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Art Department
State University of New York at Stony Brook
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ROBERT SMITHSON:
AN ESTHETIC FOREMAN IN THE MINING INDUSTY
(PART TWO)

RON GRAZIANI

> "One must be concerned not only with the landscape itself, but how one looks at it—the view is very important." *Robert Smithson, 1972*[1]

Smithson's admonition can and has subsequently been framed by a series of Postmodern (read anti-esthetic) mirrors, posted throughout the discursive terrain, that continue to function as protective blinders around the art by Smithson, deflecting unwanted critical positions while containing others. Relying on a methodology of deferral and displacement, staged as a form of resistance to mainframe modernist esthetics in pursuit of a garden of seamless closures, this camp's analysis of Smithson's art has over the course of the last twenty years gained strength, cogency and a significant degree of institutional academic acceptance.[2] My own anamorphic excavation of this theoretical landscape grounded both Smithson's esthetics and its postmodernization as (de)tours through the long-standing conventions of the picturesque-sublime.[3]

Although, this reading suggests several tertiary implications, such as an unwarranted abyss between postmodern methodological claims and practice, my intended destination was a return to a more concrete historical landscape. A recent appraisal of how "the internal taxonomy [categorical frameworks] of the visual arts are the signifiers of political victory" and how the above taxonomic camp has postured Smithson's art as an anti-esthetics within an all-too-familiar "seemingly seamless open field" makes a similar case.[4] What is at stake is how "the recruitment of Smithson's alleged transgressive taxonomy [has been used] in a propaganda battle against taxonomy as such," and whether its strategies to "defunctionalize the modernist taxonomy by ridicule [should be] assumed, at least in some sense,

emancipatory, before the fact... before it has been put into effect by state functionaries." Arguing for how destabilizing esthetics can allow for a "re-stabilization or recuperation" on the part of any institutional apparatus moving "to regain its homeostasis," the postmodernization of Smithson's art can be seen as "propagating a theoretical error" by refusing to see its "anarchizing tendencies as an integral part of the oppression it purports to mock... and one indispensable for [the latter's] perpetuation."

Nonetheless, while refusing the anti-esthetic camp's posture of resistance, Smithson's "permanent place in the history of art [is relocated] to his skill in negotiating what really was the 'end of art'... in a manner that has been serviceable to countless artists ever since."[5] Although a part of the growing dislike for the "aimless nomadology" in the postmodern theory, what is again displaced is the world of social practices—the social and historical reality upon which theory not only rests, but is ideologically implicated within. What is not even acknowledged is the intermediary role patrons play between art and subsequent artists, how Smithson was a participant in a range of other discursive forums—for example, the economics of the mining industry, the congressional debate over that activity, or the ecological parameters that helped determine those debates—all already actively engaged in what would become Smithson's taxonomic framework by the late 1960s. A lack of critical engagement in how Smithson the citizen and his art's significance were inscribed within the political and/or economic habits of those patrons of the arts who played a role in deciding whether the art by Smithson would constitute a useful site for a re-negotiation of their esthetic habits—before it is put into effect by countless artists ever since—conveniently displaces a permanent place for the ideology of patrons in the relationship between esthetic theory and concrete social practices.

The art-patron relationship is never an easy fit, but without it, as Smithson posits, "the types of critical boundaries... that exist by themselves removed from what surrounds them... tend to isolate the art object into a metaphysical void, independent from the external relationships such as *land, labor and class*." It is a type of "freedom [Smithson viewed as] metaphysical or in art critical terms, *esthetic*."[6] Smithson's position seems to have accounted for how "Marx had placed the class referent at the core of all the relevant taxonomies."[7] But Smithson's view was not a Marxist view, for Smithson did not "want to transcend the bourgeois order,"[8] only consolidate its scatterings.

In ecological terms, that meant an awareness of how over the course of a century, the pursuit of nature as rich in unlimited mineral resources has turned the machine-in-the-garden esthetic parameter of the picturesque-sublime on its head. That is, with the demise of manifest destiny and its version of nature possessing unlimited resources, by the late 1960s the issue for many, was no longer how to manage the machine-in-the-garden but what to do with the growing perspectival garden-in-the-machine view of the landscape.[9]

Roland Barthes, the cultural theorist from the 1960s, began a short analysis on the travel guide in his essay "The Blue Guide" with the following: "The blue guide hardly knows the existence of scenery except under the guise of the pictur-

esque." Nonetheless, Barthes supplied another crucial guidepost by contending that this mythic "formula of the picturesque had become obsolete for a part of the bourgeoisie. The myth of travel is becoming quite anachronistic," and, "if one entrusted the preparation of a new guide book to...",[10] and here I interrupt Barthes to point out that, for me, someone like Smithson was one of those new guides through our postmodern landscape. In a prior essay, *Robert Smithson: an Esthetic Prospector in the Mining Industry (Part 1)*, I explored the art-patron relationship caught up within the ambivalent ecoscape of the late 1960s—the aspirations, successes, and defeats of what can conveniently be called the initial wave (or "new conservationisms") of the ecological movement.[11] But to quote from the *Blue Guide* one last time, much like the Cheshire cat—both in terms of how the art historical landscape has dealt with this body (of) politics, and in reference to the internal makeup of Smithson's esthetic activity— "what is to be seen is constantly in the process of vanishing."[12]

Witness for example, the series of excursions Smithson began in 1966 (later published as travelogues) to the crystal quarries of the Great Notch and Upper Montclair near Paterson, New Jersey; his tour through a highway construction site in Passaic, New Jersey; or his Yucatan excursion. Celebrated through the parameters of a promotional tour, here were self-consciously staged acts of salesmanship, openly placing the beholder as a recruit for the picturesque. Within such a familiar approach as a travelogue, the issue is how does one want to place these excursions into the picturesque-sublime?

One can (and many have) viewed them as the act of a resistor transgressing the boundaries of decorum.

One could continue this narrative of an anti-esthetic of resistance and emphasize how Smithson's subsequent Nonsites, as forms of representations, inherently displace what the Nonsites point to, an original prospected site. Their infrasystem of maps, photos, and bins of minerals all have a certain "having been there" quality to them: the *photograph*, with its photosensitive chemicals registering its direct contact with what's out there, the *map* in being taken for the world, its direct link with both reality and representation buttressing the epistemological bedrock of cartographic thinking, and the *minerals as rocks* in the bins suggesting a certain direct presence of the earth's crust although displaced in the gallery. Along with the infrasystem of containments, Smithson argued that "the external site evades you all the while (the maps, photos, and the piles of rocks) were directing you out there." As he stated it, "There is no way to find what is out there, yet you're directed out there."[13]

As acts of representations, Smithson's Nonsites emphasize the original site as displaced in its representation. But representation was only part of the Nonsite-site ensemble. Emphasizing how the distance between Nonsite and site—*as distance traveled* —could be experienced, he spoke of developing a sense for the distance between the Nonsite and prospected site. One that "*could be* invented, devised, artificial, a space of metaphorical significance,"[14] a type of travel Smithson called an anti-travel or a nontrip. But if the participant wanted to travel to the original site (a distance Smithson noted would change according to where the Nonsite

was being exhibited), appropriate itineraries would be provided.

Smithson argued for a dialectical relationship (and here, too, with his proviso that the dialectic was also a logic of illusions) between the natural and the artificial, the concrete and the theoretical, the miner and the ecologist—renegotiating throughout the 1960s the ambivalence of those parameters within a variety of detours through the semiotics of the picturesque-sublime. In the process, Smithson's art came to constitute a useful view of a particular landscape, a landscape that needed new and innovative ways to view it for that part of the bourgeoisie desiring a less obsolete version of the picturesque-sublime. That is, Smithson's views, in their significance, proved to be capable of renegotiating what in the 1960s, was becoming anachronistic for part of the bourgeoisie—pictorial views of nature as a Garden of Eden even if occupied by the machine. It was a crisis of economic legitimacy that also took shape in cultural terms, and the Garden State of New Jersey provided Smithson with all sorts of contemporary versions of gardens now in the machine.

In the spirit of a non-travel to a land that time (art history) continues to forget, this essay pieces together a series of storyboards that outline a geo-historical account of the semiotics of earthart, and how Smithson's esthetics helped to renegotiate the boundaries of that sociality, institutionally delimited within the political and cultural initiatives and openings generated from within. Avoiding the hegemonic discourse of how the artwork always exceeds interpretation, the current essay picks up where Part 1 concluded—taking Smithson at his word but without underestimating the internal ideology of his esthetics. While continuing to assume that context also exceeds the parameters of any artistic activity, in its significance, this narrative will oscillate somewhere between an image of Smithson as an unofficial gleaner of man's relationship with nature—viewed as valuable (yet limited) in mineral resources—and that of an authorized esthetic foreman in the mining industry.

In a interview dated April 1972, Smithson talked about the artist's relationship to the culture industry: "The artist isn't in control of his own value, he is sort of waiting for the value to be confirmed... the artist is estranged from his own production... and the museums... [are] instruments of political control."[15] Echoing Foucault's agenda, Smithson argued that an archaeological "investigation of the apparatus the artist is threaded through... will be the growing issue of the 1970s," adding that he "could no longer" even do the kind of esthetic act he had performed at Documenta V that year, where his contribution to the exhibition was a statement titled "Cultural Confinement." These comments were made at a time when Smithson felt relatively confident about the shift he had taken in the early 1970s—a move that pushed his art away from the confines of the museum space and into a more direct involvement with the civic process of recoding the ecological parameters.

The politics of ecology had become by the end of the 1960s a huge broad-based grass-roots phenomena. Even the mining industry (in the midst of doubling its output in the surface mining of, for example, coal) was beginning to see the need for public relations on a broader scale. Two main groups jockeyed for a position of influence. The dominant one, centered in Washington D. C., consisted of forestry

and fishery managers, state officials tied to various bureaus, the House Interior Committee, those organizations intent on subsidizing nature's users. The second group was more decentralized, a combination of numerous citizen initiatives and environmental groups ranging from conservationist to preservationists. Many were just beginning to be effective on the regional level: Greenpeace had just begun in 1970; groups like the Sierra Club, a splinter group of Friends of the Earth had its own brand of "shock troop tactics"; the Audubon Society, which developed more deliberate forms of recruitment used the *New York Times* for its mouthpiece. Each helped to establish definitions for a "new conservationism" on an international level and together they held a loosely defined and often contradictory ecological philosophical position.

Although presented as a grass-roots movement, much of this second group was not a "poor man's movement." Claiming fealty to this group were: The John Muir Institute, a branch of Friends of the Earth and financed by the chairman of the board at Atlantic Richfield; the American Conservation Association headed by Lawrence Rockefeller; and the Nature Conservancy, which purchased endangered land. Additionally, the North American Wildlife Foundation and Wildlife Management Institute (supported by the gun industry) spent a large amount of research money and time to set up their own ecological parameters for stocking and managing wildlife.[16]

By the early 1970s, these wilderness societies had become militant preservationist groups, politically conservative and ecologically reactionary. While their new conservationisms (including what was called the psychedelic left on the West Coast) were based on concepts of the environment that included the human or industrial element they also ran counter to the congressional anthropocentric version of that relationship. Despite the name, the "new conservationisms" were—as the the "progressive conservation movement" had been at the turn of this century—policies inscribed within the economics of sustainable profit.

The arguments held a basic contradiction for Smithson. Most of those fighting for preservationism were the very same beneficiaries of the industrial ventures that were polluting our environment. What separated the 19th century expansionists from their more contemporary consolidating prototypes was that the latter were now in a battle to preserve their own backyards slowly being inundated with the alluvial debris of industrialization. Smithson's argument ran something like this: Capital's imaging of a better standard of living was based on growth and consumption, a lifestyle that also was spoiling the land. Yet most of those arguing the case for preservation were not only affluent due to the industrial machine now overrunning the garden but were also unwilling to give up that position. This was the fundamental faultline of ecological politics. For Smithson, the "new conservationisms" contained a real unresolved ambivalence and "it seemed to [Smithson that one should] recognize this entropic condition rather than try to reverse it."[17] Smithson's esthetic narratives framed that tension—the tension between an ever-consuming mining industry and what Smithson felt were a variety of chauvinistic assumptions re-managing its accumulating debris.

With the political reality of federal intervention into the environmental

impacts of the mining industry and the ecology issue quickly becoming a political revolution based on confrontation—using tactics such as sit-ins and boycotts—both the industrialist and ecologist presented hurdles for Smithson's esthetic of confinement, and by early 1970, Smithson would sustain some negotiational failures. For example, after constructing a *Map of Broken Glass-Atlantis* on a parking lot on Love Ladies Island, New Jersey—where for the duration of the installation it posed a constant threat to those crossing the park(ing) lot— Smithson ran up against a citizens' conservationist group in Vancouver when he attempted to complete a more durable version of an *Island of Broken Glass*. Having completed *Glue Pour* for a Vancouver show in 1969 and *Glass Strata with Mulch and Soil* for a private garden, Smithson went there in search of an island. Scanning the Strait of Georgia near Vancouver for a possible site, Smithson located a small (pumice) island just west of Fraser Point British Columbia. Smithson planned to use the island to dump 100 tons of D-Grade glass, and with special rubber boots and a shovel, smash the material into a "glass strata." The prospected site—Miami Islet—was given as a gift by the British Crown and the project was initially approved by their minister of Lands and Forests. But during the week of the planned execution, Smithson was cartooned in a local Vancouver newspaper as an alcoholic looking for a place to recycle his beer bottles.[18]

Financed by Ace Gallery (Venice, California and Vancouver, BC), Smithson attempted to bring the glass up from Stockton, California, (a real public relations blunder) but was stopped at the border by the Society for Pollution and Environmental Control. They claimed the project would disturb the ecological system of seals and cormorants on the islet. Under conservationist pressure, the office of the Minister of Lands and Forests withdrew its permission. In a letter submitted to the Minister of Lands Forests and Water Resources on Feb. 13, Ace Gallery argued that "extensive" research had "shown that only some gulls, a few pigeons and about 20 seals were using the islet—no cormorants nested on the site." But Smithson concurred that despite the low risk of harm, the glass project should not be done as proposed. In its stead, Smithson subsequently submitted the Miami Islet project as a broken concrete earthwork—concrete habitats so as "to encourage wildlife to visit and use the island as a nesting and breeding ground," adding "especially cormorants that need to rest on a dry level." The project was now to be considered "a monument to ecology." It, too, was rejected.[19]

While thus embroiled, Smithson was in the midst of another failure in California, but this time with industrialists. As artist-in-residence for Kaiser Steel and American Cement Company in the "Art and Technology" show, a show intent on bringing together artists and industries for a cooperative venture, Smithson proposed several de-architecturalization projects. Upon seeing his proposals—a collapsed mine tunnel, a demolished building, a landslide—the companies canceled their cooperative participation. Smithson then took his designs and adapted them to the Miami Islet project, proposing an "Island of Dismantled Building" capped by a concrete section of a demolished building from Vancouver. Ultimately neither projects were ever completed.[20] Smithson called the whole Vancouver event pathological, and felt the "militant preservationists" were using him as a "scape-

goat," fueling the "pollution panic to take political power from the industries... using his art as a symbol for their propaganda."[21] Smithson saw the attempt to protect the animals on Miami Islet as a kind of ecological Oedipal complex, "a cheap religion to clear [the environmentalist's] conscience while he continued to eat his bloody steaks and drive his poisonous car." The Miami Islet Project "was not meant to save anything or anybody, but to reveal things as they are."[22]

No longer a studio artist with the type of security or privileges of a laboratory condition, Smithson would have to develop a set of consensus-building skills with an awareness of broader social systems. He would have to learn how to negotiate for his esthetics of confinement, in collaboration with both the private and public sectors. But by mid-year he would have a major success, the basalt fabrication *Spiral Jetty*.[23]

The most often reproduced and discussed earthwork, *Spiral Jetty* was constructed in April 1970—the month and year of our *officially* celebrated first "Earth Day"—on the Great Salt Lake in northern Utah. Since submerging, *Spiral Jetty* and its below water-level condition has been staged to celebrate the esthetics of the post-sublime characteristics of fragmentation, transience and impermanence. These qualities are present at *Spiral Jetty*, but Smithson's esthetics were always inscribed within processes of both displacement and containment.

Smithson's means for scanning the parameters of the lake included the use of a 1963 College of Mines and Mineral Industry Report, titled *Oil Seeps At Rozel Point*. Rozel Point consists of tertiary rock composed of (volcanic) basalt and limestone. Maps in the report pinpointed a destabilizing *fault* line running through an *alluvial fan* on the edge of Rozel peninsula. It was the presence of this fault that accounted for the "tilted" nature of the basalt flows and limestone beds as well as the "shattering of the rocks along the fault which provided avenues of upward migration for the oil below."[24] As Smithson described it, "the site suggested an immobile cyclone while the flickering light made the entire landscape appear to quake, a dormant earthquake spread into the fluttering stillness."[25] Notwithstanding, the report recommended that despite the destabilizing geological situation, "with a systematically planned program... a profitable oil field could develop." In other words, economic containment could take place at the site, even if in jeopardy. Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* gave esthetic shape to those geo-economics. Smithson's teratological (this is his usage) wonder at Rozel Point was a reciprocity between industry and nature with Smithson's "eyes becoming combustion chambers churning orbs of blood blazing by the light of the sun."[26]

His choice of a site on the edge of both a derelict oil drilling operation and an alluvial fan, coupled with his use of volcanic basalt—which the surface seepage of oil had so heavily coated that the basalt was referred to in the Report as *asphalt*—emphasized Smithson's geo-economic preferences. But more to the point here, using the index map from the 1963 Report, Smithson chose a site that would prove the most resistant to the Jetty's displacement. The terrain around the Great Salt Lake has a very gentle slope and minimum grade. As a result, the lake can shrink or expand a mile or more around its shoreline following only a drop or rise of just an inch or two in mean depth. Considering the grade of the terrain at the

Great Salt Lake, and its constantly changing water level, Smithson chose a spot where the shoreline had the steepest grade, where the *Spiral Jetty*'s terminal contact with the shoreline would be displaced as little as possible. The chosen site was one of the few places where a shifting shoreline would be minimal, or as Smithson described the site "was one of the few places where the water comes right up to the mainland." In addition, on the edge of an alluvial fan, there was also always the "danger that the Jetty might break through the quagmire of mud,"[27] but again, these conditions were also countered with Smithson's infrasystem of front-end loaders and dump trucks. Always in jeopardy, *Spiral Jetty* was nonetheless constructed to be "physical enough to be able to withstand all the climate changes yet intimately involved with those climatic changes and natural disturbances."[28]

There had been a history of entropic industrial activity at Rozel Point. The site was adjacent to Promontory Point, where in 1869, the joining of the first transcontinental railroad, Golden Spike and all, took place. Throughout the second half of the 1969 Centennial Celebrations, the coming together of the rails was reenacted daily. The spot was also known as Victory Point by the competing railroad companies of the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific—to celebrate the meeting point. The actual construction of the transcontinental railroad had its share of mercantile aggressiveness and waste. The government ultimately had to step in and fix a meeting point for the two competing railroad companies. Smithson's chosen site was "unsurveyed land"[29] just north of the Lucin cutoff, where tracks—used by Southern Pacific Railroad—cut across the lake. Trains had often stopped on the short causeway to allow tourists to take snapshots of the vicinity. Belatedly participating in the centennial "Wedding of the Rails"[30] Smithson decided to stay at the Golden Spike Motel in Brigham City during the construction of *Jetty*.

A pedagogical drawing of *Spiral Jetty* gives three options for experiencing the fabricated jetty. One was an aerial view—the most often used photograph is an aerial view facing the shoreline; another option was to walk the jetty—which since its submergence has not been possible; the third option was to hike up the "rocky slope" of which the jetty was an extension. On the rise one could view a panoramic scene of the *Jetty* on the Great Salt Lake. Nonetheless, the landscape Smithson constructed to view on the hill was not a locomotive cutting into the distant horizon (reminiscent of 19th century picturesque-sublime landscape paintings) but a path spiraling in on itself. What Smithson called the "Immobile Cyclone" has subsequently been tailored, by succeeding postmodern theories, into a variety of post-sublime experiences, most often taking either the look of Lyotard's transgressive visions or reenactments of a psychic Barthesian *jouissance*. Both journeys have been celebrated as futuristic horizon full of potential—or as Smithson might have suggested it—not too dissimilar to the Emerald City that Dorothy visited on her own ride in a cyclone.

Smithson noted at the time "that the force of the twister may get so intense that it breaks into imaginative, or fairy-tale results... Through the force of the twister, you're propelled to this central image... in Technicolor... people go there, children and the scarecrow, to the Emerald City of Oz... I mean that to *me* is a kind of fairy tale level that's indicative of something."[31] But he also suggested a view of the

cyclone moving in the opposite direction, a black-and-white view of what is left in the cyclone's wake—the "sediments bordering the lake with countless bits of wreckage."[32] But how does one want to apprehend the entropic spin Smithson's view of the cyclone included, as a parody on the whole tradition of the machine in the garden, or a consolidation of how the post World War II boom in highway construction coincided with the death of the rails. Considering that the auto industry's production potential had taken shape through a huge subsidized program in highway constructions (peaking by the early 1970s) was also a program that included a systematic dismantling of railroad infrasystems, and that Smithson's own previous picturesque-sublime tours helped to re-negotiate the politics of highway tourism, the asphalt coated *Spiral Jetty* seems just as much a consolidating esthetic.

The 1960s had also seen Salt Lake City expand its recreational commitments making the Great Salt Lake a "vacationland... attracting bathers boaters campers and sight seers in force." The Dead Sea of the West had been re-energized by 1970, and was showcased with a new State Park on one of the major islands in the lake. Part of this growth also included a new waste management program aimed at preventing the local communities (and the large mining interests in the area) from dumping their raw waste into the lake.[33]

If one includes all the low-level information from the vicinity of Rozel Point described above, the result is an earthwork structured through a geo-economic framework, mingling the issues of waste, vacation, esthetics and mining. As Smithson argued it conceptually, "We develop profound theories to account for its [the *Jetty's*] origin... we have succeeded in constructing the creature that made... the strange footprint on the shores of the unknown... and lo! it is our own."[34] Nonetheless, Smithson's "network of signs" meant to map out the terrain of the *Jetty* as a network "discovered as you go along, uncertain trails both mental and physical."[35] As Smithson stated it: "The rationality of [a] grid on a map [sank] into what it [was] supposed to define."[36] The allegorical analysis in the "Jetty" article was not out to lose oneself in what exists beyond habits or before conventional logic but the limits of their vanishing points. *Spiral Jetty* submerged—similar to how the rocks in Smithson's *Sinking Hypothetical Island /Continent* of *Cathaysia*, situated on quicksand, literally sank out of sight but also into the site—is enveloped by the surrounding vicinity. As Smithson argued *Cathaysia,* there was no way to locate "the island of rock," that background will always ultimately determine foreground—"there are no fixed points only background."[37] *Spiral Jetty* allows for both a reading of manic containments and displacing utopias, or can be viewed through the ambivalence of their intra-relationship.

Although the containment issue has submerged along with the *Jetty*, (a rather anthropocentric perspective), the issue here, is not only art history's willingness to keep all this low-level information a part of *Spiral Jetty* but Smithson's own willingness as well. Upon submitting his special lease application to the Division of State Lands in Utah, Smithson stated his intentions were for the *Jetty* to "induce salt crystals on the rocks and gravel as encrustations that will develop over a period of time," making the point, "its purpose was purely esthetic."[38] Smithson had learned from his experiences in Vancouver and California earlier that year, and the

disciplining meaning into the structure of *Spiral Jetty* has been left to the anamorphic habits of its anticipating audience.

The following year, participating in the sixth Sonsbeek exhibition in Holland, Smithson conflated the two components of the *Spiral Jetty* —the spiral and the "rocky slope on the shore of the lake"—into the *Spiral Hill* portion of his *Broken Circle/Spiral Hill* project completed for Sonsbeek 71. The added design of the *Broken Circle* would also become a template of sorts for most of Smithson's subsequent (and never built) post-mining reclamation projects.

Sonsbeek 71, was the sixth international exhibition of sculpture, set for Sonsbeek Park in Arnheim, or as Smithson described it, "an 18th-century park of planned natural irregularity."[39] The format for the 1971 show differed from the previous years. Titled "Beyond Lawn and Order", the show was less a pedagogical display of the chronological development of modern art and more a platform to show certain contemporary movements. Smithson ultimately came to see the curator's intentions to be that of "calling into question the cultural confinement of isolationist art institutions." The show became for Smithson a means to "shed [his art's] independence from the social whole."[40] Within its faults, Smithson felt the exhibition pointed to a "possible reunification [of art and the social fabric] and one based on social interconnections." Deciding on a sand quarry site beyond the parameters of Sonsbeek Park, Smithson gave physical shape to the curatorial theme "From Exhibition to Activity."

Smithson could now argue for art that was no longer "detached from the complex of interconnected things" and an art that could, in the process, "expose valuable contradictions" between, for example, "art and industry."[41] Various proposals were forthcoming prior to the June opening of the show. Early on, a proposal for a mud-flow of soil and an island built in the large pond in the park at Sonsbeek were rejected for ecological reasons. Other sites were suggested to Smithson. The possibility of using a factory in Veiteveen never materialized, a run-off at St. Petershill didn't seem to interest Smithson, large tide differences at a site in Biesbosch seemed appropriate but it too became mute for Smithson when word of the construction of a dam stabilized the tidal activities. Delta works in Zeeland was another proposed location. But it was a reclamation site on the Zuider Zee[42]—due to be converted into a recreation area—that Smithson chose for his *Broken Circle/Spiral Hill.*

The geological terrain around the sand quarry at Emmen was on the edge of a *terminal moraine*—the physical remains of which is the huge boulder that surfaced during the project's construction, while the Emmen Sand Quarry had profited from the remains of the alluvial sedimentation of the Rhine River. In other words, the site chosen was, again, an ancient landscape constructed by powerful natural forces—necessarily taking shape over a long drawn out entropic process—yet also a site containing the remnants of an industrial entropic venture.

To construct his recreational design, Smithson employed conventional dike-building procedures. A shovel was used to dig out the *Broken Circle* from the bottom up—the way dikes are built in Holland—not by pouring in a fill as was done at the Great Salt Lake. The design for the *Broken Circle* consisted of a land

section and a water section which are inverted or mirror shapes of each other. Smithson had earlier proposed to do some kind of Sun canal,[43] which would also have been an extension of his work in Utah, where the narrative of the sun motif played a major role, but he opted for a dike/canal design more in tune with the geological reality of the Dutch landscape. Considering how the *Broken Circle* design has visual affinities to many of Smithson's subsequent reclamation designs—most of which figure the word *crescent* in their titles—the configuration of the *Broken Circle,* might also have lunar associations.[44]

Continuing this line of conceptualization, the overall form of *Broken Circle/Spiral Hill* also has the configuration of a three-dimensionalized compass-dial—an early navigational computer or machine for mapping the earth or solar system—found in Smithson's collection.[45] In this light, *Broken Circle/Spiral Hill* becomes an observatory of sorts, one among a host of esthetic observatories proposed at the time and later. The viewing ramp would also become more and more an integral aspect of Smithson's subsequent projects. *BC/SH* was a continuation of the way Smithson framed his art within the disciplinary devices for mapping the earth—be it cartographic, crystalline systems, photography or here a celestial observatory or astro-time machine. But again a disciplinary device in jeopardy, for what one saw from *Spiral Hill* was a *Broken Circle* (broken clock!), neither a closing circle nor a completing circle, both often used metaphors for a sound ecological program.[46] If one infers the never-produced film Smithson contemplated for *BC/SH* through his 1971 essay "Art Through the Camera Eye," one can get a sense of the broken circle concept. "It appears that abstraction and nature are merging in art, and that the synthesizer is the camera. We live in frameworks, and are surrounded by frames of references, yet nature dismantles them and returns them to a state where they no longer have integrity. Today's artist is beginning to perceive this process of disintegrating frameworks as a highly developed condition. The buried cities of the Yucatan are enormous and heterogeneous time capsules, full of lost abstractions, and *broken frameworks*. There the wilderness and the city intermingle, nature spills into the abstract frames, the containing narrative of an entire civilization breaks apart to form another kind of order. A film is capable of picking up the pieces."[47]

Less conceptual is how the design of *Broken Circle/Spiral Hill* reenacted the consequences of a strip-mining venture in which creating cavities (excavated pits) resulted in the addition of man-made mounds composed of spoil overburden. *Spiral Hill,* is a reshaped anthropogenic 'spoil' mound, while the configuration of the *Broken Circle* in its positive/negative relationship of jetty/canal echoed the strip-mining process of removal/accumulation (or excavation/fill area). Geomorphological and orographical shapes in the post-mining terrain were one of the most controversial issues debated during the early 1970s congressional hearings on the subject. In addition, the possibilities and dimensions of anthropogenic land forms created by the expanding mining industry had grown considerably with the new hi-tech machinery available. The mining industry argued the presence of high-walled mounds as a necessary outcome in the mining of nature and wanted to leave high walls while the environmental groups wanted them graded.

Due to the ideology of mining quarries, interruption of the natural profile of the landscape usually occurs, with gaps and steep walls, mounds and hillsides interrupting the profile of an area. The *Spiral Hill* as an anthropogenic mound was a new component of Smithson's work. Reshaping the earth's crust (and what to do with that potential) became, at Emmen, a more integral component of Smithson's esthetics. The *Hill* in substance, is a high in-pit spoil pile, and along with its winding road *Spiral Hill* becomes a miniature simulacra for how much larger spoil mounds could be given recreational round trip paths with views and vistas.[48]

Not only were the man-made fills at disturbed sites of ecological concern but so were the excavated shapes of the abandoned quarries, which were often developed into lakes. Due to the flexibility in their overall designs these anthropogenic "fresh" lakes were substantially more useful (for recreational purposes) than natural lakes. But due to the composition of spoil and loose rocks, these anthropogenic excavations also have shorelines that are unstable at best. *Broken Circle* is an at-grade in-pit back fill, with water filling the remainder of the quarry pit and the history of its shoreline attests to its makeup.[49] *Broken Circle/Spiral Hill* soon became a reclamation project with a history of required yet continued maintenance. Overall, the recreational design at Emmen was a success for Smithson and became an example of how art could play a useful role in Reclamation Parks.

Prior to the Emmen project, Smithson had imaged how geological processes and industrial processes of displacing s(p)oil were similar in their entropic behavior. Structured into the infrasystem of Smithson's art was the issue of how geomorphological mass alluvial movement could be equated with a similar process in urban expansion or industrial ventures.

His chosen terrain were sites predominantly found within terminal moraines, volcanic flows, alluvial fans, all slow-moving geological masses that, as they fanned out toward ever greater disorder, inherently included a slowing down or thermodynamic loss of energy. These would continue to be Smithson's chosen sites, when in the early 1970s he took his esthetic of confinement portfolio directly to the mining industry. By then these geological sites had became conceptual sites for an esthetics argued through a theory of geo-economics—which saw the mining industry mirroring geological entropic processes in the ever-increasing containment of profit through extraction and use of the earth's crust, coinciding with a greater state of ever-increasing geologic disorder, higher entropy—with s(p)oil as its most visible flow. In Smithson's view, the chauvinism of the scientific community had created on a societal level an unresolved ambivalence, broken in its circularity with an entropic inevitability awaiting even its most manic forms of containment.

Smithson's acceptance of industry and its use of the land as a necessary ingredient of the natural environment is in itself, a leap of the imagination in support of a particular economic way of life.[50] Smithson was not out to burn the "woodshed"—others did that. But, again, participation for Smithson was not merely an assimilative form of marriage. Smithson's integrated form of participation was dependent upon how he read the competing desires of the industrialists and the ecologists. Over determined by the desires of "industry, commercialism and the bour-

geoisie,"[51] Smithson's esthetic theory of thermodynamic consequences nonetheless framed those desires within an esthetics of confinement.

With the "equation between the enjoyment of life and waste" being used to help determine the rehabilitation of post mining sites, *Broken Circle/Spiral Hill*—and the Foundation subsequently set up to conserve it—became Smithson's calling card when he approached prospecting companies in the United States, where, by the 1970s, over three million acres of land had been disturbed by surface mining, two-thirds of which might be required to be reclaimed. With his untimely death in 1973, Smithson's post-mining reclamation proposals never got past the preliminary drawing stage. But with manifest destiny's controversial siblings, *sustainable development* and more recently *ecological security*, currently the guiding lights behind our "landscape correct" approaches toward sound ecological programs—including the "fabricated arcadias" that have subsequently been constructed since Public Law 98-85 was signed into law in 1977[52]—it is unfortunate that in the postmodernization of Smithson's art, what is lacking is a body of critical writing about these drawings and the negotiations in which they were inscribed. Such a history would re-mobilize the ideological relationship between art and the slow moving ecological adaptations that have surfaced in the economics of mining, the democratic institutions of Congress, the politics of tourism and the Park sensibilities, since Smithson's death. Or more to an historical point, the drifts, delays, and appeasements of those ongoing negotiations—in their very ambivalence and confinement, inscribed as they were within what was becoming a massive, complex, politically messy situation—was a landscape Smithson felt made conflicting demands well worth a view.[53]

Notes

1 Robert Smithson, unpublished portion of "Conversation in Salt Lake City: Interview with Gianni Pettena, January 25, 1972" Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm reel 3835, frames 882. Hereafter abbreviated AAA. The interview is found in *Writings of Robert Smithson* ed. Nancy Holt (New York; New York University Press, 1979). Hereafter abbreviated *Writings*.

2 There has been an going development in this camp, given cogency by Craig Owens in a series of essays, "Photography en abyme" *October*, no. 5 (1978), "Earthwords" *October* no. 10 (Fall 1979): 120-130, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of the Postmodern," *October* nos. 12 & 13 (Spring & Summer 1980); Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment, Avant Garde; Avant Guerre and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986); Henry M. Sayre, The Object of Performance: *The American Avant Garde since 1970* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989); Jessica Prinz, *Art Discourse: Discourse in Art* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1991), and most recently, Gary Shapiro's *Earthwards, Robert Smithson and Art After Babel* (Berkeley, University California Press, 1995).

