strong political statements that he wants people to hear, whether through a museum or in a journal, but is afraid of taking direct authority over his work. Through the characters of Justine Frank and Eva Braun, as well as his journal article on Moshe Gershuni, Rosen uses a separate identity in order to express his ideas. He needs to create Justine Frank to act as the puppet in his ventriloquist act. If addressed through a psychoanalytic lens, it is possible that he would want to protect his identity from his mother or other close family members, who survived the Holocaust, but who would be appalled by what he is doing. By creating characters who take viewers back into history as well as remind them of the politics of the present, Rosen reminds viewers that the perception of the self and the other cannot be classified as either the pure "good" or "bad" object, but that single beings contain multiple identities.

Notes

[1] Sigmund Freud, *Collected Papers,* vol. 5, edited by James Strachev (London, Hogarth Press, 1956), 182.

[2] Roee Rosen, *Justine Frank: A Retrospective* (Herzliya: The Herzliya Museum, 2003), 2.

[3] Ibid., 4.

[4] J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1973), 298.

[5] The definition or disavowel, according to Freud, is the specific sense of a mode of defense which consists in the subject's refusal to recognize the reality of a traumatic perception, especially the perception of the absence of a woman's penis.

[5] Phyllis Tyson and Robert L. Tyson, *Psychoanalytic Theories of Development: An Integration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 74.

[6] Klein was mainly dealing with children, not schizophrenics. Therefore, her schizoid-paranoid position does not define schizophrenia, but there are similar characteristics. However, her contemporary, Kraepelin defined 'paranoid' schizophrenia as a type of schizophrenia that resembles paranoia in which disillusions occur. Ibid.

[7] Hanna Segal, *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein* (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), 7.

[8] Roee Rosen, *Justine Frank: A Retrospective* (Herzliya: Herzliya Museum of Art, 2003), 4.

[9] Segal, *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein*, 41.

[10] Wolfgang Lederer, *The Fear of Women* (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1968), 31.

[11] Segal, *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein,* 26.

[12] Lederer, *The Fear of Women,* 194.

[13] Ibid., 164.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Rosen, *Justine Frank,* 96.

[16] Lederer, *The Fear of Women,* 42.

[17] Ibid., 248.

[18] Rosen, *Justine Frank,* 88.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 110.

[21] Avner Falk, *A Psychoanalytic History of the Jews* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), 575.

[22] Ibid., 578.

[23] Rosen, *Justine Frank,* 110.

[24] Falk, *A Psychoanalytic History of the Jews,* 578.

[25] Roger Rothman, in *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/ Recent Art,* Norman L. Kleeblat, ed. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

[26] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* S.E. (1920), 18. Also, Milton E. Jucovy, "Psychoanalytic Contributions to Holocaust Studies," *International Journal of Psychological Analysis* 73, no. 267 (1992): 272.

[27] I. Grubrich-Simitis, "Extreme traumatization as cumulative trauma," *Psychoanalytic Study Child* 36 (1981): 415-450, and (mentioned in) Jucovy, "Psychoanalytic Contributions to Holocaust Studies," 271.

[28] Milton E. Jucovy, "Psychoanalytic Contributions to Holocaust Studies," *International Journal of Psychological Analysis* 73, no. 267 (1992): 271.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 273.

[31] N. Auerhahn and D. Laub, "Primal Scene of Atrocity: the Dynamic Interplay Between Knowledge and Fantasy of the Holocaust in Children of Survivors," in *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 15, nos.360-377 (1998): 361.

[32] The split within the ego is similar to Klein's split between the good and bad self, discussed in Part 1 of this paper.

[33] Judith S. Kestenberg, "How Children Remember and Parents Forget," *International Psychoanalytical Psychotherapy* ½: 103-123.

[34] S. Laub and Nanette C. Auerhahn, "Reverberations of Genocide: Its Expression in the Conscious and Unconscious of Post-Holocaust Generations," in *Psychoanalytic Reflections on the Holocaust: Selected Essays,* Luel and Marcus, eds., (New York: Holocaust Awareness Institute Center for Judaic Studies University of Denver and KTAV Publishing House, Inc, 1984) 160.

[35] J.S. Kestenberg, "Transposition Revisited: clinical, therapeutic and developmental considerations" in *Healing their Wounds: Psychotherapy with Holocaust Survivors and their Families,* P. Marcus and A. Rosenberg, eds (New York: Praeger, 1989), 67-82.

