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On Mimesis and Painting

By Michael Peglau

Mimesis is preserved in art and a necessary
precondition of it. Mimetic behavior is a
receptacle for all that has been lopped off
from and violently repressed in man by
centuries of civilization.

Theodor Adorno[1]

I

Mimesis and the Other

In the first section of this essay I will propose a definition of mimesis
as a temporally and spatially complex interrelation between the painter,
the image and the other,[2] that to which the image refers. In particular I
will speak to a balance and an interchange between painter, image, and
other which I will call a dialogue among them. In the second section I
will use this idea of interchange to question a basic supposition of much
contemporary art theory, the optimistic analogy of the painted or drawn
image to the linguistic sign.

Broadly stated, mimesis in painting means to make an image of the other.
This "of" must be carefully distinguished from a standing "for the other."
The mimetic image does not stand for the other or re-place it; rather, it
is always interconnected with and dependent on the other.

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Mimesis rises from a recognition of the difference of the other, and it attempts to address and find an image for that difference even as it attempts to narrow the gulf between the painter and the other, between the life of the painter and the life of the other. The mimetic painting, in being founded on the difference of the other, must face the problem that the other is outside its logic and is, at least in part, outside of culture. Thus, mimesis invariably has within it a fundamental irrationality. This is partly given in the sensuousness of the medium and in the manifold sensuousness of the other, but it is also given in the reach of the maker toward the other. Mimesis attempts to initiate a dialogue with the other, but the etiquette of this dialogue cannot be determined from one side or foreknown. The motive of the painter toward the other, the interconnection of the image with the other, and the other in its difference are far from simply analyzed and can never be completely described or known. The dialogue which embraces both through the image can never be closed or final. As indicated by the term difference, the other stands apart.

Yet the apartness of the other is not total or final. In so far as it is recognized as other, and apart, it stands in relation, however provisionally, to the subject (to the painter). Even though that relation is limited by the fact that the painter cannot encompass the other in a painting, or integrate it into a system, the relation indicates a shared distance between the other and the painter, and a ground of recognition. The painter tries to reach the other through a mimetic painting, but the work of making the painting is inevitably shaped by the other's distance. The mimetic painting attempts to bridge the distance between the painter and other, but it also necessarily is caught in expressing that distance. The painter reaches through the painting toward the other, toward the fullness and strangeness of the other even as that otherness is always apart. The work of painting is work supported by the maker's life, given over to the dialogue of painting.

The mimetic image requires a profound twofold transformation: the material of the image must become as though the other and the locale of the other. To make mimetic painting, then, is to transform matter into an image which through its life summons and suggests the other it addresses: the first question to all mimetic painting is does the painting live? The life of a mimetic painting depends on the vitality engraved in it by the painter and by the resonance that the transformation of matter carries of the other. The life of the painting further demands that it must itself be a thing apart from what it addresses. The mimetic painting therefore is not a replica or a copy. Its proximity to the other can only be achieved through its separateness and through its own life. The mimetic painting must be as though a living thing.

Mimesis must be distinguished from illusion, with which it stands in fundamental tension.[3] Certainly, illusion is an aspect of all painting: it is that meaningful and ordered aspect of an image which is both derived from a tradition and which connects the image on several levels to a greater social world. In the language of ordinary art history, illusion embraces both iconography, at least iconography as an *iconologia* of images, and the extra-

personal aspects of style. It could also be described as that necessary and given structural and imagistic thickness in any image which makes the image analogous to an archeological site, or a building in which many social actions are configured. Mimesis, on the other hand, in the sense of the term I am arguing for, addresses the other at the limits of illusion—the other, of course, is outside our constructions of it. The structuring of illusion may parallel the working through of mimesis, but their objectives are sharply different. Illusion, which depends on comprehensible form, is controlled by convention. The construction of an illusion—and this is just as true of abstract painting as of figurative—is ordered by a set of relationships within a tradition of craft. (Indeed, for anyone who cares to think about it, the set of conventions governing a tradition of abstract painting are in general more obvious than the usually more complex structures at work in any of the various traditions within European optical naturalism;[4] traditions, by the way, from which the structures of illusion in most abstract painting in fact derive.) Illusion within any tradition is an impediment to mimesis. Mimesis must attempt to incarnate the other within the image through a complex series of invocative and searching moments of address toward the other. The traces of these moments inscribed within the material of the painting or drawing must seem to glow with the life of the other; they cannot feel rehearsed. The structures of illusion, the architecture of illusion, are in no sense congruent to such transformation, nor are they necessarily pliant to the complex of emotionally and psychologically charged relations between the painter and the other which drive mimesis. Far from it, it is in part the depth of the tension between mimesis and illusion which, for example, gives to the late work of Rembrandt or Titian such uncanny power.

The tension between mimesis and illusion can never be resolved, though much twentieth-century painting attempts to resolve the dilemma by running from mimesis; this is as true of David Salle as of Morris Louis. The opposition of mimesis to illusion arises directly from the fact that mimesis' ultimate aim is a far more intimate addressing of the other than illusion, in its coherence, can allow. The tension is sharpened by mimesis' stealing much of its matter from illusion even as it deepens the structure of drawing, color, and possible form. Great imitative painting is always forcing the limits of illusion. This fact, however, does not serve the modern idea of innovation for its own sake. As the work of Caravaggio, or Rembrandt, or Cézanne suggests, mimesis may sometimes dictate retrenchment. Likewise, certain neo-classical episodes suggest that the gulf between their staid costuming and mimesis is shaped by the strangeness of the other.

Mimesis, however, is never simply the opposite of illusion, no matter how deeply in conflict they may be. In painting, as in any other art form, mimesis must inhabit illusion. While mimesis is not a series of foreknown relationships with another, or any kind of simple reflection or replica of the other, it moves through illusion toward the other. The stuff, the material which mimesis transforms is both disordered and open and yet already implicitly the architecture of illusion. Illusion is the form through which

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mimesis reaches toward the other, even as mimesis strives to protect the rawness and pliancy of the material it takes over from illusion. To imitate is to enact tiers of reference to the other out of the architecture of illusion, yet none of these tiers more than fragmentarily approximates what it seeks to substitute for in the other. Given that approximateness, the painter may within any tier disarrange the constitutive matter, or in improvisation born of the hiddenness of the other, the painter may break apart and recombine whole structures. The painter may further wrench material free from a structure and attempt to use it unalloyed for some aspect of the image. Such disruptions of illusion, the sudden chasms within a painted image, hint at the degree to which mimesis is open to unconscious factors, an issue I will address in a separate essay.[5] These disruptions also suggest that mimesis introduces many more undertones into illusion than is generally supposed. In its will to the other mimesis seeks to make the painting material into much more than a repository for sense impressions.

Mimesis works through resemblance. This is not to say, however, that mimesis is identical with resemblance. Even less is mimesis to be confused with verisimilitude, a congruence between an image and the existing community of agreement about appearance. The other is never to be trapped in the familiarity we conventionally assume appearance to have. The naive and yet brutal idea that appearance can be adequately duplicated and that this duplication would somehow render the other fails to account even for the strangeness, the instability and the richness of appearance, let alone for how much the other is dissembled in appearance. The aspects of the other which stand forward in a moment of appearance are for mimesis utterly provisional, and appearance of course calls up the question of what does not appear, both of what the tissue of appearance hides and what we might not see within that array, and of what is temporally disconnected from the layer of appearance we presently see. Appearance also implicates qualities of the other which are scarcely tinted into appearance, if they are not invisible entirely, or which are actively dissembled. Appearance insofar as it is determined by a community of agreement further raises the problem of the repressions which lie behind the agreement over that which is said to appear.[6] Yet appearance forms the anchorage of mimetic images, and to suppress appearance is to truncate mimesis, if not to dismember it entirely.

The anchorage appearance gives mimetic painting is first and foremost the commonality of things, however dimly known, in a shared world; the community of agreement over appearance, however flawed, is richly connected to the greater social world. On a deeper level, this anchorage is the possibility an acute translation of appearance allows painting for locating the particularity which distinguishes the other as other and not just as something familiar. For as much as the other is hidden in appearance, appearance is also a basic locale for facing the other's difference. The iconoclastic move of suppressing appearance, and the typically related moves of suppressing mimetic images and claiming that the other can be expressed in a bodiless and extentionless representation in a mere sign,

is a fundamental de-facing of the other and all that defacement implies. Such a collapsed representation of the other not only reduces it to a sign, but implicitly deprives the other of its place in space and in a greater world outside of the rationale of the iconoclasm. Once appearance is no longer contested by painting, painting acquiesces in the expansion of the operational world, in the neutralization of the sensate by instrumental reason. In its retreat from appearance, modernism fled from a crucial theater of the war over the real in the twentieth century.

Mimetic painting must both address the spatiality of the other and the way in which the other is embodied; that is, in order to stand in relationship to the other the mimetic image must not only find form for the body, the house of the other's life, but the image must also be ordered so as to account for the proper space of the other. The other inhabits its locale, and that locale both touches on the embodiment of the other and in turn is shaped in part by the other's inhabitation. Like any inhabitation, the relationship between the other and its proper space is particular and intimate. Therefore mimesis demands that the virtual space of the image be so constructed that the intimacy and character of the other's relation to its locale be preserved. Just as the relationship between the other and its space is reflexive, so too is the relationship between the painter, the other and the virtual space of the image. The painter comes to inhabit that virtual space in the making of the image, and through the virtual space, enters as though into the realm of the other.

Painting is an active undertaking. In a sense, it is transitive like dancing, although the forms of its real and virtual spaces are different. As the painter moves as though in the realm of the other, his or her own life is carried there, however fragmentarily. And within the realm of the other, embedded within the touches and within the facture of the image, is the sense that the painter is "touching" the other and the other's space. "Touching" here, however, is not to be understood as a stressing of the "haptic" over the "optical." Rather, the mimetic touch carries with vision other related modes of experience.[7] In particular, the mimetic touch is laden with what the hands bring to vision, and with the complex interrelation of vision and movement. Vision is never pure in mimetic painting, just as seeing in the world is inherently shot through with the queries of looking: far, near, or at hand; jagged, coarse, or smooth; hot, cold, or tepid; large, human size, or small. Hosts of other often life-saving questions in far more complex and intricately interlaced clusters are posed each day, and typically few of them are answered by actually being articulated in language. Rather, their sense falls exactly to eyes, hands, feet; it is this compass and genius which allow the necessary move. Were we even to pose the trials of leaving a room to language, its balkiness would forestall us, possibly dangerously. Of course, painting is also balky, indeed far more so than language, but the trajectories of eyes and hands and feet are woven into its making. For implicitly the mimetic touch journeys to the other along the reach of vision; it projects our movements in shadow to the other, face to face, hand to hand. The transpositioning of the painter has in potential the gravity of an intimate addressing of the other, and in that intimacy it also can be

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transfiguring. Consequently mimesis can be violating; it can symbolically pillage or seek to possess the other. Mimesis therefore requires an ethic; it must preserve the integrity and life of the other or it becomes an enactment of violence.

The mimetic touch is subject to time. Neither the maker nor the other is aloof from the many temporal processes which surround each, which flow through each, and which can traverse the distance between them. The mimetic touch, no matter how controlled, is inflected by the time of its making. In part this is the fundamental matter of the viable conventions of illusion within an epoch, but it is also the deeper matter of inner temporal processes in the maker and the other. Within what David Summers calls "the subjunctive space"[8] of the image, the painter transposes the mimetic touch to the realm of the other. And in this transposition the mimetic touch has the temporal sense of carrying an actual somatic and psychological moment from the life of the maker to the body of the other. Specifically, the image of the body of the other is built of these fragments; that body is in part constituted from temporal tissue taken from the painter's life. But even as the image of the other is grafted from the mimetic touch, so the temporality of the other inflects the painting. In part, this inflection is simply established by the state of the other, its condition within the course of its existence and the conditions of its environment. More directly, mimetic painting is itself lodged in time, the making of the work is actual in time, and it has its pauses and continuities and its rhythms. Whether the making of the work and the other are coextensive in space, they always stand in a temporal interface—even when the other and the painter are historically separate, or when they are generally separate. This interface, however, in no sense guarantees the painter access to the temporal life of the other; rather, it poses the difficult problem of relating the rhythmic order of making to an existence whose temporal form may be entirely foreign. To achieve even a trace of the temporal expressivity of the other the mimetic image must be left open to the impress of its own rhythms and temporal process. The mimetic touch must acknowledge that it bears a temporal content; and that content must in some sense be shaped by the temporal life of the other.

Within the domain of vision the other is never simply there, revealed and entire. What vision can find of the other, what the other discloses of itself, and what mimesis can articulate into an image are all caught in, all take distinct shape only through time. They change with time and contribute to the texture of their temporality.[9] Indeed, one can speak of basic structural expressions of the other in relation either to the other's environment or to mimesis as taking form in time. For example, contour is inherently rhythmic and temporal; contours in a face express both organic and psychological processes. When perceived through incident, or through dialogue with the other, time is not homogeneous. And mimesis, understood as intrinsically tied both to temporal flow and to temporal thickness, to the density and elasticity of time and the other's relationship to time, is not to be identified with representation.

Considered as an ideal model for a pictorial image, representation at the least demands an excision of the image's referent, that which is imaged, from the course and texture of time. The referent is understood as depicted in a pure present,[10] a privileged instant disengaged from time's transformations. Representation further requires that the periods and rhythms of labor, the reach of time in the image, be totally disguised. No more than the weight and physicality of the pictorial mark can the imprint of time be tolerated in representation whose efficacy depends on its absolute transparency. Read literally, representation means re-presenting; it asks that we believe that the image is identical with that to which it refers, that the transparent relations between the image and its referent are entirely adequate. Representation therefore fundamentally excludes both the other and the painter as a maker. The other in its own temporality and environment, the maker working in time, both of them inhering in a larger and opaque region of time, are explicitly different and as though facing one another. Their apartness can never be collapsed into a mirage of identity.[11]

The most basic condition of mimesis is difference, the spatial and temporal separateness of the life of the maker and the life of the other. To deny that difference through any attempt at representation, whether through the defacing work of abstracted signs or the objectification of copy-making, is to deny both the life of the other and the life of the painter.[12]

II

Norman Bryson and the
"Discourse, Figure" Polarity

Much contemporary art theory is specifically opposed to mimesis. While most contemporary attacks on mimesis belong to the well-traveled paths of modern iconoclasm, ranging from the idealism of the traditional "spiritual" imperative, to abstract art, to the formalism of Rosalind Krauss' poststructuralism or the materialism of Benjamin Buchloh's Marxism, exceptions do exist, such as the work of Gombrich, or that of Norman Bryson, motivated, in part, as a refutation of Gombrich. Bryson is of special interest, for while he bases his project on a sweeping dismissal of mimesis, and while his work owes its principal modes of analysis to post-structuralism albeit tempered by the later Wittgenstein, it is anything but purposefully iconoclastic (though unfortunately its formalism renders it so). While Bryson would strictly separate painting from an image primarily derived from perception, he is versatile and eloquent in his arguments for painting as a specifically differentiated and complexly referential image. If for Bryson that scheme of reference is largely or even exclusively found within a tradition of representation so that the image is entirely circumscribed by culture, he nonetheless insists as adamantly as Gombrich, if not with Gombrich's iconographic rigor, on the specificity and meaningfulness of images. In fact, beyond proposing a model and offering a critical reexamination of both

the methods and certain period verities of traditional art history, Bryson clearly intends to provide a rationale for contemporary painting critically, to cut across both conventions of depicting perception and an actual world of social practice.

The central idea in Bryson's work is that all paintings are material signs produced by makers who, along with their audience, participate in a discourse which is culturally bounded. While I am in sympathy with Bryson's stress on painting as a socially complex practice, a fundamental problem is raised by the way he understands the term "sign," a word which in any usage is oddly narrow before painting. For Bryson, the painting as a sign is structurally analogous to the linguistic sign.[13] In the first of his books on painting, *Word and Image,* he outlines his model for the analysis of painting. It hinges on two terms, "discursive" and "figural." By "discursive" he means those characteristics of a pictorial image which depend for their form and tenor on the controls of a text, or another verbal source. By "figural" he means those structures which belong to "visual experience independent of language—its being-as-image."[14] Bryson's model is clearly derived, as he recognizes, from Saussure's division of the linguistic sign into an intelligible component, the signified, and the conventional material signal or support for that signified, the signifier; and Bryson further recognizes the linguistic sign as the paradigm for all signs.[15]

But on that assertion I think it necessary to ask if indeed the priority or the paradigmatic authority of the linguistic sign has been conclusively demonstrated for pictorial images. Fairly spoken, it certainly has not. For example, Bryson seems peculiarly innocent of Umberto Eco's well-known critique of the notion of the "iconic" sign, a critique which incisively explodes both the appropriateness of the term "sign" and the usefulness of the term "iconic," at least in its semiotic application to pictorial images.[16] Or, as David Summers has argued in a recent essay, "This is Not a Sign," conceptual images cannot properly be called signs if the term is normed by the linguistic sign, because their use and form are specific, motivated, and often spatially determined in ways which are absolutely different from the fundamental arbitrariness of the linguistic sign.[17] Yet the project of "linguistic imperialism" goes forward, to borrow an adroit and far-reaching idea from W.J.T. Mitchell[18]—and it is important that Bryson's model be questioned.

In the introductory chapter of *Word and Image,* "Discourse, Figure," Bryson inadvertently raises crucial problems in his proposed analogy of the linguistic sign to the pictorial image. On no issue are these problems more evident than on the question of just what configures the illusion of the real, the naturalistic effect, in images where some kind of optical naturalism shapes the image. Bryson's understanding of optical naturalism follows Roland Barthes' argument that realist fiction is based on an assumed exteriority of the world described to the language of its description.[19] Barthes' central contention is that the world described in realist fiction is built and enclosed by the text and that text's interplay with other texts.[20]

Passing by the several weaknesses of Barthes' hermetically sealed semiosis and the question of just how comparable optical naturalism may be, even

in some variety of Realism, to whatever example of literary realism, it is not hard to see the broad shape of Bryson's argument. The optical naturalist painting functions through a conventional pictorial lexicon and syntax, which while understood passively to reflect the world, is actually structured through received rules of lexicographic and syntactical order whose circuit of meaning runs through related paintings. It is not derived from a world exterior to the schemes of representation. The actual working of the seemingly passive mirror of the painting is carefully effaced; it is as disguised as the thrust of the painting's social purpose. The optical naturalist painting therefore sponsors its meanings by concealing them; the "figural" functions primarily to dissemble the ideological purposes of the "discursive."

Bryson formulates the ancillary and dissembling role of the "figural" in stating that the naturalistic effect depends on *"a scale of distance from the patent site of meaning* which is read as *a scale of distance toward the real."*[21] The metaphor on which this formulation rests, a map or a diagram as the template for optical naturalism, is odd, and I will discuss its peculiarities below. For the moment I want to concentrate on discussing Bryson's terms. "The patent site of meaning" apparently substitutes for the "discursive;" the naturalistic effect of the image results from the distance and difference imparted by the "figural" against the textually determined limits of the "discursive." To reintroduce terms I used in the first part of this essay, the naturalistic effect depends on the remoteness of much of the architecture of illusion from the mere schemata which Bryson thinks of as sufficient to indicate the basic meaning of a text.[22] The naturalistic structures within the architecture of illusion are built away from a pictographlike root which articulates a "narrative kernel."[23] The optical naturalist painting is fleshed out in its naturalism around a core, or in a linear movement away from a prime terminus which is some kind of conceptual image. Bryson thinks that the architecture of illusion in naturalism is not only fundamentally in the service of the "discursive," but that it has no more primary anchorage. Yet this raises a fundamental problem about the exact location of that anchorage.

The problem simply put is: does the "discursive" have a clear and inscribed existence within an optical naturalist image, or is it not only disguised by the "figural" but essentially embodied through the "figural"? Bryson attempts to protect the distinctness of the "discursive" through a series of phrases meant further to define its role in optical naturalism. Thus he tries to give the "discursive" a location through the "patent site of meaning," or he tries to specify its function through a "narrative kernel." He attempts to distinguish it from the naturalistic effect made through the "figural" by stating that this effect is constituted by an excess of information over the minimum, which would suffice for the simple glyphs which, in his system, are all that is required for the explicit textuality of the "discursive." He further attempts to distinguish it from the "figural" by proposing that the "discursive" be identified with an area of "semantic necessity" and the "figural" with an area of "semantic irrelevance"; the naturalistic

effect is beyond the "threshold" of "semantic necessity" in a terrain of "semantic irrelevance."[24] The idea of "semantic irrelevance" gets Bryson into difficulty.

Are we to think that the vivid and particular aspects of a given text are configured any less necessarily in the "figural" aspects of some great naturalist poesia, say Titian's *Rape of Europa,* than in the "narrative kernel" of girl, (rides), bull, (in), water?[25] Not only does Bryson's idea absurdly flatten the probable way in which Titian thought and worked, but it implicitly distorts the tradition in which he worked.[26] For certainly in that broad tradition, even in its strictest Albertian form, the "narrative kernel" was necessarily interwoven with the enlivening power of the "figural." The simple semiotic oppositions of Bryson's model are in no way adequate to the profoundly varied and subtle rhetorical imagination of the Renaissance, or to the repleteness with which optical naturalism could embody that imagination.[27] As for the possibility of a distinct location for the "discursive" in the Titian, it is absolutely voided in the succinctness and vividness of the painting's principal episode, and in the rightness with which Titian revisions Ovid's text.[28]

Despite its determining role in the workings of his model, Bryson gives the "discursive" no definite and unambiguous location within an optical naturalist image. Rather, the "discursive" seems to require a series of locations to have any place at all within optical naturalism, aside from being used as a hierarchic principle said to control the painting, by opposition, from what in practice is a domain outside the work. The locations, which range from "patent site of meaning," "narrative kernal," "area" of "semantic necessity," to the semiotic term, paradigm, deepen the ambiguity over the "discursive's" location and function within the image. At no point does Bryson systematically explicate the linkage he envisions amongst these terms; rather, he proceeds as though the spatial "patent site of meaning" transforms easily to "narrative kernel" and that the "discursive" so broadened is accurately substituted for by paradigm. While the consequently deepened ambiguity of location for the "discursive"—does the "discursive" only exist in language or does it somewhere inhabit the image?—can be seen to reflect a similar and fundamental ambiguity over the place of the signified in semiology, it vitiates Bryson's claim that painting is a pure material sign where presumably the "discursive" would always have some kind of concrete inscription in the image. The absence of a clear inscription for the "discursive" in optical naturalism points furthermore to a lack of fit in practice between the "discursive"/"figural" polarity for painting and the signified/signifier of the linguistic sign.

