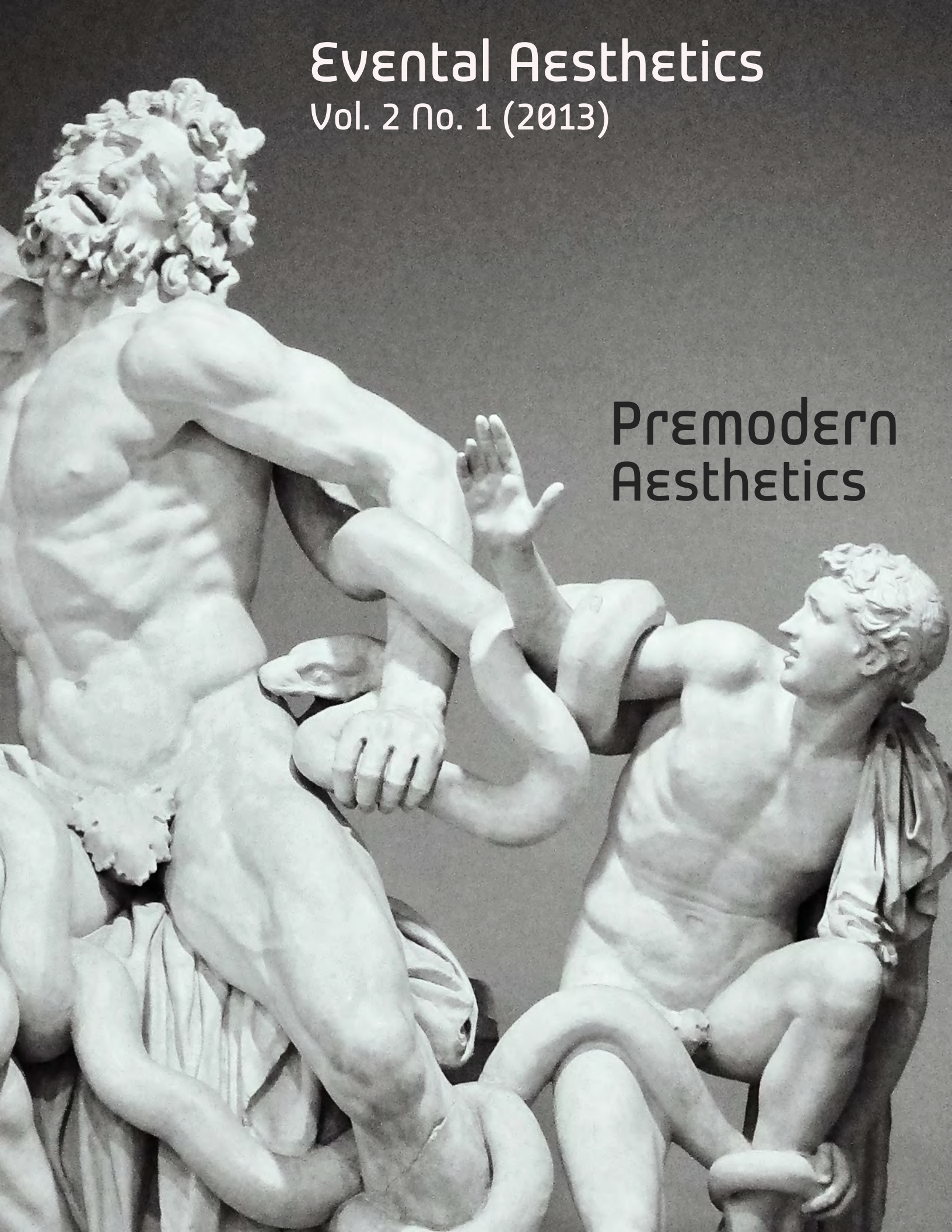
Evental Aesthetics
Vol. 2 No. 1 (2013)

Premodern Aesthetics



Evental Aesthetics

www.eventalaesthetics.net
ISSN: 2167-1931

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Introduction

Joanna Demers

On 4 February 2013, the media announced that the remains of Richard III had been unearthed beneath a parking lot in Leicester. DNA tests linking the bones to two living descendants of the king were conclusive. The find also confirmed certain rumors while leaving many others in doubt. Richard III died of a blow to the head suffered in battle, after having been stabbed multiple times. He had pronounced scoliosis, a condition that probably gave rise to the Shakespearean image of an ugly hunchback.

Public reception of the news was enthusiastic. For as many as two whole days, at least in the US, Richard III overshadowed Syrian civil war, gun control, and Washington gridlock. Readers of the *New York Times* front page article who chose to leave comments were unanimous in their passion for the king, even if they argued vehemently over the merits of various biographies of the Leicester monarch. On one issue, at least, all seemed to agree: Shakespeare's play was terrific theater, but poor history, written to flatter the Tudor family that wrested the crown from this last Plantagenet. The historically accurate Richard III, we are told, might have

been a tyrant by today's standards, but by the standards of his day was positively progressive, having instituted a few reforms that benefitted the poor. Alas, the true Richard III remains a lacuna, something about which competing factions can argue, but none can claim to know objectively.

And so it is with any history. We are often most drawn to those histories that reflect what we want to see, whether it is an incorrigible murderer who seduces a widow over her husband's corpse, or a statesman who was only trying to do his best within a system that was unapologetically brutal. Suetonius knew this, which is why he gave us lurid details on the Imperial Roman family, rather than incidental trivia on bookkeeping or taxation. Robert Graves knew this all the more, which is why he gave us those lurid details wrapped up into a novel called *I, Claudius*, starring the most charismatic pathological killer, Livia. What a letdown, to do a scant bit of research and read that the true Livia was an upstanding Roman matron. This bit of historicity is worth little when compared to the pitch-perfect image of a political genius trapped in a woman's body, who nonetheless manages to run an empire, poison dozens, and thwart republicanism for over fifty years.

Quentin Meillassoux writes of the fallacy of rational philosophy, that it cannot conceive of the possibility of thought prior to humanity. Thus, although modern science has been excavating and imagining both the distant past and future without humans, modern philosophy cannot do so if it is to remain faithful to Kant's crushing blow to metaphysics. There is no way for reason to think of the object-in-itself, the Kantian revolution tells us; reason can only conceive of things through itself. Time that predates or postdates reason is thus unthinkable.

Meillassoux's argument is revolutionary, but ours is more modest and self-evident. Even in history that is *human* history, as opposed to humanity's pre-history, we are hamstrung by our inability not to find most interesting the details that reflect our biases, prejudices, and fancies. Even premodern artists, who preceded Descartes and the onset of philosophical modernity, insisted on measuring their works and ideas according to those established by predecessors and institutions, even when their own works and ideas suggested more intricate relationships and far-reaching consequences.

For example: revisiting notions of tragedy in the works of Racine and his mentor Nicole, Peter Hanly illustrates that these playwrights struggled to locate an authoritative essence of tragedy in their historical

predecessors, winding up at odds with one another to the detriment of both their equally complex positions.

In another example, writes Sylwia Chrostowska, the Gothic figure of the gargoyle was caught between established notions of the grotesque and of sacred architecture. Gargoyles remain problematic even today, and from a secular point of view, because they cannot be fully apprehended through modern lenses that insist on parsing out superstition from orthodoxy and beauty from evil. Instead these creatures are most accurately viewed as cultural and aesthetic dualities, though this sticky ambiguity does nothing for gargoyles' appeal.

Evental Aesthetics has adopted a new organization that splits each issue into themed and non-themed sections. We welcome submissions for the latter category that have to do with any issues pertaining to philosophy and aesthetics. We offer two inaugural articles here. James Wierzbicki undertakes an attentive examination of multiple temporalities in both Jackson Pollock's painting and Elliott Carter's composition. Cornelia Tsakiridou provides a similarly nuanced application of Hegelian philosophy to the perception of cinema, a reading that acknowledges cinema's status in relation to, yet distinct from, modernist painting.

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COLLISION

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A new genre of speculative writing created by the Editors of *Evental Aesthetics,* the Collision is a concise but pointed essay that introduces philosophical questions raised by a specific aesthetic experience. A Collision is not an entire, expository journey; not a full-fledged argument but the potential of an argument. A Collision is an encounter that is also a point of departure: the impact of a striking confrontation between experience, thought, and writing may propel later inquiries into being.

Chrostowska, S. D. "A Collision of Gargoyles." ***Evental Aesthetics*** **2, no. 1 (2013): 10-20.**

ABSTRACT

This article addresses the aesthetic status of gargoyles in medieval Gothic architecture. Irreducible to the grotesque yet manifestly discrepant with the core of cathedral and monastic buildings, the gargoyle serves as an entry point for an exploration of the stylistic relations comprising the Gothic and reflecting the cultural duality of the ecclesiastic sites of its historical emergence. The relation between gargoyles and the bulk of Gothic structures and ornamentation is discussed in terms of an "aesthetics of contrast."

KEYWORDS

medieval architecture; Gothic; cathedrals; ecclesiastical buildings; marginal sculpture; grotesque; aesthetics of contrast

A Collision of Gargoyles [1]

S. D. Chrostowska

> I don't believe that my peasant will do any harm, for example, to the Lautrec that you have, and I dare even believe that the Lautrec will, by simultaneous contrast, become even more distinguished, and mine will gain from the strange juxtaposition, because the sunlit and burnt, weather-beaten quality of the strong sun and strong air will show up more clearly beside the face powder and stylish outfit.
>
> • V. van Gogh [2]

The grotesque figural gargoyle, a peculiarity of Gothic architecture, admits of several overlapping lines of explanation.[3] One takes it to be primarily the elaboration of an architectural necessity — the rainspout — thus a genre of applied art. Another sees it as a three-dimensional apotropaic image, designed to ward off evil. Still another

focuses on its edifying symbolism, its capacity for theological work in the profane realm, appealing outside of the church to the vulgar taste and superstitions of the illiterate public in their own, residually pagan visual language. A fourth interpretation — the gargoyle as spiritual distraction — is the fruit of medieval controversy, wherein the clerical criticism of "excessive" monastic art provoked a defence of it. To its detractors, such production, which went beyond gargoyles, was unjustifiable, wasteful and shameful, a kind of folly that, while it could be aesthetically pleasing and fascinating, was inappropriate for the *ecclesia* and unacceptable for the cloister, an encroachment upon the religious aesthetics of moderation called for by reformist monasticism.[4] To its traditionalist defenders, however, immoderate ecclesiastical art was not only harmless, but glorified and rendered service to God, strengthening devotion.[5]

To these four theories one could add a fifth, archi-aesthetic one: flagrant imaginative *play*, which the Church somehow tolerated. As Huizinga reminds us:

> [W]hen we contemplate certain examples from the teeming treasury of plastic form, we find it hard indeed to suppress the idea of a play of fancy, the playful creativity of mind or hand. The . . . magical mazes of ornamental motifs, the caricature-like distortions of human and animal forms — all these are bound to suggest play as the growing-point of art. But they should do no more than suggest it.[6]

Bataille's extension of Huizinga offers another way of explaining art through play: the transgressive spiritual desire of play is behind all artistic "excess" and the dimension of the sacred. Gadamer, meanwhile, sides with Schiller (and, to that extent, against Huizinga): the presence of play in artistic practice takes us beyond intention- , medium- , or convention-based aesthetic models.[7] In its generality, however, the art-as-play thesis fails to elucidate the special case before us.

Exterior, beside and above angels in tabernacles and massive saint-framed portals through which the incoming faithful must pass as if to undergo purification, the gargoyles hold sway, protruding from parapets and corners, referring with ludic candor and chimerical ingenuity to the world of the vulgar, the low-brow, and the ordinary, where disparate things commingle as they please. Gargoyles may be grotesque, but we must not forget that, far from antithetical or accidental to Gothic

architecture (as reaction, parody, provocation, perversion or aberration), they are its integral element. Neither a standalone, autonomous motif, on the one hand, nor a mere effect or symptom of their situation, on the other, they exist in an aesthetic (not to mention functional) relationship with the design of the structure to whose façade they adhere, out of which they seem to grow and past which they seem to reach. It seems obvious that to make sense of these — these warts on a grand corpus, excrescences on a carcass of stone — we need to look beyond the grotesque. Cathedrals do not become "grotesque bodies" as a result of this association, but neither can we treat them as mere supports, extraneous to the gargoyles' meaning and effect. The reverse also applies: the gargoyle is not rendered holy by its attachment, nor can we discount the creature as a mere appendage to the cathedral; its anti-erosive function of channeling rainwater clear of the masonry walls has little or nothing to do with its artistic values or *Kunstwollen* (artistic will). We should remember that not all carved grotesques featured on church buildings had this function, even as they might otherwise appear indistinguishable in size, shape, or expression from gargoyles.[8] Thus, while occasioning the gargoyle as architectural element, functionality contributes hardly, if at all, to aesthetics or to the just-noted contrast; it underpins these facets without determining them.

We are, in fact, confronted here with two (rival? complementary?) aesthetics. The first, "God is light," is the aesthetic of the inner sanctum, the illumination of soaring, vaulted vertical space through colored glass, with painting and sculpture subordinated to reflective-spiritual uplift. The second aesthetic is, of course, the *grotesque*, confined largely to exteriors — the outer walls of the cathedral, the cloister of the monastery. The most striking shapes owe much to unstylized figurative naturalism and expressive realism. It would, however, be wrong to assume that gargoyles — in themselves, individually, or relationally, in combination with the rest — fall neatly into this grotesque *dis*order, whether *noble* or *ignoble*, *terrible* (fearful) or *sportive* (ludicrous), to invoke Ruskin's evaluative typology.[9] They do not. An answer to the gargoyle question is, then, to be found neither in the one nor in the other aesthetic creed, but in bringing them together — in what I will term an *aesthetics of contrast*. Rather than the mixture or interpenetration of the high and the low that moves us from laughter to tears and back again (on the model of tragicomedy, as in the grotesque-theory of Olga Freidenberg); rather than the reversal or collapse of the morally-coded high into the low, making fear "droll and monstrous" (as in Bakhtin's better-known version which cut high

seriousness down to size, on the model of that "other face" of the church, the carnival), the Gothic aesthetics of contrast pairs the grotesque with a contrasting stylistic register, the two being made to coexist in visible proximity and mutual irreducibility.[10] More obviously contrived contrasts of this sort are often associated with the Baroque: the elevated beside the degraded, the refined with the primitive, the cultivated next to the wild, smooth nearly touching coarse...

The aesthetic of contrast is indeed most potent in clear-cut contrastive pairings, framing or spatially isolating each aspect to bring out its distinctiveness. In the case of Gothic cathedrals, it is enabled by a simple structural dichotomy (inside/outside), with symbolic value as an interface between the *sacrum* and the *profanum*, spirit and matter/body. It is likewise facilitated by formal separations of "high" and "low" executed on the façade. (Here, too, demarcations and contrasts abound: the saints are arranged in sculptural groups around portals and do not keep grotesque company. The two "realms" are still kept apart.) Given these boundaries, achieved also through spatial distance and demarcations, we cannot speak of the interpenetration or dialectical reconciliation, any more than the cancellation, of the two aesthetic orders.

One might object that — grotesque impressions on casual passersby aside — the experience of the interior primes the soul emerging from it to embrace the gargoyle, and from there the deformed, the sick, and the insane. Or else one might counter that the canvas is sacred but the paints profane; that while profane or pagan imagery lifted from bestiaries appears only, as it were, on the reverse, un-primed side, it competes there for space with sacred iconography and outperforms it in ingenuity, participating with the outside world in an overall subversion and profanation. This would be strictly untrue; monstrous, irreverent and vulgar details did appear inside the church, if rarely conspicuously or profusely. The sanctum allowed the "touch of evil." The chisel, "let loose" within, could be quite versatile.[11]

One might also recall the onomatopoeic derivation of *gargoyle* from throat, the passage of water, which later links it to *gargling* and *gurgling* — physiological sounds that, save for their guttural location, have little audibly in common with plainchant, the heavenward sounds of the immaterial. Etymology thus leads us back to the *comœdia corporis*, with its embarrassing noises and physiological reactions.[12] Have we here parody so lofty that it no longer lightens the atmosphere — even quite the

contrary? The lightness is to be found where gravity is less palpable, *inside* — as is the sensuousness: embarrassment of riches, dazzling spectacle of divine presence, awe-inspired spiritual ascent, desire for the Great Architect...The sublimation of ugliness and sublimization of beauty? One thing is certain: this is no simple hierarchic reversal.

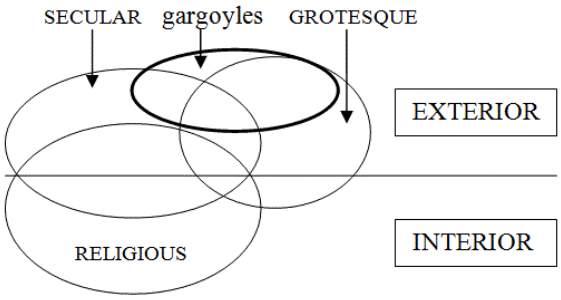
The aesthetics of contrast does not rely on comparison; it does not arise from noting and examining both similarities and differences between two sides of one object, or between two objects against a common ground. The effect is more immediate. It rests on asymmetrical juxtaposition, with each term of the contrast appearing for that more resolved, vibrant, vivid, more unlike the other, as we are used to recognizing in post-impressionist painting. It thrives wherever a mutual heightening of intensity, a deepening of effect on either side of the disjunction takes precedence over blending for the sake of chromatic statements or gradations (as in impressionism).

The Medieval aesthetics of contrast, while not totally un-theorized, remains under- and mis-theorized. Three approaches are representative. The most important is Victor Hugo's consideration of the aesthetic-contrastive value of the grotesque. The sublime ("high") and the grotesque ("low") do not dissolve into each other, do not exist in as stable synthesis, but co-exist in close promixity and dramatic harmony.[13] Next comes Bakhtin's recognition of the contiguity, in the consciousness of medieval man, of "two lives" reflecting the "two aspects of the world, the serious and the laughing," the pious and the grotesque, when speaking of visual sculptural representation that manages to hold them together without fusing them.[14] Lastly, we have Yuri Lotman's distinction between the *aesthetics of identity* and the *aesthetics of contrast*, except that for Lotman, guided perhaps by the unifying ideology of Christendom, medieval art belonged in the first of these categories.[15] Yet, as I have struggled to show, Gothic cathedral art appears, upon reflection, to be a modality of cultural duality, without which we could not grasp the medieval picture or even the part that gargoyles and suchlike played in it.

Why, then, an aesthetic of *contrast*, rather than something more positive, like *correlation*, *correspondence*, *balance, contradiction,* or *complementarity*? While all suppose a relation, only *contrast* does not require aesthetic *oppositions* while at the same time preserving aesthetic *distinctness* — for instance the distinctness between grotesque art and art in service of theology. The original, forgotten meaning of *contrast* is *to withstand* — here, to withstand any totalizing, theological unity and

harmony-based aesthetics, that timeless free play of the faculties laying the artwork like an egg. Rather than harmonizing competing aesthetics, the aesthetic of contrast names their tension.

This, finally, gives rise to at least three broader issues. First: Should we apply Kantian and post-Kantian aesthetic standards to pre-Kantian art practices? (N.B. the problem of attributing a conscious *aesthetic* to medieval artisanship, and the attendant danger of historicism.)[16] Second: Are we not similarly in danger of anachronism by imposing a different and, in some sense, more totalizing aesthetic standard on Gothic ecclesiastical architecture's disaggregated parts, variegated aspects of a culture we cannot re-enter by entering its extant edifices? Third: To save these buildings and "image-complexes" from anachronistic aestheticization, are they not better regarded as proto-galleries, art institutions *avant la lettre*, displaying contemporary as well as older cultural symbols? But are we not then modernizing the cathedral in another way? And would avoiding this not put us right back where we started?



Thematic Overlap in Gothic Monumental Sculpture

• Notes •

[1] The inauguration of a scholarly form which the Editors name "collision" offers one of very few opportunities to throw together — as like with like — a new genre, a rule-bound practice that, far from established, is yet hardly more than a theoretical project, with an old genre that still may strike us as modern because of its fundamental ambiguity, its un-whole incorporation into a weighty artistic tradition. As one tries to establish the new genre with one's practice — out of belief in the proliferation of forms as valuable in itself—one will try to renew the old one by theoretical means, believing that certain historical genres need to be disturbed from theoretical slumber.
I wish to thank Brian Stock for reading this piece with appropriate seriousness.
[2] Van Gogh likened this portrait to the *Potato Eaters* (Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, Saturday, 18 August 1888, Br. 1990: 663/CL: 520, accessed May 19, 2013, http://vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let663/letter.html).
[3] The elaborate stone gargoyle is indissociable from Gothic architecture, where its design is conventionally dated back to c. 1220 (reconstruction of the Laon Cathedral), peaking between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries (Jean-Marie Guillouët, "Gargouille," in *Dictionnaire d'histoire de l'art du Moyen Âge occidental*, ed. Pascale Charron and Jean-Marie Gouillouët [Paris: Robert-Laffont, 2009]). Grotesque gargoyles can also be found in French Romanesque architecture of the thirteenth century.
[4] St. Bernard of Clairvaux's *Apologia ad Guillelmum Abbatem* (1124–1125), central to this controversy and widely considered an important source for understanding medieval art, opens the topic using a set of rhetorical questions, suggesting genuine confusion about this kind of ornamentation, and concludes with condemnation: "But apart from this, in the cloisters, before the eyes of brothers while they read — what is that ridiculous monstrosity doing, an amazing kind of deformed beauty and yet a beautiful deformity [*deformis formositas ac formosa deformitas*]? What are the filthy apes doing there? The fierce lions? The monstrous centaurs? . . . [E]verywhere so plentiful and astonishing a variety of contradictory forms is seen that one would rather read in the marble than [meditate on the law of God — S.C.] in books … If one is not ashamed of the absurdity, why is one not at least troubled by the expense?" ("Apologia ad Guillelmum Abbatem," trans. Conrad Rudolph, in C. Rudolph, *The "things of greater importance": Bernard of Clairvaux's* Apologia *and the Medieval Attitude toward Art* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990], 282 [106]; mod. trans.). Though in recognizing the simultaneous ugliness and beauty of the hybrid figures Bernard is clearly referring to the seamless mingling and mixing of disparate elements that do not belong together in nature, he dwells less on the effects we credit the grotesque with eliciting (laughter, fear, revulsion) and more on the curiosity and distraction caused by such unnatural, fanciful inventions, not all of them individually grotesque (take the simian motifs or the worldly pursuits of men, for example). Rather than giving the sense of an outrageous hodgepodge, his analytical remarks underscore the contrastive relationship of elements within or between these figures. It should be noted that Bernard does not denounce all church art, but only its excesses, in particular the embellishment of claustral buildings which, once seen with a sober eye to one's spiritual duties, does not aid instruction or devotion but violates it (Bernard of Clairvaux, *Treatises I*, ed. M. Basil Pennington [Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1970], 66, translator's note 169; this is also Conrad's view, 124 et passim). Taking a skeptical view on the didactic purpose of such unruly art, we may wonder how much of it was due to license or anarchy of the creative imagination and how much to moralizing intent on the part of the sculptor or the patron. Did the distress, hypertrophies, or zoomorphism affecting such grotesque figures invariably signify degradation? Were their various forms of sinful behaviour punished, in laymen's eyes, by being cast outside the holy sphere or by their obscure or peripheral placement in the church (which may have "saved" them from control by ill-disposed authorities)? In light of the collective and popular nature of cathedral construction we cannot, moreover, assume a monolithic unity of vision for all the parts, some of them created off site, others decades or even centuries earlier.
[5] The figure most associated with this opposing policy was the Abbot Suger. In *De Administratione* (1144–1147), he justifies the use of costly material and craftsmanship in liturgical art as spiritual aids (see discussion in Rudolph, 30–35, 59–63, 108–111). But he should not be grouped with defenders of ornate extremity. The scarcity of grotesque or monstrous marginal imagery at Saint-Denis and the

lack of reference to it in Suger's writings should give pause. Given his patronage of complex artistic innovation, "it could be said that Suger had essentially rejected this type of imagery. Although I suspect he might personally have liked it, it was no longer intellectually/spiritually acceptable" (Rudolph, correspondence with the author, March 20, 2013). See Conrad Rudolph, *Artistic Change at St Denis: Abbot Suger's Program and the Early Twelfth Century Controversy over Art* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990] and "Inventing the Exegetical Stained-Glass Window: Suger, Hugh, and a New Elite Art," *Art Bulletin* 93 (2011): 399–422).