3 See Ron Graziani, "Robert Smithson's Picturable Situation: Blasted Landscapes from the 1960s" *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 20, no. 3, Spring 1994.

4 Jeffrey Steele, "Taxinomia and Taxomania: Some Groundwork Towards an Evaluation of the Art of Robert Smithson," in John Roberts, ed. *Art Has No History* (London: Verso, 1994).

5 Ibid., 136-138, 147.

6 Smithson, "Art and Dialectics" in *Writings* p. 219.

7 Steele, 139. Steele adds "it is not [Smithson's] fault that his conception has become a weapon used to defeat others in the art political arena" (152). The issue here is how Smithson's esthetics are protected from such a fault line, a fault line that Smithson internalized as an essential component of his esthetic parameters.

8 See "Robert Smithson on Duchamp, Interview with Moira Roth" *Writings*, 198.

9 To quote from the 1967 Congressional report *Surface Mining and Our Environment*, "There is a necessity not only to maintain the precarious balance between the requirements of our population and a shrinking natural resource base, but to meet those requirements and, at the same time, avoid destroying the natural environment that sustains all life on this planet." See U. S. Department of the Interior, *Surface Mining and Our Environment*, (Washington DC, U. S. Congressional Printing Office, 1967), 3.

10 Roland Barthes, "The Blue Guide" in *Mythologies* (Edition du Seuil, Paris, 1957), 74-77.

11 See Ron Graziani, "Robert Smithson; An Esthetic Prospector in the Mining Industry (Part 1)" *Art Criticism*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1994.

12 Barthes, op. cit.. One caveat seems appropriate here. The van(ishing) point in any historical perspective is also recognized here, as a compositional devise, having as much to do with fixing the specifics of a historical terrain out there, as it does with acting as a vehicle for seeing oneself seeing—a substitute for the actual eyes of the historical onlooker—a vantage point that is necessarily ideologically charged. That is, histories of Smithson's art will necessarily impinge upon other histories of his art, confuse as well as clarify, resist as well as accommodate, distort as well as celebrate what is out (t)here.

13 "Four Conversations between Smithson and Dennis Wheeler in, *Robert Smithson Unearthed; Drawing, Collage Writing*, ed. Eugenie Tsai (New York, 1991), 113. Hereafter abbreviated F C.

14 Smithson, "A Provisional Theory of Non-sites" unpublished essay. AAA reel 3835, frame 240-9.

15 "Conversation with Robert Smithson on April 22, 1972," ed. Bruce Kurtz, in *The Writings*, 200-201.

16 This view of the ecological participants has come from Jon Margolis, "Our Country 'Tis of Thee, Land of Ecology," *Esquire*, March 1970, 124, 172, 176-79. Found in Smithson's collection, AAA.

17 Smithson, "Entropy Made Visible," in *The Writings*, pp. 194-195.

18 AAA, microfilm reel 3835, frame 1064.

19 AAA, microfilm reel 3834, frames 83-84. Smithson did not give up on acquiring an island for a project. He subsequently tried to acquire a site in the Chesapeake Bay, then later off the Texas Gulf coast. In 1971 he was in the Florida Keys trying to purchase an island. Finally in October of 1971, upon payment, the Little Fort Island off Maine would be deeded to Smithson.

20 Smithson had other projects refused due to ecological sensitivities. In 1972, at Storm King, Smithson proposed an earthworks, consisting of an island with circular canals

located in the river—the Moodna River Proposal. Another proposal on a marsh site would see a circular body of water divided by four ascending ramps of gravel and sand—the Moodna Quadrant Proposal. But the New York State Bureau of Conservation would not permit the use of the river because of ecological reasons. By 1972, Storm King had experienced a decade of ecological controversy over various development proposals.

21 AAA, reel 3834, frame 1064.

22 AAA, microfilm reel 3833. Smithson's existential response seems more a quick fix to justify a project that was no longer going to fly, than an esthetic way to use the raw physicality of a site to put in jeopardy, what Smithson felt were chauvinistic attitudes of the scientific community.

23 The basalt fabrication was but one of the ingredients called *Spiral Jetty*. There was also a film, an essay, an unfulfilled project for an underground cinema. Together they formed an expanded in-version of his earlier *Non-sites*. That is, with *Spiral Jetty* , each medium now had its own site of encounter.

24 Armand J. Eardley, "Oil Seeps at Rozel Point," *Utah Geological and Mineralogical Survey Bulletin,* Special Studies, no. 5, June 1963. This special issue was part of Smithson's personal collection, AAA.

25 Smithson "Jetty" in *Writings,* 111.

26 Ibid., 113. In a now published 1971 essay "Art Through the Camera Eye," Smithson also suggests the role the sun played in his making of the Film *Spiral Jetty*. "Photographs are the result of a diminution of solar energy, the camera is an entropic machine for recording gradual loss of light...the sun is a brilliant error...and the camera records the result of that 'error', Somewhere between the still and the movie camera [Smithson postulated] an infinite camera...that reminds us of that most brilliant object the sun—no it is not an object, but rather an undifferentiated condition from which there is no escape." FC, 89-90.

27 Ibid., 111.

28 *Writings*, 187. In 1993 the Jetty temporarily surfaced intact.

29 As it was described on the special use lease agreement no. 222. The land was owned by the State of Utah. AAA, microfilm reel 3835, frame no. 804.

30 This was the title of a promotional brochure published for the celebration staged in 1969, found in Smithson's personal collection, AAA.

31 FC, 120.

32 Smithson, "Jetty" in the *Writings,* 112.

33 This information was pulled from an article in The *New York Times*, found in Smithson's collection, AAA.

34 Smithson, "Jetty," in *The Writings,* 113.

35 Ibid., 115.

36 Ibid., 112.

37 FC, unpublished portion AAA reel 3833 frame 1150. Similarly, critical narratives are also inscribed within their own unexplored assumptions, contradictions or inarticulate moments. Historical narratives are coded texts inscribed within a larger backdrop, fragments of a larger political discourse.

38 AAA microfilm reel 3834, frame 90-91. With the financial backing of both Dwan Gallery in New York and Ace Gallery in California, Smithson contracted Parsons Asphalt Inc., from Ogden, Utah to build the Jetty. Considering that crystalline structures were one of Smithson's primary forms of mapping the geomorphological terrain and that any type of mapping a terrain was in jeopardy, it seems ironic that not only would the name of the land specialist who witnessed the lease agreement be Mr.

Crystal but that Mr. Crystal would inform Smithson, early in 1972, that the Division of Natural Resources in Utah would not approve Smithson's attempt to extend the 20-year lease "into perpetuity". AAA, microfilm reel 3834, frame 442.

39 Robert Smithson, "Sonsbeek Unlimited: Art as an Ongoing Development," unpublished essay, AAA, microfilm reel 3834, frames 875-880.

40 Ibid., frame 875.

41 Ibid., frame 880.

42 With Dr. Sjouke Zuylastra (a geographer and director of the theater and cultural center in Emmen) as liaison between Smithson and the city officials of Emmen, a quarry located northeast of the city was selected.

43 AAA, microfilm reel 3834, frame 260.

44 The opposing configuration dike/canal crescents of the *Broken Circle* mirror the waning/waxing phases of the moon, combining the opposing phases of a waxing crescent and a waning crescent.

45 A 1965 pictorial brochure from the American Museum of Natural History/Hayden Planetarium, Smithson's collection AAA. The internal patterns of one of Smithson's later reclamation designs (*Tailing Pond First Stage*, Creede, Colorado, 1973) mirror those of a portable astrolabe, another device for measuring time and navigation found in Smithson's collection.

46 For example Barry Commoner's best seller book *Closing Circle* published in 1971. Completing the cycle also even surfaced in the 1967 Congressional Report, *Surface Mining and the Environment* as a two page spread as "The Full Circle." See note no. 9.

47 FC, p. 91. The inverted (or mirror image) of the land/water design of Broken Circle also has affinities to Olmec "mosaic masks"—that were buried in "dug pits' so as not to be viewed by spectators—the type Smithson and archaeologist Robert Heizer (father of Michael Heizer) corresponded about in the late 60s. See AAA reel 3835, frame 1202.

48 Similar to how Smithson's first Nonsite, *Pine Barrens Nonsite* was a miniature scaled version of his subsequent Nonsites.

49 Both segments of *Spiral Hill/Broken Circle* have changed over time. Late in 1971, a heavy storm caused some erosion of the site prompting Smithson to authorize "shoring" up the earthwork to conserve its design. Similar to the site, in Utah, the water level at the quarry in Emmen was low in 1971 and has subsequently risen and fallen, leaving the *Broken Circle* below the water's surface at times. Smithson also had the *Spiral Hill* planted with low growing cotton-easter (and later stabilized *Broken Circle* with buttressing rods). Managing these two unstable ingredients—the anthropogenic lakes and adjacent landforms—were also of primary interest for those concerned with cutting the repair costs of reclaiming post-mining sites. Subsequently designs requiring no maintenance became a standard post-mining reclamation design principle.

50 See Smithson's comments in "Entropy Made Visible: An Interview with Alison Sky" found in *Writings*, 189-196. This analogy between how industrial activity was no different from nature's own cruelties could and was also being used by the mining industry to justify its mining practices and its version of what would be appropriate reclamation responsibilities. Our sophisticated highways and freeways have been a useful source for redepositing the spoils of the mining industry—with the result that open pits inevitably remain abandoned and usually located near a developed freeway or road system.

51 "Robert Smithson on Duchamp" in *Writings*, 198.
52 The Surface Mining, Control and Reclamation Act (SMCR) set the national minimum reclamation standards now regulating a portion of the mining industry.
53 This will be the topic of Part 3 of this essay "Robert Smithson: an Esthetic Foreman Mining the Park Sensibility."

A Natural Order:
Observation and the Four Seasons

Karl F. Volkmar

When Camille Pissarro's gaze traveled through the region surrounding Paris and the Ile-de-France, it settled on the town of Pontoise as the place to live and work until the move to Eragny near Gisors early in 1884. From the possible images available to the artist documented in Richard Brettell's *Pissarro and Pontoise*, Pissarro's selective vision rejected the urban, industrial world of modern society in favor of a more natural world lying beneath the spectacle of modern civilization. The relationship between this reality and the artist's representation was revealed in the treatment of motifs admitted into compositions, and those omitted from his work.[1]

Representing the agricultural region of the Vexin Francais that extended west of Pontoise, Pissarro's *The Four Seasons* (c. 1872, PV 183-186) were painted during his Classic Pontoise Period (1872-1873). The harmony between man and nature existed in an agricultural world of vast horizons and limitless possibilities. Combining a handling of the brush from Monet and a palette of colors from Turner, Pissarro defined a classical sensibility that reflected the influence of Corot. This series of paintings was created for banker Achille Arosa, and might well be regarded as a paradigm for Pissarro's career. In *The Four Seasons*, he attained a balance between pictorial structure and perception that he would never equal. Included were most of the individual motifs that would constitute the subject matter of his subsequent work.[2]

This machine-cut agricultural world was to appear again in *The Harvest* of 1882 (PV 1358), but would not itself become a major theme in his work. The transformation of rural life with the advent of mechanical harvesting restructured the agricultural experience as peasants became Frenchmen.[3] The anarchist philosopher Pierre Joseph Proudhon viewed this change as the result of the idea of property, a fundamental source of modern problems. The ownership of land that displaced the peasant, and the development of agricultural machinery that made it possible, were the reasons behind "the desertion of the land and the desolation of society."

> The metaphysical concept of property has devastated the French soil,

> dethroned the mountains, dried up the streams, changed the rivers into torrents, [and] paved the valleys with stones: all with the authorisation of the government. It has rendered agriculture odious to the peasant, more odious yet their native land...the need for survival always places workers at the mercy of modern exploitation more than ancient property rights did with slaves; and agriculture, increasingly industrialised day by day, would do better to return to the soil, even if cultivated by servile hands, [to produce from it] all that it can give. (PJP II.83)[4]

The Romantic relationship between man and the land that had been represented by Millet became the subject of nostalgic reflection for the urban audiences of Andre Breton, Leon Lhermitte, and Andre Theuriet's *The Rustic Life in France*.[5] Pissarro, however, chose to focus on the more intimate, domestic, and carefully structured world of the kitchen garden.

The Eye of the Artist

When studied in the context of seasonal representations in the French landscape tradition, Pissarro's gaze revealed a world different from that depicted in the seasonal cycles of seventeenth century artist Nicolas Poussin and nineteenth century painter Jean Francois Millet. The procession of the seasons and the harmonious relationship between man and nature in Pissarro's *Spring* is accompanied with flowering fruit trees and soil freshly turned and ready for planting. A peasant couple walks across the prepared earth, replacing Poussin's springtime *Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden* (1660-1664) and the allusion to the dogma of original sin.

Millet's *Spring* (1868-1873) replaced the biblical drama of the Temptation, Fall, and impending Expulsion from the garden with a springtime thunderstorm. The violence of gusting winds, crashing thunder, and lightening flashes that brought the necessary rains is ending. The iridescent rainbow, an image that Pissarro later painted on a fan given to Madame Theo Van Gogh to commemorate the approaching New Year,[6] foretells the promises of nature as it shines above the darkness of the storm by virtue of the sun penetrating beneath the receding edges of the clouds.

The natural relationship among sun, rainbow, and storm had inspired the classical poets to invent Iris, goddess of the rainbow and assistant to Juno in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as well as English painter John Constable. The dramatic nature of the spring thunderstorm and rainbow as a sign of hopefulness appeared in Constable's *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* (1831), painted after his wife's death in 1828. In contrast, Pissarro envisioned the more gentle, lyrical character of his springtime nature.

In Pissarro's *Summer,* three figures—a man, woman, and person riding side-saddle on a white horse—travel a narrow, rutted country road passing through the wheat harvest in process. Uncut bearded stems stand on the viewer's right. At the left, sheaves of straw lie on the earth in front of standing straw from which the heads have been severed. For his representation of summer, Poussin chose the biblical love story of Ruth and Boaz related in the book of Ruth, and its message of

a divine plan underlying seemingly accidental human choices. Nature's fertility forms a sympathetic alliance with the love between woman and man. How different was Poussin's tender love scene involving the gleaning Ruth and property owner Boaz from Millet's somber peasants of *The Gleaners* of 1857! Millet focused on the labor demanded by the harvest in *Summer: The Buckwheat Harvest* (1868-1874). Peasants intently gather the cut sheaves that a circle of peasants in the background beat with flails. Their harvest labors produce the food that will sustain them through the coming year. Pissarro's figures, however, are as casual as Poussin's are meaningful and Millet's laboring.

The harvest is over in Pissarro's *Autumn*, the straw stacked in great mounds whose French name, *meules*, refers to both the conical mounds in the painting and the great stone wheels of the mills that grind wheat into flour. Black birds flutter in the sky, gleaning the fields of what remains after the harvest, as do Millet's foraging sheep of *Autumn* (1868-1874). The dark clouds of impending winter that Pieter Bruegel the Elder had also observed in *The Return of the Herd* from his representations of the months (1565) gather in the sky. The fields are being plowed in preparation for the planting of the winter wheat for next year's harvest.

In Millet's painting, a shepherd relaxes in the shade beneath the huge mound like the figure hiding from the storm beneath a tree in the distant middle ground of his *Spring*. For his part, Poussin had chosen to represent *The Return with the Grapes from the Promised Land*. As related in Numbers 13.17-24, Moses had sent representatives to explore the promised land of Canaan, and they returned with grapes and other fruit as evidence of the fertility of the land. The joy at the discovery of the newly found harvest and the new home in the promised land contained an element of sadness. Although Moses would view the new land from a distance, he could never enter.

In Pissarro's *Winter*, the houses of a small rural village huddle closely together against a hillside. Like the winter wheat planted in the fields, they lie under a protective blanket of snow. The viewer is kept at a distance by the double wall and trees whose dark, curving branches contrast with geometric contours of man-made forms, edges softened by the snow. We know full well, however, that in these homes the people wait out the winter cold, enjoying the bread and produce stored from earlier harvests. The winter wheat lies in the snow-protected earth waiting, like the peasants, to burst into action with the warming air of *Spring*.

The Eye of the Anarchist

Pissarro also looked at the world through the eyes of anarchist philosopher Pierre Joseph Proudhon. Pissarro was an enthusiastic supporter of anarchist principles, offering money in support of anarchist causes and donating images to anarchist publications. He repeatedly referred to Proudhon's three volume *Of Justice in the Revolution and the Church* for ideas, and sent a copy to son Lucien with the observation that it was better than all the Bibles.[7] In a letter to Lucien written in July, 1891, Pissarro later declared: "Proudhon in *Justice* says that Love of the Land lies at the heart of the Revolution, consequently at [that of] the artistic ideal..." adding that the anarchist philosopher "is absolutely in agreement with our ideas. His book

of *Justice in the Revolution* should be read from cover to cover."[8] Pissarro also referred to Proudhon for his thoughts about literary and social questions in efforts to explain his viewpoint to brother Alfred.[9]

In the comprehensive summation of his philosophy, Proudhon explains how the essential principles of his anarchist metaphysics were discovered through observation of the natural world. The fundamental principle and revolutionary ideal of "equality," was revealed in the regularity of nature:

> The days of the year are equal, the years [are] equal; the revolutions of the moon, variable within a certain limit, always return to equality. The legislation of the worlds is an egalitarian legislation. Let us descend to our globe; is not the quantity of rain which falls each year in every country measureably equal? What is more variable than the temperature? And yet, in winter, in summer, by day, by night, equality is still its law. Equality governs the Ocean, the ebb and flow of which, in their averages, continues with the regularity of the pendulum. (PJP I.274)

In their insistant reliance on nature for their art and ideas, artist and anarchist were following a path that others had traveled before. The importance of nature was a theme of some of the world's religious and secular literature. Personified as the mystical Wisdom by the author of the deuterocanonical book of the same title, omniscent Wisdom was identified with:

> all knowledge and all science of techniques. Thus was given to me an exact consciousness of reality. It teaches me the structure of the universe and the activity of the elements, the beginning, middle, and end of time, the alternations of the solstices and the changings of the seasons, the cycles of the year and the positions of the stars, the natures of the animals and the tempers of the savage beasts, the violent impulses of the mind and the thoughts of men, the varieties of the plants and the virtues of their roots. All hidden and apparent reality, I have known it, because the artisan of the universe, Wisdom, has instructed me. (Wisdom 7.15-21)[10]

Although the world of humanity and the world of nature were different, they were governed by the same principle. Manifested in stability, peace, and happiness, Proudhon believed the principle of equality to be immanent and its exisitence self-evident:

> Just as it is the law of the world, equality is the law of humankind. Outside this law, there is not for him any stability, any peace, any happiness, because there is no equilibrium: it is strange that such an elementary truth encounters contradictions. To hope that society would be founded on inequality is to support [the idea] that something can be balanced by nothing, established on nothing, which is absurd. (PJP I.275-6)

Man and nature formed a harmonious whole. The world of liberty, that of art and humanity, and the world of fatality, that of nature, were subject to the higher principle of equality:

> From this superior point of view, man and nature, the world of liberty and the world of fatality, form a harmonious whole: matter and spirit are in agreement in constituting humanity and all that surrounds it, the same elements subjected to the same laws. (PJP II.73)

Proudhon's vision of an integral relationship between man and nature found meaning where others perceived only chaos and injustice. He was not the first. The author of the book of Job and Medieval rabbi Moses Maimonides found wisdom in nature too.

The vision of nature of the author of Wisdom was similar to that of the author of the Book of Job, according to the interpretation of medieval Rabbi Moses Maimonides in his effort to reconcile Aristotelian science and faith in *The Guide for the Perplexed*, which had been translated from Arabic into French by Solomon Munk and published in 1856.[11] Maimonides, also known as The Rambam, explained that the book of Job was a demonstration of the relation between science and revelation, and that the view of Job represented the theory of Aristotle. When Elihu spoke about the nature of knowledge, he illustrated his ideas with images of thunder and lightening, rain and snow, warm winds out of the south and cold winds from the north, and frost on the earth and clouds in the sky interspersed with life events. (Job 32.1-37.24) When God spoke to Job directly (Job 38.1-42.16), he directed his attention from the heavens to the things and events of the earth, as Maimonides described, saying:

> In a similar manner the Revelation that reached Job, and explained to him the error of his whole belief, constantly describes natural objects, and nothing else; it describes the elements, meteorological phenomena, and pecularities of various kinds of living beings. The sky, the heavens, Orion and Pleiades are only mentioned in reference to their influence on our atmosphere, so that Job's attention is in this prophecy only called to things below the lunar sphere. Elihu likewise derives instruction from the nature of various kinds of animals.

The metaphorical redirection of attention from the heavenly, spiritual world to the terrestial describes the historical process of the evolution of ideas that characterized one direction of nineteenth century thought. Romantic poet Charles Baudelaire's interest in correspondances among Swedenborg's mysticism, Fourier's terrestial physiocracy, E.T.A. Hoffmann's "spiritual barometer", the effects of opium and hashish, and esthetic experience was only one instance. Dr. Samuel Hahnemann reworked the ideas of Paracelsus and Franz Anton Mesmer into homeopathic medicine. The work of Hippolyte Bernheim and Jean Martin Charcot developed animal magnetism, through the agency of James Braid's redefinition of animal magnetism as hypnotism, into clinical medicine and psychology. Experiments with hypnotic

suggestion were accepted as proof of earlier claims for healings attributed to spiritual agencies and therapeutic virtues. The spiritual, however, now became the domain of the psychological.[12]

Having pointed to nature as the source of knowledge, Maimonides explained the meaning of the book of Job, saying:

> In the same manner, as there is a difference between works of nature and productions of human handicraft, so there is a difference between God's rule, providence, and intention in reference to all natural forces, and our rule, providence and intention in reference to things which are the objects of our rule, providence, and intention. This lesson is the principle object of the whole book of Job; it lays down the principle of faith, and recommends us to derive a proof from nature, that we should not fall into the error of imagining His knowledge to be similar to ours, or His intention, providence, and rule similar to ours. When we know this we shall find everything that may befall us easy to bear; mishap will create no doubts in our hearts concerning God, whether he knows our affairs or not, whether he provides for us or abandons us.

The Aristotelian vision of an ordered world found its proofs in the observation of nature, and the nineteenth century was a time of reassessment of accepted traditions of knowledge based on fresh observation and experience.

Pissarro's regenerative vision of nature in *The Four Seasons* was also found earlier, during the Medieval period, in representations of the labors of the months, like those of the calendar pages of *The Very Rich Hours of Jean, Duke of Berry* by the Limbourg Brothers of the fifteenth century, and the carved reliefs of the cathedrals of Notre-Dame in Paris and at Amiens.[13] The seasonal celebrations and activities of nobles and peasants in the months of *January* and *February* differ from the pessimism of Poussin's *Winter* of deluge and death, or Millet's peasant women bending under their loads of branches, and trudging through the cold snow under a gray winter sky. The plowing and planting of *March*, the harvest of wheat in *July*, the promenading courtiers of *August*, and the new plowing of *October* are refreshingly unpretentious and carefully observed images from the fifteenth century world of the Limbourg Brothers' experience.

This intimate relationship between man and nature, essential to anarchist philosophy, was tersely outlined by Proudhon:

> Through my birth, through my family, through my loves, I know me [to be] in organic communion with all of nature; through my work, I know me [to be] in communion with all of nature; through my justice, I know me [to be] in communion with society; I am in communion with all the universe. (PJP II.131)

Through their work, the peasant in the field, the artist at his easel, and the philosopher at his desk were in communion with nature, creating food, art, and ideas.

Order and Chaos: Structure and Appearance

The dynamic order of the visual narrative of *The Four Seasons* was reflected in the expanding horizons of the Vexin Francais and the temporal procession of the seasons. The pictorial expression of order perceived in the space of nature was achieved by 1880. This visual statement was realized in two paintings from that year that have been referred to as "The Nature of Structure" and "The Nature of Appearance"[14] in Brettell's study of Pissarro. These compositions represent the two major ways of perceiving the world: the ordered, Aristotelian nature of structure, and the chaotic, Heraclitean nature of appearance.

"The Nature of Structure" is represented by *Landscape at Chaponval* (1880, PV 509). Through the dark shadows of the foreground space, Pissarro gazed into the volumes of nature's space. Carefully directed brush strokes create planes and define ordered surfaces. As observers, we stand in the world of humanity, the world of liberty, and look into this microcosm of nature— at the peasant woman, the cow, the tree and grasses, and back to the earthen hills. From foreground to background, the eye passes through the three realms of nature discerned by Proudhon:

> Above the three kingdoms of nature, mineral, vegetal, animal, the kingdom of the mind, kingdom of the ideal and of the law, in other terms, the kingdom of humanity, raises itself to the fourth kingdom. (PJP III,432)

Having developed the means to reconcile perception and sensation in pictorial terms, Pissarro stood in the tradition of Poussin and Cezanne. Pissarro's vision was that of those who found order and meaning within nature itself.

In "The Nature of Appearance," represented by the painting *Thatched Cottages at Valhermeil (with figure)*, (1880, PV 511), the interlacing and curving branches, the jumble of cottages, and the bending road depict a "brilliantly anti-ordered landscape." We are not assisted by the higher viewpoint, the transparent screen formed by tree branches, and the double wall of the *The Four Seasons*'s *Winter*. Irregular patterns of light and shadow reinforced by the physical texture of paint contrast with the greater regularity of man-made structures whose edges are softened and obscured by thatching made from organic materials in the manner of the snow-covered roofs of *Winter*. The architectonic forms of the buildings suggest the possibility of an order underlying appearance without confirming its existence. Opponents of Proudhon's ideas declared that, while justice was egalitarian in principle, nature was not. His critics held a vision of nature that Proudhon characterized as biblical, saying: "Providence has taken care to write at the head of all the pages of its great Bible: *inequality*, *inequality*, in everything, everywhere, and for everything." (PJP I.274) For them, injustice and inequality were the conditions of the world in which they lived. Justice belonged to another world.

Proudhon explained that their perception of a chaotic, unordered nature, however, was only apparent:

> Yes, all is variable, irregular, inconstant, [and] unequal in the universe: that is the brutal fact, that the first glance cast on things perceives there. But this variability, anomaly, inconstance, this inequality, finally, is contained everywhere within narrow boundaries, displaced by a superior law by which all phenomena are absolutely governed, and that is equality itself. (PJP I.274)

Variation and inequality were the results of external influences, and not of the essential nature of individual things:

> Consider the animals and the plants, each among their species: everywhere you discover, under restrained variations, *caused by exterior influences*, the law of equality. Inequality, all in all, does not derive from the essence of things, from their inner being; it comes from outside. Eliminate this influence of accident, and all returns to absolute equality. (PJP I.274)

Justice, the anarchist declared, was the principle of equality realized in the world of man, and the manifestation of the universal law of equilibrium in society.

The Eye of the Homeopathic Physician

Pissarro also looked at nature through the eyes of the homeopathic physician, and entrusted the health of family and friends to the principles of homeopathic medicine.[15] He was himself a lay homeopathic physician, diagnosing diseased conditions, prescribing medicines, and referring patients. Theo Van Gogh had first asked Pissarro if he would take care of his brother Vincent. Pissarro referred him to the care of Dr. Gachet at Auvers-sur-Oise.[16]

The homeopathic ideal envisioned life in the natural state of health and harmony within a vitalistic theater of nature subject to influences on mind and body that ranged from the meteoric to the telluric. (SH #75,171)[17] Believing that "the health of the body and of the soul" was "the greatest of the gifts from the land" (SH #120,203), homeopathic man was in full enjoyment of his individuality. Health was maintained by the vital principle and was experienced as a sensation of tranquillity and well-being (SH #229,255),[18] and the coenesthetic sensation of "an admirable vital harmony" (SH #9,116).

Nature was perceived through the synthesis of observation and sensation conditioned by the state of health of the observer, and the advice of the physician often seemed to echo that of the artist. When Dr. Leon Simon explained that "observation reveals to us the characters...[of things, and] experience makes us aware of [their] properties" (S&H 9), the artist advised Lucien that "it is necessary to have in the eye and the hand known forms...[and] to find the means to represent a thing with its own character."[19] The properties of things were experienced in their effects on the body and mind of the physician, perceived as sensation, and manifested in movement. This process seemed to emulate that of artistic creation, and Pissarro advised that it was necessary to "subordinate this facility [of technique] to [the observation of] character and to the [experience] of sensations."[20]

The homeopathic observer was subject to the dynamic effects of his environment that affected the ability to respond to the world around him. The space in which one lived and worked determined the nature of perception, and Pissarro seems to have rejected Isle-Adam and Compiegne as possible homes for these reasons. Isle-Adam was described as "horrible", "sad", "bourgeois", and "beastly, beastly" [21] and Compiegne as "a flat and monotonous country...[with] the general view of a nearby hillside and quite cold and monotonous, it is not to my taste."[22] Perceptions and representations reflected individuality and the equilibrium of the vital principle when healthy, and the artist explained that "for my work, I need to be absolutely tranquil."[23] When this equilibrium was disturbed in the diseased state, perceptions were distorted, and nature was seen through a vision clouded by disease. Under the controlled conditions of experiment and experience, however, the physician could observe specific cause and effect relationships.

The fundamental principle of homeopathic medicine, *similia similibus curantur*, or "like cures like," was discovered in this way by the developer of homeopathic therapeutics, Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, during his experiences with quinine. Noting that the symptoms produced by quinine when ingested by a healthy person were similar to those of the malaria for which quinine was considered a cure, Hahnemann concluded that the homeopathic physician should prescribe a medicine whose effects determined by experience matched those produced in the ailing individual.

The fundamental truths of homeopathy were not the privileged knowledge of highly trained physicians. They were accessible to those living in a more natural, less civilized condition:

> Domestic medicine itself, practiced by persons who are strangers to our profession, but endowed with a healthy judgement and an observing mind, have found that the homeopathic method was the most sure, the most rational, and the least subject to failure. (SH 101)

This knowledge, encoded in the folk remedies and practices of the peasants, was readily available to those who worked in the kitchens and labored in the fields.

Homeopathic medicine was a serious attempt to address many of the same problems confronted by the developing clinical medicine of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Homeopathy's vitalism developed within the context of a German metaphysical tradition that also produced the pantheism of Goethe, and painting's Philipp Otto Runge and Caspar David Friedrich, and Hegel's idealism. As an idea, it had the classical authority of Aristotle's "critical vitalism," and should not be judged by the mystical interpretations of theosophy's Madame Blavatsky, anthroposophy's Rudolf Steiner, and pseudokabbalist Alphonse Louise Constant. Experimental science condemned it as pseudoscience. Homeopathy as a synthesis of material and spiritual principles by virtue of its vitalism condemned the pure materialism of orthodox medicine, a view of science shared by Proudhon.[24]

Orthodox medicine was refered to as the "ancient medicine" and the "ancient school," and its practitioners derogatorily as the "ministers of nature" (SH

41). These "common physicians whose minds only nourish themselves with coarse and material ideas" (SH #280,284) were blinded by the appearance of nature in their efforts to imitate nature and the body's reaction to disease. Their blood lettings, purgings, emetics, and massive doses of medication were often more deadly than the disease. Their methods were "a bad copy of the scarcely effective assistance that gross nature is capable of giving, to which one resigns oneself when relying on the same resources." Misled as to the true nature of disease by the body's reaction, this "art must thus necessarily aggravate the disease when it imitates it [nature] in its processes, [and] one creates dangers when he suppresses its [nature's] efforts. Allopathy [orthodox, clinical medicine] does one or the other. And that is what is called rational medicine!" (SH 45)

In the evolution of medical perception in the birth of the clinic outlined by Michel Foucault, orthodox medicine's revision of the medical script gave disease a starring role in a drama played out against the backdrop of life. Homeopathy's focus on life and nature distinguished it from the orthodox medicines of both centuries.[25] As long as man lived in harmony with nature, the simplicity of life created few diseases, and they were easily treated with natural medicines. (SH 7) Through his understanding of nature, the homeopathic physician restored the health of an individual as the anarchist restored the health of society.

The Eyes of the Poets: Paul Verlaine and Charles Baudelaire

The pictorial representation of order and chaos were often phrased in terms of justice and injustice, life and death, joy and sorrow, and health and disease by poets and writers, and were often combined in the European landscape tradition. Poussin's ordered classicism found its antithesis in the stormy landscapes of Gaspard Dughet. The lyrical order of Claude Lorrain was countered by the unpredictable landscapes of Salvatore Rosa. In the nineteenth century, the classicism of Corot's paintings from the Roman Campagna were followed by the lyrical naturalism of his later paintings in their images of misty sylvan and riparian nature. The two views are combined in Poussin's parable of civic virtue, *The Burial of Phocion* (1648). The ordered world of civilization and civic responsibility where nature and architecture exist in mutual harmony exists at the edge of the wilderness. This place of death where the forces of nature overwhelm the vitality of the human spirit is also found in Jacob van Ruisdael's *Jewish Cemetery* (c. 1660) and Constable's painting of Salisbury Cathedral.

Pissarro also looked at the world through the eyes of Romantic poet Charles Baudelaire and the Parnassian and Symbolist Paul Verlaine. He sent copies of their work to Lucien as a means of explaining what he was attempting to achieve in painting, adding that "it is not that I support absolutely the premises of these two books."[26] We may form a clearer idea of what he may have meant by comparing their use of landscape images.

Baudelaire represented order and chaos as incompatible spiritual and material principles in *The Flowers of Evil*. In "The Enemy", he compared life to a garden subjected to the destructive forces of time and weather, and found a measure of relief from suffering in esthetic experience:

My childhood was but a gloomy storm,
Crossed here and there by brilliant suns;
Thunder and lightening created such devastation,
There remained in my garden very few ripe fruits

Now that I have reached the autumn of ideas,
And it is necessary to use the rake and hoe
To rebuild anew the flooded lands,
Where the water digs great holes like graves.