This incongruence between Bryson's model and Saussure's arises precisely because of the "discursive's" entanglement in the "figural" and it contradicts the idea that painting corresponds in structure to the linguistic sign. While painting can indeed refer to texts, that reference is never unencumbered. It is always housed in the architecture of illusion. Even in the case of direct inscriptions or mottos, the configured image both locates the words and inflects their meaning;[29] and such combinations and the

general capaciousness of painting indicate a basic condition: a painting contains many different referential parts, and this is especially true of optical naturalism. Bryson, however, seems unaware of these basic and well-known facts. He contends that the "discursive" can be identified more or less completely with the totality of some conceptual images, images which he maintains approach the linguistic sign in the "transparency" of the vestigial "figurality" within them:

> With the linguistic sign, interest in the sensuous materiality of the signifier is normally minimal except in certain highly conventionalized art situations; we tend to ignore the sensual 'thickness' of language unless our attention is specifically directed towards it. And the Canterbury window similarly plays down the independent life of its signifying material, which progressively yields, as we approach it, to a cultivated transparency before the transcendent Scripture inscribed within it. The status of the window is that of a relay or a place of transit through which the eye must pass to reach its goal, which is the Word.[30]

But is this near-perfect transparency true, even of stained glass? Are such works simply a "relay" or a "place of transit," or do they in some sense embody the texts and the Biblical personages to which they make reference? Certainly all conceptual images are configured; their existence as images demands that their material be ordered according to a complex of conventions which reach from the correct distribution and shape of ornament to the proper shape and decorum of the depicted personages. The mode of configuration for each thing embraces traditions and rules for the manipulation of the material used, and patterns and other precedents for the proper shapes of things to be depicted. These traditions and rules clearly reach beyond the simple concern of making whatever depicted personage denote whatever name in whatever text. For example, in *The Virgin and Child Surrounded by Angels* from the St. Matthew's Gospel of *The Book of Kells* (c. 700), the complexity of ornament and the general elaboration of all the figures are of a visual splendor comparable to great optical naturalist painting: in a very basic sense they are meant to be seen. While that splendor certainly relates to the significance of the figures themselves, and to the importance of the book in which the image is situated, it is evident that the image as a whole was understood as an important and needed addition to the text. The image is not there to tutor the unlettered or to function with simple efficiency as a "relay" to the Gospel of St. Matthew.[31] Rather, the image is substantive in its own right, and placed as it is within this sacred book it must also be understood as a sacred thing—not unlike the window within the holy edifice at Canterbury.

In the sacredness of either image, the care exercised over the ordering of the material plays no small role. The "sensual 'thickness'" of the material is not simply overridden in the interest of efficient communication. Convention in neither of these works centers on the making of ideograms. *The Virgin and Child Surrounded by Angels* in *The Book of Kells* is as particular and specific within the tradition from which it was made as, say, the Virgin and Child in Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, and it was in all pro-

bability no less important to the home church. Similarly, the figures in the Canterbury window are not mere generics. In any of these works an absolute and specifically bounded location for the "discursive" cannot be ascertained; rather, the word and the depicted personages inhabit the images and their locations. In this inhabitation, from within the image, the "discursive" elides into the "figural," it takes form from the "figural" and is grounded in the "figural;" one might say it consecrates the "figural" and rises from it.

In any painting, what Bryson calls the "discursive" is always bound to what he calls the "figural," to the architecture of illusion. The "discursive" may also reside in a text outside the image, but the passage between that text and the image is never simply automatic: the discursive is inevitably inflected by its place and configuration within the image. But if the "discursive" actually has its anchorage in the "figural," then Bryson makes a basic error in privileging the "discursive." The inflection of the "discursive" by given conventions and their particular articulation makes it clear that a painted Virgin constitutes its meaning in ways which are other than the written or spoken word, "Virgin." In neither the scripted nor the phonetic signifier, "Virgin," is the relationship to the signified, Virgin, troubled by a complex and promiscuous configuration of the "discursive" aspects of the depicted Virgin from out of the particular inflected "figurality" of the stylistic base. In the linguistic sign the reference of the sign is not woven into the material of the signifier, it is not woven into the signifier in a specific and intended way—and especially it is not visible in the signifier. The habitation of the "discursive" within the "figural," its rising from and embedment within the "figural," makes both the polarity between these terms and their analogy to the linguistic sign manifestly artificial and simplistic. As Eco has pointed out, the complex "macro unit" of interlaced meaningful structures, which constitute what I am calling the architecture of illusion, is so variegated in its contextual relations that there is no stable or final division between pertinent and encoded units and free variants.[32] Bryson's supposition that the "discursive" might be identified with a medieval work which he treats as a simple schemata overlooks the fact that even stick drawings cannot accurately be called signs.

The ambiguity over the location of the "discursive" and the problems Bryson encounters concerning its relationship to the "figural" suggest that he is confusing the structure of illusion in painting with the system through which he would interpret painting. This confusion is baldly evident in the attempt he makes to elaborate the "discursive"/"figural" polarity through a pair of semiotic terms, paradigm and syntagm. (Syntagm refers to the established pattern and rules of contiguous word order, paradigm concerns "all those essential relationships which a word has outside syntagmatic ones."[33]) While not carefully discussed in relation to painting, paradigm in Bryson's usage points to those iconographic aspects of an image which must be related to a text or to other "information outside" the image. In short, paradigm underscores the problematic status of the "discursive" as both covering some reference to an iconographic source and yet housed

in the image's figuration, embedded in the "figural" and yet superior to it. For Bryson the "figural" is a species of the syntagm; it finds its relation to the syntagm through the contiguities of depicting "sequences of information which seem to preclude any alternative organization."[34] Surprisingly, Bryson does not introduce the term metonymy at this point in his argument. In discussing the displacement of the "discursive" by the apparently seamless continuities of the "figural," it would seem obvious within a semiotic frame to turn to metonymy—the contiguities of the "figural" in optical naturalism are far closer semiotically to metonymy than to syntagm. But in avoiding metonymy and in appending the pair paradigm and syntagm—terms specific to word order in writing or speaking—to a discussion of optical naturalist painting, Bryson makes it clear that the formal requirements of his model take precedence over the nominal subject of his discussion, the effect of the real in optical naturalism. The obvious intention behind the introduction of paradigm and syntagm is to place the locus of the naturalistic effect outside the actual imagistic structure of painting and into the realm of writing:

> Realism works hard to reduce the activity of the paradigm to a minimum. Any questions of the kind, 'what is in common between...?' must be silenced, because that questioning process breaks down the sequentiality of the image and forces us to reconsider the image as having a purpose beyond its physical existence in the present. Into the place vacated by the paradigm steps the syntagm, and its influence is increased by the characteristic realist feature—uncurtailable addition (the 'and then'). This 'and then' is the typical mannerism of the chronicle, where the only recognized principle of organization of data is succession in time: there seems to be no intervention between data and their recording, no system of mediating intelligibility.[35]

Bryson therefore is attempting to finess the complex problem of how optical naturalist paintings are convincing images for visual experience by arguing that such images function in a way parallel to written chronicles. In this he does not simply beg the question of how optical naturalism structures its references to a seen world, but relocates the question in an entirely "verbocentric" system.[36] His model operates within the realm of how painting might be discussed. Its intersections with painting per se are hazardous.

For example, Bryson attempts to illustrate the operation of the syntagm in a discussion of a Dutch still-life for which he suggests no date:

> Still-life takes as its inaugural act the rejection of the narrative sentence; not the rejection of language, for the image is still secondary to something outside itself—a positivist reality before which it effaces its independent being. It has not yet attained full figurality—the liberation of the image from all constraint outside itself. Denying the narrative sentence, still-life knows only nouns, adjectives and conjunctions, and by insisting on these and only these remains permanently below the threshold of meaning.[37]

This passage is remarkable for Bryson's imposition of a semiotic shorthand upon what is a complex historical problem. It is also remarkable for the contortions Bryson must introduce into his argument to maintain that shorthand. Thus still-life has its inception in the denial of the "discursive" despite the well-known allegorical and proverbial iconography of still-life. While still-life is said to be founded in a syntagmatic cluster of nouns abutted to adjectives and conjunctions, its resolute involvement with the syntagm somehow leaves it "below the threshold of meaning," as though the words appropriate to any still-life are from a lost language. Syntagmatic as it may be, still-life nonetheless paradigmatically refers to a "positivist reality" outside itself which seems to have all the authority formerly reserved for a text. Yet this "positivist reality" is, it would appear, the syntagmatic word clusters upon which still-life exclusively "insists." This circularity, a familiar feature of a "verbocentric" argument, is reflected in the fact that while still-life is personified into a historical demiurge worthy of any idealist history, it remains subject to a metastasizing semiosis. While still-life has not "yet attained full figurality" ("visual being independent of language"), that possibility is evidently its syntagmatic structure. In arguing that the reality of still-life is such a torturous amalgam, Bryson sounds like a sophistic formalist, one who uses semiotic terms rather than the planes, diagonals and other familiar apparatus of modernist formalism.

The prime objective of Bryson's semiotic bifurcation of optical naturalism is to combat what, following Husserl, he calls "the natural attitude," the idea that there is a fundamental and single spatial and temporal reality which everywhere has always existed and with which all people are universally familiar.[38] Bryson shapes his model to challenge the supremely naive assumption that optical naturalism exactly mirrors an immutable and consistently familiar reality.[39] By splitting the optical naturalist painting into the "discursive' (paradigmatic)/"figural" (syntagmatic) polarity, Bryson insists on the image being absolutely conventional and nominal. Its references to an outside reality are in his view entirely screened by the priority of the given codes for the "discursive" and the "figural," and by the foundation of both in language.[40] While he succeeds in scratching the mirror metaphor for painting, naively understood, Bryson's model is troubled by a rigid synchrony.

The model allows little leeway for the discussion of the historical development and significance of the optical and "natural" basis of naturalism. Rather, Bryson's model implies that the development of optical naturalism and the philosophical traditions most closely related to that development were first and foremost in error, and unfortunate errors at that. Moreover, in the generality of its terms, the model easily addresses neither questions of how the work of one artist is to be distinguished from that of another nor the many problems involved in discussing the evolution of the work of one artist. The model obviates these questions by simply reducing them to its basic semiotic terms.[41] Furthermore, with the attendant contention that imitation is naively based on the "natural attitude," the model leaves little basis for discussing how fantasy was distinguished from the descrip-

tion of nature. Rather, in his resolute insistence on the priority of a linguistic structure Bryson fails to treat even the problem of how the conventions for depicting nature are convincing in the first place, let alone how they evolved.[42]

By defining the naturalistic effect as an excess of information which is semantically controlled, Bryson has more at stake than merely closing off the naive assumption that the optical naturalist painting might have some unmediated relationship to the world. As I just pointed out, Bryson certainly intends to challenge the philosophical traditions underlying naturalism, though not in any sustained and analytically rigorous way. In terms of the basic synchrony of his model, he means to place all pictorial images in a frame whose first and last terms are verbal. Under his model, painting is not only essentially controlled in structure by a linguistic determinant, but that to which painting would make reference is also essentially constituted in language, whether that referent is another person, some aspect of the social, or nature. Without gainsaying the extraordinary flexibility, reach, and social importance of language, or the richness of the roles of poetry and rhetoric in the evolution of optical naturalism, it must be said that Bryson's model reduces painting to a rebus and makes the corporeal, spacial and temporal specificity of the other into a code. Under his model the question must be raised: why should there be optical naturalism at all? To preserve the authority of his model, Bryson can no more afford a careful discussion of how optical naturalism is related to sight than he can a discussion of its philosophical and poetical traditions. He must limit his understanding of mimesis to Pliny's simple-minded story of Zeuxis and Parrhasius;[43] by asserting that mimesis means to copy, he discredits an overly flimsy straw man and asserts that mimesis is without complexity, without dialogue between image and other, except for that encoded in his model. But the world of that model, so untroubled by sight, light or space, so centered on a linguistic imperative, runs the great risk of becoming as arbitrary as a signifier.

The weaknesses which I have outlined in Bryson's model are determined by the internal structure of the model itself and throw open to question any linguistically derived attempt to codify painting. In its counterpoised and polar structure, Bryson's "discursive"/"figural" opposition inevitably cuts the pictorial image into arbitrary parts, and in so doing misses the essential issue: that the pictorial image is motivated in its structures. Vis-a-vis optical naturalism, Bryson's model necessarily cuts the image into unequal hierarchically skewed parts; necessarily because of the determining place of the "discursive." Beyond these problems, Bryson's model absolutely lacks a fit to the actual structures constituting the architecture of illusion in any optical naturalism. As the shift in terms from "discursive"/"figural" to "a scale of distance toward the real" indicates, Bryson recognizes that the naturalistic effect cannot be explained in linguistic terms alone. Rather, he attempts to introduce a spatial component into a discussion whose basic principle and claims would make all space arbitrated by linguistic signs.[44]

But this attempt to buttress the model by laying it out on a scalar diagram,

by tagging linguistic terms to a ruled plane, simply introduces another overly simplified and highly problematic feature into his analysis. If the "discursive"/"figural" opposition rests on the optimistic assumption that the pictorial image is the close analogue of the linguistic sign, his attempt to join that model to a planar diagram asks that we presume optical naturalism to be as legible and univalent in its structure as a titled and inscribed diagram. Bryson would address any of a considerable number of spatially complex painting styles through a demarcated scale, a ruler of sorts—except that his formulation is not actually that incisively spatial. Even if it were, it would lack the flexibility to describe the manifest structure of illusion in painting. For despite what might appear at first reading a useful simplification, the plane might still seem to twentieth century eyes the formal and conceptual basis of painting; any planar model fundamentally disfigures optical naturalism. All optical naturalism depends on a convincing virtual space and a convincing virtual light. The architecture of illusion in any optical naturalist painting is shaped by the demand of realizing virtual space and light. Any analytic model which would interpret optical naturalism must in its own structure and language be responsive to the metamorphoses of painted touch into image, of substance into virtuality, of substance into light. The model must be responsive, in short, to structures which provocatively and convincingly lift phantasms out of matter and so configure them that they are as though real.

Within the architecture of illusion, no component is more basic than the individual painted touch, and no factor more questions Bryson's model than its incapacity to analyze how the mark singly or in the weave of the facture functions within optical naturalism. His model addresses the image at no deeper level than the essentially nominal structure he gives to the "figural," particularly through concepts like syntagm. As I discussed earlier, Bryson's attempts to side-step the problem of how the "figurality" of optical naturalism creates a convincing illusion for visual experience by arguing that the "figural" as a species of the syntagm functions like a written chronicle. This position forces him into making some highly problematical statements. For example, in discussing still-life, he states:

> But over the epithet triumphs the conjunction: all the adjectival multiplicity yields before an all-pervasive and all-fusing 'and then', which takes physical form: light. It is as though the syntagm, to which still-life is infinitely loyal, had incarnated as light source, spreading its rays equally over all the surfaces and linking them together in a seamless, unbreakable contiguity.[45]

Against his idea that painting is analogous in structure to the linguistic sign, Bryson transubstantiates the syntagm, through whatever mysteries, into virtual light, and transforms the syntagmatic "'and then'" into an instantaneous visibility.[46] A contiguity of words gives over to light, the necessary basis for making any distinctions whatsoever by seen attributes, whether articulated in language or not. Bryson must transform the syntagm into virtual light because the architecture of illusion, the "figural" in op-

tical naturalism, is at foundation a system for creating virtual light and shadow.[47] No object, no personage, and no space can be articulated in its specificity to sight without submitting to the relationship of light and shadow relative to the standpoint of the painter-beholder. Perspective, which is often mistakenly thought of as the founding structure of optical naturalism, is a geometry of the visible relative to a single view point.[48] The fall of virtual light on a depicted thing, the cast shadows, the relationships to other things and other areas of light and shadow are all intended to be convincing in terms of a visibility which is to be compared to the visibility of the world.[49] While either visibility is given shape by culture, both arise out of a deeper interaction of eye, mind, and light.[50] Optical naturalism is a system for ordering an image which is understood to correspond to the action of light in the world. Virtual light and shadow therefore constitute the deep structural category of optical naturalism; they are the foundation for the architecture of illusion and the most specific factor in the depiction of any thing.[51] Bryson's use of syntagm asks that we not only understand contiguous words as a more fundamental experiential category than light, but also that we believe the syntagmatic to act like light.

When Bryson discusses the facture of an optical naturalist painting, Vermeer's *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* (c. 1672), that discussion further undermines the appropriateness of the syntagm to painting and the usefulness of his model in general:

> Expansion of the syntagm permits the development of figurality: if language cannot enter the image, it automatically attains a certain autonomy. But that autonomy is not yet complete, because the still life is still secondary to an outer reality before which it claims to be entirely passive. The decisive bid for figurality comes when the image breaks with that reflective and secondary posture and comes to assert the irreducibility of its own material construction. A brilliant example is the Vermeer in the National Gallery in London, known as *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*. At first glance it seems to belong to the sign-formation of still-life: it is a highly persuasive picture of the world, and one so free of discursive intent that it seems already well on the way to autonomy. But it goes much further toward autonomy than still-life is able to do. It contains within itself a series of adorned surfaces: the painting on the wall, the landscape inset into the lid of the virginal, the *faux-marbre* sides and stand of the instrument, the marbled flooring, and the row of representational tiles at the skirting. But not all of these surfaces are represented as existing on the same level of transposition into painting. Whereas the representation of the lace in the girl's dress is based on a supposed one-to-one isomorphism between the 'original' and its 'copy,' the representation of the gilding round the picture asserts considerable latitude of transcription: there is a gulf between the original and its representation. We cannot say that it is a high-fidelity transcription of an original that is out of focus, because we can see the actual strokes of the brush that articulate the representation. The signifier is visibly present on the canvas and its existence is as stressed here as it is understressed at the lace.[52]

Leaving aside the streamlined and new formalist history this passage implies, Bryson's point of the visible "signifier" ironically depends on the image being ordered through seen resemblance, not through a linguistically determined structure. While Bryson understands that Vermeer is not working with a simple-minded notion of the painting as a reflection, he offers no more convincing argument for how the pictorial "signifier" makes reference to lace, a picture frame or anything else. Certainly the words "lace" and "gilding" are not inscribed in the paint. Just as obviously, the many painted touches which Vermeer organized into the complex shapes depicting the lace and the frame do not, taken individually, have the same strongly coded differences that linguistic signifiers have. The painted touches are more like pebbles on a beach than like letters in an alphabet or words in a lexicon; they are both more nuanced and yet similar in form than words or letters.[53] Equally, the painted passages which depict either the lace or the frame are both more variegated in structure and complexly specific in form than words. Each passage must incorporate a distribution of virtual light and shadow, however much informed by convention, which is recognizable as convincingly akin to the shape actual light reveals of lace or a picture frame, or to any other thing whose identity can be recognized from its shape in light. Bryson has no escape from this illuminated corner: the lace is such because he recognizes it in an image configured according to the fall of light.

Bryson attempts to escape this dilemma by stressing the material presence of the painted mark, as though this presence disqualifies the image as virtual:

> Let us recall an earlier observation on realism: that it depends on the supposed exteriority of the signified to the signifier. An image can persuade us that it reflects the real only for so long as it effaces the traces of its own production and conceals the independent material existence of the signifier. The Vermeer so forces our attention on to the activity and articulation of the signifier that the effect of the real is no longer generated in innocence.[54]

Barthes' contention about literary realism depends on the arbitrariness of the linguistic signifier and its presumed textual enclosure. Bryson's similar claim about optical naturalism depends on the close analogy of the pictorial "signifier" to the linguistic signifier—but is this analogy correct?

Any individual painted touch in optical naturalism addresses some aspect of a pictorial problem concerning the action of light. At the same time the touch collaborates in the structure of a particular area of facture which also addresses the action of light. The painted mark can range from noting the apparent insubstantiality of reflected light to being shaped to register the apparently hard and certain fragment of, say, the moldings of a picture frame. As I have repeatedly pointed out, in either instance the touch, while based in convention and a tradition of craft, must be carefully inflected. The painter must transpose what is to be taken for an observed phenomenon outside the image from color mixed on the palette and loaded in a certain way on the painting implement to an actual location within the surface of the support, a location which is forever changed by the touch. Not only

that, the mark must collaborate in a complex weave of other painted marks which in their entirety become virtual. Depending on that virtual location closely similar touches can be referential to lace or to a frame, but they are not analogous to the letter 'a.' Not only are they undercoded with respect to the strict limitations of script and alphabetical order determining the function of 'a,' but both the references they make and their function in the facture are determined by and grounded in the virtual spatial structure of the painting. Their meaning is determined by location. The letter 'a' remains the letter 'a' no matter what its location, though of course its pronunciation is coded by other signs in a word. The contiguities between letters forming a word are no less strictly coded than the differences between letters. The contiguities between painted marks in optical naturalism, while certainly anchored in convention, are no less closely shaped according to the pattern of virtual light and shadow necessary to establish a recognizable similarity between an area of facture and what is understood as the appearance in light of the depicted thing.

In short, the contiguities between painted marks bear a degree of nuance, a specialization of relationship entirely outside of the arbitrary and strongly coded rules governing both spelling and word order. The significance of the painted touch is radically grounded in its location within the order of virtual light and shadow, and its contiguities are in no way syntagmatic. Furthermore, the painted mark interplays, often decisively, with other touches at remove in the image—Bryson's use of paradigm is so "verbocentric" that he fails to recognize this "paradigmatic" fact. Paradigm, crude as it is as a concept in relationship to optical naturalism, is more appropriate to the virtuality of optical naturalism than syntagm.

However, this failure of recognition on Bryson's part is not surprising. Despite his stress on the "independent material existence of the signifier," his thinking on optical naturalism so turns on Pliny's simple-minded notion of mimesis that he thinks artists as thoughtful as Titian or Tintoretto painted as though under a fantasy of perfect transparency.[55] He does not realize that "the effect of the real" was never generated "in innocence." Even Zeuxis was doubtless intimately aware of the difference between the conventions underlying the structures he could build in paint, the particular inflections he made from those conventions, and the things to be depicted. In so far as he could be said to work in some variant of optical naturalism, Zeuxis, like Vermeer, or Rembrandt, or Titian, was fully aware that those conventions and inflections owed both their deep form and their particular shape in any painting to one overriding concern—to build an image out of paint which resembles the activity of light.[56] The syntagm is in no way adequate to describing virtual light, and it is too intrinsically nominal to be meaningful in describing even the physical structure of the individual painted touch or the facture of optical naturalism. By using the syntagm to define the operation of the "figural," Bryson inadvertently subverts his model. The syntagm ends up a rhetorical husk and the model's inadequacy to optical naturalism can be seen as given in its isomorphism to the linguistic sign. Ironically, then, Bryson's model fails because of the semiotically con-

trived idea that painting reflects the structure of the linguistic sign, an idea, despite Bryson's considerable intelligence, roughly as naive as that Pliny held of mimesis.