[6] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949), 168–169. To ascribe cave paintings (or gargoyles?) wholly to a play-drive, Huizinga maintains, would be to reduce them to "mere doodling" (168); even if "culture is played from the very beginning" (46), art is more than aesthetic play, as architecture makes plain. Huizinga's great history of late-medieval cultural forms, incidentally, passed over this flourishing of marginal sculpture.

[7] See Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, especially "The Ontology of the Work of Art and Its Hermeneutic Significance"; Georges Bataille, *Lascaux: Or, the Birth of Art: Prehistoric Painting*, trans. Austryn Wainhouse (Lausanne: Skira, 1955), especially 34–36.

[8] Similarly crouched or asquat, menacing and glaring — not to say gratuitous given their in-obvious architectural function — such prominent exterior grotesques (as, for example, the hunky punks of the Somerset towers or those on Siena's Torre del Mangia) might be seen upon gables in high relief, extending from spires, perched upon ledges, overhanging porches, climbing walls, etc. But the architectural use, both ornamental and functional, of grotesques is much greater: they range from detail over archways and doorways, to parts of sculptural groups on scriptural, hagiographic or legendary subjects involving demons or devils, to roof bosses, head stops, and column capitals in cloisters; they lurk, hunched over, on corbels, beneath eaves and cornices, and work their way up in size to full-scale figures.

[9] The *ignoble* grotesque stems from "delight in the contemplation of bestial vice, and the expression of low sarcasm" which, according to Ruskin, is "the most hopeless state into which the human mind can fall"; rather than horror, it provokes our disgust (John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, vol. 3: The Fall [London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1873], 121, 143). Keeping to Ruskin's distinctions (and putting to one side the anachronism of applying theories of the grotesque, Renaissance or otherwise, to the Gothic), the gargoyle's often frightful appearance would qualify it for grotesque *nobility*. Then again, its unnatural monstrousness would debase it; only by being grounded in natural phenomena could a monstrous grotesque be ennobled, actually appear terrible, and approach the sublime (169). See Mark Dorrian, "The Breath on the Mirror: Notes on Ruskin's Theory of the Grotesque," in *Chora Four: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*, ed. Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Stephen Parcell (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 25–48. Ruskin's volume on the Gothic, however, offers almost no perspective on its architectural grotesques: the medieval builder he so admires "endeavoured to make his work beautiful, but never expected it to be strange. And we incapacitate ourselves altogether from fair judgment of his intention, if we forget that, when it was built, it rose in the midst of other work fanciful and beautiful as itself; that every dwelling-house in the middle ages was rich with the same ornaments and quaint with the same grotesques which fretted the porches and animated the gargoyles of the cathedral; that what we now regard with doubt and wonder, as well as with delight, was then the natural continuation, into the principal edifice of the city, of the style which was familiar to every eye throughout all its lanes and streets …" (John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, vol. 2: *The Sea Stories* [New York: Cosimo, 2007], 97–98). The grotesque is thus glossed over and deliberately "deferred" to volume three (the discussion of its "morbid influence" on the Renaissance), given Ruskin's confidence that an educated reader will know of the "universal instinct of the Gothic imagination" "to delight in fantastic and ludicrous, as well as in sublime, images" (203).

[10] Freidenberg's and Bakhtin's views are compared in Aron J. Guriewicz (Aaron Gurevich), "Z historii groteski: 'góra' i 'dół' w średniowiecznej literaturze łacińskiej," Polish trans. Wiktoria Krzemień, in *Groteska*, ed. Michał Glowinski (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2003), 103–124. See also source texts: Olga Freidenberg, *Poetika syuzheta i zhanra* [Poetics of Subject and Genre] (Moskva: Labirint, 1997); Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968) (the quoted phrase is from p. 91).

[11] Indeed, until the late thirteenth century, graven grotesques appeared in mostly hidden spots inside ecclesiastical buildings; only later did they migrate outside and on to public structures like town halls, fountains (e.g., the gargoyles of Nuremberg's *Schöner Brunnen*), or choir stalls. See Nurith Kenaan-Kedar, *Marginal Sculpture in Medieval France* (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1995), 134, and Dorothy and Henry Kraus, *The Hidden World of Misericords* (New York: Braziller, 1975).
[12] The gush of water from gutters resembled digestive noises and, visually, the act of vomiting or evacuation, all sourced in the body (the anthropomorphic variety of gargoyle made use of orifices at either end to discharge water). The "body" of the Church was on constant guard against bodily noises and functions: "[F]or the monks . . . every belch and rumble in the stomach signalled an invasion of their bodies. Just as the mouth and other orifices, such as the eyes, had to be kept guarded against the onslaught of evil, the entrances, doorways and windows at Aulnay [a Romanesque church] are those most entrusted with the protective gaze of deformed forms" (Michael Camille, *The Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992], 75).
[13] The high/low distinction is for Hugo not without a hitch: identifying the grotesque with the low demeans it. Here is what he has to say: "Christianity has led poetry to the truth. Like it, the modern Muse must look at things more loftily, and more broadly. She must feel that not everything in creation is 'beautiful' in human terms, that there is ugliness alongside beauty, deformity next door to gracefulness, grotesquerie just on the other side of sublimity, evil with goodness, darkness with light"; "Poetry must resolve to do what Nature does: to mingle (though not to confound) darkness with light, the sublime with the ridiculous — in other words, body with soul, animal with spirit, since poetry and religion always have the same point of departure. Everything hangs together"; "[B]oth as a means of contrast and as a goal alongside the sublime, I find the grotesque as rewarding as any source of artistic inspiration that Nature could possibly supply. . . . The universal beauty that ancient artists solemnly spread over everything did have its monotonous side; a single tone, endlessly reiterated, can become tiring after a while. It's hard to produce much variety when one sublimity follows another — and we do need an occasional rest from everything, even from beauty. Now, the grotesque may act as a pause, a contrast, a point of departure from which we can approach what is beautiful with fresher and keener powers of perception. A salamander can set off a water-sprite; a gnome can embellish a sylph" (Victor Hugo, Preface to *Cromwell* [1827], in *The Essential Victor Hugo*, trans. and ed. E.H. and M.A. Blackmore [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], 23, 24, 27).
[14] The relevant passage is: "[W]e find on the same page strictly pious illustrations of the hagiographical text as well as free designs not connected with the story [which] represent chimeras . . . comic devils, jugglers performing acrobatic tricks, masquerade figures, and parodical scenes — that is, purely grotesque, carnivalesque themes. . . . Not only miniatures but the decorations of medieval churches, as well as religious sculpture, present a similar co-existence of the pious and the grotesque. . . . However, in medieval art a strict dividing line is drawn between the pious and the grotesque; they exist side by side but never merge" (Bakhtin, 96).
[15] As Stephen Aylward explains, Lotman saw art as establishing similarity and difference, the former giving rise to the value-laden distinction between the aesthetics of identity (*estetika tozhdestva*), the latter to the aesthetics of opposition (*estetika protivopostavleniia*), which Aylward chose to render as "aesthetics of contrast" (*contrast* being weaker and more open than *opposition*). "[T]he aesthetics of identity describes works that tend towards either generalization or fulfilling strict genre conventions. The aesthetics of contrast applies to those works that tend towards greater complexity or defying existing genre conventions (*Lektsii* 173–74)" (Stephen Aylward, "*Poshlost'* in Nabokov's *Dar* through the Prism of Lotman's Literary Semiotics" [M.A. thesis, University of Waterloo, 2011], 64; his source is Iu.M. Lotman, *Lektsii po struktural'noi poetike: vvedenie, teoriia stikha* [Lessons from Structural Poetics: Introduction, Theory of Verse] [Providence: Brown University Press, 1968], 170–76). Lotman's "aesthetics of contrast" has thus mainly to do with a diachronic relationship between rules and practices, and little to do with spatial and temporal juxtapositions in and of artworks, where, to be sure, rules are necessary to note the contrast.
[16] The question might be sharpened if we entertain Hugo's thought (if only to turn around and take issue with it) that it was with the decline of the "total" and "sovereign" cathedral art, with the waning of Gothic architecture, that the other arts began to emancipate themselves and acquire the grandeur needed to inspire their serious study as a *system* in which architecture would become "an art like any other," if not lesser for the loss of its "subjects" (Hugo, "Ceci tuera cela," *Notre-Dame de*

Paris [1831], accessed October 19, 2012, http://www.hylandmadrid.com/libros/fr/notre_dame/23.html). That said, the Gothic cathedral "belonged to the people" and was the *jeu d'esprit* of popular artists who unabashedly, "under the pretext of service to God," developed art "to magnificent proportions" (ibid.).

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Vol. 2, No. 1 (2013)
Premodern Aesthetics

Hanly, Peter. "Passionate Deceptions: Nicole and Racine on the Theatre."
***Evental Aesthetics* 2, no. 1 (2013): 21-41.**

ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to re-consider the aesthetics of tragedy in the work of the seventeenth-century dramatist Jean Racine. The purpose of the essay is twofold. On the one hand, the intention is to re-invigorate the reading of a dramatist whose work is too easily buried beneath labels such as "French Classicism." On the other, an attempt is made to use this re-reading to cast new light on some of the central questions of representation, pleasure and tragedy that were to become fundamental to later developments in aesthetic theory in the century that followed.

We could cast Racine's rejection of his mentor Pierre Nicole in familiar terms, describing it as the rejection of a repressive theological moralizing in favor of a hard-won "expressive freedom." However, a closer examination of both Nicole's aesthetics and Racine's dramatic art reveals a different picture. As this paper will show, Nicole's critique of seventeenth-century aesthetic practice is complex, nuanced, and trenchant. It is a critique that succeeds in posing significant questions about representation, self and other, and about the mechanics of "tragic pleasure." In turn, Racine's more private reflections (in his notes on Aristotle) as well as the development of his dramatic practice, indicate not a rejection, but a serious attempt to appropriate this critique, and transform his own dramatic practice in response to it.

KEYWORDS

Jean Racine, Pierre Nicole, tragedy, representation, pleasure

Passionate Deceptions: Nicole and Racine on the Theatre

Peter Hanly

It is hard to read Racine's open letter to Pierre Nicole, from January 1666, without a certain measure of disappointment. The occasion such a letter might have afforded for thoughtful reflection, for a measured response, even for a graceful or elegant rebuttal of one of the theatre's most eloquent adversaries by one of its most brilliant young adherents remains sadly beyond its horizon. Instead we find a vituperative and undignified attack, by turns sarcastic and hysterical: "And what is it that novels and plays might have in common with Jansenism?" shrieks the author (*Et qu'est-ce que les romans et les comédies peuvent avoir de commun avec le jansénisme?*).[1] Still more unpleasant are the biting and insidious references to personal misfortune: "You have enough enemies: why seek out new ones...?" (*Vous avez assez d'ennemis: pourquoi en chercher de nouveaux...?*) The spectacle of a dazzlingly gifted young poet pouring scorn upon his teachers – and not just upon Nicole, but upon others like Antoine le Maistre, who had demonstrated an almost paternal benevolence toward Racine at Port-Royal – is a distinctly unedifying one. Inevitably, too, the attack is rendered still more discomforting by the sense of opportunism that surrounds it, an impression more than reinforced by

Racine's well-documented mistreatment of his friend and mentor Molière just one month before.[2]

However, beyond the somewhat dark light that these incidents cast on Racine's character, they tend to simplify the picture of his position relative to the critique of the theatre launched from Port-Royal and elsewhere during the 1660's. The relation between Racine and Nicole appears, in the light of his attack, as merely a rather brutal manifestation of the confrontation of intransigent adversaries. Such confrontation in turn tends to mask the complexity and subtlety of the debate itself. In particular, the intensity of Racine's attack on Nicole conceals many of the complexities of his response to the latter's critique. In light of the subsequent reconciliation with Port-Royal, it is possible to see many of the continual shifts and transformations in Racine's dramaturgy, as evidenced in the Prefaces, but also in the plays themselves, as in some measure modes of reaction, response and accommodation to that critique. Traditionally, this reconciliation is located biographically in 1677, upon the publication of *Phèdre*, and on the cusp of Racine's thirteen-year silence. At the close of the preface to that play, Racine writes explicitly of his desire to seek "a means of reconciling to tragedy a number of celebrated persons who, in their piety and through their doctrine have condemned it in recent times" (*un moyen de réconcilier la tragédie avec une quantité de personnes célèbres par leur piété et par leur doctrine qui l'ont condamnée dans ces derniers temps*). This desire, dramatically reinforced by the play's immediate presentation – at Racine's request – to Arnauld, certainly becomes explicit in this text. But the working out of complex relations with Port-Royal, and more broadly with the debates surrounding the value of the theatrical experience, can surely be traced throughout Racine's work. This is by no means to insist on a "hidden Jansenism" at play below the surface of Racine's work, but rather to suggest a way in which his output might be seen as the nexus of an ongoing debate on the nature of the theatre, and of an insistent response to a critique to which he was, at least according to the testimony of his son, very sensitive.[3]

On the other side, an over-simple representation of Nicole's position would tend to mask the subtlety and intensity, and therefore also the significance, of the debate itself. In this masking, this debate can come to appear, somewhat anachronistically, simply as a battle between "artistic freedom" on the one hand, and the forces of a moralizing repression on the other. The purpose of this paper will be to try to bring out a more nuanced and complicated picture of the debate that crystallizes dramatically around Racine's break with Port-Royal. To this end, the first part of the paper will

examine Racine's understanding of his praxis, as filtered through his reading of Aristotle, and made clear in contrast to the conception of tragedy articulated by Corneille. The second section will focus on Nicole's understanding of theatre, contained largely in his *Traité sur la Comédie* of 1667. The third and final section will return to Racine, and attempt to reveal a proximity between certain elements of Nicole's thinking, and the dramatic practice of Racine's exactly contemporaneous tragedy *Andromaque* (1667).

• 1 •

Amongst the most intriguing of the vast array of personal documents and letters bequeathed to Racine's son Louis upon his death is the poet's own copy of Aristotle's Poetics, in a sixteenth century Latin translation. For in its margins are translations and annotations, clearly made for Racine's own personal reflection, of certain key passages of the text. The translations are by no means literal, and the additions and interpretative remarks can provide certain clues to Racine's understanding of Aristotle. However, the aim here will not be in any way to provide a full account of the presence of Aristotle's thought in Racinian tragedy. Rather, what is to be attempted is more modest: to point out evidence, via his annotations of Aristotle, of a subtle shift in the understanding of tragedy that will place Racine at odds with the theoretical speculations of his most celebrated contemporary Pierre Corneille, and thereby lay the theoretical ground for his confrontation with Nicole.

Particularly germane to our purpose is the translation and annotation of what was, and remains, the most famous passage in Aristotle's text: his definition of tragedy (1449b24–30). Racine begins his translation as follows: "Tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious and complete, and which has an appropriate grandeur. This imitation is created by discourse, in a style constructed for pleasure" (*La tragédie est l'imitation d'une action grave et complète, et qui a sa juste grandeur. Cette imitation se fait par un discours, un style composé pour le plaisir…*).[4]

Two aspects of this translation must be noted at the outset. The first concerns the translation of "*magnitudinem habentis*" (*megethos echouses*) as "*juste grandeur*." Vinaver has pointed out that this

translation is in fact Corneille's:[5] the phrase occurs twice in his *Premier Discours*: *De l'utilité et de la partie du poème dramatique* of 1660.[6] Corneille's treatises were, of course, widely read in the 1660's, but it is significant to note that Racine's reading of them may have been sufficiently close as to have absorbed and appropriated specific formulations. More particularly, this derivation from Corneille suggests that, in considering Racine's reflections on Aristotle, we might simultaneously need to understand that we are considering a reflection on Corneille's dramaturgy. And indeed, it will become evident that the central aim of Racine's reading of Aristotle is not merely to turn to the "authority" of Aristotle, but more particularly to address himself to a conventional contemporary perspective on tragic poetry, in so far as this is expressed by Corneille.

The second translational interpolation to note is the phrase "*un style composé pour le plaisir*." This phrase adapts the Latin "*condita oratione*" (literally "ornamented speech") in such a way as to place a very specific emphasis on both *style* and *pleasure*. Whilst it is true that Aristotle's Greek (*hedousmenon men logon*) refers to an effect of pleasure, it is clear from his explication at 1449b29 that this pleasure involves the need for a pleasing resonance of the words themselves; a pleasure, one might claim, that whilst belonging to the essential definition of tragedy, does not represent its central thrust. Now, to say that this language represents *un style composé pour le plaisir* is to effect a subtle but significant shift in the orientation of the definition. This shift is such that, all of a sudden, the entire tragic discourse begins to revolve around pleasure: tragedy becomes, literally, a discourse composed *pour le plaisir – in order to* produce pleasure in spectator or reader.

More significant still than these interpretative additions is the extensive annotation that Racine adds to his translation of Aristotle's famous definition of "catharsis." Aristotle writes that catharsis in a tragic representation "accomplishes by means of pity and fear the cleansing of these sorts of feeling."[7] Racine translates as follows: "*une représentation vive qui, excitant la pitié et la terreur, purge et tempère ces sortes de passions*." But then he adds: "This is to say that, in moving the passions, it relieves them of that [part] that is excessive and vicious, and brings them back to a condition that is moderate and in conformity with reason" (*C'est-à-dire qu'en esmouvant ces passions, elle leur oste ce qu'elles ont d'excessif et de vitieux, et les rameine à un estat modéré et conforme à la raison*).[8]

We are offered, thus, a very specific interpretation of catharsis, whose significance can be gauged in contrast with Corneille's reflections. Corneille, acknowledging Aristotle as his authority, begins his first *Discours* by acknowledging the centrality of pleasure in drama, but is careful from the outset to restrict that pleasure to a very specific kind: the pleasure obtained in the observance of "rule." On condition of this restriction, he is quick to argue that the pleasure that obtains in the dramatic spectacle is in no way to be separated from its usefulness, its "*utilité*." Indeed, in claiming that "that which is useful can appear there [in tragedy] only via the pleasurable" (*l'utile n'y entre que sous le delectable*) he is rapidly able to subordinate pleasure to utility – the former will be simply a mode of access to the morally effective.[9] Corneille goes on to describe four kinds of moral utility that are to be discovered in theatrical representation, the first being just the simple inclusion of morally appropriate maxims. The second utility consists in what he terms "the naïve painting of virtues and vices" (*la naïve peinture des vices et des vertus*).[10] According to this conception, the morally efficacious quality of the drama will necessarily appear *if* the drama is successful. It is impossible, Corneille assures us, that vice could ever be mistaken for virtue under these conditions: "this latter always makes itself loved, even though unhappy; and the former is always detested, even though triumphant" (*Celle-ci se fait alors toujours aimer, quoique malheureuse; et celui-là se fait toujours haïr, bien que triomphant*).[11] Within a successful dramatic representation, then, pleasure itself – the observance of rule – will necessarily entail an absolute clarity of moral light. This intrinsic clarity enables the third utility, which is that "the happy success of virtue…excites us to embrace it, and the unhappy success of crime and injustice is capable of augmenting in us natural horror" (*Le succès heureux de la vertu…nous excite à l'embrasser, et le succès funeste du crime ou de l'injustice est capable de nous en augmenter l'horreur naturelle*).[12] The moral compass then, fixed and immutable, dominates the drama, to the extent that the efficacy of the dramatic spectacle involves simply an "augmentation" of our natural moral coordinates. The effect of drama on the spectator revolves around the self-evidence of moral characteristics, a self-evidence which becomes apparent precisely to the extent that the drama is successful. It is in consequence of this that the notion of catharsis, which Corneille acknowledges as the "fourth utility," is downgraded to a mere "speculation": "I am very much afraid that Aristotle's reasoning on this point is no more than a fine idea, with no effect in reality" (*J'ai bien peur que le raisonnement d'Aristote sur ce point ne soit qu'une belle idèe, qui n'ait jamais son effet dans la verité*).[13] Corneille embraces the significance

of "pity" and "fear," describing the experience of tragedy as a movement from one to the other: "The pity for an unhappiness into which we see those like ourselves fall brings us to a fear that we might experience something similar" *(La pitié d'un Malheur où nous voyons tomber nos semblables nous porte à la crainte d'un pareil pour nous*).[14] The question of "catharsis," thus, is suspended, placed in abeyance by a conception which is grounded upon the self-evidence of moral norms. In such a conception pity and fear become merely one of the mechanisms by which these moral norms reveal themselves: there is, thus, no need for an experience of "catharsis," however that may be construed.

This, then, is the background against which we must understand Racine's marginalia. However brief and inconclusive, they point toward a theoretical conception quite at odds with Corneille's. In the first place, one must note Racine's translation of catharsis: "*purger et tempérer*." The significance, for Racine, of this translation is attested by the remark (cited above) which he appends to this phrase. Catharsis is a "purging" but also a "*tempering.*" What is to be tempered is, precisely, the pity and the fear – "*ces sortes de passions*." In other words, "pity and fear" are not simply incidental mechanisms of moral utility. Rather, for Racine, drama is essentially shaped by the movement which awakens these passions (*en esmouvant ces passions*) – that stirs them, that brings them forth – but in so doing tempers them. The meaning of this tempering is very precisely described by Racine: that which is to be excised from these passions through their representation will be that which is "excessive" (*elle leur oste ce qu'elles ont d'excessif*). In consequence of this circumscription they will be withdrawn to a condition that "conforms to reason." Thus we can see that, far from being controlled in advance by the self-evidence of moral dicta, Racine's dramaturgy assumes the dominance of passion, which it is the role of tragic emotion to temper, to isolate from the risk entailed in an embrace beyond reason.

It is clear from our brief comparison that Racine's annotations represent more than his own attempt to grapple with the Greek legacy. They represent a decisive shift in, and thus a critique of the principles that govern Corneille's understanding of theatre. If the central narrative of the development of French drama through the 1660's and 70's can be understood, biographically, in terms of the gradual eclipse of its leading figure by its new rising star, it is equally possible to interpret this eclipse in terms of a gradual re-orientation of attitudes towards passion and pleasure within the theatrical spectacle. It is in light of this development that it is possible to move now to examine certain key moments in Nicole's

Traité de la Comédie, in order to shed light on the ambiguities surrounding the role and purpose of theatrical representation that the differences between Corneille and Racine make apparent, by viewing them through the lens of a most trenchant Jansenist critique.

• 2 •

Nicole's *Traité de la Comédie* appeared first in 1667, appended to the re-publication of his *Héresies Imaginaires* and *Lettres Visionnaires*, aspects of which had so offended Racine. Included in the volume were two letters, addressed to Racine, by Jansenist supporters of Nicole.[15] Thus, it can be assumed that, although Nicole himself did not deign to dignify Racine's attack with a direct response, the publication of the *Traité* was conceived, in part, as a rebuttal.