[36] Jucovy, "Psychoanalytic Contributions to Holocaust Studies," 271.

[37] Melanie Klein, "Knowing and Not Knowing," (Conference, Yale University, New Haven, 1982) quoted in N. Auerhahn and D. Laub, "Primal scene of atrocity:

knowledge and fantasy of the Holocaust in Children of Survivors," in *Psycho-analytic Psychology* 15 (1998): 360-377, 362-3.

[38] By using the words "realistic perspective," I mean Rosen's realistic perspective, which may not be objective either.

[39] Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain* (New York: The Modern Library, 1927), foreword.

[40] Jucovy, "Psychoanalytic Contributions to Holocaust Studies," 272.

[41] Roee Rosen, "The Visibility and Invisibility of Trauma: Traces of the Holocaust in the Work of Moshe Gershuni and in Israeli Art," in *The Jerusalem Review* 2 (1997-1998): 98-118.

[42] Ibid., 98.

[43] Ibid., 102.

[44] Ibid., 98.

[45] Ibid., 112-113.

[46] Rosen, *Justine Frank,* 8.

Art Criticism

Contributors

Francis V. O'Connor, is an Independent Historian of American art who holds a Ph.D. in the History of Art from The Johns Hopkins University. His interest in psychology and creativity is rooted in his early literary studies and later work on Jackson Pollock and the Abstract Expressionists, his own writing of poetry, and his personal experience of the analytic process under both Freudian and Jungian practitioners. In 1991 he held a Rockefeller Fellowship in the Humanities at the Institute for the Medical Humanities of the University of Texas Medical School at Galveston, where he completed the psychiatric research for a book currently titled *How Artists Happen: A Psycho-dynamic Study of Image Making in the Visual Arts*. This book proposes to answer in depth the five fundamental questions which he raises in his paper.

Steven Poser, Ph.D., practices psychoanalysis in Greenwich Village and is a member of the faculty and a training analyst at the Center for Modern Psychoanalytic Studies in New York. Since 1991, he has exhibited his paintings in ten one-person and eight group shows. In 1997, he received the Gradiva Award for painting from the National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis.