Bryson's semiotic model is not only inadequate to describe virtual light and the painted touch in optical naturalism; it also lacks language to describe the workings of pictorial space. For Bryson space in optical naturalism is little other than perspective and, as I mentioned above, Bryson fails to realize the determining place of light in perspective. For him perspective is at once the "guarantee of semantic irrelevance" and the structure which absolutely enforces the division of the painting into the "discursive" and the "figural."[57] That is to say, perspective, as much as the locations he attaches to the "discursive," forces the issue of the location and inscription of the "discursive" in optical naturalism. If perspective enforces "semantic irrelevance" it is fundamentally an aspect of "figurality." Yet given the fact that both the "figural" and perspective are founded in the description of light in optical naturalism, and the fact that the image in its entirety is ordered by virtual light and shadow, then the "discursive" has no actual inscription anywhere in the image. Rather, it is a distillation from the iconography, a "narrative kernel" or the like—in short, an interpretive fantasy.

Bryson, of course, cannot open this line of questioning; to preserve his model he must carefully segregate perspective from what he considers the meaningful aspects of the image. Thus perspective guarantees "figurality," and especially "semantic irrelevance," "because there are so few ways in which the data concerning the spatial location of bodies can be semantically important."[58] But this assertion, like the notion of "semantic irrelevance," is easily challenged by considering almost any first-rate optical naturalist figure painting with a narrative iconography: for example, as Panofsky elegantly argued, the disposition of Europa on Zeus turned bull in *The Rape of Europa* is crucial in understanding Titian's retelling of Ovid.[59] Bryson, in the interests of his model, must relegate a whole domain of meaning to "irrelevance."

For Bryson, perspective, like optical naturalist painting as a whole, is at the mercy of a dialectic of suspicion. Inherited from Barthes, this dialectic renders anything not "discursive" into a disguise through which the ideological purposes of the "discursive" would be furthered. Virtual space in this loopingly circular project seems to be implicitly and negatively compared to the parsed space of the written sentence, or to the schematic space of the pictograph. It is probably fair to say that the optical naturalist image as understood by Bryson is an image seen by someone whose primary experience is in critical writing, not evidently in painting.

To declare perspective a guarantee of semantic irrelevance, and to reduce virtual space to a secondary semiotic order, is by implication to strip the image's reference of any necessary spatiality. In the terms of the first part of this essay, it is to take from the other the necessity of having a proper space and to spare the painter from the ethical task of addressing this spatiality of the other. Similarly, to construe a naturalistic effect as semantically

irrelevant is to push the particularity of the other, insofar as that particularity is accessible to naturalism, outside of any crucial concern: it is to open the way to the other's defacement. Defacement also is suggested in the objectification inherent in Bryson's model and the inevitable formalism of that model in practice. The uniqueness and particularity of an image and the complex dialogue built through that image to the other are reduced by Bryson's model to semiotic representations: they become operations within a specialized syntax. The sensuous manifoldness of the other, the plenitude by which it exceeds any image and the specific and nuanced character of the image are utterly outside of his model and inaccessible to its language.

However, for Bryson these facts do not throw the model open to question. Rather, it appears that those intimate and sensuous aspects of the image and its reach toward the other which are beyond the competence of his model are for him of no consequence.[60] The vitality of the image, the sensuous richness of its dialogue with the other, and the embodied life of the other are therefore things which Bryson will not allow to challenge his thinking. Despite the elegance and interest of his arguments, by not dealing carefully with mimesis Bryson reveals his model as yet another demonstration of what is now the most fashionable mode of operational thinking. In its inadequacy to mimetic painting, it recalls an admonishment of Merleau-Ponty:

> If this kind of thinking were to extend its reign to man and history; if pretending to ignore what we know of them through our own situations, it were to set out to construct man and history on the basis of few abstract indices (as a decadent psychoanalysis and a decadent culturalism have done in the United States)—then, since man really becomes the manipulandum he takes himself to be, we enter into a cultural regimen where there is neither truth nor falsity concerning man and history, into a sleep, or a nightmare, from which there is no awakening.[61]

Endnotes

[1] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London, 1984), p. 453.

[2] By the other I mean the "not-I," that which in its difference asks our respect and care in protecting its particularity and separateness. First and foremost, then, the other is another person, whom we may encounter or know of. But the other may be another creature, or some aspect of nature.

[3] Cf. Adorno, note 1, pp. 148-72, and especially, 166-168.

[4] I follow David Summers in his *The Judgement of Sense* (Cambridge, 1987), and especially p. 3 on the term "optical naturalism:"
> "Naturalism" and "realism" are sometimes used interchangeably, but it is necessary to distinguish between them. "Realism" is at base a category of subject matter, and refers to art having a concrete historical reference or an apparent concrete historical reference...

The term "naturalism" must be distinguished from the term "imitation," which is a broader category, referring to art that makes artificial analogues to things. Imitated forms may refer to natural forms but do not necessarily reduce them to their optical elements. A marching army might be shown as a frieze of undifferentiated soldiers, and the simple repetition of the forms of the soldiers themselves made to stand for the army's movement without any further concessions to the description of the appearance of an army on the march. In these terms, naturalism is a kind of imitation, but a kind of imitation in which the artificial analogue is a virtual relationship of light, dark, and color determined at least in principle by optics, by the physical geometry of sight.

In the terms of this essay, therefore, optical naturalism refers to a group of possibilities for the ordering of the architecture of illusion. It is not then in any sense identical with mimesis, nor is mimesis to be identified here with imitation as commonly understood.

[5]Following James Hillman, it can be argued that Freud discovered the unconscious through the mimetic behavior of his patients. See James Hillman, *The Myth of Analysis* (New York, 1972), p. 286.

[6]Cf. Michael Cahn, "Subversive Mimesis: Theodor Adorno and the Modern Impasse of Critique," in: *Mimesis in Contemporary Theory,* edited by Mihai Spariosu (Philadelphia/Amsterdam, 1984), pp. 27-64.

[7]Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," in: *The Primacy of Perception* (Evanston), especially pp. 162-164.

[8]David Summers, "Real Metaphor: Toward a Redefinition of the 'Conceptual' Image," a paper delivered at the NEH Summer Institute for Theory and Interpretation in the Visual Arts at Hobart and William Smith College, Geneva, New York, July-August 1987. Summers defines subjunctive space as a "culturally specific construction of human spatiality":

> Subjunctive spaces are precincts, more or less large, from the boundaries of a game to the precinct of a religious building, to the reach of an empire. A precinct is not only an area in which laws hold or languages are spoken, it is also an area within which images are respected and presented as if efficacious. Subjunctive spaces are inherently inclusive (and exclusive) and are thus both social, and architectural. Insofar as they are social, subjunctive spaces demand agreement, or "convention." One must implicitly or explicitly accept the rules according to which the spatiality of one's experience is qualified.

While Summers is speaking of substitutive images and not of mimetic images, which as I argued above cannot be substitutes or replacements, I think it is clear that mimetic images also depend on a subjunctive space, which the work articulates within itself, and which is significantly involved with a greater social world. That greater social world both helps to order the conventions governing the subjunctive spaces of mimetic images and in turn is shaped and in part given meaning through those subjunctive spaces. What I have called the architecture of illusion therefore has as one of its principle components a tradition of subjunctive space.

Real metaphors are those substitutes one might introduce for persons or things (such as a hobby horse in a child's game, or a stone, say, meant to commemorate a chieftain), which before they can stand for a horse or a chieftain, or be like either, must be suited to the use to which they are put. Not all available things, in short, can be ridden by a child, or erected as a monument. To take the case of the hobby horse, which Summers takes over from Gombrich's well-known essay, "Meditations on a Hobby Horse," the thing chosen to be horse must be of a size, weight, and configuration which permits a child to straddle it. The thing chosen must fit the deployment asked by the game, and in fitting it starts and opens the possibilities of the game. In opening the game the hobby horse also transforms given circumstance. That is, the hobby horse establishes a different tenor to the space, and a different set of actions for its use than existed before its enlistment. It is a real metaphor because it is an actual object which through a spatial transposition substitutes, within the context of the game, for a horse. That spatial transposition obviates the etymology of "metaphor" itself, from *metapherein,* to carry over or beyond, to transfer. Real metaphors further depend upon and are implicative of subjunctive spaces. Thus the thing chosen for a hobby horse is not only transformed into a real metaphor for a horse, but that transformation also involves the

transformation of a given and present space into a place where a horse may be ridden. The present space becomes a subjunctive space wherein the game is played.

[9]For an insightful and profoundly influential discussion of temporality and mimesis in literature, see Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton, 1953).

[10]Cf. Immanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (Pittsburgh, 1969), p. 125, from which I adopt the phrase "pure present." His chapter "Enjoyment and Representation" was of great use to me in developing this argument. See pp. 122-42.

[11]Again see Levinas, note 10, especially pp. 79-81.

[12]This is not to say, however, that signs are present and immediate to the subject, or that they exist in a pure present.

[13]Norman Bryson, *Word and Image* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 1-3.

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 6.

[15]*Ibid.*, pp. 1-3, and p. 28.

[16]Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1976). See especially pp. 191-217.

[17]David Summers, "This is Not a Sign," *Art Criticism,* Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 30-45. "Real Metaphor: Toward a Redefinition of the 'Conceptual' Image," cited note 8, expands on the principle arguments of "This is Not a Sign."

[18]W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology* (Chicago, 1986), p. 56.

[19]Bryson, note 13, p. 9.

[20]Roland Barthes, *Essais critiques* (Paris, 1966), p. 199. I take this note from Bryson, ibid. p. 254, note 19. This position, as a general principle, lies at the base of much of Barthes' work. For example see *S/Z* (New York, 1975) or *Elements of Semiology* (New York, 1977).

[21]Bryson, note 13, p. 11.

[22]*Ibid.*, p. 3.

[23]*Ibid.*, p. 16. The argument founding this formulation is located especially on pp. 10-11.

[24]*Ibid.* p. 11.

[25]I adopt "girl rides bull in water" from Bryson's discussion of Masaccio's *The Tribute Money:* "...with Masaccio's scene...all one needs are the component ideas of 'apostle', 'money', 'receiver of money', and the activity which connects them of 'donation.' The narrative can be parsed into its minimally sufficient requirements: apostle—donation—recipient. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[26]David Rosand, "Titian and the Critical Tradition," *Titian: His World and Legacy* (New York, 1982), ed. D. Rosand, pp. 1-40.

[27]On these issues see David Summers, *The Judgement of Sense* (Cambridge, 1987) and especially "The Light of the Piazza," p. 125-50.

[28]See Erwin Panofsky, *Problems in Titian* (New York, 1969), "Titian and Ovid," pp. 163 ff.

[29]For example, see Panofsky's famous essay "Et in Arcadia Ego," *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (New York, 1955), pp. 295-320.

[30]Bryson, note 12, p. 3.

[31]For a terse and elegant discussion of *The Book of Kells* see Carl Nordenfalk, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Paintings* (New York, 1977), pp. 17-19.

[32]Eco, note 16, pp. 213-14.

[33]Bryson, note 13, p. 20.

34*Ibid.*, p. 22.

35*Ibid.*, p. 22.

36Cf. Eco, note 16, p. 228.

37Bryson, note 13, p. 23.

38*Ibid.*, p. 6.

39*Ibid.*, p. 8.

40His later book, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (New Haven, 1983), expands on this position through a variety of interesting arguments; however, the problem of the initiating verbocentric assumptions remains.

41Bryson, note 13, pp. 12-13.

42*Ibid.*, "Watteau and Reverie," pp. 58-88. This chapter, which is most deft in undermining some all too familiar art historical cliches about Watteau, and which contains some insightful readings of portions of some paintings, nonetheless ends up skirting the challenging matter of Watteau's development.

43As "The Natural Attitude," in *Vision and Painting* makes clear, Bryson's project stands in peculiar thrall to Pliny. See note 40, pp. 1-12. For Pliny's famous fable: Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History* (Cambridge, 1938), trans. H. Rockham, Vol. IX, book xxxv, paragraphs 65-6, pp. 308 ff.

44Bryson attempts to develop this highly problematic position in *Tradition and Desire* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 64-66.

45Bryson, note 13, pp. 23-24.

46On the questionable character of such a transformation even from within Bryson's perspective see Jacques Derrida, "Signs and the Blink of an Eye," in *Speech and Phenomena* (Evanston, 1973), pp. 60-69.

47Summers, note 4, pp. 6-8.

48*Ibid.*, p. 137.

49*Ibid.*, pp. 119-124, and pp. 151-147.

50*Ibid.*, pp. 151-181.

51*Ibid.*, pp. 5.

52Bryson, note 13, p. 24.

53As Eco has noted, Goodman's opposition of "dense" versus "articulate" is not adequate to painting. For Eco's argument see Eco, note 16, pp. 181-82 and pp. 191-217. See also Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (New York, 1968), pp. 3-19, and pp. 225-32. For a thoughtful discussion of Goodman see Mitchell, note 18, pp. 53-74.

54Bryson, note 13, p. 27.

55*Ibid.*, p. 26, and for further and strangely doctrinaire remarks on Titian see Bryson, note 40, pp. 94-96.

56Again see Summers, note 4, pp. 125-150.

57Bryson, note 13, pp. 11-12.

58*Ibid.*, p. 20.

59Panofsky, note 28.

⁶⁰For some far-ranging thoughts on the sensuous and mimesis see Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Vol. 1, The Will to Power as Art* (New York, 1979), especially "The New Interpretation of Sensuousness and the Raging Discordance between Art and Truth," pp. 211-220.

⁶¹Merleau-Ponty, note 7, p. 160.

Architectural Criticism, Values, and Psychoanalysis

By Juan Pablo Bonta

I am not an artist, an art historian, or a psychoanalyst. Who am I, and—more importantly—what am I doing here? I have been trained as an architect, and my current work is in architectural text-analysis—the study of writings about architecture as encountered in the critical and historiographical literature. My connections with art, art history, and psychoanalysis are from the receiving end—as a consumer of art, a reader of art history, and a patient. I could act in this conference as a consumer advocate, although not in the way Ralph Nader would do it. More about this in a moment.

One way to find out about my role would be to ask the conveners: What did they have in mind when they invited me? I would like to discourage, however, this line of attack, not only to avoid shifting responsibility onto other shoulders, but because of a more general theoretical concern. Those who would expect the conference organizers' intention to be a major determinant of my role are likely to support the equally compelling, but in my view equally misguided, proposition that the artist is the one who ultimately holds the clue about the significance or meaning of his/her work. In my

view, even my own intentions are of limited relevance. My intentions may be laudable, but I may prove unable to reach my goals. Ultimately, the only relevant criterion to assess my contribution by is whatever I can manage to get across to you, the audience. The hearings on Judge Bork's nomination focused attention on whether or not the Constitution must be restrictively interpreted in terms of the framer's original intent. In scholarship, as well as in art and design, the locus of meaning, and ultimately of success, lies not in original intent but in the users' perception. It is in this sense that I see myself advocating the users' point of view.

This is not meant to disregard the thoughts and expectations of the conference organizers: to the contrary, they are also users, and very important ones at that. But again, the key is not what they intended me to do, but what they will perceive me as having done, or having failed to do. Their perceptions will be tinted by their expectations, which are also likely to be yours, and which I would be wise to take into account.

Two issues are to be raised here: the relationship between art and architecture, and the congruence, if any, between my work and psychoanalytical methods in criticism, which is the theme of this conference.

It has been a practice in past Mountain Lake symposia to have a participant from the architectural profession. I am fulfilling that role this time. This puts me in the minority, if not on the periphery, even if I shared everything else with my fellow conferees. "Not so," I can imagine some of you telling me. "We accept you in a brotherly spirit; much of what we have to say about art production and art interpretation is also applicable to architecture"—"with a few allowances for the utilitarian nature of your endeavors," you might add. And you would mean it. Indeed, architecture is often perceived as a sister art; this perception is reflected in the administrative structure of many universities.

Yet many of my fellow architects would have resisted such a categorization until very recently. They were more likely to see themselves as building technologists, social engineers, or political reformers. It is a relatively new fact that some of the younger and most creative members of the profession, especially in this country, are presenting themselves to the world as artists. The architectural profession at large has not yet fully accepted this new self image, let alone adjusted to its consequences. The situation is particularly critical in the field of verbal discourse—criticism, theory, and history. It is one thing merely to proclaim, after decades of denial, that architecture is an art; it is another to have developed a critical vocabulary, a set of epistemological tools, and a scholarly tradition nurtured in such a view. Such tools and traditions must necessarily differ from the ones developed when architecture was seen as, say, a branch of engineering. Art history and art criticism are sometimes unfavorably compared with literary criticism, where more exciting ideas seem to have arisen during the past generation. The theoretical foundations and scholarly traditions in architectural thinking are, I must admit, even weaker. We have glamorous professional magazines, but only one journal devoted to architectural history in this country. Interest in architectural history runs very high, both

among professionals and layman, especially as it relates to historic preservation; but there is almost no background in architectural historiography—in other words, in the critical analysis of the historical tools themselves. Something similar happens with criticism. A few of the smaller, usually universityrelated magazines valiantly if sporadically engage in criticism. Again, however, scant attention is devoted to the theory and methodology of criticism. Architectural theory as a scholarly endeavour, by comparison with our sister disciplines, is in its infancy. My own presentation, alas, can prove my thesis.

A few words about my preoccupations as they intersect with the symposium's theme. I see myself not as an architect, or a critic, or a historian, but as a curious observer. I would write my epitaph, if permitted, "He looked at things as they were." I carved a little niche for myself in architectural scholarship, where I had the audacity to dictate my own rules. The rules are: do not pass judgement, do not believe what people say, and keep watching. One of the things I watch is what people say about architecture. Because of their permanence, writings have a special advantage over transient words; it is therefore to architectural writings, such as are found in the professional and historical literature, that I turned my attention. They are a marvelous means by which to uncover people's beliefs and assumptions about architecture, both overt and covert. Literature, with a capital L, is recognized as a legitimate subject for specialized inquiry. Architectural literature, by contrast, is usually approached as if it were fully transparent—as if it were good only to access a subject matter that is architectural, not verbal. I propose, instead, to look at literary discourses seeking levels of significance that go beyond explicit, literal meaning. The procedure puts at our command a large corpus of material, both contemporary and historical, more varied and richer than what could be amassed using conventional interviewing techniques.

In *Architecture and Its Interpretation* (1979) I presented a series of contradictory opinions selected from the writings of distinguished architectural historians and critics. I also reviewed instances of judgments that were widely shared at one point in time, only to be replaced soon afterwards by an equally collective, albeit divergent, interpretation. At that time, I strived to reach a level of analysis at which the conflicting, contradictory, or changing views could somehow be reconciled. I proposed the existence of what I called "expressive systems"—a notion whereby I expected to be able to reclaim a layer of logic for architectural literature. Different expressive systems, like different languages, were often irreconcilable, as shown by my excerpts selected from different contexts; within each expressive system, however, consistency was to be expected—or at least so I thought. Shifting interpretations, in turn, could be explained in terms of general taxonomy of change, displaying a certain dialectic logic beyond the apparent randomness of the pronouncements encountered.

I have become more radical since I came to see architectural discourse as a game, bound by socially shared expectations which reward certain types of discourse while penalizing others, but free in other senses—only

weakly connected to or restricted by the dictates of logic or reality. Architectural literature, if decoded, can reveal those socially shared assumptions, perhaps more effectively than the buildings themselves, which are less apt by their very permanence to reflect fast-paced temporal change.

I will not offer you a psychoanalytical interpretation of architecture. I am not sure that one has been accomplished successfully anywhere, with the exception, of course, of generalities about the obvious symbolism of certain architectural forms (protection vs. exposure, softness and harshness, submission or dominance, and so on). But I believe my goals and preoccupations to be congruent, at some inner level, with those of psychoanalysis, even if I cannot claim to use its techniques or tools in any systematic fashion. In shifting my attention from architectural practice to written architectural discourse I am mimicking the psychoanalyst's interest in her patient's speech behavior. Indeed, I am removing myself from actual architectural practice twice: first, because of my choice of words over buildings; second, because of my interest in the hidden significance of discourse over literal meaning. Admission of possible levels of significance in the realm of the illogical and the unreal is, I believe, decisively Freudian, and so are my three private rules—not to pass judgement, to be skeptical of pronouncements, and to continue observing.

Acknowledgement of a certain level of indebtedness to psychoanalysis must not be construed to imply, however, that I am ready to advocate the usage of psychoanalytical methods in architectural criticism. More about this later.

* * *

As a case study, I will examine a text by Kenneth Frampton about House X by John Hejduk (1966), published in *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier* (1975). This has been an unusually influential book, not only in establishing definitively the reputations of the five architects referenced, who up to that time had only a limited body of built work but, more importantly, in introducing new values and perspectives into architectural discourse. Thus, the book contributed to the revolution in architectural practice and criticism of the past twenty years.

I would like to pinpoint certain characteristics of architectural criticism, found in this piece and in many others, that, because of their very universality, are usually taken for granted and can be perceived only by special effort. A little later, I will try to highlight the unique, personal nature of Frampton's descriptive tools and critical evaluation, as is revealed in this excerpt. To shoot for both the universal and the particular may be, perhaps, a bit ambitious; but I will limit the extent of my remarks in order to be able to touch upon both spheres.