The *Traité* sets the full weight of an entirely different tradition – the Augustinian legacy – against the contemporary preoccupation with an Aristotelian vision of the dramatic spectacle. The fundamental contours of Nicole's treatise can be mapped in terms of this confrontation, in which the nexus of pleasure and utility will become the object of profound suspicion. Indeed, even in the preface, Nicole addresses himself to those who would insist on "a certain metaphysical notion of drama," abstracted from its connection with sin: "Theatre, they say," writes Nicole, directly referencing Aristotle, is "a representation of actions and words as if present; what harm can there be in that?" To this abstract notion of pure representation Nicole will oppose considerations grounded not in "chimerical speculation" but in "common and ordinary practices of which we are witness."[16] From the outset, then, Nicole's intention will be to see *through* the veil of theatrical spectacle. In so doing, he will attempt to cast its aesthetic and moral aspirations in the unwelcome light of a critique that refuses to allow theatrical representation the suspension of rigorous moral judgment just because such a representation might contain an obscure cathartic efficacy.

Nicole, in fact, draws into his consideration the fundamental notions that govern the Aristotelian definition of tragedy – the evocation and production of pity and fear – but casts them into a framework in which they no longer belong to the representation of actions on the stage, but become the source of an antipathy toward representation itself: "There is

nothing more contrary to the condition which obliges one to penitence, to tears, fleeing from useless pleasures, than the seeking out of a diversion as vain and dangerous as the theatre" (*Il n'y a rien de plus contraire à cet état qui l'oblige à la penitence, aux larmes et à la fuite des plaisirs inutiles, que la recherche d'un divertissement aussi vain et aussi dangereux que la Comédie*).[17] Tears will have their source and their value in the penitent's inward reflection upon his own condition: pity, if there is to be pity, will not be a sympathy aroused by the spectacle of an action outside the self, but a reaction to the abject condition of that very self. Likewise, fear has a deep efficacy: "True piety cannot exist without a salutary fear, which the soul conceives in view of the dangers with which it is surrounded" (*la veritable piété ne peut subsister sans une crainte salutaire, que l'âme conçoit à la vue des dangers dont elle est environée*).[18] But this fear will not be merely evoked through an involvement in the spectacle. This fear will be extended to the act of representation itself, which becomes the object not merely of suspicion, but of disgust. In a sense, then, Nicole is radicalizing "pity and fear" – the central coordinates of the Aristotelian definition – drawing them beyond the limits of the dramatic spectacle, and allowing them to roam freely across the entire spectrum of human activity, across the act of representation itself.

Henceforth, though, there will be not merely pity and fear, but pity, fear, and *horror*. Speaking of the dangers of the representation of love, Nicole writes, "the principle rein that would serve to prevent it is a kind of horror" (*Le principal frein qui sert à l'arrêter est une certaine horreur*). This "horror" is a reaction of recoil, a movement of withdrawal that returns us upon ourselves, that opens up the possibility of a recognition of one's own ineluctably sinful nature – of the inevitability of concupiscence, and the perils of *amour-propre*. Regarding the former, Nicole argues that the representation of desire, of concupiscence, is necessarily sinful: it is not a question of degree, of intention, or of effect, "for even if marriage makes proper use of concupiscence, [the latter] is nonetheless evil and unruly" (*car encore que le marriage fasse un bon usage de la concupiscence, elle est néanmoins mauvaise et déreglée*). It is inadequate to claim that "reason" returns desire to controllable limits, because however controlled, desire is always desire: "always unruly in itself" (*toujours déreglée en elle même*). Nicole, thus – foreshadowing a debate that would soon rage fiercely in his own circles around the "in-itself" of pleasure and the interpretation of Malebranche – insists on the univocity of desire, and thus on the inevitability of sin.

In describing the theatre as "*un divertissement…vain et…dangereux*" Nicole is setting his critique within parameters established by Pascal, who had already described the theatre in unequivocally negative terms. For Pascal, it is precisely the "natural and delicate representation of passions" that renders the theatre most odious – the naturalistic transparence of representation, its verisimilitude.[19] In similar fashion, Nicole will decry the representation, specifically in Corneille, of the whole paraphernalia of "honor," of "*gloire*": "this Roman 'virtue,' which is nothing else than a violent love of oneself" (*cette vertu Romaine, qui n'est autre chose qu'un furieux amour de soi-même*). Again following Pascal's lead, and in a move that will recur again and again in attacks on the theatre, Nicole insists that the theatre is most dangerous precisely when it appears innocent: "and often, the representation of a passion covered over by a veil of 'honor' is still more dangerous, because…it is received with less horror" (*et souvent même, la représentation d'une passion couverte de ce voile d'honneur est plus dangereuse, parce que…elle y est recue avec moins d'horreur*). It is not in its most glaringly flagrant extremes that the representation of passion is most dangerous: it is precisely in the moments which would seem to display the triumph of virtue that the theatre may slip through the defense of *horreur*. Always, deception lurks, the risk that the pleasure that such a spectacle might bring would lead to a certain self-satisfaction, a vanity which is the principle index of *amour-propre*.

The theatre, then, represents a danger unequivocally, in itself. It is not that some kinds of theatre are more or less dangerous: the theatre is not susceptible to reform in some way, by attending to the "content" of drama. Clearly, and explicitly, Nicole is setting himself against Corneille's notion of moral utility (discussed above), but also against those, like the Abbé d'Aubignac, who would embrace theatre on condition of certain reforms.[20] Rather, it is the theatrical spectacle in itself that is dangerous. But how is this danger to be understood? What, really, is at stake in the threat that theatrical representation brings? In addressing these questions, it is valuable to note that, in Nicole, we do not encounter a thinker who is fundamentally unattuned to poetry, to the aesthetic. Indeed, as Thirouin and others have pointed out, Nicole was considered, amongst the circles of Port-Royal, "an expert in aesthetics and poetic theory."[21] In the treatise of 1657, *La Vraie Beauté et Son Fantôme*, for example, Nicole develops a theory – of farsighted implications – of the beautiful as reaching beyond the internal coherence of an object and towards a "conformity" with our own nature.[22] And any simplistic suspicion of a fundamental antipathy, on Nicole's part, toward the

expressive power of language is easily confuted by taking note of his insistence, for example, in the same treatise, that the accord which the beautiful achieves with our own nature must depend upon the "*sonorité agréable*" of the words themselves.[23] Nicole's antipathy to theatre, then, will not involve dismissal of the pleasure involved in the representation of poetic utterance. What is dangerous, in the theatre, is "spectacle" itself. The key notion, here, will be Nicole's description of drama as "*divertissement.*" This term, deriving its resonance and significance from Pascal, becomes far more than a dismissive deflation of the ambition of drama. The notion of theatre as "diversion" (*divertissement*) will be central to its danger, and crucial to Nicole's concerns.

In a telling phrase, Nicole describes the theatre-goer "softened by pleasure" (*le coeur amolli*), "entirely intoxicated (*entièrement enivré*) with the follies he sees represented there, and by consequence outside of the state (*hors de l'état*) of Christian vigilance." The spectacle, then, takes us outside of ourselves, intoxicates us, removes us from the awareness of our own condition. Likewise, the actors, for Nicole (unlike other contemporary critics of the theatre) cannot "represent" passions without being in some manner carried away by them.[24] The distance, then, between the "representation" of passion and its experience is elided. The actors, as much as the spectator, drawn into the intoxication of the spectacle of passion, must necessarily experience that passion themselves, at least for the duration of the representation: "Those who would represent the passion of love," he writes, "must in some fashion be touched by it, *during the representation itself.* "[25] It is in this intoxication, in the abandonment to what is outside the self, that we will find the paradoxical key to the "distraction" that theatre represents.

"Le moi est haïssable" ("the I is detestable") Pascal had declared, and much of Nicole's writings in the *Essais de Morale* are devoted to an exploration of the ramifications of this dictum – to an excruciating, painstaking analysis of the subtle deformation that the *moi* effects on the soul.[26] The essay "*De la Connaissance de Soi-Même*" describes succinctly the paradox of the self whose self-scrutiny necessarily ends in the discovery of its own emptiness: "and thus it is necessary to know oneself, in order to conclude, through this bizarre reasoning, that it is good *not* to know oneself" (*Et ainsi il faudrait toujours se connaître, pour conclure même par ce bizarre raisonnement, qu'il est bon de ne se connaître pas*).[27] That which, for Nicole as for Pascal, is detestable about the *moi* is not its activity as such – perceptual, cognitive, affective – but rather its capacity to represent itself to itself, to form an idea, a vision of itself: "the greatest

pleasure of a man of pride is to contemplate *the idea he forms of himself*."[28] The *moi* is formed as a reflection, out of the experiences, contexts, etc. in which we discover ourselves. This reflection is indistinguishable from attachment, which serves to conceal the blank emptiness of our existence without the intervention of grace. The paradox, then, is the desire to "see ourselves," to yearn for a representation that, were it to reach clarity, would reveal itself only as the horror of an infinitely reflecting mirror-play of our vanity and self-love: "Man wants to see himself, because he is vain. He avoids seeing himself, because he cannot suffer the sight of his faults and his misery" (*L'homme veut se voir, parce qu'il est vain. Il évite de se voir, parce que étant vain il ne peut souffrir la vue de ses défauts at de ses misères*).[29]

So subtle are the wiles of the *amour-propre* which is at the heart of the paradox of the self-representing I, that it becomes almost indistinguishable from attempts to overcome it. In the essay "*De la Charité et de l'Amour-Propre*" Nicole describes the complex itinerary of a self-love that knows so well how to "counterfeit charity" as to make it "*almost impossible* to know precisely what distinguishes it."[30] Almost, but not quite, for within this insatiable self-love itself lies the moment at which it can come to recognize its own ugliness, to recoil from the endless mirroring of its own vanity. It is in this sense that charity "defaces with a marvelous subtlety all the signs and characters of self-love."[31] Imitating the imitation, charity subverts the constructions of vanity with a sense of the self that cannot be anything other than void, empty, blank – precisely because it cannot turn back into an image, cannot become a representation of itself, without falling prey once again to its vanity. It is this absolute negation, this abasement which cannot recognize itself as abasement, which opens onto the possibility of grace. Indeed, "one of the first effects of the light of grace is to uncover to the soul the emptiness, the nothing, the instability of all the things of the world."[32]

From this perspective it becomes easier to grasp the reasons for Nicole's disdain for theatrical representation. The *enivrement* through which the spectator loses himself in the object represented, resists the recoil upon the emptiness of the self that is the first opening onto the possibility of grace. What is required, then, at all times, for Nicole, is a kind of double gaze. He writes, in Augustinian fashion, of a kind of seeing that is opened up by sin onto the pleasures of the world, but that is then confronted by a another kind of seeing – "opening the eyes of the soul" – which is at the same time a kind of blinding (*aveuglement*), "happier, by far,

than the unhappy sight that sin has procured."[33] The gaze that looks upon the world will be one that simultaneously recoils upon its own emptiness.

Perhaps Nicole's most vivid, one might almost say theatrical images of this double sight appears in his essay "*De la Crainte de Dieu*." The image he provides is one of a ball. Imagine, he says, "an assemblage of pleasant people who think of nothing but diverting themselves (*se divertir*) ...They see a spectacle that flatters their senses, fills their spirit, which softens their heart, and allows, gently and pleasantly, a love of the world to enter."[34] But what is it that the "light of faith" will see in this spectacle?

> It will uncover a hideous massacre of souls destroying each other...It will see demons entering into these souls through all the senses of their bodies, that poison them them...that bind them with a thousand chains, that prepare for them a thousand tortures...and who laugh at their illusion and their blindness. It will see God, who regards these souls with anger, and abandons them to the fury of the demons.

In the theatrical spectacle too, such a double gaze must be operative, one that sees, and yet withdraws from the intoxication of absorption in the image. But the theatre is too dangerous to think that one might expose oneself to its pleasures and emerge unsullied. Interestingly, for Nicole, the effects of the representation of vanity work their effects at a level beyond our conscious grasp: they "remain hidden for a long time in the heart without producing any perceptible effect."[35] The spectacle, then, works its effects not through the production of tears, of pity, but rather through the unconscious mechanism of an "*impression insensible,*" that insinuates itself with the same subtlety as the wiles of *amour-propre*, leading us incrementally into the web of our own vanity.[36]

• 3 •

The principle thematic that governs Nicole's approach to the theatre is a drive towards an unmasking of deception – towards a purification, a purging of our vanity. The subtlety and depth of Jansenist critique, though, lies in its refusal to allow the possibility that this purging can succeed in restoring a positive conception of human behavior. Innocence is out of the question. The drive to purity is possible only under the sign of a negation, only on condition that we accept the impossibility of such a purity. It is only in recognition of our fractured, torn identity that the hope

of grace can emerge. Thus it is unsurprising that Nicole should so vigorously turn against any conception of moral utility in the representation of human affairs in the theatre. These latter, for Nicole, present to the fractured gaze of the Christian subject an image of such unremitting horror that their representation can never be anything more than merely seductive: they are nothing more than the deceitful blandishments of an inescapable *amour-propre*.

Fundamentally, then, Nicole's critique aims not merely at the indulgence of passion and its theatrical display, but also – perhaps even more particularly – at conceptions of theatre such as Corneille's, that sought to clothe the representation of passion in the garb of moral utility. Such a conception, for Nicole, is profoundly deceptive. The only moral utility that could emerge from the spectacle of passion lies in a reaction of recoil from the representation as such: not pity and fear, but a horror which must always be at the same time a kind of self-disgust. His critique is unforgiving and uncompromising, and refuses to entertain a positive dialogue with those who would write for the theatre. For Nicole, they are always, indeed, "poisoners of souls" (*empoisonneurs des âmes*). This phrase, which so infuriated the young Racine, does in fact provide the conceptual basis for Nicole's vision of theatrical representation, and prevents easy appropriation by any sort of dramaturgy whatsoever.[37] Within the coordinates of the quarrel, between Racine and Nicole, one could indeed easily stop there. One would, in this way, remain with a vision, certainly supported by both men in 1667, of an implacable mutual hostility, rendered bitterer still by the knowledge that the two enemies were, once, teacher and student. On another level, such a vision would insist on an absolute and unbridgeable divide between the theatre and its critics: it would be only a question of competing ideologies. But to stop with this quarrel would be to ignore the subsequent history of Racine's relations with Port-Royal. The question, then, to be addressed now, if only briefly, is to what extent these implacable opponents share a vision that might render the well-documented rapprochement more than a biographical accident, but rather a movement grounded in common assumptions.

It has been noted that Racine's reflections upon Aristotle also provide a ground for a conception of drama that is in opposition, as is Nicole's, to any naïve conception of moral utility. In Corneille's conception, the witness of the dramatic spectacle will be rendered virtuous simply by being exposed to the self-evidence of virtuous actions. We have seen how implacably Nicole's vision will resist these assumptions. But it is no less

true that Racine's conception of catharsis prevents such a straightforward assimilation of virtue. For Racine, the function of theatrical representation is a tempering of passion, the absolution of the excess that intrinsically belongs to our comportment in the world. In the very most general sense, then, we can already trace the outline of a conception, shared by Racine and Nicole, of the human as riven by passions barely susceptible to control. If a shared vision of the dominance of passion in human endeavor underscores both Racine's and Nicole's conceptions, it may be possible to track within Racine's dramas themselves certain thematic elements that render them unexpectedly close to the vision of his Jansenist enemies. It is beyond the scope of this paper to undertake an examination of the entirety of Racine's output in this light. We will rather, now, focus on certain moments, and point to certain thematic elements, which might begin to point the way toward such a shared ground. These observations will center around the tragedy *Andromaque*, precisely because this is the drama upon which Racine was working at the time of the confrontation with Nicole.[38]

Philippe Sellier has noted, most lucidly, that any hope of uncovering a "hidden Jansenism" in Racine's early work must run aground upon the figure of injured innocence that is continually to be discovered there.[39] When Oreste, in *Andromaque*, cries out:

> My innocence begins at last to weigh upon me…
> Wherever in my life I turn my eyes
> I see only misfortunes that condemn the gods…
>
> (*Mon innocence enfin commence à me peser…*
> *De quelque part sur moi que je tourne les yeux,*
> *Je ne voix que malheurs qui condamnent les dieux*…) (III,i)

This is a sentiment which clearly confutes any attempt to assimilate Racine's vision to a Jansenist model. Indeed Sellier goes so far as to suggest that it is precisely Racine's preoccupation with tortured innocence that drew him back towards Port Royal, whose associates increasingly, through the 1670's and 80's, came to represent the image of guiltless oppression.[40] However, given the conception of catharsis that we have observed in Racine's annotations of Aristotle, we should resist assimilating the self-observations of Racine's characters to a representation of his own vision: exposure to the extremes of passion, we remember, is designed to "purge and temper" those extremes. From this perspective, even

protestations of innocence might come to seem the signs of a passionate self-delusion. Racine's characters, wrapped up in the intensity of their desire, cannot be claimed as knowing arbiters of their own condition; rather, their self-knowledge is subject entirely to the oppression of frustrated desire. From the perspective of a Jansenist interrogation of the self, Oreste's acknowledgement:

> Such is the fatal blindness of my love!
>
> (*Tel est de mon amour l'aveuglement funèste*) (II, ii)

or his despairing question:

> What do I know? Was I master of myself?
> Fury carried me away...
>
> (*Que sais-je? De moi-même étais-je le maître?*
> *La fureur m'emportait...*) (III, i)

represent moments of insight – paradoxically – precisely because they acknowledge the inadequacy of self-knowledge. And indeed, the intensity of *Andromaque* is heavily invested in the character's absolute lack of rational self-understanding. "*I*, love her?" asks Pyrrhus angrily (*Moi, l'aimer*?) (II, v) and the self-assurance of his "*moi*," here, his recourse to the certainty of his own power, would seem completely to fly in the face of Pascal and Nicole's subversion. Until, that is, one realizes that what is exposed on stage is precisely his self-delusion, his vain assumption that he is in control of his feelings:

> But forgive a residue of tenderness...
> The last flickering of a dying love...
>
> (*Mais excuse un reste de tendresse...*
> *D'un amour qui s'éteint c'est le dernier éclat...*) (II, v)

he declares, but we already know that this "almost extinguished" fire will destroy him utterly.

Racine presents his characters as caught in a web of desire. They yearn, one and all – for an experience of love that eludes them continually. Longing for happiness, the tortured protagonists are driven ineluctably towards the pursuit of a pure joy, toward the perfect consummatory instant. That they are doomed not to achieve this consummation, that the perfect instant of bliss is discovered not in the requital of love, but in death and madness, is what renders *Andromaque* tragic. What we see on the stage is a play of self-deception, a network of passionate claims and counter-claims, in which the protagonists are, one and all, deceived both as to their own intentions and those of others. Governing, driving the action is a desperate and tragic hope that they may be freed into an instant of happiness through the fulfillment of their desires. There is no small sense in which the tragic impossibility of this drive – of this desire that can end only in collapse, in death, or in madness – projects nothing if not the vanity of their passion. Perhaps then, after all, the recoil upon the horror of our own vanity that Nicole longed for is not so far from the effects of Racinian catharsis as both men would have maintained in 1667. Racinian tragedy rests upon the blighted, vain hope of an impossible happiness. Nicole's equally tragic vision rests upon the hope of a grace that can be glimpsed only in the impossible collapse of our *amour-propre*. But both men, in a sense, pursue a vision of purity – a vision that seeks to rend the veils of self-delusion and set up before us a hope. For Nicole this is the hope of grace, for Racine the hope of love. But both are located beyond our self-understanding and searing in their desire.

• Notes •

[1] In Pierre Nicole, ed. Thirouin: *Traité de la Comédie et Autres Pièces d'un Procès du Théâtre* (Paris: Champion, 1998), pp. 225.
[2] In December 1665, Racine had, unbeknownst to Molière, who had agreed to present his second tragedy *Alexandre* at the Palais-Royal, arranged concurrent performances at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, purely in order to curry favor with the King at his erstwhile supporter's expense. Racine will subsequently compound the insult by writing, in the preface to his only comedy, *Les Plaideurs*, in 1668 of "certain writers" (by whom he certainly intends Molière, whose fortunes, at that moment, were already at something of a nadir on account of the dispute surrounding *Tartuffe*) "*qui font retomber le théâtre dans la turpitude*" on account of "*sales équivoques et… malhonnêtes plaisanteries.*"
[3] Racine's son Louis claimed that his father had admitted to him that "the least criticism, no matter how poor it might be, always caused me more pain than any amount of praise afforded me pleasure" (*la moindre critique, quelque mauvaise qu'elle ait été, m'a toujours causé plus de chagrin que toute les louanges ne m'ont fait de plaisir*) (Quoted in *Racine, Théâtre Complet* (Paris: Garnier, 1960), p. 583). In a way, such a sensitivity to criticism goes some way toward explaining the sheer aggression of his response to Nicole, following an attack which was not even, in the first instance, directed at him personally.
[4] Racine, ed. Vinaver, *Principes de la Tragédie en Marge de la Poétique d'Aristote* (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1951) p. 11. We will retain the editor's invaluable italicization of the words and phrases that represent interpolations or particularly interpretive translations on Racine's part.
[5] *Ibid.* p. 58.
[6] Corneille writes: "Comedy and tragedy also resemble one another in that the action chosen for imitation must possess an appropriate grandeur" (*La comédie et la tragédie se ressemblent encore en ce que l'action qu'elles choisissent pour imiter doit avoir une juste grandeur…*). Corneille, *Premiers Discours,* in Mantero, ed., *Corneille Critique et Son Temps* (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1964) p. 181.
[7] Aristotle, *Poetics trans.* Sachs (Newburyport: Focus Books, 2006) 1449b29.
[8] *Op. cit.* p.12.
[9] Corneille, *Discours,* p.170.
[10] *Ibid.* p.172.
[11] *Ibid.* p.174.
[12] *Ibid.* p.175.
[13] *Ibid.* p.205.
[14] *Ibid.* p.201.
[15] Nicole, op.cit. See in particular, the introduction, pp.22-25. This invaluable volume also contains the responses to Racine's letter, by Goibaud du Bois, and Barbier d'Aucour.
[16] *Ibid.* p.34.
[17] *Ibid.* p.104.
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] Pascal, fragment 630, in *Pensées,* trans. Levi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) p. 136.
[20] See F. Hedelin, Abbé d'Aubignac, *The Whole Art of the Stage* (1657) trans. Cadman (London, 1684) Reprinted (New York: Blom, 1968).
[21] J. Mesnard, quoted in Nicole, ed. Thirouin, *Traité*, op. cit. p. 28.

