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Art Criticism

crit´i·cism, *n.* 1. the act of making judgments; analysis of qualities and evaluation of comparative worth; especially, the definition and judgment of literary or other artistic works.

2. the art, principles, or methods of a critic or critics.

3. a finding fault; censuring; disapproval; a critical comment or judgment.

4. a review, article, etc. expressing such judgment and evaluation.

5. the detailed investigation of literary documents to discover their origin, history, or original form: usually called *textual criticism.*

Art Criticism

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by William V. Ganis

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Towards A Newer Critique

The Missing Link:
The Influence of T.S. Eliot's Ultra-Conservative Criticism on Clement Greenberg's Early Rhetoric and Themes

Adrienne M. Golub

Does criticism of Clement Greenberg stand on a false foundation? Have stunning, perhaps intentional, omissions altered our understanding of his early influences and critical decisions? Commentary on the late critic points to "yes" on both questions. From the disparate genres that spawned this Greenberg criticism we have, on one side, art history, pridefully claiming cultural and intellectual history as its base, despite the conspicuous void in its own historical narrative. And on the other side are the pervasive "Clembusting" rituals, that informal critical choreography aimed at dislodging the critic's tenacious grasp on twentieth-century art criticism and theory. Not infrequently, these widely diverse camps—composed of art magazine writers, critics, and scholars alike—generated similar observations. Greenberg was compared to T. S. Eliot—poet, critic, expatriot, and "mentor" from a distance, since the young critic had in fact openly borrowed Eliot's early critical forms and transformed them into his own art tools. But Greenberg was accused of embracing far more than methodology; his alliance with elitist standards was considered comparable to Eliot's own elitism. I believe that this elitist "kinship" obscures our understanding of early Greenberg.

Missing in these discussions was the truth about T. S. Eliot's brand of elitism and the fact that his earlier and well known critical focus was significantly altered during the 1930s, the same period when the young Greenberg was preparing to enter the critical arena. Straying from his early years when "Prufrock" and "The Waste Land," or "sensibility" and "tradition" brought acclaim and a public platform, Eliot's evolving ultra-conservative rhetoric after the late 1920s agitated many American intellectuals. From

his pulpit abroad, the poet edged into social and cultural criticism, spouting fascist ideology while Hitler and Mussolini were rising to power, and while Stalinist tyranny held firm. Eliot's aberrant cultural behavior was well documented in 1930s intellectual journals, but he continued to receive international accolades, revered by those who ignored his political turn to the far right and by those who considered his blatant anti-semitic commentary as irrelevant.

As for Clement Greenberg, the "most influential art critic in American history," though he was elevated early in his career by an admiring art world hungry for critical clarity and rigor, later, despite decades of stylistic mutations, he remained resolute, quite unwilling to suspend his critical model. Instead, he persisted in advocating his intractable elitist paradigm with its notions of quality and taste, and formalism, where attention to formal elements prevail over representation. Underlying these decisions was a self-anointed mission to purge dangerous and illusory subject matter from an everpresent but elusive content. Remaining was the "purified," "flattened," and "self-reflexive" medium, terms which carried symbolic weight and like readings of "kitsch" were interpreted too literally, and were generally misunderstood. Greenberg, who immediately rejected "kitsch," viewed these imitative and tainted capitalist commodities as highly vulnerable to propaganda and contrasting with his acclaim for avant-garde art, particularly abstraction. To the dismay of many contemporary avant-garde artists, he banned surrealism and its explicit "content," declaring abstract art safer because it was capable of rejecting propagandistic incursions. To understand the critic's early premise, we need only reread his impassioned rhetoric in "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" or "Towards a Newer Laocoon," both of which repeatedly respond to social and political factors. Though he later dropped his early written justification, and prescribed and championed abstraction on its own terms, still, an "Art for Art's Sake" argument is far too simplistic a rationale to support Greenberg's early esthetic decisions, especially during a cataclysmic historical period. Further confusion arose when he endorsed seemingly incongruous themes, like intuitive/objective judgments or Socialist/elitist rationales.[1]

Recognizing that Greenberg borrowed Eliot's standards for criticism, Greenberg's actual attitudes towards him, which wavered between obligatory hero-worship and outright contempt, were nonetheless ignored. Perhaps more anxious to dethrone Greenberg than pursue in-depth scholarly investigations of sensitive social/cultural influences, the art world remained silent about ambiguities within the Greenberg/Eliot connection; similarities were appropriate for discussion, differences were ignored. At the same time, Greenberg critics grasped at fragments of information about his influences (all of which are important), including the famed "three lectures" by Hans Hofmann during the late thirties, his dalliance with Kantianism, Brechtian politics, Kafkian alienation, and eventually, his Jewishness. And then there was the "was he or was he not a bona fide Marxist" approach, and the inevitable question of degree—was he more pro-Trotsky or more anti-Stalinist? No doubt, Greenberg's art influences were baffling, since his educa-

tional background was in literature and languages and his grip on art criticism was accomplished despite few credentials in art history. Even so, the critic was clearly a first-hand witness to New York abstraction during the late 1930s, following years as a "Sunday-painter." But despite his friendship with Lee Krasner during this period and his subsequent and fortuitous promotion of Jackson Pollock, he considered himself an art scene "outsider," conceding that his first reading in contemporary art was Sheldon Cheney's *The Story of Modern Art*, in 1941, the year of his first published art review, in *The Nation*. Given such fragmentary sources, it is perplexing that art scholars still preferred tenuous threads of potentially influential roots while omitting aggressive investigations of those whom Greenberg really did study. All of this leads to a logical assumption: that because Greenberg was greatly influenced by the poet during his own formative years, we need to scrutinize Eliot's entire oeuvre to discover what he was actually writing and what Greenberg was actually reading. If Greenberg entered criticism through cultural channels, then how did Eliot's culture affect him? I am specifically proposing that more precise definitions of Eliot's elitism are needed, as well as discussions of how the poet's shift to ultra-conservativism had a negative influence on Greenberg's original thinking on art and on culture.

Even with Greenberg's ambiguous influences, we cannot evaluate his origins without a responsible approach to all that he read and when he read it, and how it influenced, even altered, his own philosophical paradigm. By definition, inhibiting "Clembusting" practices did not permit this methodology, but fostered a proliferation of subjective attitudes that biased historical truth while laying siege to Greenberg's critical empire. It must be added however, that the critic, who was never his own most articulate spokesman, left a legacy of cryptic writing and hidden riddles within a body of work that is, for this author, at times exasperatingly dialectic, yet often praised for its clarity. With the premise of amending the historical record by severing the illusory elitist cord between the two critics, this paper introduces a negative Eliot—an unexplored issue for art criticism in general, and for Clement Greenberg in particular. This negative Eliot is the missing link.

Introduction

For over five decades critics vilified Greenberg's elitism, encouraged perceptions that he was heir apparent to T. S. Eliot's cultural elitism, while failing to clarify the numerous cultural distinctions that separated them. Though Greenberg emulated the expatriot's early critical tenets, his blatant protestations were generally ignored. Working from an unusually biased practice, critics who were ostensibly seeking cultural rationales for esthetic decisions omitted Eliot's 1930s ultra-conservativism from the art historical dialogue, generating a notion of the taboo within an otherwise lively and acrimonious discourse. Under this imprecise cultural model, Eliot's steady drift into fascism and cultural extremism was deleted, and although these were vital negative

components fundamental to Greenberg's own developing critical thought, attention was diverted instead to his more conspicuous use of the poet's early critical forms.

Carter Ratcliff alone stated that omitting Eliot's altered criticism was intentional. In his article on the state of art criticism, written over two decades ago, the critic recognized behind-the-scenes strategical maneuvers aimed at the purposeful misreading of Greenberg's elitism: "I have not considered it [Greenberg's criticism] in connection to his literary and social criticism. I have not looked at his concern with T. S. Eliot, nor at his early Marxist roots (though I can't help saying I think these have been misconstrued by detractors looking for an easy way to attack his elitism)."[2]

Ratcliff may have broached an erroneous Greenberg/Eliot kinship, but his remarks failed to elicit appropriate historical revisioning—all the more surprising since we know that Greenberg's intellect grew from literary roots, with Eliot's writing pivotal to these formative years. This underscores the need to reassess the entire historical and intellectual relationship between Greenberg and Eliot.

Art scholars ignored Eliot's fascism, but the subject was absorbed into historical texts, and into literary dialogue following the publication of the controversial *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice* (1988), where author/apologist Christopher Ricks rationalizes Eliot's inflammatory anti-semitic remarks of the 1930s as esthetically critical. [3] During this period of Centennial festivities marking Eliot's birth, unsettling questions resurfaced apropos the expatriot's drift to the far right during the thirties. In turn, the subject was briefly mentioned in art texts, although not in conjunction with Greenberg's formative influences or as a possible rationale for his decisions, including his underlying and indisputable esthetic elitism, particularly his bold subjective assessments of "quality." Even with the enormous gulf separating Greenberg's cultural perceptions and the historical and cultural context in which they originated, art historians freely dissected Greenberg's cultural genesis, but excluded Eliot's cultural milieu. With this missing link in mind, we might recognize that the recent revival of ultra-conservative politics and religion, and the continuing argument against cultural elitism, adds contemporary relevance to the issue.

In the following discussion, I will amend the historical record which ignored the transformation of T. S. Eliot's critical practice between his early writing and that of the 1930s. My premise is not to deny critical links between Greenberg and Eliot, but to refocus on underlying cultural dissension which significantly alters perceptions of their relationship. I will propose a new paradigm for interpreting early Greenberg within the complex and catastrophic period prior to, during, and following World War II. Eliot's ultra-conservativism will be reviewed as a continuous underlying factor for Greenberg's fundamental themes, fueling my conclusion that Eliot's regressive esthetic and critical themes during the 1930s contributed to, even prompted, Greenberg's early turn to Kantian rationale and terminology. Using this model, Greenberg's argument with Eliot may have compelled him to adopt and apply Kantian criticism as an appropriate, effective, and specific response—an internally generated expression of free will—and in precise

opposition to the externally imposed esthetic criteria that followed from by Eliot's turn to religious revelation and dogma during the ominous period of spreading fascist extremism. This undetected and undeciphered relationship between Eliot's dicta as a negative motivating force for Greenberg's critical model and early turn to Kantianism will be explored as a logical conclusion to my discussion. I have synthesized this complex relationship by designating Greenberg an Anti-Eliotic Kantian. By extension, I contend that Greenberg's critics erred by faulting his incomplete Kantianism and for failing to ask or suggest why he was driven to use Kantian ideas. I will also suggest that Kantianism might be reviewed and revalued for its intended symbolic paradigm of free will, a philosophical slant that ought to be understood by those in the arts, and without its customary and speciously limited anti-Greenbergian configuration.

This discussion unites elements that I believe will find cohesion when juxtaposed with each other. My argument is framed between Donald Kuspit's reading of Greenberg in his book, *Clement Greenberg: Art Critic* (1979), and those of John O'Brian, editor of the late critic's collected writings.[4] I will briefly introduce selected Greenberg critics, and compare Eliot's early critical motifs with his later refashioned critical focus. These social issues, metaphorically analogous to the catastrophic world events prior to World War II, will be viewed as a requisite backdrop to any critical analyses of Greenberg's formative period. I see several other early influences as highly significant; *The Brown Network: The Activities of the Nazis in Foreign Countries* (1936),[5] translated by Greenberg in 1935; the relationship of both Eliot and Greenberg to *Partisan Review*; Greenberg's early articles on Brecht (a conspicuous counterexample to Eliot); and Brechtian esthetics. I will briefly introduce these Brechtian commentaries with their previously unexplored clues to Greenberg's process and thinking, especially his preoccupation with parody as a powerful rhetorical mechanism. After a discussion of the critic's own shifting attitudes toward Eliot, "The Kantian Connection" explicitly links the negative Eliot with Greenberg's Kantian rationale.

When the critical positions of two prominent art historians intersect peripherally within the myriad of contradictory issues surrounding Greenberg's debt to T. S. Eliot, seems to invite serious debate. That their remarks appear in two central texts on Greenberg suggests the centrality of Eliot's writing to Greenberg's early rhetoric and themes. But what first resonates as objective commentary is actually an unarticulated argument between Kuspit and O'Brian. In Clement Greenberg, Kuspit places Eliot at the center of Greenberg's early critical practice, concluding that for Greenberg, Eliot's criticism was a "touchstone . . . a working method and a philosophical theory." In stark contrast, O'Brian's introductory remarks and brief editorial notes to *Perceptions and Judgments and Arrogant Purpose* (1986), omit any mention of Eliot's presence during the volatile 1930s or in the following decade. But Eliot wasn't absent from O'Brian's thinking because he informs us immediately that Greenberg's criticism in general, and *Art and Culture* (1961) in particular, contains "articles in which [he] disagrees with the perceptions and judgments of other critics."[6] T. S. Eliot was one of these "other critics,"

although O'Brian chose not to share this with his readers. His silence is even more provocative because he not only purges Eliot from his Introduction, which ostensibly situates Greenberg's early cultural milieu, but also from his excellent Chronology. Because he cites Kuspit's book in his Bibliography (the only text on Greenberg), one might think that Kuspit's analysis of Eliot might have been mentioned, however briefly.

O'Brian's saves Eliot until the the very end of his polemical introduction to *Affirmations and Refusals* (1993). First he stakes out new definitions for editorial privilege, shredding Greenberg for his anti-Communist/anti-Stalinist mentality after World War II and for succumbing to the temptations of journalistic writing for such capitalist mass markets as *Vogue Magazine*. He traces Greenberg's post-war political metamorphosis from left to right, from avowed Trotskyist to "Cold Warrior," generated by the critic's continuing anti-Stalinism, but confused by his conflicting disavowal and praise for Marxist practice. The editor criticizes Greenberg's elitism for rejecting "middlebrow" culture and for driving esthetic pronouncements like art detached from realistic representation. With rhetoric shaped by his own politicized agenda, the editor defined this art as abstraction linked "to the brightest cultural prospects in the American imperium."[7]

Having saved Eliot for a 1953 grand entrance, it is curious that O'Brian had already stressed literary origins as significant to Greenberg's developing criticism while omitting Eliot. He even inferred earlier Eliot connections by suggesting that Greenberg's early essays "relate almost as much to literature as to art" and even more cogently, that his "ideas were informed more by literary criticism than art criticism." [8] With Eliot bound to this literary criticism, we might have expected an explanation of Eliot's value or relationship to Greenberg. Instead, we settle for partial disclosure within Marxist parameters. And when O'Brian launches his attack on Greenberg in the Introduction's final paragraph, he cites Greenberg's remarks on self-criticality, purity, and criteria for excellence, and then finally admits that Eliot had actually been of major concern to the aspiring critic:

> In holding to such an opinion, Greenberg came close to rehearsing the peremptoriness he had earlier observed in Eliot's criticism. He also came close to rehearsing the exclusive view of culture forwarded by Eliot, aview he had previously felt compelled to repudiate. [9]

Eliot, a Greenberg adversary at one moment, is a Greenberg accomplice at the next. But was Eliot simply an innocent culture prognosticator, as if his fascist dogma existed in an historical vacuum? If this final passage is intended to initiate an honest Eliot dialogue, it is instead a Pandora's Box of cultural contradictions. In the end, O'Brian transforms Greenberg into a synonym for Eliot.

But Greenberg was no Eliot. O'Brian's strategy effectively limits our understanding of very distinct cultural arguments between the two critics. By purging Eliot from

his critique, he not only omits the poet's threats to democratic ideals and esthetics during the 1930s and 1940s, but he also eliminates his early influence on Greenberg. Instead, the editor focuses on 1953, when Greenberg published "The Plight of Our Culture" and "Work and Leisure Under Industrialization," a two-part disparaging response to Eliot's "Notes Toward the Definition of Culture" (1949). His discussion is simultaneous to his analysis of Greenberg's Cold War cultural "sins." It isn't difficult to determine why he initiates the Eliot subject at this particular moment: first, because Greenberg has just openly restated his absolute affirmation of Marx (despite his 1948 rejection of Marx); and secondly, because Eliot's 1930s essays included anti-Marxist sentiment that might threaten or dilute a Late Marxist agenda. But such a selective reading did not go unnoticed. Conservative critic Hilton Kramer claims that Greenberg's anti-Eliot essays of 1953 were "not only the best response" to Eliot, but "one of the most cogent analyses of the problem of democratic culture any critic has given us in the last forty years." Kramer also faults O'Brian for political distortions in his writing, for aligning his politics with associate and friend, Serge Guilbaut, and for ignoring this bias. [10]

Reducing Greenberg's essays to a Marxist nexus, minus a pre-1950 Eliot, also precludes their value as anti-Eliot documents. We see this with O'Brian's enormous leap when he ignores Eliot and labels Greenberg a "Kantian anti-Communist." His conclusion is also questionable, however, because he ignores Greenberg's early turn to Kant, in 1941, and well before the critic's turn toward what might be viewed as an orthodox anti-Communist mentality, despite his ardent anti-Stalinist mentality. [11] O'Brian insists that this political shift, from left to right, is what drives the critic's Kantianism, a thesis which I will argue against, given Eliot's earlier influence. I believe that eliminating Eliot as a major player in Greenberg's early cultural environment elevates Marxist content and polemics over historical veracity, resulting in an academic exercise which I term "history without history." Without a full accounting of Eliot's cultural aberrations, neo-Marxist claims for critical appropriation of the 1930s (or the 1950s or 60s for that matter) remain a specious argument. It follows that Eliot's fascism is no less vital a link in this historical chain than charges against the "later" Greenberg for supposed cultural/political intrigue during the 1950s or 60s.

Eliot's drift toward the right was obviously problematic to *Partisan Review* editors and writers of the 1930s. Greenberg began his own writing career at this leftist magazine when they published his first major article, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in 1939. But we have to keep in mind that this early writing was drafted during the years of Eliot's turn toward ultra-conservativism and while his controversial presence dictated policy within intellectual journals on both sides of the Atlantic—*Partisan Review* in New York, and Eliot's own conservative *Criterion* in England.

While art discourse omitted the Eliot subject, other disciplines, particularly literature and history, have more adequately integrated the "Eliot factor" into revisionist studies. In addition to Ricks' book, a number of historical accounts stress the pluralistic

nature of 1930s intellectuals, especially those associated with *Partisan Review*. Eliot's modernist poetry and critical method were admired; his ultra-conservativism and fascist drift were abhorred. [12] By contrast, while sparring to displace Greenberg, critics were grounded, if not calcified, in advocating critical kinship between Greenberg and Eliot, a kinship that consistently eliminated difference.

Yet dissension was all too obvious, since Greenberg made no secret of his views on Eliot. His two Eliot essays in *Art and Culture* (1961) literally frame the art text, focusing attention on unmistakably derisive remarks which eclipse the usual discourse about Greenberg's critical debt. For those unfamiliar with the critic's previous writing, *Art and Culture* had enormous influence on a generation of students who only knew the revised essays. Described as Greenberg's account of modernism, *Art and Culture* also appeals for a broad cultural dynamic in opposition to Eliot. Along with Greenberg's earlier observations, a more complex view of his perception of Eliot is inescapable. I suggest that because *Art and Culture's* subtitle is "Critical Essays" (instead of "Essays in Criticism"), it implies far more than a play on words, but suggests a cohesive critical narrative.

There is, of course, no argument against valuing Eliot as an important influence on Greenberg. He studied the poet at Syracuse University (1926-1930), when, like many of his generation, the young critic-to-be was profoundly affected by Eliot's innovative critical forms. Not surprisingly, we find Eliot's name in the very first line of "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939), suggesting that he was very much on Greenberg's mind during this early period. By 1984, the critic names Eliot his "principle inspiration." But relevant to my reading of their critical affinity, Greenberg later corrected his earlier judgment, insisting adamantly to this author that the word "influence" more appropriately described the relationship.[13] Nevertheless, we need to consider the striking contradiction between Greenberg's debt to Eliot and his derogatory remarks about Eliot's cultural themes. A close reading of Greenberg's early texts reveal his actual attitudes —negative views that are discernible in cultural, poetic or art criticism, or inferred in Greenberg's early critiques of Bertolt Brecht or Eliot. It is important to remember that Brecht and Eliot were two of Greenberg's "mentors" during the thirties.[14]

Eliot's Transition to Ultra-Conservativism

Greenberg would have been entirely familiar with the wide schism between Eliot's formalized critical programme of the 1920s and his developing ultra-conservative politicized beliefs of the 1930s and beyond. Comparisons between the two are now totally dependent on understanding these distinct periods of criticism. Launching his early critical themes in *The Sacred Wood* (1920), Eliot outlined the preservation of tradition, taste, the objective correlative, unity, and the place of order. His "superior sensibility" motif systematized and articulated impressions through an ordering process with new impressions merging with old. He claimed that criticism was the "development of sen-

sibility," leading to his criteria for critics: a "good" critic demonstrated superior sensibility, used comparison and analysis, and relied on fact, while an"imperfect" critic was unduly subjected to his own emotions. Eliot also measured an artist's progress through the "continual extinction of personality," a "process of depersonalization" signaling art's recognition of scientific methodology.[15] In short, the medium was expressed and personality suppressed.

But by the late 1920s, several factors influenced distinct changes in Eliot's critical writing: his conversion to the Anglican Church of England, in 1927; threats of encroaching secularism advocated by Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More; and the 1929 economic collapse, causing liberals to stress social issues and adopt Marxist rationales in order to counter exploitation of the workers in a capitalist society. Subsequent to his newly acquired religious conversion and British citizenship, the expatriot's criticism increasingly reflected conservative themes—homogeneous Christian culture, hierarchical class structure, nationalism, the absolute codependency of religion and culture, and religious dogma as the basis for analyzing literature. This new direction appeared in the preface to the 1928 edition of *The Sacred Wood*, where he insisted on poetry's relationship to morality, religion, and politics. These external referents were extensions of his expanding religious/esthetic philosophy, summed up by his remark, "There is . . . something outside of the artist to which he owes allegiance, a devotion to which he must surrender and sacrifice himself." But Eliot's willingness to "sacrifice" included art: "I do not deny that art may be affirmed to serve ends beyond itself."[16] By the late 1930s, Eliot's early "extinction of personality" had transformed into externally-imposed literary authority. His new philosophy corresponded with the decade's advancing tyranny and oppression.

Eliot shared his adopted religious convictions and conservativism, in England and back home in America, where in 1933, the year of Hitler's rise to power, he gave three lectures at the University of Virginia. These lectures were subsequently published as *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (1934), one of Eliot's most controversial books, because its crusade towards racial purity paralleled Hitler's own racial objectives. The poet endorsed moral values as literary touchstone, but Eliot's morality theme was biased by cultural exclusivity—the Northeast was "invaded by foreign races" and contemporary society was "wormeaten with Liberalism." His themes expressed his own personal perspective, like tradition that represented blood kinship of "the same people living in the same place." With this "tradition," analogous to "Christian orthodoxy," Eliot's paradigm exchanged critical language with cultural terms, a particularly parochial message during the volatile pre-war period. He also viewed "heterodoxy" as comparable to heresy, with tradition and unity becoming metaphors for cultural elitism based on religious underpinnings. Eliot's religious premise thus pressed for homogeneity, a "unity of religious background," with the poet adding astonishing invective: "reasons of race and religion combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable." Freely sharing his penchant for "homogeneity," a term which transcended

strictly delineated racial or religious categories, he also criticized "Unitarian infidels," Protestant decay, agnostics, and psychoanalysis.[17]

By the mid-thirties Eliot preached the merits of superior standards in the form of "ethical and theological" criteria for literary criticism. He claimed that these were based on unconscious Christian religious dogma, suitable for elitist Christians, but not for the "pagan world." This form of Eliotic elitism, synonymous with religious bias, opposed secular literary ideals as inadequate for judging literature. Eliot wrote, "The whole of modern literature is corrupted by what I call Secularism, ... it is simply unaware of, simply cannot understand the meaning of, the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life: ... something which I assume to be our primary concern."

His critique also implied a fundamental attack on atheists (presumably Marxists and Humanists) or other religious groups. He denounced the notion that the greater part of our current reading matter is written for us by people who have no real belief in a supernatural order, though some of it may be written by people with individual notions of a supernatural order which are not ours.

Because it conflicted with his own concept of a unified Christianity, Eliot criticized Humanism and its champions, notably his colleagues, Babbitt and More. The poet, who previously rebuked Babbitt's acceptance of Humanism in place of religion, and for his refusal of "dogma or revelation," became especially critical of his former professor's theme, the "inner check" which advocated self-control in place of deteriorating religious orthodoxy.[18]

Also during the thirties, Eliot's religious motifs coalesced with his own personal political arena. He promoted "Christian world-order, the Christian world-order," a unified Christianity as the only reasonable response to Marxist disorder, or to the League of Nations, which he denounced. Fusing spirituality and esthetics was Eliot's objective in *Christianity and Culture* (1940), where he refined his religious-based cultural critiques, favoring a Utopian Christian community where religious authority would control social habits.[19] He spoke of these ideas in a radio address in March 1939, in Cambridge, England, just prior to Greenberg's first trip to Europe, and during the crucial period when the young critic was formulating his own criticism. Given the expatriot's fame and notoriety in *Partisan Review*, Eliot's speech would have been familiar to Greenberg who was interviewing Ignazio Silone in Italy, and meeting with intellectuals throughout Europe between April and June, 1939.

Eliot's uniform culture also challenged diverse racial and religious groups (particularly in the United States), which presumably interfered with his strategy for increasing church/state integration. Extending this formula into a critique of European culture, his views paralleled Hitler's pursuit of racial purity. With ideas coming dangerously close to Hitler's rhetoric, Eliot concluded that no European religion had ever been pure, characterizing these unnamed religions with their "tendenc[ies] towards parasitic beliefs" and "perversions." Given this tone and drift, it is hardly surprising that

Eliot freely used anti-semitic code-words in a 1937 radio series focusing on the relationship between the church, the community, and the state:

> Perhaps the dominant vice of our time, from the point of view of the Church, will be proved to be avarice ... I am still less sure of the morality of my being a money-lender, [and] I seem to be a petty usurer in a world manipulated largely by big usurers, and I know that the church once condemned these things.

Eliot's malicious language is the more so when juxtaposed with Hitler's reign of terror and professed oath to eliminate the Jews. Even with a half-century's hindsight, his words nullify the notion of Eliot's "old-fashioned 'gentlemanly' anti-semitism," as Leonard Bushkoff aptly terms this insidious discourse. Eliot echoes Hitler's blueprint again in "The Class and the Elite," where he appeals for a "radical transformation of society," envisioning an ideal where "superior individuals must be formed into suitable groups, endowed with appropriate powers." These groups were the "elites . . . the elites of the future will . . . replace the classes of the past."[20] Resembling Hitlerian visionaries, Eliot's "elites" also corresponded with his personal vision for an orderly hierarchical society populated by superior forms.

With Eliot's undiluted rhetoric speaking for itself, we can only conclude that inferring cultural affinity between Eliot and Greenberg is misleading, if not patently bizarre. Without specifying difference, in this case, affinity is no more than a hollow term of convenience. However dogmatic and intransigent Greenberg's criticism was or would eventually become, it appears to have been rooted in the necessity to ensure cultural viability during a global crisis. At the other end of the spectrum, and openly defiant of its author's "extinction of personality" motif, Eliot's inflammatory language and fascistic objectives reflected his own personal sensibility toward a cultural aristocracy bonded by blood, racial purity, and religious intolerance. The poet's critical perversions suggest that those who hint of an elitist alliance between Greenberg and Eliot could not be fully acquainted with the poet's actual writing. Rather, Greenberg's continuing dispute with Eliot leads us to view the expatriot as looming forcefully—a powerful negative presence during the years of Greenberg's early critical growth.

Greenberg's Critics

Despite Greenberg's rebuke of Eliot in the widely-read *Art and Culture*, few critics integrated Eliot into their writing on Greenberg, nor did the idea of a negative Eliot take hold, despite Ratcliff's observation in 1974. The subject revived in 1989 when critic Florence Rubenfeld restored Greenberg's actual views. With three succinct words - a "sometimes scathing critique" - she accurately describes Greenberg's response to Eliot and shifts the discussion toward critical attention. She also admonishes T. J. Clark for avoiding Greenberg's "Plight of Culture" (1953) in his own writing. Without this critical essay, Clark, who admits to superimposing his own Marxist ideology over Greenberg's

early writing, remained free to label Greenberg an "Eliotic-Trotskyis[t]," thus categorizing the critic, in his own terms, between Eliot's pessimism and Trotsky's Marxism. Arguing that Greenberg's rationale emerges from its "Eliotic stronghold," Clark cultivates an elitist affinity between the poet and Greenberg.[21] But with Eliot's drift to the far right the missing link here, one wonders if Clark's Marxist impulse was enhanced by scholarly amnesia, perhaps the same ideological malady that would strike his former student, John O'Brian.[22]

Eliot remains a scarce or misread commodity for many other critics, including art historian Susan Noyes Platt who receives a great deal of attention here because her "Clement Greenberg in the 1930s: A New Perspective on His Criticism" (1989) focuses on the very decade of Eliot's transformation. In her well-argued hypothesis she asserts: "In this article I will examine Clement Greenberg's formative years in the late 1930s, his cultural heritage as a Jewish intellectual, and his first contacts with art, aesthetics and politics." Although her broad cultural rationale includes Kafkian underpinnings to demonstrate Greenberg's narrow (in her view) focus, surprisingly, discussion of Eliot is severely limited: "In the 1930s, Eliot pursued a 'reactionary' direction: he converted to Catholicism, and was considered a fascist." But following this powerful admission, Platt eliminates him from her cultural discussion, a bias that precludes any comparative analysis of Eliot's culture and 'Jewish intellectual[s]'. I for one find it impossible to situate Greenberg within a wide 1930s cultural or political arena without inviting a significant discussion of the 'reactionary' and 'fascist' Eliot? After all, Platt claimed:

> To accurately assess Greenberg's contribution, he must be seen in the larger perspective of twentieth-century political and aesthetic history in Europe and America, rather than simply in the limited arena of the post World War II art world.

The art historian's entire premise seemed to anticipate Eliot since she depicted this 'larger perspective' threatened by totalitarianism, or the "apocalyptic confrontations in both the political and aesthetic sphere." We know that when Greenberg entered this volatile milieu, his ideas found form in criticism as well as instant acclaim with his early publications in *Partisan Review*. Alfred Kazin recollects this 1930s criticism as a "'philosophical front where the great central forces seeking to rebuild the world were locked together in battle,'" critic/warriors convinced of the necessity to rescue culture. Historian Terry Cooney sees this critical sphere as including cosmopolitan values "demand[ing] a resistance to particularism of nationality, race, religion or philosophy and ... celebrat[ing] richness, complexity and diversity."[23] In all respects, Eliot represented the opposing side.

Despite encouraging broad readings of 'cultural heritage,' Platt interprets Greenberg's Jewishness and cultural heritage as unrelated to Eliot. Her position is difficult to fathom since she repeatedly linked Greenberg's pursuit of a purified medium and abstraction to the erosion of European civilization which was central to Eliot's

view of declining culture. All of this leads us to ask why Platt chooses to eliminate Eliot as a major player in this dialogue. He was, after all, the eminent critic whose "racial purity" theme paralleled Hitler's ideology. This was the Eliot who spoke of "money lenders" while Hitler prepared for Kristallnacht. And this was the Eliot who proposed literature's subservience to religious revelation and dogma—while books were torched in Germany. Contrary to Platt's thinking, in any examination of Greenberg's 'cultural heritage' or critical practice, all of these issues remain powerful historical determinants.

Nevertheless, having neatly excluded Eliot's later cultural assertions, Platt links Greenberg solely to the poet's early critical thinking. Setting her selective Eliot/Greenberg alliance into motion, she writes, "Eliot's dicta for writing, and his model of the development of art echoed in Greenberg's work. Indeed, it fit seamlessly together with his other intellectual frameworks." But Platt's deduction missed Eliot's descent into cultural austerity, undoubtedly central to Greenberg during the 1930s. Considering her personal interview with the critic in 1984 when he cited Eliot as his "principle inspiration," together with her own brief synthesis of Eliot's fascist behavior, we might have expected a different response. Instead, Platt promotes a Kafkian model, and writes of a prophetic Greenberg anticipating a "Messianic event." And when she theorizes that Greenberg transposes "Jewish heritage into the fabric of his thinking and writing," we are reminded that Eliot's own spiritual/esthetic objectives would have been powerful prototypes for this kind of speculation.[24]

Platt also hypothesizes that Greenberg incorporates Orthodox Jewry's prohibition against image-making and the pursuit of abstract ideas into his own visual paradigm—despite his lack of Orthodoxy and his "free-thinking" Socialist atheistic parents, and despite his known habitual art activities since childhood. The critic wrote that his immigrant parents "maintained only their Yiddish . . . and an insistence upon specifying themselves as Jews," but also "repudiated a good deal of the Jewish heritage for him in advance." Explaining that this Jewish heritage endowed his writing with an informal cultural quality, he asserted that it was "transmitted mostly through mother's milk and the habits and talk of the family." In a conversation with this author, he affirmed his cultural Jewishness and his parents' atheism, critical notions for assessing his initial theories and motivations. But we also need to consider Greenberg's handdrawn street-scene, mailed from Paris in 1939 along with a letter to his family, and eventually printed in *Perceptions and Judgments*. What appears as an innocent drawing now acquires unique status, and challenging supposed familial proscriptions against representation. Moreover, his writing during a twelve years as associate editor of *Commentary*, and his essay, "Kafka's Jewishness," contradicts attempts to promote religious underpinnings grounded in orthodoxy. Without question, Greenberg's writing generated erroneous conclusions confusing religious and cultural identification and the Jewish bias toward the abstract. But linking abstraction to a non-Orthodox Jew's paradigmatic design is misguided logic, as is Platt's assumption that a Jewish intellectual tendency towards

abstract ideas is an exact correlation with visual abstraction.[25]

Despite Platt's extensive explication of imminent global catastrophe, she omits the expatriot's controversial presence during the volatile thirties, and particularly on the pages of *Partisan Review* where Greenberg would have been well acquainted with his views. That she cites Cooney's *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals: Partisan Review and Its Circle* (1986), with its full discussion of the *Partisan Review*/Eliot dilemma, indicates her awareness of Eliot's problematic fascism. Although Cooney does not connect Greenberg's early motivations to Eliot's criticism, Platt's discussion of Greenberg's Jewish roots suggests that her thinking might have included Eliot. Given her bias against the later Greenberg, eliminating Eliot is an effective move. In the end, she analyzes early Greenberg by securing a plausible Kafkian rationale to Greenberg's Eliotic roots.[26]

Artist/critic Robert Storr promotes affinity between Eliot's Anglo-Catholicism and Greenberg's supposedly "fundamentally religious perspective." In "No Joy in Mudville," Storr describes Greenberg and Eliot as "contenders in combat"- Greenberg the "Marxist impersonator," and Eliot his "hero in combat," characterizations that partially explain Greenberg's love/hate relationship with his mentor. But Storr, who was on the right track, then stresses similarity based on religious genesis, proposing a shared elitism between the two critics, but ignoring the unbridgeable critical gulf. When he weaves his criticism around Greenberg's inability to acknowledge "social issues," we are compelled to ask why he eliminates the entire issue of Eliot's 1930s social criticism, as well as the threatening data—e.g., *The Brown Network*—both of which were integral to Greenberg's critical development?[27]

Are Platt and Storr the critical progeny of Kuspit's thinking in Greenberg? Eliot's cultural and ultra-conservative esthetics were non-existent here, not surprising given Kuspit's source, Austin Warren's reverential reading of Eliot in "Continuity and Coherence in the Criticism of T. S. Eliot." Kuspit's later review of the collected Greenberg reflects a more comprehensive view, particularly when he acknowledges the critic's "damnation of Eliot's social criticism."[28]

Finally, there is artist/critic Sidney Tillim's discussion, in several prominent articles, where he links Greenberg's Jewish and Kafkian themes. In the 1960s, Tillim and Greenberg had driven together from New York to Bennington College, where Tillim had been a faculty member for years, and where Greenberg was frequently invited to lead seminars. With an independent streak that openly defied his driving partner's proscriptive "tyranny," Tillim's historical figure paintings emerged during abstraction's peak, and his "paper-towel" abstractions coincided with the reemergence of the figure during the 1980s. Because he was never a member of the "family," as Janet Jones aptly describes Greenberg's proteges, Tillim's insight into Greenberg's motives deserves our attention.[29] Nevertheless, despite compelling conclusions about the relationship between Greenberg's early writing and his Kafkian themes, have Platt, Storr and Tillim, like so many others, ignored Eliot's influence, albeit negative, on Greenberg and his

Jewishness? What is notable however, is Tillim respectful debt to Greenberg's theories, while the younger critics may have been influenced, even ignited, by decades of fervent "Clembusting." [30]

The Brown Network

This recent focus on Greenberg during the thirties and his Jewishness as a contributing factor for his criticism also suggests a more careful reading of his 1935 translation of *The Brown Network: The Activities of the Nazis in Foreign Countries*, a report by the "World Committee for the Victims of Fascism" (1936). I believe that critics have ignored the implications of this work on the young critic, despite O'Brian's cogent suggestion that it reflects Greenberg's "political attitudes," or Platt's observation that the book introduced Greenberg to "urgent contemporary political issues." Because Greenberg translated *The Brown Network* when he was twenty-five years old, when Hitler's strangle-hold on history was emergent and when Eliot's former engagement with poetry and criticism had converted into a mask of religious ideology, I think the book ought to be required reading, both for serious Greenberg scholars and for contemporary historians witnessing the ominous reappearance of 1930s'-style fascism. Aside from its distinct political drift, however, numerous passages reflect heinous anti-semitic themes. Is it possible that these offensive details were not of some import in Greenberg's Jewish past? [31]

Nevertheless, even with some powerful emotional issues deleted from the art historical narrative, Platt correctly concludes that the *The Brown Network's* main focus was fascist methodology and propaganda stratagem. This example illustrates the book's malevolent tone and data.