And who knows if the new flowers that I dream
Will find in this earth washed like a sandy shore
The mystical nourishment which will restore their vigor?

Oh sorrow! Oh sorrow! Time devours life,
And the obscure Enemy which eats away at us the heart
Of blood that we have lost grows and strengthens itself!
(Baudelaire, "The Enemy", X, *The Flowers of Evil*)

For Baudelaire, the drama of life took place in the theater of a degenerative nature. Material existence was the source of pain and suffering. His gaze was the gaze of orthodox medicine that looked at life from the heights of death:

> The nineteenth century will speak obstinately of death: the savage, castrated death of Goya, the visible, muscular, sculptural death offered by Gericault, the voluptuous death by fire of Delacroix, the Lamartinian death of aquatic effusions, Baudelaire's death. To know life is given only to that derisory, reductive, and infernal knowledge that only wishes it dead. The Gaze that envelops, caresses, details, atomizes the most individual flesh and enumerates its secret bites is that fixed, attentive, rather dilated gaze which, from the height of death, has already condemned life.[27]

Sorrow and sadness were the poet's lot. Injustice was the nature of life. Only in the garden of poetic imagination nourished by the poet's creative energy could beauty flourish.

When Pissarro represented the garden in paintings and words, he walked upon the earth, never soaring "Above the ponds, above the valleys, The mountains, the woods, the clouds, the seas" like Baudelaire ("Elevation," III, *The Flowers of Evil*). Whether they were found in Pontoise, like *The Garden of the Mathurins, Pontoise* (1876, PV 349), or at the Kew Gardens in England, *Kew Gardens, Path to the Main Conservatory*, (1892, PV 795), the light-filled spaces, massings of forms, ordered facture, and colored pigment translated Pissarro's observations into the painted world of art. Describing his reaction to Kew Gardens, he wrote:

> This is why I am at Kew profiting from an exceptional summer in order

> to throw myself completely into my outdoor studies, in this striking garden of Kew. Oh!, my dear friend. What trees! What lawns! What beautifully imperceptible movements of terrain! It is a dream![28]

His real-world experiences in the space of nature were equal to the imaginative gardens of the poet.

When Baudelaire wandered through the fields and gardens of his seasons, he experienced a world envisioned by the imagination. He described one such journey in "Landscapes", the opening poem of "Parisian Paintings":

> I want, in order to compose my eclogues,
> To sleep close to the sky, like the astrologers,
> And, neighbor of the bell towers, to hear while dreaming
> Their solemn hymns carried by the wind.
> Two hands on my chin, from the heights of my attic,
> I will see the studio which sings and chatters;
> The chimneys, the steeples, these masts of the city,
> And the great skies which make one dream of eternity.
>
> It is soothing, across the mists, to see born
> The star in the azure, the lamp at the window,
> The rivers of coal mounting to the heavens
> And the moon pouring out its pale enchantment.
> I will see springs, summers, autumns;
> And the winter comes with monotonous snows,
> I will close everywhere doors and shutters
> To build in the night my fairy-like palace.
> Then I will dream of bluish horizons,
> Of gardens, of spouts of water weeping in the alabasters,
> Of kisses, of birds singing evening and morning,
> And all that the Idyll offers of the childlike.
> The Riot, storming vainly at my window,
> Will not make rise the brow of my desk;
> Because I will be plunged in this voluptuousness
> Of evoking Spring with my will,
> Of drawing out a sun from my heart and of making
> From my burning thoughts a warm atmosphere.
> (Baudelaire, "Landscapes", LXXXVI, *The Flowers of Evil*)

Baudelaire's nature of the imagination was constructed from memories distilled from past experience, and sublimated through time into the images of his art. The nature of his art was not the nature of life.

Baudelaire's personal synthesis of experiences of life and art in *The Flowers of Evil* was reflected in the subtitle for the first collection of poems in the book, "Melancholy and the Ideal." In his early books of poems, Paul Verlaine treated them as separate themes. Nature seemed to have faces corresponding to his different moods.

The "Melancholia" and "Sad Landscapes" in *Saturnine Poems* (1866)

were the melancholy reflections of the poet echoed in the landscapes of his art, images emerging from the darker side of a personality plagued by alcohol, drugs, depression, and disastrous love affairs, and were balanced by the *Gallant Festivities* (1869). When he experienced a period of joy and happiness following his marriage to Mathilde Maute, the exuberant expression of his love in the optimistic poems of *The Beautiful Song* (1870) found in the seasons their perfect expression:

> Winter has ended: the light is warm
> And dances, from the earth to the bright heavens.
> The saddest heart must yield
> To the immense joy spreading through the air.
> Even this sick and sullen Paris
> Seems to bid welcome to the young suns,
> And as if in immense embrace
> Extends the thousand arms of its ruby rooves.
>
> I have had for a year now spring in my soul
> And the returning green of floral sweetness,
> Just as a flame surrounds a flame,
> Places an ideal on my ideal.
> The blue sky extends, rises, and crowns
> The immutable azure where laughs my love.
> The season is beautiful and my share is good
> And all my hopes have at last their turn.
>
> Whether summer comes! Whether yet comes
> Autumn and winter! And each season
> To me will be charming, oh you who adorn
> This fantasy and this satisfaction.
> (Verlaine,XXI, *The Beautiful Song*)

For Verlaine, as for Pissarro, the space of nature was the space of art, and he could wish for no other paradise:

> Yes, I want to move justly and calmly in Life,
> Towards the goal where destiny directs my steps,
> Without violence, without remorse, and without envy:
> This will be the happy obligation to cheerful struggles.
> And as, to soothe the slowness of the route,
> I will sing artless tunes, I tell myself
> That she listens to me without displeasure, without doubt;
> And truly I want no other Paradise.
> (Verlaine, IV, *The Beautiful Song*)

Verlaine's vision would change following his acceptance of the Church in 1875, a subject to taken up in a different study. Pissarro continued to stand in nature as he worked, his images found within the world in which he lived, his work the product of observations and sensations experienced in nature.[29]

The Nature of Life

Pissarro had every reason to look at the world through the eyes of Baudelaire, and the opponents of Proudhon's ideas who envisioned a nature of anomaly and irregularity. The series of personal and family tragedies that began with the death of his father in 1865 could have lead him to reject life and nature, to find refuge in art or religion. He could have taken the view of the early Job[30] with whom he once compared himself. He could have become angry at the misfortunes heaped upon a just man.

Instead he represented the world of *The Four Seasons* where seasons and soil form a vast and sympathetic theater for humanity in an ordered revolution that returns to its beginnings each spring and fall. Plantings and flowerings in spring bring harvests in summer and fall. Wheat seed planted in the fall lies fallow during the winter, and begins to grow in spring until the cycle of harvesting begins again in summer. This cyclical nature in which everything changes and everything remains the same had been described in the representations of the poet known as The Qoheleth, or The Ecclesiast:

> One age goes, another comes, and the land continues forever. The sun rises, the sun sets, it returns to the place from which it rises. The wind blows towards the south and turns towards the north, the wind turns, and turns again, retracing eternally the paths it has followed. All the rivers flow towards the sea, and the sea is not filled; and the rivers return to the places from which they flowed to flow again. (Qoheleth 1.4-7)

The Pissarro family had certainly experienced much sadness and rejoicing in the years preceding the Classical Pontoise Period—the beginning of Camille's relationship with Julie Vellay in 1860 when she entered the Pissarro family household as a domestic; the birth of son Lucien in February, 1863, and the death of Camille's father Frederic in January, 1865; the birth of daughter Jeanne Rachel in May of 1865, and the death of Camille's sister Emma in January, 1868; the birth and death of daughter Adele Emma on the verge of the family's departure for England to escape the advancing Prussian army late in 1870; the marriage of Camille and Julie in June, 1871; the destruction of his paintings by military forces occupying their home; the birth of son George in November, 1871, and his illness in 1872. This, too, had been explained by The Qoheleth:

> There is a moment for all and a time for every thing under the sun: a time to give birth and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to harvest the plants, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to destroy and a time to build, a time to cry and a time to laugh, a time to lament and a time to dance, a time to throw stones and a time to gather stones, a time to embrace and a time to stop embracing. (Qoheleth 3.1-5)

The finite nature of all that existed, and an appropriate time for actions, also under-

lay the essential ideas of anarchism, according to Proudhon:

> The leaf is equal to the leaf, the flower to the flower, the seed to the seed, the individual to the individual. The world, says the Sage, was made with *number*, *weight*, and *measure*; all that it contains is placed in balance, that is to say subject to equality. To look for one fact, one alone, of which the law is not an *accord*, a *symmetry*, a *harmony*, an *equation*, an *equilibrium*, in one word, EQUALITY? There exists an order of knowledge created *a priori*, and which, through an admirable accord, finds itself ruling at the same time the phenomena of nature and those of humanity. (PJP I.274-5)

Nature was the source of wisdom and knowledge, the embodiment of immanent principles, and a book to be read from cover to cover. From the observation of nature the artist created his paintings, the anarchist his philosophy, and the physician his medicines and therapeutic principles.

The regenerative nature of the procession of the seasons, the anarchist's "Love of the Land" and "Revolution", and the restoration of the natural state of health by the physician were sympathetic visions. Nature was where one could relax, and begin to live and work after the chaos of the city, wrote Pissarro:

> It is a great respite, indeed, for me to be here in the open countryside; for the moment, I am trying little by little to get back to my work. This great brouhaha of Paris, throws us into a world so different, that, when one returns, it takes several days to restore my sensations.[31]

When the rejuvenating powers of nature were not enough, and his friend, author and anarchist Octave Mirbeau, was affected by feelings he could not shake off, Pissarro wrote:

> What a pity that you have no confidence in homeopathic remedies. Seriously, my dear, I believe that you would be able to fight off these prostrations, this discouragement, this lassitude about all things... what a pity, I tell you because I have such confidence in it.[32]

"Confidence" in homeopathic medicine was essential, for it had been under constant attack by orthodox medicine since its inception.[33] When Baudelaire suffered from similar problems, he eased his distress through the esthetic experience—poetry, the paintings of Delacroix, and the music of Wagner—or experimentation with the effects of opium and hashish. Verlaine found refuge in the reconciliation of his art with the Church. Pissarro found his in nature and in art.

Observation and Cognitive Structure

When the artist looked at nature through the eyes of the anarchist and the homeopathic physician, he discovered visions of nature sympathetic to his own. Each represented nature according to individual temperament, but the spatial configura-

tion of their representations seemed to be coincident. By virtue of this structural and conceptual compatibility, Pissarro's eye could be that of the artist, the anarchist, and the physician.

Surrounded by the vast horizons of the Vexin Francais and the panorama of the seasons, and guided by sight and sensation, Pissarro understood what others had discovered before:

> Meanwhile, my wisdom, she, assists me. I have refused nothing to my eyes of that which they demand; I have deprived my heart of no joy, for my heart enjoys all my work: that was the share which returns to me from all my work. (Qoheleth 2.9-10)

Later, in 1884, he wrote to Lucien who was beginning to make his way as an artist: "do not worry too much about searching for the *new*, the new is not found in the subject, but rather in the method of expressing it."[34] The Qoheleth had written in response to a similar question—"Come and see this new thing!": "There is nothing new under the sun!...this new thing has already existed in the centuries that have preceded us." (Qoheleth 1.9-10) Like a modern Job, he had turned his gaze from himself onto a world where nature replaced the divine:

> Do not be wise according to your own eyes, fear especially the Lord, and turn yourself away from evil. This will be a remedy for your body, a refreshment for your limbs. Honor the Lord of your benefits, of the first fruits of your profits, and your baskets will be filled with wheat as the wine will overflow your wine presses. (Proverbs 3.7-10)

Carefully reworking Baudelaire's description of the poet as one:

> —Who soars above life, and understands without effort
> The language of the flowers and [other] speechless things!
> (Baudelaire, "Elevation", III, *The Flowers of Evil*);

one could say that Pissarro was one "—Who walks through life and understands without effort the language of flowers and other mute things!" Pissarro's representation of a regenerative nature suggested that "redemption on earth is possible, and, not only on earth, but in France and Pontoise."[35] The terms of this redemption were there for all who would see.

Notes

1 For a thorough study of Pissarro's work during his residence in Pontoise, and a description of the social and political world in which he worked, see Richard R. Brettell, *Pissarro and Pontoise: The Painter in a Landscape*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

2 See Brettell for a discussion of *The Four Seasons (Les Quatres Saisons)* and the

Classical Pontoise Period, pp. 151-157. Excellent color plates are on pages 152-153.

3 Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

4 Pierre Joseph Proudhon, *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église*, 3 vols., Paris, Librairie de Garnier Freres, 1858, II, p. 83. Subsequent references to Proudhon will be made in the text with PJP, volume number in roman numerals and page number in arabic. Proudhon's idea of property and the relationship of man to the land distinguished his anarchist philosophy from the materialism of Karl Marx's communism and is crucial to an understanding of Pissarro's art and political ideas.

5 Andre Theuriet, *La Vie Rustique en France*, (Paris: Launett et Cie, 1888). See Richard R. Brettell and Carol Brettell, *Painters and Peasants in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York, 1983), for a study of representations of peasants in nineteenth century art.

6 To Lucien Pissarro, December 12, 1889, Volume II, #557, in Camille Pissarro, *Correspondance de Camille Pissarro*, Five Volumes, Edited by Janine Bailly-Herzberg, (1980-1991). "J'expedie ce jour a Cluzel deux eventails a faire monter: l'un *Paysage avec l'arc-en-ciel* (P.V. 1642), est destine a Madame Van Gogh. Je vous prie de vouloir bien le lui presenter de ma part, et lui faire mes compliments de Nouvel An, car il est plus que probable que je ne pourrai m'absenter a cette epoque."

7 To Lucien, January 21, 1884, in *Correspondance*, Volume I, #211. Pissarro's use of the plural in reference to the Bible suggests that he was aware of the several groups of writings known collectively under this general name. The first five books of the Bible are known as the Books of Moses, the Pentateuch, and the Torah. Together with the books of the prophets and what are sometimes referred as "the other writings", which include the Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, the Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and others, they form what is sometimes referred to as the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible and the New Testament form the Protestant Bible. When the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew into Greek under the direction of Ptolemy of Philadelphia, known as the "Version of the Seventy" (although there were actually seventy-two), a number of works considered as apocryphal by the others were included. These "deuterocanonical books", which included Wisdom and Jesus Ben Siracide, were translated into Latin and later edited by St. Jerome to form the Vulgate, the Bible recognized by the Roman Catholic Church. The authenticity and authorship of these books was scrutinized during the nineteenth century, and their attributions, interpretations, and essential meanings subject to dispute. Ernest Renan's translations and studies of Job, The Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes were important examples of the latter.

8 To Lucien, July 7, 1891, *Correspondance*, Volume III, #671.

9 To Lucien, December 28, 1883, in *Correspondance*, Volume I, #203.

10 References from the Bible are taken from *La Bible: Ancien Testament*, Traduction oecumenique de la Bible by la Societe Biblique Francaise and Editions du Cerf, 2 Volumes, (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1979).

11 Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, Translated by M. Friendlander, Second revised edition, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1904), 302-3. Maimonides' book was translated from Arabic into French in the mid-nineteenth century by Solomon Munk as *Le Guide des egares, traite de théologie et de philosophie par Moise Ben Maimoun dit Maimonide*, 3 vols., 1856; rpt. Paris: Editions G.-P. Maisonneuve, 1960.. Maimonimides' efforts to reconcile science and faith angered orthodox rabbis for its heresy, as Bernard Lazare briefly related in his *L'Antisémitisme: Son Histoire et Ses Causes*, (Paris: Leon Chailly, 1894), pp. 114-5.

Lazare attempted to define a tradition of scholarship within Judaism that extended through Sabbatei Levi and Jacob Franck to include himself. Maimonides' example was an important model for Jews like Adolphe Cremieux and other members of the *Alliance Israelite Francaise* who were defining a new secular identity for Jews. For an overview of this process, see Jay K. Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-century France*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989). Lazare was the model for Hannah Arendt's idea of the "Jew as Pariah".

12 Interesting and very different explanations of this processs can be found in Claude Bernard's *Introduction a l'Étude de la Médecine Expérimentale*, (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966), representing the viewpoint of experimental science, and in the mystically-inclined Bernard Lazare's *La Télépathie et le Neo-Spirtualisme*, (Paris: Librairie de l'Art Indépendent, 1893), which seeks to place all experience within the context of the evolution of knowledge. Also useful are the writings of Henri Bergson, who combined the evidence of science with ontologically necessary answers to the questions Claude Bernard acknowledged but refused to ask.

13 For the calendar pages, see *The Tres Riches Heures of Jean, Duke of Berry*, facsimile edition of the original in Musée Condé, Chantilly, with comments, discussion, and explanation by Jean Longnon, Raymond, and Millard Meiss, translated by Victoria Benedict, (New York: George Braziller, Inc.1969). For the sculpture, see Emile Male, "The Mirror of Nature" and "The Mirror of Instruction," in *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France in the Thirteenth Century*, Translated by Dora Nussey, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), 27-63 and 64-97.

14 Brettell, pp. 192-197.

15 Pissarro used Dr. Leon Simon's translation and revision of Dr. Constantine Hering's *La Medecine homéopathique domestique*, translated from the 12th German Edition, (Paris: J.B. Bailiere et Fils, 1867), as his primary guide. Further references to this book will be cited as SH.

16 Letter to Julie Pissarro, September 28, 1889, in *Correspondance*, Volume II, #544 and Note 2, 299.

17 Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, *Exposition de la Doctrine médicale homéopathique, ou Organon de l'Art de Guerir*, translated from the 5th edition by A.J.L. Jourdan, Second Edition, (Paris: J.B. Bailiere, 1834), #75, 171. References indicated by the prefix "#" refer to the numbered paragraphs in the *Organon* proper for comparative purposes between different editions. Subsequent references will be indicated in the text with SH, and paragraph number preceding page number.

18 Hahnemann, #229, 255. "La tranquillite et le bien-être ne rentrent dans leur âme que quand leur corps est revenu à la santé."

19 Letter to Lucien, May 21, 1883, *Correspondance*, Volume I, #153.

20 Letter to Georges Pissarro, January 9, 1890, *Correspondance* , Volume II, #562.

21 Letter to Lucien, December 14, 1883, *Correspondance*, Volume I, #198.

22 Letter to Lucien, February 10, 1884, *Correspondance*, Volume I, #216.

23 Letter to Georges, June 21, 1893, *Correspondance*, Volume III, #901.

24 Although united in their opposition to science when it denied the existence of any vital principle, the metaphysical systems of homeopathy and Proudhon's anarchism were fundamentally different in other respects. In categories defined by Proudhon, their differences were those between Descartes' Deism and Spinozan pantheism. Proudhon could not accept the vitalism of homeopathy and the existence of a vital principle, but he admitted the ontological necessity of its existence. He could not reject pantheism as an idea, however, and declared himself to be a "panthéiste pratique." His concept of *rapports* led him to embrace Freemasonry. At issue in the

distinction between the two viewpoints is the significance of observation and experience for the physician, and observation and sensation for the artist, as cognitive experiences. See references to Bernard and Lazare in Note 12 for discussions of the question that was central to nineteenth century thought. Homeopathic vitalism belongs to tradition of "critical vitalism" represented in its classical form by Aristotle. It is different from the "naive vitalism" that identifies "life" with substance in the form of breath or blood. This latter form begins to approach a materialistic vision of life. The pantheistic conception of unity was given a "non-theistic form" in Proudhon's principle of equality governing nature and life. Homeopathic medicine's vital principle was both governing principle and immaterial substance that sustained the integral unity of the living organism.

25 Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, Translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith, (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), pp. 153-155.

26 Letter to Lucien, December, 1883, *Correspondance*, Volume I, #203.

27 Foucault, p. 171.

28 Letter to Octave Mirbeau, [End of July, 1892], *Correspondance* , Volume III, #805.

29 Baudelaire's images of light and dark as metaphors for the spiritual nature of esthetic experience and the material needs of everyday existence may have broader implications for an understanding of Pissarro's art. In a letter from Theodore Duret to the painter dated December 6, 1873, cited in *Correspondance*, Volume I, #29, note 1, by Janine Bailly-Herzberg, Duret wrote: "Je ne me preoccupe pas de savoir comment cela a été fait ni si c'est votre manière claire ou noire."

30 Letter to Eugene Murer, [July, 1884], *Correspondance*, Volume I, #246.

31 Letter to Theo Van Gogh, April 4, 1890, *Correspondance*, Volume II, #582.

32 Letter to Mirbeau, January 10, 1892, *Correspondance*, Volume III, #741.

33 The need for confidence would have been essential to any successful cure through homeopathic therapeutics from the standpoint of orthodox medicine. Clinical medicine had found no basis for homeopathy's claims because of the lack of experimental proof of the effectiveness of its *materia medica* for reasons claimed. Clinical psychology, however, allowed some credence for their claims based on research into hypnotic suggestion by James Braid, Jean Martin Charcot, and Hippolyte Bernheim among others. Homeopathic cures were attributed to the power of suggestion due to the attentions of the homeopathic physician and the patient's confidence in his abilities to effect a cure. This was the same explanation given for faith healings and the "laying on of hands".

34 Letter to Lucien, February 17, 1884, *Correspondance*, Volume I, #219.

35 Brettell, p. 155.

The Reading of a Still:
The Evocation of Death in Dorothy Dandridge's Photograph

Charlene Regester

Dorothy Dandridge was problematized because of her race, sexuality, and the politics of a hegemony that rendered African American women screen stars unable to escape being racialized and sexualized. Yet Dandridge became one of the most commercially photographed African American women in post-war World War II America. A star in the cinema world and therefore a marketable commodity, Dandridge was exploited, reproduced, and marketed to the public for mass consumption. As Dandridge was commodified by white Hollywood, she posed for still photographs that attempted to capture her as she was and is still remembered, but who, according to Christian Metz, "no longer is."[1]

As one critic described photography, "By drawing attention to the moment of creation, that is literally freezing the subject in time and place, photography does not simply reproduce the real but validates the impression of reality — the photographic image appears truthful."[2] Dandridge was rendered an object of the gaze by white Hollywood because of her racial and sexual construction. Her body became a site by which white males could explore their own fantasies. Not only does Dandridge's photograph reproduce the real as she elicited the male gaze; it similarly captures how she internalized the gaze by projecting this gaze onto herself — a self so consumed by the continual exploitation of her racial and sexual construction that she became suicidal. Metz contends that the very nature of photography signifies death, as it captures a single moment in time that has passed and can no longer be retrieved.[3] I suggest that this particular photograph was indeed symbolic of death — the death of Dorothy Dandridge.

The Dandridge photograph I have chosen was acquired in Los Angeles at one of the many enterprises specializing in movie stills, posters, and other collectibles. This photograph, although reproduced elsewhere, has never been criti-

cally read.[4] The photographer remains anonymous and even the year in which the photograph was produced is unknown. Totally stripped of anonymity, however, is Dandridge, whose mature visage reveals a date late in her career, when she had achieved some degree of acclaim and success as a screen actress. It is a promotional photograph, allowing spectators, in the words of Metz, to "fetishize" Dandridge. In fact, this photograph becomes symbolic of Dandridge's death.

The relationship that exists between photography and death as articulated by Metz is that the reading of the photograph either greatly enhances or diminishes the viewer's understanding by superimposing a theoretical paradigm that has grown out of colonial discourse. Metz postulated that photography was closely related to death because: (a) they share immobility and silence; (b) photography evokes memories of those victimized by death; (c) a photograph "is the instantaneous abduction of the object out of the world into another world, into another kind of time"; and (d) a photograph maintains the memory of the dead as being dead. Metz further contends that a photograph parallels death in that it is immediate and definitive. Thus, Dandridge's photo captures a single and definitive moment of time that can never be re-captured or re-claimed. Metz further argues that photography is a mirror image of the aging process of an individual. For Dandridge, the photograph crystallizes her in maturity. Because the photo is a still, Dandridge is frozen in time, but the viewer's memory is jolted into recall of the before and the after of that moment.[5]

Roland Barthes similarly connected death with photography and argued that "the reading of a photograph is ... always historical; it depends on the reader's knowledge just as though it were a matter of a real language, intelligible only if one has learned the signs."[6] Barthes at the same time commented on the paradox of reading a photograph based on its denotative and connotative message thus usurping the issue of "how then can the photograph be at once 'objective' and 'invested,' natural and cultural?"[7] Dandridge's photo becomes a historic moment in her l lifespan, an emblem of the lurking death.

Walter Benjamin points to the fact that:

> No matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed his subject, the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the Here and Now, with which reality has so to speak seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of the long-forgotten moment the future subsists so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it.[9]

Thus, Dandridge's photo allows us to vacillate on the continuum between the there-and-then and the here-and-now, as we seek to foreground an individual backgrounded by time and history.

More recently, Carol Mavor, drawing upon previous scholars' discussions in the same vein, also argues that not only is death connected to photography because it seizes a moment in time, but death or the "morbid sense of mortality" can be read in a photograph.[10] Mavor also explores how death is captured in photo-

graphs through the positioning of the body. Thus, Mavor's reading gives further significance to the representation of death in Dandridge's photo.

An examination of the death of Dandridge as constructed in this photo must of course take into account Dandridge's alleged suicide and the circumstances surrounding her death. These underlie the discursive use of this photo and call for a recapitulation of the story of her death. Some four months prior to her death Dandridge left a note outlining her will. Reprinted in the *New York Times*, it read,

> In the case of death—to whomever [sic] discovers it—don't remove anything I have on—scarf, gown, or other. ... Cremate me right away—if I have anything, money, furniture give to my mother Ruby Dandridge. She will know what to do. Dorothy Dandridge ("Forty-four Word Hand-written Will of Miss Dandridge Filed".)[11]

Dandridge outlined her will a few months prior to her death. Considering that she had been diagnosed as suicidal, this may have been a warning of her intentions. Her death is still shrouded in mystery. When Dandridge was found dead in her apartment,[12] conflicting reports circulated: she died from an injury, or her death was caused by murder, suicide, or drug intoxication. Following Dandridge's death, the Los Angeles Coroner's office, allegedly under pressure to release a report on her death, produced a preliminary finding suggesting that because she had suffered a broken bone in her foot, resulting from an injury sustained in a gym several days prior to her death, fragments of the bone infiltrated her blood stream and may have caused her death.[13] In an amendment to her death certificate, authorities later revealed that Dandridge's cause of death was from acute drug intoxication from the ingestion of Trofranil, an anti-depressant that apparently had been prescribed for her because of her severe bouts with depression. Her friends insisted that Dandridge was murdered; they refused to believe that suicide was the cause of death.[14] Her death, says Earl Conrad, co-author of her autobiography, "was not suicide, [but] was a murder that took a lifetime."[15]

Because "photography and film both always bear the work of death, the pausing to freeze, mummify, 'corpse-ify' whatever body they capture or pose," it is conceivable that this photo of Dandridge similarly connotes death through her body's pose.[16] Dandridge's body became the signifier of her own internal contradictions, and these contradictions surrounding her death are transfigured in her photograph. Dandridge's suicide is visible in her forced happiness pose—eyes straining to glow, lips opening to suggest complexity—an "I am yours and yet not yours stare." Fear (of murder) is conveyed in the striking contrast of her pose, with one arm elevated suggesting that she is warding off her attackers; yet at the same time, her other arm rests at her side with her shoulder extended suggesting that she is inviting the attention of admirers. The elevated arm and hand rest loosely on the plant almost in a soothing manner to suggest her vulnerability as she seeks protection and security. Even the red (or orange, a derivation of red) dress and lipstick that she is wearing in the photo signifies a plurality of meanings. Red can have signify death, consistent with the Chinese custom of "eating ... red sorghum during mourning time."[17]

The color of red is inscribed with multiple meanings; it can signify sexuality, danger, or alarm. Similarly it serves to alert viewers of Dandridge's paranoia, as she became increasingly more vulnerable to the social and political whims of Hollywood. This photo may foretell Dandridge's death; but it cannot tell us the cause of death.

Conceivably, death is subtly conveyed in the moles—blots that highlight the sexual beauty of her face—suggesting that her skin remains unblemished except for this one dark spot, the darkness of death. These moles also signify beauty spots, as they render Dandridge more sexually appealing. Her necklace simulates a fetal position, often associated with death since it is linked to birth. This necklace, encircling Dandridge's neck, is not a literal strangulation but a figurative one, suggesting the exploitative coiling she endured in patriarchal Hollywood. Moreover, the positioning of the necklace, which accentuates her revealing neckline, signifies the sexual exploitation that Dandridge endured in the cinema world which thrived on the exploitation of women's sexuality.

In reconstructing Dandridge, it is necessary to review the early years of her life and her hard-won success in filmdom. Even though she gained a level of acceptance as a screen star, a status denied to most African Americans, she was marginalized in the industry and became the doubly determined cultural Other because of her race and sexuality. And that otherness is inflected in Dandridge's photograph. Being Other, however, is not without contradictions; as Trinh Minh-Ha suggests, being designated as Other connotes some sense of privilege, which is problematic itself. Thus, Dandridge may have deliberately designated herself as an Other, "a form of self-location and self-criticism within established boundaries."[18] She no doubt was subliminally aware that it was necessary. Without understanding the "the dialectical relation between acceptance and refusal, between reversing and displacing," she felt overwhelmed and consumed—questioning the power of Hollywood.[19] But being designated as Other is fraught with chance; an inescapable pattern invites both new negatives and new positives as they contest those previously established. When Dandridge accepted this identity, she participated in her own exploitation. Trying to resist her otherness (refusing to complete a motion picture that exploited her racial and sexual construction), Dandridge became stigmatized as an undesirable, as one who was difficult to work with and as problematic. Constantly entrapped between these two competing identities, she must have internalized this conflict between acceptance and rejection of otherness, itself a death of the self—a death that can be detected in Dandridge's photo.

Otherness is also apparent in Dandridge's body. In the racial bigotry of the language of that period, the lightness of her skin signified whiteness and therefore, life, while her darkness signified blackness and therefore, death. Such contrasts were artfully augmented in the photo by the shadows created by the lighting that brightens one side of her face and body, while deliberately darkening the other side. Upon closer examination, Dandridge's face appears to be much lighter than her neck, leaving unanswered the question of whether the photo through a highlighting effect, has caused this implied whiteness or whether Dandridge wore facial cosmetics to appear lighter when photographed. In either case, Dandridge's racial construction has been subverted. Her copper-toned complexion could have al-

lowed her to represent any number of ethnicities. Also, Dandridge possessed European features (evident in her thin nose, etc.) She simultaneously symbolized Eurocentric standards of beauty. By deliberately diluting her ethnicity she was being promoted as something other than African American. If Dandridge, allowed herself to be coded as something other than African American, she then became an "Inappropriate Other." Already Other in race and so-called black sexuality, she blurred the lines, presenting herself as belonging to an unknown ethnicity, her racial construction manipulated to appeal to a broad audience, both those who accepted only white and those who might be fascinated by a woman of color.

If the photo then becomes symbolic of a mirror by which Dandridge could view herself, then, according to Lacan, the photo becomes symbolic of the formation of Dandridge's ego-ideal as she attempted to transform herself into what she "witnessed" in the mirror. Dandridge wanted to marry a white man—white men, however, married only white women. Dandridge wanted to transform herself not so much into a white woman but into a figure of white-womanness so that white men would want her. In order to become this mirror image, Dandridge wanted to kill the outward signs of her blackness, intensifying the process already begun by Hollywood, increasing the tension between her interiority (blackness) and exteriority (whiteness)—or between self and Other.

Color as a construct of race becomes compounded with sexuality. Freud himself used the dark continent trope to refer to female sexuality. Thus, black women because of their blackness automatically became sexualized. As Dandridge, confirming these views, muses, "So many white men think there is nothing sweeter than having a brown boff on the side, under wraps, taken in the dark or kept behind the scenes." Dandridge, because of her Africanness, is automatically objectified. Because of her sexuality, in the words of Laura Mulvey, Dandridge becomes the object of the male gaze which "projects its phantasy on to the female figure." [20] Mulvey's views are applicable when she argues:

> Thus the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified. The male unconscious has two avenues of escape from this castration anxiety: preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object (an avenue typified by the concerns of the film noir); or else complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous (hence over-valuation, the cult of the female star). This second avenue, festishistic scopophilia, builds up the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself.[21]

Dandridge understood that her provocative pose for this photograph invited the male gaze; she was constructing herself as an object of desire. Her obsession with white men was inscribed in the positioning of her body; her face, nose, and breasts

all point in one direction, toward the brilliance of the light, which can be equated with her desire for whiteness. The shadows created by the light cast darkness on the part of her body that remains stationary. Thus she has shielded part of her body, representing her flight from blackness. Dandridge appears off-frame, in direct opposition to the way Americans customarily read—from left to right. Her position disrupts our traditional eye movement.

Her posture and demeanor, with her slightly opened mouth and low-cut blouse, the exotic plant associated with jungle terrain or rain forests, the selection and positioning of objects in the photo as contrasted between light and shadow all combine to enhance her desirability and to invite the gaze. Unfortunately, Dandridge internalized this gaze and its effects and projected them onto her person, thus inviting her own death which the photo presages.