Donald Kuspit is a professor of art history and philosophy at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.
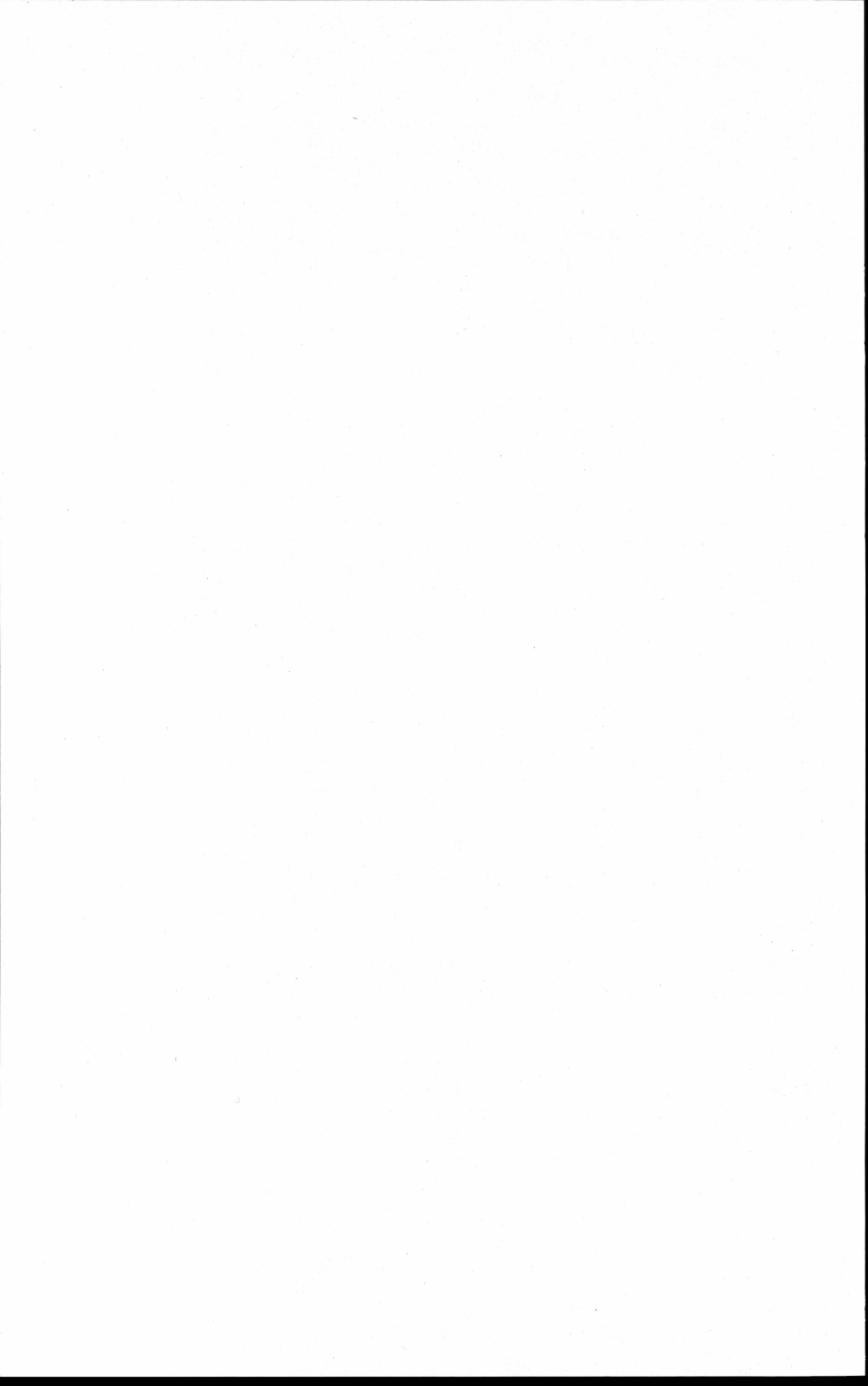
Eugene Mahon, MD is a lecturer and a