As almost any architectural writer would have done, Frampton organizes his view of the project in terms of a visitor who approaches the house from the roadside garage, negotiates the walk, traverses the entry, and then experiences the various interior spaces ending in what is presumably the

bedroom. But why? This outside-generated experience is surely appropriate when faced with a store, or an exhibition pavilion—but here we are dealing with a residence. Shouldn't a truly user-oriented description of a house, one that is sensitive to the inhabitant's life rather than to the impressions of the visitors, start with a description of the master-bedroom ceiling as it presents itself half-blurred to the sleepy owner struggling to awake in a cold winter morning? Shouldn't the barefooted walk to the bathroom, partly over a caressing rug but partly over cold marble, be the next issue to consider, to then ponder exactly what Mr. and Mrs. Jones will see framing their image in the bathroom mirror while brushing their teeth? Shouldn't the next point in the agenda be the breakfast table, followed by the walk to the garage, and then by the delay while the car's engine warms up? Only after that would the overall appearance of the house from the road matter—although not much—as Mr. Jones briefly glances at the image of his home as reflected in the rearview mirror of his car. Architects and critics are quick to give assurance about the users' experience of the house being the kernel of their concerns. One would expect, if they were sincere, the organization of their discourse to reflect those priorities. The fact that it generally does not demonstrates that in spite of lipservice to the users' needs, the real nature of architectural historians' and critics' (and their audiences') interaction with architecture is governed by a detached aesthetic and primarily visual appreciation, as if houses were isolated museum objects.

This state of affairs can be denounced, but it cannot be easily corrected. A truly "experiential" description of a house—one focused on the daily life of the users—would run counter to commonly accepted norms. Those norms prescribe that the analysis of an airport or a railway station be conducted from the perspective of a departing passenger rather than an arriving one, whereas the analysis of a hotel is to be undertaken, in contrast, from the viewpoint of an arriving passenger, not one who is departing. According to the grand scheme of the universe, anybody coming into the hotel will sooner or later depart, just as most airline travelers leaving from one airport will eventually arrive into another one, although—granted— it may not be the one they had planned. But conventions overshadow reality. A description of the Jones' home starting in the bedroom and ending in the garage, no matter how well-intentioned, would startle readers rather than reassure them, for they also participate, along with the architects and critics, in a system of rules and expectations with contradictions that are impervious to reality.

Hejduk's House 10—or is it House X?—is a somewhat special case, inasmuch as it was never built nor, as far as I know, intended for construction. Mr. Jones does not exist, and worrying about his morning hygiene seems somewhat gratuitous. House X, and much of the work of the Five Architects at the time of publication of the book, was a stepping stone in an on-going search for a new, ideal, abstract concept of architectural order, a re-evaluation of the architectural vocabulary, and a redefinition of the very nature of the architectural task. Worrying about real perceptions of

real buildings, be it from the point of view of dwellers or of aesthetically-minded visitors, seems largely irrelevant in this context. This, of course, is recognized by Frampton himself, and by other contributors to the book. The writer *did not* miss the real nature of the project. Rather, my point is that *in spite* of his understanding of the unique parameters of this case, he could not rid himself (or at least, not rid himself completely) of the weight of an entrenched critical vocabulary. He thus continues to discuss the house in terms of a "left hand complex" and a "right hand complex," left and right being meaningless references unless one accepts the fact that the perception of the house is to be organized in terms of an approach from the street. In few cases is this usage so ill-fitted as to House X. Hejduk drew the axonometrics of the house from all four quadrants, with equal care. What is on the left in one of the views therefore becomes the right, then the top, and then the bottom, in the other three. Frampton was aware of the collapse of frontality in the project, since he entitled his essay "Frontality vs. Rotation;" yet "left" and "right" were not expurged from his discourse.

In one sense, it would be marvelous if the vocabulary of criticism and its content would match each other perfectly, like a glove to the hand. That is, however, a rare occurrence, given the real-life pressures under which architectural literature is produced. For the text-analyst, though, careless, half-baked critical pronouncements may be even more rewarding than "perfect" ones. As in the case of psychoanalysis, the patients' (or the critics') misfits and lapses in logic may be more revealing in identifying their hidden assumptions—both the personal ones and those that are socially shared.

* * *

I wish to bring to your attention the frequent usage of dualities in this excerpt. Frampton starts the first paragraph with a contraposition of "this scheme" and "Hejduk's earlier projects." Further oppositions appearing in the same paragraph are "vertically stacked" vs. "horizontal fugal" relationships, and "solid" vs. "glazed." In paragraph two there is the "left hand complex" contraposed to the "other end," the "first end condition" as opposed to the "second end condition," the L-shaped pavilion in contraposition to the three-quarters square pavilion, the form of the pavilions confronted to the forms of their chimneys, and the existence of "fugal counterchanges" between pavilions and chimneys in two of the instances opposed to an inconsistency in the third pavilion. I'll come back to this. In paragraph three we learn of organic foyers contraposed to non-organic pavilions, and of the opposition between glass on one side of the spine to solidity on the other side. Paragraph four, in turn, introduces a contrast between frontality and rotation—a contrast which then becomes the basis for a still higher level contrast, in which the lower level contrast is said to be handled one way by Hejduk and another way by Eisenman.

The issue that I would like us to face is whether the preponderance of dualities is a feature of the Hejduk house, or of Frampton's critique, of my

own reading of Frampton. Or is it perhaps a universal trait of human thinking, or an instance of what Dr. Spitz called earlier today "correspondence between art and mind"?

The first hypothesis—that duality is encapsulated in the project itself-is easy to dismiss by showing that alternative readings, conducted from the vantage point of different interpretive principles, are not only possible but potentially rewarding. We could attempt a "musical" reading—one in which the various units of the composition are faced sequentially, with an ear toward the resulting "crescendos" or "diminuendos". We could start with the simple note of the perpendicular path, to continue with the more complex phrasing of the parallel path leading to the even reacher foyer, as a preparation for culminations in the two left-side pavilions. The "accompanied" part of the spine then introduces a welcomed relaxation, as a prelude to the unaccompanied part which becomes a peak in terms of simplicity. The "lean-to" unit and the toilet reintroduce the theme of complexity, all of which reaches a final climax, and a resolution, in the right end pavilion. Resolution it is indeed, because now for the first time the conflict between straight-lined pavilions and curvilinear "lean-to" additions is synthetized into an element that is both curvilinear and pavilion-like. Far fetched? I am not sure. You know that I am merely experimenting, and that may detract from my credibility. But if we were to encounter this interpretation in an appropriate scholarly context it would pass, I believe, the test of acceptance.

The "musical" interpretation also falsifies the hypothesis that polarities are universally embedded in human reason, to the exclusion of other ordering principles. The only remaining explanations are that the polarities were "brought to" the project by Frampton or else that they were brought to Frampton by me. Although I cannot elude some measure of responsibility, I still believe that my reading of Frampton is not entirely capricious. Additional evidence could be gathered from a wider corpus of his writing. In an article published in the current issue of Design Book Review I pointed at another instance of dualities as an organizing principle in Frampton's discourse.

Many assume that the riskiest part of the critic's task, when he or she truly exposes innermost values, is the evaluation of a piece of work. Personally, I often find "descriptive" writing to be just as committed and revealing. Anyway, let us examine the one instance in the excerpt where the writer clearly passes judgement. By the middle of the second paragraph, Frampton points out that each of the three "pavilions" have a series of common structural elements—namely, a column, an L-shaped wall, and free-standing fireplace. He further argues that there is a "fugal counterchange" in the case of two of the pavilions, between the shape of the pavilion and the shape of its chimney: "the three-quarters semi-circular pavilion has within it a circular chimney structure, while the three-quarters square has within it a three-quarters square chimney structure." And then Frampton concludes, disapprovingly:

However, at this juncture the consistency of the system breaks down, for the "L" form has within it a square chimney structure that is aligned with one side of the "L".

I would like to invite you to a bit of unauthorized editing. Let us replace the sentence with this one:

However, at this juncture as elsewhere in the project, the architect shuns predictability and chooses instead to keep us on edge. In a masterful twist, Hejduk places a non-L-shaped chimney in the L-shaped pavilion. By violating the rule he himself had set up, he was able to remain consistent, at a deeper level, with the spirit of fugal counterchanges that informs the entire oeuvre.

I am not claiming that this evaluation is *preferable* to Frampton's; it is enough, for the purposes of my argument, to agree that the alternative assessment is *possible*. By this I mean that it is *acceptable*, that it does not violate interpretative cannons or scholarly rules. The editor of a publication, even the most authoritative, would not dare—I believe—to grab his or her red pencil and single out my sentence as unprintable.

Architects and architectural students, perhaps more so than artists, are often reluctant to accept the legitimacy of alternative, even contradictory evaluations. Creative persons who would resist the suggestion that a design problem can be solved in only one way nevertheless do expect single-valuedness and unique, universal solutions in the realm of criticism. If only one critical position were tenable with regard to each work, criticism would be worthless; it could be arrived at by an automaton. Critical freedom, like artistic freedom, is a pre-condition for the critical act. Criticism becomes meaningful, like art, precisely because of choice. If there is no choice there is no meaning, as information scientists know well. Choices are made in terms of values, and values are, thus, what is reflected in choices.

I see criticism, like art itself, as a free game in which the rules are permanently being rewritten. Indeed, criticism, like design, is at its most exciting when the rules are challenged.

I expect only two things from criticism, the same things I expect from art: inner consistency and meaningfulness. Inner consistency is what remains after renouncing the quest for external consistency, consistency with other opinions and even consistency with reality itself. What I mean by this is that the critic, like the artist, and certainly like John Hejduk in House X, is free to redefine reality in his or her own terms. Meaningfulness is more difficult to measure than inner consistency; ultimately, the only test of meaningfulness available to us is social acceptance. The limits of social acceptance must be permanently tested because they too are subject to change—but these are the only limits curtailing the freedom of both artist and critic. Notice that I am, again, emphasizing socially shared pronouncements. This is what I had in mind when I suggested that I would act as a user advocate.

Personally, I profess an almost obsessive infatuation with inner consistency. I know myself capable of driving an audience to unbelievable limits

of boredom if I merely suspect that it may bring me any closer to the always elusive goal of lucidity and coherence. But this is merely an individual preference, not necessarily shared by others. In fact, it has always filled me with wonder to note that it is possible to have one of the two qualities of criticism—consistency or acceptance—while being shortchanged in the other.

Let us now return to the alternative assessments of the chimney shape in the L-shaped pavilion of House X. Frampton disapproved of it because it broke down the consistency of the system as established in the other two pavilions; I validated the architect's action as a deliberate effort to break down an excessively rigid rule and engage, instead, in free playfulness. In which sense can these pronouncements be said to convey values? In a very distinctive sense indeed—and it is precisely at this point that I must defer to Frampton. My tentative reasoning would make sense only if we acted in a social environment in which Hejduk's purported rigidity was widely recognized. In fact, this is not the case. Frampton must invest a considerable amount of critical capital (in terms of words, or paragraphs, or time—whichever way critical effort is to be measured) to introduce his idea to his audience. Searching for contrapunctual relationships between pavilion shapes and chimney shapes was a novel concept. Until such time as this idea had been established and had sunk into social consciousness, it did not make sense to talk about its *violation*. Please note, again, that we are not dealing only with the inner, formal characteristics of the project; what gives Frampton's view more stamina than mine is that he had in mind the limits of his audience. He spoke about inconsistency rather than playful violation of rules—I believe—not because he could not perceive the violation as playful, but because his audience could not. To that extent, Frampton's discourse proves respectful of the limits of public acceptance in a way that my interpretation is not—or, to be more precise, would not have been at the time of publication of the book. Which leads us to a further twist: if critiques are bound by what is acceptable in their social environment, different environments may make possible different critiques. My statement could have been unpalatable in 1975, but a cliche today. The historicity of criticism—the need for different critiques at different times—is hereby reaffirmed, at the same level as the historicity of architecture itself, or art.

If critics are vindicated as active cultural agents, whose standing in the dialectics of artistic development is comparable to that of artists, shouldn't they, too, be subject to psychoanalytical inquiry? In a general sense I would say yes. The critics' preferences and values are surely rooted in the deepest layers of their personality. But this could be the beginning, I am afraid, of a universal, unending chain of psychoanalizations, in which we all would have to jump onto the couch to disentangle our roles in the wider social processes outside of which art or architecture simply do not exist.

This prospect does not necessarily displease me. But being aware of the length and slowness of the psychoanalytical process, I am afraid that while the results begin to flourish we would be forced to continue business as usual.

I am, of course, only partly serious; I am testing the limits to which I can push the tolerance of this audience and the patience of my fellow conferees, whom I imagine committed to psychoanalytical methods to extents that I do not share.

I would like to make, in conclusion, a candid statement about my standing. I expect a great many good things to continue emerging from the human and the social sciences, of which psychoanalysis is but one. In the October issue of the *American Journal of Psychiatry,* published earlier this week, there is a paper by Nancy Andreasen, of the University of Iowa, arguing for a correlation between creativity as evidenced in the work of distinguished contemporary American writers and mental illness in the writers themselves and/or their immediate family. Dr. Gedo, who told us that creativity may be the cure, but not the result, of psychopathology, would probably disagree; but let us assume, merely for the sake of the argument, that the findings were true. If so, its consequence for education, family science, and preventive mental medicine could be enormous; but I cannot see this piece of knowledge having a major effect on literary theory. The question is not whether the human sciences can make a contribution; of course they can, and they do. My questioning merely concerns the centrality of their contribution to criticism.

I see centrality of psychoanalytical contributions limited on two counts, the first being relevance and the second being practicality. In terms of relevance, I question the inevitable emphasis of psychoanalytical techniques on the personality of the artist or architect, who is only partially responsible for the total outcome. I presume that psychoanalytical study of the critics and their audiences is not a practical possibility.

The practical restrictions of the technique are, ultimately, overpowering. Dr. Gedo has explained how limited is the number of scholars truly qualified to practice this sort of interdisciplinary work. For somebody who is interested primarily in socially shared processes, this seems an extremely important stumbling block. Being interested not in what critics (or people) *ought to do,* but in what they really do, if the psychoanalytical approach can be followed only by a few then I know that I am unlikely to encounter it.

This of course comes as no surprise. Psychoanalysis is a science, and it must comply with its own internal paradigms as such. This compels it to proceed far too cautiously for the fast lane of criticism. Critics, by their very nature, must remain free to jump to conclusions after only cursory examinations; their often merciless, sweeping statements are naturally inimical to the restriction and discipline of science. There is no, nor do I ever expect there to be, scientific architectural criticism, just as there is no scientific architecture.

There is, however, one final twist that allows me to envision a scenario in which the path of psychoanalytically-oriented art theorists and my own could conceivably intersect. Perhaps as a result of this symposium, and of persistent similar efforts, a climate of opinion will finally emerge leading to the acceptance of psychoanalytical criticism as a dominant paradigm—as

has happened before with existentialism, phenomenology, structuralism, and deconstructivism. Psychoanalytical criticism would have passed the test of social acceptance. If this were to happen you and I could happily concur. You, because things would finally be the way you want them. I, having no vested interest except in seeing things as they are, for the very same reason: because things turned out the way you wanted them. I ask for no less and no more.

An Autobiography in the Shape of Alabama: The Art of Roger Brown

By Mary Mathews Gedo

Like Pablo Picasso, who described each of his canvases as the visual equivalent of a diary entry, Roger Brown forges his art directly from the stuff of his life.[1] But unlike Picasso, who forced his viewers to share his personal distress, Brown cushions his public—and maybe even himself—from the full brunt of his autobiographical revelations by rendering them in a quirky style, complete with bright colors, punning titles and witty captions. Perhaps partially for this reason and partially because he is a much more modest, private person than Picasso, critics have not focused primarily on the self-revelatory character of Brown's oeuvre, as this essay proposes to do.

As I hope to demonstrate, Brown's character—and his art— have been deeply impregnated by the experience of growing up in the rural South in a close-knit family committed to fundamentalist religious beliefs and practices. Although transient events, such as sights observed during vacation trips, invariably invade his paintings, the enduring elements of Brown's personal style and iconography remain rooted in early childhood memories.

Brown, born in 1941, spent several crucial years of his early childhood at the home of his maternal grandmother in Hamilton, Alabama, where he lived with his mother and grandmother while his father served in the armed forces from 1943-45.[2] Brown's grandmother lived next door to her mother-in-law, Dizenia, in the larger of two homes the latter's son had built for them. Unfortunately, Dizenia never accepted her daughter-in-law, and by the time Brown was born the two women did not even speak. This strange situation must have greatly puzzled the little boy, who loved both women, though they certainly did not love one another. His fascination as an adult artist with depicting the inhabitants of houses and high rises as minute figures silhouetted against their windows, as though perceived by an observer forever excluded from the life within, may reflect repeated early experiences of peering from one of these cheek-by-jowl homes into that of the "enemy" next door. Brown's mature propensity for engaging in artistic feuds may also stem from the tangled relationships to which he was exposed during those formative years.[3] Since 1982, he has devoted considerable artistic time and energy to portraying his negative assessments of the criticism written by two prominent Chicago art critics, Franz Schulze and Alan Artner. The latter has gradually assumed pride of place as Brown's favorite enemy, and artist and writer have exchanged frequent painted and written barbs.[4]

In 1945 the artist's father rejoined his family, and they moved to Brown senior's home town, Opeleika, Alabama, where they lived in close proximity to several paternal relatives. The future artist's lifelong intimacy with these kinfolk has imprinted his artistic oeuvre in a variety of ways. To cite just one example: the images of trailer trucks that recur in so many of Brown's pictures apparently symbolize a favorite uncle, who drove such rigs professionally.

Although Brown did not spontaneously allude to any artistic interest on his father's part, a photograph taken when the future artist was two or three shows him seated in a delightful little painted wooden jeep, one of many objects of this type that his father made during Roger's childhood. The artist's enduring response to this paternal hobby can be measured by his extensive sculptural oeuvre, which dates from 1974 to the present.[5] His witty objects range from those fabricated from scratch, like *Mask for the Chairman of the Board of Directors,* 1974, a painted wooden construction featuring suitably lofty-looking skyscrapers, to recycled objects that Brown transforms into works of art with a few deft touches. *UUFWI (United Universe Flying Waffle Iron),* 1976, consists of a reincarnated old appliance converted into a sleek space ship by the addition of appropriate openings, complete with glimpses of the passengers.

Throughout his childhood, Brown accompanied family members to revival meetings, and religion became such an important aspect of his adolescence that following high-school graduation, he briefly enrolled in a seminary to study for the ministry.[6] Although he is no longer a devout church-goer, remnants of the artist's early religiosity continue to surface in his work, affecting both its form and content. Such consistent stylistic

features as the glowing nocturnal light diffused through canvases like *Night Fishing in a Calm Lake,* 1980, commemorate dramatic sky effects glimpsed by the sleepy future artist on trips home from evening revival meetings. His religious background more obviously colors the iconography of Brown's art, both in relatively more respectful representations such as *An Actual Dream of the Second Coming,* 1976, a canvas that literally reproduces a vision of the Last Judgement that he experienced during sleep, or in more satiric compositions, like The *Devil's Surprise,* which shows the blessed pleasuring themselves in every indulgence of the flesh, while below them the damned sit rigidly aligned in church pews, condemned forever to listen to the haranguing of a boring preacher. Though the latter painting subverts the meaning of its source, its imagery derives from the artist's vivid childhood memories of crudely painted religious charts depicting the horrors of hell that itinerant preachers carried with them from mission to mission on the revival circuit.

Of course, Brown's oeuvre does not derive solely from such personal experiences; it also reflects his reactions to art of the past, as well as to examples of influential teachers and peers. His responsiveness to a wide range of sources, from the paintings of the Italian and Northern "Primitives" at one extreme, to the work of tribal, outsider, and comic-book artists at the other, has been amply documented by critics.[7] But it is important to remember that Brown's admiration for artists like Giotto and Duccio is intimately bound up with the fact that their art exerted such a profound impact on their world. He would like nothing better than to have his paintings produce the kind of social effect achieved by Duccio's *Maesta,* so admired by the artist's contemporaries that the entire citizenry of Siena followed it as it was carried through the streets en route to its future home in the town cathedral.

During Brown's student days at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), he remained singularly unresponsive to the art of the "Old Masters" and Impressionists displayed in the museum with which the school was affiliated. "All those old landscapes" bored him, while the canvases of the contemporary Abstract Expressionist painters impressed him as merely decorative, their fabled "angst" as a mere artifact of the bravura technique used to produce them.[8] Among twentieth century painters, he especially respects Diego Rivera, whose great public murals seem to Brown capable of exerting a socio-cultural impact comparable to that of the Italian and Northern Primitives. But not until Brown became acquainted with the work of Giorgio de Chirico and Rene Magritte did he recover from his indifferent response to modern easel painting. The major Magritte retrospective shown at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1966 especially excited and inspired Brown, along with many of his Chicago peers. As his SAIC classmate, the abstract painter Frank Piatek, observed, "You can see Magritte's *Golden Legend* (a canvas depicting meticulously rendered loaves of French bread filling the landscape) in Roger's clouds and my tubular forms."[9] Canvases such as *Intermittent Showers and Land O' Lakes,* both 1976, demonstrate that Magritte's example continued to exert an impact on Brown's cloud

compositions long after the retrospective ended. More recently, the artist's fascination with Magritte resurfaced in *This Is Not a Gun,* 1984, which derives its ironic motif from the Belgian master's famous series labeled *"Ceci n'est pas une pipe."* Of course, Brown's artistic development has also been shaped by his first-hand contacts with SAIC instructors— especially Ray Yoshida, who urged him to paint about his own experiences—and classmates, as well as by local "naive" artists like Joseph Yoakum.

But it is not the purpose of this essay to examine the role of such influences on Brown's artistic evolution. Rather, I hope to demonstrate some of the ways the psychoanalytic approach can be used to illuminate an artist's oeuvre. When one encounters a cooperative artist like Brown, willing to participate in a psychological exploration of his work, it is possible to draw fairly definite conclusions about connections that must remain mere speculations when they involve the character and career of a deceased artist. In my earlier work on Picasso, and more recently in an essay in *Art Criticism* illustrated with examples drawn from interviews with the Chicago abstract painter, William Conger, I have attempted to demonstrate why the psychodynamic approach seems best suited to explaining changes in an artist's style and productivity levels as well as in his iconography.[10] In Picasso's case, every variation of this type was causally associated with changes in his most intimate relationships. In this respect, too, Brown demonstrates an affinity with Picasso. The Chicago painter's association with the late architect, George Veronda, who became his close companion from 1972 until Veronda's death in 1984, exerted just such a profound effect on Brown's work and world.