Richard Dyer argues that only whiteness can convey desirability and more specifically blonde white females.[22] But Fanon contends that "women of color in quest of white men are waiting ... they will become aware, one day, that 'white men do not marry black women.' But they have consented to run this risk; what they must have is whiteness at any price."[23] Dandridge, although she was constructed to convey desirability because of her sexuality, believed she was rejected because of her blackness. Fanon argues that ego-withdrawal could conceivably help to disrupt this pattern of behavior but is not useful for blacks, since they require white approval. He added, "They must have white men, completely white, nothing else will do," and once this symbol of whiteness is obtained, the black woman is metamorphosized; "she [is] white. She [is] joining the white world." [24] And indeed, Dandridge, reflecting on her own life as she had engaged in futile relationships with white men, acknowledged her own obsession, stating, "Hell bent on marrying a white man, I don't know what I wanted to prove."[25]

The photo represents Dandridge as an African American woman who has been characterized as Other, one in which the configurations of race and sexuality have been transfigured. Lowering a scrim over these configurations, Dandridge complicated her image, transforming it from simply Other to "Inappropriate Other," and later inviting death. This photo is a representation of Dandridge's death. Dandridge actually foreshadowed this at one point, reflecting on her predisposition to self-destruction: "Some people kill themselves with drink, others with overdoses, some with a gun, a few hurl themselves in front of trains or autos. I hurled myself in front of another white man."[26]

As a spectator, perhaps I have developed in the words of bell hooks an "oppositional gaze."[27] Perhaps my transgression of the sexual and racial construction of Dandridge allows me to see Dandridge as the real African American star that she was, struggling to overcome the confines of the dominant hegemony of Hollywood. My knowledge of Dandridge, from reading texts about her life and those of her friends and critics, was, I now know, severely limited. Reading this photograph, my understanding of her exploitation by others and by herself has been greatly enhanced. The photo is about her death.

Notes

1 Christian Metz, "Photography and Fetish,"*October* 34 (Fall 1985): 81-90.
2 Kathryn Benzel, "The Body as Art: Still Photographs of Marilyn Monroe," *Journal of Popular Culture* 25.2 (Fall 1991): 3.
3 Metz, 83-84
4 "Island in the Sun," *Ebony*, 12.9 (July 1957): 32.
5 Metz, 85-86
6 Ibid., 83-86
7 Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 23.
8 Ibid., 20
9 Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings* (London: NLB 1979)
10 Carol Mavor, *Pleasures Taken* (Raleigh-Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 48.
11 "A Fracture Fatal to Miss Dandridge," *New York Times*, 11 September 1965, 27.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Louie Robinson, "Dorothy Dandridge Hollywood's Tragic Enigma," *Ebony* 21.5 (March 1966): 70-82.
15 Dorothy Dandridge and Earl Conrad, *Everything and Nothing: The Dorothy Dandridge Tragedy* (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1970)
16 Patrice Petro, ed. *Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995)
17 Trinh Minh-Ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 90.
18 Ibid., 186
19 Ibid.
20 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16.3 (Autumn 1975): 6-18.
21 Ibid., 13-14
22 Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986) 161.
23 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks (* London: Pluto Press, 1986 [1952]), 49.
24 Ibid, 57-58. "Forty-Four Word Handwritten Will of Miss Dandridge Filed," *New York Times*, 12, October 1965, 58.
25 Ibid., 192
26 Ibid., 186
27 bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators," in *Black American Cinema*, ed. Manthia Diawara (New York: Routledge, 1993)

Francesco Clemente and a Memory of his Childhood

Mary Elizabeth Karoll

The various trajectories of this essay are based on, but do not entirely hinge on, a pre-adolescent trauma, a myth here ironically named "Francesco Clemente and a Memory of his Childhood," a reminiscence of an event which supposedly precipitated the most transgressive artist of the transavantgarde's decision to become an artist. For three years, in his Neapolitan home where sixteenth-century religious paintings by Luca Giordano and Francesco Solimena graced the walls, the subject enacted a daily ritual with his mother. Each morning, from ages five or six to age eight, the future artist recited poems to his mother, who transcribed the verses. In 1964, when Francesco Clemente was twelve years old, these poems were published in a book entitled Castelli di Sabbia, whose rather prosaic English translation is "Sand Castles." Quotes from several interviews establish his screening of the memory as well as the ways in which he wishes to present the origins of his creativity. He related to one interviewer, Rainer Crone, that

> (i)t was an embarrassing event, the publication of this poetry of mine. . . it was published against my better judgment. It was enormously embarrassing and it made me into a painter, actually, because I decided that to be a poet was to embarrassing, it was too revealing, and I wanted something more obscure to deal with. [1]

In this essay, I will explore the ways in which Clemente's enigmatic art may be seen as an attempt to recapture a pre-Oedipal union with his mother which he previously re-enacted in his daily recitations that precipitated her absorbed response, a sort of artistic collaboration. Referring to basic concepts of Freudian psychology, most notably the phallic mother, I will interpret several of the artist's pastels as depictions of infantile sexual theories of conception and birth. Pastel is traditionally

thought of as a "feminine" medium, and while it is admittedly difficult to use the word without pejorative connotations or charges of essentialism, I believe that the artist's widespread use of this secondary medium betrays a poignant attempt to knowingly yet affectingly adopt a wishful fantasy of feminine creativity, a larger theme of these works in question, many of which portray the act of childbirth or laying eggs. Through this study, I will attempt to demonstrate that Clemente's exotic, erotic, poignant and playful art inverts phallocentrism by turning the role of the phallic mother into one link in a fluid, psychosexual circular economy of organs, ova, orifices and babies, the contours of which are a metaphor for artistic creation.

Many aspects of Clemente's polymorphously perverse imagery are an endless attempt to recreate the coupling with his mother. In interviews, he constantly reiterates an analogy between his work and poetry, between his oeuvre and spoken language, and letters are dispersed across the surface of his drawings, prints, and paintings. In one image from *Two Garlands* (1986), a series of over a hundred monotypes with a small self-portrait at the bottom of each, a smeared, lurid figure gives birth to a smattering of letters and seemingly the artist himself in a bloody parturition.

Through the depiction of oral and anal intercourse and birth from both male and female figures, a full-grown male or father and the need or even desire for genital intercourse are rendered unnecessary by Clemente's symbolization. Such images would be read as the result of a desire to be one with the phallic mother. Freud explains the dilemma of comprehending the difference between the sexes.

But when the child thus seems to be well on the way to postulating the existence of the vagina and to concluding than an incursion of this kind by his father's penis into his mother is the act by means of which the baby is created in his mother's body—at this juncture his enquiry is broken off in helpless perplexity. For standing in its way is his theory that the mother possesses a penis just as a man does; existence of the cavity which receives the penis remains undiscovered by him.

I have divided the general category of this theory, the phallic mother, into groups of Clemente's pastels which nevertheless overlap each other. The first of these sets is composed of variations on the mother endowed with the phallus, either by a stylized or deformed baby emerging from her body or by way of a detachable penis, as well as, metaphorically, through an idealization, depersonalization and predominant placement above the male figure in the drawings. Representations of a male or a surrogate self-portrait giving birth to an oviform object after presumably being inseminated by the maternal phallus comprise the second set of Clemente's erotic improvisations which I will explore. These images invoking the remembering and dismembering of his childhood muse might be seen as the artist's attempt, even as a child reciting the poems, to reposit his mother as the fantasized all-powerful phallic Madonna of the pre-genital nursing stage.

The artist's act of endowing the many female figures represented in his oeuvre with a phallus is self-reflexive, since Clemente is assured by his portrayal that he won't lose his penis or creative power. This, from childhood, may very well

have been associated with his mother's ability to assure his being a child prodigy through their collaboration as a writing couple. In depicting a phallic woman, a self-portrait of the artist or a surrogate figure often embodies the phallus in a reprisal of the artist's youthful symbiotic relationship with his mother.

Dilemma, a pastel from a series of sixteen, is included in a book comprised of poems by René Ricard and pictures by Clemente. The horizontal image is divided into two sections, the left depicting the heavens, the right with a rubbing of upper-case letters. A nude female figure drawn in profile, her face obscured by her hair, bridges the two zones, her outline pierced by a figure emerging between her legs and forming a sort of pseudo phallus. This work reads as an allegory of the artist's relationship with this mother in the act of learning language, even the language of painting, of art. A theme in his oeuvre, similar letters apparently formed by rubbing also appear faintly in the 1989 oil painting, *U = Remember*, from a series entitled the *Vocali AEIOU*. In it a female figure embraces one of the artist's myriad, self-consciously obsessive nude self-portraits from behind while feeding him by hand, perhaps imparting the rudimentary building blocks of language.

Simultaneously inside and outside, invagination and evagination, man and baby, the attenuated, androgynous, elongated form in *Dilemma* might be understood to represent Clemente's wish for a phallic union with his mother. The figure bridges the gap between a total merging in the womb and the formation of a separate identity, the accession of language concomitant with the separation from the mother-child dyad. The overlapping characters, enigmatic messages to be deciphered, letters which apparently do not as yet form words, appear to be created by placing a piece of paper over a tactile, raised or indented source and stroking the pastel crayon over it. The sweeping gesture of the woman's elongated arm and hand as well as the faint, scratchy lines on the drawing, echo the artist's manner of holding the pastel to do the rubbing, an erotic act of creation and revelation. Perhaps as in Clemente's youthful poems, the presence of the phallic woman is necessary in decoding or uncovering the poetic content of the word-puzzle or cryptograph, his enigmatic, obsessive language of symbols. Freud describes the spatially and proportionally disparate, seemingly irreconcilable elements in a dream as being best understood as a pictograph or rebus, an image that is also applicable to *Dilemma*. In writing down her son's dream-poems, transcribing them in an accessible form, Maria Quarto, Clemente's mother, thus acted as an intuitive psychoanalyst. A possible parallel in the pastel is the act of rubbing, or frottage itself, a metaphor for revealing the unconscious in an archaeological fashion. Encircled, held in stasis by the muscular ring of the vagina and the soft halation of pubic hair, the homunculus emerging from the monumental nude goddess may be on its way to the acquisition of language. The French psychoanalyst Lacan posits this as the final stage in a child's separation from the mother.

Oral imagery, one of Clemente's most prominent iconographic or thematic interests throughout his forays in different media, could be derived from ambivalent desires closely linked to the separation from the mother, postponed by her complicity in his poetic production. Positing art as poetry may very well act as a means of prolonging the play of the phallus, thus delaying separation from the

mother.

At one point in his career Freud postulates that the fantasy of oral birth is derived from the childhood supposition that conception comes from kissing. In view of the concept of the phallic mother, I would propose that the bizarre oral/vaginal birth depicted in another pastel, *In the Mouth*, might be a simulacrum of language, the artist's desire to subsume the maternal phallus into his own oral offering. The picture depicts a seemingly acephalic woman or one whose head is thrown back in ecstasy or in pain in an ambiguous act of giving birth, since the baby appears to be emanating from the mouth of a man whose head covers her lap, subsuming her parturition with his gift of the phallus. Perhaps latent ambivalent emotions towards the phallic mother and her contents, feces and babies, are given shape in the child's deformity, as well as the oral aggression.

In *Circuit*, a pastel from 1980, the passive/aggressive act of feeding at the maternal breast has also been displaced to a phallus. Another statuesque female torso with spread legs bears a small penis inserted into the mouth of the male figure in the lower half of the image. In *Leonardo and a Memory of his Childhood*, Freud argues that a woman's desire to fellate a man

> only repeats in a different form a situation in which we all once felt comfortable—when we were still in our suckling days and took our mother's (or wet nurse's) nipple into our mouth and sucked at it.[2]

As is usual in his caricature-like self-portraiture, the artist here exploits the resemblance of his large and sensuous mouth to a vagina. In light of this picture, it is suggestive to read Clemente's many depictions of anal birth, especially from male figures, as a result of fantasized impregnation through feeding at a female's penis, a fantasy substitute for the maternal breast.

The awkward articulation of the male figure's left hand holding the spoon, perhaps to catch the shoots of milky liquid from the hermaphrodite or fantasy female's penis, may again be expressive of ambivalence towards the mother's nourishing capabilities. Like the proffered maternal breast, the dainty stylized phallus sustains the man in his creative act of imbibing influence and emitting it in the work of art. The symbolic origin of the egg-like form floating in front of the male figure's left breast, perhaps only apparent in examining several other drawings by Clemente, is crucial to my argument and to the larger picturing of the artist's ontogenesis. If the circuit suggested in the title is to be complete, perhaps the spread-eagle phallic female will ingest the anal production, the egg, so that she can emit the vital fluids that feed the man who can now give birth to yet another ovoid creation symbolic of art.

A recognition of polymorphous bisexuality in childhood which we may wish to recapture in adulthood is suggested in the luminous color of the penis which can be attached and detached in perverse permutations at the artist's will. In his essay, "On the Transformation of Instincts with Special Reference to Anal Eroticism," Freud clearly explicated the homology between the penis and feces. In opposition to his conception of the female's desire for the baby as penis, he re-

marks that

> (a) different series of relations can be observed much more distinctly in the male. It is formed when the boy's sexual curiosity leads him to discover the absence of a penis in women. He concludes that the penis must be a detachable part of the body, something analogous to faeces, the first bodily substance the child had to part with.[3]

The pastel penis in Clemente's *Circuit* is coloristically similar to the blue outlines and nipple of the breasts, stressing their formal and psychosexual similarity.

Perhaps a temporal as well as a psychosexual material circuit flows through this pastel, as the anticipation of the spurts of liquid connects the oral stage of infantile eroticism to oral intercourse, and drive to desire. Another pastel with the same title, *Circuito*, (1981) could be interpreted in a similar fashion.

After the pastel, the congruence of the egg-like form with anal creation is a way of maintaining that the mother is phallic. Another infantile sexual theory colors my perception of yet another work entitled *Circuito,* depicting a man laying an egg, as well as a miniature from the series, *Francesco Clemente Pinxit*. If a mother is phallic, the little boy reasons, then his mother must be impregnated and give birth through her anus, and his own attempts to create a baby, a gift for the mother, might be focused on giving birth anally. Many of the artist's oils, pastels, and drawings depict an egg, as the anally or orally spawning eggs or with oviform objects touching various erogenous zones of the body. These works attribute a positive aspect to castration, to the loss of the fecal phallus, a severing that is perhaps a chance for rebirth and renewal, for which the egg is a traditional symbol.

Another pastel from the same series as *Dilemma*, *Fable Sweet*, depicts two of these egg-shaped forms encapsulating a similar rubbing of letters. The pastel provides a speculative glimpse of the imaginary contents of similar oviform objects depicted in Clemente's works; the matter inside the ovum is language. The eggs in *Fable Sweet* and the other drawings might metaphorically illustrate not only the erotic charge the artist felt in voiding himself of the poems every morning as a child, but also, in light of the poetic metaphor which encompasses his entire oeuvre, the act of making art.

Notes

1 Francesco Clemente, *Clemente*, interview by Rainer Cronw and Georgia Marsh (New York: Vintage, 1987), 8.

2 Sigmund Freud, "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood," *Standard Edition* (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1957), vol. 11, 87.

3 Sigmund Freud, "On the Transformation of Instincts with Special Reference to Anal Eroticism," *Collected Papers* (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1949), vol. 2, 170-71.

KITSCH AGAINST MODERNITY[1]

C.E. EMMER

Preface: Dorfles' Compendium of Kitsch

The standard English-language text on kitsch is Gillo Dorfles' *Kitsch: The World of Bad Taste*, which came out almost simultaneously in a number of languages around 1968-9.[2] Dorfles' Kitsch brings together a number of essays on various subfields in the topic of kitsch,[3] interspersed with Dorfles' introductions and commentaries. In addition, the book is literally and haphazardly supplied with hundreds of photographs of various "kitsch" items.[4] Overall, the presentation makes the book somewhat confusing; even though the text speaks of "the shrewd [indictment] of a situation which is so dangerous for our society," the numerous photographs, which are accompanied by (presumably) Dorfles' editorializing, and which frequently threaten to crowd the text right off the page (sometimes leaving only five lines per page of the essay for which they are ostensibly illustrations), give the impression more of celebration than condemnation. Curtis F. Brown's *Star-Spangled Kitsch*, which refers to Dorfles' book as "informative, at times abstruse,"[5] shares this seemingly self-contradictory trait, but to a much higher degree: the text loses even more ground to the illustrations, and the tone, though occasionally moralizing and always derogatory, actually inclines more towards laughter and a sort of 'aren't we Americans silly?' attitude.[6]

I was drawn to the subject of kitsch to a large extent for this very reason, i.e., the peculiar ambivalence which almost always haunts its discussion. When I first came across Dorfles' book, I thought it was hilarious. My first reaction to it was enjoyment; I joined the editor in his amazement at the stupidity, shallowness, and basic tackiness of the great majority of objects with which we surround ourselves. Each page presented yet another functional mismatch, another invitation to a rugged suspension of disbelief. And yet, as I spent more time with the book, I began to question the disdain which my laughter presupposed. On one level, I wondered to what degree my laughter and dismissal could be part of a maneuver to achieve a(n unjustified) feeling of superiority. On an even deeper level, I began to come across moments when the object which was presented for my disapproval had once been — or still was — something I honestly enjoyed or respected. At

these points, my reflections upon the naive consumer were no longer theoretical, not even empirical observations, but extremely intimate.

Clement Greenberg's essay, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" appears in the Dorfles collection abridged. When I read the essay in full, I came across this comment:

> Kitsch is deceptive. It has many different levels, and some of them are high enough to be dangerous to the naive seeker of true light. A magazine like The New Yorker, which is fundamentally high-class kitsch for the luxury trade, converts and waters down a great deal of avant-garde material for its own uses.[7]

Now I had always considered the idea of being published in The New Yorker as a sign of quality, as an honor, a true mark of distinction, and had noted how many of (what I considered to be) the best pieces of fiction (such as Mark Helprin and Denis Johnson) had first seen print in its pages. I was familiar with the 'watered-down avant-garde' phenomenon of which Greenberg spoke, but had usually noticed this sort of dishonesty or structural ambivalence when I had come across it.[8] Had I now come across — in Greenberg's words — one of "these accidental and isolated instances [which] have fooled people who should have known better"? I could excuse myself by arguing that perhaps The New Yorker of the late 30's was a different creature than in later decades, but that might well only be a cheap shot at dodging a criticism which happened to include me.[9]

Furthermore, and at an even shorter distance, there were the undeniable examples of the kitsch attitude which I discovered in my own diaries (from my late teens), which I had just recently unearthed from my attic. All the signs were there: paeans to the glories of the later Pre-Raphaelites, sketches from Edward Burne-Jones, idealizing prose poems on nature and love, half-hidden lust, and misty aspirations, all written in calligraphy and abundant flourishes, peppered with occasional runes. I can remember during that time the indignation I felt upon reading a comment that Burne-Jones' work was "suffocated in syrup." Reading over these diaries again, after having for the most part forgotten what they contained, I am reminded of Marx's self-criticism of his state of mind upon arriving in Berlin:

> lyrical poetry was bound to be my first subject ... owing to my attitude and whole previous development it was purely idealistic. My heaven, my art, became a world beyond, as remote as my love [Jenny von Westphalen]. Everything real became hazy and what is hazy has no definite outlines. All the poems of the first three volumes I sent to Jenny are marked by attacks on our times, diffuse and inchoate expressions of feeling, nothing natural, everything built out of moonshine, complete opposition between what is and what ought to be, rhetorical reflections instead of poetic thoughts, but perhaps also a certain warmth of feeling and striving for poetic fire.[10]

(We may note that Marx's self-criticism culminated in his burning his attempts at

"poetic fire.")

Now, I have heard the charge brought against discussions of kitsch that they characteristically begin from hypothetical consumers going through hypothetical emotions based on hypothetical motives — in other words, that the standard 'kitschographer' does not speak from knowledge, but has simply made up the entire phenomenon under discussion. Vis-à-vis the theory of artistic choice as status-drive, for example, we find this:

> Not one empirical study ... finds respondents offering status as the main reason for their [artistic] choice. [It may be objected that people would not want to admit this.] Perhaps. But how do we know? Unsystematic data? Our own longing? For so empirically minded a discipline as sociology, this weak support for a central thesis is unsatisfactory, and perhaps even scandalous.[11]

At least in the case of these diaries, the complaint of speculation or armchair psychologizing cannot be lodged, for I know this sappy sentimentalist personally; indeed, these were events and emotions that I myself lived and believed!

The ambivalence I have sensed in relation to the kitsch concept serves as a sort of preliminary intuition. The upshot of this inkling is that the kitsch concept as I have come across it will, upon closer examination, probably exhibit a combination of useful and useless insights. Therefore, the goal of this essay will be to perform an examination of the kitsch concept, in order to discover what it is, if it has any legitimate use, and, if it does, to discover what the limits of that legitimate use are.

Introduction: Defining Kitsch

When one discusses kitsch, what is one discussing? Though for anyone presumably reading this, the term "kitsch" will automatically bring to mind a number of related terms (e.g., "schlock," "schmaltz," "bric-a-brac," "tchotchkes," etc.), let us begin at the beginning, with a short list of "typical" or "traditional" kitsch items.[12] In his essay, "Notes on Traditional Kitsch,"[13] Aleksa Celebonovic ticks off a healthy number of examples: traditionally, kitsch is understood to refer to such things as "souvenirs, animals, sickly statuettes, non-functional tumblers and dinner services ... [p]lastic knick knacks, plaster Buddhas, bare-breasted enameled negresses, celluloid trays with lace engravings ... [and] huge cushions of fake velvet." Dorfles' own list gives a feel for the wider application he wants to give the word: "the brazen styling of the bodywork of cars, the vulgarity of tourism, the inhuman horror of summer beaches and winter skiing resorts, and, similarly, the newly-weds' bedroom furniture, American kitchens, hordes of garden gnomes and rabbits and Disneyland characters, the Swiss-miniature phenomenon and so on."[14] Though something ineffable seems to float between all these things, what really strikes one is the incredible variety and chaotic hodgepodge, as if the collation of kitsch results itself in something not unlike the mess of trinkets on a bedroom shelf destined for a kitsch catalog.

Hermann Broch, in the first lines of "Notes on the Problem of Kitsch," warns us not to "expect any rigid and neat definitions. Philosophizing is always a game of prestige played with the clouds, and aesthetic philosophy follows this rule just as much";[15] elsewhere, he observes that most concepts in the human sciences evaporate "upon closer inspection into something vague and therefore highly unscientific."[16] Our topic — kitsch — is subject to these observations in an especially marked fashion.

This is due, I suspect, to the frequent use of the term "kitsch" to mean simply anything done in "bad taste," which can be discovered in as wide a field as the person applying the word wishes to leave remaining as the focal circle of "good taste" is increasingly narrowed. Indeed, the critical lens can be focused to such a fine point that the miniature projection of the sun which results leaves behind only a smoking scar of burnt flesh. On the other hand, like any other word, the word "kitsch" can be used with a higher or lesser degree of precision and care, and, to the degree that it is used merely as a sign of denigration and is practically interchangeable with any number of other pejoratives, its usefulness — or revelatory power — is greatly (if not completely) diminished. We should, however, not make these observations sloppily; for in discussing the scope of "kitsch," we can refer either to the degree of precision which a user gives to its meaning, or we can refer to the number of things which will be allowed to fall under this term, whether in its more precise or less precise use. Even if "kitsch" is defined in a very restricted way, cases can be found in which the restricted meaning is allowed a wide field of application and a great number of examples.

Surveying the literature, we find "kitsch" appearing rather regularly in association with a sort of family of related terms. Certain adjectives, for example, appear regularly in its company (notwithstanding that many of these words are English translations of words from non-English books and essays). This family of related terms has a number of more or less distinct subdivisions — I have lettered them (a) through (h), and supplied each subdivision with representative terms. Taken at once, we seem to already have a rather unmanageable collection,[17] but, we might reassure ourselves, kitsch can be taken to appear in a variety of milieus.

By creating these subdivisions, we have generated a rough-and-ready survey of the topics broached in most scholarly discussions of kitsch. Even though our list has given us a start, this sorting of qualities into categories still comes off rather clumsily. It might be noted that, given the generally negative import of these characteristics, each characteristic actually forms just half of an opposition, the other half of which is easily generated by supplying the reverse, say, with the word "not." Tadeusz Pawlowski has generated a list of the key oppositions necessary for a discussion of kitsch, which he refers to as an expandable "comprehensive typology" necessary for "cop[ing] with existing diversity," though his oppositions are of opposing approaches to the question of kitsch.[18] He concludes that, "[a]t best kitsch phenomena form a family of subsets, connected only by partial similarities."[19] Pierre Bourdieu observes (though in a radically different context) that, when confronted by a confusing multiplicity in cultural phenomena, the first natural reaction for the professional intellectual, who is inevitably imbued with structuralist habits, is to

draw up a 'table' of the pertinent oppositions, for each author as well for the set of related authors. In fact the effect of such a formal construction would be to destroy the specific logic of these ideological clusters. The specific feature is their indeterminate nature, which makes them akin to the fundamental polarities that structure mythical systems. Thus, any thinker may, in a particular situation or context, develop applications which seem contrary to rigorous logic, yet may be justified in terms of the logic which matches the pairs of practical contradictions that found the partial systematizations.[20] Presumably the situation is a little bit different here, for unlike Pawlowski, who is attempting to map the whole tradition of 'kitschography' into a system, what we are attempting to do is to rescue the valid conceptualizations (should any exist). On the other hand, Bourdieu seems to suggest that any systematization based on oppositions is likely to be less rigorous than it takes itself to be, and there is a chance that any answers we come up with may exhibit this tendency.

The Deduction of Kitsch

Pawlowski raises the question of "corroboration," or the justification for declaring something to be kitsch (he seems to concentrate mostly on the intention of the producer). He observes that most of the statements made about the intention of the author or producer of that which is alleged to be kitsch rarely finds substantiation.[21] What needs to be clear is that there are two levels to this "corroboration." There is the level at which Pawlowski discusses it, namely, (a) determining whether or not the object to be designated as kitsch actually conforms to the definition of kitsch then being used (in his discussion he refers to "false naivieté," pretentiousness, and imitativeness).[22] At another level, one must (b) determine whether or not the characteristics being scrutinized deserve the kind of attention they receive, especially given that discussions of kitsch usually hinge upon putting a good/bad opposition into play.

This observation brings us to a particularly entrenched set of good/bad distinctions which often work their way into evaluations — whether or not they are consciously intended to have such an effect. The analytic triad of class, gender, and race, though a conventional one, is so for a good reason: these are three aspects which inform almost all aspects of life, even if only as strong influences or parameters of meaning, and not completely determinant. I will only have the space to sketch out the beginning of an analysis into the effects of these topics upon the articulation of the kitsch concept as it appears in the standard literature. But this sketch should be enough to alert us to their implications (difficult though they may be to lay out systematically) for the kitsch concept in terms of this second level of "corroboration."

Concerning class, it seems that a number of 'kitschographers' wished to take this variable into account, but did so on the assumption that status (or status-seeking) was the primary category for investigating class and kitsch.[23] For example, an idea frequently broached in discussions of kitsch is that members of the "lower" classes only purchase kitsch because it is an imitation of "upper" class art forms, and they would like to have the appearance of belonging to that class, even though they do not possess the skills (education or socialization) necessary to recognize

"real" art, let alone understand it. Therefore, goes the argument, they are dependent upon the advice of experts (who do understand these "upper" class art forms) or are dependent upon advertisers who simulate such expertise and advice.[24]

This contention, however, if true occasionally (it is always a possibility), is not born out by the research done by David Halle, who found out e.g. that people who own and display a reproduction of Leonardo's *Last Supper* frequently do not know (and apparently could not care less) who the painter of the original was. So the motive for purchasing these reproductions was not to show it off as a Leonardo! In another instance, Halle describes asking a woman about the painter of Vincent van Gogh's *Sunflowers* (a reproduction of which was displayed in her home): "she examined the signature and said it was by someone named 'Vincent'!"[25] Nonetheless, class distinctions are not unimportant; the point is merely that in pointing to an object as kitsch because it has "lower" class consumers may reveal more about the untested — perhaps class-based! — assumptions of the pointer than the meanings of class differences.

The category of gender also makes its mark on the kitsch concept of the 'kitschographers.' This is most obvious in the denigration saved for the experiencing of emotions or levels of emotions associated with women (even if the perhaps the writer bears no particular animus against women). All of the "overly sentimental," "weepy" emotions usually associated with and criticized in kitsch are emotions or emotional responses normally associated with women. We find a gentler example us such an attitude in a recent movie review: "What are two intelligent people ... doing in this retro weepie plot? Love Affair is kitsch derived from old 'woman's film' formulas"; at its strongest, we have the warning from Lenin: "I can't listen to music often, it affects my nerves, it makes me want to say sweet nothings and pat the heads of people who, living in a filthy hell, can create such beauty. But we mustn't pat anyone on the head or we'll get our hand bitten off."[26]

Immanuel Kant's Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime—which, for a book which focuses on beauty, certainly has some repulsive observations on gender and race!—though it does not deal specifically with kitsch, bears out the above remarks on kitsch and gender, and touches on the long history of such attitudes. For if one examines the dichotomies set up therein between the beautiful and sublime (which Kant associates with women and men, respectively [see esp. section III]), one will find an almost one-for-one correspondence with the emotions most 'kitschographers' connect to kitsch (the beautiful, 'womanly' emotions) as against 'real' art (the sublime, 'manly' emotions).[27] Just as with the class category, things are not as simple as they may at first appear, and due caution must be used.[28]

The main caution is to be wary of searching out phenomena which are representations from faulty oppositions or baseless conceptions, or if one does search them out, to investigate them rather as indicators than sources. It may not be the phenomena under observation which need to be critiqued, but the schemas from which they get their present meaning. And yet so far we have only sketched out a negative description of the kitsch concept, i.e., what it should not be. It is time to push forward into an attempt to describe that conception which deserves not

attack but support. Nonetheless, if such a conception is found, it will still have to pass the test of the first level of "corroboration"—whether or not the kitsch objects or kitsch experiences exhibit the characteristics they are claimed to have.

Suffice to say that to gain more cohesion one would have to move beyond the qualities of kitsch objects (such as we have arranged in our table of kitsch qualities, see end) and on to what kitsch is alleged to "do," or what the kitsch "attitude" reveals or promotes, much of which cannot be easily captured in single adjectives or even tables of such adjectives. The basic thrust of Dorfles' anthology is to press for the progression from an understanding based on classifying objects, through structures which these objects exhibit, the techniques used to produce them, and finally to the psychic phenomena which support them, culminating in the concept of the "kitsch-mensch," or the obsessive consumer of kitsch.

We shall also use this more "subjective" approach, but only to a degree. For even though it turns out that a subjective analysis will be central to the kitsch concept here advanced, we will not abandon the imperative to find empirical support for this conception either. Collecting and cataloging kitsch objects, however, would be much too de-contextualized for our use. In Giesz' words, the idea would be "to start appreciating the superiority of an analytical, apparently over-generous outlook which speaks for example of kitsch-man and does not collect ('scientifically') kitsch postcards, cushions and souvenirs, nor worry about cataloging them."[29]

After the Groundclearing: Preliminary Distinctions

We have, then, eliminated a number of standard elements in the use of the kitsch concept, or at least marked them as questionable and admissible only when handled with an extremely light touch. In general, the 'ethical' or 'psychological' uses of the kitsch concept, in their tendency to degenerate into heavy-handed derogatory evaluations, reveal less about the psychology of their ostensible focus than the psychological state of their proponents (angry, silencing, polemical, polarizing, self-opaque).[30] The perspective which holds more promise for actually revealing something about its object is a 'historical' (or even an 'art historical') conception of kitsch.

The last assertion may require some clarification. For though my claim is that this 'historical' view of kitsch is better than the 'ethico-psychological' perspective, the psychological perspective has as its very point the idea that "kitsch-mensch" tries to escape the surrounding historical conditions. A better formulation may be that the downfall of the 'ethico-psychological' perspective is its inclination to conceive of this escape as the symptom of a necessarily morally weak or emotionally diseased psyche. Broch, for example, states that "if you ask yourselves to what extent you are affected by this avalanche of kitsch, you will find — at least I find it as far as I am personally concerned — that a liking for kitsch is not all that rare. The conclusion that we are heading towards an ever-increasing universal neurosis does not seem unfounded."[31] The difference would have to be that between (a) a psychological conception which is a psychological analysis (a diagnosis or evaluation) and (b) a psychological approach which by any other name would be a subjective (i.e., 'mental' or 'intentional') investigation. The adequate perspective

will then inspect the 'subjective' (or 'psychological') aspects of coping with relevant historical phenomena.

Kitsch as Modern

If the kitsch concept includes modernity (as it does e.g. for Broch and Calinescu),[32] then the first step in its justification is accomplished: we rescue kitsch — or at least one conception of kitsch—from the first obstacle, namely, that it is a concept so vague and pliable that it can be applied anywhere at will. To connect kitsch to modernity attaches it to a specific historical period with particular characteristics. It thereby has at least a referent with certain boundaries, a referent with a certain structure (dialectical though it may be).