[22] See Nicole, ed. Béatrice Guion, *La Vraie Beauté et Son Fantôme et Autres Textes d'Esthétique* (Paris: Champion, 1996) p. 55.
[23] *Ibid*. p.61.
[24] E.g., Conti. See Nicole, *Traité*, op.cit. which also contains Conti's influential polemic, pp. 185-210.
[25] Nicole, *Traité*, p.36
[26] Pascal, *op cit*. fragment 494.
[27] Nicole, *Essais de Morale* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1999) pp. 310-379.
[28] *Ibid.* p.311 (My emphasis).
[29] *Ibid.* p.312.
[30] *Ibid*. pp. 381-415. Translated as appendix in Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees and Other Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).
[31] *Ibid.* p.5 (My emphasis).
[32] Nicole, *Traité,* p. 106.
[33] *Ibid.* p. 108.
[34] Nicole, *Oeuvres Philosophiques et Morales* (Paris: Hachette, 1845) p. 141.
[35] Nicole, *Traité,* p. 50.
[36] Nicole, *Essais de Morale*, Op cit. p. 250.Quoted in Nicole, *Traité*, op cit. p.50 n.27.
[37] See Racine's letter to Nicole, in Nicole, *Traité,* op.cit. p. 234.
[38] Racine, *Théâtre Complet* (Paris: Garnier, 1960). English Translation by J. Cairncross in *Jean Racine: Andromache/Brittanicus/Berenice* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967). Translations emended.
[39] Sellier, P. *Essais Sur L'Imaginaire Classique* (Paris: Champion, 2003) p.234.
[40] See, in particular, the essay "*L'Enfant de Port-Royal,"* in Sellier, *Port Royal et la Littérature, vol. II* (Paris: Champion, 2000) pp. 217-250.

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@Aesthetics

Vol. 2, No. 1 (2013)

Tsakiridou, C.A. "Art's Self-Disclosure: Hegelian Insights into Cinematic and Modernist Space." ***Evental Aesthetics*** **2, no. 1 (2013): 44-72.**

ABSTRACT

This article uses Hegel's analysis of the Romantic form to elucidate the relationship between aesthetic space and subjectivity in modernist painting (Paul Klee) and cinema (Sergei Eisenstein). The movement that brings art to realization in Hegel thus includes genres and modalities of art that did not exist in his time: in cinema and modernist painting, the Idea or truth of art evolves and brings itself to completion. Plasticity, the movement of aesthetic form toward self-expression, abandons the rigid substantiality it achieves in the Classical era and acquires unprecedented range, depth and resilience. In the Romantic form, the dynamism of the concept surfaces in full force and aesthetic boundaries expand. The emergence here of a new type of visual space is determined by a subjectivity that abandons the concrete, corporeal individuality associated with sculpture (most explicitly in Classical art) and imparts on sensuous form the fluidity of inner life. Music and poetry converge in the visual object which now assumes cinematic modality, a modality that also finds expression in modernist painting.

KEYWORDS

aesthetic space, cinema, Sergei Eisenstein, G.W.F. Hegel, Paul Klee, modernist, plasticity, Romantic

Art's Self-Disclosure: Hegelian Insights into Cinematic and Modernist Space

C.A. Tsakiridou

The movement that brings art to realization in Hegel includes genres and modalities of art that did not exist in his time. These are present in latent configurations that take concrete form as the Idea or truth of art evolves and brings itself to completion. Plasticity, the movement of aesthetic form toward self-expression, abandons the rigid substantiality of the Classical arts, and opens the art object to new forms and modalities of existence. This is especially evident in the third and final form of art described in Hegel's aesthetics, the Romantic form, where the dynamism of the concept surfaces in full force and aesthetic boundaries expand. Implicit in the Romantic form is the emergence of a new type of visual space determined by a subjectivity that abandons the concrete, corporeal individuality associated with sculpture – which for Hegel exemplifies Classical art, the form that precedes the Romantic – and imparts on sensuous form the fluidity of inner life. It is in this break or

release that we can identify the origin of the cinematic moment, a moment that also finds expression in modernist painting.

In Romantic art, aesthetic form moves freely between painting ("outward appearance of extension on a surface…a pure appearance of the inner spirit"), music ("in place of spatial figuration, figurations of notes in their temporal rising and falling of sound"), and poetry (being "exempt from painting's restriction to a specific space" and music's "abstract inner life of feeling").[1] Painting loses its enframed, closed subsistence, as the equilibrium and surface clarity (*klar*) that characterize the image in Classical art dissolve.[2] Representation as such, the reference of the art object to something other than itself, unravels. Art internalizes all references and posits them anew, not from the realm of nature or external reality but from that of consciousness and that of art itself.

Paul de Man contends that in Hegelian aesthetics, "the paradigm for art is thought rather than perception."[3] When Hegel writes that "romantic art is the self-transcendence of art but *within its own sphere and in the form of art itself*" (*doch innerhalb ihres eigenen Gebiets und in Form der Kunst selber*), he expressly recognizes an inherent resilience and fecundity in the aesthetic which accommodates the complete internalization of sensuous form.[4] The outcome of this process is not the conversion of the art object to a sign, as de Man suggests, but the emergence of a self-conscious aestheticity in the work of art. Because representation becomes an affair of the subject through and through, the range of sensuousness expands, and the materials that sustain it multiply indefinitely. The art object's "outer existence" (*äußeren Daseins*), its plastic countenance so to speak, is expressively configured as such and is thus subjected, as Hegel puts it, to the "contingency" and "caprice" of the imagination which "can mirror what is present to it exactly as it is, just as readily as it can jumble the shapes of the external world and distort them grotesquely."[5]

Cinema is where this development takes concrete form, as it both encompasses and disorientates the painterly, the musical and the poetic. In cinema, externality takes the form of consciousness in which a subject or subjects are always posited. This is why the cinematic image cannot be confined to an onscreen sequence of shots that reproduce the real (as photography in motion), but must constantly return to itself from a periphery that always eludes it, from an invisible (e.g., offscreen) and discursive space (e.g., in montage).[6] Moreover, the material basis of cinema, considered, like that of photography, as a technological construct,

suggests a similar disorientation — a condition that, as we shall see, we first encounter in the earliest art form, Symbolic art.

There is no pristine, pure physicality in the Romantic work of art. Everything in it is open to subjective mediation. The medium itself becomes aestheticized — it is itself encountered as "art": think of the material quality of color and the chromatic subsistence of pigment in Van Gogh.[7] This transformation affects the work in its entirety. It saturates it with energy. But it also opens it to dispersion and dissolution by simulating mental space and its objects and the quickness of the inner, psychic and intellective movements in which the body of the work is now assimilated. It is this body that technology reconstitutes (e.g., digitalizes). Compared to the photograph, in which visual rhythm takes an almost architectonic, still expression, the cinematic image is inherently fluid and musical.[8] Rather than construct and constrain (enframe), as does the photographic image, it dissolves and expands. And unlike the silence of the photographic image, the cinema must speak.

My objective in this paper is twofold. First, I will use Hegel's analysis of the Romantic form in order to elucidate the relationship between aesthetic space and subjectivity in cinema and modernist painting. Second, I will use this cinematic and modernist spatiality, with its incorporation of aural and visceral realities, to disengage Romantic art from its superficial entrapment in linear time and expose the dynamic aesthetic logic that constitutes it. Rather than envision these arts in their own individuated domains, we will see them unfold synchronically in clusters of relationships configured as painting, music, and poetry (image, sound, speech).

Thus the Romantic is not only a form that arises in a given historical period. It is also the realization of art's concept in which all its histories are contained, an open field — the domain of a now free or self-ordained aestheticity — where all the arts accumulated in that movement can co-exist and co-inhere by expanding and contracting their identities. Culmination and origination here converge as the ground of art surfaces and exposes itself in the plastic object. Free to saturate its objectivities with its presence, the self-reflecting subject now takes possession of all forms and posits art from the standpoint of the Idea. Having brought itself to concreteness, the realized concept is on its subjective side pure expressiveness, while on its objective side it becomes pure aestheticity. Despite its continual dissolution and dispersion (a movement that actually

takes place in it), the aesthetic object persists and becomes the ground where multiple expressivities can be staged.

In what follows, I use modernist painting and the cinema to outline the Romantic *space* (*Räum*) where art finally reaches its own Idea. I approach painting, music and poetry as fluid and open forms, since the idea of insular and distinctive arts is abandoned right where the Romantic begins, never to be reinstated in its original integrity. Cinema is implicit in this movement in which music and poetry come to constitute and unravel (absorb and disorientate) the visual object. I chose Paul Klee (1879–1940) as my representative of modernism because his paintings have a kinetic and musical plasticity similar to that of the cinematic image. And I chose Sergei Eisenstein (1898–1948) because in his films the express realism of the cinematic image is posited from the standpoint of a constructivist subjectivity which operates both inside and outside the frame — composing it as it goes. Through montage, the shot is set in an elliptical modality, similar to that of the *haiku,* which imparts on it an inner motion that is inextricably plastic and psychological (e.g., in the famous Odessa Steps sequence). This motion is accelerated when the aesthetic elements active within the frame are set in oppositional relationships (light and dark, static and dynamic, heavy and light etc.) thus "shattering…the quadrilateral cage of the shot."[9] As in Klee, the picture plane is simultaneously dissolved and posited from within.

• The Movement •

In Hegel's aesthetics, the self-determination of art has three moments, the Symbolic, the Classical and the Romantic. These exist logically in the concept of art, and materially in its historical expressions, until the latter collapse into the fully objectified concept, giving art its true being and initiating new self-expressive modalities. A brief look into how this movement works is necessary before we proceed.

At the very opening of the Symbolic moment, art exists in a state of dormancy manifested as an exterior unity, an immanence unmediated by questions of meaning and form, that implies for consciousness a literal encounter with the divine — i.e. with the "immediate divine existents" (*unmittelbare göttliche Existenzen*) — posited as being rather than as art.[10]

This actuality, which is shared alike by the divinized bull (*der Stier*) of the pagan ritual and the Eucharistic blood (*das wirkliche Blut Gottes*) of the Christian liturgy, seems impenetrable: an object which consciousness cannot rupture.[11] But since it is in the nature of consciousness to enter and reconstitute its objects, the idol must give way to something far more malleable and familiar. This giving way is the gradual transition from cult to art.

The germination of art in the Symbolic begins with the appearance of the idol as a consummate, impenetrable particular. Here the power (*die Kraft*) of the supernatural being that stares one in the eye or simply stands its sacred and absolute ground unperturbed, in front of a petrified consciousness, recalls what modernism found in the primitive: the figure that though small in size appears colossal in its power of presence.[12] This tension is resolved within the Romantic sphere, wherein art is freed from the burden of representation — exactly as some modernists advocated — and therefore from the shallow interiority of the mimetic image.[13] In this sense, the Romantic is present wherever a work of art assumes the total being of a subject (or as I have argued elsewhere, a person).[14]

In the Symbolic, consciousness awakens to the transformation of matter and to its own expressive nature. Resistance and at the same time submission to the splicing power of subjectivity marks the emergence of the art object from the idol, and the onset of the aesthetic or consciously shaped object, in the final stage of the Symbolic.[15] This movement develops in three stages: first as idol, then as the visualized or fantasized apparitional image, and lastly as the aesthetic object. When the work is perceived as the thing through which a subject speaks or makes itself known, it assumes for the first time the ambiguous distance from nature that marks the being of art. In contrast to the idol that remains mute and the apparitional image that articulates by means of sheer repetition (spatial projection), this proto-aesthetic object posits a question as to its meaning that it cannot entirely answer.

We must pay attention to the middle point, the apparitional image, because it shows how active subjectivity is in the work of art. In this stage, all subjective content, any trace of consciousness expressed in sensuous form, will appear "abstract and superficial."[16] Hegel cites Indian art whose ubiquitous gods never reach the degree of self-contained personification achieved in Classical sculpture. This condition, where form expands into all kinds of extravagances, can be seen in Bodhisattva figures with multiple arms and legs in Himalayan art. Here neither aesthetic form

nor consciousness can restrict themselves. This fluidity recurs in the Romantic, but from the standpoint of the total possession of the art object by consciousness. An example is Klee's *Fugue in Red, 1921* where chromatic progressions impart on visual space not only a sonorous quality but also a sense of presence in an interior, unspecified space, where the image is being composed. The difference here from the Symbolic is that the aesthetic object is solidly established and can sustain all these reverberations.

What accounts for this resilience is the fact that the Romantic form presupposes and entails the Classical. As the Symbolic transitions to the Classical, the image begins to control and limit its own space, to gather all aspects of what it shows into one form. Hence the self-possessed figures of Archaic sculpture (e.g., the *kouroi*) where the rigid solidity of physical form is countered by the enigmatic smile — clear evidence that subjectivity is at work in the art object.

In the Classical, the "enigmatic" unity achieved in the Symbolic loses this "deeper meaning" — the intimation of a potent but superficial subjectivity — and becomes a sensuous appearance that is thoroughly saturated with meaning ("in itself and throughout distinct and clear," *in sich selber durchweg deutlich und klar zu sein*) and thus inherently plastic, i.e., in charge of its own form.[17] This new dynamism in the art object, the fact that it sets itself forth as a self-determining subject — what Hegel calls "substantial subjectivity" (*die substantielle Subjektivität*) — remains within the domain of art as one of its two formative moments.[18] The other moment is the thorough saturation of the aesthetic object by subjectivity which thus posits the "worthlessness of the sensuous" (*das sinnlich Erscheinende dur Wertlosigkeit herniedersinkt*).[19] Here the art object loses its autonomy and is tied to a signifying subject: the sign in de Man.

Together, these two moments, the modality of substance (resilience, autonomy) and the modality of the sign (expression, communication), define the aesthetic. In the Romantic, the work of art can function simultaneously in both modalities, shifting from the one to the other within its own space. What makes modernism so suitable to Hegelian reflection is that it thematizes this duality and the ambiguity it imparts on the work of art.

• Painting •

In Romantic art, subjectivity expresses itself aesthetically and the work of art begins to lose the independent existence it had in the Classical stage.[20] The Romantic signals the elusive presence of the subject on the surface and at the interior of the art object and the onset of a dynamism in the picture space that was absent from Classical art. The image now has an inner life that does not entirely belong to it. Hegel speaks of the "principle of subjectivity…breaking into (*hineinbrechende hervor*) the subject matter *and* the artistic mode of its *portrayal* (*Dastellungweise*)."[21] Form is infused with feeling and thought. Attention shifts away from representation (i.e., from what the picture depicts) and toward the aesthetic object itself (i.e., what actually does the depicting): "the spirit becomes a center essentially shining out as the inner life transcending its fusion with what is objective and external."[22] A depth opens in the two-dimensional image that seems to undermine its placid unity.

The art object that in the Classical form put forth a "self-enclosed space" *(in sich abgeschlossene*) as its own self-sufficient and self-contained world, is no more.[23] In the Romantic, the work of art is neither idol (Symbolic) nor ideal (Classical). It is now Idea. Inside it surge energies that cannot be expressed by its previous forms.[24] The "shining-through of the spiritual" (*Widerschein des Geistigen*) may rest temporarily in the Classical totality, and make the Greek temple vibrate with music (*der Musik ihrer Verhaltnisse*).[25] But even when at rest, this seemingly self-sufficient totality is in motion. It works to open art to its concept and liberate it from artificial boundaries.[26]

The picture space in the Romantic is an aestheticized space in and through which subjectivity projects (its) art. We may think of it as art emptying and unfolding its being and becoming a stage, where consciousness maps itself. Thus whatever appears internally and exists noetically — for example, feelings, impressions, or vivid images — is transferred to a surface where it assumes the full semblance of the physical realities out of which painting crafts its object. Things painted still look like what they are in the world. But the aesthetic form they assume does not belong only to them: "in the manner of their artistic realization they make visible the liveliness (*Lebendigkeit*) of their treatment, the participation of the spirit, the mind's very indwelling in this

uttermost extreme of externality (*Extrem der Äußerlichkeit*), and therefore an inner and ideal life."[27]

It is important not to overlook the connection between "liveliness" and "extreme externality," since, as we shall see later, this is the distinctive feature of the image in Klee and in the work of other modernists like Joan Miró: the sense that the objects we see are lively and playful because they have no inner center to hold them and they thus exist in a state of perpetual motion despite the fact that their plastic being commits them to the tentative stillness of objects (things). The surging of the image out of the picture plane that contains it, and its tendency to dissolution and dispersion, are characteristic, as we shall show below, of the cinematic image and are already foreshadowed in photography. So is the discarnating effect of the liveliness that is visible in the picture space in Romantic painting: it spiritualizes what it gets hold of, intimating an oneiric and fantastic sensuousness.[28]

This precarious subsistence belongs to art in all its stages, but becomes explicit in the Romantic. We see the "body posited as a negative" (*negativ zu setzen*), a negativity that, once released, returns to the work as discourse, ideology, sign, bringing about the further dissolution of the work.[29] This may very well be a postmodern moment. The negative returns as corporealized speech, as theatre and performance, or some other specular act in order to take over, displace and mock art and its plastic media, for example film and painting, from within their own spaces — to paint painting's untruth and thus make it lie to itself. Certainly art can dissolve here if the aesthetic object fails to simultaneously affirm and deny its sensuousness, if it ceases to exist as a signifying plastic being and becomes only a sign.

In the Romantic, painting cannot contain the inner life that informs it.[30] What appears on the surface of a canvas or a panel is indeed, as we pointed out earlier, an interiorized object — a thing imagined, seen, contemplated etc. The destiny of the painted image is thus "the outward appearance of the self-concentrated inner life" (*das Hervorscheinen des in sich konzentrierten Inneren*).[31] If we spatialize the concepts involved here, we will see the imbalance. All the energy is in the dense interior which the image imperfectly conceals and to which it is ready to yield at any moment — such is its precariousness. "The spatial external form" (*die raumliche Außengestalt)* that painting assumes is, qua "external," already an artifice, a projection from a depth that the image does not, cannot master, and therefore a movement that opens the image to irony.[32] Hegel sees on the

other side of this concealment, right where the image forms, a "free play" (*freien Spielraum*) or clearance, the opening of a space where the sensuous breaks down into aesthetic variety and multiplicity (*Mannigfaltigkeit*).[33] This is exactly where irony (toward realism or naturalism) proliferates and where the Romantic outlines the aesthetic experiments undertaken in modernism.

These developments are clearly articulated in the second movement of Hegel's analysis of painting, "The Sensuous Material of Painting," which defines the art by its failure to reify the third dimension, a failure that is essential to painting's being. This failure is exactly where subjectivity makes its entrance and comes to dominate aesthetic space. In the course of the Romantic moment, which, like the Symbolic, has three phases, subjectivity gradually internalizes and reconfigures space, first as image, then as sign (musical note), and eventually as word (poetic image). "As retiring into itself out of it" (*als aus demselben in sich hineingehend*) is thus the modality of the painted image that carries subjective ideas as its *locus mysticus*, a locus which it strives to but cannot possess or express fully and to which it owes its distinctive plasticity.[34]

So radical is this intrusion that the spectator, the subject on the other side of the image, is actually in it already, has already placed herself inside the work. A position thus opens in the painted image, even before anything is painted, for painting to present not itself or the world but rather the subject whose construct and spectacle the world is and whose modalities it now posits. "The spectator (*der Zuschauer*) is as it were in it from the beginning (*von Anfang*), is counted in with it, and the work exists only for this fixed point, i.e., for the individual (*diese festen Punkt des Subjekts*) apprehending it."[35] This "*festen Punkt des Subjekts*" is thus a locus within painting where all the mechanisms of subjectivity converge and from where they are deployed as the Romantic unfolds. It is for this reason the point from where painting may unravel and from where it may also be recovered and reconstituted – something that from this point on, art is free to do. We could even clear this ground and place this subject outside it, expel it, in order to create once again, in the "primitive" manner of the Symbolic, the totemic object.

We have reason to suggest, then, that at some point this precariousness will become evident in the work of art. Painting will explicitly stand between the inner and the outer, manifesting this duality in all its aspects. As "painting" is thus dissolved from inside, images will arise which have an unprecedented degree of transparency and are

simultaneously mental and plastic objects. We see this in Klee but also in Wassily Kandinsky and Kasimir Malevich.

In Klee, the divisive-unitive rhythm of discarnation that subjectivity imposes on things brings to the image a temporal dimension: it is in color and light that what we see forms, endures and dissolves. *Hammamet with the Mosque* (1914), is an image dominated by pale washes of red, blue, green, yellow and gray laid out along a diagonal line on the upper side of which, against the horizon, are outlined the shapes of walls, windows and towers. Buildings, fields, sky, and vegetation belong most visibly and integrally to an architectonic of converging color zones which is synthesized on the spot. Sky passes into tower, wall into cloud. The explicit geometry of the emerging landscape makes an atmospheric, impressionistic impact unlikely. We do not know from what position the image is painted — whereas the impressionist paints explicitly from outside.

Klee, who said that he discovered color (and painting) while in Tunis, first painted this picture on location, but that same year he re-arranged its fluid, transitioning zones in a more programmatic and rigid structure in *Motif from Hammamet* (1914). In *Motif*, as in many other examples from modernist art, we can speak of discarnate realities and transparencies because what we see has the consistency of things deflected through a window, glass or prism — perhaps the influence of Robert Delaunay whose work Klee admired. At the same time, because of its incremental structure and chromatic dissolutions, the image here extends beyond the frame — as in cinema.

It is only by convention that what we have in front of us is a "picture," in the sense of something set permanently, irreversibly in a frame. In reality, if we push the convention aside, the image is nothing more than the interruption of a movement. It recalls what happens when the photographic camera cuts a slice out of the continuum of consciousness and world and lets it stand for itself, or when the freeze-frame in cinema presents us with the isolated, dislocated image *as if* it were a photograph.

Hegel characterizes painting as "a self-enclosed whole" (*ein in sich beschlossenes Ganzes*) whose unity can be established thematically (*der Sache*).[36] But this thematic unity is tenuous because the image cannot be assembled on that basis except from the position of the one who thematizes it, a position that lies beyond it and which painting itself cannot render. Thus it makes sense for painting to move into abstraction. Think

of how abstract painting, the non-representational, non-narrative image, in most instances thematizes this absence and how this thematization works ironically to turn the image into an expressly authored object (for example in the work of Jackson Pollock, but arguably not in the work of Mark Rothko). But authorship inserts the work in a literary space, making it the surrogate of discourses which the subject may or may not possess. "Painting" may go on in that respect for as long as we wish to keep this type of rhetorical operation active.

Variations on painting's tenuous unities are possible which Hegel could not have anticipated. In *Hammamet* we may speak of a contained multiplicity whose point of issuance is neither inside the image nor, as far as we can see, outside it. We can thus imagine or speculate the existence of some programmatic movement, some matrix in which the image is integrated and in relationship to which it is virtually, as Hegel said, a clearance (*Spielraum*) where painting now *plays*. Even the notion of the subject-as-artist seems to have no place in this dynamic, and we may in fact consider that there is only one certain position for subjectivity given to us here: that of the spectator (*der Zuschauer*). The transposition of the creative subject outside the image, as one who encounters rather than projects, is part of the opening of the Romantic to the subject as transcendent (dislocated) rather than as an immanent (localized). The artist is subject to this splicing effect that takes place "inside" the picture (which, as we have pointed out, has no inside anymore and thus no outside either).

Hammamet helps us outline the Romantic and at the same time position ourselves concretely, through the actual painting, in the frequencies that constitute it. "Frequencies" are generated whenever a subject is intimated that lies concealed somewhere between artist and spectator and even beyond that. Or, alternatively, we may think in terms of "frequencies" when meaning is structured independently of a subject but in modalities that are consonant with it (e.g., progressions, architectonics, permutations). We can imagine that the subject of *Hammamet* is nothing more than color that is transposed directly from the actual landscape to the canvas and to what makes its appearance there — or simply *an* appearance.

Thus, as painting reaches this state, what is left of the Romantic in it is not the subject in which the image originates and withdraws but the actual movement (modality) of this withdrawal, the "retiring into itself out of it." In other words, it is in the nature of subjectivity to actually abstract

from its own presence and leave behind, as residue, a movement or logical intonation (or traced paths). Here, according to Hegel, we are already in the sphere of music which for Klee, an accomplished violinist, is painting's perennial muse — perhaps the Platonic *mousike*.