> By virtue of the decree of June 30, 1933, Dr. Goebbels now controls all news services, domestic and foreign propaganda, art, radio, motion picture and theatre guilds, censorship, exhibitions, travel advertising and sports, abroad - in short, everything which seems useful to the Nazis for the maintenance of their power at home and the spread of their influence abroad.

And what effect did the following citation from *The Brown Network* (quoted directly from *Mein Kampf*) have on the young Greenberg?: "Through the skillful and persistent application of propaganda an entire people can be shown heaven as hell, and equally, the most miserable life can be made to seem paradise." [32]

These passages prove that by 1935 the young aspiring critic had been thoroughly exposed to the perversion of esthetics, particularly art and film as powerful mechanisms of propaganda. They also confirm that by the mid-1930s Greenberg understood that illusions were inherently hazardous. These issues underscore his predisposition to equate false images or false messages with his rejection of explicit subject matter (thus in his mind, propaganda) and his subsequent and unbending alliance with abstraction. Never-

theless, I see an interesting correlation here between Hitler's threat and Greenberg's reaction in "An American View" (1940), written for *Horizon*, the British literary magazine. In his article he pairs "safely abstract" and "dangerously concrete" provocative metaphors that voice an emotional context, as in "The heat of war would force these [anti-fascist] slogans from the realms of the safely abstract into the regions of the dangerously concrete." I see this language as weakening an overly literal rationale for the critic's romance with abstraction and personal tenets of modernist and formalist theory. And, speaking of rationale, is there also a correspondence between his warnings of dangerous "realistic illusions" in "Towards a Newer Laocoon" (1940), and Virgil's account of the priest, Laocoon? Interrupting his narrative, Brechtian-style, the oracular Greenberg writes, "Forces stemming from outside art play a much larger part than I have room to acknowledge here." And from the distant past, prophetic counterpart Laocoon signals the advancing Trojan Horse, crying out, "Trust not the horse, ye Trojans." (33)

Brechtian Esthetics and Parody

Greenberg's early critical practice was indeed shaped by complex "forces. . . from outside art" including, the contemporaneous struggle between fascism and capitalism and their various propaganda strategies, a fear of particularist religious intrusion into culture, and T. S. Eliot, the influential intellectual, a purveyor of such converging currents. But these interrelated themes also suggest reexamining Greenberg's critical relationship to Bertolt Brecht. Beyond the well-noted political contradictions between the Trotskyist Greenberg and the Stalinist Brecht, I see their esthetic kinship as revealing insights into Greenberg's early thinking. Esthetics in the service of Brechtian politics have been discussed, but to my knowledge there has been no significant focus on Greenberg's intensive studies of Brechtian esthetics. My reversal situates Greenberg's early Brechtian critiques and observations on parody as shedding light, possibly even forecasting his own Eliot strategies. But assuming parody as an operative paradigm for the critic also forces us to reevaluate literal interpretations of his writing in general (thus the cryptic writing and hidden riddles that I mentioned earlier).

Greenberg's own rhetorical process might be revealed by a close reading of "Bertolt Brecht's Poetry," (1941) where he explains parody's subtle nuances. But what makes this early essay so compelling is the critic's persistent focus on parody's ability to communicate profound ideas, and in fact his discussion of parody is perhaps more persuasive than the poetry he is ostensibly explaining. Note Greenberg's cogent conclusion: "Parody ordinarily finds its end in what it parodies but in Brecht's hands it became the means to something beyond itself, more profound and more important." What was he thinking about when he analyzed the German poet? His remark describes far more than Brecht's process but suggests his own concentration during this early critical period, that is, in borrowed or recontextualized forms that convert into rhetorical mechanisms,

eventually promoting profound or critical ideas.[34] This is particularly apparent when we reread the critic's earliest published article on literary criticism, "A Penny for the Poor" (1939), where his very first sentence asserts: "Brecht could not have found a better dramatic legend for the expression of his obsessive theme." Greenberg, obviously intrigued by the ways that writers disguised their thinking, concluded, "by instinct [Brecht] puts on a mask before speaking. He has to cast himself in a role." That this observation appears only in the early "Bertolt Brecht's Poetry" and is omitted from the revised version in *Art and Culture* suggests his own propensity for disguise or at the very least, his fear of revealing his own practice. We observe this again when he remarks "Brecht pretends to speak for himself."[35]

It is interesting to speculate that Greenberg's writing on parody and borrowed forms during this period led to a parody of Eliot's critical methods. Linda Hutcheon's scholarly study, *A Theory of Parody* (1985), substantiates this kind of thinking, particularly her conclusion that parody is more complex than simple mimesis or burlesque because it expresses a double-voiced twentieth-century art form, a parodic conversion that she defines as "repetition with critical distance." That she restates Margaret Rose's definition of parody -"both a symptom and a critical tool of the modernist episteme"—is of special interest here because Hutcheon's text begins with a quote from early Partisan Review editor, Dwight Macdonald, who wrote, "We are backward-looking explorers and parody is the central expression of our times." [36]

Greenberg's writing on Brecht repeatedly underscores parody's significance to the young critic's intellectual development. But given Hutcheon's articulation of parody's modern context, it is interesting to assume that Greenberg's adaptation of Eliot's early critical forms both enabled and enhanced his own rapid ascent to the editorial boards of numerous intellectual journals. But was Greenberg leaving clues when he repeatedly wrote of parody's proclivity for destruction? Transferring this notion to art, his reviews included odd verbal couplings like "The cubist painter eliminated color because, consciously or unconsciously he was parodying, in order to destroy." [37] Here we have Greenberg's early thinking, compelling us to review, comprehensively, his interest in parody as a timely and purposeful tool.

Is there precedence for viewing Greenberg's Brechtian commentary as forming a critical pattern? Kuspit's "archeological" critique of Greenberg examined "words and phrases as clues to concepts, structuring them until they make coherent sense." It seems no less reasonable to initiate a close reading of Greenberg, not only to determine paradigms and intentions, but to reevaluate his earliest notions about Eliot. An archeological approach also compels us to rethink the meaning of Greenberg's 1944 essay, "A Victorian Novel," purportedly a book review of Anthony Trollope's *The American Senator*, but bearing little formal resemblance to any of his other reviews. It does not introduce a new edition of the book, a plausible rationale for its presence, but is isolated within reviews expressing contemporary subject matter. Although it eventually received a bit of attention as one of four literature essays, all personally selected by Greenberg

for *Art and Culture*, it has been generally ignored. Yet, given the unusually detailed retelling of Trollope's narrative, I question whether the writing was ever intended as a straightforward book review. Or, did Greenberg intend to write a parodic commentary on Eliot's cultural idiosyncrasies and the social structure and mores of his adopted country? [38]

On the surface, Greenberg faults Trollope's inability to unify narrative elements (correlating with Eliot's theme of unity, and his own developing visual criticism). But with Greenberg's interest in parody, did he, like Brecht, don a "mask before speaking?" Behind this Brechtian mask were three critical voices - his own, Trollope's, and Trollope's central character, the sympathetic American Senator, Elias Gotobed. Strategy focuses on Gotobed, whose persona both mirrors and opposes Eliot, particularly evident when the visiting Senator, like expatriot/social commentator Eliot, criticizes British social strata. Applying Eliot - like attributes, Greenberg describeds Gotobed in nearly comedic terms, as a "figure of Reason incarnate, stalking and castigating the English land," or, articulating Eliot-style moral authority, "The senator arouses wide-spread animosity by his outspoken surprise at the injustices and anomalies of the English social order." But this fictional Gotobed also mimics Greenberg, who had urged (however naively) from his American pulpit, that a working class revolution was England's only hope in a war against Hitler. (39)

The Dilemma: *Partisan Review* and Eliot

Greenberg's Brechtian studies during the 1930s contributed substantially to his budding career as *Partisan Review* critic and editor; his introduction to intellectual life was officially launched after his critique of Brecht's "A Penny for the Poor" appeared in the magazine in early 1939. During this time, perceptions of Eliot at the magazine were increasingly problematic for founding editors Philip Rahv and William Phillips. An orthodox Marxist publication at its 1934 debut, its first editorial statement in 1934 asserted that defending the Soviet Union was its primary objective. Partisan Review's metamorphosis into an anti-fascist, anti-Stalinist, and pro-Trotsky journal with liberalized literary aims resulted however, from disillusionment following the Moscow Trials (1936-38) and subsequent repression of the intellectuals. Central to the Eliot dilemma was an incongruity—how to pay homage to the modernist literary hero while he continued espousing inflammatory fascist rhetoric. With Greenberg's "A Penny for the Poor" accepted for publication, and because he was corresponding with Dwight Macdonald in early 1939 regarding the future publication of "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," the young critic would have been fully aware of the problematic dialogue surrounding Eliot.

Rahv and Phillips juggled their own shifting attitudes toward Eliot while the magazine promoted the Popular Front's united effort against fascism. First condemning Eliot's fascism, Rahv later attempted to separate cultural politics from esthetics, thus praising "Murder in the Cathedral" (1934) on esthetic grounds but faulting the ideo-

logical bias of Marxist critics. But Rahv had no trouble in openly criticizing the poet, writing "of late Eliot has been steering close to fascism in his general attitude to the problems of our time." Phillips, writing under the pseudonym Wallace Phelps, distinguished between the poet's early criticism and the "absurdities" of his later ideas, writing, "[Eliot's] gods are the caricatures and monsters of fascism." He also reprinted the poet's remark about "free-thinking Jews." [40] *Partisan Review* editors were retreating from Orthodox Marxism's externally-imposed esthetic boundaries, while promoting intellectual freedom, including of course, Eliot's assault on literary content.

Eliot's drift toward fascism was not buried in 1930's leftist critiques. His problematic relationship with *Partisan Review* was later reconstructed in numerous critical accounts, including one published nearly three decades ago by historian James Burkhart Gilbert who acknowledged that the early editors were "impressed" by Eliot's poetry but conflicted by "ideological implications" of his social criticism. Historian Terry Cooney claims that Rahv's early assessment of Eliot formed the philosophical basis of *Partisan Review*, that is, modernist heroes of the 1920s, though philosophically unsound, still deserved recognition. Cooney summarized the editors' attitudes toward Eliot:

> Rahv's and Phillips' attacks on the Eliot of the thirties incorporated into one image of reaction the dangers and failing of religion, feudalism, regionalism, upper-class cultural castes, resistance to scientific thought, 'authoritarianism,' nationalism (the state'), ruralism, and racism.[41]

Acclaim, Ambivalence, Rejection

Greenberg's early writing and shifting attitudes express the same predicament as Rahv and Phillips and other 1930s leftist intellectuals—praise for Eliot's early critical achievements coexisting with staunch rejection of the poet's ultra-conservativism. Reflecting this philosophical contention, Greenberg hints of the expatriot's negative presence by leaving clues in his own writing. Though he cites Eliot immediately in the first line of "Avant-Garde and Kitsch"—as representing high culture's ideal—later, a powerful passage about cultural animosity and "godliness or the blood's health," are likely allusions to a contemporary Eliot. Greenberg explains that "this resentment toward culture is to be found where the dissatisfaction with society is a reactionary dissatisfaction which expresses itself in revivalism and puritanism, and latest of all, in fascism." [42] But the expatriot's spectre also haunts "Towards a Newer Laocoon" (1940), "Modernist Painting's" (1960) early predecessor. Greenberg's historical justification for abstraction and rationale for purifying the medium do little to drown "Laocoon's" passionate rhetoric. Interpretations are virtually impossible without recognizing the perils of 1930s propaganda and the danger of esthetics (during this particular historical era) dominated by subject matter.

Clues to Eliot's critical presence also surface in Greenberg's early literary reviews, including his Brechtian commentaries and poetic criticism. With his known Brechtian

concentration throughout the 1930s, it is not surprising that his writing includes negative material on Eliot, particularly evident in "Bertolt Brecht's Poetry" (1941). Conscious or unconscious dialectic strategies are at work here, pitting the German writer's non-elitist forms against an absent elitist Eliot; when Greenberg praises Brecht's poetry or themes, he is contradicting Eliot. When he mentions Brecht's appreciation for anti-literary folk culture, he infers antagonism to Eliot's obscure motifs. When he praises Brecht's parody of forms that oppose "obscurant 'book' literature," he is openly condemning Eliot's elitism. Greenberg also affirms his early (though disputed by later neo-Marxists) Marxist affiliation by extolling Brecht's universal values, thus by inference reproaching Eliot's nationalism, narrow cultural drift, and obedience to a backward-looking tradition. And when Greenberg writes of Brecht's ingrained religious bias and moral disposition, it is Eliot's newly-acquired religion and moral authority that is implicated, perhaps mockingly.[43]

Similarly, we find the young modernist Eliot (greatly influenced by Jules Laforge and other French Symbolist poets) between the lines in Greenberg's early (1941) critique of Marianne Moore. He parodies Eliot's "sensibility' and "unity" motifs, and then claims Moore was "one of that first generation of American modernist poets who in the teens and twenties went into the wilderness and with the aid only of a few volumes of French poetry built their Tower of Babel from the ground up." But it is an altered Eliot he is speaking of now, not the critical hero. Greenberg's mocking tone leads us to the Book of Genesis where Babylonians constructing the Tower of Babel in order to find their way to heaven, are conspicuously reminiscent of Eliot's newly-found religious fervor.[44]

During 1943 and the first half of 1944, when many of Greenberg's articles related to contemporary Jewish themes, oddly, there is little explicit mention of Eliot. By the summer of 1944, and after, however, the critic's remarks are less benign than his previous allusions. What accounts for this distinct change? Greenberg's new self-assurance likely derived from his developing prominence as a critic and editor, his promotion in 1944 to managing editor of the *Contemporary Jewish Record*, and increasing reports of war-time fascist atrocities against Jews. Also contributing was a renewed focus on Jewish identity and relationship to Jewish intellectual life, explored by prominent thinkers in discussions initiated by magazines like *Contemporary Jewish Record* or *Partisan Review*.[45]

Greenberg's first article on Eliot, written for *Partisan Review*, in 1944, criticized the poet's appeal (published in the previous issue) for a religiously-based fixed culture. Always apprehensive of homogeneous religious intrusion and of Eliot's reverence for the supernatural, Greenberg wrote: "It may be that religion will dissolve itself into the ethical, discarding revelation and the envelope of the supernatural." Greenberg's early cryptic commentary eventually converted to explicit hero-worship mixed with ambivalence and outright rejection. Eliot, the "greatest of all literary critics," also established the "first true school of English-speaking literary criticism since the eighteenth cen-

tury." But acclaim succumbs to an indictment of Eliot's "frivolous" social and political attitudes, his "bad" plays and his "contrived" poetry. Greenberg also makes a compelling and sardonic observation that only Eliot appreciated Machiavelli. Nevertheless, with his continuing mistrust of religious intrusion into the general culture, Greenberg accuses literary intellectuals (especially the poets) of reviving "religiosity," his anxiety reflecting a persuasive contemporary context, including post-war Jewish resettlement and the founding of Israel. Corresponding with these events was the continuing "Eliot" factor, since the poet—despite his controversial invective—was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948.[46]

By 1953, the year chosen by O'Brian to enter the Greenberg/Eliot dialogue, disparity between Greenberg's homage to Eliot's esthetics and censure of his themes is indisputable. Greenberg was then Associate Editor of *Commentary*, the conservative Jewish publication which evolved, in 1945, from the *Contemporary Jewish Record*. Designed to reflect changing perceptions of Jewish life in the post-Holocaust era, *Commentary* articles reveal the passionate flavor of Greenberg's personal views. Ironically, Greenberg now emulated Eliot, although from a distinctly different base; Eliot's particularist religious viewpoint opposed Greenberg's pathos stemming from post-war Jewish cultural or political themes and a universal motif of the Jew's alienation. Greenberg accuses Eliot for being an "ideologue" and of parodying eighteenth century practice where "the eminent man of letters begins to feel in middle age that literature is not enough, and aspires to some larger power over public opinion." Given Eliot's prestige, the critic's statement reflects his continuing apprehension of Eliot's potential for power. This is evident when Greenberg questions Charles Maurras's influence on Eliot's books, *After Strange Gods* and *The Idea of a Christian Society*. (Maurras, a Frenchman, was jailed as a German collaborator.) The first text argued for religious morality to define literature, and the second proposed homogeneous Christian culture - both disturbing propositions to Jewish intellectuals facing intensifying prewar anti-semitism and fascism. Declaring Maurras reactionary, espousing "'classicism,' 'hierarchism,' 'authority,' ultra-nationalism, and anti-Semitism"— Greenberg's adjectives also describe Eliot. The art critic denounced Eliot's fusion of political ideology and esthetics, and boldly castigated the poet's lack of sensibility and intelligence. And, after Eliot's curious statement: "I do not approve of the extermination of the enemy . . . . One needs the enemy," Greenberg was caustically incisive: "Never was a humane sentiment expressed with such barbaric and fatuous humor." "One becomes alarmed for the author's soul, not his mind. And, after all, Eliot is, or was, a great writer." [47]

Greenberg's negative attitudes toward Eliot, an offshoot of his ripening rhetorical self-assurance, also surfaced in several early art reviews. Defining Eliot's "negation and pessimism" in an art review, his statement is particularly valuable because it exposes Greenberg's explicit negativism toward the poet during this period. He also repudiated Eliot's religious dogma and esthetics, transferring this rejection to visual art by censuring representational subject matter, as in his 1945 Rouault exhibition review,

where he abandons any pretense of critical restraint, boldly accusing the painter of "pornographic, sadomasochistic, avant-garde Catholicism." Though he follows this (in his typical dialectical practice) by praising Rouault's talents, ultimately he condemns the painter's turn to religion as "pretext and justification for venting his abhorrence" of the era, "of humanity and himself." It is important to note that Greenberg is not faulting religion or Catholicism here, but is berating what he sees as Rouault's perversion of religious and esthetic ideals.[48]

Greenberg's bias against Eliot culminates in *Art and Culture* where the revised Eliot essays restate earlier themes. That Greenberg reissued anti-Eliot arguments in 1961 reiterates his continuing concern with the poet's critical behavior, compelling us to conclude that vigorous anti-Eliotism remained at the nucleus of his critical practice. Again he denounces the poet's deteriorating critical skills and poetry, suggesting a correlation between his transformed criticism, religious conversion, and political conservativism. He also trivializes Eliot's poetry as suffering from "intimidating overtones" and "off-stage manipulation," not exactly words from the elitist cheering section. Even Eliot's critical innovations are attacked—perhaps "belittled" is a better word — with Greenberg repeating his argument (from 1950), that the genesis of Eliot's ideas was in early twentieth-century art criticism. Assailing Eliot's cultural criticism, Greenberg opposed both his pessimistic view of culture and his drive toward an homogeneous society with religious overtones. He includes Eliot's peculiar statement about "exterminating the enemy" and then re-exposes his "hereditary transmission of culture" and "persistence of social classes." Finally, in his fundamental argument with Eliot's cultural aberrations and continuing pessimism, the chameleon-like Greenberg, who declared himself a "disabused" Marxist, in 1948, now invoked (or reinvoked) Marx as the only fitting solution.[49]

To summarize, my observations imply a far greater range of critical perceptions than have been integrated into Greenberg scholarship. The critic's writing verifies his consistent disapproval of Eliot's cultural politics, and these negative convictions impacted significantly, not only on his general themes of culture and esthetics, but on peripheral forays into the particulars of religion, technology, economic stability, and leisure. My amended account substantially alters perceptions that Greenberg's debt to Eliot derives singularly from borrowed critical methods or shared elitist views: Greenberg's complex views point as much to difference as to affinity. That the critic's conspicuous attitudes have been consciously (or conscientiously) disregarded suggests that paradigmatic opposition to Greenberg has superseded historical objectivity.

The Kantian Connection

That Greenberg's Kantianism was likely inspired by Eliot's shift to ultra-conservativism in particular and corresponding to contemporary (1930s) world events in general, has not been considered despite Eliot's unambiguous if not dominant pres-

ence in Greenberg's early intellectual life. (We need to remember that Eliot was known to Greenberg during his college years, fostering a decade of influence even before the young Greenberg began professional criticism.) Omitting Eliot's altered themes as credible cultural rationale permitted critics and art historians to rely on simpler Kantian arguments with purely philosophical underpinnings, including the thesis that Greenberg's subjective judgments lack appropriate objective verification. I maintain that Eliot's perverted esthetics points to a more salient argument supporting Greenberg's Kantianism —that of free will as a symbolic entity.

Kantian arguments for subjective response as an agent of free will directly contradict Eliot's external authoritarianism based on religious referents. In opposition to Eliot, Greenberg's subjective criticism was both timely and appropriate during the catastrophic World War II period. Greenberg's Kantianism thus becomes a powerful and precise corollary to his esthetic stance during his formative period, i. e. the implicit peril associated with ideology's intrusion into subject matter. In short, the critic offered the choice between freedom and external domination—metaphors for options in a world threatened by fascism. Ironically, despite arguments for or against the credibility of the critic's Marxism, Greenberg's initial critical model actually reflected and argued for the individual voice.[50] By contrast, considering the potential for global cataclysm, including fascist escalation, an advancing Hitler, intellectual repression in the Soviet Union, and the expulsion of "degenerative" art and artists in Germany—Eliot's esthetic criticism was indeed menacing to democratic ideals and culture. It is also true that because these themes originated from an idol within the western intellectual world, this inherent jeopardy was greatly enhanced. For all of these reasons, I believe that Greenberg might be best described as an Anti-Eliotic Kantian. In turn, John O'Brian's "Anti-Communist Kantian" label is questionable; while his conclusion corresponds to the 1960 Greenberg, it fails to integrate Eliot, hovering as he did in the shadows of 1930s fascism. Mindful of O'Brian's purposeful elimination of this reactionary Eliot, his conclusion is weakened, perhaps a fallacy by omission.

Kant's presence is documented early in Greenberg's writing, yet it is as fragmentary as Greenberg's knowledge of the philosopher. He first mentions Kant in 1941, the same year that he began to publish art criticism: "As Kant says, you only find what you look for." By 1943 the critic refers to Kantian definitions of beauty and to the notion of intuition, introducing his review of John Rewald's book, *Georges Seurat* with "The mystery of intuition must be taken for granted in aesthetic experience." [51] In time, Greenberg was severely rebuked for using Kantian forms on the grounds that subjective intuitive responses reflect dogmatism and authoritarianism and were thus unresponsive to objective criteria or to external events. But in eclectic Greenberg's vocabulary, intuition, self-criticism, and self-referentiality, etc. had all become, metaphorically, "anti-Eliot" forms and as such did respond to the realities of an external world, including his vigorous anti-Stalinism. Within what I see as a misunderstood Greenbergian context, these terms continued to acquire pejorative denotations. With hindsight, we might agree

that if Greenberg's Kantianism evolved from an anti-Eliot strategy, his failure to reveal this logic contributed to, if not produced, art criticism's contentious course, including a twentieth-century esthetic impasse regarding verification of judgment. History also suggests that with encroaching fascism and Orthodox Marxism's insistence on ideological content, the critic's philosophical rationale was not only timely, but powerfully symbolic. With Greenberg's later focus on justifying his premise, he actually encouraged the philosophical debate to stray from a simple equation that elevates intuition into a metaphor for human freedom.[52] Again, rejecting intuitive decision-making forces confrontation with its antithesis, in Eliot's practice, external religious authority. External authority, even lacking the religious component, is synonymous with dictated propaganda strategies. Then we can only conclude (and here we must be absolutely meticulous about eliminating all prejudice against the "later" Greenberg) that the critic's "intuition" was equivalent to individual free thought. In all respects, Eliot's external dogma eliminated individual freedom.

Greenberg's touchstone was Kant's postulates of freedom, reiterated in various sections of his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) and *Critique of Judgment* (1793). There is much to learn from the remarkable polarities between Kantian aphorisms of freedom and Eliot's external impositions. We might even theorize that in Greenberg's eyes, Kant was speaking directly to Eliot. Kant's message includes his perception that the intellect possesses "universal laws of nature" and a corresponding ability to judge with a priori subjective principles. This intellect "prescribes a law, not to nature, but to itself to guide its reflection upon nature." Excluding external influences from judgments is paramount, as when Kant argues that the judgment of taste must remain independent of all "interest." Also distancing himself from moral authority, the philosopher clearly defined his position, "where the moral law dictates, there is no room left for free objective choice." He continued this freedom motif in his treatise on the beautiful: "the Object of a universal delight" is "not based on any inclination of the subject (or any other deliberate interests)." With influence removed, creating a distinct separation between the subject and personal regard for the object, Kant emphasized that "no personal conditions" may determine the subject's value. On the judgment of taste, he wrote that one "must regard it as resting on that which he may also presuppose in every other person." With this mandate, Kant's subjectivism is rooted in a "sensus communis" or a universal validity.[53]

I found Carl J. Friedrich's inspiring biographical notes on Kant particularly useful in understanding Greenberg. Friedrich asserts a prophetic quality to the philosopher's initial work; promoting the common man, extending science, and restricting theology. He traces Kant's intellectual path from his secular hypothesis of cosmology (formulated to oppose Newton's deism), through his conviction that ethics were the nucleus of human endeavor. He claims Kant's theme of autonomy as "self-legislative . . . a will which is not subject to any restraining set of external 'laws'." Friedrich maintains that Kant's design includes a crucial element, an "inner experience" that must be validated

by the subject's "objective core." And with great relevance to my discussion, Friedrich concludes that Kant's political acumen and cognizance of contemporary revolutionary events formed an elemental rationale for his entire philosophical construct. Kantianism as a symbolic paradigm thus stands between the philosopher's own personal reaction to contemporary events and his subsequent conversion of these events to philosophy.[54]

In a conspicuous strategy, Greenberg transfers his early symbolic notion of Kant to his theory of modernism. This fact is underscored when he refers to Kant in his "Modernist Painting" essay (1960), commissioned, broadcast, and first published by the "Voice of America." Designating Kant as the "first modernist," Greenberg also acclaims him as the embodiment of modernism and self-criticism, with his symbolic and contemporary role posing individual thought against totalitarianism. In separating religion from self-critical activities, Greenberg includes an oblique reference to a 1930s Eliot who alluded to self-criticality in his early and possibly self-serving remark, "the critic and the artist should frequently be the same person." But any freedom of the will or inherent self-criticality in Eliot's early critical programme was later severely impugned by his sharp turn to homogeneous—thus exclusionary—religious morality.[55]

Greenberg's rationale for Kantian esthetics was faulted by numerous critics who neglect the appropriateness of his logic. One problem is that Greenberg's use of Kant is more purposeful than perfect, suggesting that a one-to-one correspondence between them is an inappropriate analytic base. Nevertheless, this argument is frequently used in critiques, including those by Nicolas Calas, Donald Kuspit, Ingrid Stadler, Leo Steinberg, Deane W. Curtin, Paul Crowther, and T. J. Clark, and by Flora Natapoff who accuses Greenberg of endorsing a "reductive aesthetic." Curtin, almost conceding Kant's symbolic role, claimed the critic "[wore] his Kantianism like a badge of honor." The scholar praises Kant's formalism as "integrative," life affirming, even a participant in morality, but without relevant cultural history, he disparages Greenberg's formalism as "disintegrative," rejecting life and morality, and embracing "Art for Art's Sake." Steinberg simply rejects Greenberg's model of Kantian self-criticism as not even applicable to modern art, concluding, "It is surely cause for suspicion when the drift of third-quarter twentieth century American painting is made to depend on eighteenth-century German epistemology." Kuspit's focus on Eliot's early writing ignores Eliot's problematic later texts although he claims an "exact parallel in Eliot and Greenberg." This reasoning influences the art historian's reading of Greenberg and Kant, particularly his suggestion that Greenberg "could have used Kant more than he did." Assertions such as these, which correctly claim an inexact match between Greenberg and Kant, actually enhance my premise that Greenberg's Kantianism initially served as a timely correction for Eliot's criticism (as well as other contemporary and externally-imposed dogma), and as such was probably never intended as a complete and precise philosophical system.[56]

A number of critics came close to or tiptoed around the subject of Eliot when they

discussed esthetics and religion in relation to Greenberg and Kantianism. Calas rebukes Greenberg's reliance on Kantian self-criticism and his assertion that religion and self-criticism are incompatible. Stadler repudiates esthetic judgments based on religious terms but fails to question cause and effect between Eliot's externally-imposed religious bias and Greenberg's internally-generated intuition. Kuspit discusses Greenberg's rejection of religious authority in esthetics and includes numerous references to "Religion and the Intellectuals" (1950) where Greenberg refers to religious intrusion (thus Eliot) into esthetic matters. But with only *The Sacred Wood* as original source, Eliot's altered critical focus during the thirties is entirely eliminated, making it impossible to link Eliot's external authority with Greenberg's rejection. Clark responds to Michael Fried's defense of intuition, suggesting that religion is displaced by Greenberg's intuition: "the intuition is the religion" although "not a very satisfactory one." In an odd inversion, Clark defends Eliot's religious ideology simply because it is supported (in his view) by historical narrative, while at the same time he promotes historical/Marxist strategy without benefit of Eliot's altered criticism, thus historical narrative. Given Eliot's absence, Clark's hypothesis becomes flawed, especially because he supports a religious viewpoint as the only "cogent defence (sic) of modernism." [57]

In closing, I will suggest the opposite—that a negative Eliot paradigm leads to an anti-homogeneous religious viewpoint as the more vigorous correlative to Greenberg's modernism. And in the same vein, whereas Greenberg and Eliot argue from humanist or religious perspectives, it seems more logical to view Greenberg's anti-religious stance as a logical retreat from parochial religious views rather than simply promoting humanism. This religious "retreat" explains the critic's rationale when he writes of "history's menace to the Jew," or its revised version, the "emancipated Jew . . . must deny history to himself because he continues to fear it." [58] Greenberg's candid remarks here reflect his inherent fear of Eliot. He also denoted, metaphorically, a world threatened by fascist dictators, nationalistic fervor, a return to historical inequities, and the rampant intolerance extolled by an articulate spokesman for a singular religious ideology. We can only conclude that assessments of Greenberg's critical judgments and theories were based on incomplete data, and as such require a scrupulous reexamination of T. S. Eliot's ultra-conservative cultural precepts. This is art criticism's missing link. Recognizing that Greenberg's reading of T.S. Eliot remains at the heart of this process, it follows that our own reading of Eliot revises all previous analyses of Greenberg within his early cultural milieu.

Notes

1 This article was developed from the author's Master's thesis, *Towards a Newer Critique: The Influence of T. S. Eliot's conservative Cultural Content and Bertolt Brecht's Aesthetics on Clement Greenberg's Early Rhetoric and Themes*, completed in April 1993 for the Department of Art,

University of South Florida, Tampa.
Robert Hughes, "The Medium Inquisitor," in *The New York Review of Books*, (October 21, 1993), 43. "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" in Clement Greenberg, *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism: Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944* vol. 1, ed. and Introduction by John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986): 20. Includes O'Brian's informative Introduction, Bibliography, and Chronology; hereafter noted as *Perceptions and Judgments.*

2 Carter Ratcliff, "Art Criticism: Other Eyes, Other Minds," (Part V), *Art International*, XVIII, (December 1974): 53-57.

3 See Michiko Kakutani, "Examining T. S. Eliot and Anti-Semitism: How Bad Was It?" *New York Times* (August 22, 1989): C13, C17. Kakutani criticizes Ricks' approach to Eliot's anti-semitism and ultra- conservatism. She also disclaims Ricks' argument that Eliot's prejudice can be rationally explained by three factors, including the historical fact that anti-semitism was commonplace in the twenties and thirties.