Supervising and Training Analyst at the Columbia University Center for Pyschoanalytic Training and Research.
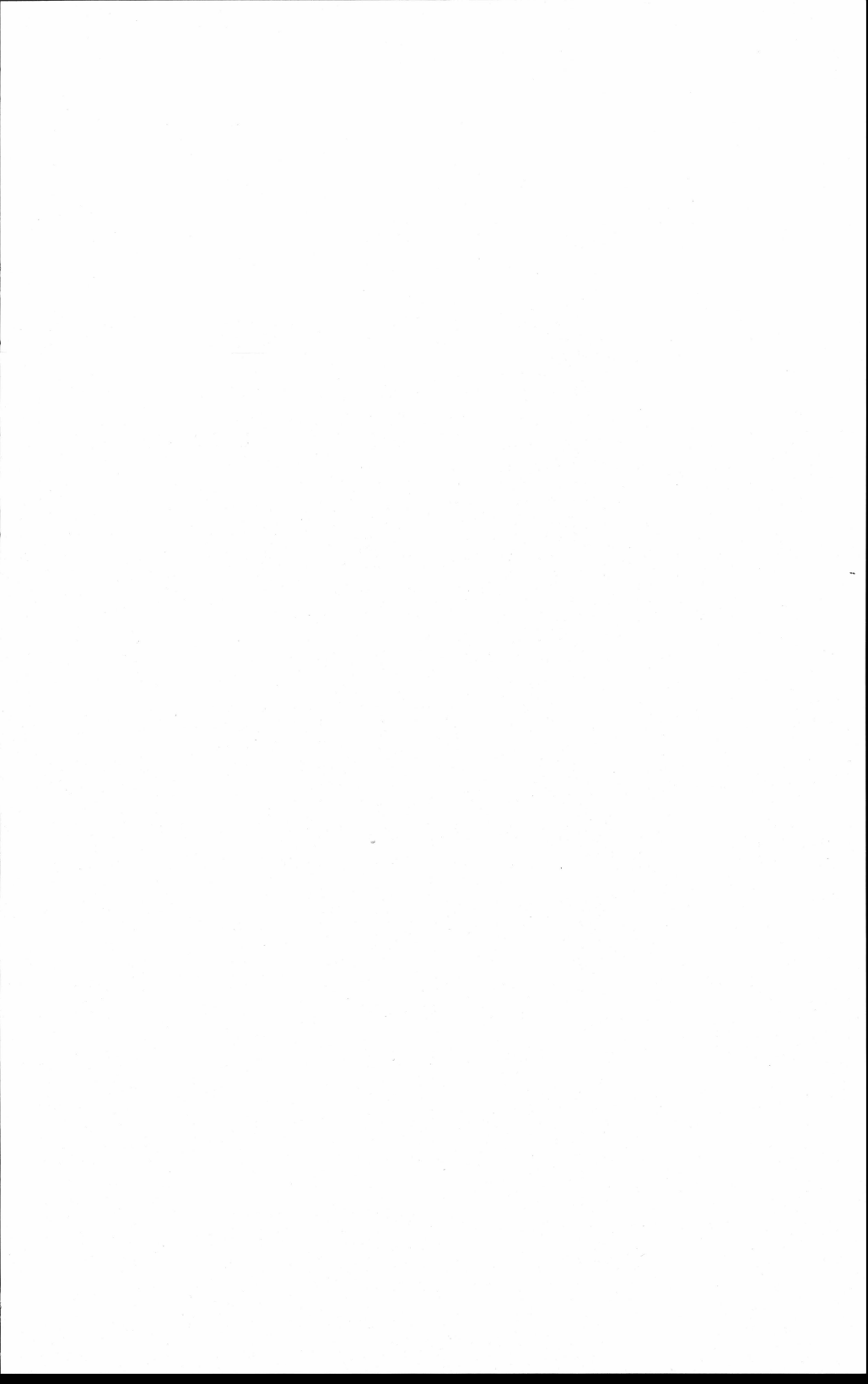
Susan Van Scoy and **Sarah Plymate** are graduate students