• Interlude: Music and Poetry •

The chromatic intonations present in so many Klee works suggest that the musical can subsist in painting as one of its integral dimensions. There is in this instance no necessary annulment or dissolution of painting's spatiality. What we have instead is the retention of the two moments in a singular form that is dynamically musical *and* plastic. Consonant with the opening of the plastic to temporality and sound, the image shifts constantly between the two directions, putting on display multiple internal inversions. Since subjectivity is now freely synthesizing its objects from any point within its own objectified (scripted) frequencies, the space posited by painting lacks finality or circumscription. Things arise in it but they do not belong there in any resolute way. What is enframed is defined by internal shifts and inversions that multiply and dissipate, as if nothing external constrains them. It is these movements that in effect constitute space as a self-plasticizing field that is active in its own painting and animation.

Fugue in Red (1921) is one of many Klee paintings from this period that have "harmony," "rhythm," "fugue," "nocturne," "pastoral," "polyphony" etc. in their titles.[37] In *Fugue*, sequences of disconnected, overlapping, floating shapes in shades of gray and red expand on a dark plane from left to right and in certain instances toward the picture plane itself. The gradual transition from gray to red imparts stillness, intensity and the sense of a surfacing, vibrating movement that brings the emerging shades to life and conspicuous form. It is as though music is inscribing (performing) itself inside the image and in so doing extends the limits of the frame in ways that recall photography and cinema.

Color is here fluid but it is also holding itself in place, as if to resist dissolution or the total and irreversible conversion of the shapes it engenders. In his significant study of the role of music in Klee's painting, Hajo Düchting wrote:

> by concentrating on individual accents and color sequences, subtle relationships and arrangements of color are revealed in rows of rectangles which become lighter and darker or warmer and cooler. The different shades of color combine like musical chords into a harmonic whole in which the mood communicated by the colors is analogous to that of major and minor keys. The rich orchestration of the color tones appears as a unified whole, even though the eye can still detect individual melodic phrases and differentiated structural rhythms.[38]

In *Fugue*, fluidity suggests the unrestrained quality of sound while the persistence of the individual triangles, rectangles, ovals and other floating shapes is consistent with the musical form (fugue) that gives the painting its name: the construction of harmony out of linearly singular moments. Hegel explains that the "figurations of notes in their temporal rising and falling" (*die Figurationen des Tons in seinem zeitlichen Klingen und Verklingen*) is the movement that defines musical space.[39] As we can see, it can also define pictorial space. In fact, the temporal "fading away" that *Verklingen* suggests in this context, is here inside the painting itself as a constantly unifying and expanding rhythm in relation to which the frame appears tenuous and open. Thus the image is arranged in sequences which it also interrupts by having its moments vanish and come together while keeping them *in sight*. It is, in this respect, already cinematized.

For Hegel, the musical is externalized "feeling" or sensate emotion (*Empfindung*). The "inner movement of the heart and mind" (*der inneren Bewegung des Herzens und Gemütes*) is "analogically present" (*entspricht*) in note figurations (*die Figurationen des Tons*).[40] As they settle into fluid arrangements, clusters of color sensations now resonate as "tone movements" (*der Bewegung der Töne*) which traverse space and occupy only tentative positions until they expire and disappear in silence.[41] What Klee shows is that painting can actually arrest this movement without suspending it entirely, as one might expect. In *Hammamet* and *Fugue*, the image internalizes the very motion that seems set to unravel it.

With the onset of "music" in the second moment of the Romantic, subjectivity takes over and "obliterates" (*Tilgen*) the "total space" (*der totale Raümlichkeit*) that painting had posited.[42] But painting can adjust to this development. Like the photograph, which has its own way of recording motion (e.g. blurring), a picture can encompass "material which for our apprehension is without stability (*haltlos*) and even as it arises (*Entstehen*) and exists (*Dasein*) vanishes once more."[43] Hegel reserves

this characteristic for music, but it is also present in Klee's *Fugue*, where the progression of chromatic tones resembles a musical composition.

Kandinsky, Delaunay, Malevich and others saw painting as a musical composition and color as an analog for psychic and aural vibrations and even, in Kandinsky's case, assigned to it a spiritual, immaterial energy that reveals transcendent realities.[44] Still they understood that form, which brings a temporary constancy to what it circumscribes, was what kept color from dissolving the image. Hegel's distinction between pictorial and musical form does not recognize this tension but does not exclude it either. In music, even as form arises (*Äußerung*), it cannot, he explains, persist as such but is immediately withdrawn. This movement thus "cancels [form] as objective and does not allow the external to assume in our eyes a fixed existence as something external."[45]

The instability (*haltlos*) that characterizes the musical configuration is already visible in *Hammamet* and even more pronounced in *Fugue in Red*. What is happening in *Fugue* at one level is exactly what Hegel is describing above: the total loss of the image as "free and independent" and capable of reaching "for itself" (*für sich*) "an existence self-reposing and persistent" (*in sich ruhig bestehenden Existenz*).[46] Yet, despite Hegel's claim that where this movement happens, space is entirely "obliterated" (*Tilgen…der totalen Räumlichkeit überhaupt*) — and thus painting gives way to music — the visual object persists.[47] This is not the self-contained existence associated with the Classical, where the image grounds its own being, but one that is saturated with the plastic energies of subjectivity. Here the aesthetic object leads the precarious and yet buoyant existence of a sonorous visible. Standing on the verge of suspending its own logic, painting displays its inherent versatility, one that it owes to music and to itself.

Moreover, this versatility is the result of discarnation — what Hegel, in making the transition to poetry, calls a gradual "degradation" (*heruntersetzen*) of the sensuous (*das sinnliche Material*).[48] The chromatic orchestration of the image brings it to a point of dissolution — *She Bellows, We play* (1928) is composed only of bands of color.[49] But as we have seen, this is something that painting can sustain not only in a passive, receptive way but also dynamically, by appropriating the non-objectivity of sound and diffusing it (sonorizing it) in its own forms. In fact, it may seem that where the image is composed only of bands or dots, it acquires a simultaneity that is comparable to that of an "open

soundscape" where a multiplicity of sounds can be heard at the same time.[50]

We may assume then that the different arts are mutually informed so that painting, for instance, can be reconstituted from a musical standpoint just as music can evoke plastic realities by reconstituting sounds associated with certain substances. Thus we might "see" the color blue, rising waves, and enveloping mists, in the presence of sounds that evoke a storm at sea. This is also evident in the poetic, which brings with it a new visuality and spatiality in order to complete what Hegel calls the "one-sidedness" (*Einseitigkeit*) of music.[51] The need for a structured voice or text (*einen Text*) is necessitated by a lacuna that opens right where music encounters the concreteness of sculpture and architecture.[52] Both arts exist latently in music which, echoing their forms, has its own architectonic. Hegel describes the union of music and text as a "firm conjoining" (*festeren Anschluß*) with a subject matter.[53] In actuality it is an *annexation* of aural space by subjectivity. Text gives to music the semblance of a totality and concreteness that belonged originally to sculpture — opera aspires to be the total art. This concreteness, alluding to the Classical, continues to haunt art with its ideality.

But textuality is too concrete on the subjective side, too rich, Hegel tells us, in content and specificity, to project itself fully in "the abstract inwardness" (*der abstrakteren Innerlichkeit*) of music, and thus this façade too must be abandoned.[54] The poetic now projects its own musicality and visuality in a final "totality" (*die Totalitat*) which is nothing else but subjectivity's inner life, and where painting and music now appear as poeticized, i.e., textualized, verbalized, discursive modalities.[55]

By positing an "objective world" (*objektiven Welt*) from within, poetry "does not altogether lose the determinate character of sculpture and painting" because it grasps conceptually and renders verbally everything that painting grasps and renders sensuously.[56] In fact, it can do so in far more detail and vivacity since it works without mediation, directly from its "imaginative and artistic conceptions but without setting these out visibly and bodily (*leiblich*) for contemplation."[57] This total plasticity is viscerally and noetically executed with all kinds of virtually corporeal realities arising and dissipating inside cognitive space, in trajectories that are underwritten by emotion and, as in music, open up to all kinds of tonalities.

Thus poetry cannot stand still, as painting does, because its tense is "succession" (*Sukzession*): the tempo of consciousness, the generation of articulated rather than abiding forms, speech acts rather than entities.[58] But even in this interior, esoteric space must be multiplied and proliferated "in the breadth of its temporal development" (*in der Breite seiner zeitlichen Entfaltung*); it must be deployed.[59] At the same time, set in the opposite direction, perhaps as a contraction that allows subjectivity to re-assert itself, is the "total inward depth" (*ganzen innerlichen Tiefe*) of its contents, a depth that painting in its circumscribed, enframed space (*bestimmten Raum*) cannot reach.[60] Poetry then arises from the voice or voices which remain hidden inside and beyond the sequences of utterances that proliferate and take over cognitive and actual space in the written poem. In a sense, even when the poem ends, the voice inside it goes on speaking inaudibly.

Poetry's difference from painting and music lies in this uninterrupted continuity, which is made visible in the most compelling way in an art that Hegel did not know: cinema. In Hegelian terms, what happens in cinema is the projection of poetic space outside consciousness, a projection in which not only the subsumed modalities of painting and music — "whose characters it [poetry] combines" — converge but also poetry itself.[61] Thus cinema's fluid and perpetual visuality encompasses poetry and converts it into what at first appears to be just a moving image. But this is on the surface alone. Uttered in frames and shots, in words and phrases, in musical notes and voices, the cinema paints, resounds and speaks the objects of the world and is spoken by them. In Pablo Neruda's poem *Poesia*, poetry does not come from words but from a world that is so saturated with voice that it exists as a poeticized reality, at once palpable and elusive.[62] In the cinema, the visual acquires the same ontopoetic power. It is the image of the world presenting itself as discursively composed, musically intoned and visually animated. In the cinematograph, as in poetry, the voice of the subject and that of its world are indistinguishable, except that in the cinema the latter acquires an evidentiary, objective force (realism) that is absent from poetry.

• Cinema •

Cinema is the visual art of "poetic subjectivity" (*dichtende Subjektivität*).[63] It is where subjectivity puts on display its expressive virtuosity and mastery of objects and their forms. Cinema is made possible by an expressive subject that has brought out of itself and positioned in the world a plethora of forms, thus expanding its creative and self-reflective space. Having entertained these forms, it is now free to re-integrate them in its expressive acts and explore the converging plasticities of self and world.

This last point needs elucidation because in the Classical, animation or expressivity must appear to originate in the art object and to be made evident in its external appearance (*Außengestalt*) or form.[64] In the Romantic, by contrast, the origin of animation lies directly in the subject, which brings to word and world the dynamism of consciousness. Thus poems make present (*zur Darstellung bringt*) beings that are permeated and saturated by consciousness and consciousness that is fully inhabited and energized by beings.[65] For Hegel, the poetic word (*das Wort*) has its own subtle corporeality (*leiblichen form*) and in that sense the poem is a perspicuous (*herausscheinen*) body set in language, a being in which "the full breadth of the world and its phenomena" (*die Breite der Welt und ihrer Erscheinungen*) become visible.[66]

But this visibility is tenuous. The poetic image has no standing of its own. The moment it arises, it withdraws to verbal space and then to non-visibility. In this liminal modality, boundaries begin to dissolve, and we now hear the image spoken and see the word heard from an interior space to which they continuously refer their origin and significations. The poem inadvertently recedes in an invisible, interior space.[67] Its point of origin is never fully brought to view. The poetic voice is perpetually revealed and hidden by the poem that speaks it. Unfolding internally "in a temporal succession as a history" (*in einer zeitlichen Folge al seine Geschichte*), the poem has its own time.[68] But when internalized in the voices that read it and speak it, as poets have said from the time of Sappho, it assumes their histories, echoes their voices and embodies their cadences.[69]

We find a similar movement in the cinema. The image that forms onscreen disappears into the off-screen space where it seems to carry out an existence that the cinema (seen as representation or a two-dimensional

image) cannot convey. We are led there by the character's gaze out of the frame, or by the facets of things that a shot leaves out. It is in the nature of the cinematic image to be elliptical. What Jacques Aumont and Alain Bergala call the "scenographic space" is an indefinite extension of the actual image beyond the frame and screen into a negative space that is both external (projected in the periphery of the screen) and internal (taking place inside the viewer's mind or inside the mental space of a collective imagination).[70]

In fact, the cinematic image seems to originate from one's mind and to be projected straight into it — which is why the screen becomes invisible, immaterial to the act of seeing. It is therefore in cinema that the continuity between objectivity and interiority, actuality and dream can be more convincingly demonstrated. In Andrei Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* (1966), for example, mental, spiritual and physical realities exist on the same plane — e.g., in the encounters between Rublev and Theophanes the Greek (c.1340–1410).

Imagine this. On the opposite side of the projector that gives us the cinematic image, there exists a projecting subject, the viewer. Sitting in the dark, she is fully immersed in her imaginal life and memory, an immersion triggered by the film unfolding in front of her on the screen and in her own mind. In the Romantic, the plasticity of a work of art is constituted not only by the work of art itself but also by consciousness. Thus, the objects that appear inside the work's space posit their being at once inside and outside the work, well beyond the visible. In poetry, for example, world forms and configurations are infused with feeling (*durchfühlt*), deepened (*vertieft*) and transfigured (*verklärt*).[71] Poetry's echo and alter voice, as Neruda knew, is the world. Thus a poem exists where this duality is annulled and at the same time affirmed. Cinema is an exemplary Romantic art because plasticity now forms from two directions: that of a world imbued with the imagery of consciousness and that of a consciousness that has internalized the imagery of the world. The director, or auteur, can work from either position or from both. In the position of consciousness, the modality is that of expressiveness; in that of the world, the modality is that of aestheticity.

Eisenstein takes the position of consciousness and crafts his films from there. Images are gathered from the world and subjected to selection and re-composition as montage. They are condensed for time and space. Ordinary distances between objects become shorter, the actions in which they and human characters are engaged become faster.

Eisenstein finds the roots of montage in poetry, painting, and literature. An example is how the distortion of a line can give to a standing body the illusion of movement (e.g., in Toulouse-Lautrec's lithograph *Miss Cissy Loftus*), or how the elliptical phrases of the Japanese *haiku* poem create realities not contained by its words. In the process, he argues, "imagist thinking" is transformed into "conceptual thinking," exactly as in montage.[72]

In montage, deliberate juxtapositions and collisions push the short, rapidly shifting visual elements (shots) beyond their fixed boundaries and normative perimeters. In Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), eye glasses are interjected in scenes of chaos and disruption, at times for the sake of their form, as surrogates for cinematic and revolutionary vision, or for the psychological effect of shattered glass impacting the human face. The objective is to re-create in the viewer's visual and visceral space the dialectical process, the tensions, collisions, and transformations that the director discerns in all natural and social phenomena. Thus the "cellular" and "organic" patterns that define this process must be inscribed, as montage, in the film's individual units and overall structure, to create objectively the logic of the Marxist "pathos" to which, Eisenstein implied, all natural and social phenomena are ordained.[73] It is not only the suffering of the characters and their world that must impress the viewer but also the logic that dictates that suffering. Once saturated with this logic, the shot will then impress itself on the viewer's psychic space: an act of unmediated transference from one mind to another — a sort of miraculous impression.

Suspended between the frames of Part IV ("The Odessa Staircase") in *Battleship Potemkin*, are images that we never get to see because Eisenstein has removed them. There is the middle-aged woman with the hat, white scarf, pince-nez and anguished face, who appears numerous times urging the crowd to plead for mercy. As a baby carriage rolls down the stairs, we see her face in close-up. When a Cossack raises his arm in a blurred frame, she appears again, with a gaping mouth, a silent scream, and the right side of her face streaming with blood. The missing, invisible frame is the one that would have shown the blade slashing her eye.

At work here is a logical impressionism, a cinema of visual inferences where what occurs on the screen is only one portion of what the viewer is allowed to see. Why these flashes of blindness? Because the viewer must be uniformly struck, shocked and implicated in the shot by a visual object that is made to be inserted and released in psychic and

mental space. The director notes: "An illustration of instantaneous action. Woman with *pince-nez*. Followed immediately — without transition — by the same woman with shattered pince-nez and bleeding eye: impression of a shot hitting the eye."[74]

Another example is the dramatic sequence of the mother and son separated in the panic of the escape. The time that transpires between the shooting of the boy, as he is running down the steps to reach his mother, and the close-up of her horrified face, as she realizes that he is left behind and begins her agonizing ascent toward him, is measured by the feet that trample on his dying body. Multiple shots of the crowd either stepping on his wrist and legs, or trying to avoid him, bombard the viewer. Even though they are shot too low for the mother to actually see what the viewer witnesses, the impression is created that she is seeing every single one of them. They become visible in her frantic mind, where the boy is dying alone, without her.

So transparent should the cinematic image become to psychic realities that Eisenstein planned to use the sound film to map mental activity, as had James Joyce's *Ulysses*.[75] "When Joyce and I met in Paris," Eisenstein wrote, "he was intensely interested in my plans for the inner film-monologue, with a far broader scope than is afforded by literature."[76] Sound helps film to break out of its visuality and enunciate its meanings simultaneously inside and beyond the image, which now carries the echoes of voices that it cannot entirely posses or articulate — cinema too has its "spiritual" invisibles. Here, as in Klee, tonality is both visual and aural. When glass is shattered in silent film, we somehow hear it but it remains contained in the image and in our minds. When sound is added, visual space becomes acoustical and we hear outside the mental space what also echoes inside. Eisenstein envisions orders of "polyphonic sounds" and "polyphonic images" which occur separately or "at once," "a rushing imaging visuality," "disconnected speech," clusters of nouns and verbs interrupted by sounds, action and silence, transitions from form to formlessness.[77]

Cinematography may even be a form of ideography.[78] Eisenstein was impressed by how, in Japanese and Chinese writing, characters that depict concrete objects combine to create an abstract concept: e.g., together, the character for "mouth" and the character for "child" form the ideogram for "scream."[79] The juxtaposition of two visual elements creates the picture of a thought. The more "laconic" these elements are, Eisenstein writes, and the more "depictive" and "single in meaning," the

more abstract and discursive the configurations they generate: "It is exactly what we do in the cinema, combining shots that are *depictive*, single in meaning, neutral in content – into *intellectual* contexts and series."[80]

Roland Barthes describes Eisenstein's use of montage as a "hammering" of visual meaning onto consciousness.[81] Ambiguity becomes a tool for inserting a certain conceptual content into the shot, as we have seen in the two examples from the "Odessa Staircase," where the missing frames only exaggerate the ferocity of the Cossacks and the pain of the people they brutalize. This use of aesthetic elements as a means of signification is characteristic of propaganda. In *Battleship Potemkin*, the saturation of the viewer's mind is masterful. Exposed to a continuous flux of images that seem to be coming from all directions, the mind is rendered a-visual so that the viewer may see through the director's Marxist vision. A comparison with *haiku* helps to clarify this point.

Eisenstein calls the *haiku* "a concentrated impressionist sketch," for example Basho's "A lonely crow / On leafless bough / One autumn eve." [82] He points out that its elliptical form invites the reader to participate in the realities it conjures and thus, like one who sees the whole moon in one of its phases, bring them to perfection. Indeed, in the *haiku*, as in the *sumiye* painting, the viewing/hearing consciousness rises to the surface of the image/poem where the present moment expands to eternity. The voice that speaks the poem, the eye that brings forth the image is there and nowhere else. In the *haiku*, the poet speaks from the midst of word-things, in a self-effacing voice that leaves room for the reader to enter and hear what the poem shows.

In *Potemkin*, by contrast, the voice speaks from behind the space where images congregate and the world appears. The image space is visibly possessed, incessantly vocalizing, and cluttered with objects of an internalized world. There is no room for the viewer to enter and see for herself, to bring to the image the rhythm and pace of her own vision. The haiku happens; *Potemkin* is made to happen, urgently. It gives no intimation of rest, no integral horizon from which its frames arise. What is seen in it is not things in their emerging essence – as we see in bamboo or plum or a journey captured alive in *haiku* verse – but a barrage of images produced by a mind for which the world is a spectacle. Images proliferate until a subtitle or a lyrical interlude (e.g. dusk in the Odessa harbor) forces a slower pace or a moment of rest before another barrage of images begins. Other times, as with the baby carriage making its way down the

Odessa steps, the unity achieved by a movement is disrupted by a solitary object in close-up (e.g. the silver-buckled, bloody belt of the baby's mother or her white gloves). Interruptions of this kind serve to intensify the dialectical movement that permeates the film.[83]

The viewer who is immobilized as Eisenstein's peculiar spectacle enters her mind, like one who enters another's dream or nightmare, is stigmatized by the traces it leaves behind. Like a weeping icon, the image of the woman's bleeding face, the Cossack's ghostly face and arm, haunts through its martyric, intangible efficacy.[84]

• Afterthoughts •

Eisenstein's films belong to the Romantic but they also revert to the Classical when they attempt to craft an ideographic object, a super organism which "enters the circle of natural and social phenomena" as a phenomenon in its own right.[85] This movement between the two Hegelian categories explains how a work of art, which has achieved the plastic form that characterizes the Romantic arts, can carry ideological content and a rigid structure and still be an autonomous aesthetic object that defies ideological construction. The Romantic is open. It suspends identities, redefines genres, and liberates art from linear time. No poem in this sense is "archaic." No film is "modern." For example, the art of Oceania or Africa that so impressed many modernists is simultaneously "primitive" and "avant-garde" and yet free to be itself. Imputed boundaries cease to exist and plasticity expands — even to the point of self-negation. The Marxist is here free to delight in form while aspiring to master it.

We can see *Potemkin* for what it is and for what Eisenstein intended it to be. Or, we can hear it. Like musical notes, frames become the raw material for carefully orchestrated expressive acts, recalling Klee's musical phrases. We may fixate on the artist, resolve to forget him or replace him with a collective subject. Eisenstein acknowledges the "Hegelian a-priority" or the "idea-satiation of the author."[86] But he then points out that "the artist's idea itself is in no way spontaneous or self-engendered, but is a socially reflected mirror-image, a reflection of social reality."[87] "Sensual and imagist thought processes" play a formative role in the creation of art, but it is "the clear-cut laws and structure peculiarities"

that govern these processes, the "laws for the construction of form, the study and analysis of which have immense importance in the task of mastering the 'mysteries' of the technique of form."[88]

Listening to Eisenstein, one would expect that the sensuous forms in which consciousness entertains its concepts progressively lose their density and reveal thought in its pure, mental configurations. But what we see in the cinema, despite the transparency and the radiance of its imagery, is not a de-densification. Instead, what unfolds before us is the confluence of multiple visualities, auralities and textualities: a visual object (if the singular be allowed here) that is at once transparent and opaque, simple and complex, shallow and deep. Certainly we can identify in this space, as we can in that of painting, visual languages or codes that point to its social or political construction. Hegel's forms show how these arise from the very concept and being of art. Thus, persistent efforts by art historians and others to outline movements, schools etc., are both prompted and undermined by art itself.[89]

The theoretician is free to theorize. "We must proceed," Eisenstein cautioned, "not by the path of mechanical simplification of the task, but by the path of planned analytical ascertaining of the secret of the very nature of affective form."[90] Such forms, as in the Symbolic, are deposited in ciphered narratives and objects to be unearthed and utilized by the modernist subject. The Bushmen who use a "long series of descriptive single images, almost asyntactic series" to suggest a unified experience (e.g., colonialist exploitation), are primitive cinematographers.[91] For Eisenstein, approaching cinema as a kind of proto-language ensures not only its universality but also its efficacy in demonstrating the veracity of Marxist metaphysics: "We must travel toward the ultimate-expressive and ultimate-affective form and use the limit of simple and economic form that expresses what we need."[92]

Yet, to accept this narrowing of the cinematic function is to also accept the opposite movement. The hammering notes and gestures, that try to impress dialectical materialism on the viewer, are actually open-ended. Their proliferation on the screen makes any kind of final recollection or categorization under a narrative or concept (e.g., of revolution) untenable – except, perhaps, for the ideologue who opts to close her eyes and pretend otherwise. To be sure, *Potemkin* has a Classical (superficial) plasticity as long as it remains part of a conceptual (Marxist) framework. It does function as the organism that Eisenstein describes. But the viewer can also take that prescribed "body" and

experience it from a primitivist, constructivist or expressionist standpoint or from no standpoint at all. Thus despite its polymorphy, polyphony and polysemy, and because of them, the Romantic is where art brings its own "absolute" into view and where it freely unfolds its being.