This move also answers the question of the range of kitsch in place and time. Kitsch, in this conception, would not embody a 'type' which could descend anywhere upon a universal field (granted that, even in its widest conceptions, it still confines itself to the advent of humanity). We need not deliberate endlessly over whether the erotic decoration of Etruscan tombs and situlas or the gaudy spectacles of the Caesars also constituted kitsch (though the question would still be open should they be imitated today). We can also dispense with the question of kitsch in cultures unreached by modernity (should any exist).[33]

The Dorfles anthology for the most part presents the kitsch concept as historically restricted ("not ... outside our own age; or at least no earlier than the Baroque period"),[34] for two reasons: (a) the historical function of art was categorically different in pre-modern societies (on the one hand, it had "religious, ethical or political" functions which were conceived of within an "absolute" realm,[35] and which took place in a sacred or ritual context;[36] on the other hand, it had not yet been absorbed into a mass-production process,[37] nor could it take part in the romantic conception of the world);[38] and (b) our knowledge of antiquity is extremely limited (at the crudest level, only a few documents from that time have survived, and almost exclusively from the aristocracy);[39] furthermore, the recognition of the kitsch 'tone' requires a lived familiarity with cultural materials and meaning, so that recognizing kitsch in unfamiliar materials is basically "impossible."[40]

Granted, both reasons given by Dorfles rule out finding kitsch amongst the ancient Romans, but how these exclusions play out in each case is not the same. Consideration of the 'historical function' takes place on an 'a priori' (or 'theoretical') level, whereas the 'limits of knowledge' approach offers an 'a posteriori' ('practical,' 'technical,' or 'contingent') criterion. This 'practical' criterion, due to the distance which critics of kitsch usually seem to have from the subculture they critique, while presumably bracketing, say, ancient or medieval culture or even 'primitive' cultures in our own time, is also liable to bracket subcultures within our own, the very groups so often taken to be in the dangerous thrall of kitsch![41]

Giesz' discussion of the kitsch attitude endemic to tourism, in particular packaged tour-groups,[42] presents the two alternatives of universally possible versus strictly historically confined kitsch as "the two extreme positions."[43] From the basic fact that we (humans) live as it were in the tension between the transcendental and the empirical (or even between the transcendent and the worldly), he argues for

navigating between the "extreme" poles, namely, recognizing that kitsch involves elements of the psyche (e.g. tension, release, boredom, curiosity, projection, etc.) which are indeed universal,[44] but which are nonetheless brought to bear upon specific historical processes and conditions (any "mass age"), and which only thereby occur as kitsch.[45] This nuance is what allows Giesz to discuss the holy water brought back by the crusaders and "[cans] of 'Berlin Air'" brought from a modern-day vacation as "kindred phenomena ... anthropological[ly]."[46] The position we take, then, would be characterized as "extreme" by Giesz; for we are positing kitsch as confined to, and indeed structurally dependent upon, the modern age.

Modernity and Its Inflections

If we are going to discuss kitsch as a co-phenomenon with modernity, what are we referring to as 'modern'? Most certainly not a bald assertion of date which would impermeably separate to realms, one before, one after. Two conceptions in particular seem the most promising, and will lie at the base of our discussion: what we could call (a) the 'immanent' conception and (b) the "linear" conception.

The immanent conception of modernity concentrates on the increasing compartmentalization, specialization, and autonomy of different realms of life and thought following the loss of control over the Western world on the part of the "Catholic" Church (reflected in the world of ideas by the disintegration of the wholistic world view).[47] Through this process, each realm seeks to (or has no choice but to) develop its own logic without the prescriptions of other realms. Philosophy, for example, once the "queen of sciences" (taken up and internalized by the Catholic church), sees the various divisions within it (once understood as integral elements) separate like buds of yeast into their own domains of natural science, psychology, political science, etc.; natural science itself splits off into physics, chemistry, biology, etc.; and physics divides from Newtonian mechanics into macro- and microphysics.

In general, each of these new divisions in the theoretical realm is carried by divisions in their human departments. All realms split apart and — each according to its own "freedom" — develop their own languages and methodologies. Each seeks to find its direction from within, so that e.g. in the fine arts an increasing formalism and purity takes hold of the influential movements and seed ideas. Traditional content evaporates as painting looks to its materials and becomes a logic of color arrangements, poetry concentrates on its word, sculpture becomes the composition of three-dimensional form, and music, seen as the most pure and contentless art form, becomes the model.[48]

In the *German Ideology*, Marx describes the seemingly contradictory logic of this increasing division. In the broadest terms it is the movement from history to world history. On the one hand, each geographical region becomes less and less isolated, more connected to the others, and more strongly affected by developments elsewhere, so that an invention in England causes famine in India.[49] On the other hand, accompanying this increased interdependence is a multiplication of the divisions of labor, initially between different regions which had all been more or less self-sufficient, and eventually down to the individual worker, who once com-

manded an entire craft but who now, with the rise of manufacture and big industry, performs one task alone.[50] In a pre-industrial, 'merely' historical, and yet holistically conceived world, the wholistic world view allowed theologians to discuss the angels on the head of a pin; the fragmented yet interdependent world-historical world only allows the worker to make pin heads.

The linear conception of modernity focuses instead upon the logical conclusions of the ascendancy of linear, historical time over cyclical, mythological time — conclusions which have only fully emerged in the last few centuries. Calinescu's elucidation of the linear conception describes the ascendancy of linear time and the subsequent development of what he calls "the two modernities," namely "bourgeois" modernity and "aesthetic" modernity.[51]

Linear time was the revolutionary seed inside Christianity's world view. Originally, time had been conceived in a mythical, generally cyclical manner, involving cycles of reincarnation (e.g. Plato), endlessly rotating spheres (cf. Aristotle) — two philosophical elaborations of the mythological view — or repeating conflicts and rebirths (e.g. Indian mythology). These myths, while indeed including grand narratives of creation from chaos and final battles of the gods (e.g. Greek or Norse mythology), in general incorporated humanity into repeating universal cycles which came long before and would follow long after. Calinescu underscores the fact that, while modernity is usually associated with the falling away of the church as the leading force in society, the forward-moving, historical, non-repeatable time which is modernity's fundamental presupposition does not contradict, but instead finds its most important center of propagation in, the Christian world view.[52]

The Old Testament world view did posit the world as historical (indeed the universe itself was only seven days older than humanity's organization of it!), but Christianity, with the stark, radical break and unrepeatability of Christ's appearance at its center, coupled with its messianic spirit, heightened this historicity and proclaimed this "good word." Granted, the revolutionary import of the Christian conception of time was dampened during the Middle Ages (during which time it was covered over with the earlier mythological, organic-continuous additions), but eventually (with inter alia the spread of the Bible itself) it took root.[53] In the secularism of modernity we see that Christ the table-turner proclaimed a world view of discontinuity and radical change which in the end outstripped its very messenger.[54]

Calinescu describes "two modernities." The first he calls "bourgeois" modernity. Bourgeois modernity developed as linear time eventually came free from Medieval accretions and Christianity itself. This first modernity is, he says, "a stage in the history of Western civilization — a product of scientific and technological progress, of the industrial revolution, of the sweeping economic and social changes [of] capitalism."[55] Emblematic of bourgeois modernity are "[the middle-class values of] the doctrine of progress, [optimism in] science and technology, the concern with time [as measurable and buyable], the cult of reason, and the ideal of [abstract humanist autonomy, coupled with a worship of practicality and] success."[56]

Over against this stands "aesthetic" modernity (often called "modernism"). This modernity is an artistic or "aesthetic" concept. Over against bourgeois moder-

nity, which exhibits linear time as positive progress or improvement, aesthetic modernity expresses the constant change of linear time more radically, as disgust with the recent past, and defines itself principally in opposition to bourgeois modernity. The heterogeneous positive programs of the modernists (such that they existed at all) only make sense when seen through their centrally negative stands.[57] "When modernity comes to oppose concepts without which it would have been inconceivable [e.g., reason, progress, science] it is simply pursuing its deepest vocation, its constitutive sense of creation through rupture and crisis."[58]

As regards the relation between these two ways of conceiving modernity (i.e., the immanent conception and the linear conception), it can be seen that the immanent conception forms a component of the world, seen as bourgeois modernity — the increasing purity of science, technology, and time, the increasing specialization in manufacture, packaging, education, entertainment, etc. There seems to be a conflict between the immanent conception (insofar as it approaches a material description, especially in Marx) and the linear conception (insofar as it takes what could be called a history of ideas approach), but it is easy to see that the two complement each other: insofar as, within the increasing world situation of specialization (material immanence), each successive group which takes over control breaks with the past, the concept of change and irreversibility (linear time) taken up by these groups lends authority and meaning to their actions; on the other hand, insofar as each group accelerates change towards compartmentalization within the world, the concept of linearity only receives more support and reality, and the wholistic mythical conceptions of the world make less and less sense.[59]

Kitsch against Modernity

So far, the picture we have drawn depicts kitsch as coeval with modernity. What must be shown, of course, is that kitsch did not simply happen to occur after the advent of modernity, but that modernity had something to do with this occurrence. What then does kitsch have to do with modernity? Taking up what we chose as the best method for approaching the question of kitsch, namely, that perspective which inspects the 'subjective' aspects of engaging historical phenomena, we can formulate a preliminary definition: kitsch is the modern coping-mechanism for modernity. Kitsch is not as such evil, but rather an attempt to deal with the vicissitudes of modern life, to make it, in its implacability, inhabitable.[60]

As has been made clear by the preceding exposition, modern times are marked by increasing encounters with change, discontinuity, instability, complexity, breaks with tradition, and (due to the division of labor, coupled with the lack of continuity) confinement. (Remember that increasing interconnection of a world-historical world produces at the same time an increasing compartmentalization and fragmentation of individuals living in that world.) To the degree that these forces create difficulty, stress, unease, and discomfort — and it is hard to see how they could not — there are basically two choices for finding relief: (a) to counteract these forces (work against them) at some level by replacing them (if only temporarily) with stability (real or imagined, local or general), or (b) to forget them (opt for distraction) by substituting a different instability, which although an instability,

is at least a chosen one. Kitsch (as product) follows the first path (that of counter-action), takes up the materials and techniques at hand (i.e., modern materials and techniques) and fashions some sort of stability from them, principally through projecting images of nature, stasis, and continuity, our separation from which bourgeois modernity has made it difficult not to feel. The second path could best be labeled entertainment (diversion, "fun": video games, action movies and television, and perhaps even sports).

To make a crude analogy, imagine a ship without a pilot which seems to be approaching a whirlpool. Most of the passengers find themselves becoming more and more frightened. Some of the passengers try to do something to counteract their precarious situation: a few strap themselves to the ship (some because they feel it would be best to hold onto something which floats, others simply because they have followed the safety manuals) and a few board the lifeboats (though the lifeboats seem just as likely to follow the ship). A certain number even resorts to prayer. Some of the passengers, however, take the other path (that of distraction and diversion): they open the hold and have a merry time with the champagne. (Now at the head of the ship there is a great, heavy anchor which might be able to save the ship, but unfortunately releasing it would probably require the strength of most everyone on the ship.)

In any case, this move against the stresses of unstable "mechanical" modernity, this move towards placidity and tradition, explains kitsch's repeated attempts to bring back the "natural." This can be seen in the imagery of return to origins so often invoked in political campaign material, advertising, arts-and-crafts, and new-age culture, which (in offering itself to the kitsch defense maneuver) proclaims itself in turn as "natural," "folk," "country," "valley," home-made," "hand-made," "farm-fresh," "April fresh," "family values," "genuine," "organic," "timeless," or "authentic," e.g. Mountain Spring Dawn (Dishwashing Detergent), Irish Spring (Deodorant Soap), Surf (Laundry Detergent), Light Scent SunRise Fresh Downy (Fabric Softener), Pepperidge Farm (Cookies), etc.[61] This same impulse informs even such apparently marginal contemporary activities as witchcraft[62] and membership in the Society for Creative Anachronism.[63] Spengler noted strikingly similar impulses in the first half of the century:

> A weariness is spreading... Men are returning to forms of life simpler and nearer to Nature; they are spending their time in sport instead of technical experiments. The great cities are becoming hateful to them... And it is precisely the strong and creative talents that are turning from the pressure of practical problems and sciences and towards pure speculation. Occultism and Spiritualism, Hindu philosophies, metaphysical inquisitiveness under Christian or pagan coloring, all of which were despised in the Darwinian period, are coming up again.[64]

It could appear that we are dealing with merely a perennial human urge for stability and comfort. But what we have here is not someone closing the door against the rain. Rather, these expressions are anti-progress, anti-rational, and anti-science —

and require the advent of progress, rationality, and science in the same way that expressly anti-Christian atheism makes little sense in the absence of Christianity.[65]

These impulses, when they are amplified, reach a level of crisis. Those movements which Spengler noted as the Nazis came to power reached their fruition in a political culture the excesses of which find their only meaning in a crisis outlook. Hans Sluga notes (in Heidegger's Crisis) that, in the first decades of the century, the symbolism of crisis "served as common coinage ... passing from hand to hand as the metaphor for the age [which allowed] philosophers and politicians alike ... to move easily back and forth between philosophical discourse and political rhetoric."[66] But he questions this vision of the present which sees it on a historical scale, and questions the epistemological possibility to discern, before a great historical turning point has passed, that a crisis is actually upon the world.[67] And yet the very structure of modernity, with its essential discontinuity, encourages the crisis interpretation to be chosen. Sluga continues:

> [The] sense of crisis is a product of a culture of subjectivity in which the structure of individual experience is projected as the order of time itself. This is also the mark of modernity, and hence we are entitled to say that the thinkers of crisis, from Fichte through Nietzsche to Heidegger, are all essentially modern thinkers, even though they may have described themselves in other terms. Indeed, their conviction of having transcended modernity appears to us now as just one more expression of their moment of transition, one more sign of an essentially modern belief in crisis.[68]

The same structure appears in aesthetic modernity. Aesthetic modernity, which pushes the discontinuity of linear time into high relief, beyond a spirit of optimistic change, and into a disgust with the past and even the present, can reach an even more frenzied form in avant-gardism, which essentially exhibits the artist's vision of crisis. Calinescu observes that the concept of the avant-garde was able to survive the inspection it received in the 60's because it was secretly protected by its inner contradictions, indeed by its innumerable aporias (extreme forms of modernity's insoluble antinomies), and paradoxically, by its long and almost incestuous association with both the idea and praxis of cultural crisis. The fact is that from its very outset the artistic avant-garde developed as a culture of crisis.[69]

We saw in Marx's description of the development of high industry the double nature of modernity — a higher integration of economic effects over the world, coupled with an increased division of labor and life. It is precisely this double nature which allows the same changes in society (i.e. modernity) to be taken as either progress (optimistic bourgeois modernity) or decadence (negative aesthetic modernity).[70] Marx saw modernity as both a promising tool for the future (an organization of the world to be taken over by the proletariat) and a horrible oppression (a fetter to the development into full humanity). And modernity as decadence, as oppression, as increasing fragmentation, is precisely the object against which kitsch also labors.

Kitsch: A Concrete Example

So far, our discussion has remained at a relatively theoretical level. The time has come to discuss a concrete example in more detail. One of the kitsch items which exhibits most clearly the characteristics we have highlighted is the contemporary (i.e., recently produced) landscape picture. It is difficult to discuss the production and meanings of most of these landscapes, since they are almost all done anonymously — either because they are photo-litho reproductions, or because the single artists who produce the hand-painted pictures are not well-known (some landscape paintings are apparently also produced by a division of labor, in which different people are responsible for different elements of the painting).

A certain number of contemporary landscape painters, however, such as Leroy Nieman and Bob Ross, have attained some degree of fame.[71] Leroy Nieman's output is available in a range of products (and prices), from original paintings, through limited edition serigraphs, to photo-litho reproductions for the Olympic games and in Playboy magazine. Owing to its dissemination principally through television, Bob Ross' output is even more accessible (though one can also purchase Bob Ross videos, books, and painting kits). Since Bob Ross' show, "Joy of Painting," offers us a direct observation of the production of and, indeed, the intention behind, a popular landscape artist's work (work which our kitschographers would undeniably place in their pantheon/penitentiary), we shall concentrate on a description of the genesis of a Bob Ross painting.

"Joy of Painting" is a weekly television how-to program which shows Bob Ross producing a complete landscape painting in a half-hour.[72] It opens with a title sequence in which Bob Ross uses a paint roller to fill a giant canvas (via Chromakey) with a finished painting in a few strokes, underscoring the ease with which a painting can be made. Then Bob Ross appears in front of a blank canvas, greets the viewers, and begins to paint. The most frequent subject in his paintings is a view of a mountain range through a lakeside forest. Usually he begins with a wet canvas (the "wet-on-wet" technique), blending in a sky/water background with a large brush. On top of this he pokes a few white clouds. With a palette knife he spreads on dark, basic mountain shapes and adds highlights to the sides of the mountains. He blurs the base of the mountain range with a brush. He scumbles in background color for a forest. On top of this he applies the basic tree shapes with a fan brush. He smears the tree colors with a brush to create the effect of reflecting water. He puts details in the trees, scumbles in foreground grass and bushes, and puts details at the water's edge. Finally, after these details, he normally paints in a small cabin or hut. The painting is complete.

So far we only listed the technical information of the half-hour sequence. But Bob Ross supplies us with much more than that. This entire process is accompanied by a rhetorically supplied aura. His running commentary is flavored throughout with diminutive language and reassuring asides which let us know that painting is not anything to be afraid of, that nothing can really go wrong, and that we are always in control. He paints the "little painting" on a "standard ol' pre-stretched canvas." The blender brush should be "very soft, as my father used to say, tender as

a mother's love." He pokes in clouds: "add your own, add or subtract whatever you want ... another little cloud, you put as many clouds as you like ... in your world, you decide how many clouds live in it." When painting a landscape, "we don't make mistakes, we just have happy accidents," and you can paint "any dream that you can conceive" because "in your world you have total and absolute power."

An even more important element remains. For, besides offering a non-threatening, friendly, and inviting atmosphere, Bob Ross also permeates his commentary with organic — almost animistic — metaphors. Everything "grows" or "lives" (one might even say, 'dwells'). Bob Ross lays down a few black strokes: "we had a mountain in our world, and it lived ... right here at the top." He considers a "big ol' tree" behind the covered bridge — "maybe he'll live over here" — and another: "now let's give this tree a friend ... there." His brush moves under the bridge: "the water's going to live right down here." Back in front of the bridge, "maybe a couple little happy trees live here ... maybe he had a friend."[73] We watch the painting slowly come to life and bring forth its own inhabitants at the command of the painter. The painting, overflowing with life, is ready. "Happy painting, and God bless."

As we have seen, in most cases the intention of the painter is at best conjectural.[74] In contrast, the Bob Ross painting appears as the conclusion to its own story of creation (not unlike Hegel's *Phenomenology*). The intention is supplied, not through guesses about symbolism or iconography, not through the advice of press kits and dealers, not even through interviews and biographical research, but with the painting, at every step in its development. And what is that intention? Precisely to supply an emotional resting place, an unbroken continuity through time, and a sense of connection with nature — the goals of the kitsch maneuver. (At this level we are simply discussing "Joy of Painting" as something being watched, but even to the degree that a possible application is the viewer's attaining mastery of a "do-it-yourself" genre, we would still be dealing with the creation of an emotional resting place through the viewer's painting — as production, of course.)

We are still left with the question of the reception of such a work. Again, in general, theories and discussions of reception are usually weakly grounded and are supplied with guesses and imagination. Halle, however, has done an exemplary study (*Inside Culture*, 1993) to determine how works are actually received. Halle interviewed hundreds of residents and investigated the works hung in homes from across the class spectrum in the New York area. Now, the received wisdom holds that the "easier" landscapes would find preference among the "lower" classes, that is, people unfamiliar with or uneducated in the fine arts or avant-garde culture. Contrary to this assumption, Halle discovered that people prefer landscapes across the board. Not only was the preference for landscapes a feature of every class, but the percentage of landscapes among pictures displayed in homes was the same in every class (a little above 30%).[75]

This universal preference was confirmed by the 1994 installation at the Alternative Museum in New York by Russian expatriate artists Komar and Melamid, *People's Choice: The Polling of America*.[76] Komar and Melamid's idea was (parodying political opinion polls) to conduct an opinion poll to determine the tastes of

Americans regarding art, and then, using the poll as a sort of instruction manual, to do a series of paintings which reflected the various tastes associated with different income levels. The Boston firm of Mertilla & Kelly conducted the survey, polling 1001 people nationwide. The results however came to Komar and Melamid as a "shock": "initially, the idea was to paint different pictures for different incomes, but we realized that there's no difference! The [preference for the color blue] diminishes with income and education, but still the color blue is the majority in every group. And every group wants these landscapes, with soft curves."[77] Led by the results of their poll, Komar and Melamid went ahead with the installation, but only made two landscape paintings, *America's Most Wanted* and *America's Most Unwanted*. *America's Most Wanted* was a medium-sized landscape with a few "fully-clothed" figures, and *America's Most Unwanted* was a small, orange-black geometric abstraction, along the lines of Kandinsky.

Even though the artists were plagued by the fear that people would only respond with "what people think they should say as opposed to what they truly [prefer],"[78] Halle's research seems to indicate that the poll respondents did for the most part give honest answers, since Halle recorded the actual work which people displayed in the privacy of their own homes, for their own viewing. The similarities between the two investigations are striking — they agree on almost every question of taste which appeared in both studies. The "People's Choice" survey found that outdoor scenes were preferred (88%) over indoor scenes (5%), and that, of outdoor scenes, bodies of water (49%), forests (49%), and rural scenes (18%) were preferred over man-made structures (8%).[79] Presumably, Halle would be pleased to see the results of the "People's Choice" survey.[80]

The agreement between the studies also includes, over and above the kind of picture that people prefer, information pertinent to the meaning of art for its viewers, or the reasons for the choices they make. Halle discovered that the landscapes people chose for display in their homes "reflect an overwhelming preference for a sedate and tranquil nature. Almost all are calm, not turbulent. Rivers flow serenely, oceans are placid; trees are unbent by the wind; snow lies evenly, fallen, but rarely falling"; he continues, "Of the 349 landscapes prominently displayed in the houses samples ... only two were turbulent. And one of these met its downfall during the study."[81] Answers to queries about people's reasons for choosing landscapes only confirmed this observation: "They like these pictures because they are 'calm,' 'restful'; they offer 'solitude' and 'quiet'; they soothe."[82] Likewise, the "People's Choice" opinion poll found that people preferred art which made them happy (60%) and which was "relaxing to look at" (77%).[83]

We posited that kitsch was a modern coping mechanism for the general structure of modernity, and that it sought to produce a reverse image of modernity, a locus of stasis, continuity, and connection to nature. Granted that empirical investigations will only give partial results (the results of polls being even more open to question), if our theory is right, it must still say something about the real world. With the little direct or solid evidence available, what have we been able to confirm? The kitsch mechanism described above (as a coping mechanism) does indeed seem to explain the phenomena in question. In particular, we have been able

to find evidence relating to the content in and intention behind the production of the contemporary landscape picture (taken as a paradigm kitsch object), and the content of and intention behind its reception. As Matisse put it, art is analogous to "a good armchair which provides relaxation from physical fatigue."[84]

Kitsch and Art

Now why should we end a discussion of the kitsch mechanism with a Matisse quote on the function of art? Precisely to underscore their affinity. For if both 'fine' (modern, abstract) art and kitsch have as their primary function a counter-movement to modernity, as it were an emotional negative print of modernity, then obviously the two are similar in a very important way, and not, as Greenberg asserted, mortal enemies. Indeed, it seems that the basic difference between the two is that 'fine' art has, over and above its primary emotional functions, additional 'intellectual' functions, or at the very least stylistic, formal, or contextual markers which allow it to more easily perform another, possibly unrelated task as an object of 'fine' art.

As we saw earlier in Dorfles' treatment of the range of kitsch, kitsch did not occur before the advent of modernity because (among other reasons) in premodern societies, art had a different historical function. This points to another aspect of kitsch: kitsch analyzed as an art form. There are a number of ways to understand this. The first involves utility: in general we could say that kitsch does not serve a 'physical' purpose, but an emotional or symbolic one. By this criterion, then, a wedge of wood which serves as a doorstop, or a metal container for serving coffee, would be tools for accomplishing some physical goal, whereas a stuffed animal or postcard of a kitten serve primarily emotional purposes. This distinction, however, can become problematic, because there are for instance door "cosies" (or "mufflers") fashioned in the shape of a snake (some people call them "door snakes")[85] and teapots in the shape of a cat. In such cases, perhaps the answer is to ask if the object fills the emotional role, and not whether it fills it exclusively.

Another approach is to consider forms: kitsch appears in the forms which are recognized as art forms, e.g., paintings, photographs, sculptures, monuments, novels, plays, films, etc., even if it is said of kitsch items that they are "merely analogous" to the "real" art forms. Indeed, the objects which are referred to as "traditional kitsch" (kitsch in its narrower understanding, such as bric-a-brac, lawn ornaments, rustic paintings) fall generally into the categories of sculpture and painting (or at least "pictures"). Finally, the status of kitsch as a variety of art can be seen in that it is marked as such, principally through the practice of display. Displaying involves placing an object in a place which is easy to see, and which is marked as a place for looking, such as within a frame or on a pedestal (loosely understood) or both.[86]

Umberto Eco is one person (inter alia!) who argues for a strong distinction between 'fine' art and kitsch. One of Eco's central arguments in "The Structure of Bad Taste" is that kitsch is consumed by people who are too uneducated and too busy to "decode" the complex information stored in 'fine' art, and yet desiring something akin to a 'fine' art experience, instead consume kitsch which has borrowed 'fine' art "stylemes" but which offers these in an unintegrated fashion and

for immediate consumption.[87] Here we see a discussion which applies aspects of a more developed approach to kitsch (the discussion of structural and technique issue as well as subjective reactions in a modern context) but which falls short on the class caveat.[88]

Furthermore, Halle's research shows that those who belong to the 'upper' classes receive abstract art in much the same way as they do landscapes: as a soothing decoration. Even those whose attraction to abstract art is that abstract art "unleash[es] the creative imagination," when asked where their "unleashed" imagination goes, responded half of the time that they imagine landscapes![89] Of those who did not imagine landscapes, most of the remainder reported family motifs and relationships between people coming to mind — the very material of the family snapshots that are a close second to landscapes in universal popularity.[90] Again the most reasonable conclusion is that the function of even abstract art is more akin to that of kitsch than opposed.

In summary, it would seem that if there were a difference between 'fine' art and kitsch paintings, it would be that 'fine' art has markers or involves a reception context which allows it to also take on a additional 'intellectual' task, presumably for artists, dealers, critics, scholars, and upper-level students. But this does not seem to touch the essence of what the works accomplish, merely an additional function.[91]

Conclusions

What, then, have we accomplished? We have reviewed the variety of kitsch concepts and placed them into an order of kitsch qualities, formal structures, and subjective aspects. We have discarded kitsch conceptions which were overly dependent upon unexamined assumptions about class, race, and gender differences. In doing this, we arrived at a kitsch conception which concentrates on subjective elements in their relation to the complex known as modernity. By this means we see that there is focal point for a legitimate investigation of kitsch. Using this focus, we see that the kitsch object is best understood as a tool in a struggle against the particular stresses of the modern world, insofar as that struggle in understood as an attempt to provide (at least) temporary relief, a place for recovery. Finally, this conception was tested against the most direct evidence available.

What do these accomplishments mean, at least practically? At the very least it seems that positing a stark or absolute contrast between kitsch and fine art is unjustifiable; both exhibit the same roots and have the same goals (though it appears that fine arts add some others). Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, we should view the impulse to extend such absolute value judgments of the consumers of kitsch with suspicion, including when we are the targets of those judgments. In my own case, it should be clear that my teenage journal entries conform to the kitsch concept here developed, and that this conception makes my entries more understandable — at least to the degree that they exhibit any general tendencies. Even if one should wish to examine the kitsch mechanism under a harsher light, it seems that approaching it as a psychic disease would be unfruitful, given that it is a part of a general human defense strategy, a healing process, an expres-

sion of the pysche's own strength.

Granted, over the course of this investigation a great simplification has occurred. Our conception of kitsch is still inadequate to that multiplicity and unending variety which falls under the rubric of "kitsch"; nonetheless, with our conception, a wide range of kitsch entities can be legitimately grasped and basically understood. There may indeed be a great number of particular aspects which will forever elude a rational explanation, but then again these have not been the focus of our energies.

Notes

1 This essay was delivered in earlier versions as a paper at the Graduate Student Colloquium, "Kitsch and Collecting" (together with Kevin Melchionne; comments by Prof. Robert Crease and David Salz), on Sept. 28, 1995 at SUNY Stony Brook and as a guest lecture ("Der Kitsch gegen das Moderne") in A. Jürgens-Kirschhoff's course "Kunst und Trivialkultur" (WS 97) on Jan. 21 and 29, 1997, at the Universität Tübingen. I gratefully thank Profs. David Allison, Edward Casey, Robert Crease, and Donald Kuspit (all of SUNY Stony Brook) for their support and guidance as I worked on this essay. The artist Nancy Romines of New York City also made many useful comments on an early draft of the work.

2 Gillo Dorfles, ed., *Kitsch: The World of Bad Taste* (New York: Bell Publishing, 1969). Some information on the translation of Dorfles' *Kitsch* can be found in Tadeusz Pavlowski, "The Varieties of Kitsch," *Dialectics and Humanism*, no. 4 (1977), 105, n. 1. Richard Egenter's book claims to be the first on the subject to appear in English, but deals almost exclusively with religious art (*The Desecration of Christ*, ed. Nicolete Gray, trans. Edward Quinn [Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1967], 10).

3 Three of the essays are by the reigning 'kitschographers' at the time of Dorfles' book: Clement Greenberg (whose "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" had reached quasi-canonical status), Hermann Broch, and Ludwig Giesz. Subtopics treated included politics, the family, death, film, pornography, and architecture. References to those authors will first give the page from the original (or parent-language) source, followed by the corresponding page of the Dorfles' English translation, if available. I have used the Greenberg "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" essay from *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965): 3-21. Likewise, though the Broch essay excerpted by Dorfles was taken from Broch's *Dichten und Erkennen*, Vol. 1 (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1955), my references are to the more recent *Schriften zur Literatur 2: Theorie*, Ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975). References to Giesz use "Der 'Kitsch-Mensch' als Tourist" in his *Phänomenologie des Kitsches*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1971): 75-84.

4 "More appalling pictures than you can shake a stick at," says the *New York Times* back-cover blurb [no date supplied].

5 Curtis Brown, *Star-Spangled Kitsch: An Astounding and Tastelessly Illustrated Exploration of the Bawdy, Gaudy, Shoddy Mass-Art Culture in This Great Land of Ours* (New York: Universe Books, 1975), 200.

6 Its subtitle captures this jovial tone perfectly, and may be exactly the sort of phenom-

enon Harold Rosenberg had in mind when he spoke of "kitsch criticism of kitsch" ("Pop Culture: Kitsch Criticism" in *The Tradition of the New* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965], 261). Cf. Ludwig Giesz' observation, "It is infinitely simple to list mass-produced [objects] in bad taste and without any artistic value, and to criticize their faults either kindly or mercilessly. There are countless albums and anthologies which serve this purpose" (75/Dorfles, 156). There is reason to doubt that Dorfles' book escapes Giesz' characterization — which it of course contains! The idea of "kitsch criticism of kitsch" is also taken up by Haroldo de Campos in "Vanguarda e Kitsch," *A Arte no Horizonte do Provável* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1969), 195-196. In the case of Brown's book at least, given its less biting tone, one could perhaps argue that it is an attempt at a criticism through good-natured humor (of the type advocated by the Earl of Shaftesbury), and if so, is perhaps the more 'effective' criticism.

7 Op. cit., 11.

8 An example of which could be Thornton Wilder's play, *Our Town*, which blends futurist/'non-objective' theater technique with full-blown narrative.

9 The complexity and ambivalence surrounding kitsch can be seen in the example of Milan Kundera's novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, which I have heard called kitsch, which is a meditation on kitsch, and which includes a particularly schmaltzy scene involving a pet near its end. It first appeared in English in the pages of — what else? — *The New Yorker*, and the passage of the novel there selected dealt precisely with kitsch. (Prof. Robert Crease reminded me of the novel's discussion of kitsch.)

10 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., Ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1978), 7.

11 David Halle makes this charge in *Inside Culture: Art and Class in the American Home* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 5-11 (esp. 6 and 7) and 120. This issue will be further discussed under the topic of "corroboration" (see n. 21).

12 I should note at the beginning that I am discussing kitsch qua kitsch — not kitsch which has been taken up in an ironic fashion, such as the case of someone who buys kitsch precisely because the items seem ugly and in bad taste. I am reflecting upon "innocent" kitsch. In a strange parallel to the impossibility of reflecting upon one's own mind immediately (contemplating one's own experiences always pushes them one step away), the label of kitsch under discussion points to kitsch as it exists before it has been labelled as such. Put simply, I am here focusing on first-order, non-self-conscious kitsch.

13 Dorfles, 280-289.

14 Op. cit., 292.

15 Op cit., 158/Dorfles, 49.

16 Op. cit., 89.

17 Not to mention self-contradictory — compare from our list of representative terms, e.g. "chaste" and "obscene"!

18 Op. cit., 105-106. His typology consists of eight oppositions:

> 1. "Kitsch as a product of human action versus kitsch man, kitsch attitude, kitsch experience, and kitsch behaviour."
> 2. "Intentional and non-intentional kitsch [in reference to the artist's intention]."
> 3. "Kitsch characterized internally and externally" [structure of kitsch object vs. comparison between objects, usually between one which is original and another which is derivative].

4. "Kitsch as a natural creation and as a human product."
5. "Relative and absolute concept of kitsch" [kitsch as a bad quality vs. kitsch as being such within a certain range of comparison].
6. "Subjective and objective concept of kitsch."
7. "Classificatory and comparative concept of kitsch."
8. "Historical and universal concept of kitsch" [105-106].

This paper will be taking up principally (1), (2), and (6), which seem to me to amount to the same thing, and also a consideration of kitsch as product produced and product consumed.

19 Op. cit., 115.

20 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*, Trans. Peter Collier (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991), 20-21. Though Bourdieu is discussing the attempt to sort out the variety of Nazi writers, we may note that the cultural products of the Nazis have not infrequently been criticized for their kitschiness! Cf. Hermann Wein, "Nietzsche und Faschismus," *Club Voltaire: Jahrbuch für kritische Aufklärung*, no. 4, (1970), 332-341: 335; Saul Friedlander, *Reflections on Nazism: Essays on Kitsch and Death*, trans. Thomas Weyr (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); and of course, Greenberg's "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," op. cit.

21 Op. cit., 107-108. "Authors writing about kitsch often refer to an intentional property, but they do not always substantiate their statements in a clear and methodologically correct manner. Even if they do make a conscious effort to ascertain the intention of an artist, they can do it only indirectly by way of drawing conclusions from observations of the kitsch object and from available external information" (107-108). The question of corroboration is also touched on a number of times in Robert C. Solomon, "On Kitsch and Sentimentality," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 49 no. 1 (Winter 1991), 1-14, and, as we have seen, discussed directly in Halle (n. 11).