in the program of Art Criticism and Theory at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.
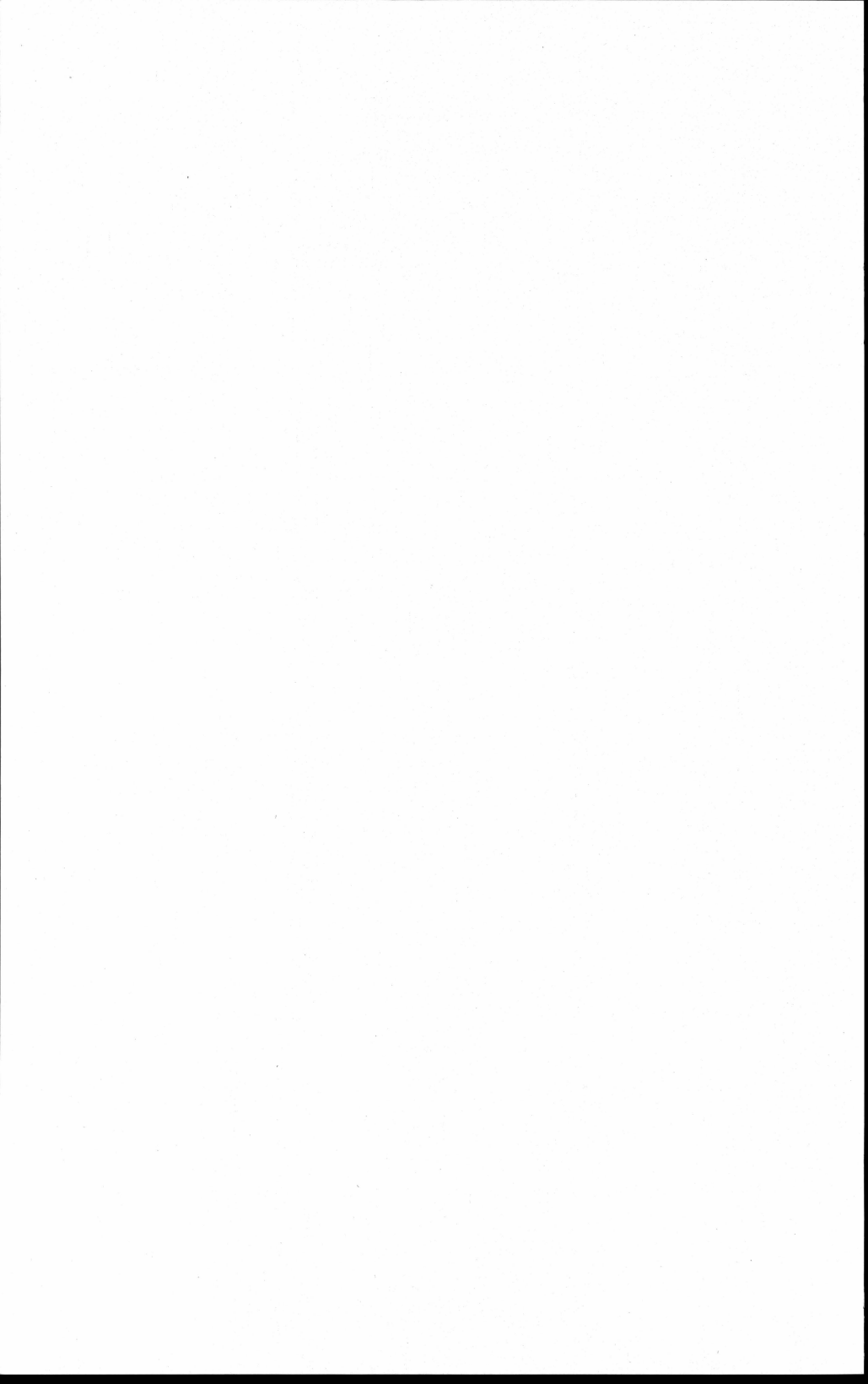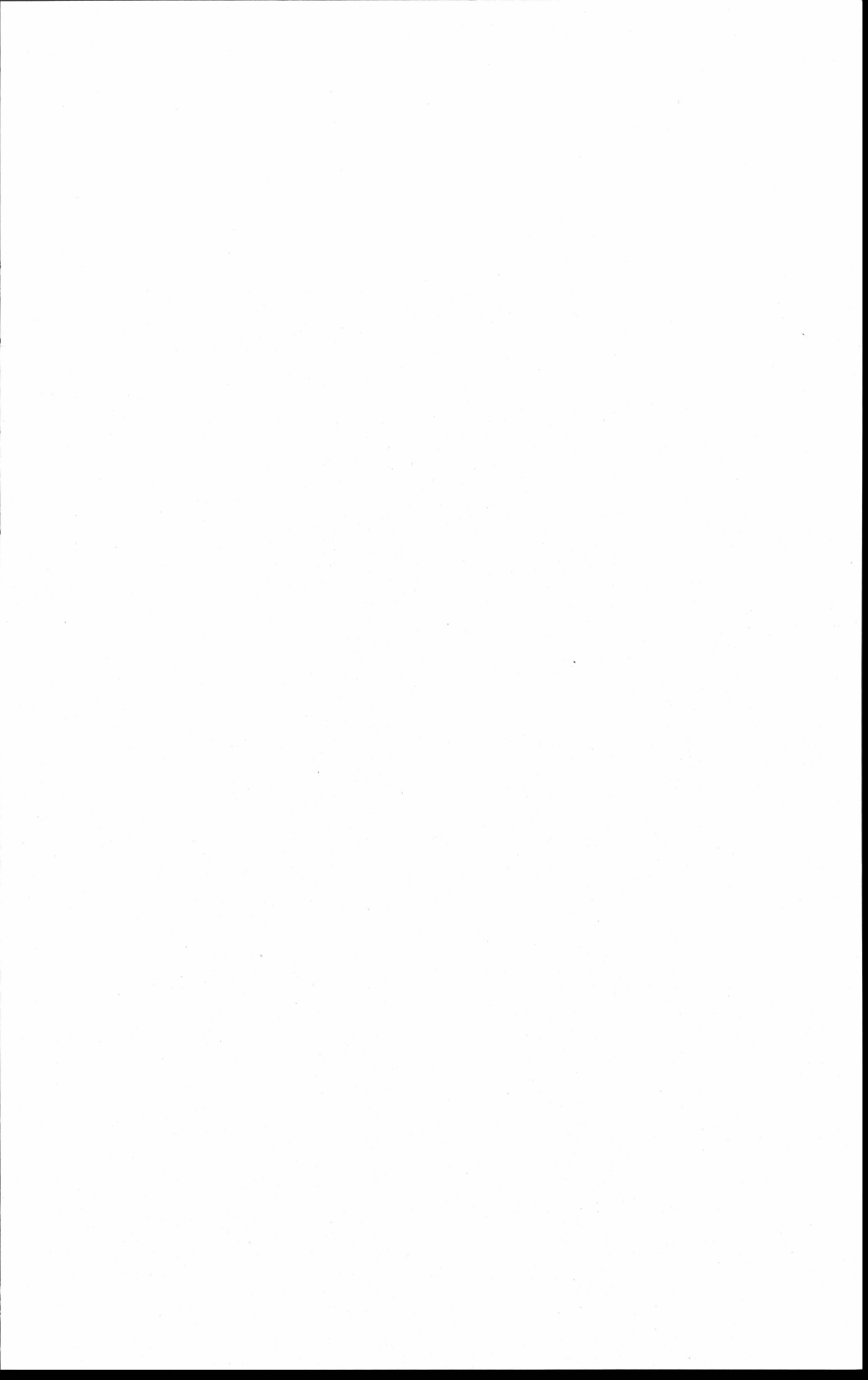
Art Criticism