• Notes •

For Professor Wilfried Ver Eecke.

I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions and to Dr. Mandy-Suzanne Wong for her incisive editing of the text.

[1] G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, volume* 2, T.M. Knox trans., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 795, 800-801, 961, 960.
[2] Hegel, *Aesthetics,* vol. 1, 309. G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik, Dritter Band*, *Sämtliche Werke*, 3 vols., (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1964), 415 (Page references to this edition appear henceforth in parentheses, following the English text, unless otherwise indicated).
[3] Andrzej Warminski ed., *Paul de Man*: *Aesthetic Ideology*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 103.
[4] Hegel, *Aesthetics,* vol. 1, 80 (120), emphasis added.
[5] Ibid. (121).
[6] On the relationship between offscreen and onscreen space, see Jacques Aumont, Alain Bergala eds., *Aesthetics of Film*, Richard Neupert trans., (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 9-18.
[7] C.A. Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity: Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 271-273.
[8] For fluidity in Hegel, see Mandy-Suzanne Wong, "Hegel's Being-Fluid in *Corregidora*, Blues, and (Post-) Black Aesthetics," *Evental Aesthetics* 1, no. 1 (2012): 85-120.
[9] Sergei Eisenstein, *Sergei Eisenstein Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, Jay Leyda ed. and trans. (New York: Harcourt, 1977), 32, 38.
[10] Hegel, *Aesthetics,* vol. 1, 324 (435).
[11] Ibid. For those who understand the Eucharist as a symbolic act.
[12] Ibid. As observed by the American painter and critic Max Weber. Gail Levin, "American Art," in William Rubin ed., *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art, vol.* 2 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 458-473.
[13] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol.1, 319.
[14] Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time*, 66-68, 251-268.
[15] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, 319.
[16] Ibid., 341 (456).
[17] Ibid., 309 (315).

[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., 80-81 (121).
[20] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, 795 (7).
[21] Ibid., 792 (3). For a discussion of the exemplary role of *Darstellung* in Hegel's aesthetics and philosophy, see C.A. Tsakiridou, "*Darstellung*: Reflections on Art, Logic and System in Hegel." *The Owl of Minerva*, 23, no.1 (fall 1991): 15-28, emphasis added.
[22] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, 794 (6).
[23] Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic* (London: Routledge, 2005), 72. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, 426 (3).
[24] G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, T.M. Knox and A.V. Miller trans., (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 71, 82.
[25] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, 660 (303).
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 794 (6).
[28] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Richard Howard trans., (New York: Noonday, 1981), 96, 115-117. See also C.A. Tsakiridou, "Roland Barthes Explores Photography 'as a wound'," *Paragraph*, 18.3, (1995): 273–85, reprinted in Neil Badmington ed., *Roland Barthes: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory,* vol. 3 (London: Routledge, 2009).
[29] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, 794 (6).
[30] Ibid., 795.
[31] Ibid., (7).
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., 794 (6).
[34] Ibid., 805 (20).
[35] Ibid., 806, (21).
[36] Ibid., 811 (27).
[37] Hajo Düchting, *Painting Music*, Penelope Crowe trans. (New York: Prestel, 1997), 28-63 (illustration of *Harmony*, 28).
[38] Ibid., 57.
[39] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, 795 (7).
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 889 (127).
[43] Ibid.
[44] The French art critic Charles Blanc (1813-1881) compared the intensity of colors with the vibrations of sounds and the musical scale with the color scale. Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time*, 276-280.
[45] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, 889-890 (127).
[46] Ibid., 889 (127).
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 796 (8).
[49] Düchting, *Painting Music*, 46, 76-78.
[50] Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 13.
[51] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, 960 (221).
[52] Ibid., 960 (221).
[53] Ibid., 960 (221-222).
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 961 (223).
[56] Ibid., 960 (222).
[57] Ibid., 961 (222).
[58] Ibid., 961 (223).
[59] Ibid., 961-962 (224).
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., 961 (223).
[62] "And it was at that age...Poetry arrived
in search of me. I don't know, I don't know where
it came from, from winter or a river.

I don't know how or when,
no, they were not voices, they were not
words, nor silence,
but from a street I was summoned,
from the branches of the night..."
Pablo Neruda, *Pablo Neruda: Selected Poems*, Nathaniel Tarn ed., Anthony Kerrigan, W.S. Merwin, Alastair Reid and Nathaniel Tarn trans. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin/Seymour Lawrence, 1970), 256-259. On poetry and cinema and on the relationship between poetry and montage in Eisenstein, see Jean Mitry, *The Aesthetics and Psychology of Cinema*, Christopher King trans., (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 23-28, 143-144.
[63] Hegel, *Aesthetics,* vol. 2, 996 (270).
[64] Ibid., 998 (272).
[65] Ibid., 996 (270). See also Tsakiridou, "Darstellung," 18-25.
[66] Ibid., 997-998 (271-272).
[67] The movement is reminiscent of the "*vathu logon*" (abyssal account) of the Heraclitean soul (fr. 62). Daniel W. Graham ed., *The Texts of the Early Presocratics: The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics, Part I*, Daniel W. Graham trans., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 166-167.
[68] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, 962 (224).
[69] C.A. Tsakiridou. "Her Voiceless Voice: Reviewing Sappho's Poetics," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 8, no.3 (Dec. 2003): 95-107.
[70] Aumont, Jacques and Bergala Alain. *Aesthetics of Film*. Richard Neupert trans. (Austin: University of Texas, 1992), 14.
[71] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, 998 (272).
[72] Sergei Eisenstien. *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, Jay Leyda ed. and trans., (New York: Harcourt, 1977), 50, 31.
[73] Ibid., 49, 159-162, 173.
[74] Ibid., 55-56.
[75] Ibid., 104.
[76] Ibid., 104.
[77] Ibid., 105.
[78] Ibid., 29-30.
[79] Ibid., 30.
[80] Ibid. Emphasis original.
[81] Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, Stephen Heath trans. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 56.
[82] Eisenstein, 31.
[83] Ibid., 172-173.
[84] This is a Russian Modernist theme. For the proletarian martyr and his iconography according to Kasimir Malevich, see Troels Andersen ed., *K.S. Malevich, Essays on Art 1915-1933,* vol. 2, Xenia Glowacki-Prus and Anronld McMillin trans., (London: Rapp and Whiting, 1968), 204-205. For the Russian modernist approach to the Byzantince icon, see Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time*, 75-98.
[85] Eisenstein, 174.
[86] Ibid., 126-127.
[87] Ibid., 127.
[88] Ibid., 130.
[89] Kirk Varnedoe, *A Fine Disregard: What Makes Modern Art Modern* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990), 17-23.
[90] Eisenstein, 146.
[91] Ibid., 138.
[92] Ibid., 146.

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Vol. 2, No. 1 (2013)

Wierzbicki, James. "*Laocoön* Again?: Simultaneous 'Present Moments' in the Music of Elliott Carter and the Paintings of Jackson Pollock."
***Evental Aesthetics* 2, no. 1 (2013): 73-104.**

ABSTRACT

Ever since Lessing's 1776 "Laocoön: An Essay upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting" aestheticians have been debating the essential differences between the temporal and the visual arts. *Pace* Lessing and his twentieth-century philosophical descendants, this essay explores the idea that the musical style cultivated by the American composer Elliott Carter in the years following World War II and the "action paintings" produced ca. 1947–53 by his compatriot Jackson Pollock in fact have quite a bit in common. The commonality, the essay argues, is not so much anything contained in the works themselves as something perceived – perhaps even viscerally felt – by persons who experience the paintings and the musical compositions. Although their musical and painterly efforts are in most ways as different as night and day, both Carter and Pollock managed in their postwar works – perhaps uniquely – to create the potent illusion of *multiple times* that *seem* to pass *at the same time*.

KEYWORDS

Elliott Carter, G. E. Lessing, Jackson Pollock, music, painting, time

Laocoön Again?:

Simultaneous "Present Moments" in the Music of Elliott Carter and the Paintings of Jackson Pollock

James Wierzbicki

One of the clearest articulations of why Elliott Carter counts as an arguably "great" composer comes, perhaps surprisingly, from a fellow composer whose music is as different from Carter's as night is from day. Referring to the wide disparity in their approaches to such basic musical elements as rhythmic pulse and tonality, the ultra-conservative Ned Rorem in 1980 granted that, of all his contemporaries, the ultra-modernist Carter "seems the farthest pole from me," yet Rorem was convinced that what both he and Carter strived for most was a "simplicity" of expression.[1] Six years earlier, alluding to a concept even more fundamental, Rorem had offered that what Carter's music projects, above all, is "necessity." By this he did not mean "the necessity of intellect" that purportedly governed so much of America's university-based music in the postwar years but, rather, "the clean-cut necessity of a child's fit."

"Nothing great is ever left to chance," Rorem wrote, "and great Carter surely is in his ability to notate insanity with a precision that, after the fifth or twelfth hearing, renders the notes as logical as the placement of beasts in the Peaceable Kingdom." Colorfully and astutely, he continued: "Like never-resting souls tangled in hell proceed [Carter's] bowed counterpoints, and always in performance after performance they are *tangled in the same way*, like those viscous strands on a Pollock canvas that, actually still, seem to move through time."[2]

Noteworthy in this assessment is the likening of a typical Carter musical composition to a typical painting by Jackson Pollock. Rorem's mention in the same breath of Carter's music and painting of any sort warrants attention at least in part because, in the voluminous literature not just on Carter but by Carter himself, it is for all intents and purposes the only such comparison.[3] Quite apart from its uniqueness, however, Rorem's comment is remarkable for what, to this writer, seems its aptness.

Evidence of links between Carter (1908–2012) and Pollock (1912–1956) is at best circumstantial: both artists were supported, beginning ca. 1946, by grants from the Guggenheim Foundation or by the private patronage of Peggy Guggenheim, and in the early 1950s the international statures of both of them were surreptitiously bolstered, it has lately been revealed, by the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).[4] Although in the 1940s Carter and Pollock were indeed for a while neighbors in New York's Greenwich Village, there is no evidence that suggests they ever crossed paths; one suspects that if they in fact did meet the social dynamics would have been stressful, for it seems unlikely that the well-bred, Harvard-educated Carter could have been comfortable for long in the presence of the hard-drinking and sometimes outrageously antisocial Pollock.[5] Not even the arcs of their careers matched: as early as 1949 *Life* magazine famously suggested that Pollock was quite possibly America's "greatest living painter," but in the late 1940s Carter was just starting to become known, and it was not until more than two decades later, in articles that anticipated his seventieth birthday, that influential music critics such as Andrew Porter would openly declare that Carter "is now America's most famous living composer."[6]

Aside from their comparable status in the pantheon of American art, and their shared interest in the later writings of James Joyce, Pollock and Carter seem to have as little in common as do the art forms with which they worked.[7] Yet I suspect I am not the first to notice similarities between the experience of viewing the so-called "action paintings" that

Pollock produced between 1947 and ca. 1953 and hearing various of the musical compositions that Carter, after tentative starts that date back to 1946, turned out regularly beginning in the 1950s.[8] To my knowledge, these similarities of perceptual experience are addressed nowhere in the extensive art-history literature on postwar Abstract Expressionism or in the equally vast and now burgeoning musicological literature on the "progressive" American music of the postwar years. That the similarities go unaddressed, of course, hardly means that they are nonexistent; it means only that, for those who might share my sense of them, they are maddeningly ineffable. In any case, it seems to me — because it so powerfully *feels* to me — that Carter's and Pollock's efforts share rather more than the formalistic parallel implied in Rorem's comparison.

Taking its cue from Rorem's comment, this essay springs not from the opinion that the apparently chaotic strands of Carter's music and Pollock's paintings are tangled in ways that reveal themselves, upon contemplation and analysis, to be in fact sensible but, rather, from the simile that Rorem, almost as an afterthought, appended to his mention of Pollock's paintings; indeed, it springs from Rorem's casual observation that the "viscous strands on a Pollock canvas," while "actually still," nevertheless "seem to move through time."

After rehearsing the primary literature that seems to prove logically enough that time-based music and space-based painting almost by definition are as incomparable as the proverbial apples and oranges, the essay summarizes first Carter's time-oriented thinking in the context of standard concepts of musical time and then Pollock's "action-painting" style in the context of temporality in the visual arts; it then explores in detail a pair of representative pieces (Carter's 1951 *String Quartet No. 1* and Pollock's 1952 *Number 32*) for the sake of demonstrating an aesthetic quality shared by those works and, indeed, by all of Carter's and Pollock's characteristic output; finally, the essay concludes with the suggestion that what the postwar works of Carter and Pollock have most in common — and what makes them stand apart from modernist art in general — is their manifestation of a very particular phenomenon that plays on perceptions of time.

Time, to recycle a phrase deeply embedded in English common law, in this essay is of the essence. But the time-based phenomenon under consideration here has little to do either with the mundane passage of clock-measured time or with philosophical concepts of temporality that mix a simple awareness of chronometric time with psychologically rich

perceptions of both a remembered past and an imagined future. The phenomenon — apparent as much in Pollock's paintings as in Carter's music — has to do, rather, with representations of the "passing" of time. Whether their medium be painterly or musical, or literary or cinematic, artists in general have long focused on just single moments in time or single stretches of passing time; in marked contrast, Carter and Pollock typically offer their audiences simultaneous images of a number of often quite different "times" passing.

• Laocoön Again? •

In a 1938 article titled "A New Laocoön: Artistic Composites and the Talking Film," the German-born film theorist Rudolf Arnheim observed that a visual art object such as a painting can have something in common with an aural art object such as music not on the fundamental level of sensory phenomena but only "at the level of the so-called expressive qualities." Arnheim stressed that there cannot possibly be a formal connection between such stimuli as a color and a musical tone, but he granted that "a dark red wine," for example, might indeed "have the same expression as the dark sound of a violoncello."[9] He never articulated what he meant by "the same expression," apparently thinking that the phrase was self-explanatory; indeed, Arnheim seems to have felt — and rightly so — that it was common knowledge that specimens of two (or more) very different media could at least somehow stir a perceiver in more or less the same way.

That *this* perceiver is stirred in more or less the same way by Carter's music and Pollock's paintings has already been suggested. It is tempting to let it go at that, to simply confess that these two very different manifestations of postwar American art have similar effects on *my* personal response mechanism. But to claim only that Carter's scores convey "the same expression" as do Pollock's canvases would be tantamount to saying that a hearing of "La Marsaillaise" and a viewing of Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* similarly trigger feelings of defiant patriotism, or that exposures to the turbulent third movement of Debussy's *La Mer* and Hokusai's woodcut *The Wave* call to mind similar romantic ideas about the ocean's potent force. No matter how eloquently they might be expressed, such statements would amount to bromides. And

they would have been recognized as such as early as 1766, when the German playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing published the famous essay that gave rise to Arnheim's title.

Inspired by accounts of the discovery, early in the sixteenth century, of an apparently ancient Roman statue depicting the Trojan priest Laocoön and his sons being crushed to death by a gigantic python, Lessing's "Laocoön: An Essay upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting" was a detailed philosophical articulation of an idea that likely had long been obvious to sensible persons. In essence, Lessing noted that there were fundamental differences between art forms that consisted of just a single image and those that consisted of images presented in succession. Art forms of the first sort were typified by representative painting and sculpture, media whose examples existed only as immobile physical objects and whose subject matter, by definition, involved just "frozen moments" of time; art forms of the second type were typified by various literary genres, but they might easily have included music and — had Lessing been gifted with foresight — cinema.

Lessing noted that the telling of the Laocoön story in Virgil's *Aeneid* involves a sequence of poetic "images" that progress from calm depictions of the priest's high status among the Trojans to conflict-filled depictions of his on-the-mark but ill-received warnings about "Greeks bearing gifts" to, finally, the horrific punishment wreaked upon him by the Troy-hating god Poseidon. The poetry's succession of images, Lessing observed, is very purposefully dramatic, little by little taking the reader from one emotional plane to another and eventually climaxing with a graphic description of Laocoön's snake-induced agonies; in marked contrast, the Laocoön statue depicts only the very instant in which the priest and his two innocent sons fall victim to the serpent. Acknowledging that some readers familiar with the Virgilian story might have expected a sculpted image somehow depictive of Laocoön's desperate struggles and screams, Lessing emphasized that the anonymous maker of the statue was quite right to fit the character with a facial expression of relative calm.

Sculpture and painting, and by implication architecture as well, Lessing wrote, are obviously spatial art forms in which the various elements exist *alongside* one another; in marked contrast, poetry and other types of literature, and by implication music, are just as obviously temporal art forms in which the elements come one *after* the other. Concepts that are in essence temporal tend not to fare well when "captured" by a static medium, Lessing suggested, and likewise for essentially static concepts

when "animated" by line after line of literary description. Referring to the subtitle of his essay, Lessing concluded that the wise artist is the one who, whatever his chosen medium, recognizes and respects his medium's limits.

The idea of limitations on various art forms — supported by a logically formulated distinction between media whose elements are juxtaposed (in Lessing's original German, *nebeneinander*) and those whose elements are presented in succession (*nacheinander*) — was well received at the dawn of the period now commonly known as The Enlightenment and The Age of Reason. But soon enough, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the conventions of design and content that since ca. 1750 had served as rational guidelines became targets at which a whole new generation of artists took aim. The most significant developments in music during the so-called Romantic era arguably had to do not so much with the expansion of harmonic language as with composers' desire to invent, or explore, new musical structures; the shift in literature (spearheaded by Goethe and E.T.A. Hoffmann) was toward narratives that focused long and hard on what often were mere instants in a protagonist's state of mind, and in painting the shift was toward images that even though fixed on canvas nevertheless attempted to "tell" fairly complex stories.

Whereas the goal of most Enlightenment-period artists was to demonstrate their skills by producing technically "perfect" works in more or less standard formats, the goal of most post-Enlightenment artists was to demonstrate their individuality at least in part by breaking free of the earlier formats. With creativity and self-expression rapidly taking precedence over mere craftsmanship, artists in the nineteenth century were driven ever more toward experimentation. As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, the roots of so-called Modernism — a movement distinguished as much by its efforts to depict both the positive and negative aspects of "modern" life as by its defiant rejection of all that seemed "old-fashioned" — were already firmly in place.

After surveying what had more or less recently transpired in various art forms, the American philosopher Irving Babbitt in 1910 penned a short book in which he suggested that perhaps things had gotten out of hand. Attempting to pick up where Lessing had left off, Babbitt's *The New Laokoon: An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts* argued that much modern art — not just with its subject matter but also with its often grand synaesthetic efforts to straddle media boundaries — was guilty of terrible excess. The monograph is "erudite" but "disappointing," writes Daniel

Albright in his 2000 *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature and Other Arts*; it is "weak on the philosophy and physiology of cross-sensory appeals, and, though ostensibly broad-minded, actually far fussier and more philistine than Lessing."[10]

Albright's book, which bases its title on the Laocoön image, does not mention the 1938 essay by Rudolf Arnheim. After dispensing with Babbitt, however, it gets quickly to Clement Greenberg's 1940 "Towards a Newer Laocoon," an essay that was first published in *Partisan Review* and which draws a much firmer line than did either Lessing's or Babbitt's between spatial and temporal art forms.

Even Lessing conceded that all physical objects in fact exist not only in space but also in time, because they continue to exist after their moment of creation and because "at any moment of their continuance [they] may assume a different appearance and stand in different relations" to the things around them.[11] Babbitt, for his part, granted that certain modernist multi-media works at least had the potential to combine temporal and spatial elements in meaningful ways.[12] But Greenberg adamantly insisted that temporal and spatial art forms in essence have nothing in common, and he warned that attempts to mix them would only dilute the strength of both types.

Not out of keeping with his growing reputation as a "purist" critic of modern art, Greenberg in 1940 celebrated the formalist music of the Enlightenment and fairly mourned its decline, during the Romantic era, into storytelling. In defense of nineteenth-century music, Greenberg offered that the shift toward descriptive and narrative forms resulted largely from a "flight from the undisciplined, bottomless sentimentality of the Romantics." Lest this spoil his fundamental thesis that music *per se* is invariably abstract, Greenberg noted that "music imitates painting as much as it does poetry when it becomes representational," and he added that a composer such as Debussy, in setting up the narrative framework of a work like *La Mer*, likely "used the program more as a pretext for experiment than as an end in itself." The spatial arts of painting and sculpture, Greenberg suggested, would do well to look to music's example, "not to ape its effects, but to borrow its principles as a 'pure' art, ... an art which is abstract because it is almost nothing else except sensuous."[13]

Midway through the introduction to his book Albright writes that all three of the thinkers he has dealt with thus far were vigilant "seekers after clarity and truth." "Lessing hated the pretense that time could be like

space, or space like time," he writes; "Babbitt mocked those who saw musical notes as colors, or took the concept of *taste* too literally; Greenberg sought solidity at the unyielding core of the medium itself."[14] And then he notes that there was "another critic, still more firmly set against artistic lies, still more gifted at despising." This was Theodor Adorno, whose 1948 *Philosophy of Modern Music*, Albright claims, "is the finest of all modern sequels to *Laocoön*."[15]

In fact, Adorno never really addresses the limits of painting *per se* ; his references to painting come mostly near the end of the book, and they serve primarily as a reinforcement for the final salvo in his sustained attack on the music of Stravinsky. Clearly a champion of Schoenberg and an arch-foe of Stravinsky, Adorno argues throughout his *Philosophy of Modern Music* that the former's work is true art because its materials consist of "absolute" and logically developing forms that not only demonstrate uncompromising intellectual integrity but also express genuine human feelings; the latter's work, Adorno argues, is mere kitsch because it consists only of stitched-together caricatures of human feeling. In its piecemeal quality, Stravinsky's music seeks to imitate Cubist painting; this ineffective attempt at "the development of a spatial perspective in music ... at its innermost core [represents] the abdication of music." But all painting "has its pathos in that which is," just as "all [genuine] music purports a becoming." And this organic sense of "becoming," Adorno claims, "is exactly what, in Stravinsky, music attempts to evade through the fiction of its mere existence."[16]

Albright notes that Adorno believed wholeheartedly that "music can best emphasize its temporality" — its essence of always "becoming," its constant "thrusting-forward" — by means of the syntactically purposeful use of dissonance. For Adorno, music that uses dissonance only for coloristic effect, or for shock value, was comparable to music that consists of chopped-up pieces of a pre-existing score put back together in "the wrong order." In either case, Albright writes, the result is "an affront to the audience and a crime against art," for in effect "it asks the eye to do the work of hearing."[17]

Provocatively titled "Laocoön Revisited," the introduction to Albright's book on twentieth-century artists' sometimes misguided yet often fruitful transgressions of formal "limits" goes on for fifteen more pages. But the section on Adorno ends with a neat summary of "the message of Adorno and Lessing and Greenberg [and Babbitt] alike," a

message that states adamantly that "the arts of time *must* remain pure, distinct from the arts of space."[18]

• Time for Carter •

As a composer, Elliott Carter right from the start of his career surely regarded music as one of the "arts of time." Yet it was not until the postwar years — simultaneous with his first experiments in what is now considered his trademark style, and by coincidence simultaneous with Pollock's characteristic "action paintings" — that Carter began to think seriously about matters of temporality.