22 Op. cit., 108.

23 The word "class" is usually taken by 'kitschographers' to refer to a directly proportionate relationship between (a) income and economic/social level and (b) education, acculturation, and accumulation of "cultural capital." The question however is whether these two are always found together; this question is touched on e.g. in Greenberg, 8-9. In the immediately following discussion of status-seeking, the focus is on acculturation (to "high" culture), seen as a means to a higher social position.

24 See Umberto Eco, "The Structure of Bad Taste," in *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 180-216 (we will discuss this in more detail later); Greenberg on kitsch as "ersatz culture" (1965) 10-11 and 15-16 [Dorfles: 116]; and de Campos 198-201. The following discussion utilizes Halle's observations, but Andrew Ross also subjects the status argument to scrutiny in *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 58-64. Both Halle and Ross bring a good amount of attention to the status argument put forward in Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), passim.

25 Op. cit., 80.

26 David Denby, "Love Affair," *New York Magazine* (November 7, 1994), 97; the Lenin quote is from V. I. Lenin, *On Literature and Art* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967), 226, cited in David Laing, *The Marxist Theory of Art: An Introductory Survey* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978), 135, n. 5. Robert C. Solomon's detailed essay defends sentimentality against the various attacks it routinely suffers.

Rosenberg's comment that "kitsch is much more likely [than art] to exclude personal malice" (264), at least, conforms to the basic idea behind Solomon's essay.

27 Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, trans. John T. Goldwaith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

28 For example, though it is often said that women are traditionally associated with nature and men with culture, and that therefore women are seen as more emotional and men as more self-controlled, there exists at the same time a traditional opposition which posits women as more civilized than men, less likely to allow themselves to get dirty, and more sensitive in general, whereas men are seen as the type to go hunting in the woods, to pursue blood sport like an animal, and to get covered in mud without hesitation in doing so (Kant remarks e.g. that women "are cleanly and very delicate in respect to all that provokes disgust," [ibid., 77] and have made "men's customs ... gentler, their conduct more polite and refined, and their bearing more elegant" [ibid., 95]). One explanation for this apparent contradiction is that the more "natural" woman is seen as belonging to the home, whereas the more "cultural" men are placed outside the home, whether that home is in an urban or forest dwelling. At any rate, it is a complex phenomenon. Added to this is the debate over whether the traditionally ascribed gender roles should be equally valorized, reversed, combined, or abandoned altogether.

As concerns race categories (about which I am still not well-enough informed), these too should be treated with caution. In relation to kitsch, it may be noted that the same idea of polarization and mutual interpenetration often posited between kitsch and the avant-garde (stealing and appropriation of kitsch by the avant-garde vs. adulteration and coöptation of the avant-garde by kitsch [cf. Dorfles, Eco, et al.]) can be set up in regard to categories of "authentic" and "inauthentic" black culture. And yet "white" and "black" music, for example, are very hard to completely separate and distinguish [see the boggling symbiosis described in Ross, op. cit., 67-68]. On the other hand, Curtis Brown's *Star-Spangled Kitsch* often makes kitsch a target of his good-humored criticism precisely for its racism.

29 The concept of the "kitsch-mensch" was first proposed by Broch, adapted by Giesz, and finally used as a core concept for the Dorfles anthology (see in particular Broch, 158 /Dorfles, 49; Giesz, 8, 77/Dorfles, 159; and Dorfles, 4.

30 Egenter characterizes kitsch as a tool of Satan for obstructing souls from reaching God [op. cit., 13-14], but Broch's discussions are just as extreme: "He who produces kitsch is not one who produces low-quality art, he is no figure of little or no ability, he is definitely not to be judged according to the standards of aesthetics, rather he is ..., to get to the point, a bad person, he is an ethically depraved person, a criminal who desires the radically evil. Or, put less dramatically: he is a pig. For kitsch is the evil itself within art. Would you like a colossal example of kitsch? — Nero playing to the fireworks of burning Christians: the specific dilettante, the specific aesthete, who does everything for the sake of beautiful effects" (op. cit., 95, my translation. Cf. also p. 154/Dorfles, 76).

Incidentally, concerning Egenter's opinion of the relation between kitsch and Jesus, a dissenting voice can be found in Hans Conrad Zaner, a former Dominican monk who writes of his life in the monastery that he then "experienced the verses from the Old Testament as primal, powerful, and true. And the verses from the New Testament as kitsch" (*Ecce Jesus: Ein Anschlag gegen den neuen religiösen Kitsch* [Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1992]), 12.

31 Op. cit., p.171/Dorfles, 65.

32 Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernity, Avant-Garde, Decadence,*

Kitsch, Postmodernism, 2nd ed., (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987). I should thank Prof. David Hertz of Indiana University, Bloomington, for directing me to this book.

33 These pan-historical possibilities have indeed been taken up, as we have seen in the case of Broch, who, though he characterizes kitsch as the offspring of Romanticism, draws comparisons between his "kitsch-mensch" and Nero's aestheticization of torture [n. 30]. As we shall see, Giesz takes a similar stance.

34 Op. cit., 11-12.

35 Ibid., 10.

36 Ibid., 40, 32, 107.

37 Ibid., 20, 31, 94-95, etc.

38 Broch, 162-166, Dorfles, 54-59.

39 Op. cit., 9.

40 Op. cit., 26. "[I]t is almost impossible to judge the 'kitschiness' of a translated passage or even a piece written some twenty years before," ad loc.

41 Dorfles' comments on comics for example ("such stupid and utterly dull figures as Superman and Batman," 40) give me the impression of someone who is indeed familiar with, but who does not however know, them. Of course, the whole point of such continuously derogatory rhetoric is to demonstrate a proper distance.

42 Op. cit., 75-84/Dorfles, 156-174.

43 Ad loc.

44 Giesz uses elements of the psyche kindred with Heidegger's existentialia or human "categories" (*Being and Time*, Trans., John Maquarrie and Edward Robinson [San Francisco: Harper, 1962], §9, 70). But his indebtedness to Heidegger is also linguistically indicated. This indebtedness, palpable in the German, is dulled in the English translation of Dorfles' anthology. The English "[a]nalyzed from the existentialist point of view," 162, for example, translates Giesz' "[d]aseinsanalytisch betrachtet," 78. My impression is that the English translation suffers because it is a translation from the Italian, itself presumably translated from the Giesz' German original. At any rate, the German is appreciably clearer than the Dorfles translation — was the English perhaps intentionally aimed at a 'lower' American audience, 'kitschified'?

45 See esp. ibid., 78-81/Dorfles, 162-166.

46 Ibid., 79/Dorfles, 163. This comparison was more recently taken up in a discussion of ancient religious relics as momentos and souvenirs in Vicki Goldberg, "In Search of Diana of Epheseus," *New York Times* (August 21, 1994), sec.2, H33.

47 Our discussion will (as will become clear) cite principally Marx, but we may indicate others: Dick Howard, *From Marx to Kant*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), esp. 34; and Greenberg, op. cit., 5-7.

48 This development was worked out in particular by Greenberg. Besides the passages already indicated from "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," see his "Towards a Newer Laocoon," *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, Vol. 1, Ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 23-38. Later, non-formalist developments in the art world have their parallels in other modern forms of the division of labor such as free-lancing and multiple-task work also described by Marx.

49 Op. cit., 172.

50 Op. cit., 180-186, 190. Martin Heidegger makes strikingly similar observations. He had aligned with a party which saw itself as an alternative to both modernity (America) and one response to it (communism) — "between two great pincers"; his vision, too, was thus a response to the challenge of modernity. He describes the same

world-historical world as Marx ("when any occurrence, in any place and any time, has become accessible at any speed, when an attempt on the life of the King of France and a symphonic concert can be lived at the same time") and his questions, "What for? Where to? — And what now?" echo Lenin's "What is to be done?" from 33 years before. All quotes (except Lenin) are modified from Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* 2nd ed., trans. Ralph Manheim (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1961), 31, as cited in Conceição Neves Gmeiner, "Martin Heidegger e o Nacional-Socialismo," *Leopoldianum*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (1975), 32.

51 Op. cit., 5, 7, 10, 19-22, 41-42.

52 Op. cit., p.10.

53 Calinescu notes: "The overall traditionalism of the Middle Ages and the prevailing medieval disregard of historical time, made up of unique, unrepeatable moments, go against the deep sense of historicity implied by Christianity's philosophy of time. The paradoxical view of the Middle Ages' rejection of the original Christian notion of time has been convincingly argued by Denis de Rougement in *Man's Modern Quest*, trans. Montgomery Belgion (New York: Harper, 1957). To the revolutionary challenge of the Christian time, Denis de Rougement writes, 'the middle ages resisted by going back to cyclical conceptions and by a sharp limitation upon the size of the past and the future: the effect of the kind of congelation of time which this entailed was the elimination of all becoming' (95). According to de Rougement, 'the Middle Ages were the "Eastern" period of Europe,' because of their 'growing propensity ... to substitute tradition, mythical allegory, and legend for the facts which only Scripture, very little read at the time, showed to be historical. All this strengthens my view that the Middle Ages, far from standing for some "golden age of Christianity" — as the Romantics were the first to allege and has been repeated ad nauseum ever since — were rather, generally speaking, a long defensive reaction against the revolutionary ferment introduced into the world by the Gospel' (90)," 313-314, n.4.

54 Perhaps the epitome of radical difference in the succession of time can be found in Heidegger's description of the Hegelian presentation of time, a succession of "nows" each of which is "either 'now' is-no-longer, or now is-not-yet" — in other words, completely different from the singular "point" of the now in the present, which conception however "mov[es] wholly in the direction of the way time is ordinarily understood" (*Being and Time*, 483).

55 Op. cit., 10.

56 Ibid., 41-42.

57 Ad loc.

58 Ibid., 92.

59 The great interconnectedness of the immanent and linear conceptions of modernity results in their often being conflated or discussed in the same breath. The implications of both conceptions play out in Wittgenstein's comment, "It sounds too simple: the difference between magic and science can be expressed in [the fact] that there is a progress to science, but not in magic. Magic has no direction of development which lies internal to it" [trans. altered] (*Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, Trans. A. C. Miles [Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1991], 13); cf. Foucault's account: "A profound historicity penetrates into the heart of things, isolates and defines them in their own coherence, imposes upon them the forms or order implied by the continuity of time ... things become increasingly reflexive, seeking the principle of their intelligibility only in their own development" (*The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Trans. anon. [New York: Random House, 1973], xxiii).

60 This thesis is greatly indebted to Calinescu (see esp. his Introduction and 246-248).

61 We could extend our list with the brand names noted by Adorno, albeit in a different context: "Jägermeister, Alte Klosterfrau, Schänke" ("Master Hunter, Old Nun, Ye Olde Tavern"; *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973], 44)

62 Referring to what she calls "cosmic feminism" or "ecofeminism," Kathy E. Ferguson notes that it "typically invoke[s] the political and epistemological possibilities of transcendence and return ... invoking the traditions of premodern societies ... as sources for cosmic feminism's struggles against modernity," this modernity being seen as "the gradual attack on and erosion of the boundary between wilderness and civilization" (*The Man Problem: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993], 98-100).

63 An organization with clubs across the United States which establishes imaginary medieval societies, complete with royal titles, jousting, swordfights, and unicorn dolls.

64 *Man and Technics* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1932), 97, as cited in Bourdieu, *Political Ontology*, op. cit., 11. The italics are Bourdieu's.

65 Ferguson notes: "Any vision of early societies available to the residents of modernity, no matter what their spiritual sympathies, is a version filtered through modernity's categories and affected by its conquests," op. cit., 100.

66 Hans Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 61.

67 Ibid., 65.

68 Ibid., 73-74. As regards the Nazis in particular, Sluga warns: "the notion of great crisis that motivated Fichte, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the Nazis is, to use Foucault's words, one of the most destructive habits of modern thought. The idea promises us an unconditional liberation from whatever we have found constraining in the past. It promises a moment of transformation and a world that is in no way like the old one. It loosens all moral and traditional bonds and projects the right to total freedom. Nietzsche wrote that 'individuals and generations can now fix their eyes on tasks of a vastness that would have seemed madness in earlier ages, and a trifling with Heaven and Hell. We may experiment with ourselves! Yes, mankind has the right to do that.' He could not foresee that National Socialism would teach us a quick and ugly lesson concerning the perils of all such experimentation." To this he cites Foucault's rejoinder: "One must probably have the humility to admit that the time of one's own life is not the one-time, basic, revolutionary moment of history, from which everything begins and is completed" [73-74]. (We should note that the equality of Nietzsche's conception of experimentation and that of the Nazis is still in debate.)

I should clarify here that I do not wish to say that kitsch is always beneficial. Though I am in general arguing against the idea of seeing kitsch as a sickness or virus, my analysis refers mainly to kitsch when it is a tool for creating a domestic sanctuary; but when such tactics are applied on a large, national-political scale, then kitsch becomes questionable, even dangerous. The Nazis are a case in point, but Reagan's "Morning in America" television campaign ads move in the same direction.

69 Op. cit., 123-124.

70 Compare the futurist F. T. Marinetti and the dadaist Hugo Ball. Items #4 and #9 of Marinetti's futurist manifesto assert: "We declare that the splendor of the world has been enriched with a new form of beauty, the beauty of speed." and "We will glorify war — the only true hygiene of the world..." ("The Foundation of Futurism" [1908], from *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, ed. Herschel B.

Chipp [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968], pp. 284-289: p.284). In opposition to this, Hugo Ball writes in his diaries: "The war is based on a crass error. Men have been mistaken for machines. Machines, not men, should be decimated. At some future date, when only machines march, things will be better. Then everyone will be right to rejoice when they all demolish each other" (*Flight Out of Time (1910-1924)*, ed. John Elderfeld, trans. Ann Raimes [New York: Viking Press, 1974], entry for July 26, 1915, p. 22). In regard to the simultaneous ability of progress to equal decadence, one may note an odd linguistic coincidence: the word "modern" in German can also mean "decaying."

71 Also worthy of mention are Mark King, a Leroy Nieman imitator (or at least a competitor for Nieman's market), and Alexander, Bob Ross' predecessor and mentor, whom (as far as I can tell) Bob Ross long ago superseded.

72 This description relies upon a number of broadcasts during the month of August, 1994, on WNYE, Channel 25, in new York, and WLIW, channel 21, in Long Island. All quoted material was transcribed live from these broadcasts.

I should mention that Bob Ross died on July 4, 1995; I believe his son will be taking over the television show. Examples of Bob Ross' painting can be seen at his company's webpage, http://www.bobross.com/, which includes pictures of paintings by people who have applied his do-it-yourself techniques.

The artist Alix Lambert curated an interesting exhibit, "Joy of Painting," involving Bob Ross' television show; the show took place at the cultural center HERE, in New York City in January of 1995. She distributed copies of a Bob Ross instructional video to various artists and had them paint from it. The video and the resulting works formed the basis of the exhibit. The paintings shown exhibited the entire range of reactions, from faithful — even loving — reproduction to passionate hatred.

73 Unless I am mistaken, all of the life forms in Ross' paintings answer to "he."

74 Cf. the Preface and the discussion of Pawlowski.

75 Op cit., pp.59-61. The next most popular subject for display in homes is the portrait, almost exclusively of members of the nuclear family, pp.87-118 (ch. 3). It should be noted that this investigation of taste via art displayed in homes is skewed in one important way — toward homeowners, that is, people arguably predisposed to seek stability. This focus also leaves out another type of domestic projection which still needs explanation, namely, the decorations native to the teenager's room, usually collages of magazine clippings, posters, postcards, photographs, and assorted cultural flotsam and jetsam, sometimes completely covering over the original surface of the wall. It seems that we are again dealing with diversion from modernity. To argue that younger people do not mind the constant upheaval of modernity would be to ignore the undeniable pain brought about by broken families and frequent moving, two increasingly frequent conditions brought about by the modern situation.

76 Alex Komar and Vitaly Melamid, "Painting by Numbers: The Search for a People's Art" (interview), op. cit., Vol. 258, no. 10 (March 14, 1994), pp. 334-348, and Victor Navasky, "People's Artists," The Nation op. cit., pp. 328-329.

77 Ibid., pp.342-343.

78 Ibid., p.343.

79 Ibid., p.340.

80 The survey (and painting) was then performed for Russia, with essentially the same results (Susannah Cassedy O'Donnell, "The People Speak: 'Blue Landscape, Please,'" *Museum News* [November/December 1994], 9-10, 26). As of 1998, the survey has been performed repeatedly across the globe, including such countries as Turkey and Kenya. Again and again, the poll returned the same results — landscapes

are preferred over abstractions or interiors. The only exceptions were Holland (which "most wanted" a small abstraction consisting of bright, swirling colors — as over against a brownish interior scene) and possibly Germany and Italy, whose "most wanted" landscapes were a little off the beaten track — or were Komar and Melamid getting tired of painting the same landscapes? (All of the paintings can be viewed at the Dia Center's webpage at http://www.diacenter.org/km/painting.html/.)

81 Op. cit., 69.

82 Ad loc. In more detail, "A Manhattan man, about a Chinese garden scene, with mountains in the background: 'It's so calm. That's what I like about it.' A Manhattan woman, on her photographs of the coasts of Greece and Mexico: 'They have a feeling of solitude, beauty, quiet, and peace.' A Greenpoint woman, on a landscape of trees and a river: 'It's very restful.' Another Greenpoint woman, on a rural street scene lined with autumn trees: 'It's peaceful and restful.' A Manhasset man, about two beach scenes: 'They're peaceful.' A Medford woman about a beach scene, with seagulls but no people: 'I like it because it's tranquil. No one bothers you'" [69-70. The Manhattan households were the upper-class urban homes, Manhasset upper middle-class suburban, Greenpoint working- and lower middle-class urban, and Medford working- and lower middle-class suburban]. Another common aspect of the landscapes Halle studied was that they depicted no people; of the landscapes that did show people, they were almost all of landscapes of previous historical periods, while the "depopulated" landscapes were usually of modern-day vistas.

83 Op. cit., 343. Again, it may be that the "People's Choice" poll might partially reflect what people believed they would choose, as opposed to what they actually had chosen or do choose.

84 Cited in Halle, 72. Halle contends that the basic reasons behind people's preference for calm landscapes relate to "an orientation to nature as the arena for leisure" (a) because the "home, and viewing landscape therein, offers some respite from the perceived hustle and hubbub of the outside world, especially the world of work" or (b) because "the modern orientation to nature [is] as scenery to drive past...or as the arena for trips and leisure time" (72-73). This contention could probably be taken as either backing up or contradicting my thesis.

85 The name for these objects, as can be seen, is hard to nail down. One mail-order catalog lists them as "Draft Dodgers" (the copywriters apparently missed the possible political connotations of the name — unless they meant to say that "draft dodgers" are snakes!). Thanks to Liz French for bringing the catalog my attention.

86 On "display" as a constitutive of art, see Halle (95, 111-112, and 120). This has been rather intuitively summed up by David LaChapelle: "The way I see it, the magazines are the galleries... And the museum is the refrigerator. If someone rips out the photo and puts it on the fridge, that really is something" (Amy M. Spindler, "Mixing Dada, Cher, Middle America," *New York Times*, [November 29, 1994], B14).

87 Op. cit., 200-205.

88 Cf. the discussion of the "status" argument in the "Deduction of Kitsch" section.

89 Op. cit., 132-134. On a more anecdotal plane, in an interview with Doris Lessing which took place at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Lessing expressed disdain for most of the "abstract" sculptures and paintings in the exhibition, "The Italian Metamorphosis 1943-1968," but (reports Diana Jean Schemo) eventually Lessing "warms to a few of the works. In a 1961 sculpture called 'White Fire' by Fausto Melotti, she sees a castle. Lucio Fontana's 'Spatial Concept. Expectations,' colored panels with almond-shaped slits, reminds her of the seashore" ("A Portrait Unwinds, As In Life," *New York Times* [November 2, 1994], C10). Likewise, we

discover that Greenberg spent his spare time at the end of his life painting landscapes (Robert Burstow, "On Art and Politics," interview with Greenberg, *Frieze*, Issue 18 [September/October 1994], 33).

90 Halle, op. cit., 132-134.

91 As far as the question of "postmodern" art is concerned, for now all I can offer is preliminary. If "postmodern" art does, as is sometimes held, not have relief or stasis as its goal, but instead further alienation, then it would apparently conform to the description of a reaction to modernity that walks with it (entertainment), or tries to run ahead of it, instead of standing against it. On postmodernism as 'hypermodernism,' David E. Pettigrew notes: "Kant and Freud's fragmentation of the subject, their critical identification of the illusory metanarratives of reason, and their necessary recourse to the ir-rational, serve to debunk the myth that modernity was simply obsessed with unity, and rather exemplifies tendencies which have traditionally been associated with post-modernity. Moreover, ... the exemplars of the post-modern, particularly Derrida and Lacan, themselves exhibit certain pathologies of modernity. Reason is portrayed as displaced from its propriety" ("The Crisis of Reason in Modern Philosophy: The Pathological Case of Kant and Freud," Diss. SUNY at Stony Brook [1991], xxix). Otherwise, "postmodern" art would conform to the same structure as 'fine" art and kitsch, as a movement against modernity.

That which is called "kitsch" is also regularly taken to be:

(a) false ("fake," "inauthentic," "non-authentic," "illusory," "substitute," "spurious," "mystified," "counterfeit," "hypocritical," "imitation," "ersatz," "ahistorical," "seeming," "synthetic," "vicarious," and "deceptive")

(b) of low quality ("cheap," "mediocre," "inferior," "vulgar," "degraded," "levelling," "trashy," and "insipid")

(c) dependent upon 'simple' or 'low' emotions ("sugary," "pretty," "sentimental," "cute," "naïve," "sensational," "obscene," "saccharine," "comforting," "chaste," and "romantic")

(d) focused on the inessential or trivial ("frivolous," "superficial," and "decorative")

(e) strongly connected to mass production, systematization, and marketing ("commercial," "packaged," "standardized," "clichéd," and "formulaic")

(f) dependent upon laziness or fatigue ("facile," "immediate," "bigoted," "unreflective," "uncultivated," "philistine," "predigested," and "unimaginative")

(g) calculated for 'mass' appeal ("conformist" and "popular")

and, finally, (h) ethically or morally wrong ("depraved," "fetischistic," "dangerous," "evil," and "virulent")

What's the Matter with Matter?

Problems in the Criticism of Greenberg, Fried, and Krauss

Hope Mauzerall

Formalist critic Clement Greenberg has been, and in many ways continues to be, the foremost architect of our vision of Modernism—a vision extended, and to varying degrees modified, by two initial followers: Michael Fried and Rosalind Krauss. Though Greenberg has come under increasing attack since the Seventies, his "significance," as Donald Kuspit tells us, "cannot be overestimated. He is the designer and subtle manipulator of modernism, which is the single most important and influential theory of modern art."[1] Similarly, when Leo Steinberg embarks in *Other Criteria* on an analysis of American formalism, it is to Greenberg, and Greenberg alone, that he turns—largely crediting the approach's "strength," "enormous influence," and "theoretical justification" to Greenberg.[2] Consequently, Kuspit's conclusion seems justified: that even Greenberg's "detractors" participate "in what...psychoanalysts call the killing of the father—the father," in this case, "of modern American art criticism," since "they are all, in the last analysis, his sons."[3]

Such hegemony makes crucial a precise understanding of what motivates Greenberg's criticism. This requires more than merely acknowledging, as is often done, his allegiance to basic principles of Western metaphysics,[4] since doing so still falls short of our appreciating its full impact on the present vision of Modernism. This essay, then, will explore more deeply the often taken-for-granted aspect of Greenberg's criticism—namely, the extent to which his approach is tied to basic, idealist tenets of Western metaphysics: the privileging of form over matter; a concern with transcendence; a stress on abstraction, purity and essence, as well as on intelligibility, clear definitions, and distinctions. Matter, in this tradition, is the stuff of this world; form belongs to a higher, abstract realm that transcends worldly materiality. Greenberg's own commitment to this tradition, though, is at times obscured by his early advocacy of medium—exemplified by his championing of

"literality" (stress on the art object's matter or physical facticity). But this apparent commitment to medium, as we will see, can be deceptive.

Greenberg's "reduction" theory of modernist art is, as the term suggests, reductive—seeing each medium engaged in a self-critical process intended to achieve the purest definition of what it most essentially is. In perhaps his most definitive statement on modernist art, he tells us that "the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincided with all that was unique to the nature of its medium. The task of self-criticism," he claims, was "to eliminate from the effects of each art any...effect...conceivably...borrowed from or by the medium of any other art." The goal here is that "each art...be rendered 'pure,' and in its 'purity' find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence."[5] Greenberg's objective, then, is to expunge impurities in order to arrive at pure form—not to esteem matter. His aim is transcendence, even if he proclaims investment in the medium. As Yve-Alain Bois points out,

> Although [Greenberg] speaks about the medium of any art as its principle horizon, he seldom discusses the actual stuff of any work of art.... Form became an a priori for Greenberg, an idea preexisting its...'projection,' its actual descent into the realm of matter....[6]

This approach of Greenberg's leads to problems in his analyses. Major discrepancies often arise between his astute physical descriptions of processes at work in modernist art and the conclusions he draws from them—conclusions clearly contradicting the logic of his own analysis. The reason for these contradictions, I contend, is Greenberg's need for transcendence, a need acknowledged yet inadequately explored by art historians and critics. The issue of transcendence is critical, not only because it lies at the crux of what goes wrong in Greenberg's criticism but, more importantly, because it points to the possibility that our entire vision of Modernism (so indebted to Greenberg) may be profoundly misguided.

Here, Greenberg's analysis of construction-sculpture proves particularly telling. It was this art form that in 1958 he declared "the most *representative* ... visual art of our time."[7] In many ways, Greenberg's account of construction-sculpture serves as a microcosm of his entire theoretical approach. Thus, it provides an illuminating departure point for problematics inherent in his theory: the need for transcendence; the breakdown in the logical development of his argument stemming from this need; and the effacement of matter. But examining these problematics first requires looking into Greenberg's analysis of the art that preceded and led directly to construction-sculpture's development.

Greenberg locates the roots of construction-sculpture, as many do, in cubist painting. This in itself is significant because it means that construction-sculpture developed out of painting, not sculpture—a fact Greenberg loses track of in the course of his analysis. According to Greenberg, Cubism had achieved a kind of quintessential flatness: becoming "flatter than anything Western art had seen since before Cimabue—so flat...that it could hardly contain recognizable images."[8] This flatness, though, as Greenberg explains, proved a problem for Picasso and Braque,

one surmounted only by their invention of collage. However, given Greenberg's criteria for painting, it is difficult to understand why flatness would have presented a problem. According to him, "the irreducibility of pictorial art [painting] consists in but two constitutive conventions or norms: flatness and the delimitation of flatness." For this reason, Greenberg concludes, even "a stretched or tacked-up canvas already exists as a picture—though not necessarily as a *successful one*."[9] Why, we might ask, should painting that had so successfully achieved Greenberg's criteria for painting (i.e., flatness) prompt Picasso and Braque to seek immediate escape through the invention of a new art form?

Interestingly, Greenberg's explanation does not support his "reduction" theory regarding self-definition and the separation of mediums. According to him, Picasso and Braque became frustrated by the indiscernible difference between the image and the surface of the canvas, which had for all intents and purposes become one—locked together. Addressing this dilemma, Greenberg states, "suddenly and paradoxically...the only place left for a three-dimensional illusion [was] in *front* of, *upon*, the surface." By their attaching paper and cloth to the painting's surface, he points out, "greater extraneousness" and "greater corporeal presence," were achieved and "[i]n their very first collages, Braque and Picasso draw or paint *over* and *on* the affixed paper or cloth, so that certain of the principal features ... *as depicted* seem to thrust out into real, bas-relief space...."[10] Indeed, Picasso's first collage, *Still Life with Chair-Caning* of 1912, does precisely this. Here he incorporates an oilcloth with simulated chair-caning into the composition. Over this already literal extension of the canvas, he paints still-life shapes which, because they lie on top of the incorporated material, seem to project out even further into the viewer's own space.

Nothing here, however, meets the criteria of Greenberg's "reduction" theory. Collage is an additive process, involving the accruing of matter. It is then the opposite of reduction or purification. Greenberg himself describes the effect of collage as achieving "greater extraneousness" and "greater corporeal presence." This suggests that art has initiated a process of bodying forth into our own space, blurring the lines between painting and sculpture, and thus breaking with Greenberg's rule regarding the distinction between and separation of mediums.

With construction-sculpture, itself, Greenberg's theory becomes even more problematic. He states:

> It was as though...[Picasso] had felt the flatness of collage as too constricting and had suddenly tried to escape all the way back—or forward—[Greenberg corrects himself] to literal three-dimensionality....by using utterly literal means to carry the forward push of the collage (and of Cubism in general) *literally* into the literal space in front of the picture plane.[11]

Greenberg's remarks—that collage was too flat and that construction-sculpture carried the "forward push" of both collage and cubist painting "*literally*" forward into "literal space"—suggest that art is quite literally bodying itself forth. However,

once again, the idea of art's becoming more material works in opposition to his "reduction" theory and, of course, to the very notion of transcendence. Consequently, Greenberg fails to develop the implications of his own analysis: that construction-sculpture seems to revel—even more than collage—in its lack of clear self-definition, purity, and the distinction between mediums.

Added to his account of what impelled Picasso to invent construction-sculpture, Greenberg offers an interesting description of when and how this occurred:

> Some time in 1912, Picasso cut out and folded a piece of paper in the shape of a guitar; to this he glued and fitted other pieces of paper and four taut strings, thus creating a sequence of flat surfaces in real and sculptural space to which there clung only the vestige of a picture plane. The affixed elements of collage were extruded...and cut off from the literal pictorial surface to form a bas-relief.[12]

Importantly, as Greenberg's account reveals, Picasso limited himself to materials that repeat the two-dimensional nature of painting—paper and taut string. However, by bending and folding he was able actually to project the materials outward—palpably—achieving three-dimensionality from a two-dimensional medium. Thus, the two-dimensionality associated with painting is preserved but extended, quite literally, into three-dimensional space.

Further corroboration of this medium-blending is again supplied by Greenberg. He tells us that Picasso subsequently "subtracted the picture surface entirely... let[ting] what had originally been affixed stand free as a 'construction.'"[13] Moreover, says Greenberg, despite this complete severance from the picture plane, construction-sculpture "continued to be marked by its pictorial origins, so that the sculptor-constructor [Julio] Gonzalez...could refer to it as the new art of 'drawing in space'—that is, of manipulating two-dimensional forms in three-dimensional space."[14] Gonzalez's remark, backed up here by Greenberg, makes even more explicit that construction-sculpture is a concretization of painting. To state, as these remarks do, that two-dimensionality (associated with painting) is translated into three-dimensional space (the realm of sculpture) is entirely different than saying, as Greenberg later does, that three-dimensional mass (associated with sculpture) has been reduced or dematerialized into something resembling two-dimensions. Clearly, when viewed by traditional standards of sculpture, construction-sculpture seems dematerialized, it loses its mass, becomes much less corporeal; but when its roots in cubist painting and collage are recognized, its *materialization*—the extent to which it tangibly extends into literal space the components of painting, i.e., line, space, form, color, etc.—becomes apparent.

The degree to which construction-sculpture appears to subvert Greenberg's theory of Modernism makes his singling out of it as exemplary—its being the "most *representative*...visual art" of Modernism—all the more puzzling, especially in view of his continued awareness of its link with painting and, thus, its break with his rule concerning separation of mediums. Addressing this point he says,

> modernist sensibility, though it rejects sculptural painting of any kind, allows sculpture to be as pictorial as it pleases. Here the prohibition against one art's entering the domain of another is suspended, thanks to the unique concreteness and literalness of sculpture's medium.[15]

Greenberg defends the departure from his rule, then, on the basis of sculpture's inherent literalness—making it capable, in his view, of expressing the pictorial because it does so literally in three-dimensional space, not deceptively through the illusionistic devices associated with painting. Ironically, then, though Greenberg appears to value the physicality of sculpture—its material fact—he does so only in so far as it facilitates a further leap into abstraction—becoming more visual in its move toward painting. Materiality or matter here is recognized but then canceled out.

To summarize: everything Greenberg says in his description of construction-sculpture supports the notion that painting is becoming more concrete; yet Greenberg reaches precisely the opposite conclusion. For him, painting is not becoming more concrete; sculpture is becoming more abstract or "visual." However, only a break in the logic of his analysis allows for this conclusion: he begins with recognition of construction-sculpture's origins in painting; he describes the way in which construction-sculpture develops out of painting, and continues to bear its marks, referring to its "linearism," "linear intricacies," "openness," "transparency," "weightlessness," and use of "applied color." He claims that this art form "is not so much sculptured as constructed, built, assembled, arranged,"[16] suggesting an incremental process of building up more characteristic of painting and collage than sculpture. But then he stops (and this is the critical point in his argument); he *relocates* himself within the realm of traditional sculpture—with its notions of mass, monolithic quality, etc.—and then proceeds, *reductively*, to work his way back toward painting. This break in the logical sequence of his analysis is what allows him to apply his "reduction" theory. Strict adherence to the lines of his original argument would have forced him to conclude that a process of *accruing* was taking place, not one of *reduction*. As Bois himself observes: "From a painting becoming sculpture, [Greenberg] evoked a sculpture that remained painting."[17]

Here it is important to remember that Greenberg's "reduction" theory is predicated upon transcendent goals: that Modernism is moving toward abstraction, purity, and a more essentializing definition of what it is. To admit that matter or materiality *itself* was gaining importance would entirely upset Greenberg's theoretical premise. To avoid any suggestion that this might be the case, he seems willing to abandon any commonly accepted notion of what sculpture is. Consequently, he determines that "[u]nder the modernist 'reduction,' sculpture has turned out to be almost as exclusively visual in its essence as painting itself. It has been 'liberated' from the monolithic [largely to escape]...excessive *tactile* associations, which now partake of illusion ..."[18] (emphasis added).