Success came quickly to Roger Brown, whose extraordinary talent was universally recognized while he was still an undergraduate student at SAIC. By the time he met Veronda in 1972, the young artist had already participated in several successful group shows and had formed the affiliation with the Phyllis Kind Gallery that he still maintains. His work was featured in a highly-acclaimed solo exhibition at the gallery in 1971, just a year after he received his M.F.A. The relationship with Veronda quickly became very important for both participants, and the measurable impact on Brown's style was immediate. Veronda greatly admired the work of Mies van der Rohe, whose buildings Brown had previously dismissed as merely "ugly, boring glass boxes." Under his architect friend's guidance, the artist began to appreciate their beauty, especially the care with which Mies invariably worked out the patterning of his curtain walls. Brown soon realized the relevance of such rhythmic repetitions to his own artistic goals, and his canvases quickly began to reflect the fascination with patterning that has remained a constant in his art ever since. One of the first canvases Brown painted in this new style, *Curtain Wall Going Up,* 1972, depicts the O'Hare Hilton during the course of construction; the composition grew out of Brown's frequent visits to the building site, for which Veronda served as project manager. It seems paradoxical, but Brown also began his "disaster paintings" around the same time as his meeting with Veronda. Although the artist's own description suggested that the initiation of this new stylistic

and iconographic phase must somehow be associated with Veronda in Brown's mind, he insisted, to my surprise, that he had begun this series *before* he met Veronda, rather than after. Brown did mention, however, that soon after they met, Veronda acquired *A View of the Auroral Drapery*, a picture that directly preceded the disaster series.

The artist's reconstruction of the chronology of his disaster series aroused my skepticism, though I cannot offer any conscious rationale for my response. Consequently, I was not at all surprised to find that the catalogue published in conjunction with Brown's 1980 exhibition at the Montgomery, Alabama Museum of Fine Arts noted that he had, indeed, embarked on this series soon after, rather than just prior to, meeting Veronda.[10] This incident points up the type of problem that can arise when an art historian with a psychoanalytic bent works with a living artist. Brown had been both courageous in agreeing to undertake interviews that he realized would involve psychological probing on my part, and unusually frank and thoughtful in his responses. Nonetheless, in this situation, interviewer and artist found themselves at odds.[11] Moreover, even if the chronological reconstruction provided by the 1980 exhibition catalogue was accurate, what was its significance? Clearly, his meeting with Veronda had been anything but a disaster for the artist, so why did the initiation of this group of canvases follow so closely on the beginning of that relationship?

The complete answer to this question may not be available to Brown's conscious recall, nor could relevant associations be elicited by the type of questions appropriate for our interview situation, which certainly made no attempt to solicit material not readily accessible to the artist. The only speculation I can offer—surely an incomplete answer if on the mark at all—is that from the secure vantage point of this wonderful new partnership, the artist could finally examine the disastrous aspects of earlier relationships, including those of his more distant as well as his more recent past. Evidence that the etiology of Brown's new artistic program was somehow closely associated with Veronda is supported by the artist's own observation that the *Auroral Drapery* painting was one of his first to omit the ground plane. "Before that I always worked with the ground plane; everything came off it, and nothing got cut off at the bottom. It was a challenge for me to see if I could make it come off—that's what really led to those disaster pictures: not having a ground plane at all, but just backgrounds and sky and stuff." This comment evoked another association on my part: young lovers often compare their sensation of elation to floating in the air or dancing on the clouds. A similar reaction may have determined this new development in Brown's art. However, the frequency with which the disaster pictures also show airborne skyscrapers in the process of disintegration—bursting in to flames, crumbling in earthquakes and the like—suggests that the motif must have cloaked an underlying anxiety. A thematic relationship between the scenes Brown portrayed in this series and enduring memories of revival meeting sermons describing the end of the world and the Last Judgement seems entirely possible. Why such associations should have been evoked at that moment in his life remains far from clear.

The autumn after Veronda and Brown began their relationship, they took a driving trip through the American West. On their return, the artist extended his new fascination with patterning to the creation of entire landscapes filled with repetitive motifs. In retrospect, he perceives this revised landscape style as a direct outgrowth of conversations with Veronda, reinforced by visual experiences garnered during their journey.

A few years later, he enlarged this pattern treatment to include cloud formations. However, he considered his first cloud painting awkward and unsatisfactory. In retrospect, he realizes that the awkwardness resulted from the depiction of all the clouds as possessing "the same intensity of color," rather than suggesting the atmospheric gradation of tones produced by the mist and recession of the more distant sky. Once again, he arrived at the solution to this problem during the course of another long motor trip: "I got this idea down South, visiting my parents, going through the mountains, [observing] the mist, and how the mountains disappeared and each successive mountain disappeared more and more...Afterward, I realized I could use this in cloud paintings." *Misty Morning* from 1975 constitutes a fine example of Brown's fully-developed cloud style. Its stylized, scalloped cloud formations also mirror the similarly decorative treatment that he admired in a Chinese embroidery from his private collection.[12]

During 1973, the artist made another long driving trip, this time to the deep South and his parental home in Opeleika. This visit inspired the *Autobiography in the Shape of Alabama (Mammy's Door)*, 1974, a picture that evolved into a complex commentary on his personal and family history. Unlike those artists who typically embark on a painting without a firm idea of its composition, much less its title in mind, Brown usually works out the theme and name of each picture in advance. But the evolution of the *Autobiography* began more serendipitously. As Brown recalls it, this work grew out of his newfound interest in making objects, a development that he attributes to his growing fascination with the Art Deco architecture and artifacts of Florida. It really seems more cogent, however, that his visit home would lead Brown instinctively to recall— whether consciously or not—the objects his father had fashioned for him during childhood.[13] In any case, he was aware of the highly personalized nature of the *Autobiography* from the start, and he soon decided to dedicate it to his great-grandmother, Dizenia, also known as "Mammy" by her fond family.

The *Autobiography* quickly evolved into a double-sided piece. On its recto side the artist painted a stylized representation of the state of Alabama with its major public and personal landmarks. The latter include Hamilton, with the two adjacent homes (shown at the upper left), where Brown spent his early years, and Opeleika (depicted at the right center), where he lived from 1945 until his graduation from high school in 1960. At the bottom of the picture the artist portrayed Mobile Bay and the Gulf of Mexico, the latter shown as a painted wooden extension, complete with a little boat labeled "Mammy." "I got so intense working on this painting that I realized I was even going to go around on the back and do sculptural 'dohigs,'

and I really started dedicating the painting to [my great-grandmother], and for some reason I dedicated the boat to her too." The artist turned the reverse side of the painting into a constructed mock-up of the wooden door to his great-grandmother's home. Relief letters attached to the door identify it as the entrance to "Dizenia's" house. Four framed personal photos incorporated into the construction portray the artist's great-grandmother, her brother and his son; his maternal grandparents; and the artist himself, shown both with his parents and alone, seated in that little painted wooden jeep his father had made for him when he was two or three. A box labeled "PS Chicago" contains letters, cards and other personal memorabilia, including a hand-written history of Alabama executed in the shape of the state and a reconstruction of the artist's personal history and family genealogy, again in a cursive script, fashioned in the form of a spiral. Six metal clothes hooks fastened to the door symbolize Dizenia's six grandchildren; a shirt she made for the future artist when he was fifteen hangs from the hook presumably representing his mother.

As soon as he had completed this complex work Brown made another trip back home to Alabama, to revisit the places he had painted or written about in the *Autobiography,* and to extend his genealogical investigations by tracking down distant relatives and other family contacts. The completion of this landmark work heralded major changes in the artist's personal life and attitudes. "I always felt the ties to my greatgrandmother and her memory. After I finished that piece—the intensity of making it—a lot of that sentimental attachment to the South and to my family sort of disappeared." It surely cannot be a coincidence that Brown executed this highly personal work around the time he bought a Halsted Street storefront building and began planning with Veronda to convert it into a studio and joint residence. With the creation of his double-sided painted construction, the *Autobiography in the Shape of Alabama (Mammy's Door),* Brown literally and figuratively closed the door on his personal past, committing himself to an independent life with his new "family" partner, George Veronda, who now claimed first place in his affections.

During the thirteen years since he finished the *Autobiography,* Brown's art has continued to mature and evolve. His increasing renown has played a major role in Chicago's growing recognition as the center for an internationally famous group of quirky figurative artists, the so-called "Imagists," among whom Brown and Ed Paschke share top rank. Throughout this period, Brown has continued to be highly fertile, producing pictures in his unique manner from sources merging personal experiences and reactions with art historical associations. For example, his "crucifixion series" of 1975-76 grew directly out of a three-month sojourn he spent alone in New Mexico, where he painted these pictures.[14] The artist recalls that the religious art of the region, especially the numerous crosses dotting the landscape, helped to inspire this series. However, these crucifixion pictures also recall such works by Georgia O'Keeffe as her *Black Cross, New Mexico,* 1929, a well-known fixture in the Art Institute of Chicago. Brown, who pays tribute to O'Keeffe as an important influence, must

have been intimately acquainted with this painting from his student days at SAIC.

Brown's cruciform canvases, however, with their frequent representations of suffering and martyrdom, convey a far grimmer message than O'Keeffe's more lyrical abstractions. Perhaps Brown's compositions again recall his vivid childhood memories of revival meetings and the crude painted charts used by the revival-circuit preachers to dramatize their hellfire-and-brimstone messages. But the dramas depicted in Brown's crucifixion pictures also tie them thematically to his earlier disaster series of 1972. Did the artist's physical separation from Veronda during this New Mexico interlude—even though unrelated to any problems in their relationship—trigger the re-emergence of such themes? However, this 1975-76 series looks forward as well as backward in Brown's oeuvre, for the *Assassination Crucifix* from this group, with its stylized yet moving depiction of Kennedy's tragic death in Dallas, prefigures an important aspect of his later work: his growing preoccupation with creating works conveying strong social messages, an interest increasingly evident in his oeuvre of the 1980's.

During 1979-80, Brown had a studio-residence built according to Veronda's design in an idyllic spot on the Lake Michigan dunes.[15] The tranquil beauty of this new setting had an immediate impact on Brown's style, stimulating him to produce the most lyrical paintings of his entire career. *Memory of Sandhill Cranes,* 1981, for example, renders the birds in flight as large, dark silhouettes echoing against a background of vegetation and a sky filled with the semicircular, concentric clouds that would become a prime feature of many canvases dating from the early 1980's. Typically for Brown, the crane composition derived both from the actual experience of seeing a group of the birds swoop down between the separate structures housing his studio and residence, and from studying reproductions of Japanese paintings with their stylized, decorative repetitions of animals, plants and clouds. Brown soon extended this new style to the depiction of biblical scenes, such as the *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* and the trial of *Daniel in the Lions' Den,* both 1982; these biblical pictures all show the protagonists as large-scale dark figures looming against stylized landscape backgrounds. This change in scale notable in pictures from the early eighties represented another stylistic innovation for the artist, perhaps inspired by experiences of seeing isolated forms highlighted by the vast dune landscapes in which they appeared.

Beginning in 1983, the threat of tragedy invaded Brown's personal paradise, interrupting this idyllic painted dialogue with his new environment: Veronda developed the first symptoms of the lung cancer that would cause his death in the spring of 1984. This ominous force immediately invaded Brown's paintings, expressing itself in powerful new images. The *Beast Arising from the Sea,* 1983, an early example of this type, portrays the seven-headed beast of the Apocalypse surging from the watery depths to loom against a Brownian sky. *Art's Folly: The Artist Working with His Critics, Dealer, Patron and Student Admirer Looking On,* 1983,

represents the assembled company as a gathering of skeletal figures, in a wryly comic rendition of a scene clearly related to Holbein's engravings of the endless dance of death. This picture, created in a moment of false optimism following an incorrect assessment of Veronda's symptoms as benign, soon gave way to far grimmer compositions, as the disease rapidly ate away Veronda's life. *Cancer,* 1984, uses continuous narration and running inscriptions to describe the course of the architect's final illness, from diagnosis through a course of treatment whose wished-for favorable effects, suggested by the last panel, titled "Hope," failed to be mirrored in reality.[16] Soon after, Brown painted an allegorical representation of the actual outcome, again using Apocalyptic imagery to portray *The Final Arbiter* as a gigantic, skeletal horse and rider silhouetted against a sky dramatically rendered in alternating bands of deep color and glowing light. *Acid Rain,* executed during these same weeks, depicts a forest of dead, denuded trees projected against an increasingly dark sky, its wide strips of black and grey banding relieved only by narrow gleams of light. The grimmest and most powerful of Brown's artistic responses, *Agoraphobia,* painted soon after the architect's death, renders a scene in the Western desert. But in place of the blinding sun and light one might anticipate in such a setting, Brown presents us with a world of darkness mirroring that of Calvary, a vast expanse of blue-black sand bisected by a thin light-colored ribbon, a solitary road across which a single minute car makes its way. Off in the distance—represented Oriental style as the top portion of the canvas—one glimpses mesas and other rock formations. The narrow strip of glowing sky that highlights these forms is interrupted by three ominous vertical bands, dark hammer-blows of fate that propel jagged lightning bolts earthward. This picture memorializes an actual experience that Brown had undergone a decade earlier: "It was done right after George died, and agoraphobia really describes the feeling I had. It was like— well, it reminded me of an experience I had when I was in New Mexico, driving through the desert; a lightning storm struck, and I felt really alone—a very frightening experience."[17] Brown portrayed this same sensation of utter loneliness in less awesome form in the beautiful *Whistling Swan,* which shows the elegant black bird swimming in solitude, his form highlighted against a sky featuring concentric dark blue and black clouds.[18]

The artist's mourning also found expression in a number of pictures that seem almost like sequels to the disaster series he had painted during the initial phase of his relationship with Veronda. *Malibu,* 1984, for example, represents that ocean-front community under siege from "almost everything nature has to offer—the far stars, the earthquake, the ocean eating away and eroding the cliffs." *Contemporary Crucifixion,* 1985, uses the imagery of uprooted skyscrapers familiar from the disaster series. But the buildings have been anthropomorphized into concrete-and-steel representations of Jesus, Mary, and John. While these all-too-human structures undergo the agony of Calvary, their inhabitants—represented by typical little stylized Brownian silhouettes—carry on their ordinary lives, oblivious to the tragedy in which they unwittingly participate.

Although Brown has successfully passed through the acute stage of his mourning, feelings of underlying sadness and loss continue periodically to perfuse his art. Thus, *Passing Generations*, 1986, shows a cemetery whose eternal tranquility contrasts with the busy highway traffic zooming past it. Many of the artist's other recent canvases, by contrast, deal with art-world topics (particularly his ongoing battle with Artner) or social and patriotic issues that frankly portray his conservative political beliefs. Thus, *The Latinization of North America*, 1983, illustrates a host of the artist's pet peeves in a single large canvas that uses his favorite continuous narration device to portray simultaneously his irritation with protesters, special interest groups, and Latin American anarchists who would transform the United States into a third-rate third-world country. Although the messages inherent in Brown's social and political paintings often seem quite conservative, they do not fit comfortably into any preconceived ideological mold. The increasingly frank sexual references evident in many of his recent canvases, for example, would scarcely be acceptable to many conservative viewers. As the spokesman for his own particular ideology, Brown seems to have come full circle. The artist who as an adolescent briefly entertained the idea of entering the ministry has now become a kind of lay minister of international stature. As such, he uses his art to confront the public with his vision of the world to come—a vision that transforms the biblical story of the Apocalypse into a stern commentary on human follies and their potential consequences for our existence.

CONCLUSIONS

This essay focuses on Roger Brown's ability to transform his life experiences into artistic expressions of great originality and attempts to interpret the psychodynamic significance of these intimate connections between his public art and his personal past. But it addresses only the most important emotional issues, those requiring few speculative inferences beyond the themes inherent in the works themselves and the comments about their significance supplied by the artist.

Critics of the psychoanalytic approach often complain that the method cannot be used to illuminate the formal aspects of an artist's oeuvre. Brown's own statements about the intensely personal roots of his major stylistic changes give the lie to that criticism. As I have pointed out elsewhere, within the oeuvre of an individual artist, style and content both form part of the seamless whole constituting the artist's private iconography.[19] The validity of this contention is amply demonstrated in Brown's oeuvre, for major stylistic changes in his art have almost invariably been accompanied by significant changes in his subject matter, or way of portraying his themes. The most dramatic parallel transformations of this type in Brown's career occurred in 1972, when his meeting with George Veronda triggered sweeping changes in the artist's style and iconography. However, it should be noted that other important innovations in the artist's oeuvre followed trips to the Southland that included stopovers to visit his family and the town where he grew up.

Perhaps in this concluding section I can add some more tentative interpretations about the meaning of his partnership with Veronda for the artist. It seems likely, for instance, that the temporal coincidence between the initiation of Brown's relationship with Veronda and that of his disaster series reflected the artist's superstitious fear of punishment for being in love and happy. The re-emergence of similar themes in the crucifixion series the artist painted in New Mexico during his brief separation from Veronda in 1975-76 suggests that this sojourn may have triggered a similar type of anxiety. One could also speculate that Veronda's death twelve years later may have reawakened Brown's childhood memories and feelings of being without a father, as well as his more age-appropriate mourning reactions. In love relationships, the beloved typically assumes complex symbolic meanings, becoming the focus not only of mature emotional responses, but of unresolved conflicts and attitudes stemming from childhood—as I suggest may have been the case in this example. But in dealing with a living artist, it seems both inappropriate and unnecessary to indulge in too many speculations of this type, and I shall not carry my interpretations beyond this stage.

In closing, however, I should like to point out that Brown's growing interest in producing pictures with strong socio-political messages capable of influencing his fellow citizens demonstrates the fusion of motivations derived from his personal past and his adolescent desire to become a minister with those deriving from his identification with major figures in art history. In assuming the role of a modern-day painter-priest, Brown follows a tradition that includes many great predecessors who regarded the creation of art as a sacred task.[20] By aligning himself with such titans, the artist reveals his growing artistic self-confidence, his increasing conception of himself as a potential leader of men as well as a major force among contemporary painters.

FOOTNOTES

This essay is based on six hours of taped interviews held with the artist during June, 1986. Although he had not asked to read or approve this essay prior to its publication, I sent Brown a copy of the completed manuscript. He responded with an enthusiastic, undated, eight-page letter that I received on August 25, 1987. In his introductory paragraph, Brown wrote: "I think [your essay] is very insightful about all the personal relationships and of course really shows the powerful effect George [Veronda] had on my work. You explained very well how his architectural influence affected my work (which people often can't see when I try to explain it). But your analysis of the personal influence I think is very accurate and even at times illuminating to me." The letter contained additional information about Brown's history and career that has been incorporated in the footnotes that follow.

[1]Quoted in Francoise Gilot and Carleton Lake, *Life with Picasso*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 123.

[2]In the letter mentioned above, Brown wrote that he was born in Hamilton, Alabama, but that his mother and he later rejoined his father in Childersburg, Alabama, where the latter was working in a defense plant. From approximately mid-1943 to mid-1945, Brown senior served in the army, while Roger and his mother again lived with his maternal grandmother in Hamilton. The artist's father, severely wounded in battle, spent the last year of the war in various hospitals, finally being moved to a facility near Hamilton, from which he was discharged.

³In his letter, the artist commented, "I want to tell you that your connection of my childhood response to my grandmother and great-grandmother's relationship, to the kind of isolation aspect of people in the city streets and dwellings is a particularly insightful analysis on your part and one that had not occurred to me." In a parenthetical comment, Brown added, "also the artistic feuds—you may be absolutely right."

⁴Let me cite just one example of such an exchange. In a review that appeared in the Chicago Tribune on September 23, 1984, Artner discussed the exhibition at the American pavilion of the Venice Biennale, noting: "Not much could be as agonizing as getting trapped for an hour by a sudden storm in the same room as an apocalyptic painting of Roger Brown's." Brown responded to this provocative statement with an equally provocative painting, *Large Bearded Sky: Portrait of a Would Be Art Critic Caught Up by Nature in One of My Apocalyptic Paintings.* As the title suggests, the "portrait" depicts the be-whiskered Artner as a gigantic, faceless beard hovering just above the flames of hell.

⁵Brown incorporated this photograph of himself in the jeep in the key work, *Autobiography in the Shape of Alabama (Mammy's Door),* discussed below. In his letter he specifically mentioned that the snapshot was taken in Childersburg, before his father left for the service.

⁶In the fall of 1960, Brown attended the David Lipscomb College affiliated with the Church of Christ, where he remained for only two quarters.

⁷For an excellent discussion of the multiple aspects of Brown's art, as well as his varied sources of inspiration, see the three essays written for the exhibition catalogue, *Roger Brown,* by Mitchell Douglas Kahan, with contributions by Dennis Adrian and Russell Bowman (Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Montgomery, Alabama, 1980). See also the catalogue for the artist's 1987 one-man show, Roger Brown, by Sidney Lawrence, with an essay by John Yau (George Brazillier: New York, in association with the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, 1987).

⁸During the last few years, Brown has developed a new found admiration for the art of J.L. David, especially the latter's full-length paintings of public figures, such as his portrait of *Napoleon in His Study,* c. 1810-12, now in the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. Certain of Brown's recent canvases, for example, the large-scale *America Landscape with Revolutionary Heroes,* 1983, reflect this admiration.

⁹Personal communication with the artist during an interview recorded in May, 1982.

¹⁰See M.M. Gedo, *Picasso—Art As Autobiography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980) and "The Meaning of Artistic Form and the Promise of the Psychoanalytic Method," Art Criticism, vol. 3:2, pp. 1-16, 1986.

¹¹See the "Chronology" section, pp. 82-5, of the 1980 catalogue (cited in n. 7). In his letter received on 8-25-87, the artist noted: "I, too, find it inexplicable that I led you to believe that I had begun the disaster series before meeting George...Now, what may have caused me to lead you to think I was claiming to have started them before George was this: I had completed two paintings before I met George which made the 'disaster' paintings possible." The letter continued with a lengthy discussion of these innovative works that enabled him to eliminate the ground plane and portray movement, elements that became prime features of the disaster pictures. Brown also described the "real 'disaster' pictures" as following directly after the creation of Auroral Drapery, whereas I had mistakenly assumed that this picture formed part of that series. His expanded account of the disaster paintings also emphasized the important role in their genesis played by the innovative new Chicago theater productions, which Brown and Veronda regularly began to attend together soon after their meeting. Seeing these productions inspired the artist "to want to depict buildings as isolated actors against a solid backdrop, and my idea was to have the buildings moving, rather than static as I had always presented them before."

¹²But Brown's stylized clouds also reflect his interest in the art of Georgia O'Keeffe, whose *Sky above Clouds, IV,* 1965, is in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago. Brown described his *Georgian Overview,* as "a take-off on Georgia O'Keeffe's cloud paintings, plus a trip I had taken to Atlanta, Georgia..."