4 Donald B. Kuspit, *Clement Greenberg: Art Critic* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1979). Since 1979, the only major text devoted to Greenberg's critical habits. Excellent overview of Greenberg's use of Eliot's early critical forms as well as rhetorical application of dialectical conversion. Kuspit's ambivalence in assessing Greenberg's critical worth is evident.
Clement Greenberg, Perceptions and Judgments, cited n. 1. Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism: Arrogant Purpose, 1945-1949 vol. 2, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), hereafter noted as *Arrogant Purpose.*

5 *The Brown Network: The Activities of the Nazis in Foreign Countries.* Introduction by William Francis Hare, Trans. by Clement Greenberg, (New York, Knight Publications, 1936). Published in Paris. 1935, as *Das Braune Netz: A Report of the World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism.* Critical document for perceptions of Greenberg's early reading, thus for serious Greenberg scholars. Includes insights into explicit Nazi propaganda strategies and explains Greenberg's awareness of film (and other esthetic forms) as totalitarian weapons, and well before the publication of Dwight Macdonald's article on Soviet film for *Partisan Review*, in 1938.

6 Kuspit, *Clement Greenberg*, 162. O'Brian quotes British critic F. R. Leavis in the first paragraph of Perceptions and Judgments' Introduction, subsequently mentions many other critics, but entirely omits Eliot Yet Greenberg's "Mr. Eliot and Notions of Culture: A Discussion." was included in this first volume.

7 Clement Greenberg, *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism: Affirmations and Refusals, 1950-1956* vol. 3, ed., Introduction, Bibliography, and Chronology by John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), hereafter noted as *Affirmations and Refusals.*
About O'Brian's editorial bravado, Greenberg remarked: "I should have known there was something that wasn't right about John O'Brian. It's an inappropriate introduction, but it doesn't pain me. Hilton Kramer, however, was quite right to nail him as he did." *Newsweek*, (April 19 1993): 66. (See Kramer's review of Affirmations and Refusals and his rebuttal to O'Brian in "Clement Greenberg & the Cold War," *The New Criterion*, (March 1993): 4-9.
Greenberg, *Affirmations and Refusals*, xxxii.

8 Greenberg, *Perceptions and Judgments*, xxi.
Greenberg's interests were eclectic. The first decades of Greenberg's life suggest a shifting juxtaposition of his early and continuing passions - art, literature and languages. In contrast to his relatively limited experience with art and art history during the 1930s, Greenberg focused on literature and languages; after graduating Syracuse University in 1930, he became proficient in German and Italian, in addition to French, Latin, and Yiddish. During the mid-1930s he worked as a translator (among other ventures), particularly from German to English.
Greenberg's earliest published writings were two adventure stories, published in magazine form, in 1934 and 1936 (*Perceptions and Judgments*, 254). These were followed by articles that brought him fame, and based on literary themes and cultural criticism (during the Winter and Fall, 1939, and Summer, 1940). His first art reviews did not appear until late Spring of 1941.
Throughout the thirties, Greenberg's intensive literature studies remained at the core of his intellectual foundation. He writes, "I (had) become much more interested in literature than in art (which) I still find it hard to read about, and so when I began to write it was mainly on literature." Quoted here from O'Brian's Introduction to Perceptions and Judgments, xix, Greenberg's remark is virtually

unchanged from his own biographical note. See Stanley Kunitz, *Twentieth Century Authors*, (New York: Wilson, 1955).

9 *Affirmations and Refusals*, xxxiii. O'Brian's mention of Eliot is selectively purposeful. A passage from *Art and Culture* affirms Greenberg's continuing argument with the "altered" Eliot: "With the passing of time the characteristic gravity of Eliot's manner has become a little stilted, and its intimidating overtones more recognizable for what they are. Little of this mars his substance, however, until he begins to turn his attention to nonliterary subjects- -that is, until the middle 1920s, when he stops being a 'pure' literary critic." Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961, 1965): 240-241.

10 Clement Greenberg, "The Plight of Our Culture: Industrialization and Class Mobility," Part 1, *Commentary*, (June 1953): 558-566. Clement Greenberg, "Work and Leisure Under Industrialization: The Plight of Our Culture," Part 2, *Commentary* (July 1953): 14-62.
Hilton Kramer, "Clement Greenberg & the Cold War," *The New Criterion*, (March 1993): 5. Kramer's defense of Greenberg suggests a subtle shift in his own critical views. His early and influential review of *Art and Culture* applied a Marxist paradigm; he argued arhat Greenberg's criticism was "formed in a crucible of Marxian dialectics." Hilton Kramer, "A Critic on the Side of History: Notes on Clement Greenberg," *Arts Magazine* (October 1962): 60-63.

11 O'Brian's Introduction mentions Kant as a "point of reference in Greenberg's criticism" in 1943 (*Perceptions and Judgments*, xxiii), but omits a *Partisan Review* article (Jan.-Feb. 1941) where Greenberg quotes Kant, thus establishing Greenberg's definitive link with the philosopher's work during 1940, if not before. (*Perceptions and Judgments*, 46). The editor offers no rationale for Greenberg's turn to Kant.
Greenberg declared himself an ex or "disabused" Marxist in 1948. O'Brian denigrated his subsequent involvement in the "American Committee for Cultural Freedom" (ACCF). William L. O'Neill's cogent discussion of the ACCF suggests that members protested passport and visa abuses, even in cases where they were vehemently opposed to the politics of the individual. William L. O'Neill, *A Better World: Stalinism and the American Intellectual* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

12 See for example, James Burkhart Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans: A History of Literary Radicalism in America* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1968); Terry A. Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals: Partisan Review and Its Circle* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986); Daniel Aaron, *Writers on The Left: Episodes In American Literary Communism* (New York: Octagon Books, 1961), Rpt. in 1974.

13 Susan Noyes Platt, "Clement Greenberg in the 1930s: A New Perspective on His Criticism," *Art Criticism* 5 no. 3, (1989): 61 (n. 14). Telephone Conversation: Clement Greenberg with author, September 14, 1992.

14 John O'Brian's introductory remarks and Chronology suggest Brecht's early influence on Greenberg.

15 T. S. Eliot, "The Perfect Critic" in *The Sacred Wood: Essays On Poetry And Criticism*, (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1928, 1st ed. 1920): 14, 15.
T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in *The Sacred Wood: Essays On Poetry And Criticism*, (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1928, 1st ed. 1920): 53.

16 Irving Babbitt, Eliot's former professor at Harvard, authored *The New Laokoon: An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts*, 1910, often cited as one of Greenberg's sources for separating esthetic genres. Paul Elmer More was a professor and friend of Eliot. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," viii, x. T. S. Eliot, The Function of Criticism," (1923) in *Selected Essays*, (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1932, 1936, 1950): 13.

17 T. S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1934): 12, 18, 20.

18 T. S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," in 1st American ed. *Essays Ancient and Modern*, 1st ed. 1932, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936): 92, 112, 110, 112.
T. S. Eliot, "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt," in 1st American ed. *Essays Ancient and Modern*, 1st ed. 1932, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936): 77, 83.

19 T. S. Eliot, "Catholicism and International Order," in *Essays Ancient and Modern*, 124, 117.
T. S. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture and Notes Towards The Definition of Culture*, (New York: A Harvest Book, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1940, 1949): 27.

20 Ibid., 36, 104, 76- 77.
Leonard Bushkoff, "When Memory Comes: The Rediscovery of Nazism," in *Bostonia*, (July-August,

1990): 24-25, 67.

Eliot, *Christianity and Culture*, 109, 108.

21 Florence Rubenfeld, "The Greenberg Effect: Comments by Younger Artists, Critics, and Curators," *Arts Magazine*, (December 1989): 62-63.

I suggested to Rubenfeld that she was the first to comment, in print, on Greenberg's actual negative views of Eliot. She concurred. Telephone conversation: Florence Rubenfeld with author, May 18, 1990.

T. J. Clark, "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art," in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Frascina, (New York: Harper & Row, 1985): 50. Rpt. from *Critical Inquiry* (September 1982) vol. 9, no. 1, 139-56.

Clark's description of Greenberg's "Eliotic-Trotskyism" caused a telling remark from the art critic, who stated, (in a televised interview), that he would have reversed the label. Does Greenberg's reversal suggests a diminished influence of Eliot during his germinal period, thus further validating my conclusion apropos Eliot's negative value? By extension, in his admitted alignment with Marxism, the critic strays from the Eliotic brand of elitism that some suggest as his generating force. "Clement Greenberg, Part 1," host Richard Love, producer, David Farris, *American Art Forum*, (December 4 1987): Transcription, WO #7971, page 7.

Clark, "Greenberg's Theory of Art," 54.

22 On this Marxist 'malady,' artist/critic Sidney Tillim writes: "But O'Brian's goal takes on an ideological cast when he acknowledges that it was T. J. Clark who first encouraged him 'to track down, read and collect the uncollected writings of Clement Greenberg.'" Sidney Tillim, "Criticism and Culture: Greenberg's Doubt," *Art in America*. (May 1987):122. (Also see Clark, "Greenberg's Theory of Art," page 49 where Clark urges "pressing home a Marxist reading of texts").

Tillim claims: "...republishing early Greenberg not only flows from an effort to 'Marxify' recent art andhistory, but represents as well an attempt by certain historian-critics to incorporate aspects of Greenberg's critical method. While the current project honors the man, as O'Brian clearly intended it should, it also completes the appropriation of modernist criticism by scholar-critics, a trend that started in the '60s, with the work of the master laid out, as it were, for a final, definitive autopsy." Tillim, "Criticism and Culture," 122.

23 Platt, *Art Criticism*, 48, 56, 48. Cooney, 67, 5.

Ibid., 50, 52, 49. Platt's sympathetic explication of Alfred Barr's sojourn in Stuttgart during 1932-33 contrasts with her negative Greenberg analysis. She reports that Barr had been alerted early to totalitarian threats to avant-garde art, thus views his "Cubism and Abstract Art' exhibition of 1935-36 as an appropriate out-growth of his own growing political awareness and the return of regionalism and realism. It was a "vehicle for propaganda for a threatened cause." She pays homage to Barr for his conversion of catastrophic events into support for a particular style but she discredits Greenberg for proscriptive activities. Susan Noyes Platt, "Modernism, Formalism, and Politics; the "Cubism and Abstract Art" Exhibition of 1936 at The Museum of Modern Art," in *Art Journal* (Winter 1988):291.

24 Platt, *Art Criticism*, 56, 50, 49.

25 *Perceptions and Judgments*, 177.

Greenberg describes himself as a " 'precocious draftsman,' drawing obsessively from the age of four." Ibid., xxi. Ibid., 177.

Personal conversation, Tampa, FL, February 9, 1990.

The entire issue of Jewish proscription against representation is problematic. Joseph Gutmann argues that the Second Commandment (Exodus, 20. 4-5) should be considered within each historical period rather than taken at face value or with a "naive literalness." He discusses historical manifestations, incorrect translations, and the fact that "many Second Commandments have taken shape throughout history. The Commandment, although based on the original Biblical injunction, means something quite different in each new historical context, and must be evaluated from that standpoint. To underscore this vital concept of the Second Commandment, it should be emphasized that no uniform unchanging attitude toward images has prevailed within and Jewish history - or ... within Christian or Muslim societies." (Joseph Gutmann, "The 'Second Commandment' the Image in Judaism," *No Graven Images: Studies in Art and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Joseph Gutmann, (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1971): xiv, xvi.

26 Cooney, 73-75.

I am not implying that Greenberg's Kafkian texts are not critical to understanding the critic's early years. His translations of Kafka (between 1942 and 1948) and his essays, "The Jewishness of Franz Kafka," (1955), for *Commentary*, and its revised form, "Kafka's Jewishness," *Art and Culture* (1961), suggest many complex aspects of Greenberg's intellectual life, including alienation and the Jew's secular and religious relationship to society, and parable.

27 Robert Storr, "No Joy in Mudville: Greenberg's Modernism Then and Now," in *Modern Art and Popular Culture: Readings in High and Low*. eds. Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. and The Museum of Modern Art, 1990): 169. An informal and disparaging critique of Greenberg. Storr is also highly critical of the critic's incomplete Kantianism and his kinship to "elitist" (thus Eliot) habits. Storr's essay omits a refreshing remark from his 1987 review of the first two volumes of the collected Greenberg. Perhaps reflecting a critical generational barrier and/or the effects of secondary sources re Greenberg assessments, Storr admitted his surprise at Greenberg's "astonishing brilliance," as he became acquainted with the critic's original writing. Robert Storr, "Book Review," in *Art Journal* (Winter 1987): 323-27.

28 Austin Warren, "Continuity and Coherence in the Criticism of T. S. Eliot," in *Connections*, (Ann Arbor: 1970): 152-83, cited by Kuspit as "a study of Eliot's concept of criticism" (Kuspit 1979): 197 n. 30. Donald Kuspit, "Arms Against a Sea of Kitsch," in New York Times Book Review (May 16, 1993): 14.

29 Tillim, "Criticism and Culture," 122-127, 201. Meyer Raphael Rubinstein & Daniel Wiener, "An Interview with Sidney Tillim," in *Arts Magazine*, (December 1987): 64-67.
Janet Alice Jones, *Clement Greenberg: His Critical and Personal Relationships with Jackson Pollock and Selected Post Painterly Abstractionists*, Doctoral Dissertation, New York University (New York, 1988). Jones corrects myths about Greenberg's critical habits. Her interviews with painters indicate that many artists (and not necessarily his protegees) freely welcomed Greenberg into their studios and did not view him as a "prescriptive" critic, as many have argued.

30 "Clembusting" bias and rituals are often characterized by dialectical components. For example, when Platt argues, correctly, that the art world "lionized" Greenberg, and "almost hypnotically . . . still uses his premises as a reference point. . . for virtually every discussion on art and aesthetics in contemporary art," she recognizes, appropriately, that his "astonishing influence" and acclaim was an externally created phenomena. Yet, having said this, the art historian interjects some surprising, if not atypical, art historical assumptions and rhetoric, including: "and he [Greenberg] castrated them [the art world] for the sake of his limp aestheticism" (Platt 59, 48, 58, inclusions mine). Because this "aestheticism" was essentially a timely reaction in the face of global fascist objectives (which Platt does cite), had she examined and included Eliot's perverted aesthetics from the thirties- -which we know that Greenberg was familiar with- -she may have evaluated Greenberg in an entirely new light.

31 *The Brown Network*, cited n. 4.
Perceptions and Judgments, xx.
Platt, 60 n. 6. Platt describes *The Brown Network 's* anti-semitic content as "discussed only occasionally."
Ibid. I believe the record indicates otherwise, as much by substance as by quantity.

32 *The Brown Network*, 47.
Ibid., 7.
Greenberg maintained that avant-garde art and literature are "too innocent," thus "it is too difficult to inject effective propaganda into them . . . Kitsch keeps a dictator in closer contact with the 'soul' of the people." Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review*, (Fall 1939), in *Perceptions and Judgments*, 20.

33 Greenberg, *Perceptions and Judgments*, 38. (He paired "safe" and "dangerous" again in "Bertolt Brecht's Poetry" (1941). Ibid., 51). Greenberg also wrote, "The arts lie safe now, each within its 'legitimate' boundaries." This metaphorical phrase (in "Towards a Newer Laocoon") celebrated the avant-garde's grasp of "purity" and "radical delimitation" within the arts (Ibid 32). The metaphor derives partially from Lessing's essay which implies contemporary ideological and political themes as motivating factors for separating esthetic genres during a period of excessive visual imagery in poetry. Gotthold Lessing, "Laocoon, or the Limits of Painting and Poetry," in *Laocoon, Nathan the Wise*, Minna Von Barnhelm, ed. and Intro. William A. Steel, (London, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1930, Rpt. 1959): 3-110.
Greenberg, *Perceptions and Judgments*, 27-28.

Virgil, *The Aeneid: Book II*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1952): 125.

34 O'Brian writes, "it is not without significance that ... when he [Greenberg] first came to publish, it should have been on Brecht, whose work he had admired and kept extensive notes on since the early 1930s." *Affirmations and Refusals*, xx. O'Brian also reveals that Greenberg had written on Brecht before 1939, although this work was never published (Ibid 254).
Greenberg's early concern with Brecht also suggests his fascination with rhetorical process: "I was interested in Brecht's attempt to speak to the many. He set me thinking." Saul Ostrow, Interview, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch, Fifty Years Later: A Conversation with Clement Greenberg," in *Arts Magazine*, (December 1989): 56.
Perceptions and Judgments, 51.

35 Ibid., 3. Greenberg's 'very first sentence' of *Perceptions and Judgments* bears a connection to his own practice. The critic, who analyzed Brecht's use of a "dramatic legend for the expression of his obsessive theme," similarly chose the dramatic Laocoon myth for his own obsession- -a preoccupation with contemporary propagandaand the absolute necessity to purge false imagery, thus illusions, from art. Greenberg's first published work for *Partisan Review* was on Brecht's "A Penny for the Poor" (1939). (Ibid., 3-5).
Ibid., 53, 55.
Saul Bellow affirms Greenberg's concern with propaganda, reporting that the critic (and Dwight Macdonald) warned him, " 'Don't be seduced by propaganda as people were in World War I.' " Saul Bellow, Interview, "A Half Life: Saul Bellow, An Autobiography in Ideas," part 1, in *Bostonia*, (November-December, 1990): 46.
In "Bertolt Brecht's Poetry" (1941), Greenberg introduced Brecht's poetry to *Partisan Review* readers, demonstrating an impressive command of his subject, particularly because of his skills in translating from German. (*Perceptions and Judgments*, 49-62). Greenberg's early analysis of the significance of Brecht's poetry predates later Brechtian scholars who draw the same conclusions without mentioning Greenberg's scholarship. He also found Brecht's poetry superior to his drama, a fact later stated by Brechtian scholars who omit Greenberg's early and incisive analysis.

36 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*, (New York, Methuen, 1985): 20, 2, 1.
Leon Trotsky maintained that developing classes construct culture from past themes- -a "'second-hand' wardrobe of the ages.'" He also encouraged reusing traditional themes for Marxist objectives. Leon Trotsky, "The Formalist School" in *Literature and Revolution*, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1924, Rpt., 1957): 177.

37 Greenberg, *Perceptions and Judgments*, 35.

38 Kuspit, (1979) ix.
Platt suggests that these essays were included because the critic "felt they were among his best works." Platt, 64. n. 53.

39 Greenberg, *Perceptions and Judgments*, 53, 196-198.
A parodic reading is also suggested by the conspicuous juxtaposition of Greenberg's "A Victorian Novel" and Eliot's "Notes On a Definition of Culture" in the same issue of *Partisan Review* where their close proximity seems more than coincidental (the final lines of "A Victorian Novel" appear on a nearly full page advertisement for Eliot's works). An identical juxtaposition appears again in *Art and Culture* where "A Victorian Novel" immediately follows "T. S. Eliot, A Book Review." Beyond speculation, it is indisputable that Greenberg's essay was published shortly before his hisbarbed response to Eliot, thus punctuating his compelling focus on Eliot during this entire period.

40 Philip Rahv, "A Season in Heaven," in *Partisan Review*, (June 1936): 11.
Wallace Phelps, [William Phillips], "Eliot Takes His Stand," in *Partisan Review*, (April-May 1934): 52, 53.Phillips' memoir sheds interesting light apropos personal views of Greenberg. Despite Phillip's confession of a misunderstanding during their past and personal relationship, his portrayal of the critic is sympathetic. He suggests that Greenberg's "dogmatism" actually represented his "strong convictions" and that this characteristic describes most of the early writers. Referring to the break in their friendship, Phillips writes, "I have never known him [Greenberg] to be disloyal or malicious either before or after." William Phillips, *A Partisan View: Five Decades of the Literary Life*, (New York, Stein and Day, 1983): 65. (Inclusion mine). See pp. 65-67 for fuller discussion of Greenberg's character.

41 Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans*, 115.
Cooney, *New York Intellectuals*, 73-75.
42 Greenberg, *Perceptions and Judgments*, 18-19.
43 Ibid., 49-62.
44 Ibid., 85.
45 One *Contemporary Jewish Record* symposium was "Under Forty: A Symposium on American Literature and the Younger Generation of American Jews," (1944). In addition to Greenberg, writers included Alfred Kazin, Lionel Trilling, and Howard Fast . See Greenberg's response in Perceptions and Judgments, pp. 176-79. Topics included the Jewish writer's conscious or passive attitudes, anti-semitism, and aspects of modern literature that reflect Jewish identity.
Twenty-eight writers responded to *Partisan Review's* "Religion and the Intellectuals: A Symposium," in 1950, including, James Agee, Hannah Arendt, John Dewey, Meyer Schapiro, Paul Tillich, Alfred Kazin, and Greenberg. See editor's note, *Affirmations and Refusals*, p. 39.
46 O'Brian notes that Partisan Review invited responses to Eliot's publication. In addition to Greenberg they asked R. P. Blackmur, William Phillips, and I. A. Richards. See editor's note, *Affirmations and Refusals*, p.217.
Ibid., 218.
Clement Greenberg, " T. S. Eliot: The Criticism, the Poetry," in *The Nation*, (December 1950): 531-33.
Another controversial contemporary issue was the 1948 Bollingen Prize for Poetry, awarded to Ezra Pound, a professed fascist and anti-semite, and early Eliot "mentor." This precipitated much commentary in intellectual journals. In a scathing critique of Pound (*Partisan Review*, May 1949), Greenberg criticized the Bollingen selection committee's lack of moral judgment. Despite Greenberg's denunciation of Pound, he refused to condemn the poet on critical grounds, citing his "fear of censorship." (Greenberg, *Arrogant Purpose* 304).
47 Clement Greenberg, "The Plight of Our Culture," 559-60. Cited n. 10.
48 Clement Greenberg, *Arrogant Purpose*, 15, 25, 24.
49 Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, 240-241. Ibid., 23, 26.
50 The "credibility" of Greenberg's Marxism, the "is he or is he not a Marxist school of thought," is a scholarly (sic) tool of recent revisionist studies. Greenberg's earliest writing demonstrates both his familial Socialist background and *Partisan Review* affiliation. His views against capitalist forms echoed standard Marxist themes and his rhetoric was bound to a dialectic form. Yet, given Greenberg's elitist stance and promotion of hierarchical distinctions of "major" art and "quality," some argue that his Marxism was tenuous. T. J. Clark, for example, emphasizes this view, finding Greenberg's early essays "blessedly free from Marxist conundrums," and the critic's Marxism "largely implicit." Thus defined, Clark remarks that he [Clark] is free to "interpret and extrapolate from the texts, even at the risk of making their Marxism declare itself more stridently than the young writer seems to have wished." Continuing this argument, Clark admits,"there are several points in what follows where I am genuinely uncertain as to whether I am diverging from Greenberg's argument or explaining it more fully." Clark concedes "carelessness" in his own logic. (T. J. Clark, "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art," in *Pollock and After:The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Frascina. (New York: Harper and Row, 1985): 48-49,60 n. 2.
Clark also approves of remarks by art historians, Serge Guilbaut, Fred Orton, and Griselda Pollock, all of whom suggest (in Clark's words), a "superficiality- -not to say the opportunism- -of Greenberg's Marxism." (Ibid., 60-61 n. 2). Platt too takes this position when she refers to Greenberg's "mere dusting"of Socialism (Platt, *Art Criticism*, 56).
Saul Bellow's remark contradicts these revisionist analyses. In an interview, Bellow, Nobel Prize laureate and first-hand observer, reminisced about his early friendship with *Partisan Review* writers, including Dwight Macdonald and Clement Greenberg. He remarked that the two young writers were "obstinately rigorously orthodox in their Marxism." Saul Bellow, Interview, "A Half Life: Saul Bellow, An Autobiography in Ideas," part 1, in *Bostonia*, (November-December, 1990): 46.
Arguments to the contrary, during the 1940s Greenberg continued to write within a Marxist framework, and on at least one occasion, strayeded into radical terrain. In 1941, Greenberg and co-editor Macdonald wrote the controversial "Ten Propositions Against the War" for *Partisan Review*. From their extreme idealistic stance, they opposed the war on ideological grounds, rallying instead for world-wide socialist uprisings as the only appropriate defense against fascism; by 1943 Greenberg

joined the Army Air Force, apparently relinquishing his anti-war position. Declaring himself an "ex-or disabused Marxist," in 1948 he appeared to turn to the political right, but, similar to many 1930s Trotskyists, he remained vehemently opposed to Stalinism. (Greenberg, *Perceptions and Judgments*, 255).

51 Clement Greenberg, *Perceptions and Judgments*, 167.

52 Carl Friedrich argues that "Kant's philosophy is among the most rigidly 'objective' systems" [because] "it is inspired by the profound sense of the reality of existence as distinct from the mind of man." Carl Friedrich, Introduction, *The Philosophy of Kant: Immanuel Kant's Moral and Political Writings*, (New York: The Modern Library, 1949), xi-xlv.
Also see Greenberg's "Can Taste be Objective?" in *Art News*, (February, 1973): 22-23, 92. This example of the critic's "philosophical" writing demonstrates his attempt to prove a contemporary rationale for Kantian themes.

53 Immanuel Kant, "Critique of Judgment" (1793), in *The Philosophy of Kant: Immanuel Kant's Moral and Political Writings.* (New York: Modern Library, 1949): 276, 277, 292-293.
Greenberg argued that Kant's "sensus communis" (a shared aesthetic experience) fails to definitively evaluate issues of "taste." He suggests that consensus over "time" is more effective. Greenberg "Can Taste be Objective?"

54 Carl Friedrich, Introduction, *The Philosophy of Kant*, xvii, xxxvi, xxix, xxxv.

55 John O'Brian writes that "Modernist Painting" appeared first (in 1960) as a "Voice of America" propaganda document. Introduction, *Affirmations and Refusals*, xv.
Greenberg asserted repeatedly to this author that "Modernist Painting" was "widely misunderstood," was "interpreted incorrectly from the beginning," and that "people didn't read carefully enough." Personal inter-view, New York City, May 31, 1988.
T. S. Eliot, *Sacred Wood*, 16.

56 Note that Natapoff's negative critique appeared in the first issue of Modern Occasions, the new publication of former *Partisan Review* editor, Philip Rahv. See Flora Natapoff, "The Abuse of Clemency: Clement Greenberg's Reductive Aesthetic," in *Modern Occasions*, 1 (Fall, 1970): 113-117.
Crowther asserts that Greenberg's Kantian logic is inherently contradictory. Paul Crowther, "Greenberg's Kant and the Problem of Modernist Painting," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 25 (Autumn 1985): 317.
Deane W. Curtin, "Varieties of Aesthetic Formalism," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 40, (Spring 1982): 315, 325.
Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art*, (New York: Oxford Press, 1972): 68.
Donald Kuspit, *Clement Greenberg*, 166, 169.
That Greenberg's early adaptation of Kant was superficial is ironically suggested by the following reference to Greenberg's early and apparently limited knowledge of Kant. Deborah Solomon infers this when she writes: "Delmore Schwartz, who had studied philosophy in college, was suspicious of Greenberg's ideas. Greenberg often cited Kant's theory of beauty in support of his formalism, prompting Schwartz to start a nasty rumor that Greenberg had read only the first thirty pages of Kant's work." Deborah Solomon, *Jackson Pollock: A Biography*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987): 170. Solomon's inference reinforces my assertion that Kantianism served as a timely correction for Eliot's conservative commentary.

57 Nicolas Calas, "The Enterprise of Criticism," in *Arts Magazine*, (September-October 1967): 9.
Ingrid Stadler, "The Idea of Art and of Its Criticism: A Rational Reconstruction of a Kantian Doctrine,"in Essays in Kant's Aesthetics. eds. Ted Cohen and Paul Guyer. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982): 210.
Kuspit, 134.
Clark, *Pollock and After*, 88 n. 7, 87.

58 Clement Greenberg, "The Jewishness of Franz Kafka.," *Commentary*, (April 1955): 320-324.
Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, 270.

Golub and Kosuth:

Whose Expressionism?

David Raskin

Never, until these last few days had I understood the meaning of 'existence'. I was like the others...I said, like them "The ocean is green; that white speck up there is a seagull;" ...usually existence hides itself.... And then all of the sudden, there it was, clear as day: existence had suddenly unveiled itself.

— Sartre, *Nausea*

I.

Leon Golub's *White Squad I*, 1982, depicts three mercenaries celebrating their brutality. These figures are hewn with brush, knife, and solvent. Golub's handling of the medium shows an authentic self—the human touch is the undeniable trace of resistance to disintegration. It is with this trace that Golub lingers, excessively reworking to deny reification. Through the deliberately physical qualities of his paintings, Golub links himself as creator and participant in the society of his imagery. This link is crucial: one person expressing their primal essence, which is shredded by the repression of modern society.

Golub's art as an expressionist undertaking gains its critical weight through a 'Freudian' formulation of a core self. Donald Kuspit argued, "Golub continues the fundamental work of modern art—the disclosure of the vicissitudes of the self in the modern world."[1]

There is another fundamental work of modern art, however, which is the examination of visual art's signifying structure. In Joseph Kosuth's conceptual art, words are the material and the message is an exhaustion of the concrete, as signaled by language. *One and Three Chairs*, 1965, is a display consisting of a chair, a photograph of a chair, and a dictionary entry for the word "chair." With this fragmentation of the aesthetic signifier into three parts—physical object, photo reproduction, and linguistic sign—Kosuth was able to remain faithful to modernist hyperreflexivity while discarding overt human subjectivity, qualities such as 'taste,' 'touch,' 'feel,' and 'expression'—specifically the qualities Golub stresses. In this manner, Kosuth's art gains its critical weight as a formalist undertaking.

This paper seeks to show that the modern distinction between expressionism and

formalism is problematic. Through a strategic Lacanian reinterpretation of Kosuth's art, I argue that Kosuth is an expressionist. Nevertheless, I aim to suggest that this application of theory to art shows psychoanalytic theories to be equally problematic ideological positions.

Franz Alexander's groundbreaking "The Psychoanalyst Looks at Contemporary Art" of 1953 established the essence of the Freudian psychoanalytic position toward modern art.[2] Alexander believed that modern art involved the "radical distortion" of real objects, which expresses both the cultural climate of the times and the artist's personality, as filtered through his or her displeasure with the real world.[3] Alexander situates the cubist artist as a hapless viewer who watched an ideal Western Europe, of which Paris was the pinnacle, abruptly unmasked as a machine of industry, politics, and the military.[4] In this manner, the artist came into conflict with a part of his or her self that was rooted in a society unveiled as corrupt. Psychoanalysis terms that part of the self the ego, and this conflict allowed an "elemental breakthrough, from the unconscious, of the primitive disorganized impulses of the id,"[5] which was manifested in the art.

Alexander levies this type of interpretation across the board. Mondrian's grids are a "nihilist rejection of...the real world."[6] Mallarmés poetry shows his "detachment from the world of reality."[7] And Malevich's squares are a "defeatist attempt to master the nothing."[8] For Alexander, all art is expressionistic, but from a psychoanalytic not aesthetic perspective: works of art are the production of an individual within society and therefore must address that relationship.[9]

Alexander presents an encompassing perspective for understanding art as expressionism that transcends visual appearance, artistic intention, and critical framing. The self's relationship to society is unavoidably exposed in art. However, it seems that Alexander did not consider developments in art that attempted to render irrelevant just such a psychoanalytic conception. This art, though certainly a product of individuals in society, appears to explore rigidly issues at odds with Alexander's humanist focus. I am thinking here of the 'art-about-art' formalist doctrine; or, more specifically, color-field painting, Minimalism, and Conceptual Art.[10]

From the 1950s on, exactly the period in which Alexander wrote his essay, two perpendicular interests in art were being pursued. While there were formalist investigations on the one hand, on the other, an expressionistic tradition—aesthetically expressionistic but also overtly in Alexander's psychoanalytic sense—continued to flourish. Disparate artists such as Francis Bacon, Jean Dubuffet, Joseph Beuys, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Leon Golub are part of this tradition. These artists desired to transmit and give release to emotions and emotionally charged messages. Expressionism has a humanist mission, centered around the notion that the individual through visual art can transmit something of value to another individual.

II

In *The Existential/Activist Painter: The Example of Leon Golub*, Donald Kuspit analyses Leon Golub's oeuvre from the perspective of Heinz Kohut's 'self psychology.' Kohut's self psychology follows a line of object-relations thought that was built on Freud's theories by Melanie Klein and emended by D.W. Winnicott in the 1950s. Kohut postulates an active, seeking, fluid and mutable self at the core of an individual's existence. This self, which is formed in relation to other people, or "selfobjects," incorporates the classical psychoanalytic functions of the id, ego, and superego.[11] The self grows out of interpersonal exchanges and throughout life mediates transactions between the individual and the object world. The key idea in self psychology is that the self forms in a relational matrix and is therefore a product of its object relations.

Kohut's self psychology stresses the role of narcissism —"the libidinal investment of the self"[12] — in the development of an independent self. He wrote, "The interplay between the narcissistic self, the ego, and the superego determines the characteristic flavor of the personality and is thus, more than other building blocks or attributes of the personality, instinctively regarded as the touchstone of a person's individuality or identity."[13] Kohut's focus on narcissism is a focus on a self-directed energy—"a hypercathexis of the self."[14] Through narcissism, Kohut gives priority to the concept of the self as a major feature in human development, one that transcends others; that is, it is superordinate.[15]

This psychoanalytic tradition, from Freud to Winnicott to Kohut, postulates a core self at the heart of an individual. This center, a flexible core, is the area of mediation in the healthy individual, and the area to be strengthened or modified to meet new pressures.

III

Leon Golub's art meshes well with the tenets of self psychology. For the most part, his paintings are rough portraits of political figures, mercenaries, or other 'types' such as priests, philosophers, or men. These figures seem hacked out, the result of Golub's less than delicate painting technique. They are displayed in a shallow space, deliberately forefronted to convey a message. This figurative art with its scarred, overworked surfaces communicates humanity's existential reality.[16] Golub's art rides the discontent of an individual with society. By depicting archetypal concepts and stressing the physical nature of the paint, he grounds them in the material world and strips away romantic gloss. In this manner, Golub conveys his fundamental connection as an individual to his overt imagery and its reference. Through the deliberately physical qualities of his paintings, he links himself as creator and participant to the society of his imagery.[17]

This link to society is a critical one: a person expressing their primal essence, their sense of self, which is shredded by the repression of modern society.[18] Golub's painting is a heroic insistence on the self,[19] an insistence on the historically grounded — therefore concrete — reality of paint and on the tradition — and therefore real — of expressionism. Insistence on these anchor points establishes an individual and the individual's

expression as such. Golub's art sweeps away the modernist/postmodernist fragmentation of the recent decades, a fragmentation accompanying the death of the self. It claims to identify that self and to expose it in its raw form. By doing so in the face of the authoritarian society, his art resists.[20]

IV

Conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth illustrates the formalist strand of modern art at odds with expressionism. Kosuth has, since the mid 1960s and his essay "Art and Philosophy," espoused a belief that art was "analogous to an analytic proposition, and that it is art's existence as a tautology which enables it to remain 'aloof' from philosophical presumptions."[21] For Kosuth, following the strand of modern art at odds with Golub's roots, art is art because it is about art. The philosophical presumptions Kosuth has in mind are aesthetics; and accordingly, he decries any relationship between art and the world in general: for example, any issues prevalent in expressionism such as 'the self' which is prominent in Golub's work.[22] To Kosuth, recent expressionist works of art are "'ejaculations' presented in the morphological language of traditional art."[23]

Kosuth identifies art's future viability: "art's ability to exist will depend ... on its not performing a service—as entertainment, visual (or other) experience, or decoration—which is something easily replaced by kitsch culture and technology...."[24] His art, then, has taken the form of what he terms "investigations" into the nature of meaning. One of Kosuth's best known works of art is *One and Three Chairs*, part of an early series subtitled *Art As Idea As Idea*, which includes *One and Three Photographs* and *One and Five Clocks*.[25] As I mentioned earlier, *One and Three Chairs* is a display consisting of a chair, a photostat of a dictionary entry for the word "chair," and photograph of a chair. With this "tripartite division of the aesthetic signifier—its separation into object, linguistic sign, and photographic reproduction,"[26] Kosuth was able to remain faithful to modernist goals while discarding overt human subjectivity.