Art Criticism
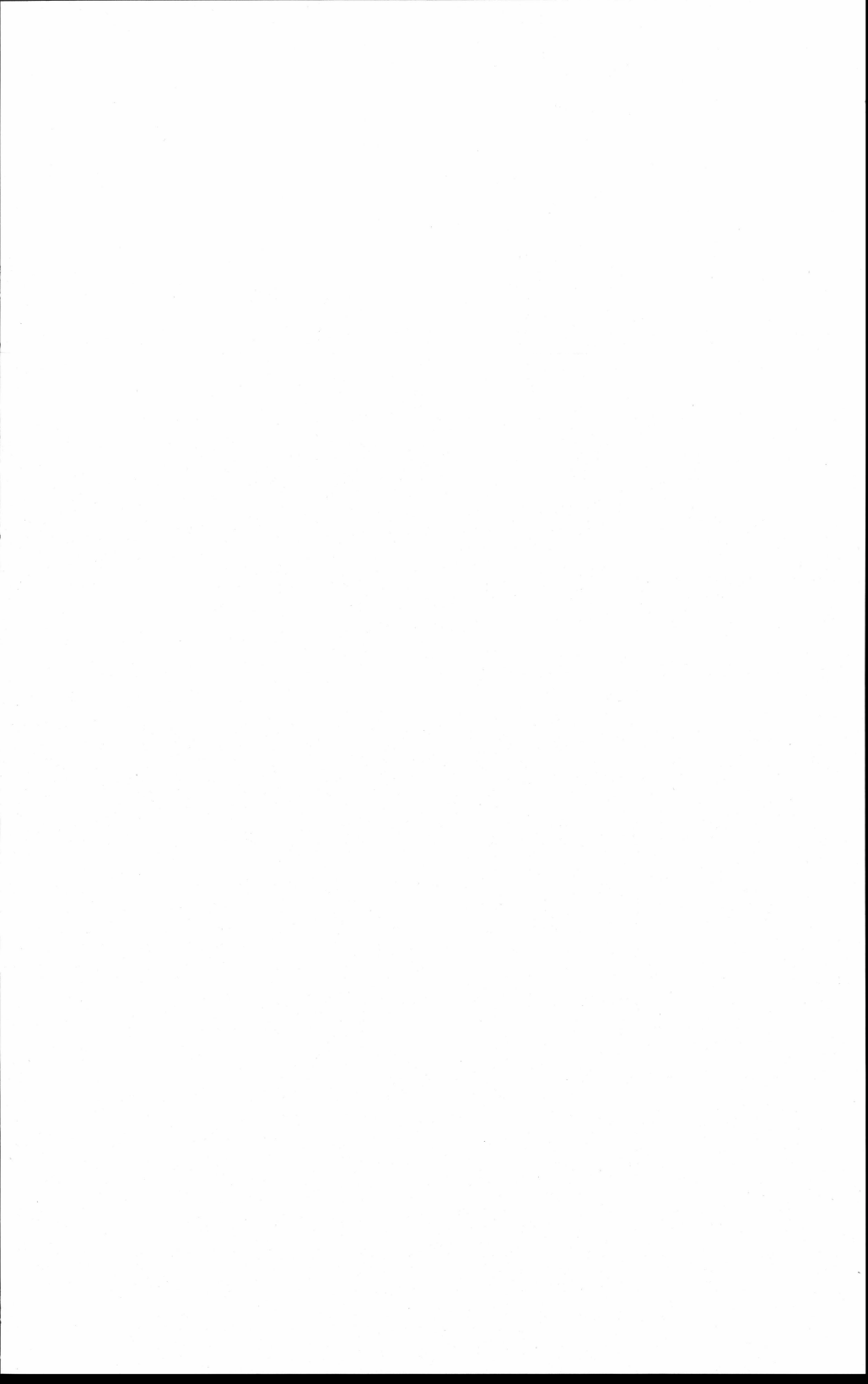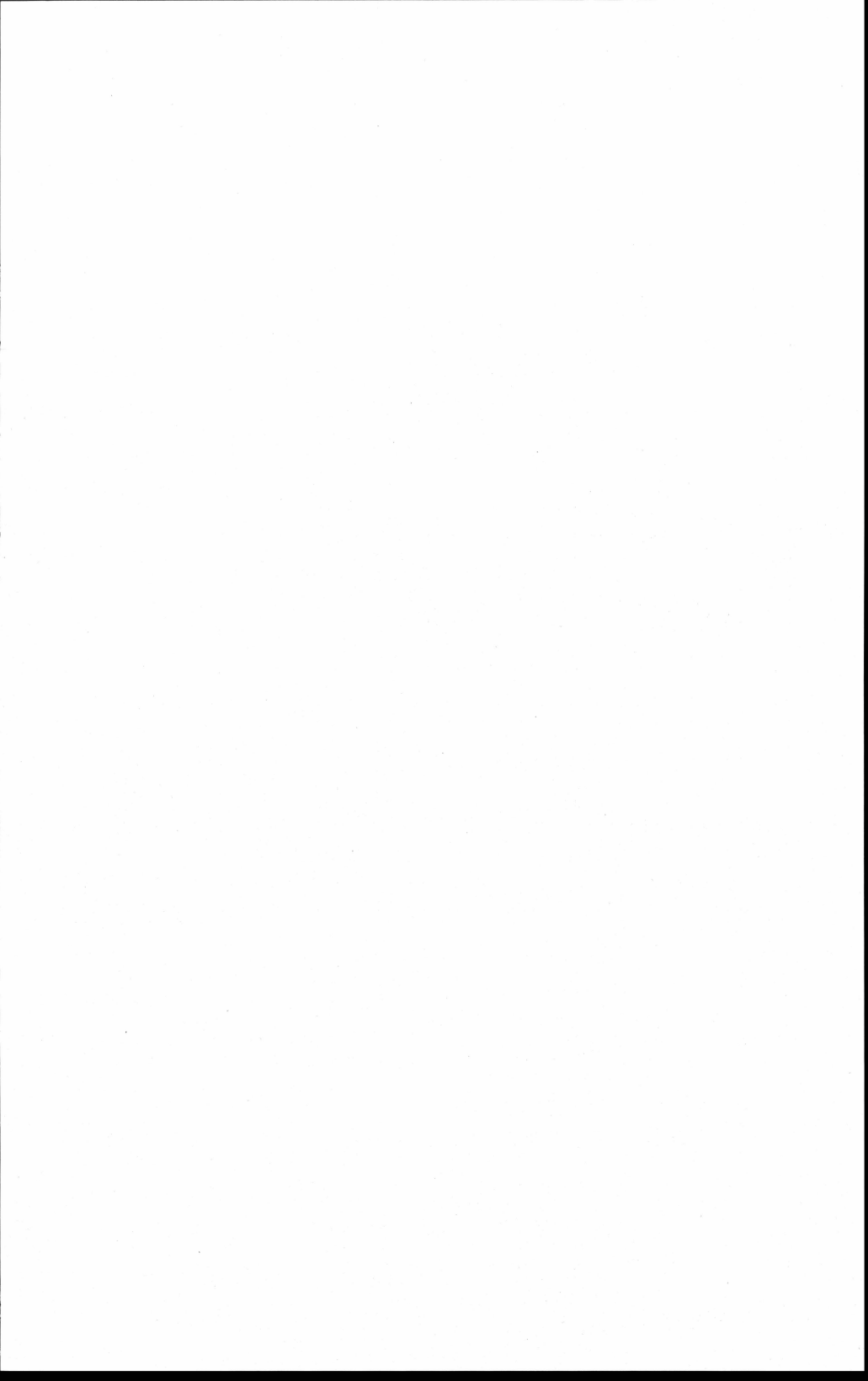
Art Department
State University of New York at Stony Brook
Stony Brook, NY 11794-5400