[13]I regard the fact that Brown selected the photo of himself in the jeep his father had constructed for inclusion in the Autobiography as an indication of the special significance of this toy, and perhaps other similar objects crafted by his father as well, for the artist's creative life.

[14]Exhausted by the physical and mental effort involved in the conversion of the Halsted Street studio-residence, the artist felt that he just had to "get away" for a while and embarked on one of those marathon driving trips which he unaccountably finds relaxing. When he got to New Mexico he immediately felt very attracted to the region (which he had actually visited briefly once before) and its artistic possibilities, but also torn by his ties to Chicago and Veronda. With the latter's encouragement, Brown decided to establish a studio in Albuquerque, where he remained for three months while creating the crucifixion series. It should be noted that the connection I make between the iconography of these pictures and that of the 1972 disaster series occurred to me as an afterthought and did not form a part of the version of the manuscript that Brown read; I do not know what his reaction to my proposed connection between the two series might be.

[15]The residence and studio consist of two adjacent, but separate buildings. Although such a plan is not at all uncommon, it also recalls the living arrangement the artist knew from early childhood, when he lived with his grandmother and mother in a dwelling immediately adjacent to that of his great-grandmother.

[16]Brown recalled that Cancer was one of the first pictures he painted after learning that Veronda had a malignancy. Despite his own distress, the architect accepted this "pretty horrible painting" with equanimity commenting, "Well, you have to do that." This interchange touchingly reveals Veronda's empathy for his painter companion.

[17]Brown had experienced the frightening storm memorialized in Agoraphobia during his 1975-76 sojourn alone in New Mexico. His visual and verbal associations to that period during the weeks immediately following the death of Veronda supports my speculation that the crucifixion series somehow referred to the latter, just as the earlier disaster series had seemed to do.

[18]As one might anticipate, the artist's productivity declined significantly during the months following Veronda's death. Brown recalls that the summer of 1984 constituted a particularly sterile period for him. However, in the absence of a complete catalogue raisonne of the artist's oeuvre, I have not attempted any detailed comparisons of his production during these months and his usual level of creativity.

[19]For more extensive comments about this point, see the essay on "The Meaning of Artistic Form" (cited in n. 10).

[20]For an interesting discussion of the artist as priest, see A.W.G. Poseq's essay "Five Allegorical Self-Portraits of Igael Tumarkin," in the Journal of Jewish Art, vol. 12-13, 1986-87, p. 335.

An Insubstantial Pageant Faded

By Ellen Handler Spitz

> I want these pieces to have an unbridled intense
> Satanic vulgarity unsurpassable, and yet be art.
> <div align="right">Claes Oldenburg, 1967</div>

Frames and Dichotomies

We have reopened the question: What kind of dialogue or parallel process is possible between art and psychoanalysis? I approach this symposium with a heady mixture of exhilaration and trepidation. This is due to the slippage, the widening chasm, between academic and clinical psychoanalysis—worlds in which (through training and teaching) I have placed one foot each. The sliding apart of these worlds produces a vertigo reflected in the following essay and in its principal subject—although surely exhilaration and trepidation are not unusual emotions with which to encounter psychoanalysis, which disturbs for the same reasons it fascinates. I have chosen, in what follows, to accept this gap as given and to join in the academic project of borrowing (and reflecting on) psychoanalysis as critical theory.

Like trepidation and exhilaration, two terms, *art* and *psychoanalysis,* are implicitly linked in the title of this symposium. Although I prefer to construe their conjunction as indicating a mutual relation without a covert privileging of one term over the other, such a reading is not the only possible one, and the point of mutuality needs underscoring. Such underscoring might respond in part to an important critique that surfaced in a recent special issue of *Critical Inquiry* (Winter, 1987). Here, psychoanalysis is chastised (although not without the leaven of genuine affection) for its imperialistic invasion of other disciplines—for its abnegation of the responsibility to come to terms with the secrets and suppressions of its own history (Rand and Torok, 1987), for its disavowal of the tortuous implications of racial and religious prejudice in its self-proclamation as a species of medical science (Gilman, 1987), for its misprisal of the feminine (Gallop, 1987), for its failure to account for the defining differences of art—the literariness, for example, of literature (Riffaterre, 1987), for its refusal to allow the texts it appropriates to challenge the concepts it applies to them (Cavell, 1987)— in short, for its aggrandizing of itself into a "ubiquitous subject, assimilating every object into itself" (Meltzer, 1987).

Implicated in a vortex of powerful inter-disciplinary crosscurrents, any project of joining the terms art and psychoanalysis is bound to encounter danger, even attack—as is the parallel case of the subversive illustration chosen here, the phenomenon of urban adolescent graffiti (subspecies: New York City subway cars of the seventies and early eighties). This body of work, a borderline case on the slippery edge between art and non-art, serves as ready analogue for the project itself, which also straddles a tenuous border.

If we stipulate (in the customary manner) that psychoanalysis has to do with the embodied mind and that art has, likewise, to do with embodied mind in the sense both of objectified thought/feeling (Freud) and of the filtering of experience through mazelike defiles of signification (Lacan), we seem to gain, by this twinning, a warrant for mapping one realm on to the other. We may assume, by such a move, that the structure of art mirrors in some sense the structure of mind—not of a specific mind, but of the dynamic organization of mind. We may sense or expect or hope that there is or should be a correspondence between aesthetic form and psychic process.

But is there any validity to such an assumption beyond the warrant it provides to play in both camps, so to speak, to borrow back and forth across the fence (barbed wire) between? What would it take to validate such a correspondence between art and mind? Would such a correspondence necessarily implicate us in a covert move from interpretation to explanation—a privileging of one term over the other (art construed by psychoanalysis)? Whereas, if such a correspondence could be permanently vitiated (if, say, the structures of metaphor and symptom could be proved radically incommensurable), would that not likewise vitiate the play altogether, replacing the and with a less friendly conjunction or even more drastically dissevering the pair? Can there be, as suggested earlier, a rela-

tion between the terms that transcends the mutual tyranny of master/slave? Or, turning to art history, can history, fact, and reality be severed (released) from fiction, fantasy, and representation?

These are framing questions—too grand for short essays, but framing questions that seem necessary to pose in that they simultaneously ground and remove the ground from whatever follows. A few more might be: How does critical practice bracket itself with respect to the theory on which it relies? Are critics responsible for (as well as responsive to) the theories they draw upon, and if so, *how?* Are critics who toy with psychoanalytic notions, clandestinely cannibalizing tasty morsels, not guilty of reverse imperialism— the very same imperialism for which clinical psychoanalysis has itself been put on trial?

My theoretical orientation, following the thrust of contemporary academic postmodernism *and* clinical psychoanalysis, is unabashedly eclectic—that is to say, Freudian and post-Freudian. Joining these viewpoints bespeaks no naiveté concerning their points of divergence and want of common philosophic roots (see Cavell, 1987). It heralds the conviction that, despite their heterogeneity, they can and do belong together as overlapping fields of forces—and with no implicit unity. Such staging of referential contexts leads not to unified interpretations but rather to composites of diverse perspectives, each of which may illumine a dark corner or, more radically, allow us not only to *un*cover and to *re*cover but actually to *dis*cover.

It is worth noting that those of us engaged in efforts to apply psychoanalytic ideas and modes of understanding to the visual arts have sought recently to extend the range of these applications, casting nets in ever-widening circles—as has been the case with critical theory more generally. Efforts began, of course, with a kind of *auteurist* approach (which I have elsewhere called *pathographic;* Spitz, 1985) that weaves together strands from an artist's life history and works (as in Freud's tediously overcriticized Leonardo paper). New horizons have extended to include the possibility of psychoanalytically-informed studies of the history of critical responses (both to individual works and to an artist's *oeuvre;* see Sheon, 1987), the shifting positions of a body of works with respect to a given canon (Yang, 1987), and even, reflexively, of the very canons themselves. More radical are efforts to de-center the figure of the artist altogether (see Gouma-Peterson and Mathews, 1987), and putative dethronements of hallowed divisions of art works into periods and styles (Bryson, 1981, 1983), as well as attempts to de- and renarrativize objects according to strategies not unlike those that lead, in the clinical sphere, to continuous realignments and regroupings—to new stories being told and strangleholds loosened.

In all of these efforts, the fears on the part of art historians have been that psychoanalysis works as critical theory to dismantle the object (see Kuspit's interesting discussion, 1987). In the main, however, the privilege of the object has remained inviolate. Postmodernism, feminism, and deconstruction notwithstanding, art objects continue to be exhibited, re-

corded, and discussed even psychoanalytically as objects. The example that follows, however, calls this priority into question.

Strategies

Graffiti art of the New York City subway cars and murals painted in the seventies and early eighties fascinate us in part because, like Prospero's magic, they appear and disappear—"an insubstantial pageant faded." Created by artists to whose very existence we give the name *adolescent*— that is to say, evolving, changing, developing—the subway car graffiti, in its coming into being, is charged with intensity and evanescent excitement. Executed in motion, it is likewise perceived in motion, swiftly arriving or departing. Currently, the spectacle itself is slowly vanishing altogether from the New York scene—its colorful designs dispelled in the wake, partly, of massive resistance by city government as well as by the fact that adolescence is itself a transient state. The generation of early writers has grown up. Even more ruinous, however, has been its cooption by the establishment—its appropriation and cannibalization by commodity culture.

As counterpart of, but in contrast to, the reassertion of civic order with which Shakespeare terminates *The Tempest*—where Prospero voluntarily forswears his magic and resumes the duties of his dukedom—the City of New York has here forcibly imposed and reasserted its hegemony over this adolescent art by banishing graffiti, by disarming its rebellious spirits. For the radiance of its wild and tangled forms, the Transit Authority has substituted "graffiti-proof" trains—stark, silver cars imported from Japan, cars that blend without defiance (but equally without joy) into the grayness of the ghetto.

Ambiguities encircle this magnetic body of art. Its controversial reception/rejection has run the gamut from penalty to praise. The passion it evokes points up the fluid boundaries between genuinely creative efforts to transform and transcend environments and wantonly destructive, deviant, sociopathic behavior. Limited here to a collage of psychoanalytic perspectives, my paper addresses only in passing the fascinating adjacent issues—historical, stylistic, aesthetic, and sociological. Themes that will surface include: the prioritizing of process relative to product; the intertwining of image and inscription, of marking with making; the foregrounding of a set of powerful developmental imperatives (psychosocial and psychobiological) as motivation for this art and perhaps for all art; the role of aggression, both latent and manifest, as inextricable from artistic insertion into the cultural order; and the trajectory of graffiti, which follows an irresistible drift of art—from subversive start to conservative finish, from becoming to being, from maker to market or museum.

In considering these issues, the inquiry doubles back upon itself, with art informing psychoanalysis as well as the other way round—art teaching psychoanalysis not only about its own objects but about the dynamics of desire, which are constitutive of these very objects. And the issues themselves are entangled—a twisted skein.

Verbs

Graffiti shifts our focus from the object as beheld in its "finished" state to both the process by which it comes into being, to that by which it is received. *Graffiti turns art into a verb.* It shifts our habitual arithmetic metaphor—art as product—to art as remainder. For what animates these marks and images are the traces of those exciting and dramatic performances through which they come into being. Kinaesthetic as well as visual in their origins, they link artistically with "Action Painting" as so-labeled by critic Harold Rosenberg. Authenticity of gesture in part determines their quality and is read in traces of action—agility, boldness, spontaneity, sustained passages. Engaging large as well as small muscle movements and hand to hand encounters with metal walls, filling huge vertical spaces by spraying paint, solving drips, integrating accidents, the visual dynamics of graffiti evoke modified images of artists of the fifties, limning, stroking, spattering and pouring, their internal impulses and systems of control engaged in dubious battle.

Correspondingly, a focus on process lies at the heart of psychoanalysis—constitutes, we might say, the heartbeat of clinical depth psychology. Recently, in the theoretical literature of applied psychoanalysis, several authors have advanced brilliant arguments that Freud's originality and genius lie precisely in his radical questioning of the object—a deeply disturbing move, the consequences of which he strove intermittently to reject (see Bersani, 1986, and Davidson, 1987). That psychoanalysis has essentially to do with means and not ends—with branching roads (as in Oedipus Tyrannos) rather than with destinations—is an attitude of mind extraordinarily difficult to maintain because it challenges the mental habits with which we have grown comfortable. These habits encompass not only the logic and linearity of our explanations, but our deeply rooted craving for intellectual and physical certainty.

The reification of such certainty, expressed through our investment in the material objects of art, is thus doubly problematized. It is called into question not only by the adolescent graffiti itself, which is an experiential, non-surviving art, but by psychoanalysis, which, in its radical and restless search, doubts every object, interrogating it relentlessly. Constituted by ruptures and sutures in a continual process of refinding, revoking, reworking, and remaking, the object generates questions that, no sooner asked, bring forth another wave of questions. Like Calvino's Palomar on the beach, we submit ungently to frustration. We are unwilling to recognize the suffering implicated in our very acts of representation—unwilling to accept the insight that we cannot contemplate, we cannot isolate, we cannot interrogate, even momentarily—an individual wave. That what must come to matter, rather, is the process itself and the capacity to go on asking: *truth also becomes a verb.*

To reintroduce or reaffirm the priority of process in relation to object is, I suppose, to conflate visual with performing art. Yet, as twentieth-

century art demonstrates, these categories can and have been suspended with intriguing results. In this spirit, my title alludes to theater via the fleeting images of Prospero's magic, Prospero who, like the adolescent graffiti artists, is both conjurer and banished citizen—and whose art, self-described, is, as some would style postmodern texts, but "the baseless fabric of [a] vision."

The performance aspect of graffiti surfaces in a manifesto given me by a former "writer" who has requested anonymity: "The actual execution of a piece [he says] is more of a statement than its style or content." Clamoring, however, against what he considers the *coup de grace* for graffiti art as well as its final corruption, namely, its removal from the original context of street and station yard and its cooption by the media, he rages especially against the attention it has provoked in cultural circles, particularly in the established art world which, he implies, radically misunderstands it, having appropriated its aesthetics without its politics.

This young man describes graffiti as a journey and as an expression of social outrage, its overriding aim being the intense desire of crew or clique to gain recognition from an indifferent world. In so saying, however, he formulates, and acknowledges with *angst*, its fundamental paradox. For, since the graffiti art, once executed, clearly and decisively does impact (whether negatively or positively) on the surrounding world, the metaphor must change immediately from journey to destination. In this important sense, the aims of graffiti (as journey toward recognition denied) are revealed to be intrinsically self-contradictory—a point inextricable from any discussion of art as process, as well as from the psychodynamics of (adolescent) rebellion.

Stagings

In a stunning paper on graffiti, John Carlin (1987) focuses on the way in which, as he puts it, this art "bombs history." In an effort to illustrate the radical restructuring of time and history that characterizes our era, he points to the media technique of juxtaposing images before us in sequences that disregard historic process. What is produced thereby he terms a kind of "feedback chamber of time," a state of utter contemporaneity, which we experience both as insidiously lulling and strangely disquieting. In a striking analogue, the bubble letters, flourishes, and tags of graffiti art also burn time. While rejuvenating the drab, they simultaneously reveal it; they refuse the old while making it older. They bring into visual awareness the rupture between generations; by inserting new signifiers, they disrupt the extant order of signification.

In this unremitting assertion of denied subjectivity and blatant demand for visibility (though not equally for legibility, since making style inimitable, "hard to bite," is definitely part of the game), graffiti art stages an ambiguous drama of presence. Simultaneously proclaiming presence *and* absence, it declares provocatively to beholders that *it* is there, that its adolescent artist *was* there but *isn't* any longer. It teases, like the saucy refrain of the

children's rhyme: "Run, run, as fast as you can—you can't catch me..."
Powerful, subversive dynamics structure this drama. Fascinatingly, however,
they are played out by choice in terms not of violence but of visual art—
the representation and the manipulation of signs.

Names, the most pervasive theme of graffiti, assume transcendent
significance for a psychoanalytic approach that privileges the notion of sub-
jectivity as over issues of self and identity (see Lacan, 1977). Untranslatable
from one language to another, names both preexist and outlast bodies. The
name, unlike our ever-changing face, figure, physique, denotes and sur-
vives us and is, finally, engraved as our memorial. The inscription of one's
name, therefore, counts as a paradigmatically significant act—a direct and
unique engagement with the symbolic order (see Richardson, 1985).

In the case of a radically alienated young graffiti artist, however, this act
bifurcates into charged ambivalence. Paradigm becomes paradox. For,
while it proclaims the assumption of a subjectivity denied both to the un-
named and to the uninscribed named, this particular version of the act tren-
chantly challenges the very symbolic order to which it seeks to gain ac-
cess. The tags are self-given (or, what is essentially the same for this point,
peer-conferred). Thus while actively seizing the right to be named, they
overtly reject the position of having been named: they both grasp and refuse
subjectivity. And the tags are, like nearly everything else about graffiti, im-
permanent. Impermanent not only in the ways previously mentioned—
including the fact that, illegally sprayed on public subway cars, they travel
under and across the City of New York—but impermanent more radically
in that the tag of any particular artist may, unlike the parentally conferred
name, actually change several times (often for social, safety, and artistic
as well as emotional reasons; cf., "Black Cloud" to "Semi-Soul," see Feiner
and Klein, 1982). Hence the paradox: fetishistic naming here coincides
with maximum public anonymity.

Developmental Imperatives

Psychoanalytically speaking, what needs and tasks are met, set, avoid-
ed, or motivated, by this art in particular, by adolescents both in this case
and more generally, and by art more generally? Such a developmental
perspective, it is worth noting, post-dates Freud. The very term "adoles-
cence" is absent from his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* as
well as from the "Dora" case, where its omission has been as sorely
lamented in the literature of child analysis as in that of feminism. When
Freud does, a few times in the *Studies on Hysteria,* mention adolescence,
the term clearly denotes puberty rather than the more complex psycho-
sexual-social entity to which it currently refers. (For a still fine interdis-
ciplinary account of adolescence, see *Daedalus,* Fall, 1971.)

Yet, a possible position here (perhaps, a convert return to Freud) is that
adolescence, as defined in contemporary clinical discourse, involves im-
peratives so deeply and pervasively human that it would be more accurate
to describe them as stage-intensive than as stage-specific. It may be that

the imperatives we associate with adolescence bear such an intimate relation to art-making in general that features associated exclusively with this developmental period retain a lifelong urgency for creative artists (cf., Greenacre, 1971).

Post-Freudian perspectives link adolescence with the theme of identity (see Erikson, 1959, 1968; Blos, 1962) and, likewise, endow names with privileged significance. Since early tags were nicknames followed by street numbers, they have been interpreted as reinforcing the transition from home to a wider turf. Cross-culturally, the assumption of new names is associated with rites of passage. Replacing family surnames, rejected along with devalued parents, street numbers may be emblematic of the world at large, and, in some cases, mark a progression from foreign parental cultures to the allure of modern American city—where numbers have replaced nouns (see Feiner and Klein, 1982).

Other adolescent developmental imperatives are implicated. To name is to tame—to claim possession. To inscribe one's name in gargantuan, savagely luxuriant, resplendent letters on the walls of trains that travel to places unknown and predictably return condenses urgent, ambivalent issues of separation. Vicariously, the young graffiti writer undertakes a (dangerous) journey to alien parts, always with the confident expectation of return—an "as-if" adventure par excellence. Issues of control are implicated. To gather in the stations and watch the names rumble past confers an illusion of power over outside forces that seem callous, threatening, and augmented in fantasy by the projection of inner turmoil.

The very choice of subway cars as a locus for painting bespeaks a craving for locomotion that, in contemporary American culture, with the dearth of formal rites of passage, assumes symbolic meaning—the trains possibly analogous, for these urban youths, to the "wheels" of their suburban counterparts. Driven by increased sexual and aggressive impulses and by wishes to establish independence from parental and societal authority—to defy, to escape, to explore, and to *be seen*—the wish for a means of locomotion is multiply determined. Experienced as extensions of the body, vehicles are embellished accordingly. Thus, graffiti art serves, in fantasy, as adornment and decoration as well as mutilation and desecration. On a deeper level of fantasy, the subway trains may carry both phallic and even more primitive anal signification in that they disappear in repetitive cycles into the depths, the entrails, of the earth.

Barring quilts and tapestries, graffiti art is singular in being performed in groups—"writing clubs"—a subspecies of peer culture that enables the adolescent to detach from earlier object ties. Writers with notably elegant styles, writers who get up in particularly dangerous locations, win respect and admiration. Thus, the activity, perilous and skilled, creates a theater for both competition and cooperation in which bodies, momentously involved, are placed at risk—an exclusive world, where old familial rivalries, risks, and passions can be displaced and defused.

Faced with outer turbulence, permeated by inner turbulence, youth seeks distraction by the frantic filling of both time and space. Graffiti writing,

from this perspective, occupies the emptiness of hours as well as the barrenness of walls. As such, it invites comparison with the familiar teenage passion for flooding consciousness with pulsating sound and accompanying kinaesthetic sensation. It takes the adolescent out of himself—out in surroundings that fail to provide even minimal opportunities for socially approved activity—contexts where the problem of evading the discordant self becomes acute.

Antisocial Artistry

What amazes some of us most about graffiti art is that, despite (and because of) the pervasive immediacy of a deteriorating city with crumbling, charred tenements, unrepaired streets, accumulating refuse, and visual and auditory chaos, these young artists have managed to mobilize color, line, shape, and design. Cloaking ugliness with bold imagery, vitalizing the dreary, and, minimally, catapulting into our visual field that which had been previously ignored, their achievement gainsays (while being sustained by) its own destructiveness.

Rebellion is a complex issue here. Resisting authority, winning peer approval, achieving independence, and, secondarily, undergoing retaliation from authority are present in tandem. As psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott (1956) points out: "the organized antisocial defense is overloaded with secondary gain and social reactions which make it difficult for the investigator to get to its core." Thus, graffiti teaches psychoanalysis about aspects of aggression that derive not solely from inner developmental imperatives but from particular external surroundings, from, in this case, a quantum of dehumanization that breeds violent feelings and hostile acts. Winnicott (1956) teaches further that openly aggressive feelings and acts may well be considered adaptive in such contexts. To perceive hopeful, self-curative undercurrents in what appears behaviorally destructive is to underscore the positive side to these youthful efforts to project an imagery that speaks both to and for its makers—that reflects back to them, as to the world, some semblance of their unacknowledged desires. Inscribed as graffiti, these desires can be read as intensely charged—positive/negative, artistic/delinquent, profoundly personal/blatantly political.