In this early work, Kosuth, influenced by the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, was interested in the relationship between language and meaning (i.e., reality).[27] This art, with its dissection of the signifier, points out the hazy status of meaning. Kosuth's art illustrates that meaning is tied to context yet shaped by language, and neither, in and of itself, is sufficient.[28]

Kosuth not only pursues this focus in his visual works of art, but also in his writing. In his 1975 essay "The Artist as Anthropologist," he crafts an argument for the singularity of reality as that which is experienced by the individual, but this experience can only be "in the system of social domination."[29] To argue this point, he assembles pithy statements removed from their context from thinkers such as Albert Einstein, William Leiss, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This essay is a collaged approach to meaning, one which signals the respective contexts of every writer, yet the sum is both greater and less than the parts. We see the connection—the historic structure of our Western intellectual traditions. We gain an overall message, but the glue is temporary. The disparate

parts do not quite fit, and the assembled gestalt breaks. The initial foundation is, in turn, by retrospect, undermined. (Can disjointed intellectual traditions be unified?) Meaning is again shown to be that which is assembled, context specific, and determined in a way that transcends its language or structure.

By lumping together Kosuth's art and writing, I am doing something akin to what art critic Harold Rosenberg railed against during the heyday of Conceptual Art: In art, ideas are materialized, and materials are manipulated as if they were meanings. This is the intellectual advantage of art as against disembodied modes of thought. The current attempt in art to allow either the words or the materials to have their own way sacrifices the advantage of concrete thinking on behalf of an apparently irresistible tendency further to rationalize the practice of art.[30] But I think my action is justified. In Kosuth's art, words are the materials[31] and the message is an exhaustion of the concrete—as signaled by language. This combination is, in fact, a Wittgensteinian maneuver: when language is art, language's inability to convey the totality of meaning is apparent.[32]

By attempting to prevent positive, concrete meaning in his art, Kosuth offers a strong challenge to the underpinnings of any traditionally expressionist art. Art like *One and Three Chairs* separates psychoanalytic expression from aesthetic expression. This division makes clear that expressionist art relies on context-demanded codes, which seen as aesthetic or linguistic signs, lack authenticity, as they must. It is a destructive art, one that withers the core of meaning embodied in a concrete self. As Benjamin Buchloh wrote evaluating Kosuth and other Conceptual artists, "What Conceptual Art achieved at least temporarily, however, was to subject the last residues of artistic aspiration toward transcendence ... to the rigorous and relentless order of the vernacular of administration."[33]

V

Administration, particularly administration by language, is a concept focused on by the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, which stands in fundamental opposition to Heinz Kohut's self psychology. Kohut proposes an integral core self, and Lacan, a decentered, illusionary self without a core.[34] For Lacan, the "Imaginary" is the location of the individual's ego ideals, which are the belief in his or her unique individuality, i.e., the illusion of a core-self. This insertion results from the earliest formation of the ego during Lacan's "mirror phase."

Lacan proposes that the me/not-me distinction, which is required for the subject's belief in a core-self, is in its very nature the distinction between the linguistic signifier and signified.[35] For Lacan, an individual must enter into existence as a human through language—the healthy individual can only be a subject. Lacan allows no choice and no exception.[36] Through language, focused on the proper name or personal pronouns, the individual is configured as a subject in symbolism—a created reality, but in that respect, external and illusionistic.[37] In this manner, the self is determined by language, yet

it is a self without a core, a continual reflection in what Lacan terms the "signifying chain."[38]

The signifying chain is the on-going linkage of meaning without a solid foundation: it is a never-ending series of signifiers. A signifier can only refer to another signifier—"meaning is never capable of being sensed except in the uniqueness of the signification developed by discourse."[39] In this respect, meaning is subservient to an empty language determined by contextual specifics. The signifying chain is the heart of Lacan's linguistic approach to the administration of the self.[40]

It is important to summarize Lacan's theory of the self as it relates to the focus of this essay. Lacan proposes an overarching structure of language into which we are born that determines our fundamental conception of self. For Lacan, in opposition to Kohut, the self is a conceptual matrix imposed upon the individual by external forces, namely, language. Lacan's theory, conceived in this sense, denies individual experience, as it is, by necessity, an illusion shaped by the structure of society.[41] In this respect, the signifying chain is the structure of administration of the self in modern society (the conditions that Golub's art attempts to resist). In Lacan's theory, the self is a repressive structure (like language).

VI

Kosuth's early art meshes well with the tenets of Lacan's psychoanalysis. *One and Three Chairs* is a lifeless work of art. It is self-less, without human touch—a cerebral, rational, even interesting work of art, engaging at a constructed level. There is no sense of a human creator, human ambition, or any spark of the intangible. There are no qualities lurking beneath the surface, nothing slightly hinted at that could be exposed in interpersonal empathy. There is nothing that Golub's work would share. The characteristics of Golub's art, the human dimension, are deadened in Kosuth's art, flattened, revealed to be unfounded as simply part of a constructed sense of self or meaning. Those qualities are stripped away as illusions. Meaning is shown to have no concrete foundation or reality. Even, and especially, an everyday object such as a chair, in Kosuth's art, lacks integrity: it is defined in its reflections—a thing I sit on, a noun, "Shaker," etc. This emptiness is the revelation that Lacan's signifying chain demands. By fragmenting the aesthetic signifier, Kosuth in art, as does Lacan in theory, reveals the self's empty core.

Kosuth's art expresses the administration of the human by language as a subject. Kosuth's art, therefore, is psychoanalytically expressionistic. It expresses the fundamental condition of human existence. But the nature of the existence it expresses, its formal characteristics, and the psychoanalytic theory that gives it credibility as such lie outside the art-historical tradition of expressionism.[42] Kosuth is an expressionist. The preceding sentence carries with it the possibility of reinterpreting modern art in terms of a core self/no core self split.

VII

From one psychoanalytic perspective, Leon Golub's art is that of a core self heroically resisting the forces of administration, resolutely expressing its existence even if irrelevant. From a different psychoanalytic perspective, one fundamentally at odds with the first, Joseph Kosuth's art reveals the mechanism of social administration, rigorously expressing the constructed nature of human existence—the lack of a core. Golub and Kosuth share an artistic mission: reveal the nature of the self in society. Brothers in arms. Make no mistake, however, the philosophical and psychoanalytic underpinnings of each expressionism are quite different, though both are supported. The core self Golub's art conveys has different "real life" implications than a belief in Kosuth's decentered self.

Though I have forced together conceptually Leon Golub and Joseph Kosuth, two expressionist artists who began this study at odds, my questions linger. Are psychoanalytic theories simply ideological positions? In light of what I have argued here, can the historical split between expressionism and formalism?

Notes

1 Donald Kuspit, *The Existential/Activist Painter: The Example of Leon Golub* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, (1986),77. [Henceforth "Kuspit" followed by the pagination.]

2 Franz Alexander, "The Psychoanalyst Looks at Contemporary Art," [1953], in *Art and Psychoanalysis*, ed. William Phillips (New York: Criterion, 1957): 346-365. [Henceforth "Alexander" followed by the pagination.]

3 For example, Alexander wrote, "The cubist revolution contained...the denial of the world as it is along with an even stronger motivational force to rearrange the fragmented parts of objects in a new, seemingly wanton but really highly consistent manner. It is as if the artist would challenge the creator and prove he too can create a world according to his own system." Alexander, 349.

4 Alexander wrote, "The European's crude awakening was a sudden and overwhelming one." Ibid., 352.

5 Ibid., 357.

6 Ibid., 350.

7 Ibid., 355.

8 Ibid., 359.

9 Alexander wrote, "the work of an artist is a refection of his personality as well as a reflection of the spirit of its times, the literature and art of a given period are the most important documents for the historian of culture." Ibid., 346.

10 Ad Reinhardt's paintings and his writing collected in *Art as Art* [1953], ed. Barbara Rose (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975) make good examples of this doctrine. The title of Reinhardt's book is an effective summary.

11 As Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell wrote, "The basic constituent of Kohut's model of the psychic apparatus is the self, 'a center of initiative and a recipient of impressions.' (1977, 99) This formulation attributes the functions to the self which in classical drive model theory are ascribed to the ego. Thus the theoretical status of the concept of the self.... The self is no longer a representa tion, a product of the activity of the ego, but is itself the active agent; it therefore carries more theoretical weight than in the earlier views." Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1983), 353.

12 Heinz Kohut, "Forms and Transformations of Narcissism," [1966] in Heinz Kohut, *Self Psychology*

and the Humanities, ed. Charles B. Strozier (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1985), 97.

13 Heinz Kohut, *op. cit.*, 109.

14 Charles Brenner, *An Elementary Textbook of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1955), 110.

15 Kohut wrote, "The general definition of narcissism as the investment of the self might still be compatible with a transactional approach; but the self in the psychoanalytic sense is variable and by no means coextensive with the limits of the personality as assessed by an observer of the social field. In certain psychological states the self may expand far beyond the borders of the individual, or it may shrink and become identical with a single one of his actions or aims." Heinz Kohut, *op. cit.*, 99.

16 As Kuspit wrote, "This style is *the* vehicle for communicating existential reality, especially in a decadent, 'psychotic' civilization, out of touch with the reality of its own humanity." Kuspit, 59.

17 As Kuspit wrote, "The integrity and validity of Golub's art depend upon the identity it gives man, not in its outward appearance as a sign of contemporary social awareness." Ibid., 22.

18 Kuspit wrote, "A brutal, sensuously confusing, obviously material mass within a logic of figural delineation (a logic tending to caricatural simplification), it represents the disintegrated state of the self." Ibid., 77.

19 As Kuspit wrote, "Golub is one of the few artists dealing directly with the modern sense of self. To articulate that disturbed sense of self is likely to remain, overtly or covertly, the task of art until a new universal myth of normative humanity is created." Ibid., 77.

20 As society can only be authoritarian, the nature of the individual and his or her role is pre-determined and binding. Resistance is all one can do. For further treatment see Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, [1944] (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1993) and Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

21 Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," [1969] in Joseph Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After*, ed. Gabriele Guercio (Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: The MIT Press, 1991), 16. [Henceforth "Kosuth, 1969" followed by the pagination.]

22 Kosuth wrote, "It is necessary to separate aesthetics from art because aesthetics deals with opinions on perception of the world in general." Kosuth, 1969, 16.

23 Ibid., 21.

24 Ibid., 24.

25 Kosuth dates these works 1965, but that dating is circumspect. See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 105-143 and Thomas McEvilley, "I Think Therefore I Art," *Artforum* 23 (Summer 1985): 74-84.

26 Buchloh, *op. cit.*, 117.

27 Robert C. Morgan wrote, "In the beginning, Joseph Kosuth was interested in the language parameters of art, that is, he was curious about the basic structure upon which meaning came to be a construction of reality through art. Ludwig Wittgenstein proved a central figure in this discourse. The early pieces of Kosuth, such as *Art As Ideas As Ideas* (1965-1967), focus completely on this problematic. The object, the photograph, and the dictionary definition of the word describing the object, were the fun damental aspects of meaning. The actual 'object' within the context of art was something more than any one of these conditions of representation." Robert C. Morgan, "Word, Document, Installation: Recent Developments in Conceptual Art," *Arts Magazine* 65 (May 1991): 68.

28 David Freedberg wrote, "For Kosuth, the notion that we can only understand art as the *context* of art was as fundamental to his work in 1990 as it was in 1969. Of course, as Kosuth noted then, any ob ject is eligible for aesthetic consideration once it is presented in, say, a museum; but because what makes art is its definition, what gives its meaning—just like language—is its use." David Freedberg, "Joseph Kosuth and the Play of the Unmentionable" in Joseph Kosuth, *The Play of the Unmention able* (New York: The New Press, 1992), 41.

29 Max Horkheimer, as quoted in Joseph Kosuth, "The Artist As Anthropologist," [1975], in Joseph Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After*, ed. Gabriele Guercio (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1991), 114.

30 Harold Rosenberg, "Art and Words" [1969] in *Idea Art,* ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: Dutton, 1973), 157.

31 I am discussing Kosuth's early art, which is, on first inspection, the art most at odds with Golub's painting. However, since the mid-1970s, Kosuth has tended to be extravagant. Concerning a 1987 installation by Kosuth at Jay Gorney Modern Art which included *Z. & N. (Neon), #4, 1987* and *O. & A./F.D. (to I.K. and G.F.) #9*, Robert C. Morgan wrote, "There is a suggestion of recurrence in Kosuth's maneuver that might best be characterized as a visual *style*—something intentionally abhorrent to his own modus operandi, yet impossible to ignore. It is, in fact, Kosuth's style of language presentation that tends to trivialize the tension between the elements, making the work appear less forceful in its directness and consequently less witty" Robert C. Morgan, "The Making of Wit: Joseph Kosuth and The Freudian Palimpsest," *Arts Magazine* 62 (January, 1988): 49.

32 Robert C. Morgan wrote, "The activity that Kosuth suggests...is only congruent to the extent that language and visual objects are matched in opposition to one another—that is, as stated by Wittgenstein, "the 'Unsayable' is that which art is capable of expressing. Therefore, language in itself is insufficient to express what is not known or what is beyond knowing." Robert C. Morgan, "Word, Document, Installation: Recent Developments in Conceptual Art," *Arts Magazine* 65 (May 1991): 68.

33 Buchloh, *op. cit.*, 142. As does Buchloh in the preceding sentence, I use the term "administration" deliberately and in the sense of the Frankfurt school and Louis Althusser. Administration, in this manner, signals a repressive society geared toward creating a human—shaping his aspirations, urges, and conceptions—who will serve efficiently as raw material in the capitalist enterprise. See Max Horkheimer, "The Authoritarian State," [1940] in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum, 1992), 95-117 and Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," [1970] in Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127-186.

34 Lacan's attention to language as the key to human existence has been severely criticized. In response, supporters of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory frequently claim that the psychoanalytic methodology is a methodology that requires a language-based theory of the self. For example, Paul Ricoeur wrote, "the analytic situation itself may be characterized as a speech relation." Paul Ricoeur, "Image and Language in Psychoanalysis," [1976] in *Psychoanalysis and Language*, ed. Joseph H. Smith, M.D., *Psychiatry and the Humanities*, vol. 3 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), 294.

35 Lacan described the mirror phase: "We have only to understand the mirror stage *as an identification*...namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image...This jubilant assumption of his specular image by the child at the *infans* stage...would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject." Jacques Lacan, "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience," [1949] in Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 2. [Henceforth "Lacan, 1949" followed by the pagination.]

36 Lacan wrote, "Language and its structure exist prior to the moment at which each subject at a certain point in his mental development makes his entry into it....Thus the subject, too, if he can appear to be the slave of language is all the more so of a discourse in the universal movement in which his place is already inscribed at birth, if only by virtue of his proper name." Jacques Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud" [1957], in Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 148. [Henceforth "Lacan, 1957 followed by the pagination].

37 Anika Rifflet-Lemaire wrote, "The subject is figured in symbolism by a stand-in or substitute, whether we have to do with the personal pronoun 'I', with the name that is given him, or with the denomination 'son of'. This stand-in is of the order of the symbol or the signifier, an order which is only perpetuated laterally, through the relationships entertained by that signifier with other signifiers. The subject mediated by language is irremediably divided because it has been excluded from the symbolic chain at the very moment at which it became 'represented' in it." Anika Rifflet-Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan* (Brussels: Dessart, 1970), 129, cited in Fredric Jameson, "Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan: Marxism, Psychoanalytic Criticism, and the Problem of the Subject," in *Literature and Psychoanalysis*, [1977] ,ed. Shoshana Felman (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 363.

38 Lacan, 1957, 155.

39 Kuspit, 77.

40 Lacan wrote, "What this structure of the signifying chain discloses is the possibility I have, precisely in so far as I have this language in common with other subjects, that is to say, in so far as it exists as a language, to use it in order to signify *something quite other* than what it says." Lacan, 1957, 155.

41 Jameson wrote regarding Louis Althusser's twist on the Lacanian self, "Ideology conceived of in this sense is therefore the place of the insertion of the subject in those realms or orders—the Symbolic ... and the Real ... both of which radically transcend individual experience in their very structure." Jameson, *op. cit.*, 394.

42 Speaking for the art historical tradition, Kuspit wrote, "Expressionism, on the other hand—to use the language Kosuth uses to dismiss it in *Art After Philosophy*—attempts to create 'demonstrative symbols' of the psychological in order to steady the 'orbit' of art within the '"infinite space" of the human condition'—to give art a relatively clear and distinct path in that space in which, from its origin, it has found itself. Art is not self-invented, self-orbiting, self-justifying. The real question for the new as well as the old Expressionism is this: can such a symbol function critically, 'make meaning,' in Kosuth's words, and especially help us 'get a glimpse of the life of the people who shared that meaning'? The answer is self-evident: the admission of intersubjectivity necessitates the psychological." Donald Kuspit, "Letter to the Editor," *Artforum* 21 (December 1982): 4.

Un-Ending Yad-Vashem

Some Notes Towards an Aesthetics of Monuments and Memorials.

Yishai Jusidman

"...The visitor to Yad Vashem will now receive a comprehensive picture of the Holocaust ..."
-Dr. Yitzhak Arad, Chairman of Yad Vashem's directorate,
Yad-Vashem News (Autumn, 1992.)

The Jewish portable culture, suited to the Diaspora's wanderings, is witnessing its own ending. No longer limited to perpetrating itself through communal rites, a new Jewish culture is being generated, cemented as it is by way of monuments and museums, to remain permanently in one place. The initial Jewish monuments and museums have been specifically dedicated to the Holocaust, thanks to the belief—or at least the hope—that the preservation of its moral lesson will prevent future antisemitic onslaught. A symbiotic cultural metabolism secures and is secured by these memorials; while striving to ward off the causes of future fleeing by perpetuating the holocaust's testimony, they also constitute the material foundation for the development of a sedentary culture. How is a holocaust-memorial, the memory's life-line to the public domain, supposed to fulfill these moral and cultural responsibilities? Memorials more often than not come to be perceived as demagogic artifices, since most remain but the cultural cosmetics of indoctrinating regimes. What is a Holocaust memorial to do to truly become culture?

In addressing these questions, I will not limit myself to analytical considerations, but will develop these around a critique of the mother of all holocaust-memorials, Jerusalem's Yad-Vashem. The efficient purpose of my concern is the rectification of what is to me an unfortunate development in the memorial's fate: Yad-Vashem's directorate, having unveiled the last of its constituent monuments, has declared it "completed" (*Yad-Vashem News*, Autumn 92'). My argument's upshot will be that Yad-Vashem should never—as far as might be possible—be completed.

Yad-Vashem (literally "a Monument and a Name") was initiated in 1953 in Jerusalem's

Mount Herzl following the establishment of the "Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Law" by the Israeli government, which summoned the creation of a shrine to preserve the memory of the millions of Jews annihilated by the Nazis. Today the site consists of an ad-hoc accumulation of monuments, sculptures, archives, token objects, a historical and an art-museum, each of which is more or less supposed to fulfill particulars inscribed in the above mentioned law. Tourists and local schoolchildren are diligently bussed into these overwhelmingly solemn grounds for obvious didactic purposes—for Yad-Vashem both defines and is defined by the land of Never Again, just as Disneyland does and is by the land of Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. (In form and function these landmarks emblematize their country's *raison d'etre*.) Perhaps to the average visitor Yad-Vashem is as poignant and persuading as it has been intended to be, the weight of recent history still warranting its effect. Be that as it may, Yad-Vashem's official aesthetics are hardly as convincing. I will argue that its exemplary success as a memorial is an ironic—but also effective—consequence of persistent artistic failures. These failures provide the footing for a tentative theory of monumentality and memorials that may eventually embrace them in a positive light.

I. Elusive Memories / Illusive Memories.

Foremost in our voyage into the realm of aestheticized memory is to rid ourselves of the simpleminded but nevertheless alluring belief about memorials which suggests that the content of a memorial amounts to the content of the memorialized event. (A similar belief about the meanings of artworks is also pervasive - it holds that the content of an artwork amounts to whatever it stands for.)

The pair of new holocaust museums in L.A. and D.C. illustrate the above assumption. While they have been duly scrutinized by public opinion, the normally decorous forum is the one colored by contrasting responses to the museums' unprecedented exploitation of the latest interactive technology. Washington's U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, reportedly the more sober of the two, offers the personal touch in assigning the visitor an ID card by which he/she may retrieve data from the museum's computer and thus pursue the real story of a personalized Shoa-pal (a victim of antisemitic prosecution who in 1939 had the same age and gender as the visitor's own.) At the other end of the spectrum, and a paramount of politically-correct sermonizing, the Museum of Tolerance in Beverly Hills (of all places) submerges you into flatulent environments of mock-oppression so as to "make you aware" of how awful bigots are and of how it feels to be in the side of the oppressed.

While the educational contents of such exercises can be justifiably examined, I suspect their configuration undermines them from the outset. In aspiring to engender surrogate experiences of the horrors of the concentration camps so that we who were born after the fact might be mesmerized into following virtuous ways, the people who shaped these museums are bound to see their noble intentions remain just that. Their

conviction that virtual-realism will bestow a sense of presentness to a nearly inconceivable event like the holocaust may well, for practical purposes, have the very opposite effect. (It's not incidental that the same technology has been developed and implemented by the entertainment industry with fantastically banal results.) For as it turns out, a virtual-Auschwitz is no more tangible nor less surreal than Tomorrowland's 3-D extravaganza starring Michael Jackson in an intergalactic mission.

Illusion is not the purpose of a memorial. As Kant suggests in the Analytic of the Sublime, horror, truly life-threatening horror, cannot be experienced secondhandedly, however true to life the representation might be. It follows that if the moral (and the practical) imperative never to forget the holocaust must be reinforced by works that publicly commemorate it, a suitable aesthetics of memorials—one clearly divorced from crass prosthetics—is called for. Yad-Vashem, I believe, is very close to exemplifying an aesthetics of the sort I think is needed, albeit unintendedly.

II. What Art has to do with it.

As if the documents gathered in its archives over the past forty years do not suffice to demonstrate the magnitude of the Nazi genocide, Yad-Vashem has been flooded with evocative art which, conjuring up mystifying artistic rites, is supposed to surmount the holocaust's ungraspability and to convey its moral sense. Evidence to the all too common illusion that artworks have some sort of intrinsic spiritually-healing power, a permanent display of artworks produced by inmates of the camps wishes to show the rise of the human spirit (creating Art) even against the most humiliating circumstances. Disappointingly, the works displayed are as saddening for their content as for their unremarkable mannerisms. Further, the quack-art monuments commissioned explicitly for the memorial are likewise supposed to embody a dignified spiritual overcoming of destiny. Instead, they demonstrate the capability of modern-art styles to arbitrarily allegorize just about anything, and to challenge many eminent art historians who've been under the impression that style itself creates meaning.

A large scale bronze relief from the 50's, portraying a group of brave muscular men and women in arms under the title *The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, has been carved in the same epic mode that would have filled the bill for Mussolini or Stalin. Another relief, a composition of Picassoesque clunkiness, somehow signifies "From Holocaust to Rebirth" (Its iconography comes conveniently translated from inspired-artist language into layman-language in a courtesy pamphlet.) Standard minimalism becomes curiously handy for extorting such tropes; an elongated convex slab of stainless steel is here no other than "The Pillar of Heroism." Such allegories are well meant but, really, to no effect. Mistakenly assuming that the works' certification as Art would by itself carry their edifying messages through, their monumentally ambitious makers and the bureaucrats who supported them display an all too common misunderstanding of the languages of Art and, more relevant for our purposes, of the aspects that relate and differentiate

monuments and artworks. I beg the reader to bear with me through a bit of theory before continuing our analysis of the memorial, in order to break through this conceptual fog.

III. Monuments themselves.

Our conceptions of both artworks and monuments are so closely related that their respective uses and applications often address the same object—usually in the form of large scale sculpture or allegorical architecture. By force of habit, then, we come to confuse them. In order to disentangle these two conceptual families we may be inclined to trace in their application the aspects of the aesthetic object that are pertinent to its being an artwork and those to its being a monument. We would quickly realize these aspects are not altogether perceptually evident—when they are perceptual at all—but presuppose our understanding of established and distinct grammars. Competence in these languages requires our awareness of the particular conditions through which these objects are infused with meaning and an understanding of the spectator's task in its retrieval. For instance, the meaning of a monument is pretty much clear-cut (at least on the surface). It is officially established and refers to facts in the world. In contrast, an artwork originates within the artist's subjectivity and its malleable significance is forged through complex relationships to the public domain. The grammars of artworks and monuments articulate an aesthetics when the object's meanings are deployed by way of their audience's responses and do not just refer denotatively to their creators' intentions. In what follows I will sketch the outline of an aesthetics of monumentality by looking into the miscellaneous links of monuments and their meanings.

A. Allegory

The monuments that first come to mind are straightforwardly allegorical. The Statue of Liberty, L'Arc de Triomphe, the monument to Vittorio Emanuelle, and most of Yad-Vashem's monuments. All of these are intended to perform as "stand-ins" for the professed greatness of a principle, an achievement or an individual. Such monuments strive to glorify, whether or not the glorification is deserved. Their subjects may be monumental in the sense of being worthy of a monument (their monumental condition preceding the concretizing of the actual monuments, whereby the monument does not monumentalize that which is already monumental but only "honors" it). On the other hand, the subject may be contrived to attain that same monumental condition retroactively through having the monument built (i.e., Saddam-Hussein's monuments to Iraq's performance in the Gulf War.) In this sense "to monumentalize" means to distort and exaggerate for undue glorification. Of course, whether allegorical monuments do justice in their glorifying or else fraudulently monumentalize is largely a matter of interpretation of historical events and ideologies. Insofar allegorical meaning is explicitly given by means of denotation, plainly allegorical monuments seldom make for aesthetically convincing experiences.

B. Metonymy

An object represents metonymically when its subject is referred to, as if by extension, through a spatial or close causal association. Metonimic monuments are places, artifacts or buildings that are directly related to particular historical events and are officially safeguarded as tokens of history. Any evocative effect produced by such monument is due to its direct historical links. And, as with religious relics, this effect depends in turn on a leap of faith—the purported links must be believed to be real. Metonimic monuments thus gather an aura, an intrinsic power to evoke their contents, yet for this very reason do not normally lend themselves for the complex readings of intentionality that are inherent to artworks.

C. Instantiation.

There is a more aesthetically involving type of monumentality which incorporates both intentionality and metonymy, and which monumentalizes—in a contrastingly positive sense to which I will heretofore refer when I use the term—by instantiating that which it represents. Such a monument is not just an instrument of political or cultural advertising. Beyond being a tool, as it were, it is the end product itself. Let me explain myself through an example. Pharaoh Cheops' unparalleled powers and the technological advancements of ancient-Egyptian civilization are not just symbolized by but also practically embodied—and thus monumentalized—in the massiveness and sophisticated engineering of the Great Pyramid of Giza. In its presence, the awe-inspiring effect, like that of an artistic masterpiece, is engendered both by its aesthetic proportions and by the awareness that mere mortals were able to bring about such a feat. Hence, independent of whatever denotative or metaphoric meaning we might subsequently want to project onto the pyramid, the monumentalizing agent was itself the monumental event of building it. In contrast to purely allegorical monuments, these instantiating monuments monumentalize by way of their inherent monumentality. And in contrast to the purely metonymical, instantiating monuments are not just tokens of history, they are also intentional exemplifications of what is monumentalized by them, and thus close the gap between the representation and the represented. (Not all the conditions that made the pyramid possible are monumentalized by it. Which ones are and which are not is decided through a grammar of monumentality, an amalgam of aesthetics and ethics. Only a disturbed culture that considered the use of slave labor virtuous would read into the pyramid a monumentalization of slavery.)

D. The Artwork-Monument Composite.

When a monument is also an artwork its significance *qua* monument is further complicated, since one would wish to differentiate it from the aesthetic and symbolic modes that pertain to its being an artwork. Monuments are often devised to articulate their references through "artistic" properties. Then whether and what such a monument

monumentalizes (or monumentalizes in the first sense) needs to be individually interpreted.

Michaelangelo's *David* is a good case in point. Having discarded the Renaissance's standards of idealized classical proportion in favor of distortions that allow for expressive tensions in the work's configuration, the *David* was a revolutionary sculpture. The Medici declared it a monument to Florence as they sympathized with its calculated balance of pragmatic strength and cultivated delicacy, or so the story goes. But while the huge arms and head of the *David* placed against his boyish body may well symbolize the Florentine's fancies, the sculpture in fact monumentalizes their progressive and independent spirit, instantiated in their adoption of Michealangelo's unprecedented aesthetics. Thus we may distinguish in the *David* qualities - physical as well as circumstantial - that are, due to its being an artwork, expressive of Michaelangelo's intentions, and, due to its being a monument, expressive of Florentine culture.

The *David* is then particularly interesting as a monument because it is simultaneously allegorical (of Florence's self image,) instantiating (Florence's progressive spirit,) and even metonymic (as an extension of Florence's most glorious epoch.)

IV. Monuments and Memory.

> *By monument...we understand a work produced by human hands and created specifically to keep individual doings and destinies...always alive and present in the consciousness of future generations.*
>
> - Alois Riegl, *The Modern Cult of Monuments* (1903)

Monuments are intended to serve in one way or another as memorials. Indeed, one of the uses of the word "monument" refers to tombs or gravestones. Still, one must bear in mind that not all memorials are meant to be monumental, as is the case with most gravestones. Memorials are not only meant to call to mind the individuals commemorated by them: memorials generally attempt to anchor their subject's memory to the public domain by concretely conveying some aspect of their bygone presence. A conventional gravestone metaphorizes an individual by recalling, albeit subtly, his/her body's organically unified mass. (This may partly explain the seemingly absurd vandalism that takes place in cemeteries.) More elaborate memorials seek to materialize a richer gamut of the deceased's attributes. In Ptolemaic Egypt a coffin would be adorned with a faithful portrait of its inmate. In sixteenth century Italy a true aristocrat would not have any less than his noble physique, his virtues and achievements properly represented in his tomb - not as mere symbols but as indisputable testimony of his taste and sophistication. By way of direct instantiation, memorials can get to be much more assertive than metaphors are. The Red Square's Lenin's Mausoleum does not limit itself to instatiating aspects of the deceased; it instantiates the deceased. Asceptically embalmed, his bodily presence is regaled to us forgetful and skeptical mortals in meatless skin and bone. (Sadly for the aesthetically conniving, current events in Russia will apparently lead to

the dismantling of this spectacular and overswaying reliquary. This once, the body will undoubtedly take its spirit to the grave. R.I.P.)

V. Monuments of the Sublime

Given what I've said so far about the aesthetics of monuments, it might be hard to picture a non-allegorical monument designed to effectively and collectively memorialize the holocaust's six million dead, apart from the metonymic monuments which the ruins of the concentration camps now constitute. An instatiating monument seems to have to be simultaneously formed with its subject (as in Cheops' pyramid), or else have its aesthetic properties correlate intimately to its monumentalizing (as in the *David*). Further, an aesthetically effective memorial should at least forcefully metaphorize the commemorated subject. But when it comes to the holocaust, the already monumental void Hitler's perverse design produced can hardly be convincingly suggested, let alone instantiated by a concrete aesthetic form. Yad-Vashem corroborates these strictures by offering fresh evidence of the evocative limitations of monuments.

A recent addition to its roster of failed monuments, "The Children's Memorial" is an underground darkened hall entirely covered by mirrors. Five burning memorial candles at the center are reflected into an infinite number of flickers, symbolizing the souls of children who perished in the war. Completing the theatrics, some names of victims and their age are recited through a sound system against spooky yet "meditative" new-age sounds. This patently manipulative and sentimentalizing technique is enough to ward off any mildly sophisticated sensibility in any context, and is particularly repulsive when applied to a subject which, being so monstrously tragic in itself, demands the utmost solemnity in its commemorating. More significantly for our purposes, the installation is also deficient in regards to its pursued metaphorical force. The unfolding reflections are meant to concretize the idea of infinity, or of a very large number, in order to implement an effect like the one Kant denominates the mathematical sublime—a morally edifying cognitive condition triggered by our confrontations with phenomenal and conceptual infinity. Although the infinite is indeed conveyed by the "Children's Memorial," its evocation of millions of souls through virtual reflections flops because we are always aware that—except for five—these are not "real" flames but only mirror images, and as such we only derive from them the illusion of millions of souls - an effect the "revisionists" who think the holocaust is a fabrication might sympathize with.

Spread over six acres, "The Valley of the Destroyed Communities" is Yad-Vashem's latest and officially last attraction. Built like a high-walled labyrinth of Minoan size blocks of rock (which are actually only overlays carefully mounted over a poured concrete base,) it gives an impression of manicured ancient ruins. Sporadically along them are spelt the names of the five thousand Jewish communities annihilated by the nazis. While the "Valley" attempts to concretely convey the magnitude of the atrocity through

the monument's massiveness and the devastation through its ruin-likeness, we are unavoidably taken much more by its creators' monumental showmanship and their aesthetizing exploits of harmonious spatial play.

Understandably then, the most overpowering display at Yad-Vashem is not a monument nor an artwork, not an allegory nor a metaphor—however suggestive. Amid the sea of aesthetically-diluting multi-media shows at its historical museum stands an unpretentious glass case containing five or six different yellow stars, actual remnants and paradigms of Nazi stigmatizing. Having been infused with the holocaust so completely, these almost ephemeral objects radiate all the pain Yad-Vashem's grandiose concoctions wished to conduct. The effect of these stars is entirely dependent on our believing their authenticity—it is metonymic in the most direct sense.

VI. Memorials and Ritual

In order to save Yad-Vashem from the purgatory of aesthetic inconsequence, we must put aside considerations as to what these monuments represent, symbolize or mean. We will instead look into what this monumental collage actually does.

In order to assure the public survival of a memory, a memorial needs to be supported by a ritual which members of a community perform so as to "share" the memory. This "sharing" does not refer to sharing something that exists physically exemplifying a memory, as the moralizing virtual-reality bites of the holocaust museums in America demonstrate, but the other way around: The ritual "sharing" of a memory by a number of individuals makes a "public memory," analogous to the way ball-players make up "a ball-game" in their playing. Religion usually provides the framework for these rituals. Still, at times the effect of a memorial may actually do the trick. Washington's own Wailing Wall, the Vietnam Memorial, is notable for having been able to generate such a ritual. By listing on an otherwise austere black marble (?) wall each one of the names of the fallen, the memorial portrays the amount of the bloodshed as well as acknowledges each individual life. Limiting itself to stating a sorrowful fact without resorting to allegorizing nor metaphorizing fanfare, people feel sufficiently unintimidated to perform their own little passions and leave their unrequested offerings in front of it. These honest displays of grief infect those who didn't loose a relative or an acquaintance in that war, or aren't even American for that matter. TheVietnam Memorial demonstrates how the forcefulness of a collective memorial depends on a lot more than its representational references to the memorialized. As quality artworks do, an effective memorial must fashion a relationship with the participating audience, and it must perpetrate through this audience—in Wittgenstein's jargon—a "form of life."