In a 1995 essay titled "Elliott Carter and the Modern Meaning of Time," Jonathan W. Bernard mentions Carter's "great epiphany about time," after which Carter "began to work, somewhat tentatively at first and then with increasing confidence, with various 'simultaneous streams of different things going on together' as well as closely interleaved, mutually interruptive continuities."[19] Bernard's essay is a lucid account not just of the various ways in which Carter dealt with time in all his mature music but also of how Carter's ideas evolved and, especially, how they related to early influences from the fields of film, dance, and modernist literature. But the reference remains cryptic, for Bernard never explains when or where — or under what circumstances — this "great epiphany" took place.

As can be gleaned from his 1971 book-length interview with Allen Edwards and from his various writings that have specifically to do with time, Carter's "great epiphany" was hardly so dramatic as what Saul experienced on the road to Damascus.[20] Nevertheless, as Carter told Edwards, his re-assessment of time vis-à-vis music seems to have happened rather quickly. Presumably referring to the period during which he half-heartedly worked on a rather conventional orchestral piece titled *Holiday Overture*, Carter said that the role of time in music

> began to seem important to me around 1944, when I suddenly realized that, at least in my own education, people had always been consciously concerned only with this or that peculiar local rhythmic combination or sound-texture or novel harmony and had forgotten that the really interesting thing about music is the time of it — the way it goes along.[21]

In most traditional Western art music, the way music "goes along" involves one "thing" coming more or less straightforwardly after another. This is self-evident when the statement is applied to music featuring just a single line, but the idea of traditional Western music being, by and large, a real-time flow of successive ideas applies as well to more complexly textured music. Music's components typically are quite deliberately put together; however numerous are the components at any given moment, they tend to be heard not individually but collectively. Just as in poetry letters form words that form phrases, so in music the tiniest elements eventually coalesce into comprehensible sonic units that occur, like the verbal images of poetry, in succession. No matter how rich these units might be in content or implication, and no matter how intricate might be the units' inter-relationships, the result is most often just a single stream of musical information. In marked contrast to Western music's standard model, the distinctive style that Elliott Carter began to develop ca. 1945, and which he continued to cultivate for more than sixty years, involves *multiple* streams of musical information.

Commentators still quibble over which of Carter's postwar compositions was the seminal work. Some would say that the 1951 *String Quartet No. 1* represents only "the first steps" that Carter took "toward his mature style" that was not manifest until such works as the 1952 *Sonata for Flute, Oboe, Cello and Harpsichord*, the 1953–55 *Variations for Orchestra*, and the 1959 *String Quartet No. 2*;[22] others would offer that the 1951 quartet was the first expression of Carter's "authentic voice" and that what came immediately before amounted only to "bridge" works that allowed Carter to move in the direction of "his first maturity."[23] Although they differ on many particulars, Carter specialists David Schiff and Jonathan W. Bernard agree that the first distinctly "Carteresque" composition was the 1948 *Sonata for Cello and Piano*.[24] Ned Rorem, whose comparison of Carter's music to Jackson Pollock's paintings was invoked at the start of this essay, wrote with confidence that "it was [in] 1946, with his Piano Sonata, that Elliott Carter is generally agreed to have turned into Elliott Carter."[25]

These debates notwithstanding, the postwar "epiphany" resulted in Carter reminding himself of a simple fact that composers had known for hundreds of years but which seemed to have been to an extent forgotten not just by him but by many other mid-twentieth-century musical modernists: more or less simultaneous with Adorno's writing of his 1948 *Philosophy of Modern Music*, Carter remembered that music's real essence had to do not with the relatively static content of moment-to-moment

pitch structures but with dynamic progression through time.[26] In keeping with tradition, Carter's earlier work — most of which he eventually destroyed — indeed unfolded linearly, with one idea following another; his innovative work beginning in 1946 likewise unfolded in linear fashion, but more and more it featured simultaneous trains of musical thought. The perceptible effect was hardly the same as that of traditional polyphony, in which the voices are distinct but nevertheless stem from the same motivic germs and "move" together toward the same teleological goals; in Carter's new kind of polyphony, the rhetorical voices were independent to the extreme and usually they "moved," each at its own pace, toward different goals.

Laying one completely independent voice over another was more efficiently accomplished with the 1948 cello–piano duet than with the 1946 piece for solo piano. Only with great difficulty could a lone pianist realize, for example, a slow-moving line with his left hand and at the same time realize a slightly faster-moving line with his right hand; in a duet for instruments that produced very different types of sounds, it was by comparison easier for each player simply to execute his own meticulously notated part without paying much heed to what his partner was doing, and it was likewise relatively easier for listeners to attend *at the same time* to a pair of lines that not only moved at different rates but which emanated from two different locations on the concert stage.

The idea of spatial stratification that reinforced temporal stratification worked well in the 1948 cello sonata, and it was an idea that Carter would employ strategically as his music's intervallic content (the *sub rosa* ingredient that in subtle ways lends consistency to audibly diverse materials) rapidly gained in complexity. Carter's 1951 *String Quartet No. 1* is a tight mesh of lines that often differ in pace but, like those in the piano sonata, do not differ all that much in actual sound. In contrast, the compositions that followed all reveal Carter's increasing interest in the timbral separation of different materials that flow, independently, through time. Timbral/spatial stratification is suggested in the titles alone of the 1952 *Sonata for Flute, Oboe, Cello and Harpsichord*, the 1961 *Double Concerto for Harpsichord and Piano*, the 1974 *Duo for Violin and Piano*, and the 1976 *A Symphony for Three Orchestras*, and the idea of sonic coloration as a means for helping listeners distinguish between simultaneous lines of very different music comes through at least in a listen to the 1953–55 *Variations for Orchestra* and the 1969 *Concerto for Orchestra*. But Carter's concern for the spatial "placement" of diverse sonic materials is perhaps most evident in his 1959 *String Quartet No. 2*, a

work that like the first quartet involves similar sounding instruments but which "casts" those four instruments (not just by means of tempos and vocabularies of intervals but also by means of characteristic musical gestures) in enormously different quasi-dramatic "roles" and which, furthermore, instructs the players to sit as far apart as possible.

To make a long story short, Carter's musical breakthrough — which occurred almost exactly at the same time that Pollock began to explore what later would be called "action painting" — centered on the idea of music that offered to the listener not a single stream of information but, rather, simultaneous streams. Each stream of information in Carter's mature music of course involved elements occurring — *nacheinander* — one after the other. But Carter's presentation of contrasting musical ideas was not at all akin to the traditional painterly side-by-side presentation — *nebeneinander* — of contrasting pictorial elements. Hardly a juxtaposition of one thing next to or after another, Carter's characteristic postwar music featured a superimposition — what Lessing might have described, had the thought crossed his mind, as *übereinander* — of one thing *over* another.

• Time for Pollock •

Responding to a question from Edwards about the degree to which "the sense of musical motion" contributed to coherence in a composition, Carter tellingly stated that "any technical or esthetic consideration of music really must *start* with the matter of time." Music being so obviously one of the "arts of time," one wonders why Carter felt it necessary to say this. The reason for the comment is that, in Carter's view, most analysts in the postwar years in fact did not approach music this way; instead of regarding music as a series of "*transitive* steps" that lead from one moment to another, Carter said, they regarded musical materials as static.[27]

The elements of a painting, once the paint has dried, of course are truly static. Yet even Lessing observed that paintings and other examples of spatial art at least in a sense have temporal qualities, not just because of their post-production "continuance" but also because the mere act of experiencing them in fact takes time.[28] Early writers on Cubism, whose practitioners often with a single image deliberately attempted to portray multiple views of a single object, noted that certain Cubist paintings seem

to "move in front of our eyes," that whereas "formerly a picture took possession of space, now it reigns in time also," that the idea of an artist's "moving around an object to seize it from several successive appearances ... [in effect] reconstitutes [the object] in time."[29] And later aestheticians such as Lionello Venturi held that *all* painting provokes a temporal experience; at first glance, Venturi suggested, viewers get no more than "a vague impression of a picture," and only after time-consuming "analysis of all its components" do they "understand the meaning" not just of the various components but of "the picture as a whole."[30]

For Clement Greenberg, who during the late 1940s and early 1950s was one of Jackson Pollock's most outspoken supporters, Venturi's ideas amounted to utter nonsense,[31] and Greenberg held that all paintings — abstract or otherwise — "stand or fall by their unity as taken in at a single glance."[32] But Greenberg, just because he so famously served as "curator, custodian, brass polisher, and repairman" of Pollock's reputation, was not necessarily right about all this.[33] After all, Greenberg in the 1940s was a Lessing loyalist who staunchly held his high ground as a champion of modernist "aesthetic purism." And the postwar years, evidenced as much in music as in the visual arts, fairly teemed with aesthetic impurities.

The essential impurity that flavored Pollock's efforts was painterly performativity. For the staunchly formalistic Greenberg, how Pollock went about making his postwar masterpieces was never an issue; Greenberg's concern was never with Pollock's methods but only with his results, and he persistently described Pollock's characteristic work not as examples of "action painting" but, rather, as representatives of what he called the "all-over," or the "decentralized," or — interesting in light of this discussion — the "polyphonic" picture.[34] How Pollock actually made his paintings, on the other hand, was crucial to rival critic Harold Rosenberg, who regarded most works of art not in terms of their formal aspects but in terms of their expressive potential. In the 1952 essay in which he coined the term "action painting," Rosenberg wrote: "At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act ... . What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event."[35] Later in this essentially theoretical essay, Rosenberg suggested that "action painting" obviated not just representation but also such traditional artistic considerations as space, color, and composition. All this "had to go," Rosenberg explained, "so that nothing would get in the way of the *act* of painting," and therefore, he concluded, "the new American painting is *not* 'pure' art."[36]

Rosenberg argued that "action painting" is "inseparable from the biography of the artist," and that "the painting itself" is in effect just "a 'moment' in the unadulterated mixture of [the artist's] life."[37] Vis-à-vis this theory, already in wide circulation at least five years before its 1952 articulation, Pollock was almost literally a poster boy. Along with a full-color shot of him standing ("moodily," according to the caption) with arms folded in front of his eighteen-foot-long *Summertime: Number 9A*, the photographs by Martha Holmes that illustrate the four-page 1949 article in *Life* magazine include a pair of images showing Pollock at work, dribbling paint or sprinkling sand on a floor-mounted canvas and wearing on his face an expression of apparently intense concentration.[38] Intense concentration, coupled with its equivalent in physical energy, similarly radiates from the now iconic photographs that accompany an article by Robert Goodnough that appeared in 1951 in *Art News*.[39] Hans Namuth, who during a visit to Pollock's Long Island studio in the summer of 1950 took the black-and-white photographs that illustrated Goodnough's article and also shot color motion-picture footage that was used for a 1951 documentary film, recalled that

> [Pollock's] movements, slow at first, gradually became faster and more dance-like as he flung black, white, and rust colored paint onto the canvas. He completely forgot that … I [was] there; he did not seem to hear the click of the camera shutter … . My photography session lasted as long as he kept painting, perhaps half an hour. In all that time, Pollock did not stop. How could one keep up this level of activity?[40]

Journalistic accounts of this level of activity — a seemingly near-manic level that sometimes involved paint violently thrown, splashed, and splattered — meshed with the occasional gossip-column report on Pollock's misbehavior to create an image of Pollock as psychologically super-charged anti-hero. An early biography of Pollock bore the subtitle "Energy Made Visible";[41] in an article published less than six months before Pollock's death, *Time* magazine dubbed him "Jack the Dripper."[42] And Pollock himself — with statements such as "I want to express my feelings rather than illustrate them,"[43] and "painting is a state of being … painting is self-discovery" — contributed plentifully to the popular perception that his characteristic works not only represented particular "moments" in the "unadulterated mixture" of his conflicted life but also in one way or another served as examples of personal catharsis.[44]

The notion that the physical activity necessary for the making of an "action painting" was for Pollock somehow cathartic has been challenged over the decades by numerous critics,[45] and recent biographies suggest that Pollock regarded himself not at all as the wildly Dionysian expressionist celebrated by Rosenberg but, rather, as the quiet Apollonian formalist celebrated by Greenberg.[46] Recent biographies also suggest that Pollock's quick move from representational painting into abstract painting — a transition that happened more or less simultaneous with Elliott Carter's equally quick move from tonal music into free atonality — was the result not of a stroke of genius on the part of Pollock but of suggestions on the part of his wife, fellow painter Lee Krasner.[47]

For the purposes of this essay, the development of or motivation for Pollock's distinctive style, and the possible relationships between Pollock's paintings and his psyche, are quite beside the point. To the point is the idea, suggested at the essay's start, that the experience of viewing certain works in Pollock's "action painting" style is similar to the experience of listening to certain passages in contemporaneous musical works by Carter.

The similarity of experience has to do with the perceiver's taking in, during specific moments of clock-measured time, of multiple streams of information. In the case of Pollock, of course, the information is not aural but visual, and the streams do not actually "move" in time but, instead, only *seem* to do so. As with the brush strokes that go into the making of any painting, the drippings and pourings that resulted in a characteristic Pollock canvas were obviously executed, *nacheinander*, one after another, and as with any paint applied by brush strokes, the once-liquid paint that Pollock dripped or poured now exists statically in two-dimensional space, with one area of dried paint — *nebeneinander* — next to another. But so long as the results of Pollock's actions are not too densely packed — so long as they do not meld, as do the myriad little dots of a "pointillistic" painting, into a single image — they arguably give the impression of existing not in two- but in three-dimensional space. And like the streams of Carter's music, the multiple streams in Pollock's paintings seem to flow — *übereinander* — one over the other.

• "Present-Tense Verbs" in Carter and Pollock •

Daniel Albright, in a commentary for a 2004 anthology of source readings that link ideas of modernism specifically with music, recalls that Lessing had been of the opinion that music in general "can depict action, but has no power to depict the thing that acts. Music is all verb, no noun."[48] Elliott Carter seems never to have used this image, but — insisting as he did for most of his career that the essence of music was not its "objects" but the various "ways in which it goes along" — surely he would have appreciated Albright's likening of music not to nouns but to verbs. Surely, too, he would have agreed that the "verbs" of music, like the "verbs" of cinema as described by the French novelist Alain Robbe-Grillet, because of the medium's linear nature are only "in the present tense."[49]

It is to the "present tense" that Albright refers when, in his earlier book on modernism in general, he foreshadows the above-quoted remark in a comment having to do not with the obviously temporal arts of music or cinema but with the obviously spatial art of painting. Praising Lessing for the intelligence and resourcefulness with which he had defined the *Laocoön* question, Albright nevertheless notes that Lessing's strictures have been loosened by certain twentieth-century works that blur the lines between space and time; he mentions the prose of Gertrude Stein, which instead of moving smoothly often seems quite static, but first he mentions "Jackson Pollock's spatters and drips, a painting style that is all verb and no noun."[50]

Using the grammar-related terminology of Albright and Robbe-Grillet, let us say that Carter's postwar musical compositions and Pollock's postwar "action paintings" indeed contain the audio or visual equivalents not of "nouns" but of present-tense "verbs." But all music, as we have seen, is in a way verb-like, and the painterly "verb" figures not only in Pollock's canvases but also in the canvases of Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, and other mid-century Abstract Expressionist identified by Harold Rosenberg as "action painters."[51] Carter's and Pollock's work of course shares traits with the work of many others, yet it nonetheless — and in a singular way — stands apart. Except in the spatial/temporal margins of their work — at the edges of canvases, at the silence-framed beginnings and endings of musical movements — Pollock and Carter in their characteristic work offer their viewers/listeners a mixture of verb-like informational units. These units are in and of themselves worthy of deep-

focused attention, but they are presented, and very likely perceived, as wholes; indeed, the characteristic works of Pollock and Carter are *characterized* by the idea that their wholes comprise individually perceptible bits of data arranged one atop another.

Elliott Carter's *String Quartet No. 1* and Jackson Pollock's *Number 32* were created more or less at the same time, the quartet in the last months of 1950 and the early months of 1951 while the composer worked in quiet isolation in Tucson, Arizona, the painting in June 1950 while the artist worked at his Long Island studio. Both pieces are of relatively large scale, the quartet having a duration of approximately forty-five minutes, the painting measuring fifteen feet in width and almost nine feet in height. Important for the sake of this comparative description, both pieces are — in effect or literally — monochromatic; as mentioned above, the quartet's cello, viola, and two violins do not differ much at all in the timbres, or "sound colors," they produce, and the painting involves only black enamel applied to a white canvas.

Carter has stated that the "overlapping of speeds" is consistent throughout his first quartet, but the superimposition of different speeds is, to the listener, more evident in some sections than in others.[52] One of the most aurally striking instances of temporal superimposition comes early in the piece's opening "Fantasia" movement, when all four instruments first come into play, after an accelerating solo for bowed cello has been punctuated only by occasional interjections from the pizzicato second violin. At the start of the quartet's measure 22, the hitherto frenetic cello settles into a steady pace-setting passage that consists of quarter notes played at the rate of 120 per minute. The parts for the other instruments are written in the same meter (4/4) and fitted with the same metronome mark (i.e., quarter note = 120), but each player is asked to generate a stream of music whose rate of flow has little to do with the cellist's. Against the cello part the second violin, still in pizzicato mode, loudly plucks chords or single pitches whose articulations occur slightly slower than those of the cello, whose durations each consist of a quarter note tied to a sixteenth note. A second and a half after this friction of tempo has been initiated, the first violin introduces pitches — bowed softly, in the high register — that each last the time of three and one third quarter notes. Soon afterwards the viola enters, with quarter-note triplets whose sharply iterated pitches move slightly faster than the cello's quarter notes. The viola now forcefully setting a pace quicker than what had been set by the cello, the cello pauses briefly before coming to the fore with a low-register series of sustained pitches whose durations (two and a half

quarter notes) are precisely three fourths of the durations of the first violin's pitches. Then the second violin, still loud and pizzicato, takes its cue from the viola and sets a newer pace as the other three instruments in turn finish their business and enter into yet another round of simultaneous but different rates of flow.[53]

It is impossible to delineate, with similar precision, the simultaneous "rates of flow" depicted in Pollock's *Number 32*, and it would be preposterous to suggest that a viewer might notice the painting's elements in any particular order.[54] Experiencing the Carter quartet, a listener has no choice but to first hear the cello's smooth pace-setting melody in combination with the second violin's brittle punctuations, then the first violin's lyric long-note melody, then the viola's aggressive triplets, and so on. Experiencing the Pollock painting, the viewer's first-glance attention indeed might likely be drawn to one of the larger swaths of black enamel, but there are arguably at least a dozen of these, and none of them dominates, as do so many central images in traditional paintings, by means of size or color or of placement at some "golden mean" division of horizontal or vertical dimensions. Even when the eyes settle on a particular area of the canvas's more than 130 square feet, there is no distinguishing (unless one were to inspect the layers of paint with a magnifying glass) between foreground and background; focusing here or there, or perhaps everywhere, the viewer of course sees weighty shapes in combination with a web of tendrils and a mist of droplets, but it is as easy to see the shapes through a translucent web/mist as it is to see the web/mist through a solid lattice of weighty shapes.

The preceding paragraph deliberately used nouns to depict the various elements of the Pollock painting: the elements of the painting were represented as so many "objects," as swaths, shapes, tendrils, and droplets that in effect formed webs, mists, and lattices. In contrast, the paragraph about the Carter quartet deliberately used verbs. In addition to simply introducing material or entering into the ensemble, the various instruments were said to "set a pace" or "punctuate" or "rise to the fore," and a longer description of the music might have used a panoply of active verbs to suggest the temporal relationships between the various parts; a wordier account might have said, for example, that the cello "plods" while the second violin "lags behind," or that the viola "rushes" ahead of the cello while the first violin "floats" above the mix. But comparable verbs could just as appropriately be applied to the elements of the Pollock painting.

Like Carter's violin line, Pollock's droplets also seem to "float," in a time/space quite independent of everything else on the canvas. Pollock's tendrils seem to "swell" or "shrink," depending on what one might take to be their starting points, or perhaps they listlessly "dangle" or explosively "shoot" from some perceived fixed location, or perhaps they simply "meander" about the canvas. Pollock's larger shapes all "stand" wherever they are on the canvas, but some of them seem to "thrust" upwards to the right, or to "fall" precipitously to the left, or to "wobble" indecisively between movement in one direction or another.

In Carter's *String Quartet No. 1*, the mix of "present-tense verbs" — that is, the mix of different but simultaneous rates of flow — is carefully prescribed, and the listener takes in the whole of it during the music's real-time unfolding. In Pollock's *Number 32*, the mix of painterly "verbs" is in its entirety fixed on canvas, and the viewer takes in as much of it as he wants in whatever order, and at whatever pace, he chooses. As far as perception is concerned, however, the results of hearing the music and seeing the painting are, I would argue, very much the same: in their *übereinander* totality, the "verbs" of Pollock as much as of Carter form a rich palimpsest of differently paced activity, a collection of stimuli that at any one moment of actual observed time offers a multiplicity of images of perceived represented times.

• Conclusions •

In her 1953 *Feeling and Form*, a book to which Carter often referred in his various writings on musical time, the American philosopher Susanne K. Langer noted that whereas "virtual space is the primary illusion of all plastic art," "the primary illusion of music is the sonorous image of passage."[55] The word "passage" here is apt, but it is unfortunately identical to a term that in everyday English refers simply to an episode of music irrespective of its content or qualities.[56] Although her sentence deals with illusion and image, Langer here uses "passage" in a concrete way; holding to the first definitions offered by most dictionaries, she indeed means migration, the passing, or movement, through two- or three-dimensional space from one physical point to another. Making an analogy, and generalizing sweepingly about Western music, Langer suggests that music's many instants include at least some that strike

listeners as more significant than others, and that the "image of passage" has to do with how music seems to "move" from one of these significant instants — points not in space but in time — to another.

How an episode of music *seems* to move, or how a "gesture" of a painting *seems* to move, or how any stretch of real time *seems* to pass, is — as they say — relative. A cliché attributed to Albert Einstein, author of the famous theory of relativity, reminds us that "an hour sitting with a pretty girl on a park bench passes like a minute, but a minute sitting on a hot stove seems like an hour."[57] But Einstein apparently did not address multiple and simultaneous passages of time; he did not speculate, apparently, on how time might seem to pass when sitting with a pretty girl not on a park bench but on a hot stove. Apropos of this essay's topic, one wonders: How *does* time seem to pass when one is confronted with a number of different sonic or visual "images of passage"? How many different "images of passage" can the healthy mind deal with in a single period of clock-measured time? And — especially important when one considers the music of Elliott Carter and the paintings of Jackson Pollock — does the nature of these "images" have anything to do with how the total impression is processed?