Satanic Vulgarities

One contemporary artist who admired graffiti from the start was Claes Oldenburg. A convergence between its themes and his own might probe the wider significance of process and performance, of repetitive cycles of doing and undoing, and fantasied enactments of aggression, control, and ambivalence—might show their bearing beyond adolescence, their relevance to the making of art more generally. Let us consider a few statements taken from *Store Days* (1967). This manifesto, written by Oldenberg in his mid-thirties, retains every iota of its refreshing and salacious irreverence:

Residual objects are created in the course of making the performance...The performance is the main thing...

I am for an art...that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum. I am for an art that grows up not knowing it is an art at all, an art given the chance of having a starting point of zero.

I am for an artist who vanishes...

I am for the art of scratchings in the asphalt, daubing at the walls.

I am for an art that is put on and taken off, like pants, which develops holes, like socks, which is eaten, like a piece of pie, or abandoned with great contempt, like a piece of shit.

At the completion of my work I'm afraid I have nothing to say at all. That is I have either thrown it away or used it up.

(Oldenburg, 1967, *passim*)

Thus, Oldenburg cannily describes art not in terms of technique, convention, and style (derivatives of what psychoanalysts call ego function) but rather in terms that exploit the polymorphous incarnations of infantile sexuality. He evokes not only the instinctual regressions (explicitly oral and anal) that may serve in adolescence as a defensive flight from genitality, but also its typical ambivalence—conveyed through images that abruptly juxtapose instinctual gratifications with corresponding renunciations. This abruptness has its counterpart in the sudden shifts endemic to adolescent behavior—its changeability and "as-if" interactions with the environment (e.g., putting things on and taking them off).

Oldenburg's words proclaim that art should be something absolutely new and different ("a starting point at zero") and, in addition, that we must not become too attached to it. His description implies a defiance of (parental) authority (i.e., the museum) and the wish for a chance to grow up without parents (i.e., without an artistic tradition). Such wishes evoke the reaction formation in adolescence that serves to defend against recrudescence of incestuous love for the first objects (the parents). His words point, by repudiation, to the oedipal conflicts unconsciously implied in any creative endeavor—to make something new being, aggressively, to replace the old. But, at the same time, we must be able to abandon our own work with contempt—lest it be saved and incarcerated in a museum. Nothing less than perpetual revolution is advocated: art must be original and disposable, like the vulnerable traveling spectacle of graffiti.

No longer equated with any good sanctioned by society, art consists not of products made, cherished, and preserved, but of the acts of marking and making. Performances, not objects, are cathected. Ambivalent and destructive wishes underlie these thoughts, fitting the motives and practice of young writers who pilfer materials, cut wire fences to enter forbidden spaces, execute paintings at night, and abandon them at the whine of sirens. The very relish with which they greet peril fulfills Oldenburg's criteria.

Important adaptive needs are served by the destructive wishes express-
ed in this manifesto; principally, the need to separate from real, displaced,
and fantasied parental objects and to create thereby a horizon for the
emergence of the new. This need clearly continues beyond adolescence
to pervade the life cycle of the artist.

Psychoanalysis, however, postulates an intrapsychic museum—a
museum of the mind. This is a fate that can be escaped neither by
rebellious youth nor by the artist of any age. For in such a museum are
eternally preserved the traces of each individual's earliest relations, all that
has been loved and lost, which, unlike pants, cannot readily be taken off
and which, unlike excrement, cannot easily be abandoned with contempt.
For, as psychoanalysis teaches, this past, this metaphoric reliquary, even
if split from consciousness, must always be, has always been, and con-
tinues to be, psychically metabolized—is forever in the process of intruding
and extruding, of becoming (however maddeningly) one with us. In this
psychoanalytic sense, there is no possibility of starting from zero.

Perversities

It is difficult to evade anal themes in Oldenburg's manifesto as well as
in the graffiti phenomenon itself. Besides the explicit comparison of art
to feces in the above quoted passage, Oldenburg has praised graffiti by
calling it a "big bouquet from Latin America" (1975). What has this par-
ticular aspect of fantasy to do with art and with wishes to transform reality?

In a brilliant paper, French psychoanalyst Chassequet-Smirgel (1983)
proposes a stunning link between anality and the human desire to trans-
cend the ordinary. Pointing out that human beings have always sought to
reach beyond the narrow limits of existence, "to push forward the fron-
tiers of what is possible and unsettle reality," she speaks of such wishes
as constituting a temptation in the mind that motivates an array of fantasies
and acts. Such perverse acts may, she suggests, serve to overturn the
"universal law" that distinguishes body parts from one another and
separates human beings into the fundamental categories of gender and
generation. This temptation is prompted, she proposes, by a retreat from
the pain and loss that follows inevitably upon the recognition of sexual
and generational differences, and also by a defiance of paternal authority,
which forbids access to the mother. Such temptation may lead not only
to perverse behaviors of wide-ranging diversity but also to a dazzling ar-
ray of experiments in thought and act, including art.

As her principal example, Chassequet-Smirgel chooses the Marquis de
Sade and indicates that the Sadian hero puts himself in the position of God,
becoming, by a process of destruction, the creator of a new kind of reality
(cf., *Dialogue,* 1987, 10, 5:29). In order to do this, all differences must
be annihilated, until finally the fundamental difference between life and
death, organic and inorganic, is denied. In this way, an anal universe is
created, wherein all things—erotogenic zones and functions, sexes, classes,
siblings, ancestors—are intermixed and interchanged in a crucible of un-

differentiated matter. Emphasizing the hubris of the individual who dares take the place of Creator, she links the sin of hubris with hybridization, with mixture, with transgression of boundaries. An anal-sadistic universe thus results that constitutes both a parody of and regressive flight from the repudiated adult genitality.

The relevance of this fantasy to adolescent and artist is evident: they both stand accused, even guilty (and not just in fantasy alone) of hubris. They also dare to defy convention, rule, and law, baring and transfiguring it. Creating themselves as demigods, daring to invent a universe, they must also wantonly and destructively (even if in fantasy alone) abandon the old in search of the new, bring forth form from chaos.

Thus, Chassequet-Smirgel unmasks our collusive denial of the intimate links between anality and the aesthetic, between art and aggression, between creativity and destruction. When even in part, as in the case of subway car graffiti, the creation of art springs from roots nourished by deep human desires to reach beyond what we are, to devise new forms and meanings, new combinations and new sights, it provokes powerful resistances, as the New York City youths have repeatedly discovered.

Deconstructions

Graffiti has almost been tamed, though its meanings have been confused and "hypocritized," to use the words of my previously cited correspondent. Its removal from the streets is being effected not only by caustic detergents, a process described recently in a *New York Times* article with the dramatic caption "Doing Battle With the Scourge of Graffiti." Far more insidious has been its success. No longer a raw, painfully brash, energizing effort to bridge the abyss between subjectivity and signification, between the imaginary and the symbolic order, graffiti art has been domesticated—its power caged and drained. Wildstyle spraypaint effects have assumed today a ubiquitous presence in American culture—in art galleries, magazine advertisements, ballet stage sets, children's T-shirts, and fabric designs for linen and drapery. "Graffiti" is now the name of a fashionable boutique in New York suburbia.

Meaning has been deconstructed, reassigned, and fixed. *Verb has become noun.* For, like psychoanalysis, graffiti art was subversive: it exposed what we did not want to see. While sabotaging, it revealed an unpleasant dis/order of things. It gave us, like Prospero's magic, a fleeting pageantry, and not without its Calibans: Satanic and vulgar, like Oldenburg's credo; yet, it was art!

For the ambiguity of art lies in its twin powers—powers simultaneously terifying and exhilarating—to undo and to make new. Psychoanalysis, grasping (and instantiating) this paradox, aligns art with health and with illness, with optimal functioning and with driven, repetitive, symptomatic behavior. Such polar views of art, deeply embedded in our cultural heritage, have been thrown into bold relief and de-dichotomized by the masterpieces on the trains. And my own essay only reopens the question.

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Looking Through the
Third Eye

By John E. Gedo, M.D.

For more than a generation, at least since depth psychology captured the attention of America's elite in the wake of the second World War, the cultivated public has been accustomed to listening with the third ear—the instrument through which the psychoanalyst filters the verbal productions of his patients. In contrast, scattered efforts to look at the plastic arts through the third eye—Freud's metaphor describing our apparatus for surveying the inner world—have provoked only neglect or, at best, derision: They have been variously mocked as the self-indulgence of either methodological naivete or visual illiteracy. I have periodically reviewed these interdisciplinary endeavors (J. Gedo, 1970; 1983, chaps. 1 and 2), only to be sorely disappointed by the level of scholarship and discernment prevalent in the field. The blunders of psychoanalysts as amateur historians or would-be connoisseurs have been matched by the embarrassing misuse of analytic theories and modes of inference by those untrained in this esoteric discipline.

Needless to say, there have been outstanding exceptions to this disheartening rule, starting with the work of Ernst Kris (1952), the only person thus

far to have become fully qualified in both art history and clinical psycho-analysis. The rare successes of interdisciplinary work demonstrate that the problem is not one of fundamental methodology; rather, it is the outcome of inadequate execution, generally based on the difficulty of mastering two demanding and disparate disciplines. In recent years, attempts have been made to circumvent this obstacle by means of collaboration and/or con-sultation with members of the other profession (see Baron & Pletsch, 1984), and interested scholars have found a haven in the pages of the inter-disciplinary annual, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Art*. Nonetheless, the number of serious participants in this dialogue of conflicting traditions has remained small indeed.

One of the putative reasons for the persistence of these difficulties in communication is the unfortunate circumstance that the vast majority of attempts in the interdisciplinary arena have tackled the problem that is most difficult from the methodological viewpoint: the study of historical materials and the lives of dead artists. Such efforts have often evoked the taunt that we cannot put these subjects on the couch. This challenge can only be met by continual revision of previous analytical interpretations by successive students of the same work and/or artist. Cumulative studies of that kind have been published about several major figures, including Michelangelo, Van Gogh, Cézanne, and Goya. Such studies occasionally lead to consen-sus, but more frequently, they result in unresolved conflicts in interpreta-tion. The pros and cons of employing psychoanalytic methods for the study of a given artist have been ably discussed by Peter Gay in *Art and Act* (1976).

Psychoanalytic contributions to the visual arts would cut a better figure if both disciplines showed more interest in the findings of clinicians who have actually treated creative artists psychoanalytically. It is true that the problem of preserving the confidentiality of the treatment is all but in-superable if one wishes to prepare a single-case study, but a number of analysts, starting with Phyllis Greenacre (1971), have published significant conclusions about the roots and avenues of creativity, derived from clinical experience with significant samples of artist-patients. My own book, *Por-traits of the Artist* (1983), contains several clinical chapters drawing on such analytical experience; in these studies, I tried to provide at least ten-tative guidelines about the psychology of creative persons, generalizations that may help future biographers avoid the pitfall of regarding the artist either as uniquely idiosyncratic or as no different from anyone else. In-cidentally, it may be worth mentioning that art historians tend to confuse the psychology of their very unusual subjects with their own scholarly-obsessional world: this is the sign of the endless struggle between artist and critic that Wagner immortalized in *Die Meistersinger* as the contest of the younger lover and the elderly Beckmesser.

In order to avoid problems of confidentiality, psychoanalytic students of the arts have to gain the cooperation of artists willing to reveal their inner world without first having sought therapeutic assistance. It is quite unlikely that a psychoanalyst would succeed in establishing the necessary

rapport with any creative person; as the field experience of cultural anthropologists has shown, it is essential to have a relationship of human mutuality with potential interviewees before asking them to serve as informants for a piece of research. The position of the student of the visual arts is homologous; only one who has patiently worked to become a fixture in a particular artistic community can hope to gain the trust of some of its members to undertake joint psychological explorations. For instance, Mary Gedo's interviews with the painter Roger Brown, in preparation for her talk at this conference, followed years of casual contacts, the publication of several pieces of psychologically informed criticism on the Chicago art scene, and an exchange of deeply felt letters when the artist's companion and lover succumbed to a malignancy.

Critics and historians seldom possess the clinical skills needed to conduct an interview in a manner calculated to encourage true candor; they are even less likely to be able to evoke the kind of associative responses that may produce revelations previously inaccessible to the artist's own consciousness. From this vantage point, it would appear that the usual approach to the study of psychoanalysis followed by humanist scholars, that of the reading of analytic texts (many of them long superseded in actual practice), is likely to remain unproductive. In my judgment, the greatest service psychoanalysis could render to the study of art would be to train prospective critics and historians to establish a productive dialogue with living artists. Interviewing skills are not easy to acquire: not only do they involve the development of a "third ear," but, what is even more difficult, they also consist of the ability to arrive at a "shared language" (J. Gedo, 1984, chaps. 8 & 9) unique to each dyad. Yet a number of interdisciplinary contributors to art history have in fact mastered these skills; beyond those I have already mentioned, I should like to single out Laurie Wilson, whose illuminating study of Louise Nevelson (1981) relied heavily on the establishment of a trusting dialogue over the course of several years. Need I say that Wilson's clinical skill was demonstrated not only in the information she managed to elicit but, even more so, in everything she chose to leave unsaid?

The same capacities are equally helpful in collecting information from the friends and family of artists living or dead. If anything, building rapport with such witnesses to the lives of the great is even trickier than dealing with the artist directly, for it requires an accurate assessment of the emotional and practical gains each informant may obtain from the relationship. In this regard, the detection of unconscious undercurrents requires empathic skills of a high order. To my knowledge, the most productive interviews with an informant thus far have been conducted, once again over the course of about a decade, by Mary Gedo in her work with Franoise Gilot. She first enlisted Gilot's cooperation in preparing her book *Picasso—Art as Autobiography* (1980a), a study that did not focus in a major way on Picasso's relationship with Gilot. This piece of collaboration was satisfying enough for both participants to result in continuing contacts that promise to culminate in a work specifically confined to Picasso's years with

Gilot. Ongoing professional contacts of this kind require as much empathy, tact, and *presence* (as our French colleagues designate their personal charisma) as does the performance of clinical psychoanalyses.

Perhaps the most constructive use of psychoanalytic expertise in the interdisciplinary field has, in the past, consisted in submitting the humanist scholar's data and/or his psychological inferences to the scrutiny of one or more psychoanalysts. For instance, Wayne Andersen's analytically informed study, *Gauguin's Paradise Lost* (1971), credits a group of psychoanalysts with whom the author discussed his material. I know of a number of attempted collaborations of this kind that collapsed into unbridgeable disagreement or even rancor; such was the fate of a published dialogue between Theodore Reff (1987) and me (1987a & b) about the psychology of Cézanne.

The nub of these difficulties is the lack of familiarity on the part of historians with psychoanalytic modes of inference; in particular, their tendency to rely on deduction from abstract theories and their bewilderment when faced with the use of empathy. The moral of these stories is that the psychoanalyst-consultant has to demonstrate his reliability and value over a long period before he or she can expect to be taken seriously by members of another discipline. Thus the analyst Robert Liebert's lengthy participation in the activities of the Art History Department at Columbia University eventually earned the trust of Howard Hibbard, who then relied on Liebert to serve as a consultant for a psychological portrait of Caravaggio (Hibbard, 1983). And the mutuality of this collaboration was demonstrated by the impeccable historical scholarship of Liebert's (1983) book *Michelangelo,* for which the author credited the assistance of Hibbard.

Perhaps the most important methodological issue that awaits clarification is the manner in which the psychoanalytic corpus of knowledge about the inner life of human beings may best be used for the study of artifacts. The correlation between an artist's psychic life and either the form or content of his work is always somewhat uncertain; nor can the artist himself be counted on to be candid and reliable in his statements about the personal significance of his art. The temptation to interpret particular pieces in terms of presumed parallels with aspects of his inner life is extremely chancy, precisely because it is all too easy to stretch the evidence to fit any proposed hypothesis. The problem is equally severe in the psychoanalytic clinical situation, of course, but competent analysts generally refrain from making speculative interpretations: effective therapeutic work demands the avoidance of premature closures in favor of the patient accumulation of much confirmatory evidence. As our Boston colleagues are accustomed to say, "Don't shoot 'til you see the whites of their eyes!"

Clearly, we are on firmer ground if we succeed in correlating significant segments of an artist's production with aspects of his biography. Moreover, in order to avoid circular reasoning, it is preferable to form our hypothesis about the artist's personality on the basis of data extrinsic to his oeuvre. I do not mean to imply that clues in the artist's work should not alert us to various possibilities concerning his psychology. For instance, the overt

homosexual content of many of Michelangelo's drawings, such as the celebrated *Rape of Ganymede* he presented to Tommaso de' Cavalieri, must certainly lead us to investigate the artist's putative homosexuality with great care, but it cannot be used as historical evidence to argue that the love affair with Cavalieri was physically consummated. It is even more of an abuse of the reconstructive method of psychoanalysis to postulate the occurrence of childhood events on the basis of clues in specific works of art.

To return to the question of how psychoanalysis may illuminate the visual arts: the assumption underlying resort to the analytic perspective is that understanding the artist as a total personality should reveal many of the undeclared intentions encoded within his creations. To illustrate, let me briefly review the portrait of Cézanne I attempted to construct, on the basis of available biographical materials, for the ill-fated dialogue with Reff. In disagreement with historians who have accepted Cézanne's own version of his family life, I see Cézanne's rebelliousness toward his father as a hollow screen concealing his passive receptivity—a screen necessitated by the painter's pathologically intense fears of external influence. The same conflict made his all-but-overt homosexual impulses unacceptable to Cézanne. He was even more troubled by a murderous hostility toward women, which seems to have begun in early childhood. The future artist's potential for violence was barely contained through his rageful childhood, only to be firmly suppressed and succeeded by extreme passivity and timidity.

Despite his artistic courage and perseverance, Cézanne's adaptation throughout his life remained contingent on the availability of external assistance. Consequently, I interpret his chronic hostility as a defense against threatened loss of autonomy whenever he feared that his symbiotic partners might overstep the limits of helpfulness. In the context of his actual relations with women as an adult, Cézanne compromised these conflicting needs in the form of overt masochism. In brief summary, my conception of Cézanne's personality is that he was ever on the edge of paranoid decompensation.

How does such a portrait of the artist help us to understand his oeuvre? First of all, it suggests that Cézanne's youthful paintings of rapes, murders, and orgies, as well as scenes of masochistic submission to exhibitionist temptresses, represent the artist's own fantasy life, and that their brutal *facture* is an appropriate reflection of the painter's emotions. Second, that in order to achieve the artistic mastery of his maturity, Cézanne had to turn his back on this subject matter, albeit approaching it in attenuated form in his series of Bathers. Third, that the passion originally conveyed by Cézanne's early subject matter was later expressed in the very methods he used to create his masterworks: his unique style constitutes an unprecedented attack on the spectator's customary manner of perception, a triumphant reversal of the artist's characterological compromises. Cézanne imposes himself on the spectator's perceptual processes in a forceful act that many of his original viewers experienced as tantamount to being visually raped.

In his role as professional skeptic, Theodore Reff (1987) responded to

the foregoing formulations as inconsequential for Cézanne studies; as I understood his argument, Reff found fault with my ideas because in his view they neither stemmed from the detailed study of Cézanne's works nor did they pretend to specify the psychological meaning of any particular opus. In sharp disagreement with Reff, I believe that the study of individual works as part of a psychoanalytic perspective requires prior establishment of a coherent hypothesis about their creator's personality, such as my character sketch of Cézanne. However, I think it is probably true that psychoanalytic insights are most directly useful in the study of the creativity question, and have to be used with great discretion in the service of deciphering iconography. So committed am I to this opinion that I subtitled my book on writing biography about artists "Psychoanalysis of Creativity and Its Vicissitudes." Psycho-iconographical studies such as Mary Gedo's papers on single works of Picasso's (1979, 1980, 1981, 1986) require expertise on other than psychoanalytic sources of the artist's imagery.

In recent years, psychoanalytic pathography has fallen into some disrepute, as we have begun to realize that creative work is not the product of psychopathology, although it may be the best of remedies for it. If we have been somewhat slow to reach this obvious conclusion, the difficulty was caused by the fact that the artist's psychopathology or its consequences for his subsequent life so often constitute the autobiographical *content* of his art. Actual psychological crises may lead to more or less lasting creative paralysis, as Mary Gedo showed in the case of Picasso, or they may interfere with the artist's integrative capacity and/or autocritical judgments, as the hypomanic state Magritte suffered in 1947 seems to have done (M. Gedo, in prep.). In more favorable instances, the process of mastering a psychological crisis may stimulate an artist to find unique aesthetic solutions; James Ensor's best work seems to have been the result of such a response to the devastating emotional illness he suffered during the alcoholic deterioration and eventual death of his father (J. Gedo, in prep.). I am stating, in other words, that pathography is by no means an idle exercise; it is, in fact, still the best method available to investigate the vicissitudes of creative endeavors.

It is true, nonetheless, that much of the interdisciplinary work of the last several years has tried to forego pathography or even the study of the artist's successful adaptation. Donald Kuspit's sophisticated use of psychoanalytic ideas to explore the meaning of artistic styles, as in his 1985 essay "Chaos in Expressionism," deliberately overlooks individual differences to focus on the psychological aims shared by the practitioners of that movement. On the other side of the interdisciplinary divide, Gilbert Rose (1980) made an attempt to investigate *The Power of Form* without resorting to the tools of psychoanalytic biography. Rose has become a worthy successor of the art educator Anton Ehrenzweig, whose books of psychoanalysis and aesthetics (1953, 1967) constitute the outstanding landmarks in these endeavors.

Efforts to apply psychoanalytic principles beyond the realm of the inner life of one person have proved to be fruitful, but they are much more difficult and risky than endeavors to specify the motivations of an individual.

In trying to understand one person, we function in the arena of clinical skills, the application of introspection and empathy, the use of the accumulated analytic commonplaces of the past century, and an occasional deductive inference based on a priori theoretical grounds. Beyond the bounds of individual biography, we must play Sir Oracle by endorsing one version of the laws of human nature—laws about which no consensus has been reached within psychoanalysis. Freud underscored the distinction I am making by calling these laws *"metapsychology."*

The epistemological problems posed by the need for some metapsychology and its appropriate applications transcend the limits of this presentation; suffice it to say here that it is precisely these arcane philosophical questions that discourage most psychoanalysts from entering the bullring of theoretical discourse. I have the impression that historians and critics of the arts seldom appreciate the difference between the methods of the humanities and those of empirical science, and therefore tend to misuse the theoretical abstractions of psychoanalysis. Parenthetically, the growing popularity of Lacanian ideas in American academic circles may well be attributed to the fact that, by basing his version of the laws of human nature on a linguistic model, Lacan has tried to dislodge psychoanalysis from the biological foundations Freud regarded as essential. Lacan's position has a respectable 2,500-year-old philosophical pedigree, but it cannot gain credence in the domain of Anglo-Saxon empiricism, and American humanists who adopt it automatically become intellectual expatriates.