Inverting the memorial-to-ritual process, a dynamic and appropriate "form of life" may itself produce a compelling memorial, as is the case with the tragically spreading AIDS quilt. Its monumental size is directly proportional to the growing number of victims, and thus it concretely conveys the epidemic's magnitude.

Curiously, there is in Yad-Vashem a little visited mini-memorial that works much in the same way, "The Memorial Cave." At the World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in 1981 participants brought a few hundred memorial stones in honor of their murdered relatives. Of diverse materials and sizes, the slabs are inscribed in different languages, sometimes stating austerely a name or two, at times indicating as well their country, and sometimes providing a more elaborated text or dedication. Haphazardly mounted on the walls of a small cave, these stones express the individuality of the commemorated as well as the separate acts of remembrance by those who placed them. Their contrasts invite us to inspect each one, and to participate in their memorializing as we do. It's somewhat disappointing that Yad-Vashem's supervisors underestimated this project's potential.

Ultimately, however, and in spite of all its shortcomings, Yad-Vashem manages to function as a "quilt" of sorts, each of its constituting patches being a monument which perpetuates the self-imposed ritual of planning, building and eulogizing holocaust monuments and memorials. While its individual monuments are for the most part aesthetically wanting, as a composite Yad-Vashem persistently articulates the desire to convey what cannot be conveyed, to imagine what could not be imagined even as it was taking place, to memorialize what cannot in itself be properly memorialized. Even though Yad-Vashem's original aesthetic goals may be, as I have suggested, fundamentally impossible to achieve, there remains an ever present moral imperative to fuel its persistence. In this persistence Yad-Vashem monumentalizes its mission: Keeping the memory alive. Hence, in spite of having been (mis)conceived as "the monument to the victims of the holocaust," Yad-Vashem monumentalizes (instatiatingly) our memory of them. It will do so for as long as the project endures. Self-satisfaction or giving up will undermine this "form of life" whose sustenance is indeed the proliferation of memorials. Declaring it "completed" is therefore as immoral as it is aesthetically wrong. In fact—and this point cannot be made often—its "completion" is immoral because it is aesthetically wrong.

Insofar as it would consolidate the reinstatement of sedentary Jewishness, liturgy teaches Jews to look forward to the building of the Temple, where regular sacrifices may again be consecrated to God. The new Temple may however come true as a secular one, dedicated to the remembrance of a sacrifice rather than to their performance.

The Inner Life in Claudel's Art Criticism

Angelo Caranfa

Art criticism...is a way of making one aware of invisible significance behind visible reality.

-D. Kuspit, *The Critic as Artist*, p. 81.

Dutch Renaissance painting is a mirror of nature, Eugene Fromentin (1820-1876) tells us in his *The Masters of Past Time*.[1] Most contemporary critics accept the naturalism advocated by Fromentin. For example, in *Art and Illusion*, Gombrich argues that Dutch painting resembles the "realism of the picaresque novel,"[2] and thus is nothing but the representation of women and men, streets and countryside, sea and sky, and domestic subjects. Like Gombrich, Alpers, too, stresses a similar view in *The Art of Describing*.[3]

In *The Eye Listens*, however, Paul Claudel (1868-1955) points out that while Dutch painting is a representation of the natural world, it is at the same time "the allegorical sign of our intellectual shop,"[4] and thus is best approached as an image of the soul or of God. Arguing against "Fromentin, and with him, most of the critics of the Dutch painters" (13), Claudel asserts that we would better understand Dutch paintings "if we would learn to listen to them at the same time that we feed our intelligence upon them by means of our eyes" (8). In Claudel's view, this contemplative look, or attentive listening, , brings with it a sense that "real solidarity is established between us and the world of the past" (24). Claudel thus reads Dutch painting as records or "traces" of the past which immobilize time for us. Indeed, what intrigues Claudel about Dutch painting is that it depicts "movement within fixity" (121), and thus is always a comment on the permanent, the unchangeable, the eternal, as well as a description of the corruptibility of things or existence. Unlike most critics, Claudel believes that an allegorical reading of Dutch art reveals a "conversation between the inner and the outer world" (43), as well as between the visible and the invisible, time and eternity.

For Claudel, this conversation is especially apparent in the landscape paintings by

van de Neer, Hobbema, Ruysdael, van Goyen, and Cuyp. They are "interiors and it is our inner self they claim" (156). They communicate and invite us "to go forward toward an end or in a certain direction" (153).[5] Each object or image in the painting alludes to an end, a direction, a future, and has no meaning except insofar as it participates in the construction of the whole. According to Claudel, this whole that frames the various objects or signs makes possible the understanding of the painting as a framework of interlocking relationships that communicates meaning or "sense." In Claudel's own words:

> A picture is...something besides an arbitrary clipping from outer reality. Because of the frame, there is a center that results from the intersection of the two diagonals. And the art of the painter is to incite the spectator to a report, a discussion between this given, geometric center, and that which, doubtless due to color and the design - but above all to something else! - results from the composition, a center, I should say rather a focus, creating a pull, a common appeal coming from the interior, and addressed to all the different objects compelled by the frame to make something together; and why not employ the correct word - a sense!... It is this silent watchword, and not the four gilded moldings that prevents the elements convoked, both related and different at the same time, from breaking away, and which makes of the number a figure. (169)[6]

The Dutch master, says the poet, is not only an eye that listens, but a mind that sees: "he is a mirror that paints; all that he does is the result of reflexion" (38). Through the eye and mind, the artist transforms visible reality into a "page...a composition...something that, by the relationship of its various elements, constitutes a meaning" (35). Thus, for Claudel, the meaning of the work can be understood only if we attend to the "relationships" the elements bear to each other; the elements have meaning for us by lending themselves, as a whole, to a certain interpretation.

For example, Vermeer's *View of Delft* and *A Street in Delft* do not portray particular places by virtue of elements in the paintings corresponding one-to-one to physical reality. Instead, Vermeer represents real places through a set of relationships that the elements of the works bear to each other. *A Street in Delft*, writes Claudel, "[is] based on the relationship between these three doors, the one closed, the second opening on darkness, and the one in the middle leading toward the invisible" (22). Vermeer's *The Lacemaker* depends entirely on the figure's "frame, whose shoulders, head, hands with their fingers like two workshops are all concentrated on the point of the needle; or that pupil in the center of the blue eye which is the focal point of the whole face, of her whole person, a sort of spiritual coordination, a ray of lightning discharged from the soul" (22). Similarly, the *Miracle of St. Benedict* by Rubens is "constructed entirely on the relationships between light that call to mind Berlioz's orchestration in parts," and which constitute "an entire drama, a complete story, composed around that insistent hand, made up of the...relationship between these three luminous spots." (118-19)

This is the way Dutch art has meaning for Claudel; it is not exhausted in the mere particular lines, surfaces, tones, or whatever other medium is employed, rather, "there is

enacted before our eyes a balancing where tone is measured in commas and atoms and where all lines and surfaces are convoked to a sort of geometric center" (21). This "geometric center" or "relationship" determines the meaning of the work and the appropriateness of any given interpretation. In this, Claudel agrees with Gombrich, for whom the artist creates in his or her work "centers of attention."[7] But in contrast to Gombrich, who interprets the meaning of this center or relationship in Dutch art as revealing real events or places,[8] Claudel interprets it as revealing life, feeling:

> Behind these moist lips, these ruddy cheecks, these eyes that have ceased to live but not to question and to answer, we feel underneath...the plenitude of a soul that speaks to us and provokes a response...I was speaking a little while ago of that strange attraction, or pull of the Dutch landscapes and interiors that move toward us less than we move toward them. In the same manner we feel, before the portraits of a Frans Hals, or even sometimes of a Becker or a Van der Hest, a kind of airy or soul call, a spirtual invitation, a word emanation. (25)

Similarly, this soul call or spiritual invitation emanates from Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, for Claudel, the picture is a

> page of psychology, thought herself at work, surprised at the very moment when the idea enters and forces a breech that causes the whole edifice to totter. The will is already on the march; intelligence...sketches a plan; and the Son of the Sun listens and follows, while in the background, prudence and deliberation support the movement, and the critical faculties see eye to eye and come to a mutual understanding. (50-51)

The work is arranged, he maintains, "on the principle of an ever increasing movement like a sandbank beginning to crumble" (48). The *Great Kermess* by Rubens conveys to Claudel the same meaning, and obeys the same movement; it is a "complete symphony, spiritual and sensuous at the same time. A suite appears to us as simultaneous. Everything stirs without stirring, and the idea remains motionless under the glance. Everything is present at once" (117-18). So, too, the *Old Woman Saying Grace* by Nicolaes Maes contains "repose and motion at the same time, a state of equilibrium undermined by anxiety," which alludes to the "Resurrection of the Dead" (176). Claudel offers a similar explanation for the still-life paintings by Willem Kalf, van Bergeren, Pieter Claezs and Willem Claezs Heda. He regards them as "an arrangement in imminent danger of disintegration; it is something at the mercy of time," which are framed within "a stable, motionless background, and in the foreground all sorts of objects off balance. They look as though they were about to fall" (47-48). Then, commenting directly on Pieter Claezs's *Still Life*, Claudel interprets the overturned cup and the watch, which Claezs is so fond of placing "on the edge of platters," as suggesting that time is up, that all has come to an end, while the wine in the glass suggests "a feeling of eternity." (48)

The relationship between the eternal and the temporal, or between the motionless background and the chaos in the foreground, suggests to Claudel "moral motion-

lessness," and the liquid in the glasses alludes to "thought in a state of calm." As to the meaning or sense of the works themselves, it is a "dedication to the beyond" (45).[9] The same meaning is conveyed by Hals's *The Regents for the Home of the Aged*, which depicts five women, some of whom are seated, while others are standing: it is "a soul in the process of decomposition." The frightful smile, the deceiving faces, the black eyes, the closed book on the table, the gestures of the hands conspire to produce a sense that all "is finished! And that is that!" (28). Here, as in *The Regents of the Almshouse*, what Frans Hals communicates, explains Claudel, is not the Holland of a middle-class, but one where what appears to be solid ground is uncertain, where reality and reflexion interpenetrate and communicate by the most delicate and subtle veins, where the painter seizes the substance of time without stopping its work, and where art transforms nature less than it absorbs her by a kind of secret impregnation. Here one feels that everything is at the mercy of patience. (31)

In seizing the substance of time without stopping its passage or movement, the Dutch painter brings into unity space and time, the visible and the invisible, body and soul; he makes possible the passage from visual sensation to deeper contemplation, from lived time to remembered time. "The art of the Dutch master," writes Claudel,

> is no longer a generous affirmation of the present, an irruption of the imagina tion into the domain of actuality, a banquet offered to our senses, the perpetuation of a moment of joy and color. It is no longer a glance at the present, it is an invitation to recollection.... Sensation has awakened recollection, and recollection, in its turn, attains, upheaves, one after another, the superimposed layers of memory, and convokes other images around it. (40)

Thus, Rembrandt's *The Philosopher* suggests to Claudel our "descent step by step into the depths of contemplation" (157), as does Vermeer's *View of Delft*, which "is impregnated with its thorough contemplation" (58). Accoding to Claudel, Dutch masters represent the elements of the visible world with extreme clarity, and they set them within a wider context of meaning:

> To every spectacle that [the artist] offers, [he] adds this element: silence, this silence that permits one to hear the soul, or at least to listen to it, and this conversation, beyond all reasonable explanation, that takes place between things by the real fact of their coexistence and of their interpenetration...this glance looks at them all together, [and combines them] into a relationship that denies them the right to disappear. (31)

By this unifying glance, this relationship that renders things permanent, the artist, says Claudel, coordinates "this scattered discourse into a contemplative...formula," he brings a "text to realization. Something born of time and which, nevertheless, henceforth escapes it, [is] superior to it, final and irrefutable" (233). In the contemplative formula of the visual language, and in the enduring aspect of time, which the visual language captures, the artist hears silence in seeing an ideal unity, a divine harmony or center

which encloses all things within the "word of God" (233). Then, concludes Claudel,

> Time shall be closed on us, and the Present shall be its eternal center. The time once established, hark, the choir bursts out singing! What can be better done than that which is accomplished? What can be more finished than that which is ended? What can be more ended than that which cannot be ended any more?[10]

A painting, then, as visual language, says Claudel, "makes the eternal center present to us, as though time were wholly present in the sense of beginning and ending, and of completing that which is incomplete. In this sense, art unveils the boundary of the two worlds! Do we not encounter it...in the museums under the uncertain lustre of glass and varnish when we are confronted by our precarious reality in those effigies that art has immobilized for us at a window of time past? How real they are! How well they hold their pose! How tenaciously they hold their own continuity." (24)

As a "window of time past," art is, for Claudel, a means by which the "mind mounts from the dark to the pale, from the particular to the general, the intermittent to the continuous, the material to the spiritual, the momentary to the permanent and the eternal, and from the stammering suggestion to the established formula" (161-62). In this world where everything is precarious, where everything is at the mercy of time, where everything perishes, painting introduces us into the permanent, the eternal, the spiritual; slowly, concludes Claudel, we come to realize that the outer world and the inner world correspond. "We speak the same language. Nature [Art] and ourselves: we say what she wants to say; and she says what we want to say. We are engaged in the same task, we follow the same road, we are stirred by the same passions, we nourish the same thoughts...And if we look at this whole world at the mercy of time...I shall say that we recite the same liturgy." (232-33)

The liturgy or language that nature and art recite or speak is, for Claudel, that of the Psalms. Just as the Psalmist is stirred by the beauty and glory of God shining in creation, so the artist, explains Claudel, is a witness to this beauty and glory of the world and this expression is something too sacred and too solemn to belong to the domain of spontaneity and personal improvisation. "We must incorporate ourselves into a text existing before ourselves. It corresponds to the movement of our souls...With our eyes fixed on the open book before us, [we] recite, or better said, celebrate the psalms, are speaking...to God. (229-30)

Art is, then, not imitation, nor is it something carried out according to personal improvisation; it is a question of what Goodman calls the "rightness of rendering," and therefore of an objective ideal.[11] It is an expressive operation; it is the incorporation of the artist and of ourselves through his/her work into a "text existing before ourselves," not that of the learned man who is taught its "good usage," which hides from him the "unknown and the virginal, which is none other than the eternal;"[12] it is nature at its origin. When we contemplate Flemish art, insists Claudel, "we are immediately inside of it; we live in it. It takes possession of us. It contains us....We are impregnated by the

atmosphere it encloses" (16-17). In looking at it, we receive the impression of a world "striving to constitute itself."[13] A similar view is conveyed by Merleau-Ponty, for whom Cezanne's paintings convey "an object in the act of appearing, organizing itself before our eyes."[14] For Claudel, as for Merleau-Ponty, this is so because nature in Flemish art, as in Cezanne, corresponds to and is a correlate of vision, that vision which penetrates to the very center of things beneath their material existence.

Claudel explains that "Vermeer's vision is pure, divested, stripped, made bare of all matter, of an almsot mathematical or angelic purity or, let us say, simply photographic, but what photography! in which this painter, shut up in the interior of his lens, entraps the outside world.... By this purification, this stopping of time enacted by glass and tinfoil, the outer order is transported for us within the paradise of necessity."(21)

And of Rembrandt, Claudel writes:

> He is neither the first nor the only one to know how to give a soul to the canvas by lighting it up...from behind, and to make a look respond to a ray of light, a look that creates the face by lighting it up. All these portraits around us are not human documents...these men and women have made the acquaintance of the [light]; they return to us...thoroughly bathed in a light borrowed from memory; they have found themselves. They come forward to awaken an echo where, in the heart of the artist just as deep down in the belly of nature, slumbers the productive and reproductive force. Down the road toward non-existence, they have made an about-face. They have finally accomplished what our feeble memory was gropingly trying to do. By isolating it, they restore this effigy, stamped with the seal of personality, this image of God, worn down by circumstances and the part it has played, that lay buried under our daily life. (39)

From this, we can understand how Claudel can say that a work of art exists as a symbol or sign of our being in the world: it is an interpretation, a becoming aware of our relationship with the world in its perpetual ambiguity between the contingent and the permanent, the imminent and the transcendent, the material and the spiritual, the visible and the invisible. "The soul takes acute pleasure in enjoying permanence and movement at the same time" (117). By means of the work of art as permanence within movement, says Claudel, we grasp reflectively what we are. In this, Claudel agrees with Gadamar's dictum:

> It is the work of art that speaks to us most directly. It possesses a mysterious intimacy that grips our entire being, as if there were no distance at all and every encounter with it were an encouner with ourselves.... The work of art is the absolute present for each particular present, and at the same time holds its word in readiness for every future. The intimacy with which the work of art touches us is at the same time...a shattering and a demolition of the familiar. It is not only the 'This art thou!' disclosed in a joyous and frightening shock; it also says to us; 'Thou must alter thy life!'[15]

For Claudel, the work of art brings to life in us the "image of God that lay buried underneath our daily life" and which is the very life of the soul. Just as the poet converts or transforms the "broken language" of the world into a "perfect verse,"[16] so the

painter, insists Claudel, must do the same; he writes in colors and in lines what has never been painted before and turns it into meaning. In Claudel's own words, the painter

> takes a position, chooses his point of view, the point of com position...where, from varied movements and allied colors, it takes on meaning...Then the painter assumes the authority, does not only propose, but accomplishes, he stirs up the incipient or latent desire of the site. What was only silence and dream becomes tale, anecdote, exposition, exclamation! declamation! He shields his model from chance, accident and straying. He removes the means of escape from him. He imprisons him in the moment he has chosen. (230-31)

A moment of the world and of the painter's life has been arrested in its full reality or meaning in the painting; and thus the painting, as the word or poem, becomes a photograph.

> We have been given the means for stopping time, for transforming its flow, its passage, in a permanent square easy to carry, something henceforth and forever at our disposal, the captured moment, a piece of supporting evidence. It is no longer a question of adaptation...it is a question of testimony itself...we have cast our eye on time and made it enduring...a chaotic diversity has been forced into composition. (231-32)

The artist's contemplation is thus finally consummated:

> The poet, master of all words, the poet, whose art it is to use them, is expert in stirring us to a state of harmonious and intense, precise and strong intelligence, by a clever disposi tion of the objects they represent. But, in the after-world, we shall be the poets, the makers of ourselves.[17]

And just as words are made up of vowels and consonants, and paintings of colors and lines,

> our soul, with each breath, draws from God, sonority in all its plenitude. To come to life would thus be, for our soul, to know, to be fully conscious...We shall then see the number expressing unity, the essential rhythm of this movement which constitutes my soul, this measure which is myself. We shall not only see it, we shall be it, we shall produce ourselves in the perfection of freedom and vision and in the purity of perfect love.[18]

Art is, thus, for Claudel the language of the soul;[19] it invites us to mount from the material to the spiritual, from the contingent to the eternal. In art, concludes the poet, one rediscovers the word of God, the very mystery of creation.

> It is the vague feeling of...this mystery to be cleared up, of this mute word to be interpreted...[that the] painter takes in the landscape.... To understand nature...he imi tates her. He tries to do the same thing that she does with lines and colors. He not only imitates her, but questions her. (230)

It is this "mute word," or this voice of silence, that Claudel interprets for us in his allegorical reading of Flemish art. But it should be pointed out that this is not the creative silence of Malraux, for whom a Vermeer, a Rembrandt, a Hals is God.[20] Rather, this is the creative silence of Merleau-Ponty, for whom the painter, in imitating and in questioning the world, moves towards the invisible, the transcendent, an encounter with the "Other."[21]

Arguing against those who assert that Flemish art is a mirror of nature, Claudel makes allegory the main point of his art criticism, thus transforming art into a source for contemplation. Interpreted allegorically, Dutch art becomes, for Claudel, the soul's journey into the spiritual meaning of existence. For him, Flemish art expresses nothing but the voices of silence, the mute word of God, and therefore he reads it as though he were reading the Psalms, evoking both the evanescence and the eternity of life, while at the same time providing us with an understanding of who we are in relation to the world and to a spiritual idea[l]. The art historian and critic Venturi would find Claudel's criticism worthy of his own definition when he writes: "The center of [the critic's] activity is...in judgment; and he is a critic in the full sense because he centres himself in judgment.... The essential condition of the artistic judgment is to have a universal idea of art."[22] But this "artistic judgment" is missing from Gombrich's criticism, and with it what is also rendered meaningless is the notion that the allegorical in art does not elicit the permanent from the flux of things, the invisible from the visible, the inner from the outer, the spiritual from the material. On the other hand, Gombrich's theory of "relationship" or "center" relies not so much on the universality of art, on art as "movement and sense," as Claudel maintains. Rather, it relies on art as a "chronicle of incommensurable symbolic forms."[23]

Notes

1 E. Fromentin, *The Masters of Past Time: Dutch and Flemish Painting from Van Eyck to Rembrandt*, ed. and trans. A. Boyle, and H. Herson (New York: 1948).
2 E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (New York: 1960), p. 87.
3 S. Alpers, *The Art of Describing* (Chicago: 1983).
4 Page references in the text are from Paul Claudel, *The Eye Listens*, trans. E. Pell (New York: 1950), p. 156.
5 The meaning of Dutch landscape paintings is discussed by C. P. Schneider, *Rembrandt's Landscapes* (New Haven: 1990), pp. 105-127; E. J. Walford, *Jacob van Ruisdael and the Perception of Landscape* (New Haven: 1991), pp. 29-47.
6 See J. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. G. Bennington and I. McLeod (Chicago: 1987), p. 81, for a different interpretation.
7 Gombrich, p. 85.
8 Gombrich, *Story of Art* (New York: 1966), pp. 308-324.
9 For a discussion of the moral meaning of Dutch still-life paintings, see I. Bergstrom, *Dutch Still-Life Painting in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. C. Hedstram and G. Taylor (New York: 1956), pp. 189- 190.

10 P. Claudel, *Poetic Art*, trans. R. Spodheim (New York: 1969), p. 124.
11 N. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: 1978), pp. 109-138. For a similar view, see H.G. Gadamar, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. (New York: 1975), pp. 93-113, and also his *Philosophical Hermeneutcis*, ed. and trans. D. E. Linge (Berkeley: 1976), p. 95; P. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory* (Fort Worth: 1976), pp. 40-53; M. Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. R. C. McCleary (Evanston: 1964), p. 52.
12 Claudel, p.159.
13 Ibid., p. 116.
14 Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. H. L. Dreyfus & P. A. Dreyfus (Evanston: 1964), p. 14.
15 H.-G. Gadamar, *Philosophical Hermeneutcis*, ed. and trans. D. E. Linge (Berkeley:1976), pp. 95 and 104.
16 Claudel, p. 123.
17 Ibid., pp. 123-124.
18 Ibid., p. 117.
19 M. Lieure, *L'esthetique dramatique de Paul Claudel* (Paris: 1971), pp. 633-634.
20 A. Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, trans. S. Gilbert (New York: 1953), pp. 356-359.
21 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenologie de la perception* (Paris: 1945), p.277.
22 L. Venturi, *History of Art Criticism*, trans. C. Marriott (New York: 1936), pp. 33 and 35.
23 Tilghman, "Review of Danto. *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*," *Canadian Philosophical Review* 7(1987): 99.

Hermeneutics and Art:

From Schleiermacher to Derrida: On the Trail of the "True Meaning" of the Work

Rudolf M. Bisanz

Purpose:

The purpose of this article is to straightforwardly illustrate select key elements of hermeneutics that have a direct bearing on art. And to spell out any utility that these may have for the interpretation of art in the context of a critical art history and a discipline-based art criticism. This will imply that hermeneutics can overcome the extremes of methodological authoritarianism, tribalism, and balkanization that today weaken those studies. Along the way, the article will also suggest that random hermeneutics holds risks of presumption, relativism, and blunder. On the whole, it is designed to show that a critical hermeneutics has the potential to stem the further intellectual decline of art history and criticism into functional incoherence. To show that hermeneutics can free those subjects from dogmas, offer them ideational consistency, and re-energize their pursuit with the excitement of discovery is a further aim of this article.

Prolegomenon

Hermeneutics originated in the second century, C.E. with Rabbinic expositions of the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) in the post-Hillel tradition of Middot (Heb. "measurement," "rules"), and, coterminously, with the theological writings and biblical exegesis of the sub-Apostolic Church Fathers, beginning with Clement of Rome. Methodical secular hermeneutics as a branch of philosophy can probably be traced back to the writings of a professor from Saxony, one Johann Martin Chladenius, in the 18th Century. The modern incursion of hermeneutics into the discussion of art goes back to early German romanticism, at the beginning of the 19th Century. However, inspite of very substantial 20th century philosophical interest in hermeneutics, including its uses for unravelling truth in the work of art, the effects of hermeneutics on functional quotidian praxis in art

history and criticism today are, on the whole, marginal. To begin with, therefore, our topic involves surmounting preliminary reservations regarding the heuristic value of hermeneutics held by many "working" critics and art historians. Because hermeneutics deals primarily with interpreting and understanding texts, many "practicing" art historians and critics tend to dismiss it as irrelevant to the study of art. And they also claim that, because, unlike literature, which the reader absorbs in "linear" fashion over time, the art object, which is manifestly present, contemporaneous and immediately observable, is apprehended instantaneously. Because of its perpetual immediacy and vital contemporaneity, they postulate, the work of art is really in no need of crafty phenomenological or intuitive exegetical machinations for its unravelling. But it could be that today's "working" art historians and critics who neglect the connection between the work of art and "basic" modern philosophy do so at peril of orphaning their discipline in intellectual deprivation. They risk betraying not only their innocence of the methodological ground of their own discipline, narrowly defined, but, more generally, forcing its disjointment from the mainstream of consequential post-Enlightenment thinking, as a whole.

Immanuel Kant, the father of modern aesthetics, profoundly influenced not only the schools of Romanticism and Idealism but, beyond that, art criticism, phenomenological speculation, and especially hermeneutics, until the present. He dedicated the First Part (of two) of his epochal "Third Critique" (*Critique of Judgment*), to showing that aesthetic judgment has two components: one, that is sensual or *a posteriori* (gained from observation or experience), and possesses personal validity; and another, that is *a priori* (independent of all sense impressions; "by reason alone," as it were), and holds universal validity. Kant asserts that "judgment of taste is an aesthetic judgment, i.e., one that rests on subjective grounds, and whose basis of determination is neither a concept nor based on a specific purpose." And he also affirms that aesthetic judgment is based on the prior "feelings" of the observer, as, e.g., when he says that "There can be no objective rule of taste which determines with concepts what might be beautiful. Because all judgment coming from those quarters is aesthetic; i.e., the feelings of the subject are its source of determination rather than a concept of an object."

Apart from all such viewers' "sensitivities," however, Kant claims that the "universal validity" (*Allgemeingültigkeit*) of aesthetic opinions must be based on "an *a priori* judgment...i.e., that satisfaction which everyone may consider as necessary" and that must derive from such "prior" ideas and definitions as have been laid down in advance.[1] By these means he intervolves the subjective with the objective, the "psychologistic" with the "scientific," and the phenomenal (the empirical/experiential world of appearances) with the noumenal (the "real"—yes, the "real"—or conceptual). Thus Kant lays out the ideative "playing field" of both mainstream modern "subjective idealism" and phenomenology, the ground of modern hermeneutics.

What follows naturally from the preceding comments is that the observing eye is not a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate, but belongs to a prepossessed, sentient being. A

person does not "gaze" at the work blankly, but (aside from reacting to it with "emotions") arrives at it with (some? many?) opinions or views shaped presumptively. Accordingly, her "gaze" as such, then, is an amalgamation of *a priori* "concepts" and experiential, *a posteriori* "feelings." Therefore, we must enquire into the nature of vision-originant interpretation/understanding in the context of rationalism coupled with "empirical psychology." This naturally points to the interrelationship between normative and practical understanding, therefore points to phenomenology, i.e., the combined study of noetic or "abstractly knowing" intentionality or intellectual projection, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, experience. In turn, that leads perforce into...hermeneutics.

Pioneers

Modern hermeneutics received its greatest augmentation with early German romanticism, where it was initially mostly of interest to artists. Their approach to examining their own creativity in relation to nature and historical art was largely intuitive, spontaneous and informal. Nevertheless, they preempted significant components of the wider task of hermeneutics today, the theoretical elucidation of concerns implicit in human understanding. In the following, it is not my intention to list or analyze the abundant contributions of any of the personalities that will be named. Instead, I wish to rapidly survey, beginning with certain romantic painters,[2] significant select writings, and show art historically and art critically relevant truths to which they point.

The Nazarene painter, Franz Pforr (1788-1812), promoted the will of the artist over reality, and fostered the impulse to interpret nature creatively. He also called for *Verinnerlichung*, or subjective spiritualization, for a personalist iconography of free symbols and allegory, as well as for assent of empiricism to the *Wesen* (inner essence) of nature.[3] The art theorist and painter, Philipp Otto Runge (1777-1810), believed that "the elements of art can only be found in the elements of nature," and that the latter are located "within each one of us."[4] Though he wrote naively, if with heartfelt conviction, he seemed to have sensed the core of phenomenology, the study of the torrent of phenomena that deluge man's consciousness in the act of interpreting and understanding.

Caspar David Friedrich's (1774-1840) holistic reach for history and personal, corporate and cosmic being, radiates throughout his iconography and collected writings.[5] Both he and Runge held progressive hermeneutic notions: that history, form and iconography are merely opening gambits in the process of discovery through art; that art should be a liberating experience for the viewer; and that the viewer should earnestly endeavor to find such meaning in art as she sincerely thinks was there to be found.[6]

The early romantic art historian, critic and Nazarene apologist, Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829), drew on these art theories while enlarging upon them semi-systematically. He demanded a "limitlessly growing romantic, progressive and universal art" that

would equal the sum of man's social and psychological interests. In turn, he instituted a modern aesthetics as a function of a sponatenous, situational experiencing of art bordering on advanced phases of contemporary hermeneutics.[7] From this intellectual nourishing ground, centering in art history, art theory and aesthetics, emerged another early romantic anti-rationalist, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), the founding father of liberal Protestant theology and modern systematic hermeneutics.[8]

Founder

Since the 4th century and St. Augustine's (d. 430) and John Cassian's (d. 435) seminal exegetical work, decoding of textual meaning was based on the four "hermeneutic senses:" the historical or literal; the allegorical; the tropological or moral; and the anagogical or spiritual. But Schleiermacher fundamentally altered that strictly text-directed method to one that also endeavors to illuminate the psychological conditions that are required for interpreting and understanding works, in the first place. In short, by partially redirecting the investigative thrust of hermeneutics from the text to the reader, he effected a sea change in textual interpretation and understanding, thereby fundamentally altering a discipline that had remained essentially static since late Antiquity. By the force of this massive redirection, Schleiermacher opened up hermeneutics to general interest, or universal application, within the larger process of interpretation and understanding, *per se*. And this includes a striking relevance to "knowledge theory" in methodical art history and criticism.

Schleiermacher emphasizes radical subjectivism, the psychological element and, apart from objective language, the "inner reality or thought" of the text (echoes of Pforr's *Wesen*). For him, hermeneutics and criticism are mutually reinforcing, "the art of understanding" as he calls that aggregate. It is based as much on interpreting language (the structural component) as it is on life/psychology (the phenomenological component). The author is fluid, an "act"; both she, and the work (as the product of an act) require our empathy. Unlike some of his 20th century successors, though, Schleiermacher believed that his method could yield a "definitive" textual meaning. As to the text-based terminology of his theory, we propose to paraphrase, e.g., "language" with "form and composition" (or "structure"); "inner reality or thought" with "iconography or content or meaning;" "text" with "art;" and "author" with "artist," etc. The following sketch of the consequences of philosophical hermeneutics for art history and criticism will profit from similar nomenclatural exchanges.[9]

Transition

Wilhelm Dilthey's (1833-1911) pivotal accomplishment in philosophical hermeneutics at the turn of the 19th into the 20th Century, was to absorb 19th Century developments, especially Schleiermacher's contribution, while defining the essential 20th-

century state of the problem to this day.[10] Significantly for us, he departs from his "mentor's" still largely language-based theory to one that is based on the process of human life as a whole. As the neo-Kantian that he was, he posits "understanding" as a methodological concept as *Seinskategorie* (a category of existence), based on *Leben* (life), and requiring hermeneutic *Nacherleben* (re-living or re-experiencing). Understanding mirrors the social and cultural integument of the person who understands. What she is able to understand reveals *Lebensäußerung* (life expression), necessitating hermeneutic re-living, empathy, and *Hineinversetzen* (transposition). Understanding is an *Erlebnis* (lived experience) and a rediscovery of the "I" in the "Thou." That revealing is likened to a process in which the mind keeps rediscovering itself, while moving on an upward spiral of recognition.

For one, Dilthey's hermeneutics ramify into *Erkenntnistheorie* or epistemology (theory of knowledge). For another, it points up striking relevance and utility for art history and criticism. As an enabling act for an unrestricted creative involvement in historical art, it is limited only by the viewer's capacity for empathy. His younger contemporary, Edmund Husserl's (1859-1938) contribution to hermeneutics is of equal significance for our topic.[11] His insights center on ontology (the study of the nature of being) and proceed from two bases: subjective phenomenological experience (akin to empirical psychology); and *Intentionalität* (intentionality; ideal, intersubjective, psychic understanding of intent). The "bottom line" of Husserl's late writings is that "contrary to pre-scientific and even scientific objectivism, the philosopher must arrive at a clear understanding of himself as the originally acting subjectivity" from which all knowledge issues forth. And, moreover, "that understanding subjectivity is the elementary seat of all objective creation of meanings as well as of all validation of being."[12] The significance for art studies of such findings as these cannot be exaggerated; Husserl posits "subjectivity" as the prime cause and essential factor of all understanding and interpretation.

Also significant for our purposes, Husserl shows a common foundation between language (or artistic expression) and "action," reminding us of Schleiermacher's injunction that the "author/artist is an act." From this follows—echoes of Schlegel—that hermeneutics is an advancing, progressive and dynamic process. However, insight into the nature of self-transcending possibilities and their orderly transmission through logical explication lies at the heart of Husserl's philosophy. The work of art is in considerable part the product of just such an eidetic (or intuitionist) and noetic (or "mind-originant") process. This process, so reminiscent of Kant's formulations, Husserl spent a lifetime investigating. Therefore, the art historian/critic would be well advised to borrow from Husserl's insights in her quest of the "true meaning" of the work.