This comment demonstrates the tendency in Greenberg to shift from a material description of art to a conclusion that stresses immateriality. According to

him, sculpture's tactility, its palpable three-dimensionality, the property above all others that has traditionally identified sculpture and distinguished it from painting, is no longer of any real consequence. Sculpture's three-dimensionality is only significant to the extent that it provides a literal foundation for the pictorial, more abstract because less physical, properties of painting. It is sculpture's capacity to dematerialize itself, achieving a state of unprecedented abstract purity, while remaining literal, that attracts Greenberg—explaining his championing of construction-sculpture.

Greenberg is explicit concerning the need for purity in Modernism, remarking that "[t]he desire for 'purity' works ... to put an ever higher premium on sheer visibility and an ever lower one on the tactile and its associations...," e.g., "weight" and "impermeability."[19] Such comments reaffirm Greenberg's agenda of moving away from matter and materiality. "Sheer visibility" seems to represent for him a condition of seeing unencumbered by matter, the tactile. A comparison here with Aristotle is illuminating. As Frederick Copleston explains, for Aristotle " substance"—as opposed to matter—"is primarily the definable essence or form of a thing, the principle...[through] which the material element [constitutes] some definite concrete object." Thus, for Aristotle, says Copleston, "substance is primarily form which is, in itself, immaterial." And therefore, while Aristotle's point of departure "assert[s] that individual sensible objects are substances, the course of his thought carries him...toward the view that pure form alone is truly and primarily substance."[20] Similarly, while Greenberg's point of departure is the physical object, "the course of his thought carries him toward the view that pure form alone is truly and primarily substance." He tells us, for example, that sculpture's aim,

> [t]o render substance entirely optical ... brings anti-illusionism full circle. Instead of the illusion of things, we are now offered the illusion of modalities: namely, that ***matter is incorporeal***, weightless and exists only optically like a mirage.[21] (emphasis added)

Matter, here, would seem to have achieved for Greenberg the consummate Aristotelian (and Platonic) state of pure disembodied form. Thus, if anything has come "full circle," it would seem to be the basic tenet which lies at the core of Western metaphysics: that form is superior to matter and grants significance to it; and that matter, itself, is always something to be transformed, overcome, escaped. Indeed, Bois recently likened "form" in Greenberg's "idealist" and "Aristotelian" approach to "an a priori UFO...land[ing] on raw matter, rescu[ing] it from its dark inertness, and transport[ing] it to the sunny realm of ideas."[22] Thus, the answer to the question posed by my title becomes clear: the matter with matter, for Greenberg, is clearly that matter *is* matter. As such, it is precisely that which art must transcend.

Having arrived at the point whereby, through opticality, Greenberg manages totally to dematerialize the art object, we can better grasp the role transcendence has played in his theory all along. At first, "literality" had served to evacuate impurities from the art object, enabling its transcendence. Along with ridding the object of subject matter, social context, biographical considerations, etc., it also

reduced the object to its purest possible material form. As Steinberg observes, "ideal[ly the formalist] critic remains unmoved by the artist's expressive intention, uninfluenced by his culture, deaf to his irony or iconography,...proceed[ing] undistracted, programmed like an Orpheus making his way out of Hell."[23] And specifically regarding Greenberg's initial stress on physicality, Kuspit suggests, "It is as if, in insisting on a critical response to the medium...Greenberg was balancing....[t]he possible purity of the medium...against the actual impurity of life...."[24]

Ultimately, however, this approach backfired. "Literality," particularly with the advent of minimalism, had turned into just another object in the world. What had begun as the attempt to escape or to rise above the world ironically resulted in a reintegration into it. Matter finally, even in its purest form, had failed; it was only the process of purifying matter that proved for a time a viable strategy for transcendence. "Opticality," on the other hand, for Greenberg, eliminated the problem by eliminating matter. With it, "substance [became] optical," rendering "matter...incorporeal, weightless...like a mirage."[25] Consequently, opticality replaced literality in Greenberg's modernist theory; touch ceded to sight—the most abstract of our senses and the one most valued by Western metaphysics. Importantly, it is largely Greenberg's theory of opticality that remains Modernism's primary legacy—a legacy criticized, but virtually unquestioned, within postmodern discourse. With this in mind, we turn to "opticality's" impact on our other two major modernist critics, Fried and Krauss.

Both have taken up the issue of opticality, but to very different ends. Fried accepts and elaborates upon Greenberg's theory; Krauss, however, in *The Optical Unconscious*, first equates modernist art with opticality (evidencing her concurrence) but then goes on to indict opticality's fundamental principles: transparency of vision, privileging of sight over other bodily senses, notions of objectivity, rationality, etc. In its place she posits the "optical unconscious," which can perhaps best be described as the underbelly of Greenberg's opticality—everything opticality, in his view, intended to avoid. Thus, in contrast to the Greenbergian inspired transcendent view of opticality embraced by Fried, Krauss proffers a distinctly non-transcendent one—rooting her version of opticality in materiality and, more specifically, in the dense corporeality of the body. Nevertheless, as I will show, she too opts for transcendence, ultimately effacing matter even more completely than does either Greenberg or Fried.

I will focus here specifically on Fried's and Krauss's discussion of Jackson Pollock, an artist who, as Bois observes, underwent a radical "rewrit[ing]" by Greenberg: "his initial distaste for the obdurate materiality of Pollock's silver paint [rearticulated itself] into a jubilant appreciation of its miragelike opticality."[26] Indeed, due to Greenberg's characterization, Pollock's art (at least his all-over drip paintings) is often regarded as epitomizing opticality. The shift here to painting is also appropriate, since painting came to occupy a privileged position in Greenberg's modernist theory, as the medium most embodying tendencies of advanced art. Construction-sculpture's appeal for Greenberg, as we saw, was largely based on its capacity to achieve the abstract, more pictorial (because less literal) qualities of

painting. As I turn first to Fried's interpretation of Pollock's work, I will focus on the same problematics dealt with in Greenberg: concern with transcendence; breakdown in the logical development of his argument stemming from this concern; and the effacement of matter.

Fried's complete espousal of Greenberg's theory of opticality is clearly evidenced in his discussion of Pollock's painting *Number One* of 1948, a work generally regarded as one of Pollock's masterpieces. Fried characterizes it as "a pictorial field so homogeneous, overall and devoid both of recognizable objects and of abstract shapes that I want to call it 'optical.'" Its opticality, he says, is rooted in the fact that "it addresses...eyesight alone. The materiality of [Pollock's] pigment is rendered sheerly visual ... result[ing in]...a new kind of space...in which conditions of seeing prevail."[27] But Fried's description of the painting and the fact that its making involved "spilling and dripping skeins of paint on...unsized canvas stretched on the floor," all suggest a degree of physicality denied by the optical interpretation. In addition, Fried notes "spots of bright color" that briefly arrest our focus, as well as the inclusion of "handprints put there by the painter"—a feature reoccurring in a number of other paintings of the period, as Fried points out.[28] Here, though Fried acknowledges these more physical elements, he tends to dismiss their significance: "all these are woven together, chiefly by Pollock's line, to create an opulent and, in spite of their diversity, homogeneous visual fabric [that]...invites the act of seeing."[29]

But why, one might logically ask, would an artist aiming at dematerialization and opticality—"intent on address[ing]...eyesight alone"—undercut the project by including something as emphatically physical, indexically manual, as his own handprint? Fried does not really address this point; but Philip Leider does. Remarking on Pollock's "treat[ment of] the painting as a *thing*," he notes how the artist "left his handprints all over it; he put his cigarette butts out in it." Moreover, for Leider, it would seem Pollock's objective was largely that of avoiding the very kind of "arty" aestheticization of his work imputed to it by critics like Fried.[30] Additionally, the handprints, not to mention cigarette butts, add to the painting the very element Fried credits Pollock with eliminating: figuration (line's capacity to enclose, thereby suggesting form, regardless of how abstractly). With the cigarette butts, moreover, form/figuration is literalized—the thing itself. Fried tells us, however, that in "*Number One*, or any of Pollock's finest paintings....[his line] has been freed at last from the job of describing contours and bounding shapes. It has been purged of its figurative character." Moreover, Fried characterizes "Pollock's masterpieces of 1947-50," in terms of the way "line...def[ies]...figuration."[31] Given this, it seems odd that Pollock should risk detracting from his ground-breaking achievement, as Fried describes it, by pressing onto the canvas something as figurative and recognizable as a handprint or as graphic as a cigarette butt.

Also in light of this achievement, it seems puzzling that Pollock did not pursue it more wholeheartedly. According to Fried, "Pollock...seem[ed] not to have been content with the non-figurative style of painting he had achieved," returning to figuration after 1950. But in fact, as Fried concedes, Pollock had never really left figuration. He notes: "it is important to observe that Pollock's involve-

ment with figuration did not cease entirely between 1947 and 1950," the phase regarded as Pollock's most "optical." Fried goes on to describe an example of this figurative retention in *White Cockatoo*, 1948, "made by dripping black paint in a series of slow-moving loops and angular turns." Fried tells us, it "come[s] nowhere near covering the brown canvas...[nor] creat[ing] the kind of homogeneous visual fabric of paintings like *Number One*."[32] Instead, Pollock applied "gouts of red, yellow, green, blue and white oil paint, either knifed onto the canvas or squeezed in short bursts directly from the tube."[33] This painting's overt emphasis on medium/matter—the "gouts" of vivid pigment—in addition to the brown canvas, invoking an almost earthy context, suggests an artist rooted in the physical, even the sensual. Thus, it seems worth considering that such works done contemporaneously with Pollock's quintessential "optical" paintings might merely be more emphatic expressions of an overall concern rooted in materiality, not opticality.

For Fried, however, Pollock's retention of figuration demonstrates only that even "when Pollock was realizing masterpiece after masterpiece in his optical style, he...chaf[ed] at the high price he had to pay for this achievement: the price of denying figuration...whether abstract or representational."[34] But the question remains, if Pollock had really been after the kind of opticality Fried claims, why did he not at least devote an entire period to this achievement? What is more, as Leider points out, a "literalist view of Pollock" competed with the optical one espoused by Greenberg and Fried, but where theirs took the form of "published criticism," the other "emerged somewhat more hazily, less explicitly ... in argument and conversation." It is not unlikely that this "literalist view" (expressed in "argument and conversation") largely reflects the views of other artists, focusing, as it did, on Pollock's technique: "Literalist eyes...did not see, or did not see first and foremost, those patterns as patterns of line freed from their function of bounding shape.... They saw them...as *skeins of paint dripped directly from the can....You could visualize the picture being made*—there were just no secrets."[35] Such an account differs markedly with Fried's non-physical, highly volatilized one.

Perhaps one of Fried's most problematic analyses of Pollock's work is his interpretation of *Cut-Out*, 1949. In this work, as Fried tells us, Pollock literally cut out a "roughly humanoid" section from one of his all-over drip fields and then "back[ed] it with canvas-board." According to Fried, "the result is that the figure is not seen as an object in the world, or shape on a flat surface...but rather as the absence, over a particular area, of the visual field." Fried sees this as ratifying opticality, since, for him, "[f]iguration is achieved in terms of eyesight alone...[without] even the possibility of verification by touch." He goes on to say that "the relation between the field and the figure is simply not spatial at all: it is purely and wholly optical." Consequently, he concludes, "the figure created by removing part of the painted field and backing it with canvas-board seems to lie somewhere within our own eyes, *as strange as this may sound*"[36] (emphasis added). Even Fried concedes the strangeness of his conclusion; but perhaps a less "strange" reading of this work would result if we attended more to its materiality. Absence here equals figuration; and the power of figuration tends to assert presence, a certain concreteness, that competes with—even overrides—the materiality of the can-

vas. In a sense, Pollock has bodied forth absence; space has taken on physicality. This idea of space being physical, moreover, has clear precedence in Modernism. Coming immediately to mind are artists such as Cezanne, who rendered space with the same physicality as figuration; Braque, who, as John Golding puts it, sought "to make [space] as real and concrete ... as the objects themselves";[37] and Naum Gabo, who stated, "In our sculpture space has...become a malleable material element."[38]

Overall, then, Fried's analysis evidences problems similar to those found in Greenberg's, and they stem from similar causes. He begins with the assertion that Pollock's "all-over" drip paintings are optical—that they "address eyesight alone." But in order to say this, he dismisses as insignificant contradictory elements, such as the handprints or cigarette butts. His claims for opticality are further undercut by his admission that emphatically physical paintings, such as *White Cockatoo*, continued to be done during the height of Pollock's "optical" period. Additionally, though he praises Pollock for his enormous achievement of freeing line from figuration (that is, from any hint of representation), he immediately concedes that Pollock never relinquished figuration. Pollock himself said, "I'm very representational some of the time, and a little all of the time"[39]—further problematizing Fried's assessment. Finally, in a work such as *Cut-out*, Fried's analysis reduces the figurative component to nothing but an optical phenomenon, existing "somewhere within our own eyes." Even Fried acknowledges the strangeness of his conclusion.

Added to this, much of Fried's argument overlooks the fact that the majority of Pollock's work (including his "all-over" paintings)—from their highly physical means of production to their appearance after the fact—bespeak an investment in materiality. As Krauss observes, Frank Stella was among those who rejected Fried's etherealizing interpretation of Pollock's work, explaining how Stella's attraction to Pollock's metallic paint, for example, had to do largely with its 'repellent' quality. "It repels the eye," she says, "as does much of the surface quality of the drip pictures seen up close." Moreover, the paint "coagulat[es]...in the areas where it ... puddled and then shriveled in the process of drying, forming a disgusting film, like the skin on the surface of scalded milk." Despite this physicality, Krauss goes on to say that "objection[s like Stella's] went...large[ly]...unnoticed; and [Stella's] own use of metallic paint would itself be gathered into the sublimatory embrace of 'opticality.'"[40] Clearly for Fried, as for Greenberg, matter serves as the stumbling block to transcendence; Fried's argument demonstrates the lengths to which he will go to achieve it.

Turning now to Krauss, we find a version of opticality that on the surface seems the antithesis of Greenberg's and Fried's. Where Greenberg and Fried seek to dematerialize art, to raise it up and lift it out of the muck of this world; Krauss seeks to materialize it in the most corporeal terms—to lower it, to bring it down into the submerged zone of the unconscious and the repressed. Krauss's opticality is "dense" and "opaque," reflecting the density and opacity of the body from which, according to her, it derives—or more specifically, the body as locus of sexual drives forming the basis of the unconscious. Sight, for Krauss, has nothing to do with the conventional notion, found in Greenberg and Fried, that vision offers transparent

access to the world. For her, vision, as Lydia Gasman has observed, is the "projection of desire";[41] or in Krauss's own words, "desire-in-vision" locates vision "within the opacity of the organs and the invisibility of the unconscious."[42] Paradoxically then, for Krauss, opticality is the *unseen*, the sexually repressed, the corporeally contained drives of the body that constitute the hidden desires of the unconscious. Sight is not a taking in, for Krauss, but, as Gasman clarifies, a projecting out of desire onto the world—hence Krauss's title, "The Optical Unconscious." In essence, sight is sexual for Krauss, at least in Freudian terms of sexuality being the basis of the unconscious.

The following analysis of Krauss's interpretation of Pollock's work will be primarily concerned with demonstrating how she, despite all efforts to the contrary, continues the pattern established by Greenberg and Fried: a push towards transcendence coupled with the effacement of matter. What makes this significant is that Krauss's entire approach is based on non-transcendence and an embeddedness in materiality. It is precisely the subversively non-transcendent aspect of Pollock's work, for example, that attracts Krauss. For her, Pollock's relationship to the "optical unconscious" stems from the fact that his paintings are inextricably linked to their placement on the floor—the horizontal plane that for Krauss signals the domain of the unconscious. The horizontal stands in opposition to the vertical plane of modernist painting which, as she explains, had been established by Greenberg as the guarantor of painting's legitimate status *as* painting. Verticality implied man's erect posture, it addressed the eyes (the highest faculty); it stood, in short, for transcendence over lowness, abjection and animality associated with proximity to the ground. According to Krauss, however, Pollock's work resisted being raised, elevated, made respectable even when placed on the vertical plane of the wall: his "indexical mark...[does] its work to *lower* and desublimate the perceptual field, doing the 'job' that...Bataille had given to the 'informe': to undo form by knocking it off its sublimatory pedestal, to bring it down in the world...."[43]

In her own desire to knock art off its "sublimatory pedestal," Krauss directs attention toward the materiality of Pollock's work; but in doing so she does not value matter per se. Matter is significant because it signals association with what is "low"; it is the indicator of something else. In contrast to Fried's characterization of Pollock's *Number One* as the epitome of opticality, Krauss describes it as a "sumptuous web....buried by [an] avalanche of...poured skein...."[44] But this "sumptuous web" is not significant in itself as a manifestation of materiality; rather its significance derives from what it covers but points toward—the chaotic, subversive, submerged realm of the unconscious. Elsewhere, Krauss comments on Pollock's "building up the linear tracery," his "whorls and loops of liquid paint," and his "varying...viscosity"[45]; but again, though matter is acknowledged, it is ultimately reduced to Pollock's "indexical mark"—the mere indicator of the painting's horizontality and, thus, its relationship to the ground, the zone of the unconscious. She then looks *through* matter to what it points toward: the *invisible* realm of the "optical unconscious."

Krauss's tendency to point out but then to look past matter is evidenced in the contrast she draws between Pollock's work and that of abstract expressionism.

Though she describes abstract expressionism's "sprays...showers and splatters of pigment...[its] viscosity and oily smears of wet-into-wet," she denies any significant continuity between Pollock and this stylistic development, since it "continued for the most part to ratify the fact that the canvas field was a vertical facing the viewer...." In other words, such paintings were conceived on the vertical axis, causing Krauss to dismiss as irrelevant any affinity they might have to Pollock's work. She goes on to describe Pollock's "puddles...massed in certain areas...the liquidity of the medium," his "throws of fluid lines leaving the trace of their fall in the halations of paler color" (by contrast an even less emphatically material description than that given of abstract expressionism). But again, matter is not the point. What counts, as Krauss tells us, is that "Pollock's drip technique was ... one massive index of the position the pictures had had to be in during the time they were being made."[46] Matter here is reduced to a sign. Its own physicality is of no real consequence, except as it functions for Krauss to disassociate Pollock from the vertical plane, the mark of painting's transcendence. Her attempt to assert non-transcendence (horizontality) over transcendence (verticality), however, only succeeds in replacing one mode of transcendence with another. The direction of her transcendence may not be up, but it most certainly is away from matter.

Perhaps one of Krauss's most overt effacements of matter is found in her analysis of Pollock's *Full Fathom Five*, 1947. She tells us that "Pollock...had...other ways besides the liquid residue of the pour" to denote the horizontal position of the painting's making. This, she describes as the "residue of 'dumping.'" The physical medium, here, its "residue," is then only a remainder, or trace, of its making—diminishing the significance of matter itself. Krauss goes on to tell us that, in addition to the "black skein," Pollock "deposited great gouts of white lead," over which he then "thr[ew] a heterogeneity of trash—nails, buttons, tacks, keys, coins, cigarettes, matches...testify[ing] to the connection the work had had to have to the ground."[47] Once again, Krauss describes a densely physical work (a collage) that incorporates matter as physically palpable as nails, tacks, keys, coins, etc. In addition, the surface upon which these objects are deposited is itself dense with "great gouts of white lead." But such physicality is ultimately as transparent as the "picture window" of Renaissance perspective, for Krauss, or as immaterial as the object in Greenberg's and Fried's "opticality." Materiality merely provides access to something else; it is not about its own facticity. As with Greenberg and Fried, matter is transcended, even when the stated goal is non-transcendence.

Despite this, Krauss herself is critical of Greenberg's and Fried's tendency to override the physical. She notes with respect to Greenberg, for example, that he most liked Pollock's line for "the flight it could take, the statement it could make against the realm of matter and substance...."[48] Remarking on Fried's analysis of *Cut-out*, she says that by "[e]vacuating the work altogether from the domain of the object and installing it within the consciousness of the subject...the sublimatory movement [was brought] to its climax."[49] Krauss here evidences criticism of Fried's eliminating the significance of the physical object. Only the act of seeing remains. But is not Krauss equally guilty of "evacuating" the object? Clearly an approach that denies the very possibility of seeing in any normal way, of taking in the physi-

cal world, has moved dramatically away from any appreciation of the object's physical reality. The emphasis in her "optical unconscious" is all on projection. Her version of opticality, then, moves even beyond subjectivity to solipsism. In this approach, no degree of objectivity is admitted. But if this is so, it becomes difficult to understand how Krauss can offer an interpretation of Pollock's work that does little more than illuminate her own subjective desires.

Ultimately it would seem that, although the two theories of opticality (Greenberg's and Fried's, on the one hand, and Krauss's on the other) could hardly appear more different, we encounter a familiar pattern. Both theories, willingly or unwillingly, arrive at transcendence, and both do so through the effacement of matter. Greenberg and Fried accomplish this by disembodying form; Krauss by embodying invisibility. In all three cases the critic addresses something other than materiality. Ironically, in the final analysis, Krauss seems to efface matter even more emphatically than does Greenberg or Fried. At least they acknowledge that matter is a factor to be dispensed with, something to be escaped; Krauss, on the other hand, recognizes only the projection of desire—the unconscious—which she herself characterizes in terms of "invisibility."

Thus far, I have sought to demonstrate the way in which Greenberg, Fried, and Krauss all move from materiality to non-materiality; how in this move they employ theories of opticality as the means of transcendence; and finally, how their optical theories obscure critical features of the art they seek to illuminate. Importantly, all three critics began as avowed advocates of "literality"; and to be fair to Krauss, her critical break with Greenberg resulted directly from her decision to support minimalist sculpture—the epitome of literality—even when Greenberg and Fried rejected it. This would suggest a stronger commitment on her part to the art object's physical facticity. However, Krauss went on to become a leading exponent of the semiological approach to art criticism, an approach that reduces the art object to an unstable, circulating system of signs. At least this approach, though, recognizes the object as the physical locus of these circulating signs. But Krauss's more recent move to what can perhaps be called "psycho-semiology,"[50] replaces the sign system of external reality with that of the internal and invisible reality of the unconscious. And though Krauss stresses the embeddedness of the unconscious in the body—claiming that vision takes place "within the opacity of the organs and the invisibility of the unconscious"[51]—it is clear that the organs and the unconscious are of distinctly different materials. They are, in her own words, as distinct as "opacity" and "invisibility." Once again, the privileged realm is the realm of non-matter.

Ultimately, my purpose has been to establish the extent to which Greenberg's and Greenbergian influenced criticism remain wedded to the basic tenets of Western metaphysics, and the degree to which the latter is largely predicated on an effacement of matter. Greenberg's own ability to simultaneously acknowledge and disparage matter's significance is summarized in the remark:

> That which modern art asserts in principle—the superiority of the medium over whatever it figures...expresses our society's growing impo-

> tence to organize experience in any other terms than those of the concrete sensation, immediate return, tangible datum.[52]

Here Greenberg directly seems to equate "impotence" with the inability to transcend matter. Clearly for Greenberg, as for Western metaphysics generally, matter operates (or should operate) in the service of something else, regarded as higher—an idea or ideal, frequently involving the notion of disembodiment. The word "metaphysical," after all, means behind or beyond the physical. In contrast, my contention (one I argue in depth elsewhere) is that matter has begun to matter in Modernism in ways that metaphysical readings cannot address.[53] To the extent that our interpretations—consciously or unconsciously—remain bound to metaphysical tenets, even the more radical readings (such as Krauss's) will efface matter in the very attempt to recognize it. Somewhat ironically, these metaphysically-based theories of "opticality" actually blind us to the truly radical nature of Modernism.

Notes

1 Donald Kuspit, *Clement Greenberg: Art Critic* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 3.
2 Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Oxford UP, 1972), 66.
3 Kuspit, 19.
4 Yve-Alain Bois, for example, is among the many who have acknowledged Greenberg's commitment to Western metaphysics: "The content/form and form/matter oppositions that have governed the idealist and dualistic aesthetic of the West beginning with Plato and Aristotle...were reconsolidated by [Greenberg's] special brand of formalism. Idealism...proved entirely victorious once again...." *Painting as Model* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), xix.
5 Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," *The New Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock, 1966 (New York: Dutton, 1973), 68.
6 Bois, xix.
7 Greenberg, "The New Sculpture," *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon, 1961), 144.
8 "Modernist Painting," 72.
9 Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," in Henry Geldzahler, *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970* (New York: Dutton, 1969), 369.
10 "Collage," *Art and Culture*, 75-76.
11 "Collage," 79.
12 "Collage," 79-80.
13 "The New Sculpture," 142. Greenberg's neatly sequential description of art's progression off the wall into space is not entirely accurate (e.g., Picasso's having executed free-standing construction prior to his papiers colles and reliefs). For my purposes, however, the sequence is less important than the fact that Picasso trans-

posed the elements and two-dimensionality of painting into three-dimensional space. See corrected chronology in William Rubin, *Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1989), 31-32.

14 "Collage," 80.
15 "The New Sculpture," 143.
16 "The New Sculpture," 142.
17 Bois, 168.
18 "The New Sculpture," 142.
19 "The New Sculpture," 144.
20 Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1: Greece and Rome, Part 1, 1946 (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1962), 48.
21 "The New Sculpture," 144.
22 Bois, "Whose Formalism?," *Art Bulletin* 78 (March 1996): 10.
23 Steinberg, 66.
24 Kuspit, 40.
25 "The New Sculpture," 144.
26 "Whose Formalism?," 11.
27 Michael Fried, *Three American Painters* (Cambridge: Fogg Art Museum, 1965), 14.
28 Fried, 13.
29 Fried, 14.
30 Philip Leider, "Literalism and Abstraction: Frank Stella's Retrospective at the Modern," *Artforum* 8 (April 1970): 44.
31 Fried, 14.
32 Fried, 15.
33 Fried, 16.
34 Fried, 16.
35 Leider, 44.
36 Fried, 17.
37 John Golding, *Cubism: A History and an Analysis, 1907-14*, 1959 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 79.
38 Naum Gabo, "Sculpture: Carving and construction in space," in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 333.
39 Pollock as cited in Elizabeth Frank, *Jackson Pollock* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1983), 111.
40 Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 248.
41 This phrase—"projection of desire"—was suggested to me by Gasman in a 1993 conversation, during which she characterized Krauss's particular brand of opticality as being fundamentally "projective": not in any way a taking in of the world but, rather, a projecting out of desire onto the world.
42 Krauss, 125.
43 Krauss, 307.
44 Krauss, 265.
45 Krauss, 252.
46 Krauss, 276.
47 Krauss, 293.
48 Krauss, 290.
49 Krauss, 247.
50 My term derives from Gasman who, in a fall 1993 conversation, referred to Krauss's semiotic approach in *The Optical Unconscious* as "psychological semiology."

51 Krauss, 125.
52 Greenberg as cited in Kuspit, 53-54.
53 See "Matter in Modernism: The Bodying Forth of Art into Life." Diss. University of Virginia, 1996.

TAMARA DE LEMPICKA'S WOMEN

TRICIA LAUGHLIN

The paintings of Tamara de Lempicka from the 1920s and '30s capture the ethos of their age so well that they have been glossed over and explained essentially as icons of art deco decadence. In a simple reading, her work is a homage to the lavish lifestyles of the international elite. Her portraits combine cubistic fractured spaces and mannerist distortions of form with the stylized poses and lavish artifice of the fashion world. This convergence of high art and popular imagery is characteristic of the many opposing dynamics that give her works a unique and provocative tension. The art historian Giancarlo Marmori acknowledged this tension when he noted in de Lempicka's work "the cerebral and immediate physical presence of the figures... a daring synthesis of logos and eros, of ice and fire."[1] A closer assessment of Lempicka's production from the period of 1924 to 1949 reveals the artist's predilection for female subjects, whether individual or group portraits, and both clothed and nude studies. Through a variety of techniques, Lempicka invested her portraits of women with a powerful eroticism that is noticeably absent in her portraits of men.

Writers who have begun to address the subject of Lempicka's sexualized female subjects are reluctant to connect this imagery with the artist's public and private identities. Emmanuel Cooper writes " What we do not know and what is not made clear is whether these sexual overtones are being made for men or for women."[2] Lempicka was bisexual and conducted her numerous affairs with men and women in a performative manner, working the scandal and transgression in her personal life the way she forged formal and narrative elements in her paintings, to seduce and overpower the viewer/patron/public. Through an application of queer theory, specifically regarding the lesbian fetish, feminine masquerade, and the homospectatorial nature of fashion, a consistent and viable iconography of lesbian desire can be mapped out in Lempicka's paintings. The focus on a lesbian fetish as an interpretive theory does not deny the currency these images may have as female subjects presented for the heterosexual male viewer's delectation. Furthermore, the aim is not to align Lempicka with a fixed lesbian identity but rather to point out the overlapping desires, straight and queer, the artist depicted on her canvases and

enacted in her life.

Tamara was born in Warsaw in 1898; her father was a successful lawyer, and she enjoyed material comforts and travel from a young age, spending summers in Russia with her mother and touring France and Italy with a doting grandmother at the age of thirteen. When she was eighteen she married Taduesz Lempicki, a successful, land-owning Petrograd lawyer. During the Bolshevik revolution, her husband was arrested; Tamara's family, like the rest of the aristocracy in Petrograd, escaped to Europe. Tamara stayed behind to search for her husband, seeking assistance from foreign consulates to locate him and arrange for his release. As the story is told by Lempicka's daughter, the Swedish consul who finally secured passage for the couple did so because Tamara agreed to a brief love affair as payment for her husband's freedom.

Once reunited, Tamara did not find her husband appreciative enough for what she had done for him. Lempicka was depressed and disoriented in Paris, where they settled; unable to accept his outsider position in a strange country, he refused to take a job at a bank with his wife's relatives. Tamara soon struck up an affair with an admiring diplomat. As two years passed and her husband was still unable to find employment in Paris, Tamara began to paint, intent on becoming a successful artist and providing for herself and her newborn daughter. She studied briefly with Maurice Denis and André Lhote, and traveled to Italy where she made countless studies of mannerist paintings. The futurists also had an influence on the emerging artist, and there is at least one account of her contact with Marinetti. Intent on success, Tamara attacked the project of learning to paint with tremendous concentration. It did not take long for her style to emerge, and she had no trouble promoting herself to Paris gallery owners and soon wealthy, elite patrons throughout Europe.

These biographical details point out aspects of Tamara de Lempicka's character that are eventually embodied in her paintings; the profile also begs comparison with Joan Riviere's 1929 psychoanalytic paper, "Womanliness as Masquerade." In her study Riviere describes a highly successful, intelligent, professional woman who, immediately following a successful demonstration of her abilities, felt compelled to attract sexual attention from male colleagues. In traditional Freudian terms, Riviere determines that the woman suffers anxiety due to the fear of retribution from the father for exhibiting masculine qualities; her coquetry and feigned ineptitude at certain moments with men is an unconscious attempt to protect herself from punishment. "Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it—much as a thief will turn out his pockets and ask to be searched to prove that he has not stolen the goods."3 Riviere draws no distinction between true womanliness, what Freud categorized as the narcissistic woman, and masquerade. "Whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing. The capacity for womanliness was there in this woman—and... it exists in the most completely homosexual woman."4

Tamara's ability to make her way in the art world and to manipulate men of wealth and power fit roughly into Riviere's paradigm. She was extremely re-

sourceful and aggressive in a "masculine" manner, competent and self-promoting, as she appears in two portraits of the period. In *Auto-portrait* of 1925, the artist depicted herself behind the wheel of a gleaming automobile. Placing herself figuratively in the seat of power, she draws on the appeal of the booming automobile culture, encoded as masculine in its evocations of speed and machine-age ingenuity. The treatment of color is cool and the contours are hard and geometric, especially in the depiction of the artist's features. Lempicka stares assertively out at the viewer, her expression slightly disdainful but impassive. Her helmeted head had a streamlined, sculptural quality that echoes the man-made curves of the car.

A similarly styled photograph of the artist from the 1930s highlights her fashion status, but the emphasis remains on the subject's confident self-presentation. In this image Lempicka's gaze is indirect yet powerful, as if she awaits more important and more interesting matters. The photographer has abstracted the composition into bold, geometric contrasts of light and dark, emphasized by the artist's hat and by her one black gloved hand, holding a cigarette, against a light fur background. Both portraits convey a totally collected, independent modern woman.

During the same period, other images of Lempicka present her as a passive, hyper-feminine ingenue. Another fashion-style portrait from the 1930s shows the artist with bare shoulders, her skin and features dissolved by a soft light. The total effect is further softened by the blurring of all details except part of the face and gloves. Lempicka here averts her gaze from the camera, evoking a vulnerable and wistful appearance. Two photograph portraits of Lempicka at work epitomize Riviere's "masculine" woman and the feminine masquerade. The close up of Lempicka in the act of painting is more candid than the portrait photographs cited above. The intensity of her gaze and her practical attire convey an image of Lempicka as the hard working bread winner, relatively unconcerned with her appearance and comfortable with her power. By contrast, in a 1937 studio portrait, the artist is seen at work in evening attire, again with shoulders bared and passively shying away from the camera.

Whether Lempicka was conscious of this strategic masquerading or not, it seems to have operated in the terms described by Riviere, and to the artist's advantage. The fact that she was engaging in affairs with women as well as men is additional reason for the artist to construct a public persona as the object of male desire, effectively creating a socially acceptable mask for her own transgressive desire. Lempicka's masquerade of womanliness may have been simply a matter of playing the role of the femme lesbian for her own satisfaction, yet if this were the case, she must have been fully aware of the appeal of such exaggerated femininity in the heterocentric world of fashion and art consumption.