The most consequential manifestation of epistemological confusion about psychoanalytic ideas is the concern frequently voiced by nonspecialist scholars about selection of the most appropriate clinical hypothesis to apply to the data under consideration. Efforts to match the patterns found in analytic texts to any particular set of observations are always misguided; in fact, such efforts run directly contrary to psychoanalytic methods of inference. The psychoanalyst formulates inductive hypotheses by first effecting a trial identification with the analysand and then using introspection to detect the probable meanings of the psychological material he has temporarily made his own. If this process is unavailable, the analyst may fall back on deductive inferences based on theoretical convictions, but such an emergency resort to "book learning" always constitutes a personal defeat in the exercise of one's "analytic instrument."

The introspective methodology employed by psychoanalysis is ever vulnerable to the criticism that it leads to confusion between subject and object. It is for this reason that we must never neglect the importance of consensual validation. To give you one recent example: Robert Liebert's *Michelangelo* stimulated me to compare my inner vision of the great Florentine with that of Liebert (J. Gedo, 1985), and I was led to propose an understanding of the psychological content of many of the artist's works quite different from that of my colleague. Each of these alternative visions will doubtless gain some partisans, and will doubtless be further refined in the light of newly discovered biographical data as well as advances in psychoanalytic conceptualization. But my strongest disagreement with

Liebert concerns the very issue of the biographer's subjectivity, about which he prefers to keep silent (see Liebert, 1985). In contrast, I believe the psychoanalytic approach demands absolute candor on this score.

I suspect that we have general consensus by now that every biographical enterprise is by necessity also a partial autobiography of its author (cf. J. Gedo, 1972). The psychoanalytic biographer differs from authors who do not share his premises mostly in being continuously aware of the cardinal importance of his subjectivity in shaping his response to his materials. The perils of both excessive idealization and hostile debunking are, of course, very well known; it may be less widely understood that every scholar is bound to experience the gamut of transference and countertransference responses, as well as identification and counteridentification, with regard to every one of his subjects.

If such irrational vectors are inevitable concomitants of our study of man and his works, we may well have to face the fact that every one of us needs an impartial witness to warn him of the psychological distortions he tends to introduce into his scholarly work. Although we may not be able to consult with a neutral observer of our psychological work every time we undertake an excursion into the interdisciplinary arena, it would be well for these projects to have the same kind of access to our inner life that clinicians who would undertake psychoanalytic treatment responsibilities are expected to possess.

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Archaism: Confronting the Past

By Jacques Leenhardt

Our century has unfurled its brilliant litany of political, artistic, moral, and scientific revolutions under the banner of Apollo. The spirit of analysis, the Golden Section and geometry, functionalism and pragmatic efficiency being used for the conquest of the world, all has occurred as if the dream of a *mathesis universalis,* the prophesy of Pythagoras, had finally been realized.

And yet art, at the same time that its movement carried it toward the rationality of forms and of functions, attempted to take an inverse road. Its interest carries it, then, toward the arts called "primitive," the fetishes and objects of animistic cults. It thus opens to itself the door of that which Breton and the surrealists quickly named the *retour de refoule*—the return of the repressed. Contrary to the linear temporality of progress, this was, in the domain of art and literature, the recourse to the past and to its images; contrary to the abstraction of the delegation of parliamentarist power, this was, on the political and cultural plane, the search for a fusion of people in the crucible of myths. This was, finally, the same as and other than rationalist reason.

Therefore art, philosophy and society advanced on two feet, but didn't follow the same road. While the one took account of the latest developments of science, the other went back to magic.

I would like to examine how that which it is convenient to call our esthetic modernity is effectively constructed on this contradiction, and to see how psychoanalysis takes place within this particular phenomenon.

The first remark to make is based on what I just said: that it is not art alone that is concerned, but the ensemble of spheres of social and cultural life. If there is, as everybody recognizes, a rupture in the esthetic field, this is simply contemporaneous with what is happening in other domains, in such a way that the question of which of these manifestations comes first is purposeless. I will deal here in an inclusive manner with the common characteristics of those different fields of intellectual, cultural and social practice.

In 1881, in his book devoted to his discovery of Troy, Ilios, and which is also his autobiography, Heinrich Schliemann begins with this confession:

> It is not vanity that impels me to place the history of my life at the start of this work. I desire only to show how the work of my whole life has been determined by the impressions of my childhood, how it has not been anything but a logical flow. The pick and the shovel that have exhumed the ruins of Troy and the royal tombs of Mycenae were forged and sharpened in the little village in Germany where eight of the first years of my youth elapsed.

Two themes, typical of the epoch, are here entwined: the first, which made so strong an impression on Freud, links a memory and the desires of childhood with the realizations and the sublimations of adulthood. The other puts in perspective, and aligns on a broader plane, this Germany that gave birth to dreams in the heads of its children and the distant Mycenae.

What Schliemann makes manifest in telling us his personal history is that the adventure of the subject, in the culture, is fundamentally an encounter with his past. Encounter of the adult with the child that he was, encounter of the citizen of a German village with his most distant cultural origins. The *hic et nunc* of a feat—here, the discovery of Troy—can be comprehended only in the manner of a crossing of trajectories where the personal history and the history of the nation intersect and produce this achievement.

But one isn't fooled. Contrary to what one might think, overinterpreting his denial, Schliemann isn't busy indulging himself in a narcissistic or vain operation: it is the very concept of history (itself) dominant in the nineteenth century that he overturns in putting his personal history in front. He in fact insinuates that history is not this progressive movement that one thought, which carries men and their knowledge toward more knowledge and domination, but that the present, gazing toward its origin, invents it and recognizes itself in the same manner that he himself, a German scholar, has invented the Homeric Troy and has delivered it to his country so that Germany would recognize itself in it.

Thus, under the pen of the archeologist, a new configuration of the notion of time and of history is sketched out. Certainly the time of a profes-

sional archeologist is consecutive-progressive. But the phenomenon that interests us doesn't concern only the actual work of the archeologist. To the contrary, in his initial phrase, Schliemann underlined the symbolic dimension of that quest for the past. From then on, and one sees it with Freud, archeology ceases to be only an austere and painstaking manual labor in order to become an attitude of spirit, a look at oneself; and the archeologist must become, for a time (like the linguist will be in his turn, three-quarters of a century later) the hero of the social sciences. For it is a question of this: at the same moment when it is decided that after a century of pillage one must conduct rigorous excavations at Pompeii, Schliemann, at his excavation site in Asia Minor, appears as the emblematic figure of the researcher. And it is through him that archeology becomes, little by little, the model science—that is to say the science whose concepts will be borrowed by scholars to be used in other fields.

As always, such success isn't due to a single cause. At the moment when Schliemann extends the history of the Greco-Latin Occident toward the past and in this way permits our relationship with our history to be renewed, other discoveries appear in the field of the exact sciences, which will lead to similar interrogations. The progress of the theory of heredity, for example, and in particular the elaboration of the laws of Mendel, revolutionized biology and, through this, the image that man has of his life and of his connection to the ancestral chain. One will see almost immediately the repercussions in literature when Zola would use this motif as a guideline for the genealogy of the Rougon Macquart, a work which would legitimately appear as an archeology of misfortune.

Origin is no longer an object for mere scientific curiosity: people suddenly realize that origin marks man for the time and through time, and thus realize that encountering origin in the archeological anamnesis means discovering oneself as part of the species.

Confronted with the necessity of thinking at the same time of the progressive development of time and, correlatively, the return to the origin, the knowledge of the end of the nineteenth century finds in the images that archeology offers a way of visually conceiving of this new and reversible conception of time. Archeology as a model science presents in effect the advantage of giving a visual dimension to time: the six superimposed towns discovered by Schliemann, in the last of which he thought he had recognized Troy, constitute (like a picture) a spatial arrangement of time whose characteristics can be found in Freud's three-tiered description of the Self.

Nevertheless, one sees that there was at that time also profound concern involved in this interest, concern directly related to the very nature of the civilizations disclosed by archeology, and not only bound up in the formal aspects. As a matter of fact, Western civilization had never ceased, since the Renaissance, to dream of Greco-Latin antiquity, to dream of a world supposedly coherent both at the social and esthetic level. At the moment when the industrial revolution definitively returned these reveries to their imaginary status, at the moment when the antiquarian musing of

Winkelmann appears no longer able to mobilize energies, so their ideal of equilibrium is very remote from the unbalanced and unequal powers that grind down the old social structures and deliver, in the cruel and barbaric suffering of this nineteenth century, the new values and the new social systems. It is, as if by a miracle of opportunity, another Greece that makes its appearance on the archeological scene. The flowery Pompeiian dreams of the Gradiva of Jensen fade out to let a ruder and more austere culture appear, warlike and massive: Mycenae. Thus, in place of the Apollonian dream, more archaic and therefore more pure forces take shape (later known as *fruhgrieschisch*, which means Archaic Greek) under the pen of the Nazi ideologue Walter Darre who, passing back before the democratic Athenian century, will make the Germans descend from the Dorian people.

In inventing Troy, Schliemann thus enthrones archeology in a double way: as a model discipline and as a social model in conformity with a mythological demand of the time that only begins to become conscious of itself. Only because Troy and Mycenae suit so well the social impulse that little by little dethrones the Greece of Pericles from its pedestal in the western imagination, could archeology spread its spatial model of time so easily in the other domains of knowledge.

It is useless to stress once more the interest that Freud finds in Schliemann and archeology. There is nevertheless a paradox in the background of this fascination that I would like to emphasize. Freud is a man of classical Greece, of the lights of reason and measure, of the "gnothi s'eauton." Yet nevertheless, one finds a fascinated admiration on his part for the pride of heros who brave the limits that are imposed on them by institutions, conventions, or the superego.

In this Freud is thoroughly of his time, and one could say, with Andre Green, that at the side of the liberal Freud, there is a Nietzchean Freud. Certainly it is in a symbolic way that his heros ignore the major prohibitions. Nevertheless, the vitalism that propels the individual beyond himself toward the superman, as toward the subhuman, is at work in psychoanalysis—as it is at work in the imaginary of that which was called then, for example in Seyes' work, psychological imperialism.

In the phantasmatic reconstruction of the origin that nourishes the archeological spirit, one sees a search for a causality always more precocious—that is to say, closer and closer to the very origin—which is, for example, in Zola's work, the blood of heredity. Twenty years later in Leon Daudet's essays, that origin is the inherited shape of personality that he cast in the notion of "heredofigure;" and finally, in Melanie Klein, it is the very concept of the intrauterine. In all these formulations of man's origin and nature, the myth of the ontogenesis of the subject is subverted and complemented by a phylogenetic instance, which carries on the mnesic marks of the species.

Thus the interrogation that occupies us refers to the ambivalence of the referents of the subject, to the double causality—generic and individual—by which it defines itself. The era is thus closed during which western philosophy and psychology had succeeded in uprooting the subject from

its multiple attachments to phylogenetic prehistory in order to make of it a pure rational being. From then on, without ceasing to think of himself as a subject, individual and autonomous, man would equally have to perform his reinsertion into the biological universe of his species and into the long span of time along which his own identity is itself transformed. The archeological paradigm, therefore, takes the value of a model in psychoanalysis and in the other fields because it makes it possible to give a form to this conflict which appears a priori unsolvable and sterile.

By connecting, in a trans-temporal image, the different moments of the being, the archeological model opens the way to a truly dialectical notion of temporality. This point goes much beyond the simple question of reinserting man as a conscious being into the web of his biological links. The question of the archaism points to the fact that the cultural subject, the writer or the artist, has himself to be reinserted in the cultural chain; and also to the fact that he finds himself facing that alter ego that is his culture, alter ego, totally alter, other, and totally ego, himself. So that the artist facing culture is like a man facing the species.

Let's repeat once again the same thing, but on a slightly different plane: the eternal question of innovation in art, which has provided us with thousands of quarrels, between the ancients and the moderns, between the moderns and the post-moderns. This question is itself nothing but one of the effects of this dialectic of the self and the other, in a culture that doesn't allow me to be myself a subject without being totally objectivized within the culture, which is my absolute other.

Thus, if the archeological model is so important, it is because it radically transforms the modality under which we can elaborate these binary oppositions. Not by chance I have used many times the word "dialectic;" by doing so, I was suggesting that the archeological paradigm provides us with a third dimension. In the old scheme where ancient and modern culture and subject, past and present used to be opposed as autonomous entities, like substances, and therefore entitled to be qualified by predicates, the archeological model, thanks to its spatial character, provides a new and relatively external instance. It in fact suggests that meaning is not immanent to things, to beings, or to time, but is constituted by grasping them from an external temporality and constituting, therefore, a human comprehension. What Schliemann offers to western culture of the nineteenth century is not so much a more ancient past, a more primordial origin; it is, thanks to what I call the archeological model, the going beyond the taboo of linear temporality and the possibility of recognizing in this absolute past something of the present, one of the forms of the present in its tension towards the future. In the manner of a ragpicker of desire, Breton said: "Any wreck within reach of our hands must be considered as a precipitate of our desires."

This trespassing of linear temporality can be achieved only by virtue of shifting from the time problem into the field of spatial concepts, and thanks to the ever more clear domination of the visual and of its logic over discursive logic. The latter, as we know, remains inevitably linked to the con-

secutive character of the chain of the words and of the phrases in language and writing. Discursive logic has no other path than a linear and progressive one. On the contrary, the eye and vision can move over the surface of the image in all directions. If the space of the picture has been slowly bent to discursive logic since the Middle Ages and therefore submitted to the hierarchial principle, that was due to the painters—that is to say, to the function of art in society—and not to the eye. With the end of the nineteenth century and the commencing of the twentieth century, the space of a picture ceased once again to be hierarchized; it became again, as it was before the Renaissance, a field where the eye wanders at its will. This new multidirectional space is what restores little by little the atrophied potentialities of the eye. In the space of the picture, as in the archeological model, everything is contemporary with everything, and the origin transforms the present like the present of the child Schliemann evoked the archaic Troy.

In its attempt at conceiving of the relationship between individual and species, particularly in the form of the Kleinian hypothesis of archaism and, in Freud, by the use of the archeological model, psychoanalysis provides us with a conceptual apparatus the pertinence of which I would like to test by confronting it with the problem of the relation to history in the practice of art.

I have suggested that psychoanalysis confronted the psychological problem of species only at the moment when, at the end of the nineteenth century, the social links were no longer sufficient to support at the symbolic level the relationship between the individual and the society. By then one had to thematize this relationship as such, and therefore give a specific status to heredity as to archaism in order to ground the historicity of the individual. I have thus affirmed that it was the rupture of the dominant social link, as a consequence of the victory of individualism, which generated the problematic of the origin.

The other essential element of this conceptual device is the autonomy of fragments in the representation of the totality. The idea of the origin or of the archaic is meant to reassemble the pieces of a lost reality, which is perceived as dispersed, to reassemble the fragments of the totality in a unitary logic. The archeological model thus is necessarily founded on the bad feeling of an original fragmentation. The archeo-logic, the symbolic logic of the origin therefore takes in our imaginary, the place of the historical linear logic, which makes us descend from what precedes us, without interrupting the chain. The modernist dynamic of avant-gardes was of this nature: a logical continuity stringing together the links of a chain conceived on the evolutionist model. As in the Bible, Manet begat Monet, who begat Seurat, who begat Delaunay, who begat...etcetera, etcetera. One could just as well order the genealogy differently, passing from Monet to Masson, from Pollock to Arnulf Rainer or to Asger Jorn; it matters little. It is a matter of a pure generative logic specific to a particular conception of art history.

But it is this logic that becomes less and less convincing during the twentieth century. If connections can always be established between works,

on the other hand, one can ground this relationship less and less on a generational sequence. It appears that it is less the generator, I would say the progenitor, of the evolutionary logic proper to art history which dominates, but only a vague entity composed of the ensemble of all the accumulated pasts. In this new situation, it is this ensemble which is in the position of the generator, and it is no longer a single figure. In other words, art thinks of itself less in relation to a symbolic Father and/or progenitor (Cezanne begat Braque who begat Lothe) than in its relationship to this historical package conceived as an arche—a beginning, an origin, an amniotic milieu, a mother, an indistinct and mythic mother of the arts.

All the artistic gestures participate in this history without chronological time, without hierarchy. It has become the habit, in architecture, to call that historicism, and then post-modernism. But this is still a way of saving the generational paradigm. In fact, the fusion of all the pasts in an originating entity belongs to a logic different from that of historicism: in the latter, there is allegiance to one specific style, to one specific time. On the contrary, the more recent developments in visual arts conceived the whole of art as a potential progenitor in its undifferentiated globality, as a mother culture—and it is that mother culture that finds itself in the position of the engenderer. The archaic maternal thus takes the place of the logic of paternity. All archaic objects are good, the already seen is good, and the catalogue becomes the absolute source.

The sterility of contemporary art is often denounced. People demand innovation, and ask the artist to astonish us with things never seen before. This is to ignore the logic of creation which dominates today. There is no longer a good New because any goodness belongs to the past; it is then the history of art that becomes truly the mother of art, and no longer is the artist the father of the work. The symbolic model of the paternity of the author (the *auctor:* remember the word author has to do with authority) means continuity of the chain by means of a sequence of ruptures, whereas the symbolic model of cultural maternity is repetition in the simultaneity. Therefore, the works of today are more radically cultural; that is to say, marked by the tribe of collective images, marked by the museum as a repository of forms, as a matrix of efforts, and as a protective authority. An artist today must manifest his cultural belonging more than he is supposed to break a tradition in order to advance the story. We have entered the specular state of art.

If we pursue this hypothesis, it appears that our world has inaugurated a new relationship of the artist to the culture. The culture no longer relates the artist to his predecessors, in the sequence of schools, groups, and movements, or as it was in the Oedipal model, in the rejection and the rupture with his immediate past.

From Marcel Duchamp, and above all the surrealists, the historical and evolutionist paradigm is shipwrecked. The new museum is built on the ruins of the previously dominant historical concept of the museum. The values legitimated by history give way to the values legitimated by anthropology, and the archetypes replace the types elaborated by the academisms.

Since then the artist has found himself alone, facing the history of his own practice. By autonomizing this practice from the constraints of a school, from those of the metier, and in turning his back to the constraints of representation which gave limitations but also meaning to his practice, he faces the totality of forms and themes ever produced. The price of his autonomy is the loss of the dynamic scheme of history. Certainly he always pretends to make this history but, having lost the evolutionist paradigm, he only has access to a series of fragments, of debris that at best he recomposes in a collage that will never be anything but a substitute, an ersatz of totality. The subjective culture that has taken hold of our history of art aims tragically at making a history out of fragments of different presents. It is the continuity, the articulation of elements in the whole, that is the problem today.

Because it succeeded in freeing itself from any kind of function, art has become sucked in by the fascination for the archaic depths, by the successive layers of its past, by the accumulated deposits of its practice.

History, under the pick and shovel of Schliemann, appears like a *mille-feuille*, a multitude of layers superimposed on the accumulative spatiality where the eye unifies what the individual has experienced in the particularity of his existence. Thus it is the death of each existential life that grounds the present of the *mille-feuille* and opens a process of signification that liberates itself from the biological and historical chronology to enter the logic of the symbolic. This shift occurs in psychoanalysis when Freud reinterprets the schizophrenic tear developed by Bleuler, which is specific to the existential and individual level, in terms of what he calls in German *Spaltung*, meaning a systematic break specific to the symbolic logic. Freud, with Max Ernst, Aragon, and many others, introduces us to the phantasmagorical world of symbolic logic where substances have lost their transcendence.

When Max Ernst cut figures in the web of imaged anecdotes and recomposed them, according to a knowing absence of logic, he invented the narrative collage. That isn't anything but reassembling, in a third space, fragments belonging originally to other spaces and other tales. It is creating poetic life with figurative death, with death languages and abstract life creating projects of becoming.

The art of our time has conquered this new perspective, which is no longer that of Alberti, ordering the world according to the eye of the spectator. From now on, the eye is nowhere, and the images of our imaginary are composed according to a new topology, far from the traditional categories of time and space.

What does the gesture of Rauschenberg or Schnabel signify if not the tentative recomposing of the debris of culture in a new totality? But this recourse to the history of objects, of materials, and of forms, is utilized from now on according to the modalities of archeological thought. The artist is faced with the history of his art, like Hofmanstahl was faced with the words of the language. He said: "I have completely lost the capacity to think or speak on any kind of matter in a coherent way. Utilizing abstract words, that inevitably the tongue must use producing thought, these abstract

words decompose themselves in my mouth like rotting mushrooms. All for me is but fragments, fragments divided again and again, and no longer making sense as a concept."

Thus, the fundamental concept of the artistic practice ceases to be the totality, as condensation of both the psychic and physical world, which had engendered an entire era of representation. Art, henceforth, takes charge of a nature that has ceased to be an objective reality to become the product of the activity of imagination, to become the catalogue of the images produced by and in the culture.

Daudet said, "We are a constant explosion of ancient images, narrowly associated with recent images."

Aragon, in his breviary of the spirit of the twentieth century, "The Peasant of Paris," knew well this new mystery of culture having returned to its maternal metonymy after three centuries spent under the law of the metaphor and of the Father.

A metonymic culture is a culture that nourishes itself on its anthropological mysteries, that refuses to leave its sanctuary in order not to mint or to sell, that is to compromise, itself in the practical world.

Art had, at the end of so many centuries, apparently arrived at the limits of its usefulness, in the same way that reason arrived at the limits of its power. The progressive metaphorization, rationalist and modern, has arrived at the end of its development and we are apparently entering an era where meaning is elaborated differently. This is not to say, as too many people pretend, that there is an evanescence of meaning and a permanence of simulacra alone. What we are facing is the elaboration of a new regime of meaning that psychoanalytical and artistic research as well have begun to formulate. This is a regime of meaning that we can more easily formulate visually than discursively, a regime which creates a conflagration of substances and times through the shock of references abandoned to their fundamental fragmentarity. Aragon had the presentiment of that when he placed this epistemological novelty under the banner of the notion of passage. It is in the collision of fragments which are now without purpose, without function, and which are out of time, that the new order of meaning in art is born, one which places us in the position of the archeologist.

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