Center

Drawing on both Dilthey's and Husserl's pioneering findings, Martin Heidegger

(1889-1976) revolutionized hermeneutics as a fundamental metaphysical category of understanding and interpretation.[13] For the art historian, one of his most seminal insights (and a partial extension of Dilthey 's and Husserl's discoveries) is basing understanding on "being-in-the-world" (existence) in "time," i.e., temporality = "being and time." This supports his celebrated methodological category of *Sitz-im-Leben* (the time and place or location in life), the first "coordinate" of modern hermeneutics. Understanding originates in a primordial form of comprehension which is embedded in *Dasein* (being). Man's "temporality"—consciousness of death—defines all of his understanding. Because of this, comprehension can only occur within a given horizon of understanding or *Vorverständnis* (pre-understanding or prior sympathy; an echo of Goethe's famous concept of *Wahlverwandschaft*—elective affinity), the second "coordinate" of modern hermeneutics. An alternative to understanding and interpretation outside of the horizon drawn by the "coordinates" *Sitz-im-Leben* and *Vorverständnis* is neither possible nor conceivable for him, or for any of his many successors.

Heidegger's massive shift of the playing field of understanding forced a union between epistemology and "lived life," between philosophy and existence. It would be difficult, therefore, to exaggerate the importance of Heidegger's pioneering existentialism for knowledge theory in general, and for knowledge acquisition in art history, in particular. His awareness of living philosophy as a process of *Destruktion* (demolition) of former (or dead?) philosophies, specifically of ontology, moreover, seems to lie at the root of deconstructionism as a postmodern phase of hermeneutics.[14] And his concept of the "hermeneutic circle" as aninterminable, relativistic, pluralistic meander of subjective and objective, present and historical, "lived" and "abstracting," subject—and predicate—related, real and ideal elements holds an especially strong gripon postmodern hermeneutics.

Yeomen

The theologian Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) carried Heidegger's ideas into an existentialist form-criticism of the Bible, by means of a process of "demythologizing" (or de-historisizing) Scriptures, and making them acutely relevant for the present life of the reader. He subjects Enlightenment hermeneutics to a scathing existentialist critique, by satirizing its "rational religion" and "right interpretation of scriptures" as a vain effort to eliminate forever "erroneous concepts." He counters such fateful errors as these with his heartfelt wish "to avoid the mistake which consists of tearing apart the art of thinking from the art of living and, hence, of a failure to recognize the "intent" of utterances or works. In his further disquisitions on the relationship of what he calls "the art of living and explication" the concept of the "self-understanding" (of the reader) plays a key part in meaningful hermeneutics.

Bultmann offered the classic definition of (what I call) the "double-*Sitz-im-Leben*" principle: interpretation is based on *Lebensbezug* (living existential relations) and pre-

understanding by both author/artist *and* interpreter. For him the "hermeneutic circle" means that "the interpreter's interests" determine the direction and nature of interpretation. Bultmann's ultimate claim is that, based on the preceeding, a presuppositionless hermeneuticsis all but impossible.[15] The consequences that Bultmann's insights into the nature of understanding and interpretation imply for art history and criticism are as profound and manifold as they are potentially ominous. Taken in their collective inference, they spell out the beginning of the end of the "normative" phase of those subjects, as we have known them.

Another follower of Husserl and Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer (b. 1900), is unquestionably the single most influential representative of radical philosophical hermeneutics today.[16] That all interpretation is a function of the Vorurteil (prejudice) of the interpreter, which is based on her *Sitz-im-Leben* (time and place in life), results naturally from Gadamer's reading of the final consequences of Heidegger's insights. Because *Vorurteil* is an organic component of *Wirkungsgeschichte* (effective history), hermeneutics should concentrate on grasping *Vorurteil.* And this leads Gadamer to his two essential conclusions.

For one, according to Gadamer, the meaning of a given text/work is lodged in its *Auslegung* (explication), with tradition showing a historical chain of such explications. Among the consequences of this, the most important one, namely explication = tradition, seems to empower each reader/viewer to initiate her own version of "custom," "tradition," or "school." For another, his equation hermeneutics = "explication explicated" leads to a fateful meta-hermeneutics, namely to the study of *Auslegung als solche* (explication as such). This may well spell the putative end of a text/work-targeted exegesis, or of hermeneutics as we have traditionally known it, by going far beyond Schleiermacher's earlier gambit of (partially) redirecting the goal of hermeneutics from explaining the text to fathoming the intentions of the reader.

In the end, Gadamer amends his position (though weakly; and contra Jacques Derrida's abject Heideggerian deconstructionism) by re-introducing, as a kind of afterthought, practical reason, judgment and enculturation as antidotes to a potentially runaway psychologism and unending indefiniteness. Taken at its core, however, Gadamer's general hermeneutics suggests to the art historian, that, in effect, there is no art history "as such" but only art history "books," and that any person who feels up to the task should write her own art history "book," according to the dictates of her own *Vorurteil.* Of course, in this context, we should not forget that 150 years earlier, Runge had already recommended that each viewer should interpret the work of art as she felt was personally appropriate for her, provided she brought to the exercise the requisite sincerity of spirit and seriousness of mind, qualities without which, Runge thought, art can be neither approached, nor interpreted, nor understood.

With his recital on the relationship between hermeneutics and art, perhaps the most succinct in print,[17] Gadamer seems to project an authentic "hermeneutics democratized." Moreover, the logic that governs his protocol of inquiry in aesthetics is a virtual intel-

lectual twin of Bultmann's inquiry into New Testament theology. (*Mutatis mutandis*, then, Gadamer's work of art = e.g., Bultmann's *Gospel of John* or his *Romans*, each having the capacity to transcend its own historical relativity through self-actualizing contemporaneousness.) He maintains that the work of art speaks to us directly, apart from its relation to history and nature. Building on G. W. Friedrich Hegel's (1774-1840) idea of art as a manifestation of the absolute spirit, Gadamer posits "an absolute contemporaneousness existing between the work and its present beholder," in spite of any and all "historical consciousness." The "reality and expressive power of the work cannot be restricted to its original horizon", i.e., its historical origin. Because the work of art "has its own present," it transcends history and operates directly and intimately on the viewer's mind. Equally as autonomous is the relationship between the work and the artist. Gadamer asserts that "the work of art is the expression of a truth that cannot be reduced to what its creator actually thought in it." As an outgrowth of *Dasein* (existence), "it offers itself as an absolute presence," and is thus "open to ever new interpretations."

Gadamer adds this charming aside: "Goethe's statement that 'everything is a symbol' is the most comprehensive formulation of the hermeneutical idea. It means that everything points to another thing." A semiotic variation of this truism is the Swiss linguist's, Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857-1913) complex intellection that language "signs" (the product of signal or sound pattern plus concept or signification) beget "signs," therefore new meaning *ad infinitum*.[18] His pioneering work in linguistics has lent a strong stimulus to much of that part of hermeneutics that is centered in the analysis of language *qua* language.

Epigones

The field of the epigones among the "hermeneuts" is large and distinguished. Few enjoy a greater reputation than Paul Ricoeur (b.1913) and Jacques Derrida (b. 1933). They are both disciples of Heidegger, respectively of Husserl, and they both seem to expand on Goethe's conceit, as indeed they do on the cachet of hermeneutics with various fields of study, while basing their hermeneutics on an eclectic melange of sources. Among the latter, and *inter alia*, we may mention Saussure's semiotics, Wittgenstein's "language games," and from the three "masters of suspicion," Marx's dialectical economics, Nietzsche's hubristic philo-poetics and, especially, Freud's psychologistic culture theories.

For Ricoeur, hermeneutics entails metacritical or socio-critical "suspicion."[19] His concept of "suspicion" seems to be based on his understanding of Husserl's concept of "epoche" (from the Greek, meaning "beginning of a time period") as *Abschaltung der Aussenwelteinflüße* (or disconnect of influences stemming from the outside world.[20] As a form of suspension of judgment, Husserl's "epoché" can be likened to a radical form of skepticism, an ancient philosophical category of doubt, or suspension of belief, or,

conversely, belief in the inconclusiveness of reason. On the positive side, for Ricoeur (and, of course, also for Husserl), "suspicion" can, in turn, lead to new options of encounter with the work, as well as renewal of its understanding and interpretation. With him, accordingly, a long string of theoretical initiatives in behalf of "reader-(viewer)-response criticism", which, as we have shown, reaches back to Schleiermacher, culminates in a mature attainment of that critical species. For Ricoeur, interpretation is perhaps interminable, with "symbol giving rise to thought" and to an endlessly shifting kaleidoscope of new possibilities. Similarly, too, his compatriot Derrida thinks of the work as a conundrum: the signified becomes the signifier within the constantly warring forces of signification.[21]

From Heidegger's notions of *Destruktion/Abbau*, Derrida adduces judgment as a faculty that is sinking fast into a labyrinth of signifying systems, where texts, works or structures have no final meaning, and interpretation is a limitless peregrination.[22] A thorough-going eclectic, who wrings out the last drop of potential consequentiality from his sources, Derrida paraphrases Heidegger's arresting cryptogrammic speculations on art [23] with his own ploy: a work "is no longer a finished corpus...but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces."[24] Might that be the epitaph, or the penultimate license, or merely a popularizing catch phrase of a more recent, postmodernist modification on the theme of hermeneutics as a conveyance on the trail of intellectual discovery?[25]

Epilogue

We have rapidly surveyed select key aspects of various stages of hermeneutics as they bear on the disciplines of art history and art criticism. This involved tracing a two-hundred year modern evolution in the "science" of interpreting/understanding, respectively its doppelgänger, understanding/ interpreting. In turn this led us on a trail from neophyte romantic beginnings to veteran poststructuralist superfluity, while traversing ever higher peaks of freedom and opportunity, as well as ever lower chasms of complexity and, possibly, near-ataxia. No doubt, each of the individual writers on hermeneutics whom we have examined is convinced that his map is the right one to lead us to the truth.

Whatever else may be said on this account, collectively the writings we have examined certainly give us a tour guide that is sufficiently rich in implications and associations as to be an inspiration for fathoming the "true meaning" of the work of art. Thus, today, art historians can choose rigid antiquarian or doctrinaire social formulas. Or they can respond to the challenge of some of the more hopeful precepts of liberal hermeneutics. But the question "will hermeneutics 'work' for our discipline" may not be appropriate. Rather, what should be asked is: "Considering the alternative—perpetuating the current state of the discipline—does the student really have a more attractive choice?"

Hermeneutics, especially its most recent phases, is not without risks. As with some postmodern art criticism and aesthetics-pace Derrida—(and, as we have seen, with the encouragement of some early German romantics) it can retrograde to unadulterated eisegesis (reading one's own ideas into interpretation). More bizarrely, it can even flirt with the experience of glossolalia (talking in tongues).[26] Yet, a communicative hermeneutics portends, though assuredly it does not "guarantee," a more meaningful conduit to or a more critical coping mechanism with history. Or hold out as much room for personal maneuver, opportunity, or reward in art criticism and analysis.

Granted, contemporary hermeneutics opens up the specter of numbing relativism. But then, as a comprehensive critical instrumentality, it does not only promote freedom of choice and growth, but also conceptual unity and control and, yes, humility, humility in the knowledge of that which is attainable by and that which is beyond the reach of reasoned enquiry. "What we cannot speak about, we must pass over in silence."[27] Where personal hermeneutic discovery may lead in individual cases is indefinite. What seems definite is: "Wer nicht wagt, gewinnt nicht"—"Nothing dared, nothing gained."[28]

Notes

1 The preceding quotations from Kant were translated from the following: "Nun ist das Geschmacksurteil ein Ästhetisches Urteil, d.i. ein solches, was auf subjektiven Gründen beruht, und dessen Bestimmungsgrund kein Begriff, mithin auch nicht der eines bestimmten Zweckes sein kann." "Es kann keine objektive Geschmacksregel, welche durch Begriffe bestimmte, was schön sei, geben. Denn das Urteil aus dieser Quelle ist Ästhetisch; d.i. das Gefühl des Subjekts, und kein Begriff eines Objekts, ist sein Bestimmungsgrund." "Es ist aber ein Urteil a priori...d.i., jenesWohlgefallen (das) jedermann als notwendig ansinnen darf." Immanuel Kant, "Kritik der Ästhetischen Urteilskraft; Analytik des Schönen," *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (orig. 1790-99), in Werke, Vol. 5, Wiesbaden: Insel Verlag, 1957, pp. 308, 313, 384. (Unless otherwise indicated, the translations in this article are by the author.)

2 For an introduction to these, see Rudolf M. Bisanz, "Andacht als Kunsterlebnis," *Das Münster*, 44/2 (1991): 86-94.

3 F. Herbert, *Die Blütezeit Romantischer Bildkunst; Franz Pforr der Meister des Lukasbundes*, Marburg: Verlag des kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars der Universität Marburg an der Lahn, 1924. Compare Rudolf M. Bisanz, "Franz Pforr," in *Dictionary of Art* (London: MacMillan, forthcoming).

4 See Philipp Otto Runge, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Göttingen: 1965; orig. 1840-1841. For the most thorough discussion of Runge's theories in English, see Rudolf M. Bisanz, *German Romanticism and Philipp Otto Runge, A Study in Nineteenth-Century Art Theory and Iconography* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1970).

5 For Friedrich, see H. Börsch-Supan and K. W. Jähnig, *Caspar David Friedrich* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1973).

6 Compare Rudolf M. Bisanz, "From C. D. Friedrich to Biedermeier: Devotion Into Art," *Studies in Iconography*, 14/1 (1995): 223-241.

7 For a condensed, intensive exposition of his ideas on the current topic see, inter alia, Friedrich Schlegel, "116. Fragment," *Athenäum* (Stuttgart: Cottasche Buchhandlung, 1960; orig. 1798).

8 See Keith W. Clements, editor, *Friedrich Schleiermacher, Pioneer of Modern Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), "Hermeneutics: The Compendium of 1819" (in "Hermeneutics, Conversation with History") pp. 157 ff. For a comprehensive reconstruction of Schleiermacher's Berlin University lectures of 1819 ff., see H. Kimmerle, editor, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*

(Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977; compare: *Hermeneutik: Nach den Handschriften*, Heidelberg, 1959).

9 For some of what follows in this article, I am indebted to various sources, including these recent studies: William J. Larkin, Jr., *Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1988). Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Robert W. Yarbrough, trans., Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994). Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, editor, *The Hermeneutics Reader, Texts of the German Tradition* (New York: Continuum, 1994). Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutic Spiral* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1991). Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (GrandRapids, New York: Zondervan Publishing House/Harper Collins Publishers, 1992). The volumes by Larkin, Maier, Mueller-Vollmer and Osborne all have extensive bibliographies. The volume by Thiselton contains an exhaustive bibliography.

10 For a selection of his thoughts on hermeneutics in English, see Wilhelm Dilthey, "The Development of Hermeneutics," *Selected Writings*, H. P. Rickman, ed., trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

11 For his early *magnum opus*, see Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 2 vols., J. N. Findlay, trans. (London: Routledge & Kegan, New York: The Humanities Press, 1976; orig. 1901). Of at least equal importance is his late masterpiece, see ibid., *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, David Carr, intro., trans. (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1970; compare: *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1982; orig. 1927 and 1936).

12 "...wenn der Philosoph zu seinem klaren Verständnis seiner selbst als der urquellend fungierenden Subjektivität sich durchgerungen hat..." "...die erkennende Subjektivität als Urstätte aller objektiven Sinnbildungen und Seinsgeltungen..." (all Husserl's italics), in Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis*...p.110.

13 Basic reading for philosophers and art historians alike, and the "bible" of contemporary hermeneutics, is Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, trans. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962; compare: *Sein und Zeit*, 16th edition, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1986; orig. 1927).

14 Jacques Derrida notes: "When I made use of this word (deconstruction), I had the sense of translating two words from Heidegger at a point where I needed them in the context. These two words are *Destruktion*, which Heidegger uses, explaining the *Destruktion* is not a destruction but precisely a destructuring that dismantles structural layers in the system, and so on. The other word is *Abbau*, which has a similar meaning." What this deconstruction was aplied to was "the whole history of Western philosophy." Quoted after Thiselton, op. cit, pp., 109-110, 137. (For Derrida's actual wording, see his *The Ear of the Other. Otobiography* (sic.), *Transference, Translation*, ed. C. V. McDonald (New York: Schocken Books, 1985, pp. 86, 87.) As to the term *Abbau*, it means "dismantling," "retrenchment," "reduction," etc. More specifically, as to the term *Destruktion* (which literally translates to "destruction," "demolition," "removal of geological layers"), Heidegger does indeed repeatedly stress its affirmative meaning, as, e.g., when he says, in referring to the history of ontology and the need he sees for its "destruction," that "This destruction is however not intended to bury the past in futility, it has a positive intention; its negative function remains inexplicit (*unausdrücklich*) and indirect." In Martin Heidegger, Par. 6, "Die Aufgabe einer Destruktion der Geschichte der Ontologie," in Chapter 2, in *Sein und Zeit*, 16th ed., op. cit., pp. 19-27, especially p. 23.

15 See Rudolf Bultmann, "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible,?" in his *Existence and Faith*, Schubert M. Ogden, trans. (Cleveland, New York: The World Publishing Company, 1960; orig. 1957).

16 For his most influential work, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Garret Barden and William G. Doerpel, trans. (New York: Seabury Press, 1975; compare orig.: *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1960).

17 For the requisite quotations, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Aesthetics and Hermeneutics" in his *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, David E. Linge, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 95 ff.; orig. in Kleine Schriften, 3 vols., Tübingen: Mohr, n.d.g.

18 Compare Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, C. Bally, A. Sechehaye and A. Riedlinger, eds. (Roy Harris, trans., LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1986 (orig. 1916)), e.g., pp. 66, 112 and passim.

19 E. g., Paul Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge and New

York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

20 Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*...p. 82 and passim.

21 For his *opus magnum*, see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, G. Chakrovorty, trans. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976). Also see: Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, G. Bennington and I. McLeod, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). This work well exemplifies Derrida's noted open-ended, eccentric, oblique, syncopating, elliptic style as applied to the topic of art. In its larger context, this work is a perpetual dialogue with two individuals, Kant and Heidegger.

22 Compare footnote Nr. 14, above.

23 Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work Of Art," in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*, Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns, eds. (New York: Modern Library, 1964), pp. 649 ff.; compare orig.: "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," in Holzwege, 1950.

24 Jacques Derrida, , "Living On/Border Lines" in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (London: Routlegde and Kegan, 1979), pp. 75-176; quoted after Thiselton, op. cit., p. 104.

25 For an entertaining, humorous illumination of the current confusion, see Jacques Derrida "Some Statements and Truisms About Neo-Logisms, Newisms, Postisms, Parasitisms, and Other Small Seismisms," in *The States of Theory*, pp.63-94.

26 For superb examinations of the problem of intelligibility of recent post-structuralist Verschnitt-hermeneutics ("the blended kind"), and the increasing difficulties in transmitting consequential understanding in the traffic of most deconstructionist art, see Hugh J. Silverman, ed., *Postmodernism-Philosophy and the Arts* (New York, London: Routledge, 1990). Also of interest in this regard, though as a negative example, is the collection of mostly philosophical essays in Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell, eds., *The Language of Art History* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For a very detailed and very frank discussion of the risks and dangers of analyzing art and art history while being "sheltered" from these subjects by thick methodological walls belonging to another field of studies, in this case philosophy, compare the major review of the volume by Mssrs. Kemal and Gaskell by Rudolf M. Bisanz, "Art History: Which Way,?" *Art Journal*, 52/2 (Summer 1993): 101-107

27 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge Humanities Press International, 1988), p. 74; orig. *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung*, 1921.

28 In addition to the excellent bibliographies in Osborne, Thiselton, Mueller-Vollmer and Maier mentioned above, see the following for a major (though now somewhat dated) bibliographic compilation: Norbert Henrichs, *Bibliographie der Hermeneutik und Ihrer Anwendungsbereiche seit Schleiermacher*, 2nd edition (Düsseldorf: Philosophia Verlag, 1972).

Addendum: For a hopeful attempt at a heuristic-analytic examination of the current problem, also see: Reinhard Hoeps, *Bildsinn und religiöse Erfahrung; Hermeneutische Grundlagen für einen Weg der Theologie zum Verständnis gegenstandsloser Malerei* (Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York: Verlag Peter Lang, 1984). Hoeps, a theologian and art historian who explores the potential of theological hermeneutics in understanding non-objective, abstract painting, summarizes at one point: "As hermeneutics...the theory of the work and of the experience of the work must originate in the mutual relationship (*Wechselverhältnis*) of the work and the viewer. Accordingly, such a theory will prove to be a theory of self-consciousness (*Selbstbewußtsein*)...," p. 65. For a recent ostensive-expository study of a related issue, see Mark C. Taylor, *Disfiguring: Art, Architecture, Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). For a trenchant critique of Taylor's volume, see Richard M. Carp, "Book Reviews," *Art Journal*, 53/1, (Spring 1994): 94-97.

Sex Machine Art:

From Mechanical Repetition Into Electric Flicker

Joseph Nechvatal

To quote Deleuze: "The subconscious is a factory, a machine for production." In 1912, Marcel Duchamp along with Apollinaire and Picabia attended a performance of Impressions of Africa, a play by an obscure author named Raymond Roussel. Roussel greatly admired the works of the author Jules Verne which he read over and over again, fascinated with their extraordinary voyages and machines, with bachelor scientists completely absorbed in postitivist exploratory dreams taken to delirious extremes. Duchamp later credited Roussel with the inspiration for his Large Glass, The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even. In 1912, Duchamp started producing paintings and drawings depicting mechanized sex acts such as Mechanics of Modesty and The Passage from the Virgin to the Bride. At the same time, Freud was explaining in his lectures that complex machines always signify the genital organs.

Roussel invented language machines which produced texts through repetition and permutations. This machine-like logic provided his art with a seemingly pure spectacle of endless variety of textual games and combinations flowing in circular form. Within this writing process he described a number of fantastic machines, including a painting machine in his novel, Impressions of Africa. This painting machine wonderfully foreshadows the arrival of computer-robotic technology and its application to visual art available to us today, nearly a century after he envisioned it. From Roussel, we start to map a certain lineage in the avant-garde throughout our century, passing through Duchamp, the Futurists, and Productivists, through Jackson Pollock, Tony Smith, Ad Reinhardt, Andy Warhol, Donald Judd, Sol Le Witt, and Joseph Kosuth.

Roussel's themes and procedures involved imprisonment and liberation, exoticism, cryptograms, and torture by language, with their inextricable play of double images, repetitions and impediments, all giving the impression of the pen running on by itself through the dreamy usage and baroque style of mirrored form. Roussel's technique and the process he developed lend themselves well to the creation of the unforeseen, automatic, and spontaneously inventive movements which give the reader the feeling of prolonging action into eternity through the ceaseless, fantastic construction of the work itself, transmitting an altered, exalted and orgasmic state of mind. After the initial dazzling, Roussel creates one predominant overall effect: doubt through mechanical dis-

course. Roussel presents us with the model of silent perfection of the eternally repetitive mechanical machine functioning independently of time and space, pulling the artist into a logic of the infinite. "The process evolved and I was led to take any sentence." The image of enclosure common with Roussel where a secret to a secret is held back, systematically imposing a formless anxiety in the reader through the labyrinthian extensions and doublings, disguises and duplications of his texts, which make all speech and vision undergo a moment of annihilation.

How I Wrote Certain of My Books is the last of Roussel's conceptual machines. The master machine, fully revealed, contains and repeats within its mechanism all those mental machines he had formerly described and put into motion. All of these machines map out a space which is circular in nature and thus form an abstract attempt at eliminating time. They reproduce the old myths of departure, of loss, and of return. They construct a crisscrossed mechanical map of the two great mythic spaces so often explored by Western imagination: space that is rigid and forbidden—containing the quest, the return, an the treasure (for example the geography of the Argonauts and the labyrinth)—and the space of polymorphosis, the visible transformation of instantly crossed frontiers and borders, of strange affiliations, of spells, and of symbolic replacements (the space of the Minotaur). Mechanical imagination opens up a universe without perspective. It combines a vertical point of view which allows everything to be embraced as if within a circle with a horizontal point of view which places the eye at ground level where it can see what is in the immediate foreground. Once inside this nonspatial place, this fictional world is analogous to reproduction itself; a plethora of possibilities imposing itself like a dark machine, creating pure repetitions, hollowing out the void with unceasing accumulated movements.

Roussel's mental machines for textual production caught the imagination of our century. The bachelor machine of Duchamp is derived from Roussel's machine, along with Franz Kafka's mechanism for torture through tattooing in Penal Colony. In 1912, the bachelor machine was already there, waiting for Deleuze and Guatari to hook in up to the body without organs, to plug it into the logic of the desiring machine to achieve the total interconnectivity of the infoworld through schizo-capitalism. The French Decadent school, which took shape after 1880, preached the abolition of social structures, spawning psychoanalysis and avant-garde art. Duchamp is linked to the French Decadent symbolism through Roussel's eccentric, baroque, and exuberant text machines. Breton was the first to link the preoccupations of Duchamp, Jarry, Brisset, and Roussel, creating a new intellectual tradition made from the experiments of the Symbolists. This intellectual tradition is part of the most significant avant-garde art in the 20th century. When Duchamp, Picabia, and Apollinaire attended the theatrical presentation of Impressions of Africa at the Theatre Antione in Paris, they enjoyed the play enormously with its mad carnival of frenzied action and delirious language, its word games, and mathematical subversive structures. This interwoven structure of systematized obstinacy is a generator that drives the artwork to an aesthetic high. Consciousness then intervenes and further embellishes the experience. "A poem is a machine made out of words," stated by William Carlos Williams, appropriately summarizes the concept. From Roussel's inflexible symbolic reasoning, Duchamp also exploited various systematic patterns which ultimately opened vast and strange domains where concepts can freely

play.

The mechanomorphic impulse in Duchamp's works from 1911-1912, and the machine works that follow, position Roussel as an inescapable point of reference for the avant-garde of our century. The machine as depicted by these artists becomes the symbol of total bliss through pure mentality and auto-sexual autonomy in contradiction to the horror which mechanized war has brought to the century. By hypnotizing our attention, the machine frees us from troubling obsessions and personal hang-ups through the alternative model of android life, intimating both our rush of desperation and our ecstatic release, refracted through a web of glazed impersonality. Duchamp utilized a humanized machine against the ordered machine, possibly to balance out the age's ineptness, whether of the mind or of the flesh: his mechanamorphic production and machine forms refigure the human body into an almost mechanized substance. In The Bride Stripped Bare by the Bachelors, Even, which positions a central bride machine between two bachelor apparatuses, Duchamp with the strictness of machinery, applies fantasy to seduction and masturbation. We as viewers can use his art as a vehicle for self-transcendence into a kind of dream work, a kind of nonsense sex. By mechanizing sex and dreams, this nonsense of the sex machine converts sexual energy into artistic energy. As Joseph Kosuth has noted, "All art after Duchamp is conceptual in nature because art only exists conceptually."

Robotics' predecessors include sources that go back as far as the 1700s. Pierre Jaquet-Droz created the first robotic mechanical figure in 1774 called the automatic scribe, using technology developed for the creation of mechanical time pieces. It can still be seen at the Musee d'Art et Histoire in Neuchatel, Switzerland. The robot-boy dips his pen into ink and pens a short love letter. In 1745, the first automatic weaving loom was invented. The loom control system was the forerunner of the early computers with punch cards. With the invention of the weaving loom, we have the first example of a conceptual system imposed into an ordinary machine, creating a robot. The first digital calculating machine was designed in 1823 by Charles Babbage for the British Post Office. A more advanced application of punch card digital technology was developed by Herman Hollerith for the U.S. Census Bureau. The demand for handling increasing quantities of information drove society to towards the invention of successively more rapid and subtle computing devices throughout the 20th century.

Electromagnetic calculating machines worked faster than their pre-World War II counterparts, but their speed and reliability were limited by moving parts like switch delays and electromagnets. The advent of transistors in 1948 and microchips which followed, enabled the creation of the computer-controlled robots we have today. In 1930, the first analog computer, the Mark I, was made at M.I.T. Reliant on punch cards and electric switches, the Mark I was still Electromechanical and not electronic. The first electronic computer was ENIAC, a digital device that came into use in 1946 out of the University of Pennsylvania. Made with vacuum tubes, it was the size of an entire room. Finally, with the development of electronic miniaturization we arrive at the era of personal computing and the industrial robot. Although computerization increases our ability to transmit and handle information, robots remain computerized machines which mimic the action we associate with human beings.

Computerized robots essentially break down any movement into simple arithmetic.

Through these mechanical operations, we can program a computer-driven robot to perform perfectly in our fantasy of the infinite. In their repetition of mechanical activities, it is easy to compare their mimicry to the physical movement involved in sexual acts and also the ecstatic repetitive chants of tribal transcendence. Thus the attraction of the idea of sex performed through mechanical aids.

Under the pressures of the computer-robotic technological revolution, we as artists are compelled to review our conceptual structures and desires and their corresponding dimensions in the imaginary, the symbolic, the virtual, the real. Particularly, the transformation of the image of the body's sexual expression and its externalization into technological media, translating sexual energy into waves of electronic energy and immaterial signals, one can find a predominant transformative drive behind the avant-garde of our era. We can clearly see this with the spread of the new technology throughout our current culture. For example, the desire for pornography enhanced the need for video rental stores worldwide and, similarly, on-line CompuServe sex lines drive the development of the interactive computer networks today. Computer sex talk makes up the largest portion of the computer network business. People enjoy the detached anonymous sexual interaction on-line, allowing them complete freedom of fantasy and expression within the safety of auto-sexual physical gratification. The exchange of X-rated pictures via the computer networks makes up the majority of visual imagery exchanged on CompuServe. Cybersex and virtual masturbation bring the detached machine of Duchamp right into the heart of our society today and into the foreseeable future as well.

Historically, theater and painting, followed by photography and the cinema, have all called on the body's tremendous qualities to which no description, neither that of the lover or the doctor or the police, can do proper justice. Cybernetics and computerized imaging have come to depict the human animal as a machine again, renewing the tradition of the 18th century clock makers and their beautiful android automatons. Cyberspace, this territory which stretches out from hypertext to the worldwide computer network, from virtual reality simulation to video games, is the domain of the digital bride, engaged in a sexual activity without place, reduplicating without duplication, reiterating without repeating. As with the conceptual machine of Roussel, Cybersex is a coldly concerted and particularly dizzying activity. It is a sexual activity lost in an infinite navigation from one sort of encounter to another in which the affirmation of the other keeps appearing and disappearing in the play of mechanical maneuvers, always averting full gratification. Therefore, any bachelor apparatus, in repeating itself ad infinitum, with its descriptions, explanations, talks, and commentaries, fails to function in transmitting the power of the machine to function as alter-ego.

Certainly there is, hidden in the computer, something so strong, so ominous, and so pregnant with the darkness of infinite space that it excites and frightens us. The innumerable ramifications of mechanical desire help us to utilize our unconscious mind. And that is the real answer to why computers are interesting in art. We admire their inhuman beauty. They return us to the experimental and to a state of sexual desire and restlessness. The neural processes they mimic are our own deepest desires and meticulous obsessions. The repetition of machines is the repetition of our sexual acts with their duplication of eggs, sperm, and blood.

Roussel told Pierre Janet, the famous Parisian psychiatrist who systematized dy-

namic psychiatry at the turn of the century (providing the basis of Freud's advances in the discovery of the unconscious), that he "bled over every phrase." Roussel's repetitions, exemplified in his descriptions of eggs on plates and the multiple allusions to the odor of urine after the eating of asparagus, is typical of the poetic-mechanical apparatus, moving us further toward the unconscious and the sexual. This intellectual history which maps out art's role in changing social allegory, contrasted with the killing in World War I and II, the Holocaust, and Hiroshima, and the discovery of psychoanalysis which is rooted in sexual symbolism, offers us an interesting context in which to view the possible role of the computer, robotics, and art. Sex-magic, technology, or both?

Kline Contra Kline

Daniel A. Siedell

Modern painting - what Kline learned from his contemporaries - became the legal language of a divorce decree. The possibility of continuing to paint is what Kline taught his contemporaries.

- Stephen C. Foster, 1994

It is an embarrassing reality that the scholarly community has ignored what the great humanist Jacques Barzun regarded as one of the truly radical critiques of post-war modernism, Harold Rosenberg's "The American Action Painters" (1952). In the epilogue to Classic, Romantic and Modern, Barzun claimed that the most lucid interpretation of this abolitionist philosophy is Mr. Harold Rosenberg, the art critic and champion of the so-called Action Painters. In their work Mr. Rosenberg sees the definitive break with tradition which earlier men fumbled, half-achieved, or retreated from.[1]

The hostility with which the scholarly community has dealt with Rosenberg's activities range from Michael Leja's belief that he "swathed the art in obscure, melodramatic, existentialist rhetoric" to David Anfam's more vicious declaration that "less gross [than Norman Rockwell's 1962 cover of Saturday Evening Post which lampooned Abstract Expressionism] but equally naive was the account popularized by the American poet-critic Harold Rosenberg...."[2] Stephen C. Foster has noticed that Action painting, as an idea, has been much abused, even corrupted in the interest of easy popularization. It is frequently used in ways that are basically unrelated to Rosenberg's original intentions, which had little to do with the spontaneity, speed in execution, improvisation, automatism, and gesturalism imputed to action painting in common parlance and popular criticism.[3]

Foster offers an alternative understanding of Rosenberg's term as "the idea of painting as an act taken without recourse to 'reasons,' especially aesthetic or critical reasons, for acting (painting) in a particular way."[4] In this context, Rosenberg's critical intention is to articulate a serious social problem which, by the late forties, irrevocably altered how artists had traditionally understood their art activities in relation to other cultural activities, namely, through a cluster of myths called "modernism."

I sight Harold Rosenberg's historical reputation within the context of a Kline book review because both have suffered terribly at the hands of a scholarly community blind

to the problems raised by the downtown painters of the early fifties. Two concurrent Kline exhibitions, one in Europe and the other in the United States, reveal diametrically opposed perspectives concerning this period and Kline's historical significance within it. Although both exhibitions have brought together an impressive body of paintings, their exhibition catalogues offer a striking contrast in historiographical approach and intention. It is not coincidental that the two authors of the catalogue's major essays, David Anfam and Stephen C. Foster, differ drastically not only on Kline's historical importance, but on the entire mid-century period as well, including Rosenberg's role within it.

I should state at the outset that this comparative review does not amount to a non-partisan approach; I served as Foster's curatorial and project assistant on the Kline retrospective for three years while completing a doctorate at The University of Iowa. The fact that Foster's European exhibition has received no critical attention in the United States and his thesis has received little critical scrutiny abroad and none in the States (owed in part to the unfortunate fact that the catalogue has yet to be widely circulated here), seems to be enough of a reason to inform the American art audience of the existence of a far more comprehensive and compelling argument for admiring Kline and his contemporaries. The additional fact that Anfam took the occasion of his essay to dismiss superficially (and quite half-heartedly) Foster's essay makes my attempt to offer a more detailed explication of Foster's thesis in relation to Anfam's quite necessary.[5]

Although both Kline shows have received moderate critical coverage, no attention has been focused on the epistemological coigns of vantage within which these exhibitions were intended to function. Essentially, Foster's thesis argues that Kline (and the rest of the downtown painters) stood decidedly outside the modernist tradition within which the art historical literature has, since the late fifties, been concerned to establish. For Foster, Kline "lays claim to our serious attention because of his successful transaction of a period without modernism's clear critical, theoretical, aesthetic or historical guidelines and without its inevitability, tradition, or aesthetic directionality."[6] Foster's essay, and the rest of the exhibition catalogue, attempts to sketch out a new historical definition of the period's significance. Its success or failure must be understood within this ambitious context.