The importance of such speculation lies in the connection between Lempicka's self-creation as an empowered feminine woman and the idealized feminine centered world she created in her paintings. Many of her straightforward portraits depict high fashion, heightened femininity, similar to the artist's own style. In their attention to makeup, theatrical gestures, fashion accessories, and the voluptuousness of the female body, these paintings function as icons of the feminine masquerade. An example of this relation between art and life can be seen in the

similar pose of the artist's hands in the photo with cigarette, the bare shouldered portrait, and the gloved hands in *Jeune Fille en Vert*, an oil painting of 1929.

At first glance this work appears to be a standard fashion portrait, unflinchingly presenting the embellished female body for consumption. A young woman with a gleaming, volumetric body holds her hat in place, seemingly in the midst of a wind that animates the fabric of her green dress. The strange lighting helps to create an otherworldly ambiance to this piece; the girl's face and left arm are highlighted by a tenebristic light source, frontal, but to the left. In addition there appears to be an intense light source behind the figure, evident in the space between her left arm and hip. Her completely placid, emotionless attitude in the midst of these unusual conditions creates a disjunction from reality that emerges from an otherwise conventional portrait.

One could argue that images such as *Jeune Fille en Vert* simply recast the classic Freudian narcissistic woman, who develops a "narcissistic investment" in her own body. In this so called normal path of femininity,[5] the narcissistic woman pampers her body and strives through artifice to become the object of male desire, in effect believing that she is the phallus which the male wishes to possess. While artifice is at work in Lempicka's women, it is towards a different end, as will be made evident when the clothed portraits are placed in context with the nude studies of woman. The rock hard body beneath the figure's dress is sufficiently "masculine" in its strength to deflate any attempt to position *Jeune Fille en Vert* as one of a passive, narcissistic type. The body actually appears to merge with the clothing, in a machine-like rendition of wet drapery; the sheer sexual power of the body diminishes the importance of clothing, the artifice so important to the narcissistic woman.

Perhaps the most useful theoretical approach for interpreting Lempicka's imagery is to be found in the concept of the fetish. There is something elusive yet concrete about Lempicka's women and their unreality which brings the fetish to mind. Maurizio Calvesi alluded to this uncanny quality when he described "the metallic, aseptic consistency of the planes and colors... the glossy and sufficiently sapphic mystery of the opulences glimpsed or exhibited."[6] In traditional Freudian terms, fetishism is a defense mechanism available to males only. The fetish develops when a young boy witnesses his mother's genitals and at a coincident moment, is threatened with his own castration. The last object observed prior to this moment—often a body part or accessory, as in the classic case of the shoe fetishist—becomes an imaginary replacement for the mother's missing penis, which the boy must believe in or accept the possibility that he may be castrated as well. Thus the fetish provides a "way of avoiding the oedipal prohibition, choosing between giving up the mother or losing the penis." The fetish "remains a token of triumph over the threat of castration."7 The most important characteristic of the fetish is that it involves an overvaluation of a part of the body or an inanimate object. That object or body part becomes a substitute object of desire, which the fetishist invest with fantastic, supernatural power.

In Lempicka's paintings an emphasis is frequently placed on a particular body part or on an accessory which has much in common with a fetishistic over-

valuation. In some images it is possible to read elements of clothing, such as gloves or scarves, as fetishized. In *Jeune Fille en Vert* the artist has rendered the gloved hands with a particular rigidity and strength. The turgid poise of the left hand, with its almost mechanized animation, stands out in contrast to the girl's otherwise immobile and unemotional appearance. The hypothetical glove fetish represented in *Jeune Fille en Vert* bears an important relation with the two gloved photographs of the artist. In both of these photographs Lempicka's hands are the focus of dramatic tension in the composition. In the first example there is an alluring contrast established between the one gloved hand and the other bare one. In the second photograph Lempicka's gloved hands are poised directly below her face, subtly directing the viewer's gaze to the face at the same time they attract attention to themselves. The position and gesture of the hands indicate that the gloves may be soon removed.

A fetishized treatment of the fabric of women's clothing is prevalent in Lempicka's work, but is especially noticeable in the scarves that nearly cover many of her female figures. *Les Jeunes Filles*, *Girls*, and *Portrait of Arlette Broucard* are three paintings that provoke a reading of the scarf as fetish. In both of the double portraits of young women, an enlivened, billowing scarf occupies almost half of the composition. In each example the paired figures tilt their heads or bodies to caress the scarf, which serves to join the women together visually. Extreme close-ups with little or no background, both double portraits suggest a private, erotic moment through the intimacy of the space and the treatment of the eyes. One woman in either pair has her eyes half closed or rolled back while the other stares blankly to the left. In both of these paintings a sexual tension is created through the representation of opposing physical states—the outward directed alertness of one figure contrasts with the other's nearly total immersion in sexual pleasure. The scarf is positioned at the center of this tension in both compositions. The *Portrait of Arlette Broucard* is a full body portrait of a specific wealthy patron. Even in this comparatively conventional treatment of the figure, the artist has painted an oversized scarf which appears to be caught in a strong wind, which mysteriously has little effect on the rest of the subject's clothing.

Since girls have no penis to lose, they have no reason to fear the mother's castration; thus classical theory simply does not allow for the possibility of a female fetishist.8 Of the many reinterpretations of Freud's basic theory of the fetish, Teresa de Lauritis' book *The Practice of Love, Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* provides the most dramatic reworking, and allows the most flexibility for placing individuals within a useful paradigm.[9] De Lauritis provides a thoughtful analysis of the various feminist, lesbian and psychoanalytic reinterpretations of Freud's fetishism. For de Lauritis, lesbian fetishism is not about castration anxiety at all, but about the lesbian subject's lack of a positive, sexualized female body image. She writes:

> What is disavowed must be the loss of something of which her body has knowledge, pain and pleasure; something toward which she has instinctual aims. That something is not, cannot be, a penis but is most

> likely to be her body itself (body image and body ego), although the symbolic structure of castration rewrites that loss as a lack of a penis. For her, then, disavowal produced the ambivalent or contradictory perception of having and yet not having a body; [that is] having a body designated as female and yet not having a body that can be narcissistically and libidinally invested.

De Lauritis's recasting of the terms of fetishism still operates within what she describes as an erotic economy of the loss—the loss of the mother's imaginary penis is replaced by the lesbian's lack of an imagined erotically feminine ideal. In her use of the terms "body image" and "body ego," de Lauritis refers to a process of self-development similar to the identification processes central to Jacques Lacan's mirror stage. Lacan described the infant's experience of recognizing its reflection in a mirror as an important moment for "establishing a relation between the organism and its reality—or, as they say, between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt* [the inner world and the outer world]."[10] De Lauritis's missing lesbian body ego is not fixed to a specific stage, such as pre- or post-oedipal or mirror stage. Rather, the building of a lesbian identity takes place throughout a continuum that may or may not include infant experiences. She writes, "as much a sociocultural construction as it is an effect of early childhood experiences, sexual identity is...dynamically restructured by forms of fantasy private and public, conscious and unconscious."[11] Because modern societies are predominantly heterocentric in their structures, the lesbian is not often presented with mechanisms which positively reflect and cultivate an erotic lesbian bodily identity, or body ego.

What makes de Lauritis's theory congenial to Lempicka's work is its emphasis on the mobility of the fetish object. Where Freud fixes the creation of the fetish to a single moment, de Lauritis allows for a lesbian fetish that is often constructed retroactively and by a kind of reverse discourse.[12] The Freudian, male fetishist presumably goes through life fixated on the valorized, imagined substitute for his mother's missing penis. The object of the lesbian fetishist's desire is much more flexible than the Freudian fetish. The notion of the fetish as mobile facilitates the production of fantasies which de Lauritis argues are central to the experience of perverse desire.

Accordingly, it is difficult to pin down Lempicka's fetish. As discussed above, in certain works the fetish object appears to be gloves or a scarf. In many other works, however, there is not a particular emphasis on accessory items, but on a part of the female body. The frequent emphasis on the breasts as solid objects, with nipples erect, suggests in some cases that this is the body fragment Lempicka may have fetishized. *Nude with Sails* and *Jeune Fille en Vert* are two works where the breasts signal arousal and a machine-like potency.

A reading of the overvaluation of the breasts as fetish in some of Lempicka's works is complicated by others where the breasts and the entire body are given a solid, rubbery treatment. *Beautiful Raphaella* is a striking example; the erotic power is diffused throughout the surface of the smooth, warm skin of this reclining nude. *Seated Nude* is another example of this almost rubbery body type, so differ-

ent from the more metallic treatment of many of the artist's women, yet still somehow outside of the natural realm. In both *Seated Nude* and *Nude with Sails* the figures loom nearly as large as skyscrapers. They have an unsettling lack of particularized personality despite the potency of their forms.

Given the variety of Lempicka's women, her fetish is best described as the female body as an ideal, phantasmic whole. In articulating her conception of the fetish, de Lauritis allows for a range of sexual practices and fantasies, insisting that whatever the sexual style, in all cases lesbian desire "is sustained on fantasy scenarios that restage the loss and recovery of a phantasmic female body." In many ways Lempicka's paintings operate as affirmations, or recoveries, of this phantasmic female body.

Lempicka's double and group portraits depict fantasy scenarios the most directly, although individual portraits may also be read this way. Often the backgrounds provide a narrative setting in which a fantasy can be staged, as Maurizio Calvesi has noted.[13] *Portrait of Arlette Broucard* and *Andromeda* are two works where the background determines a particular fantasy narrative. In *Andromeda* the amplification of the figure in contrast to the distorted cityscape dwarfed in the background heightens the sexual drama of this scene from a classical myth. Giancarlo Marmori describes the figure as "sluggish" and points out that "it is surely a question of playacting and not of any revival of the ancient, since the mythological scenes, whether violent of elegiac, all unfold in twentieth century surroundings."[14]

The all-female, eroticized scenes depicted in *Woman Bathing* and *Group of Four Nudes* provide some of the most convincing examples of Lempicka's conscious or unconscious impulse to create a phantasmic, feminine ideal.[15] *Women Bathing* is a closely cropped view of several women overlapping and emerging unbelievably, from a shallow, indeterminate space. The barest details of a cityscape in the background and a futuristic pool of water in the foreground confuse attempts to fix this scene as either interior or out of doors. The figures are sculptural and finished in some areas, and airy and dissolved in others; the central figure, whose back is turned to the viewer, appears to be truncated below the knees, growing out of the stone steps like a phantom. Her right arm is bent to fit into the space, and is made up of overlapping forms rendered in a style that recalls Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*. The rest of the composition is unusually still, suggesting a moment frozen in time that this gestural motion is breaking. The right arm of the reclining figure in the foreground morphs into her leg, and the legs of this figure vanish behind the legs of another figure. The total effect is dreamlike and perversely erotic.

Group of Four Nudes presents the most undiluted instance of lesbian sex enacted. The writhing, orgiastic women have a vampiristic quality prevalent in both fashion photography and in western cultural representations of lesbians. Three of the four figures have their heads thrown back and eyes closed, with their long necks exposed as if waiting for the vampire's bite. The space is cloying, cropped to include only portions of each figure. The extreme closeness of the figures to the picture plane is a device Lempicka used in many of her works to create an atmo-

sphere of cloying intimacy. In her article "Tracking the Vampire" Sue Ellen Close notes that settings in fog or gloom are crucial to vampire lore; film and literary scenes of the vampire often create "a palpable atmospheric touching." The air surrounding Lempicka's *Group of Four Nudes* is not foggy but uncannily clear, emphasizing the proximity of the figures.

Case establishes a historical and cultural correspondence between lesbianism and vampirism. "In the nineteenth century the stable notion of nature as natural and the natural as good made it possible to configure same-sex desire as unnatural—thus monstrous, thus vampire."[16] She quotes from *Mein Kampf*, where Hitler describes the Jewish race bleeding and poisoning society. "Such discourse invented the vampiric position—the one who waits, strikes and soils the living pure blood; and it is against this bloody discourse that the queer vampire strikes."[17] Case writes of an empowered lesbian vampire, striking back at a dominant discourse that has created this marginalization. "The equation of hetero=sex=life and homo=sex=unlife generated a queer discourse that reveled in proscribed desiring by imagining sexual objects and sexual practices within the realm of other-than-natural.... In this discourse, new forms of being or beings, are imagined through desire."[18]

It would be problematic to impute Lempicka's openly lesbian subjects with the sort of late twentieth century queer political intention that Case establishes. Nevertheless, paintings such as *Group of Four Nudes* and *Women Bathing* have an undeniably disruptive quality in their ambivalence towards the unnaturalness of the erotic lesbian subject. They exhibit an undefinable power in their very separation from reality, and in their absorption in a realm of physical pleasure. Vampiristic elements are prevalent throughout Lempicka's studies of individual women as well. *Beautiful Raphaella* and *Nude with Sails* are two more examples of elongated necks bared for consumption. The most pervasive vampiristic quality in Lempicka's work is a subtle, at times almost feline, anthropomorphism, as seen in *Girls* and *Andromeda*.

The tropes of fashion photography provide a probable explanation for the vampirism of Lempicka's female figures. In her article "Fashion and the Homospectatorial Look," Diane Fuss discusses vampirism in women's fashion photography, basing her argument on the notion that "in constant threat of dissolution, female heterosexuality must be critically maintained through the cultural institutionalization of the homosexual look."[19] She credits the fashion industry as being one of the few institutionalized places where women can look at other women with cultural impunity... women consume in voyeuristic, if not vampiric fashion, images of other women."[20]

Through her portraits of women Lempicka conjured in paint an eroticized, feminine realm in which women exchange the pleasures of looking, consuming, and offering themselves up to or for sexual pleasure with other women. This pictured world is similar to the imagined, fetishistic realm of de Lauritis's perverse desire. De Lauritis writes of:

> a femininity at once constrained and defiant that is revalorized in the

popular imagination of all-female sociosexual spaces, amazonic or matriarchal, ranging from girls' schools to prisons and from alternative worlds to convents and brothels. Here the female body is the site of a sexuality that is both incited and forbidden or regulated, but in either case female-directed and female centered."[21]

It is significant that during the same years in which the erotic subjects were produced, the artist also painted a number of female portraits with Catholic themes. Among these are a sober, close cropped portrait of a crying nun titled *Mother Superior*, and another of Lempicka's daughter, Kizette, in first communion garb, *La Communiante*. These religious images are not incongruous with the artist's more worldly subjects when they are considered as part of what de Lauritis describes as the fetishistic project to "revalorize...all female sociosexual spaces."

Lempicka must have been aware, to some degree, of the window of opportunity provided by the fashion world, or perhaps she instinctively knew that perverse desire can operate through the female to female identification that occurs at the site of the fashion image. She aligned herself with fashion by producing paintings for the covers of *Die Dame*, a German woman's magazine, and by creating a public identity for herself that epitomized the glamorous heights of fashion. Further, she incorporated the settings and accoutrements of the fashion world into her paintings, using these artificial props at least in fragments, to depict a highly erotic, female-centered fantasy realm and to recover in paint a perversely ideal, sexualized, female body.

Notes

1 Giancarlo Marmori, *The Major works of Tamara de Lempicka* 1925-35, (London: Idea Editions, 1978), 5.
2 Emmanuel Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective*, (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), 170.
3 Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as a Masquerade," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 10 (1929), 306.
4 Ibid., 307.
5 Elizabeth Grosz, "Lesbian Fetishism?" in Emily Apter and William Pietz, eds., *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 110-111.
6 Maurizio Calvesi, "Tamara, the Horizons of Style," in *Tamara de Lempicka, Elegant Transgressions*, (Rome and Montreal: Academia di Francia, Montreal Museum of Fine Art, 1994), 12.
7 Grosz quoting Freud in "Lesbian Fetishism?" 105.
8 Ibid., 101-105; also see Naomi Schor's article "Female Fetishism: The Case of George Sand" in *Poetics Today, International Journal for Theory and Analysis of Literature and Communication* 6, 1-2 (1985):301-310 for a discussion of cases of female fetishism, unacknowledged by classical psychoanalytic theory.
9 Given the limited scope of this article, I will not review the contributions of several

theorists who have contributed to the literature on the female fetish. Significant among these omissions are Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, and Sarah Kofman.

10 Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York: Norton, 1977), 2.

11 Teresa de Lauritis, *The Practice of Love, Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), xix.

12 Ibid., 264. Also see de Lauritis's comments on Naomi Schor's notion of the mobility of the fetish in the works of Georges Sand, Ibid., 167.

13 Calvesi, 15.

14 Marmori, 7.

15 *Rhythm*, a painting of 1924 is an important work of this same type. It depicts a stagey, intimate gathering of five female nudes. The figures are impossibly long and curving, distorted to fit into the fantasy space. See the exhibition catalog *Tamara de Lempicka, Elegant Transgressions* for a reproduction of this image.

16 Sue-Ellen Case, "Tracking the Vampire," *Differences* 3.2 (1991): 15.

17 Ibid., 6.

18 Ibid., 4.

19 Diane Fuss, "Fashion and the Homospectatorial Look," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 4 (summer 1992), 734.

20 Ibid., 713.

21 De Lauritis, 264.

Using Art To Laugh Oneself Sick:
Two Examples Of Punning In Early Avant-Garde Art

Donald Kuspit

Puns feature prominently in early avant-garde art, so much so that it has been argued that punning was once the core of avant-garde art, or at least initiated it: to be an avant-garde artist one had to be able to come up with a good pun. I want to focus on two examples of punning, one by the Cubist Georges Braque, the other by the Dadaist Marcel Duchamp. I want to argue that the humor involved in their puns is a narcissistic defense—humor in general is of course a major way of maintaining self-esteem—but of a peculiar kind: the pun is an intellectual ostrich hole in which the artist hides from his affective life while seeming to acknowledge it. More particularly, the artist uses the pun less to seek and thus find, than to find in order to forget: he finds and expresses his true self—gets enough of a glimpse of it to have a sense of his own authenticity and reality as an artist—and instantly abandons it, in fear of what he might find if he explored it further. And, perhaps above all, because to do so would require more than art—would take him beyond art—and all he wants is to be an artist, to make mysterious, exciting works of art. In the end, art is all for him, not the psychic truth. In short, the pun articulates the artist's recognition of his creative self—presents it in the disguise of the pun—but by its very nature precludes any understanding of his self as a whole. It may, ultimately, be a way of circumventing the self while giving it lipservice.

Thus the pun is a way of seeing and not seeing at the same time, and as such a kind of pseudo-insight. Its wit is pseudo-self-reflection. The pun plays safe while pretending to be unsafe: it takes a risk, but stops short of becoming a challenge. To say this another way, the pun points but does not penetrate, acknowledges but does not analyze, states a problem but does not attempt to solve it. The pun is a very personal, intricate Gordian knot, which the artist struggles to tie, but then cannot untie. He does not realize that it has to be cut: the emotional intelli-

gence it takes to conquer it by cutting it with the sword of self-assertion, as Alexander the Great did, is, paradoxically, of a higher order than the intellectual intelligence, however brilliant, it took to tie it. The pun shortcircuits working through by tossing psychic problems off: trivialized into jokes, they lose their urgency. The pun, in other words, is an ingenious—if precarious—mode of denial, stopping a psychic process in its tracks: it playfully admits that something is "wrong" in the self, but refuses to admit that there is anything fundamentally wrong *with* the self—something that requires special attention and effort. Instead, the narcissistic wound signified by the pun is turned into art by being treated ironically—conveyed in the form of a pun. The pun is thus a dubious self-analysis and pseudo-healing. It is a funny half truth used to defend against the unfunny whole truth.

I might note in generalized passing, and no doubt controversially, that to turn a psychic issue into art is a way of staying on its surface rather than engaging its depth, that is, a superficial way of dealing with it: art turns what threatens to become very painful into a pleasurable or at least tolerable surface. To make art is not so much to investigate an issue as to describe it metaphorically, which no doubt alleviates some of the suffering associated with it but does not afford much enlightenment about it. Art looks like self-reflection, but it is, rather, self-expression—and limited self-expression at that—which is different. In any case, in the examples I will offer, the pun is a complicated strategy for dealing with an uncertain sense of self and achieving a measure of certainty without any great understanding of the reasons for the uncertainty.

In the case of Braque, it is the normal uncertainty associated with an attempt to achieve an autonomous identity, in his case a unique artistic identity that is nonetheless socially acceptable. His problem was to differentiate—indeed, radically separate—his art from that of the past without alienating the public that preferred it, if only out of habit. He did not simply want to develop his own modern terms, but needed to have them socially accepted, confirming that they had a larger interpersonal relevance—that they spoke to and for the society they were made in, and thus that he was not simply a solipsist working in a narcissistic vacuum. In the case of Duchamp, it is an endemic uncertainty, which is objectified—even reified—by the pun, and becomes an ironical source of artistic identity and certainty, indeed, suggests that it is comical—a kind of joke—to be an artist, thus mocking the seriousness with which society traditionally takes the artist. As an emerging artist, Braque had a problem with his public: it made him uncertain of himself by rejecting his art. He solved the problem by asserting himself in the disguise of the pun, which gave him a measure of self-certainty—enough to continue functioning as an independent artist, without giving up the wish for public recognition and relevance. Duchamp, in contrast, was inherently split, and dismissed his public as beside the point of his split, which he fetishized in defiance of it. He did not care what the public thought of him, only how he could confound it with the Gordian knot of himself. Ultimately he repudiates the idea that art is a social activity—that the artist speaks to and for a society—however much particular individuals might identify with his art, because of their own anti-social, split personalities.

The fact that Braque made puns only at the beginning of his career, and

stopped making them once he had secured a sense of artistic identity and became socially accepted—believed in his own avant-garde uniqueness and significance, and convinced society to believe in it, that is, realize that his art spoke to and for it, not only for himself—suggests that the narcissistic issue involved in his punning was normal. In contrast, Duchamp continued to make puns all his career—indeed, punning is his standard not to say compulsive way of making art (virtually all his readymades are puns)—which suggests that his narcissistic problem was deeper, that is, pathological. Braque eventually found his particular artistic identity and achieved a sense of certainty, while Duchamp never did: he exploited and fetishized his uncertainty about his identity. The result superficially looks like art, but, as is well-known, it is anti-art, which, as I have suggested, can be thought of as anti-social art, more particularly, art with a perversely split personality: superficially social but profoundly anti-social. Duchamp's readymades "narcissicize" socially given objects, mocking their social identity while seeming to maintain it. They thus have a split identity. This process of hermeticization or metaphysicalization, as conventional art history calls it, is in emotional fact a narcissistic devaluation of society—a radical replacement of social with autistic meaning. Duchamp's readymades are, indeed, private jokes—puns. One can get the joke—decipher the pun; the problem is to understand its psychodynamic import. Duchamp suggested certain psychodynamic meanings, but they were always presented in the spirit of a joke—as part of the joke of the anti-art object.

Duchamp, then, was an anti-artist; from the point of view here, this means that he never arrived at a secure sense of artistic identity and uniqueness. Anti-art is a shortcut to uniqueness and individuality, but it is not exactly artistic uniqueness and individuality. That is, it offers no model of integration, old or new. Anti-art affords a kind of pseudo-identity: the anti-artist achieves a sense of identity by attacking art that is traditionally identified as such, but that does not exactly give him an artistic identity of his own, nor does it result in things that the world is willing to recognize as art. Indeed, the debate about whether or not Duchamp's readymades are or are not art has become philosophically interminable and absurd.

Does that mean Duchamp was more authentically and consistently avant-garde than Braque, who in fact is thought of as avant-garde—artistically revolutionary—only during his early, punning Cubist period? Theodor Adorno wrote that Dada "activists were as much given to laughter about what they were doing as were the people outside," which for Adorno meant that they thought it was impossible to make art. But is it possible that they were too uncertain of themselves to make it, and so had to devalue it, in a kind of sour grapes process? The Dadaists may have thought that "no art was better than false art," as Adorno said,1 but is it that they were too narcissistically disturbed to know what objectively true art might be, granted that in modernity it was necessarily different than it had been traditionally? If, as Adorno writes, art is a "medium of objectification for the subject," then the subject implicit in Duchamp's anti-art is clearly quite different from the subject implicit in Braque's art, whether or not one wants to regard anti-art as more authentically and durably avant-garde than true modern art.

Braque's *Nature morte, violon et cruche*, 1909-10 has been described by

Alvin Martin as "a visual pun on the human figure"—an "amusing metamorphosis" whose original and correct title was *Broc et violin*. "'Broc'," as Martin points out, "is the phonetic homonym for the artist's name, and thus identifies the painting's subject, a hermetic self-portrait composed of the artist's cherished possessions." "Such a play on words regarding the artist's name was current at the time"—which, if not the technical beginning of Braque's career, was when he came into his own as a Cubist, and began to be taken seriously as an important, unique, advanced artist. Thus, in February 1909, in one of his first public appearances as a Cubist, Braque exhibited at the gallery of Berthe Weill, who recorded the event with the notation "Braque en Broc." "The pun is enriched by the fact that Braque's very name in context of public response to cubism made a delightful joke, particularly in light of Zavie's description of him as an ' eccentric humorist.' This, no doubt amused Braque as much as it did his detractors. The French adjective *braque* means a harebrained fellow or madcap—it also means to be of daft appearance"—like the Cubist pictures Braque was painting. Moreover writes Martin, "in the context of Braque's pun, the *trompe l'oeil* nail becomes explicable." Apart from its meaning within "the ambiguous formal dialogue" of Cubism, it "takes on a special meaning," for it brings "the verb *braquer*...into the game. *Braquer* means to point, to direct, or to fix one's glance. Thus the nail 'braque vers la tete braque de Braque'."2 Now why was Braque—and Picasso and their friends—so given to "' hermetic' punning...at this time," as Martin says? When it first appeared, "Cubist style...was inflammatory in both the eyes of public and critical taste." Hermetic punning served a double function: to narcissistically defend against the criticism which dismissed it as an incomprehensible, harebrained joke on art—something which even Matisse thought Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* was—and to confirm that to make such a tradition-defying and destructive witty art was the only way of achieving an artistic identity of one's own in the modern world. One's identity in modernity was always a negative identity: an identity achieved by revolting against and overturning traditional identity. Such a "new" identity was not a solid identity—as solid as traditional identity: it was always ambiguous, playful, as fragmented as a Cubist picture, that is, a play on the "substance" of identity, resulting in an appearance that had no self-identity or cohesiveness, but was always split, ironical, a mockery of fixed, clear and distinct, socially self-evident identity. Braque's punning issued in a private sense of identity which was, from the perspective of the everyday public sense of identity, skewed and absurd—daft and bizarre. But from Braque's point of view it established his autonomy and independence—his significant difference.

In fact, Braque's punning figure, while fragmented into still life objects, remains a cohesive figure: all the objects are clearly grouped to form a figure, however strange and unconventional the figure. (The technique in fact is familiar from Arcimboldo, and thus avant-garde only in terms of its contemporary context.) The still life objects pun on the parts of the human body, just as the title puns on Braque's name-identity. The displacement, interplay, and ambiguity typical of a pun occurs—the figure becomes "objectified," the objects subjectified—but once one gets the joke one "recognizes" Braque, that is, has a sense of his identity. It

seems very private; Braque comes across as introspective. But the introspection suggested is limited: Braque displays objects he associates with himself, but they are everyday objects, particular to Braque only by the joking way of the complex pun. Thus, we don't really know who Braque is, nor does Braque know who he is: he is only Braque, the painter of the clever picture.

The picture represents him as self-identical: split or fragmented into everyday objects symbolic of himself, partly obscured by his painting touch, but still held together or as integrated, however nominally, as any ordinary figure. I suggest that this picture, like the other Cubist figures of Braque, finally became socially acceptable, because the figure remained intact, however ironically disguised and fragmented. The public could identify with this figure: they too, saw, that they were "essentially" the everyday objects they used—a sum of associations that had a nominal yet nonetheless clearly social coherence. Braque, after all, was just like everyone else: he identified with and was identified by his possessions, particularly those—a newspaper, and a pitcher of wine to drink from while reading it—associated with his private, leisure time activity. Braque's pun, after all, is quite benign, however initially disturbing.

I want to suggest that Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919 lacks this subliminal coherence—this nominal and finally everyday social integration, which is why it is both more subversive art historically speaking and more pathological psychodynamically speaking. Duchamp's work is radically—unhealably—split: an unresolvable contradiction. The pun is used not to suggest and protect a secret sense of true self, if also subtly mediate it to an indifferent public, but to falsify the true self and even deny its possibility and reality—even the possibility and reality of any constancy of self. Indeed, Duchamp suggests—projects, I would argue—through the device of the pun, a self helplessly and hopelessly split—invariably false to itself. It is always the opposite of what it declares itself to be—in other words, a hypocrite, however unwittingly. As is well-known, the joke of the pun is on Leonardo's masterpiece and woman in general: if one pronounces the letters as they are pronounced in French, one discovers that one has said that "she has a hot cunt." It is a multilayered pun: the letters become words which become a devaluing male comment on the beautiful, dignified woman—she's just another slut. She's smiling because she's thinking of being fucked—more probably, of masturbating, that is, fucking herself.

Masturbation is Duchamp's preferred sexual activity, as suggested by Duchamp's painting of himself secretly masturbating in a railroad car (1910)—as in the later *Blow Job* by Andy Warhol, one sees only the figure's head, but is told the sexual "truth," which remains "conceptual," thus preserving proprieties while discrediting them, and letting one in on the joke even though the joke is on one (the figure is completely self-absorbed, even though it looks like it is relating to the viewer)—as well as by the aura around the hand of *Dr. Dumouchel* (1910) (the same Dr. Dumouchel who posed for Adam in *Paradise* (1910-11), with his hands over his genitals) and the masturbating male figures in the *Large Glass*. But is the Mona Lisa really a woman? Duchamp gives her a moustache and goatee: she is a man in drag—a probably homosexual transvestite. Finally, the crippling—cheap-

ening and literal defacing—of Leonardo's beautifully painted masterpiece is confirmed by the artlessness—crudity—of Duchamp's graffiti: the letters, goatee, and moustache are applied by pencil. Duchamp's casual pencil marks are a kind of onanistic spilling of his comic seed on the Mona Lisa, who is reduced to a masturbatory image. But then one is masturbating at the sight of a man in drag: what does that tell you about yourself?

Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.* is currently celebrated as a statement of universal bisexuality—an ironic declaration of inherent androgyny—but I suggest that it shows core gender confusion and the narcissistic sexuality that frequently accompanies it. Joyce McDougall has written about how in male masturbation the violently moving hand becomes the symbolic heaving vagina around the penis, reinstating primal scene fantasy. But my point is that Duchamp's so-called undecidability—his uncertainty about whether he is a man or a woman, evident in other works in which he appears in drag, that is, as the *Rose of Rrose, c'est la vie*—is evidence for a profound split in his self-representation, indicating, at the least, a borderline personality. The humor of the punning of *L.H.O.O.Q.*, as well as that of most of his other works—usually a combination of visual and verbal punning—quickly fades, once one realizes that what is being articulated is a pathological personality. The pun is a masquerade on narcissistic disturbance, palming it off as an insider art joke, but in fact reifying it—making it a comic end in itself, that is, a joke to be taken on face value rather than a situation to be analyzed in depth. This makes Duchamp's puns all the more malevolent—really "bad" jokes.

Thus, Duchamp's puns are in bad faith with himself, while those of Braque establish good faith with himself, however deviously—establish a sense of true and even interpersonal self. Duchamp uses humor to confirm his defensive indifference to himself, however often he is the obvious referent of his art—much more often than Braque is of his art. Is Duchamp compulsively repeating and trying to master some disintegrative infantile narcissistic trauma—perhaps that of having two successful artist-brothers, whom he had to better by going one avant-garde step further (indeed, going to what was then the avant-garde limit) with the help of the pun? Perhaps, but I think the key point is that Duchamp turned his emotional immaturity—his arrested development—into a pseudo-artistic triumph by way of the perversity of his puns. However intellectually sophisticated, they existed only to generate infantile excitement. His readymades are, indeed, exciting, teasing, and in the end frustrating objects, however primitive the satisfaction they propose. Thus Duchamp became bogged down in endless wisecracking, but his puns seem more cracked than wise. In contrast, Braque used the pun to develop a sense of integral self, however obliquely. In both cases sly punning created a private sense—one might say scene—of selfhood that defies the conventional public sense of it, even as the punning representation of selfhood (and the artist) catches and outrages the public eye by reason of its unconventionality and deception. But in the end the irony—hilarity, as Jasper Johns said of Duchamp's works—of the pun wears thin, unless, finally, it enriches the sense of self, conveying a new however occult sense of its integrity, as occurs in Braque's Cubist portraits, rather than mocks the possibility of any integrity of self, indeed, makes the very idea of continuity or unity of

self a joke by presenting the self as permanently at odds with itself, as occurs in Duchamp's comic Dadaist works. That is no emotional joke however many artistic games—or rather anti-artistic fun—it can be turned into.

Notes

1 T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 64.

2 Alvin Martin, "Georges Braque and the Origins of The Language of Synthetic Cubism," *Braque: The Papier Collés* (Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1982, exhibition catalogue), 67-69 in passim.

Contributors

C.E. Emmer is a doctoral candidate in Philosophy at SUNY Stony Brook. His concentration is in German Idealism.

Ron Graziani is Associate Professor of Art History at Eastern Carolina University.

Mary Beth Karoll is a doctoral candidate in the History of Art at Bryn Mawr College. Her dissertation is on Sherrie Levine.

Donald Kuspit is Professor of Art History and Philosophy at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and Editor of Art Criticism.

Tricia Laughlin is a Ph.D student in the History of Art at Rutgers University.

Hope Mauzerall earned her doctorate in art history at the University of Virginia in 1996. Her dissertation was titled "Matter in Modernism: the Bodying Forth of Art into Life."

Charlene Regester is Assistant Professor of Africana Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Karl F. Volkmar is Professor of the History of Art at Southeastern Louisiana University.

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