Perhaps frustrated that their medium had for decades offered viewers one-at-a-time successions of "verbs" only "in the present tense," some filmmakers in the 1960s explored the idea of multiple "present-tense verbs" displayed simultaneously. Their experiments with "split screen" techniques indeed depicted activities with diverse physical and psychological tempos, but almost invariably these depictions were arrayed, like the represented objects in a traditional painting, one alongside the other. [58] The filmmakers' decision simply to juxtapose the imagery was doubtless wise, for to superimpose moving pictures, especially in a narrative film whose content involved not just actions but also the various entities acting and being acted upon, would have led to disaster; audiences perhaps might have been able to grasp ironies or cross-references suggested by the cinematic equivalent of a double exposure, but anything beyond that likely would have been quite incomprehensible.

The characteristic works of Carter and Pollock go far beyond mere "double" exposures. In the context of the artists' entire output, the *String Quartet No. 1* and the *Number 32* described above rank as fairly simple works, in essence thin-textured "monochromatic" pieces whose overlays typically involve no more than three or four "streams of information" delivered to listeners/viewers at one time. But the later characteristic

compositions of Carter, and many of the earlier characteristic paintings of Pollock, are thick-textured "polychrome" works that offer to listeners/viewers "present-tense" data streams far too numerous to count.

Why, then, are the characteristic works of Carter and Pollock *not* incomprehensible? Indeed, why are these multi-layered efforts — the music with its "simultaneous streams of different things going on together," the paintings with their overlapping drips and splatters and swirls and swipes — *not* generally perceived as just so much hodge-podge?

Writing favorably of Pollock and suggesting that abstract painting in the manner of Pollock "comes closest to music in the way it propels perception," F. David Martin described Pollock's large canvases as being not just "forceful, rhythmic, and seemingly spontaneous" but also "full of the chaos of chance."[59] Pollock's work, however, involves neither chaos nor chance. "I deny the accident," Pollock famously told an interviewer, and he resented implications that his formally complex paintings resulted from cathartic acts of personal expression.[60] It may be true that some of Pollock's paintings seem to convey the idea of chaos or chance, just as certain passages in Carter's music perhaps seem to convey, as Ned Rorem put it, the notion of "insanity." Yet these conveyances are deliberate, the result in Carter's case of meticulous pre-compositional planning and in Pollock's case of intensely disciplined improvisation; behind the "madness" of Carter's music lies method aplenty, and in Pollock's "action paintings" virtually nothing is the result of random actions.

Genuine randomness, of course, did figure importantly in the efforts of certain influential artists who, like Carter and Pollock, rose to fame in the early 1950s. But syntactic connections between the diverse components of "indeterminate" works — by, for example, composer John Cage or choreographer Merce Cunningham or painter Robert Rauschenberg — exist only in the minds of the works' perceivers.[61]

In marked contrast, syntactic connections between the diverse components of Pollock's paintings and Carter's music were very much intended by the works' makers. The projection of an image of chaos was seldom the point of Carter's and Pollock's characteristic work; indeed, most often the point was just the opposite. British music critic Antony Bye astutely summarized the entirety of Carter's mature oeuvre in a 1994 article, writing that "despite the composed randomness of his foreground rhetoric, [Carter] *wants* his pieces to exhibit a fundamental unity."[62] The same could be said of Pollock, and it might also be said that the deepest

impact of Pollock's paintings and Carter's music owes less to the demonstrable fact of their fundamental unity than to the audience's perception of that unity.

Seldom is this perception conscious. But it is a perception nonetheless real, a perception felt almost viscerally as one listens or looks, in effect, *through* the various scrims that contain Carter's and Pollock's "present-tense verbs." Confronted with any situation that involves multiple layers of activity, the perceiver can by definition focus primary attention on only one layer at a time, yet invariably the layer chosen for momentary special consideration is experienced in the context of all the others. Although in any such situation the ears/eyes flit from this to that, the brain constantly takes in the whole of it, and concentration on one bit of information is always modified/influenced by an awareness of all the other bits. But only in a situation in which the various elements are wholly compatible — as is the case with Carter's music and Pollock's paintings — is a single impression made by an aural/optical Gestalt.

In any of their characteristic works, the various streams of Carter's music and Pollock's canvases do form a single Gestalt, not simply a "form" or "shape" as might be suggested by a literal translation of the German word[63] but, rather, in the sense used by psychologists, a "configuration or pattern of elements *so unified as a whole* that its properties cannot be derived from a simple summation of its parts."[64] Indeed, it was doubtless his observation that the diverse elements of Carter's music are tightly unified that prompted Ned Rorem to state that what Carter's music projects, above all, is "necessity," and one suspects that it was an awareness of painterly "necessity" that caused Rorem to include, in his celebration of Carter, the casual mention of Pollock. And perhaps Rorem also noticed that the work of Carter and Pollock share, in addition to unity and/or "necessity," the phenomenon that has been the subject of this essay.

Regardless of how it might have been applied, all the pigment on any exhibited canvas remains dried and static; regardless of their rhythms and note values, all the sounds that constitute any piece of music occupy a finite span of time that can be measured by a clock. In the works of Jackson Pollock and Elliott Carter, the existence of simultaneous "present moments," or of *multiple times* that *seem* to pass *at the same time*, is thus only an illusion. But it is a powerful and palpable illusion, one that succeeds again and again, even for audience members familiar with the works at hand and somewhat knowledgeable — as this writer claims to be

— about their machinations. Realized as effectively in Pollock's paintings as in Carter's music, the image of simultaneous "present moments" remains one of the twentieth century's most intriguing and most enduringly potent artistic coups.

• Notes •

[1] Ned Rorem, "Setting the Tone," *Christopher Street* magazine, 1980. In *Setting the Tone: Essays and a Diary* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1983), 93.

[2] Rorem, "Our Music Now," *The New Republic*, 1974. In *Settling the Score: Essays on Music* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), 281–82. Emphases original.
Four years later Rorem rephrased the thought, but his changes involve only the sentence that refers to the painting from ca. 1833 by Quaker preacher Edward Hicks: "Carter's glory dwells in the knack for inscribing productive tantrums with such accuracy that after the third or the nineteenth hearing the notes fall as logically as the arrangement of animals in The Peaceable Kingdom." Ned Rorem, "Messiaen and Carter on Their Birthdays," *Tempo* (New Series), no. 127 (December 1978), 23.

[3] In the annals of journalism there may well be comparisons of Carter's music to visual art. In the rather vast scholarly literature on Carter that is now easily accessible by means of on-line searches — and in the collections of Carter's own thoughts that include Allen Edwards's *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds: A Conversation with Elliott Carter* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), *The Writings of Elliott Carter*, edited by Else Stone and Kurt Stone (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), and *Elliott Carter: Collected Essays and Lectures, 1937–1995*, edited by Jonathan W. Bernard (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1997) — there are many comparisons between Carter's music and both film and modernist literature, but virtually no comparisons between his music and painting. In an autobiographical section of *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds*, Carter recalls that as a high school student he was excited by the avant-garde paintings of David Burliuk, El Lissitsky, and Kasimir Malevitch (42). Near the end of their *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2008), Felix Meyer and Anne C. Shreffler note that the "impulse" for Carter's 2007 *Sound Fields* for string orchestra "came from 'color field' painting as practiced by Helen Frankenthaler"; "color-field painting," they explain, was "commonly seen as a less overtly subjective, 'cooler' alternative to the abstract expressionism of Jackson Pollock" (344). Early in the first edition of his *The Music of Elliott Carter* (London: Eulenburg, 1983), David Schiff writes: "Musical time creates a counterpoint between measured time and illusionistic time, just as a painting creates a counterpoint between the flat pattern of paint on a canvas and the illusion of depth. In Carter's music, as in [Hans] Hofmann's or [Jackson] Pollock's paintings, the conflict between these basic types of perception is no longer resolved by a traditional hierarchical formula of meter or perspective" (24); in the 1998 second edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), this allusion is omitted.

[4] For details on how the CIA covertly but quite successfully promoted both Carter and Pollock as "genuine" American artists, see chapter 14 ("Music and Truth, *ma non troppo*") and chapter 16

("Yanqui Doodles") of Frances Stonor Saunders's *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 1999). For more on the CIA's involvement with modernist art, see Ian Wellens, *Music on the Frontline: Nicholas Nabokov's Struggle against Communism and Middlebrow Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), and Mark Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[5] Carter was just four years older than Pollock. Born in 1908 and productive until shortly before his death, Carter since his college days maintained — as reported in countless newspaper interviews — a sophisticated but behaviorally modest lifestyle. Born in 1912 and killed in a 1956 automobile crash, Pollock lived a life of alcohol-fueled bohemian excess; his personality is unflatteringly described in Jeffrey Potter's *To a Violent Grave: An Oral Biography of Jackson Pollock* (New York: Pushcart Press, 1987), and his downfall is vividly depicted in the 2000 theatrical film directed by Ed Harris and titled simply *Pollock*.

[6] Andrew Porter, "Mutual Ordering," *The New Yorker*, 3 February 1974. Reprinted in *A Musical Season: A Critic from Abroad in America* (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 140.

[7] In his own writings and in the book-length interview with Allen Edwards, Carter often cites Joyce as an important influence on his mature thinking. Ellen G. Landau, in her 1989 *Jackson Pollock* (New York: Harry N. Abrams), notes that Pollock was familiar not only with Joyce's 1922 *Ulysses* and 1939 *Finnegan's Wake* but also with Joseph Campbell's and Henry Morton Robinson's 1944 *A Skeleton Key to* Finnegan's Wake; Landau (172–74) notes as well that Pollock, while making his "action paintings," sometimes listened to the 1929 recording of Joyce reading aloud the "Anna Livia Plurabelle" section (Book I, chapter 8) of the at that time still very much in-progress *Finnegan's Wake*.

[8] For an overview of Pollock's "action paintings," see Leonhard Emmerling, *Jackson Pollock: 1912–1956* (Cologne: Taschen, 2003). For an account of Carter's most characteristic compositions, see chapters 2 and 3 ("Three Seminal Works (1945–51)" and "Maturity (1950–80)") of James Wierzbicki, *Elliott Carter* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

[9] Rudolf Arnheim, "A New Laocoön: Artistic Composites and the Talking Film," in *Film as Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 203. The *Film as Art* volume contains Arnheim's own translation of the essay "Nuovo Laocoonte" that was first published in the Italian journal *Bianco e nero* in August 1938.

[10] Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature and Other Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 10.

[11] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting*, trans. Ellen Frothingham (New York: Roberts Brothers, 1873), 91–92.

[12] The three most famous multi-media works of Irving Babbitt's day — Alexander Scriabin's symphonic *Prometheus: A Poem of Fire* (1909), Wassily Kandinsky's play *Der gelbe Klang* (1909), and Arnold Schoenberg's opera *Die glückliche Hand* (1910–13), all of which called for the carefully timed projection of specific colors — were premiered after Babbitt published his book. But talk of these works, and others like them, would have been very much in the air during the twentieth century's first decade.

[13] Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon," in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Frascina, second edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 65–66.

[14] Albright, 14. Emphasis original.

[15] Ibid. The Adorno book is titled *Philosophy of Modern Music* in its 1980 English translation by Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Seabury Press); Albright uses the original German title, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, and translates it literally as *Philosophy of the New Music*.

[16] Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, 191.

[17] Albright, 18.

[18] Ibid. Emphasis added.

[19] Jonathan W. Bernard, "Elliott Carter and the Modern Meaning of Time," *The Musical Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (1995), 655–56. The quotation is from Edwards, *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds: A Conversation with Elliott Carter*, 101.

[20] Carter's pronouncements on the nature of time include a lecture titled "Sound and Silence in Time: A Contemporary Approach to the Elements of Music" that was delivered on 13 February 1957 at the University of California, Los Angeles (reproduced in Meyer/Shreffler, 130–37); a 1965 "Time Lecture" that Carter delivered at Harvard (reproduced in Bernard, 313–18); a brief 1965 lecture-based essay titled "The Time Dimension in Music" (reproduced in Stone, 243–47, and in Bernard, 224–28); and a

1976 book chapter titled "Music and the Time Screen" (originally published in *Current Thought in Musicology*, ed. John W. Grubbs (Austin: University of Texas Press), reproduced in Stone, 343–65, and in Bernard, 262–80).
[21] Carter, in Edwards, 90.
[22] John Rockwell, "Elliott Carter: American Intellectual Composers & the 'Ideal Public'," in *All American Music: Composition in the Late Twentieth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 38.
[23] Michael Cherlin, "Crossing the Millennium with Elliott Carter," *Music Theory Spectrum* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2001), 103.
[24] David Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, first edition (London: Eulenberg, 1983), 76; and Jonathan W. Bernard, "The Evolution of Elliott Carter's Rhythmic Practice," *Perspectives of New Music* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1988), 165.
[25] Ned Rorem, "Messiaen and Carter on Their Birthdays," *Tempo* (New Series), no. 127 (December 1978), 23.
[26] Carter was familiar with the *Philosophy of Modern Music* and Adorno's work in general, but apparently only after the start of the 1960s. There is no evidence to suggest that ca. 1945 Carter, who lived in New York, and Adorno, who at that time was living in Los Angeles, were even aware of each other's existence.
[27] Carter, in Edwards, 90. Emphases original.
[28] For a deep study on the "continuance" of works of visual art over long periods of time that was relatively contemporaneous with the emergence of Carter's and Pollock's characteristic styles, see André Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Doubleday, 1953). Malraux's *Les Voix du Silence* was first published in France in 1951; it was a revised version of his 1949 *La Psychologie de l'Art*, a compilation of his *Le Musée imaginarie* (1947), *La Création artistique* (1948), and *La Monnaie de l'absolu* (1949).
[29] The quotations are from writings ca. 1911 and 1912 by the French critics Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger, translated — respectively — by John Golding (in his 1968 *Cubism, A History and an Analysis 1907–1914*), Edward Fry (in his 1966 *Cubism*), and Linda Henderson (in her 1971 "A New Facet of Cubism: The Fourth-Dimension and Non-Euclidian Geometry Reinterpreted" in *Art Quarterly*) and reproduced in Jeoraldean McClain, "Time in the Visual Arts: Lessing and Modern Criticism," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 44, no. 1 (Autumn 1985), 48–49.
[30] Kenji Kajiya, "Deferred Instantaneity: Clement Greenberg's Time Problem," *The Japanese Journal of American Studies* 16 (2005), 208. The quoted paraphrases derive from Venturi's *Painting and Painters: How to Look at a Picture: From Giotto to Chagall* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945).
[31] Greenberg's opinions on Venturi's book were expressed in a brief review — titled "On Looking at Pictures" — published in *The Nation* on 8 September 1945; the review is reprinted in volume two of Greenberg's *Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 34–35. An illuminating discussion of Greenberg's objections to Venturi's "wandering of the eye" theory is offered by Lut Pil in his "Clement Greenberg on Narrative in Painting" chapter in *Time, Narrative and the Fixed Image*, ed. Mireille Ribière and Jan Baetens (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001).
[32] Greenberg, "'American-Type' Painting," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 226. The article first appeared in *Partisan Review* in the spring of 1955.
[33] Tom Wolfe, *The Painted Word* (New York: Bantam, 1975), 56.
[34] Greenberg, "The Crisis of the Easel Picture," in *Art and Culture*, 155. The article first appeared in *Partisan Review* in April 1948.
[35] Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," in *The Tradition of the New* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 25. The article first appeared in *Art News* in December 1952.
[36] Ibid., 26–27. Emphases added.
[37] Ibid., 27.
[38] "Jackson Pollock: Is He the Greatest Living Painter in the United States?" *Life* magazine, 8 August 1949, 42–45. Along with *Summertime: Number 9A*, the paintings shown in full color are *Number 12A: Yellow, Gray, Black* and *Number Seventeen*; all three paintings date from 1948.
[39] Robert Goodnough, "Pollock Paints a Picture," *Art News*, May 1951: 38–41, 60–61. The photographer who accompanied Goodnough on his interview with Pollock was Rudy Burckhardt; the photographer whose pictures in fact illustrated Goodnough's article was Hans Namuth. For a detailed account of Burckhardt's session with Pollock, see Carter Ratcliff, *The Fate of a Gesture: Jackson Pollock and Postwar American Art* (New York: Westview Press, 1998), 7-10.

[40] Quoted in Pepe Karmel, "Pollock at Work: The Films and Photographs of Hans Namuth," in *Jackson Pollock: Key Interviews, Articles and Reviews*, ed. Pepe Karmel and Kirk Varnedoe (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 132. The motion-picture footage was used in *Jackson Pollock 51*, a ten-minute film directed by Namuth and Paul Falkenberg, with music by Morton Feldman, that had its first showing at New York's Museum of Modern Art on 14 June 1951.
[41] See B.F. Friedman, *Jackson Pollock: Energy Made Visible* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955).
[42] "Art: The Wild Ones," *Time* magazine, 20 February 1956, 72.
[43] Jackson Pollock, spoken in *Jackson Pollock 51*.
[44] Jackson Pollock, quoted in Selden Rodman, *Conversations with Artists* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1957), 82. The interview took place in June 1956, two months before Pollock's death.
[45] One of the earliest challenges was launched by Thomas B. Hess in "Pollock: The Art of Myth," *Art News*, January 1964: 39–40, 62–65. Hess's argument, which suggested that the popular idea of Pollock's "action paintings" as catharsis stemmed largely from the Namuth photographs and their accompanying texts, was importantly sustained by Barbara Rose in "Hans Namuth's Photographs and the Jackson Pollock Myth — Part One: Media Impact and the Failure of Criticism," *Arts Magazine*, March 1979: 112–19. More recently, the argument that Namuth's photographs led to the "catharsis myth" has been developed by Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock in the "Jackson Pollock, Painting and the Myth of Photography" chapter (165–76) of their 1997 *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed* (Manchester: Manchester University Press); by Pepe Karmel in the "Pollock at Work" chapter (87–137) of his and Kirk Varnedoe's 1999 *Jackson Pollock: Key Interviews, Articles and Reviews*; and by Kent Mintum in his 2001 "Digitally Enhanced Evidence: MoMA's Reconfiguration of Namuth's Pollock," *Visual Resources* 17: 127–45.
[46] Along with the already mentioned 2003 *Jackson Pollock: 1912–1956* by Leonhard Emmerling, recent biographies include Deborah Solomon's *Jackson Pollock: A Biography* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001); Ellen G. Landau's *Jackson Pollock* (New York: Abrams, 2010); and Evelyn Toynton's *Jackson Pollock* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012). One of the most thorough treatments of Pollock and his circumstances is Steven Naifeh's and Gregory White Smith's *Jackson Pollock: An American Saga* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1989).
[47] The control that Lee Krasner exercised over Pollock's career is thoroughly described and interpreted by Sue Wragg in "Lee Krasner: Mrs. Jackson Pollock," in *Difference in View: Women and Modernism*, ed. Gabriele Griffin (London: Taylor & Francis, 1994), 111–20, and by Anna C. Chave in "Pollock and Krasner: Script and Postscript," in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Frascina (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 329–47. Chave's article first appeared in *Res* 24 (Autumn 1993).
[48] Daniel Albright, *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 65. The quotation comes from the introduction to the chapter titled "Testing the Boundaries between the Visual Arts and Music."
[49] Robbe-Grillet made the statement in the context of his famously cryptic screenplay for Alain Resnais's 1961 film *Last Year at Marienbad*. Whereas written literature "has a whole gamut of grammatical tenses that makes it possible to narrate events in relation to each other," he wrote, the cinema — because of the linear nature of its medium — in effect offers verbs only "in the present tense." "Alain Robbe-Grillet vous parle de *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*," trans. Richard Howard, booklet for the 2009 Criterion Collection DVD edition of *Last Year at Marienbad* (CC1815D), 23. Robbe-Grillet's article first appeared in the Paris magazine *Réalités* in May 1961; the translation by Howard first appeared as the introduction to the English-language version of the screenplay published by Grove Press (London) in 1962.
[50] Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 10.
[51] The painterly "verb" figures as well in the postwar work of Francis Bacon (1909–1992), an Irish-British painter who was Carter's and Pollock's contemporary. Bacon's for the most part representational images have little in common with Pollock's abstractions, yet they similarly teem with "gestures" that Gilles Deleuze, in his monograph on Bacon, described as "forces." See Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). As *Francis Bacon — Logique de la sensation*, Deleuze's book was first published by Éditions de la différence (Paris) in 1981. Also see the "Forces" chapter (pp. 111–30) of Ronald Bogue's *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).
[52] Elliott Carter, "Shop Talk by an American Composer," *The Musical Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (1960), 193.

[53] The just-described passage is from Elliott Carter, *String Quartet No. 1* (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1955), 4–5. Mm. 22–29 of the score — with annotations indicating that the cello moves at the rate of 120 pulses per minute, the pizzicato second violin at the rate of 96 pulses per minute, the high-register first violin at the rate of 36 pulses per minute, and the viola at the rate of 180 pulses per minute — are reproduced in Jonathan Bernard, "The Evolution of Elliott Carter's Rhythmic Practice," 175 (by the same method of calculation, the cello's foreground melody — not included in Bernard's excerpt — moves at the rate of 72 pulses per minute and new pace set by the second violin moves at the rate of 90 pulses per minute). Without annotations, the same excerpt appears in David Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, second edition, 58.
[54] Images of Pollock's *Number 32* — both in its finished form and as an in-progress canvas photographed by both Hans Namuth and Rudy Burckhardt — are abundantly available on the Internet.
[55] Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), 72 and 113.
[56] In his brief definitions of "passage" for both the 1980 *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and the dictionary's current on-line version, Michael Tilmouth writes that the term refers to "part of a composition generally characterized by some particular treatment or technique." Standard dictionaries tend not to qualify the term in regards to music; after first defining "passage" as a physical movement (or means thereof) from one place to another, they offer, for example, that a "passage" is simply "a portion of a book, composition, etc." (*Webster's New World Dictionary*), "a phrase or short section of a musical composition" (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*), "a segment of a written work or musical composition" (*The American Heritage Dictionary*), "a particular section of a literary or musical work" (*The Oxford Paperback Dictionary: Australian Edition*), or "a section of a piece of music" (*The Australian Oxford Dictionary*).
[57] The quip is likely apocryphal, but a quoted variant of it appears in Ashley Montagu, "Conversations with Einstein," *Science Digest*, July 1985, 75.
[58] The "split screen" technique was introduced at the 1964 World's Fair in New York and popularized at the 1967 Universal Exhibition (Expo '67) in Montreal. Among the earliest feature films to employ the technique were John Frankenheimer's 1966 *Grand Prix*, Richard Fleischer's 1968 *The Boston Strangler*, and Norman Jewison's 1968 *The Thomas Crown Affair*.
[59] F. David Martin, "The Persistent Presence of Abstract Painting," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 28, no. 1 (Autumn 1969), 27.
[60] Pollock's often-quoted denial of "the accident" was spoken to and recorded by radio journalist William Wright in the summer of 1950 but never broadcast. The text is reproduced in, among other places, *Abstract Expressionism: Creators and Critics*, ed. Clifford Ross (New York: Abrahams, 1990), 144, and Karmel Varnedoe, *Jackson Pollock: Key Interviews, Articles and Reviews*, 22–23; the interview is dramatically featured in the 2000 film *Pollock*.
[61] For an exploration of how listeners strive to "make sense" of indeterminate music, see Judy Lochhead, "Hearing Chaos," *American Music* 19, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 210–46.
[62] Antony Bye, "Carter's 'Classic' Modernism," *Tempo* new series, no. 189 (June 1994), 3. Emphasis added.
[63] *The New Cassell's German Dictionary*, s.v. "Gestalt" (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1971), 195.
[64] *The American Heritage Dictionary*, fourth edition, s.v. "Gestalt" (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 358. Emphasis added.

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