Anfam's essay, however, leaves the "modern" question, à la Irving Sandler et al. firmly intact and proceeds to offer a hybrid "reading" of Kline's pictures by splicing together the views of Albert Boime and Harry Gaugh, whose exhibitions in 1977 and 1985 respectively, have done perhaps more to condemn Kline to oblivion than to offer any kind of historical rationale for taking him seriously. Anfam attempts to make Kline relevant by adding just a pinch of postmodernism into the Gaugh/Boime brew which consists of linking Kline's paintings to photography (a trendy postmodern medium) and "a taste for the vernacular instead of the sublime and harboring no desire to reach for the stars, Kline ironically seems more in tune with the present than those who sought a universal language of emotions."[7]

Foster, as opaque and excruciatingly theoretical as his essay might appear to be in certain places, seeks nothing less than a complete overhaul of the myths that the scholarly community has cherished for generations. "This essay," he begins, "makes the major (and admittedly arguable) assumption that from the late 1940s to the mid-1950s, America witnessed a failure of modernism, a crisis to which some responded with alarm and others with relief" (15). By this, Foster does not in any way imply an "aesthetic" crisis (Surrealism or Cubism; figurative or abstract, form or content, etc.), but a social one premised on how artifacts and behaviors come "to mean," or be made meaningful within social contexts and the necessary role institutions play in such processes.

Foster locates the key to unlock "meaning" in the informal sociological make-up of the downtown community. "What appears to some to be the exaggerated importance lent to the studio or the Cedar Tavern is, in fact, an accurate reflection of the impoverishment of the traditional means of making a painting relevant" (34). These "traditional means" were part of the modern tradition, which posited a ready-made relationship between the artist and an abstract audience constituted through art's communicative ability. The downtown painters, from de Kooning and Pollock to Kline experienced serious doubts about the relevance (or even possibility) of such relationships as well as the ability of their paintings "to mean" anything—in any context. The early review literature, quoted extensively in the exhibition catalogue, clearly bears this out. Leo Steinberg, in reviewing Kline's 1956 solo show at Sidney Janis, asked, "What these canvases are I don't exactly know—obviously not pictures in any inherited sense...."[8] Anfam, however, is strangely (although not surprisingly) disrespectful of the early review literature. Rather than deal with them as historical documents extremely useful in terms of revealing parameters of mid-century modernism, Anfam distrusts them and is clearly relieved when they are apparently "corrected" and proven wrong by the scholarly community. Rosenberg, for example, "is dated and applicable today only if understood as metaphor" (10). It is one of the strange ironies of this field that the art historian condemns his historical agents and documents for being "dated."

Foster, however, sees Rosenberg as the key to the entire period. For him, the fact that Rosenberg was criticized by such modernist critics as Clement Greenberg, Robert Goldwater, and Mary McCarthy for not focusing on the paintings themselves (recall McCarthy's declaration that "you can't hang an event on the wall"), doesn't invalidate Rosenberg's point of view, as it does for every other scholar in the field, but demonstrates that Rosenberg wasn't at all concerned about the paintings; the problem was not located in the meaning of the paintings, but whether meaning was even possible. This is where Kline and Rosenberg "meet," as it were. "Works no longer 'meant,' per se, a fact to which Kline was keenly sensitive. Meaning became dependent on the presence and development of a work in a live situation or setting. Short of this, a work meant nothing" (32). This is precisely what Rosenberg meant in emphasizing the "event" as opposed to the work itself. Foster does not let the full implication of such a perspective go unnoticed. "The question, I think, is not whether one can talk about the pictures.

The serious question for the artists was whether the paintings should be talked about" (24). Here, of course, is where things get really interesting. Foster argues, in effect, that his exhibition is a collection of residual events; objects used as means to transact certain social situations. But he still wants you to look at the paintings. And he wants you to do so by focusing on their internal development. "The works become the impermanent configurations of 'places' from which one [Kline] can continue the process" (36). "They are," Foster goes on to say, "above all, event structures and only then art situations" (36). How does one focus on their internal development without conceiving of them as more than residual events or "event structures?" How does one do so without falling into the box of modernist formalism? Does the very notion of a retrospective exhibition defeat such an anti-modernist perspective which argues that these paintings do not communicate in some way? How does the contemporary viewer approach these pictures, then? These questions, although Foster does not (cannot?) answer them, imply something extremely important nonetheless: that quite possibly, Kline's and the downtown painter's anti-modernism, which doubted the very existence of sender-receiver models, was so radical that it was diluted through over-aestheticization (Rosenberg's fate as well) by mid-century modernism as a means to make them conform to those institutional myths which were believed to be beyond critique.

Foster's argument further implies, then, that postmodernism, in all its manifestations in the institution of art is simply another modernist self-critique with such communicative models (the ones the downtown painters gradually rejected) still firmly intact. (The postmodern work of art, or the work of art "read" by a postmodernist still "communicates," although it does so now in many voices. This might also explain the highly unlikely revival of arch-formalists Clement Greenberg and E.H. Gombrich in the semiotic, structuralist, deconstructionist, and psycho-analytic art historical literature.) Foster, then, treats Kline's paintings less like works of art and more like historical documents; artifacts from a distant cultural period. And in the process, makes Kline more difficult to understand.

The review literature of the Menil Kline show, on the other hand, reveals Anfam's (and the guest curator David Whitney's) desire to make Kline completely palatable to an artworld already conditioned to see Kline in specific ways. Such critical reviews as Richard Shiff's in *Artforum* (December 1994) and Robert Hughes's in *Time* (January 23, 1995) could just as well have been written thirty years ago. Shiff and Hughes sing the same old refrains, such as that Kline's color works don't stack up to his black and white paintings; that his art is a bit "naive" and grandiose; that his pictures, at their best, express his unique vision of New York City; and that he was fleeing the world for the hermetic confines of his studio. Shiff closes his review by stating (apparently in deference to Kline) that "His art is vaguely Existentialist—out of fashion, nevertheless meaningful, and still difficult." Kline, then, is a curiosity, to be admired for his sincerity but smiled at for his modernist naiveté. The fact that such critics could review the show in this way is not to impugn the critics themselves, but the exhibition and Anfam's essay

which make such critical utterances possible, and maybe even necessary. The problem with the European exhibition for the scholarly community is that after having read (closely) Foster's essay, one cannot make these statements without looking silly. Foster makes it extremely difficult for a critic to rely on such ready-made assumptions.

Anfam's essay, in contrast, offers the mainline status quo under the guise of a post-formalist re-evaluation. For Foster, Kline's scholars, most notably Harry Gaugh, have done serious damage to Kline's historical reputation. In fact, Foster's thesis is a complete and utter repudiation of Gaugh's endeavor. Anfam, on the other hand, actually relies upon his work. In response to the assumption, posited by Foster, that Kline's early work bears little or no real relationship to his later, post-1950 work, Anfam simply dismisses it by claiming that "scholars such as Harry F. Gaugh have since reestablished how the change was, in truth, a gradual evolution" (10). And this is essentially the main goal of Anfam's essay. Ironically, he argues, as Foster does, that "Kline upsets the narrative that Abstract Expressionism invites" (12). However, he devotes the body of his essay to serving up Kline on the same kind of Abstract Expressionist platter; namely, that the early figurative work of de Kooning, Pollock, Kline, Rothko, Still, Newman, etc. develops naturally—or evolves—into their mature abstractions, which, as the argument goes, aren't really "abstract" because they have "content" or "subject matter." For although such a developmental model might seem convincing for Pollock or Newman (although I actually see it as just as problematic), in the context of Kline's work, it is positively absurd. As Hilton Kramer rightly argued in a 1968 review of the Kline Whitney retrospective, Kline is not the kind of artist who is interesting primarily, or even incidentally, because of the way he developed. In a very real sense, he did not "develop"—certainly not in any significant degree after, say, the painting of "Wotan" and "Cardinal," both dating from 1950.[9]

To force Kline into the Procrustean bed of such a model requires that the artist's most interesting parts be lopped off in the process. The serious problems which Kline offers to the normative ways that the scholarly community has gone about making sense of his and the other's art activities are apparently not even noticed by Anfam, who is content to continue offering Gaugh-like interpretations which are striking simply for their indifference to the historical evidence, which Foster's exhibition catalogue, in contrast, does much to resuscitate. For example, although the Menil show focuses exclusively on Kline's "mature" paintings (1950-61), Anfam is forced into explaining the mature work in the light of the earlier work not included in the show. Anfam, then, undermines the very visual significance of the exhibition space and makes the rather explicit declaration that Kline's "mature" paintings cannot stand on their own; they need to be propped up by his early work. Now, in the context of Pollock or de Kooning, for example, this hasn't been such a terrible thing because their early work is quite interesting. The situation for Kline would not be much different, however, if his early work wasn't so bad. His motley mélange of Pennsylvania landscapes, puppets, and clowns painted throughout the forties are indistinguishable from a thousand other such

paintings rendered by a thousand other Greenwich Village and Washington Square artists to whom Anfam and the rest of the scholarly community would never have given a second look. So the fact that Anfam uses these paintings as the interpretive base for Kline's later paintings undermine not only their significance but the seriousness of the scholarly community in general. One of the most admirable characteristics of the European show is Foster's dogged unwillingness to compromise his thesis by including such early work. Foster follows through, with varying degrees of success, on his promise to establish a language with which to discuss Kline and his activities without falling into the same art historical trap which had snared previous Kline commentators.

For example, Anfam initiates a discussion of Kline's mature paintings by comparing his massive mural *New Year Wall: Night* with, of all things, Jacob van Ruysdael's *Jewish Cemetery*, 1655-60. "To be sure," Anfam says, "the Ruysdael should not be taken as a source" for the Kline, but he goes on to say that they are similar, however, in their spirit and structure. In both, an underlying armature is threatened by upheaval: the tectonic remains of a human order are caught up in turbulent chiaroscuro as a universe appears simultaneously electrified and close to extinction (14).

This kind of art historical discourse is almost entirely irrelevant. You could substitute a hundred other paintings for the Ruysdael which could satisfy the same function for Anfam: imply that Kline's post-1950 pictures are traditionally conceived. But Anfam feels confident to make such comparisons because of the prevalence of Kline's dark and supposedly mysterious Pennsylvania landscapes in the literature, and that apparently, these early works bear importantly on the later work.

Kline's sudden change from his landscapes and quasi-abstractions to his full-blown black and white paintings is explained by Anfam, quite inadequately, in terms of the artist's "psychology," and he credits Boime for rightly determining the origins of this split (14). Well, does this mean that Kline's post-1950 work is due to a psychosis or a pathological illness? Or, maybe, are we to assume that this stylistic shift had something to do with his father's suicide when he was a child? Anfam fails to offer anything more in the way of explanation. He is content simply to attribute this shift in style to personality. Anfam is thus completely insensitive to Kline's function within a social situation that might bear strongly on the art. In fact, he, like the rest of the scholarly community, refused to acknowledge the relevance of such communal sites as the Cedar Tavern, the Waldorf Cafeteria, the Eighth Street Club, and the artists' own studio spaces and, in an another context, has dismissed them as "superficial signs of cohesion"[10] because they failed to produce what could be considered an aesthetic program within which the paintings could be interpreted. For Foster, on the other hand, the fact that, by the late forties and early fifties, modernism's myths had been, to a large degree, abandoned by the downtown community, meant that the traditional modernist relationship between the work of art and such aesthetic programs or manifestoes is rendered severely problematic. The social matrix, therefore, becomes the situational context for understanding the work, although the historical question of whether they can be "explained" is a co-

nundrum Foster leaves provocatively open.

Anfam is able "to interpret" Kline's black and white paintings through his early work in part based on the importance which he attaches to Kline's titles. Anfam, again following Gaugh's lead, claims that "the titles act like a secondary theme in a fugue, a counterpoint testing out nuances" (18). The titles, Anfam assumes, must in some way help us unlock the work's meaning, or offer another level of meaning. Gaugh's book already demonstrated the awkwardness of this endeavor, as he took such black and white paintings as *Lehigh*, *Diamond*, *Mahoning*, *Pittston*, and *Hazelton*, named from Kline's childhood in Pennsylvania, and attempted to locate some kind of local landscape theme in them, or determined that they expressed some kind of emotion from his Pennsylvania background. Gaugh's interpretive exercises become almost unbearably absurd when he discusses Thorpe (1954). "Like a massive, balanced rock, stable because of weight, it blocks us as surely as Jim Thorpe or Mauch Chunk Mountain. In a general way, the configuration suggests a **T**, a further reason for relating the name Thorpe to the painting."[11] This attempt to bring to bear on Kline's work such normative art historical devices is a falsification of the historical origins of Kline's titles and their functions. The interview conducted by Foster and published in the exhibition catalogue bears this out. Dan Rice, an artist himself and an intimate studio friend of Kline's, recalls that a "couple of times when he had a show ready to go, and it was going to the gallery, and he'd want me to come over and help him name the paintings...The painting would make him think of someone or some place or some feeling. And not the other way around."[12]

Again, the name attached to the painting had more to do with the drunken evening itself: the conversation, thoughts, and attitudes which emerged during that night in the studio rather than serving to express any kind of interpretive key to the painting. Kline himself, in an interview with Katherine Kuh, stated that

> when my paintings look somewhat alike I give them similar titles. Now take the paintings I've called *Bethlehem*. You'll find quite a number of Pennsylvania titles among my pictures because I came from that part of the country. Sometimes it's just that I like the names—the words themselves. For instance, the painting I called *Dahlia* doesn't have anything to do with a dahlia. The name "Bethlehem" has noting to do with steel.[13]

It is strange that Anfam, who apparently read the European Kline catalogue in the process of writing his own essay, did not notice that much of what these men said contradicted his own (and the rest of the scholarly community's) views. For example, Anfam quotes Dan Rice from the interview. Rice, in response to a question concerning Kline's modern artistic sources, recalls that "When Franz talked about painters, he talked about Velásquez or Hokusai, not about Cézanne." Anfam concludes from this statement that "Kline embraced tradition" (12). This is absurd. At mid-century, an artist (and audience) functioning within the modern tradition—painting abstractions, or the

like (which Kline was doing)—understood "tradition" to mean Picasso, Matisse, Mondrian, Surrealism, and Cézanne, not a Spanish Baroque painter or an almost unknown Japanese illustrator. I would argue that his refusal to talk about Cézanne or other modernists considered by the mid-century art institution to be seminal for advanced painting is an obstacle to asserting Kline's modernism. Again, Anfam has detached Kline from the social world and institutional structure in which he was a part. Subsequently, he does not believe Kline posed any problem for modernism. Naturally, he turns to the figurative work to make this rather weak argument; an argument that either he can't sustain or feels he doesn't really need to. Moreover, Anfam not only turns to Kline's early work, but probably his most silliest and irrelevant of all such work: the clowns, puppets, and Nijinskys.[14] The prominent slant of the heads of the Nijinsky - puppet-clown figures has not gone unnoticed. Because human existence pivots upon our being upright creatures, this diagonal cant plainly signals an identity out of kilter (17).

According to Anfam, Kline's use of the "puppet-clown" theme willy-nilly puts him firmly within the modern tradition. In fact, he attempts to invalidate, or "qualify" Foster's argument that Kline was an anti-modernist because these clowns "are archetypal leitmotifs of the early modernist imagination" (29, 52n.). Like much of the scholarly literature of the New York School, simply an artist's statement that he "likes" Mondrian or Picasso or, in Kline's case, that he once painted clowns, is enough to qualify him as a full-fledged modernist. Does the fact that Kline loved to talk about the Dodgers and the Yankees make him a major league ballplayer or an expert baseball strategist? Even if Kline was consciously working within this "archetypal" modernist tradition, it still cannot account for his post-1950 work. On this, of course, Anfam is conspicuously silent. Foster, however, is not so quick to pin the modernist label on these artists. About Kline, he argues that

> He was certainly aware of Mondrian and spoke highly of him. He unquestionably knew a number of individuals from the American Abstract Artists group. On the other hand, it is hard to believe that he had any kind of comprehensible sense of their European sources (De Stijl, etc.), a realistic notion of their ideologies, or the objectives of their social agendas.[15]

For Foster, being a modernist or avant-gardist requires one to be self-consciously aware of the social agendas which are part and parcel of the historical origins of modernism and the avant-garde. Such an understanding (or belief) can be found nowhere in Kline's own career. In Foster's interview, he asks Dan Rice,

> The early modernists were truly aware of art as a cultural phenomenon, and they looked at it as a language alongside sociology, philosophy, religion, or whatever. It was a language in culture. And they used art to critique culture, condemn culture, and glorify culture. What relationships did art have to culture in the minds of people like Kline or de Kooning?

Rice responds, quite shockingly, given the perspective of the scholarly literature, that

> I really don't believe they thought it was related. I think one could work on it and bring theories to bear, and maybe even pose a couple of points. But they would be so indirect as to be almost meaningless (43).

Kline's and the rest of the downtown painters' inability to assume such cultural relationships might, in the end, undermine the scholarly community's assumption that they were "modern" or avant-garde in any significant (i.e. "European") way. Whether one agrees with Rice's conclusion or not, the fact that Anfam read this interview but failed to find it important to account for such historical evidence is interesting, to say the least.

The final straw of Anfam's essay is his attempt to co-opt Kline for the history of photography by articulating what he sees as "Kline's photographic sensibility" (20). This is quite simply the result of Anfam looking at a few black and white prints of Kline's paintings and holding them up next to photographic prints of Robert Frank, Aaron Siskind, and Walker Evans, whose black and white images of New York City offer an "abstracted" view akin, Anfam argues, to Kline's. This "photographic sensibility" also makes itself manifest in the fact that Kline's paintings, he claims, were conceived of and executed with one specific compositional orientation in mind (apparently like photography). "Rothko could get away almost unnoticed with turning a canvas while, or after, he painted it. Not Kline" (26). This is just not true. First, time and time again, in the course of mounting the European Kline show, Foster and myself were confronted with instances where the painting had been hung, for years, sideways or upside down. In fact, Kline often would change his mind about a picture's orientation while he and Charles Egan, or later, Sidney Janis were hanging his shows. Furthermore, Dan Rice recalled that Kline's working process often entailed turning paintings upside down and on their side. Moreover, it became clear to Foster and I that many of the paintings in major collections whose pictorial configurations have become quite well-known, were probably painted by Kline sideways or upside down—or, at least they started out that way. Second, the notion that Kline's paintings could only work "one way," implies that they were images "about" something. This, as Foster argues, could not be further from the truth. "The paintings are not interpretations of pre-existing images, nor were they images realized in or through process, but the coordinates developed in the course of experiencing the environment."[16]

Even Richard Shiff's review of the Menil show at the Whitney contradicts Anfam's view concerning Kline's pictorial orientation. Concerning one of the paintings in the show, Shiff writes,

> Kline played with his *Ninth Street* like a child. He kept turning it, layering it, scraping it, scratching it, scoring it, rubbing it. Perhaps its vaguely circular or spoked motif allowed it to be oriented in any direction. [17]

Anfam, apparently, did not even look closely at the works which curator David Whitney selected. Unlike Anfam, Foster's essay reflects the coherent, but often problematic, agenda of both scholar and curator; selecting works which sustain and strengthen his argument, not undermine it. It is ironic that it is Foster's essay, which has been criticized for being too theoretical and unconcerned with "discussing the works themselves," that grew out of an intense involvement with the pictures; while it is Anfam's piece, which will inevitably be praised for its lack of theoretical jargon and ability to interpret the paintings in a concise manner, that bears no concrete relationship to the paintings in the show.

Kline's "photographic sensibility" and his association with the New York School of photography rather than the New York School of painting relies on another superficial myth propagated by the scholarly community, that the color works are inferior to the black and white paintings. Anfam's ignorance of the color works (and Kline's own painting process) makes it easy for him to juxtapose a "black and white" Kline with a Steichen or a Robert Frank photo and to perform a rather normative formalist analysis. Shiff implied such a perspective concerning the color works when he re-stated the common view that "Kline of the early '50s satisfies viewer desire, Kline of the late '50s doesn't quite do it."[18] Kline, apparently unbeknownst to Anfam, often painted his black and white pictures by "painting out" the color which he had applied during earlier sessions. Such "black and white" paintings as *Lehigh V Span*; *Swanee*; and *Sabro*, all reproduced in full-color in the European Kline exhibition catalogue, show how Kline had painted over such colors as green, yellow, red, blue, etc. in the process of finishing them. This fact, then, enables the so-called "color abstractions," which traditionally have been ghettoized by the scholarly community and almost universally declared to be not as successful as the black and white paintings, to function in a very different way in Kline's body of work.[19] Such magnificent color works as *Torches Mauve, Yellow, Orange*, and *Purple, Orange and Black Wall*, and *Red Painting*, which garnered serious praise by Kline's peers, take on a new significance as perhaps the artist's least self-conscious works, in which contrast and structure are established without the ready-made compositional tricks of black and white. Kline himself rather obliquely explained, "I painted originally in color and finally arrived at black and white by painting the color out. Then I started with only color, white and no black—then color and black and white."[20] For Foster, however, "a failure to understand Kline's color is a failure in understanding, not a failure in color" (27).

And perhaps, in the end, this is the main difference between the two exhibitions and their accompanying theses. Foster's is an attempt, perhaps too ambitious, to provide a new epistemological basis for understanding Kline and the rest of the period; in fact, Foster raises questions and problems which he himself has trouble answering. This ambition is made manifest not only in his essay, but in the publication of a quite illuminating interview with Kline's peers who have been largely ignored by the scholarly community; a complete excerpted bibliography structured around Kline's critical

reception and exhibition history; the first comprehensive publication of catalogue raisonné information for all the exhibited paintings; and finally, in Foster's stubborn refusal to treat the color works in the show as somehow "different." For Anfam, the present models of the period (and Kline's relationship to them) work just fine. Furthermore, Kline's present reputation and how he is appreciated (or not appreciated) is not explained or critiqued, it is embraced. Anfam's only claim to an original contribution to the literature is to place his paintings in the rather spurious context of the New York School of photography. Anfam's essay, then, in sharp contrast to Foster's, is content not to ask the real serious historical questions (is he aware that there are serious questions?). And he is quite happy to toss to himself the same old battered softballs made lumpy and lopsided by the likes of Albert Boime, Harry Gaugh, and others. Hilton Kramer was probably right in 1968, when, on the occasion of Kline's Whitney retrospective, he felt compelled to critique the New York artworld. "This is the way it is going to be. This is the way our art is going to be turned into academic history and solid investments and polite cultural entertainment."[21] Perhaps this is also what prompted Robert Natkin recently to write, It is almost a miracle that the Fundacio Antoni Tapies/ Whitechapel have had the courage to put on this exhibition whereas no museum in the United States has the foresight, the insight or the testosterone to mount [such] a Kline exhibition."[22]

Franz Kline: Art and the Structure of Identity, originated out of the Fundacio Antoni Tapies in Barcelona, Spain, (March 18-June 5, 1994); travelled to the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, July 8-Sept. 11, 1994; to the Reina Sofia in Madrid, Sept. 27-Nov. 22; and closed at the Saarland Museum in Saarbrücken, Germany, Dec. 11, 1994-Feb. 5, 1995.

Franz Kline: Black & White, 1950-1961, originated out of the Menil Collection in Houston, Texas, (Sept. 8-Nov. 27, 1994); travelled to the Whitney Museum of American Art, Dec. 16, 1994-March 5, 1996; and closed at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, March 25-June 4, 1994).

Notes

1 (Garden City, New York, 1961), 141-42.

2 Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism* (Yale University Press, 1993), 4. Anfam, *Abstract Expressionism* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1990), 9.

3 "Nach Amerika zurück, mit Europa im Rücken," *Vernissage* 11 (November 1994): 57-58. I quote from Foster's original English text.

4 Ibid.

5 Like Anfam, Stephen Polcari mentions the existence of "a more comprehensive exhibition" but fails to offer any kind of analysis of Foster's thesis, except for insinuating that it ultimately fails because

Foster takes seriously Rosenberg's criticism rather than dismissing it, as do Polcari and the rest of the scholarly community. See "Gottlieb and Kline," Art Journal 55/1 (Spring 1996): 91

6 "Franz Kline: Art and the Structure of Identity," in *Franz Kline: Art and the Structure of Identity* (Fundacio Antoni Tapies; Madrid: Electa, 1994), 15. All subsequent references to this essay will be done so parenthetically within the body of the text.

7 "Kline's Colliding Syntax: 'Black, White, and Things," in *Franz Kline: Black and White: 1950-1961* (The Menil Collection; Houston, TX: The Houston Fine Art Press, 1994), 13. All subsequent references to this essay will be done so parenthetically within the body of the text.

8 Quoted in "Bibliography," *Franz Kline: Art and the Structure of Identity*, p. 176.

9 "Franz Kline: Turning Art Into Academic History," Quoted in ibid., p. 179.

10 *Abstract Expressionism* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 105.

11 *Franz Kline* (1985; New York: Abbeville Press, 1994), 63-64.

12 "Franz Kline and the Downtown Community: The Artists' Voice," in *Franz Kline: Art and the Structure of Identity*, p. 53.

13 *The Artists' Voice* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 152. Excerpted in part in "Bibliography," p. 186.

14 The fact that Gaugh himself devoted an entire chapter in his 1985 monograph to these subjects should be evidence enough of the current state of the Kline literature.

15 "Nach Amerika zurück, mit Europe im Rücken," 58.

16 Ibid., 60.

17 "Franz Kline: The Menil Collection," *Artforum* 33 (Dec. 1994): 79.

18 Ibid., 78.

19 The only exhibition, before Foster's, to treat the color abstractions in any kind of systematic way was Harry Gaugh's *Franz Kline: Color Abstractions* exhibition in 1979 at the Phillips Collection in Washington DC. The review literature, however, devoted most of its space discussing how they didn't "stack up" with Kline's stereotyped black and white canvases.

20 Interview with Kuh, 152.

21 Kramer, "Franz Kline: Turning Art Into Academic Art History," *New York Times* (Oct. 6, 1968): sec. 2, 35.

22 Robert Natkin, "Kline & Co." *Contemporary Art* 2/4 (Winter 1994-5): 38.

Retracing Modernist Origins:

Conceptual Parallels in the Aesthetic Thought of Charles Baudelaire and G. W. F. Hegel

Anna Brzyski-Long

Whether heralded by Marshall Berman as "the prophet and pioneer" of modernity or singled out by Ihab Hassan as the harbinger of the "tradition of the new," Charles Baudelaire has come to occupy a place of privileged in the cultural pantheon of the modernist progenitors.[1] No other figure has become so synonymous, both as an artist and a critic, an author and a theorist, with the concept of modernity and aesthetic modernism. And no other has been claimed as such with the same degree of consistency by authors on the opposing ends of the methodological and ideological spectrums and across a range of disciplines. For Michel Foucault, Baudelaire was a thinker who most fully succeeded in capturing the peculiarity of the modern condition—who did for the modern period what Kant had done for the Enlightenment.[2] For Jürgen Habermas he was the first true modernist, the one who stood at the beginning of the development that eventually culminated in surrealism and dada.[3] For Matei Calinescu, Baudelaire's concept of *modernité* constituted the "qualitative turning point in the history of modernity as an idea."[4] By opposing the aesthetic and the social modernity, it brought into being the modernist tradition of the avant-garde rebellion. Within art history as well, art historians and art critics, from Clement Greenberg to T. J. Clark, have pointed to Baudelaire as an exemplary theorist and practitioner of modernism. In the last few years, this wholesale acceptance of Baudelaire as the canonical spokesman for aesthetic modernism in general and the early French modernist painting in particular was turned into a veritable dogma by two new textbooks on the nineteenth century art.[5] Neither *Modernity and Modernism: French Painting in the Nineteenth* Century (1993) co-authored by Francis Frascina, Nigel Blake, Briony Fer, Tamara Garb and Charles Harrison, nor *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History* (1994) edited by Stephen Eisenman, challenged it. Despite efforts to provide an alternative reading of modernism, both seamlessly incorporated Baudelaire into their accounts without questioning fundamental assumptions behind the poet's art historical significance. Finally and most recently, David Carrier, writing from a highly self-conscious post-modern perspective, mystified the poet into a

prophetic figure of the bygone modern era and a counterpart to his own post-modern critical practice in *High Art: Charles Baudelaire and the Origins of Modernism* (1996).

However, this wholesale adoption by art historians of the reading of Baudelaire as the paradigmatic modernist—a reading based on literary studies of his poetry and prose and not on art historical studies of his art criticism—has created a misleading image of Baudelaire as an art critic. By focusing on his definition of modernity rather than on his aesthetics, art historical texts dealing with the origins of modernism have sustained a perception of the radical novelty of his views on art. As a result, they have managed to minimize the importance of those elements of his art criticism that point to his heavy reliance on prior aesthetic models, in particular on W. G. F. Hegel. And by ignoring Hegel's influence—an influence that is most apparent in Baudelaire's dialectical definition of beauty, in his conception of the modern artist and modern work of art, and his views on the history of art—they have *de facto* validated and perpetuated the France-oriented model of the history of modern art. Therefore, without questioning Baudelaire's importance as a modernist poet or as one of the most influential nineteenth century art critics, it is necessary to redress this problem by tracing the conceptual parallels between the aesthetic thought of Baudelaire and Hegel—parallels that raise serious questions as to the validity of Baudelaire's treatment as an *uniquely original* commentator on modern art and that challenge France-centered definition of modernism to which this treatment, this singling out of Baudelaire as the paradigmatic modernist, inevitably leads.

Perhaps no other author sensed the conflict between Baudelaire's view of modernity, as it appeared in his poetry, and his theory of modern art, better than Walter Benjamin. In his unfinished book on the poet, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism,* Benjamin conceded that Baudelaire's theory of modern art constituted the weakest point in his conception of modernism.[6] Unlike his poems in *Fleurs du Mal*, in particular *Le Cygne*, in which Baudelaire explored the vital connection between modernism and antiquity—a connection that, for Benjamin, stood out among all the relationships into which Baudelaire's concept of *modernité* entered and that made Baudelaire's perception of modernity truly unique—his writings on art were, according to Benjamin, uninspired. They lacked the depth of analysis that was a hallmark of his poems.[7] Benjamin argued that, if Baudelaire were consistent, that is, if his views on art were a logical extension of his views on modernity, he would have written about classical art. "But he never attempted anything of the kind. His [art] theory did not cope with the resignation which in his work appears as a loss of nature and naïveté."[8] Benjamin blamed Baudelaire's inability to engage modernity in his art criticism on the same level as in his poetry on two factors: on Baudelaire's dependence on Edgar Allan Poe as a model and on the "polemical orientation" of his writings against historicist painting.[9]

Although Benjamin was certainly correct in distinguishing between Baudelaire's poetry and his criticism as well as noting the poet's reliance on existing models, he was mistaken in identifying Poe as the source of Baudelaire's views on art.[10] Poe certainly played a significant role in shaping Baudelaire's aesthetics, but it was Hegel who provided young Baudelaire both with a philosophical framework and a concrete example of aesthetic theory. That Baudelaire was searching for such an example is evident from a 1839 letter to his step-father, Jacques Aupick, written from College Louis-le-Grand

that Baudelaire attended from 1833 to 1839. Asking his father for funds to hire a tutor, Baudelaire explained the reasons for this request: "I have no need of assistance to follow the class as such," he wrote,

> what I'd want from a coach would be an extra serving of philosophy and subjects that aren't done in class, namely: *religion,* the study of which is not included in the university's program, and aesthetics, or the philosophy of the arts, which our professor is certainly not going to have the time to tell us about.[11]

Considering the choices that Baudelaire would have had in terms of philosophy or aesthetics, it is highly likely, that after ancient philosophers, he would have turned to German ones such as Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, whose principal works were translated into French in the mid 1830s and 1840s.[12] By 1845, the year Baudelaire began reviewing the annual *Salon,* Hegel's *Lectures on* Art were available in French. Although Hegel delivered his series of lectures on fine arts in Berlin between 1823 and 1829, the notes on which the final published version of *The Lectures* was based were not collected and edited as a single text until after his death. They were published by H.G. Hotho in 1835 as a part of Hegel's collected works and appeared as a separate volume for the first time in 1842. Soon thereafter, they were translated into French by Ch. Bénard who published them in Paris in 1840 under the title *Cours d'esthétique par W. Fr. Hegel.*[13] Hegel's aesthetic theory was popularized in the ensuing period by the French press and by Auguste Ott whose book *Hegel et la philosophie allemande ou Exposé critique de systèmes allemands depuis Kant et spécialement de celui de Hegel* appeared in 1844.[14] Given his interest in aesthetics, it is therefore highly likely that Baudelaire would have had an opportunity to read *The Lectures* either in the original or in translation, or at least that he would have come in contact with Hegel's aesthetic theory through press and hearsay.[15]

The closeness of intellectual ties between France and Germany during the first half of the nineteenth century as well as Baudelaire's own interest in German art, music and literature further reinforce that possibility.[16] Although France and Germany have had historically a great deal of cultural contact due to geographic proximity as well as economic and political ties, the intellectual exchange between the two countries intensified in the first decades of the 19th century following the publication in 1810 of Madame de Staël's *De l' Allemagne.* Despite or perhaps because it was banned by Napoleonic censors, the book became immensely popular in progressive French intellectual circles. Intended as a thinly veiled critique of the Napoleonic regime, it set up an opposition between idealized Germany, the country "where everything is independence and individuality,"[17] and repressive Napoleonic France. Carrying the comparison into the cultural realm, Madame de Staël contrasted progressive, intellectually alive, romantic Germany with static, culturally stagnant, classical France. Her enthusiastic endorsement of the German intellectual achievements played a key role in popularizing views and attitudes associated with German Romanticism.[18]

As the century progressed, the initial curiosity and cautious interest bloomed into a wholesale fascination with German culture. This enthusiasm for "all things German" continued essentially unabated until the advent of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870.

According to Theodore Zeldin, the admiration of French intellectuals for the achievements of their German colleagues became especially enthusiastic in the 1830s, when even French philosophical texts copied the style of German academic writing. The interest in German philosophy and literature resulted, in the founding of *Revue germanique* in 1857, the express aim of which was to "build a bridge across the Rhine" by encouraging cultural exchange between the two countries. Describing the milieu of the period, Zeldin wrote,

> Michelet talked passionately of "my Germany, the scientific power that alone has made me study questions deeply, and given me Kant, Beethoven and a new faith." Victor Hugo wrote of it "No nation is greater." Renan declared, "I studied Germany and felt as though I was entering a Temple; everything I have found there is pure, elevated, moral beautiful and touching."[19]

Baudelaire himself showed a keen interest in German thought and cultural achievements. As early as 1846, in his review of the annual *Salon*, he quoted Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann on synesthesia and referred to Heinrich Heine's discussion of Eugene Delacroix's painting method.[20] He also displayed knowledge of contemporary German art by making a reference in the same essay to the "neo-Christian school of [Friedrich] Overbeck," the leader of the Nazarenes, and, in a 1859 letter to Nadar, to a contemporary German painter, Alfred Rethel.[21] Again, in his review of the 1855 Universal Exhibition, Baudelaire referred more than once to Winckelmann, and in 1861 he wrote a celebratory essay on Richard Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in which he revealed his familiarity with the composers critical writings as well as his prose poems.[22]

Given his personal interest in Germany as well as the general intellectual atmosphere in France, it is not surprising that Baudelaire turned to Hegel for a conceptual model for his own art criticism. He came particularly close to Hegel in his dialectic conception of beauty and art. Like his overarching concept of the Spirit, which reconciled within itself the particular and the universal, the divine and the human, the material and the metaphysical, art was for Hegel inherently dialectical. Since the work of art originated in the mind of the artist and yet existed in a sensual, objective form, it necessarily resolved within itself the subject-object dialectic; that is it created an inseparable unity of the mental idea that formed its conceptual basis, and the sensuous material that constituted its material existence. Similarly, because the concept of beauty depended on achievement of a delicate balance between metaphysical universality and real particularity, art as a realm of the beautiful synthesized the universal and the particular within a beautiful work of art. With regard to a viewer, art performed an analogous function. Because it conveyed ideas through a physical medium, it necessarily had to animate the "dry abstractions," i.e., the conceptual content, by introducing facts and details of the phenomenal world. Therefore, it appealed both to what Hegel called the "sensuous apprehension" or the "emotional sense" of the viewer, as well as to his or her intellect.

Baudelaire conceptualized beauty, and by corollary art, in strikingly similar terms. Although he alluded to the dual nature of art as early as 1846, he did not fully formulate his dialectical definition of it until 1863. In "The Painter of Modern Life" dating from that year, Baudelaire stated that each work of art was composed of two elements. These two elements, the eternal and the circumstantial, were equivalent to Hegel's concepts of

the universal and the particular. This dual nature of art was, for Baudelaire as for Hegel, an inevitable consequence of man's dual nature—his existence at once as an eternal soul and a mortal body.[23] Like Hegel, Baudelaire believed that in a beautiful, and therefore successful, work of art, the eternal (Hegel's universal) and the contingent (Hegel's particular) existed in a state of perfect equilibrium and interdependency. These two terms, a thesis and antithesis, were reconciled in such a work and created through their complementary relationship a new unified whole that was superior in aesthetic value to either one of its constituent elements.[24] Baudelaire defined the eternal—in rather vague terms—as that which was invariable, and, as such, ahistorical in a work of art. The eternal was synonymous for him with the "ideal" or "general beauty." The circumstantial, on the other hand, was infinitely variable and therefore historically contingent. Baudelaire was much more specific in defining this term. He likened it to an "amusing, teasing, appetite-wetting coating of the divine cake," without which, the eternal would have been unpalatable.[25] It was a "particular beauty" that resided in appearance of the world around us and which derived its character from contemporaneity through all temporally conditioned phenomena, such as fashion, morality, and conduct.[26] As such, it was synonymous with modernity which Baudelaire defined in parallel terms as "the transient, the fleeting, the contingent."[27]

Baudelaire's equation between the contingent/particular and the contemporary is also present in Hegel's *Lectures*. For Hegel, the Ideal, that is the synthetic unity of the material and the conceptual, was intrinsically tied to the external world, and, as such, to the present. Both through its physical presence and through the fact of its maker's necessary engagement with the world, a work which manifested the Ideal, "immediately encroache[d] on ordinary external reality, on the daily life of the actual world, and therefore on the common prose of life."[28] Because it had such an immediate attachment to a given historic moment, a work of art produced in the modern era necessarily had to reflect both in its form and content the modern ethos. "No Homer, Sophocles, etc., no Dante, Ariosto, or Shakespeare can appear in our day," wrote Hegel, "only the present is fresh, the rest is paler and paler."[29] In other words, although great works of art produced in the past had to be admired for their aesthetic perfection, they belonged to a different stage of cultural development and were therefore useless as models for contemporary artistic production. To emulate them in the present, was to go against the course of history. Only those works derived from and in tune with the modern world view, what Hegel called the *Zeitgeist* of the present, were to be counted among the modern masterpieces.

Hegel's insistence on a link between the present and a modern work of art was a consequence of his conception of the ideal artist. Because the artist's individual psyche was connected to the collective psychic life of the Spirit, he produced in accordance with the dictates of the particular stage of the Spirit's progress to self-consciousness. His ability to convey the nuances of the life of the Spirit depended on two factors: his self-knowledge and his knowledge of the world around him. By coming to self-awareness, the artist was able to infuse his work with a sense of the self, thus giving it a unique existence as both a reflection of his psyche and, through it, of the transcendent Spirit. He wrote,

> the originality of art does indeed consume that accidental idiosyncrasy of the artist, but it absorbs it only so that the artist can wholly follow the pull and impetus of his inspired genius, filled as it is with his subject alone, and can display his own self, instead of fantasy and empty caprice, in the work he has completed in accordance with its truth.[30]

This revelatory nature of an art work was essential for Hegel. Within his conceptual scheme, art functioned as a double mediator, on one level allowing the Spirit to arrive at self-consciousness and, on another, an individual (whether a viewing subject or the artist creating the work) at awareness of his or her own subjectivity. "The universal need for art" was therefore a result of "man's rational need to lift the inner and the outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognized his own self."[31] Like a child in Lacan's Mirror Stage, Hegel's individual becomes aware of his or her existence as a coherent subject through a process of "mirroring," or representing/recognizing, the self and the external world in a work of art—through conceptualizing the self as distinct from the world and yet imbedded in it.

Hegel argued that, true to his own corporeal existence (the simple fact of his living in the world), the artist could not produce works that were not in tune with his individual experience of the world, and with his personal *Weltanschaung* formed through that experience. Because a human being, "this entire center of the Ideal, *lives,*" wrote Hegel, "he is essentially now and here, he is the present, he is individual infinity, and to [his] life there belongs the opposition of an environment of external nature in general, and therefore a connection with it and an activity in it."[32] The artist was "essentially now and here," and the work that he produced was likewise wedded to its specific historic circumstance. It too participated in the unfolding of the Spirit that, according to Hegel, infused all aspects of cultural, religious, intellectual, political, and social life (and therefore could not be separated from its historic matrix). In other words, the artwork had to be faithful to its *Zeitgeist*.

Baudelaire also believed in the embeddedness of the work—or, for that matter, of any aspect of social life—in the "spirit of the age." Discussing fashion plates at the beginning of "The Painter of Modern Life," he wrote that they reflected "the moral attitude and the aesthetic value of the time."[33] Though seemingly insignificant and accidental, these plates participated in, and were a product of, the period's unique sociocultural dynamic. As such, like Hegel's ideal work of art, they were inseparable from the unique historic context that shaped them. Extending his observation from fashion plates to the whole of art, Baudelaire echoed Hegel's prescription against slavish emulation of past masters when he wrote, "No doubt it is an excellent discipline to study the old masters, in order to learn how to paint, but it can be no more than superfluous exercise if your aim is to understand the beauty of the present day."[34] His reason for warning artists against using old masters as models for their own works was much more practical, however, than that given by Hegel. According to Baudelaire, the old masters could not teach modern painters how to depict modern life because they themselves were too much a part of their own "present." They painted a different world, different types of fabrics, different textures and grains, different fashions. Their canvases were useless as models when it came to depiction of silk *à l'antique* or satin *à la reine*.[35]

Therefore, they had to be admired on their own terms as instances of human genius and not treated as irrefutable standards of artistic beauty.

Hegel, like Baudelaire, believed that the nature of modern existence had a profound effect on the appearance of modern, i.e., Romantic, art. In the modern world, defined as post-Renaissance Europe, an individual had no identity outside the social order to which he belonged. If, in ancient Greece, a man was an "independent, total, and at the same time individual living embodiment" of the Greek society, in modern Europe, he was only a "restricted member" of the established social order. In other words, the modern European did not transcend the particularity of his social role. Therefore, according to Hegel, reflecting the nature of modern existence,

> [art's] interest in such a figure, like the content of its aims and activity, is unendingly particular. For, at the end of the day, the interest is always confined to seeing what happens to this individual, whether he happily achieves his aims, what hindrances and obstacles he encounters, what accidental or necessary complications obstruct or occasion the outcome, etc.[36]

This description of modern man and modern art's relationship to him, brings to mind Baudelaire's description of the ideal modern artist, Monsieur G., who, like a mirror, reflected the world around him. He was like a "kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness, which with every one of its movements present[ed] a pattern of life, in all its multiplicity, and the flowing grace of all the elements that [went] to compose life."[37] Each day, Monsieur G. went out into the world and "watche[d] the flow of life move by, majestic and dazzling. He admire[d] the eternal beauty and the astonishing harmony of life in the capital cities."[38] Like Hegel's artist, who "[found] precisely though his aliveness a thousand occasions for his activity and inspiration, occasions which others pass[ed] by without being touched by them,"[39] he too was a consummate observer gathering in his memory these banal details of modern life that went unnoticed by everyone else. He paid attention to the life on the boulevards— carriages, soldiers parading, fashionably dressed women, and children. He noted the pursuits of fashionable society and the drudgery of the poor. He tirelessly recorded the infinite changes of fashion and of manner. Baudelaire wrote that at the end of the day,

> [he was] the last to leave any place where the departing glories of daylight linger[ed], where poetry echoe[d], life pulsate[d], music sound[ed]; any place where a human passion offer[ed] a subject to his eye, where natural man and conventional man reveal[ed] themselves in strange beauty, where the rays of the dying sun play[ed] on the fleeting pleasure of the 'deprived animal!'[40]

Like Hegel's artist who at the end of the day reflected on what happened to the modern man, he too after a long day of absorbing the sights and sounds of the world around him, retired to his study and began to transform his experiences into art.

However, as much as Hegel and Baudelaire praised the contingent and therefore the modern, they both ultimately believed that the excessive presence of either the contingent/particular or the eternal/universal element endangered a work's integrity, and inevitably lessened its aesthetic value. According to Baudelaire, too much of the con-

tingent resulted in a work that lacked unity and succumbed to the anecdotal. He stressed that the ultimate aim of a great artist was not to record indiscriminately the incidents of the everyday reality, but "to *extract* from fashion the poetry that resides in its historical envelope, to distill the eternal from the transitory."[41] In other words, the artist had to transcend the literal transcription of reality in order to achieve aesthetic perfection. This was the main reason for Baudelaire's ardent opposition to photography. Concerning it he wrote,

> In these deplorable times, a new industry has developed, which has helped in no small way to confirm fools in their faith, and to ruin what vestige of the divine might still have remained in the French mind...In the domain of painting and statuary, the present-day credo of the worldly wise, especially in France ... is this: 'I believe in nature, and I believe only in nature.' ... 'I believe that art is, and can only be, the exact reproduction of nature.' ...'Thus if an industrial process could give us a result identical to nature, that would be absolute art.' As avenging God has heard the prayers of this multitude; Daguerre was his messiah...From that moment onward, our loathsome society rushed, like Narcissus, to contemplate its trivial image on the metallic plate.[42]

According to Baudelaire, the problem with naturalism and by corollary with photography was not that it captured everyday reality, but that it did it in an unmediated, one-sided manner. In short, it dispensed with the pursuit of the ideal in favor of a total submission to the real. That, for Baudelaire, was not an acceptable option because it could no longer produce beauty—it could no longer maintain a balance between the particular and the abstract.

On similar grounds, Baudelaire objected to the tendency in the opposite direction. "You have no right to despise this transitory fleeting element, the metamorphoses of which are so frequent, nor to dispense with it," he wrote concerning the depiction of modernity. "If you do, you inevitably fall into the emptiness of an abstract and indefinable beauty."[43] In his review of the 1855 Universal Exhibition, fulminating against the academic system and its absolute aesthetic standards, he asked,

> how could this necessary, incomprehensible, infinitely varied strangeness [of art], dependent upon environment, climate, habit, upon race, religion and the temperament of the artist, ever be controlled, amended, corrected by utopian rules, excogitated in some little temple or other (sic) of learning somewhere on the planet, without mortal danger to art itself?[44]

The answer he gave was that art could not be contained by rules or absolute norms. The mistake of academic art was to presume an objective standard of beauty in the name of which the contingent was invariably sacrificed for the sake of the eternal. Just as the accidental by itself was unable to sustain a work of art, the ideal alone was equally incapable of doing so.

Baudelaire's warning against the dangers of one-sided excess in art is equally present in Hegel's *Lectures*. Because a work of art embodied for Hegel a balance of the particular and the universal, the concrete and the abstract, it necessarily had to transcend pure imitation of the world. The reality that it portrayed was "withdrawn from the profusion

of details and accidents."[45] It was subjected to a process of idealization through the artist's creative activity. However, a work of art also did not limit itself to a pursuit of pure abstractions. Only false, i.e., current notions of the ideal—what he called the "modern nebulous idea of the Ideal"—cut off art's necessary connection with the world. "The genuine Ideal," according to Hegel, did "not stop at the indeterminate and the purely inward; on the contrary; it [had to] go out in its totality into a specific contemplation of the external world in all its aspects." Because a work of art had a dual nature, its rootedness in the material and the mundane had to issue for Hegel "from the particular conditions of the most varied sort, amongst them especially the time and place of its origin, then the specific individuality of the artist, and above all the technical development of his art."[46] The terms of Hegel's statement reveal almost an exact parallel with the elements enumerated by Baudelaire in his rhetorical question on the nature of art. These factors—environment, climate, habit, race, and religion—could be seen as elaboration on Hegel's category of "time and place." They are more specifically defined subcategories of Hegel's more abstract term.[47] Likewise Baudelaire's "temperament of the artist" could be seen as simply a paraphrase of Hegel's "specific individuality of the artist." The difference in descriptive terms between "temperament" and "individuality" makes no difference in the overall meaning of the passage, which stresses the importance of the individual artist, his unique disposition—that is, his character, temperament, and emotional/intellectual being.

Although one could argue that similarity in the choice of words does not necessarily imply a similarity in beliefs, the affinity between Hegel's and Baudelaire's views on the nature of the artistic practice and its relationship to the ideal/eternal, goes beyond such superficial, yet telling parallelism. Like Baudelaire, Hegel too, saw artistic subservience to abstractions as a danger. "The artist is not relegated to what he has manufactured by his own imagination," he wrote,

> but has to abandon the superficial 'ideal' (so called) and enter reality itself. To embark on art and poetry with an ideal is always very suspect, for the artist has to create out of the abundance of life and not out of the abundance of abstract generalities, since, while the medium of philosophy's production is thought, art's is actual external configurations ...Therefore the artist must live and become at home in this medium.[48]

Whereas the Ideal, or the perfect physical embodiment of the concept in a work of art, represented for Hegel the pinnacle of synthetic union, in which the tangible and the intangible, the material and the intellectual melded in complete complementary unity, the "ideal (so called)" was its opposite. This false modern ideal was limited and fragmentary. It could not produce a beautiful work of art because of its one-sided subservience to the intellectual realm, the domain of philosophy. For Hegel, a work that encroached on a sphere so foreign to its nature, a nature wedded intrinsically to the material existence of objects, lost its validity as art.

On another, complementary level, Hegel's statement recalls Baudelaire's views in its emphasis on the artist's relationship to reality. Hegel's stress on the artist's need to interact with the world, phrased as the necessity of his "entrance" into reality—his submersion in it—reminds one of Baudelaire's description of the artist as a convales-

cent.[49] The image sketched by Baudelaire, based on Poe's short story *The Man of the Crowd*, is that of not only psychological and visual but also physical absorption. The convalescent man literally enters the crowd as if entering an ocean; he becomes submerged in its anonymity, simultaneously absorbing and being absorbed by it.

> The crowd is his domain, just as the air is the bird's, and water that of the fish. His passions and his profession is to merge with the crowd. For the perfect idler, for the passionate observer it becomes an immense source of enjoyment to establish his dwelling in the throng, in the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite.[50]

For Baudelaire, the artist maintains the same relationship to the world. He is, in other words, both part of it and yet apart from it. Like Hegel's artist, he both enters reality and maintains a distance from it through his intellectual activity that transforms and orders its randomness.

This ordering, transforming process of artistic creation is linked for both Hegel and Baudelaire to memory. For Hegel, to create is to grasp and configure all that one sees and hears, to "impress on the spirit the greatest multiplicity of pictures of what is *there*."[51] This work of gathering and storing presupposes, according to him, "a retentive memory of the variegated world of these manifold pictures."[52] The word "retentive" is key to understanding Hegel's view of memory's function. He sees it as a reservoir of information and sensations—the greater the intellect, the more expansive the memory. That is why according to him an artist, before he can produce a superior work of art, must experience a great deal. "He must have seen much, heard much, and retained much ... For what interest a man he engraves on his memory, and most profound spirit spreads the field of his interest over countless topics."[53] In other words, he must have filled his mind with the diverse memories that he could later use as raw material in the creation of his work. To that effect

> the artist must not only have looked around at much in the world and made himself acquainted with its outer and inner manifestations, but he must have drawn much, and much that is great into his soul; his heart must have been deeply gripped and moved thereby; he must have done and lived through much before he can develop the true depths of life into concrete manifestations.[54]

Therefore, Hegel argued, artistic talent could reveal itself in youth, but it did not reach its full potential until much later in life, when it was supplied with a lifetime of experiences on which to feed.

Baudelaire's ideal modern artist, Monsieur G., likewise arrived at his mastery after a lifetime of experiencing. He began painting as an "old man" of forty-two.[55] Regarding his career, Baudelaire wrote,

> He began by looking at life, and *only later* did he contrive to learn how to express life. The result has been a striking originality, in which whatever traces of untutored simplicity may still remain take on the appearance of an additional proof of obedience to the impression, of flattery of truth.[56]

Also, like Hegel's artist, Monsieur G. did not limit himself to any one thing. He was for Baudelaire a true Renaissance man, if not in actual ability then at least in spirit. He was "a man of the whole world, a man who [understood] the world and the mysterious and legitimate reasons behind its customs."[57] An "artist", on the other hand, was "a specialist, a man tied to his palette like a serf to the soil ... [he] move[d] little, or even not at all, in intellectual and political circles." A little later Baudelaire added that "with two or three exceptions ... the majority of artists [were] ... very skilled brutes, mere manual laborers, village pub-talkers with the minds of country bumpkins."[58] In short, they were mere artisans. Baudelaire's ideal artist, on the other hand, transcended the mechanical requirements of his art by becoming at once an observer, philosopher, poet, novelist and moralist. That was the reason why Monsieur G. did not want to be called an artist. Because "he [took] interest in everything the world over," and was "the spiritual citizen of the universe," he could not be satisfied with limiting himself to being simply a skilled technician.[59]

Baudelaire's notion of the function of memory in the creative process is as well strikingly similar to that of Hegel. Writing about the working method of Monsieur G., Baudelaire stated that under his hand

> things are born again on the paper, natural and more than natural, beautiful and better than beautiful, strange and endowed with enthusiastic life, like the soul of their creator. The weird pageant has been distilled from nature. All the materials, stored higgledy-piggledy by memory, are classified, ordered, harmonized, and undergo that deliberate idealization, which is the product of a childlike perceptiveness.[60]

Here again we are confronted with the notion of memory as a reservoir of sorts, storing "higgledy-piggledy" the rough experiential materials. However, Baudelaire expands beyond Hegel's notion in ascribing to the memory a transforming power. Whereas in Hegel's scheme, the memory is distinguished from the rational, conscious mind of the artist (that actively organizes information stored by it), and is instead identified as a passive, receptive medium, in Baudelaire's conception, memory becomes fluidly identified with the mind. Although it stores information, it also transforms it. In Baudelaire's words memory "extract[s] from nature"[61] its essence. Therefore it actively participates in the process of creation by freeing the artist from the "tyranny of detail." Monsieur G.'s "resurrecting memory" preserves general tones and shapes. It saves the work from the anarchy of excessive detail that, like a "riotous mob in love with absolute equality," destroys its harmony and unity.[62]

And yet, within Baudelaire's scheme, just as in Hegel's, the artist needs more than memory to create. For Hegel, a great work of art results not from irrational impulse, but from the arduous mental activity of the artist. "Without reflection," he wrote, "a man does not bring home to his mind what is in him, and so we notice in every great art that its material in all its aspects has been long and deeply weighed and thought over."[63] The artists in other words, had to structure the mass of his experiences through careful deliberation and rational choice. Hegel did not believe that a genuine artist could accomplish that complex task unconsciously.[64] Similarly, Baudelaire wrote that before becoming a work of art, the materials stored haphazardly by memory had to be "classified, ordered,

harmonized." They had to "undergo that deliberate idealization" that elevated them above the purely transitory.[65] Although Baudelaire compared the artist-observer to a child, implying there was an unconscious, unpremeditated aspect to his activity, he describes the artist-creator in quite different terms. Whereas he saw the child as a being guided by instinctual sensibility, the artist, a man of genius, used his reason to create. "Genius is no more than childhood recaptured at will," he wrote, "childhood equipped with man's physical means to express itself, and with the analytic mind that enables it to bring order into the sum of experiences."[66] In addition to absorbing the information gathered from external reality, the artist had to distill from it its essential quality. In other words, he had to impose rational control over the chaos of haphazard details.

Baudelaire also came close to Hegel in his views on the history of art. According to Hegel, the historic evolution of art followed a deterministic process of the Spirit's quest for self-consciousness. However, though art evolved through time because of its association with the evolving consciousness of the Spirit, it did not progress in a qualitative way. Rather, it changed in form and content through time, in keeping with the *Zeitgeist* of the age that produced it. Within this framework, Hegel associated different stages of artistic development with different geographic areas and different historic periods. The ancient cultures of the East, i.e., China, India, and especially Egypt, produced Symbolic art. Within Hegel's dialectical system, Symbolic art anticipated, but did not yet attain the Ideal, or the total synthesis of the conceptual and the formal elements. In this type of art, the disjunction between the form and the Idea existed because the conceptual element lacked the particularity demanded by the Ideal. Hegel saw Symbolic art as being more a search for the plastic configurations capable of conveying the Idea, than as its genuine representation. Because it was too universal and devoid of particularity, this type of art necessarily falsified reality. Consequently, it represented the least advanced stage of art's development.[67] Unlike Symbolic art, Classical art, which Hegel identified with the art of the ancient Greece, fully succeeded in realizing the Ideal. Here, the work of art existed as a perfect unity of form and content. In other words, the Idea in Classical art was fully embodied in a form which was uniquely appropriate for its expression. Hence, in realizing the Ideal, the art itself, as a form, reached its fullest potential. In the next stage of development, i.e., in Romantic art, the complete union of the Idea and form became lost once again. Although Romantic art attempted to actuate the Ideal, it failed because it transcended mere representation. Under the influence of Christianity, it placed too great an importance on conceptual and spiritual content. Consequently, in Romantic art (identified by Hegel with Christian art and in particular Italian art of the High Renaissance), as in Symbolic art, there was an inevitable incongruity between the ideal content and the external form. However, if, in Symbolic art this was caused by the predominance of form over content, in Romantic art it was due to inadequacy of form.

Although Hegel did not posit any more specific stages of art's evolution after Romantic art, he did discuss development after the sixteenth century, i.e., the zenith of Romantic art. For Hegel, the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, in particular the development of the type of naturalism epitomized by Dutch genre painting, represented the gradual dissolution of Romantic art. This type of painting completely split the tenuous union of form and the spiritual content which still existed in Romantic art. Here, the two became totally separated, thereby freeing art from its previous subordination to the

spiritual concerns. Because of this development, and because of the growing critical acumen of the artists (which destroyed the illusion of the inevitability of any particular form), art in the present, i.e., the nineteenth century, "had become a free instrument which [was] qualified to exercise itself relatively to every content, no matter what kind it may be, agreeably to the principles or criteria of the artist's own peculiar craftsmanship."[68] This liberation of art from its former constraints, and the creative independence of the artist was, according to Hegel, the hallmark of the present.

If, in the past, art received its forms and subject matter from the demands of the unfolding Idea, in the present, art could embark on an exploration of shared humanity, the present realm of now fully self-conscious Spirit. Consequently, according to Hegel, in the present,

> Art is quiet as truly the return of man upon himself, a descent into its own soul-depths ... and unfolds within our common humanity its new holy of holies, in other words the depths and highs of human soul simply, the universal shared of all men in joy and suffering, in endeavor, action and destiny.[69]

Because art was now freed within the realm of the free Spirit, the artist became freer as well. "From this point onward it is from himself that the artist receives his content," wrote Hegel. Through the artist, art became a domain of "the Spirit of man assigning to himself its own boundaries, contemplating, experiencing and giving utterances to the infinitude of his emotions and situations."[70] Consequently, because anything that issued forth from the human soul was awarded importance, the realm of possible subject matter and formal languages acquired theoretically unlimited extension.

Baudelaire's views on the history of cultural development reflect similar beliefs. In a review of the 1855 Universal Exhibition, he described the course of the world's cultural history in terms strongly reminiscent of those used by Hegel. Like Hegel, Baudelaire asserted that different geographic regions held cultural ascendancy at different historic times. Echoing the philosopher's views on the development of culture, Baudelaire wrote that "time was when the dawn was in the East, then light moved down towards the South, and now it springs from the West."[71] Also, like Hegel, Baudelaire described cultural progress in metaphysical terms, likening it to a movement of a "vital spark," the source of artistic vitality. Implying that this process was inevitable, he proposed that after a period of growth and maturity, a culture experienced a decline, after which "the vital spark move[d] elsewhere to other lands and races."[72] Finally, like Hegel, who compared development of each art form to a process of "a growth, blossoming, and decay,"[73] Baudelaire too used organic metaphors to describe the process of cultural evolution. He likened the cultural history of a nation, which he characterized as a "vast collective being," to an individual's life cycle. He maintained that nations, like babies, "wail, gurgle, fill out and grow" in the early stages of their development; "like youths and mature men they produce works full of boldness and wisdom" at the peak of their cultural ascendancy; and "like the aged they fall asleep on their heaped up riches" in the period of their decline.[74]

Also, like Hegel, Baudelaire believed, that although art evolved through time, it did not progress qualitatively over time. Writing about fashion in "The Painter of Mod-

ern Life," he described the history of art in terms of smooth transitions and continuity between various styles. By comparing artistic development to biological evolution, he implied both an element of inevitability and necessary historic dependence between the various stages.[75] Even earlier, writing about Delacroix in his review of the 1846 Salon, he stated that without the artist "the great chain of history [would break], [it would fall] to the ground."[76] However, unless one makes a distinction between "evolution" and "progress," these remarks that point to Baudelaire's belief in evolutionary nature of art, seem to be contradicted by his statement in the review of the 1855 Universal Exposition, in which he ardently denied the possibility of progress in art. He wrote in that review that the idea of endless progress was "humanity's most ingenious and cruel form of torture... a constantly renewed form of suicide."[77] However, the notion of progress, to which he was so opposed, was not equivalent to the notion of evolution. He saw progress, that is, qualitative improvement over time, as a concept foreign to art. It was borrowed, according to him, from the technological sphere and misapplied to culture. Unlike in technology, where each successive invention derives from knowledge accumulated in previous discoveries,

> in the realm of poetry and art, the great discoverers rarely have precursors. Every flowering is spontaneous, individual....The artist owes nothing to anyone but himself. To future ages he holds out no promises but his own works. He is a guarantor for no one but himself. He dies without offspring.[78]

In other words, as in Hegel's scheme, the artist is dedicated to free pursuit of his own creativity. He, like those before him, is a link in the great chain of art history, and not a cause of future artistic developments. Therefore his works, like those of old masters, must be judged and appreciated on their own terms, and not used as a standard or a guide for creation of new art.

Considering how close Baudelaire came to Hegel's aesthetic theory in his views on the nature of beauty, of modern artistic practice and of art history, it is difficult to imagine that he was unaware of the philosopher's writings on art. On the other hand, since neither Hegel nor Baudelaire formed their theory in a cultural vacuum, it is equally difficult, in the absence of documentary evidence, to argue for Baudelaire's direct use of Hegel. Nevertheless, the existence of such close parallelism in the thought of the two authors, so distinct in terms of their projects and ultimate interests, and yet so close in their key beliefs, suggests an intriguing possibility that certainly deserves attention, and that raises questions about the fundamental assumptions of the history of modern art. What implications does Baudelaire's reliance on Hegel have for the construction of the history of modernism? For one, it points to the as yet barely acknowledged importance of German Idealist philosophy in general and Hegel in particular, for the definition of French modernist theory from Baudelaire to Albert Aurier and beyond. Secondly, it complicates art historical accounts of the origins of modernism that still very much rely on the concept of a heroic, uniquely original individual, and that, at least as far as the first half of the nineteenth century is concerned, are still dominated by France. Finally, by drawing a distinction between Baudelaire the poet and Baudelaire the art critic, it puts into question the reliance of art history on models derived from literary and cul-

tural studies - models that are not always most appropriate for the investigation of every issue involving visual arts.

Notes

I would like to thank Joel Snyder and Barbara Jaffee of the University of Chicago for their encouragement, critical comments and editorial assistance.

1 Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin , 1988), 133; Ihab Hassan, *The Postmodern Turn* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987), 90.

2 Michael Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," in *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow, ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 39-42.

3 Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity - An Incomplete Project," in *Postmodernism: A Reader*, Thomas Docherty, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 99.

4 Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 49.

5 David Carrier, *High Art: Charles Baudelaire and the Origins of Modernism* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania Sate University Press, 1996).

6 Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (New York: Verso, 1992), 82.

7 Ibid., 81-2.

8 Ibid., 82.

9 Ibid., 82.

10 It is significant that the first mention of Poe appears in Baudelaire's correspondence in late 1853 (Letter to Auguste Poulet-Malassis from December 16, 1853), eight years after his first *Salon*, which already displayed some of the basic precepts of his aesthetic theory. Rosemary Lloyd, *Selected Letters of Charles Baudelaire: The Conquest of Solitude* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 59.

11 Charles Baudelaire, "Letter to Jacques Aupick, 26 February [1839]," in *Selected Letters of Charles Baudelaire: The Conquest of Solitude,* Rosemary Lloyd, ed. and trans.(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 18.

12 Nino Accaputo, *L'Estetica di Baudelaire e le Sue Fronti Germaniche* (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1961), 111-2.

13 *The Lectures* did not appear in English until 1879, when only parts of them were translated by W.M. Bryant. The complete English translation was published only in 1916-20 by F.P.B. Osmaston. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Art, Vol. I,* T.M. Knox, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), vi-vii.

14 Accaputo, 112-21.

15 According to Accaputo, Baudelaire not only was familiar with Hegel's aesthetics through Bénard's translation and Ott's study, but in fact wrote in such a way as to explicitly demonstrate in his writing his knowledge of Hegel's aesthetics. Accaputo, 198.

16 For detailed description of Franco-German ties see Theodore Zeldin, *A History of French Passions. Volume Two: Intellect, Taste, and Anxiety* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 113-26. For a discussion of the reception of German Idealist philosophy in France consult Accaputo, 111-22.

17 Zeldin, 114.

18 The personal contacts between intellectuals of the two countries attest to the degree of interest generated in France in German culture in general and new idealist philosophy in particular. For instance, importantly for us, Victor Cusin maintained a correspondence with Hegel. Although the philosopher responded less than enthusiastically to Cusin's interpretations of his work, their relationship was such that in 1826 letter Cusin could ask, "Hegel, tell me the truth. I shall pass on to my country as much as it can understand." Zeldin, 114.

19 Zeldin, 116.

20 Baudelaire, 58. Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (1776-1822) was a German musician and writer.

Baudelaire quoted a paragraph on the painter Delacroix written by Heine for his 1831 Salon. Baudelaire, 66.

21 Baudelaire, 91; Lloyd, 129.

22 Three of Wagner's critical writings were published in French between 1849 and 1851. His prose poems were translated in the mid-1850's. Baudelaire, 457. It is also worth mentioning that Baudelaire wrote a latter to Wagner in 1860. Lloyd, 145-6.

23 Baudelaire, 393.

24 Like Hegel, Baudelaire did not limit his application of the dialectic method to the aesthetic realm. Instead, he extended his logic to include other aspects of life. Not only was art a dialectic form, but so was woman. She was a "harmonious whole" because of the relationship between her and her attire. The two were according to Baudelaire inseparable. Baudelaire, 424.

25 Ibid., 392.

26 Ibid., 392.

27 Ibid., 403.

28 Hegel, 245.

29 Ibid., 608.

30 Ibid., 248.

31 Ibid., 31.

32 Ibid., 246.

33 Baudelaire, 391.

34 Ibid., 404.

35 Ibid., 404.

36 Hegel, 194.

37 Baudelaire, 400.

38 Ibid., 400.

39 Hegel, 288

40 Baudelaire, 401.

41 My italics. Baudelaire, 402.

42 Ibid., 295.

43 Ibid., 403.

44 Ibid., 119.

45 Hegel, 156.

46 Ibid., 34-5.

47 In the introduction to the *Lectures*, Hegel described a work's dependence on its context in terms perhaps even closer to Baudelaire's, by stating "every work of art belongs to its own time its own environment, and depends on particular historical and other ideas and purposes." Hegel, 14.

48 Hegel, 281.

49 Baudelaire, 397.

50 Ibid., 399.

51 Hegel, 281.

52 Ibid.

53 My italics. Ibid., 281-2.

54 Ibid., 183.

55 My italics. Baudelaire, 396.

56 Ibid., 406.

57 Ibid., 396-7.

58 Ibid., 397.

59 Ibid., 397.

60 Ibid., 402.

61 Ibid., 96.

62 Ibid., 407.

63 Hegel, 182.

64 Ibid., 283.

65 Baudelaire, 402.

66 Baudelaire, 398. He contradicts himself on this point later in the essay, when he writes that "in the end, the ideal execution may become as unconscious, as flowing as process of digesting is for the brain of a healthy man after dinner." Baudelaire, 407.

67 It is important to note that in *The Phenomenology* Hegel likewise identified the East with the earliest shapes of consciousness, i.e. sense-certainty and perception. This is particularly apparent in the Religion chapter, in which Hegel discussed the earliest stages of the development of religion through examples of the cult of light, which he associated with Persia; religion of plants and animals, which he identified with India; and the cult of the "artificer," which he ascribed to Egypt. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, A.V. Miller, trans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 410-53.

68 Hegel, 605.

69 Ibid., 607.

70 Ibid., 607.

71 Baudelaire, 121.

72 Ibid., 121.

73 Hegel, 614.

74 Baudelaire, 121.

75 Ibid., 392.

76 Ibid., 75.

77 Ibid., 122.

78 Ibid.

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