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# OCTOBER

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Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe  
and John Johnston  
Jean-Claude Lebensztejn  
Hollis Frampton

*"Ceci n'est pas une pipe"*

*The Carrot and the Stick*

*To the Distant Observer:*

*Towards a Theory of Japanese Film*

*The Giant on Giant-Killing*

*Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism*

*Gravity's Rainbow and the Spiral Jetty*

*Star*

*Notes on Composing in Film*

Spring 1976

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# OCTOBER

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NOËL BURCH's theoretical writing on film is known primarily in this country through the translation from the French of *The Theory of Film Practice*. The text published in this issue is from *To the Distant Observer*, a critical history of Japanese Film to be published this year in London by Secker and Warburg.

RICHARD FOREMAN, playwright, is the founder of the Ontological-Hysteric Theater, whose most recent production was this winter's *Rhoda in Potatoland*. He is scheduled to direct *The Three Penny Opera* later this season at Lincoln Center in New York. His collected scripts will be published by the New York University Press this spring.

MICHEL FOUCAULT is professor of History and Systems of Thought at the Collège de France. His most recently translated book is *The Birth of the Clinic*. "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" first appeared in the *Cahiers du Chemin* (January, 1968).

HOLLIS FRAMPTON, the film-maker and theorist of photography, has been at work for the past two years on a film cycle entitled *The Clouds Of Magellan*. His *Poetic Justice* has been published in book form by the Visual Studies Workshop. He teaches in the Center for Media Studies of the State University at Buffalo, New York.

RICHARD HOWARD, who contributes to this first issue as both poet and translator, has completed a new volume of poetry, *Fellow Feelings*, published this season by Atheneum.

JOHN JOHNSTON, co-author, with Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe of *Gravity's Rainbow and the Spiral Jetty* and translator of *Star*, is a graduate student in English Literature at Columbia University.

JEAN-CLAUDE LEBENSZTEJN is a French critic and historian of art. *Star* was first published in *Critique*, No. 300 (May 1972).

## About OCTOBER

We have named this journal in celebration of that moment in our century when revolutionary practice, theoretical inquiry and artistic innovation were joined in a manner exemplary and unique. For the artists of that time and place, literature, painting, architecture, film required and generated their own Octobers, radical departures articulating the historical movement which enclosed them, sustaining it through civil war, factional dissension and economic crisis.

Within a decade, this movement, that moment, were memorialized in a work that is itself a celebration of the manner in which aesthetic innovation may be a vector in the process of social change. Eisenstein's *October*, of 1927-28, was commissioned for the tenth anniversary of the Revolution. This was, as well, the year of Trotsky's expulsion from the Soviet Union. *October* was the summa of the silent Soviet film, which transformed the nature of an art paradigmatic for our century. It was a penultimate stage in that revolutionary project which was to be modified by the Silence of totalitarian censure and its conscription of Sound. *October* was, as we now know, propadeutic for the realization of Eisenstein's two Utopian projects, *Capital* and *Ulysses*,\* in which the innovations of intellectual montage were to be developed to their fullest dialectical potential. Their conception and their censure are inscribed as the ultimate limits of *October in the Arts*.

Our aim is not to perpetuate the mythology or hagiography of Revolution. It is rather to reopen an inquiry into the relationships between the several arts which flourish in our culture at this time, and in so doing, to open discussion of their role at this highly problematic juncture. We do not wish to share in that self-authenticating pathos which produces, with monotonous regularity, testimonies to the fact that "things are not as good as they were" in 1967, '57—or in 1917.

The cultural life of this country, traditionally characterized by a fragmented parochialism, has been powerfully transformed over the past decade and a half by developing interrelationships between her most vital arts. Thus, innovations in the performing arts have been inflected by the achievements of painters and sculptors, those of film-makers have been shaped by poetic theory and practice.

\* The second issue of *October* will carry a translation of Eisenstein's unpublished diary entries for 1927-1928 on his project for *Capital*, together with an introduction by Annette Michelson.

There exists, however, no journal which attempts to assess and sustain these developments. American criticism continues to exist as a number of isolated and archaic enterprises, largely predicated upon assumptions still operative in the literary academy. The best-known of our intellectual journals—among them, *Partisan Review*, *The New York Review of Books*, *Salmagundi*—are staffed or administered by that academy and, more importantly, articulate its limits and contradictions. They have, in fact, sustained a division between critical discourse and significant artistic practice. More than this, they have, in their ostentatious disregard of innovation in both art and critical method, encouraged the growth of a new philistinism within the intellectual community. Readers wishing to inform themselves of developments in contemporary painting and sculpture, writers desiring to encourage consideration of new cinematic forms must seek out various overspecialized reviews (*The Drama Review*, *Artforum*, *Film Culture*), which are unable to provide forums for intensive critical discourse. For none of the latter publications provides a framework for critical exchange, for intertextuality within the larger context of theoretical discussion.

*October* is planned as a quarterly that will be more than merely interdisciplinary: one that articulates with maximum directness the structural and social interrelationships of artistic practice in this country. Its major points of focus will be the visual arts, cinema, performance, music; it will consider literature in significant relation to these. *October* will publish critical and theoretical texts by scholars and critics, texts and statements by contemporary artists, texts and documents by artists of the past whose work has influenced contemporary practice. It will present texts of these kinds in translation from foreign languages as well. Its emphasis on contemporaneity is designed to initiate a series of reexaminations of historical developments.

*October's* structure and policy are predicated upon a dominant concern: the renewal and strengthening of critical discourse through intensive review of the methodological options now available. *October's* strong theoretical emphasis will be mediated by its consideration of present artistic practice. It is our conviction that this is possible only within a sustained awareness of the economic and social bases of that practice, of the material conditions of its origins and processes, and of their intensely problematic nature at this particular time.

As this issue demonstrates, we will publish writing grounded in presuppositions that are materialist, or at times idealist. Indeed, the tensions between radical artistic practice and dominant ideology will be a major subject of inquiry. They demand clarification. In matters of this sort, Marx's evaluation of Balzac is exemplary; Lukács's views of Brecht and Kafka are not. The idealisms of Malevich and Brakhage are among the more interesting and problematic instances of such contradictions. They are to be analyzed, not dismissed.

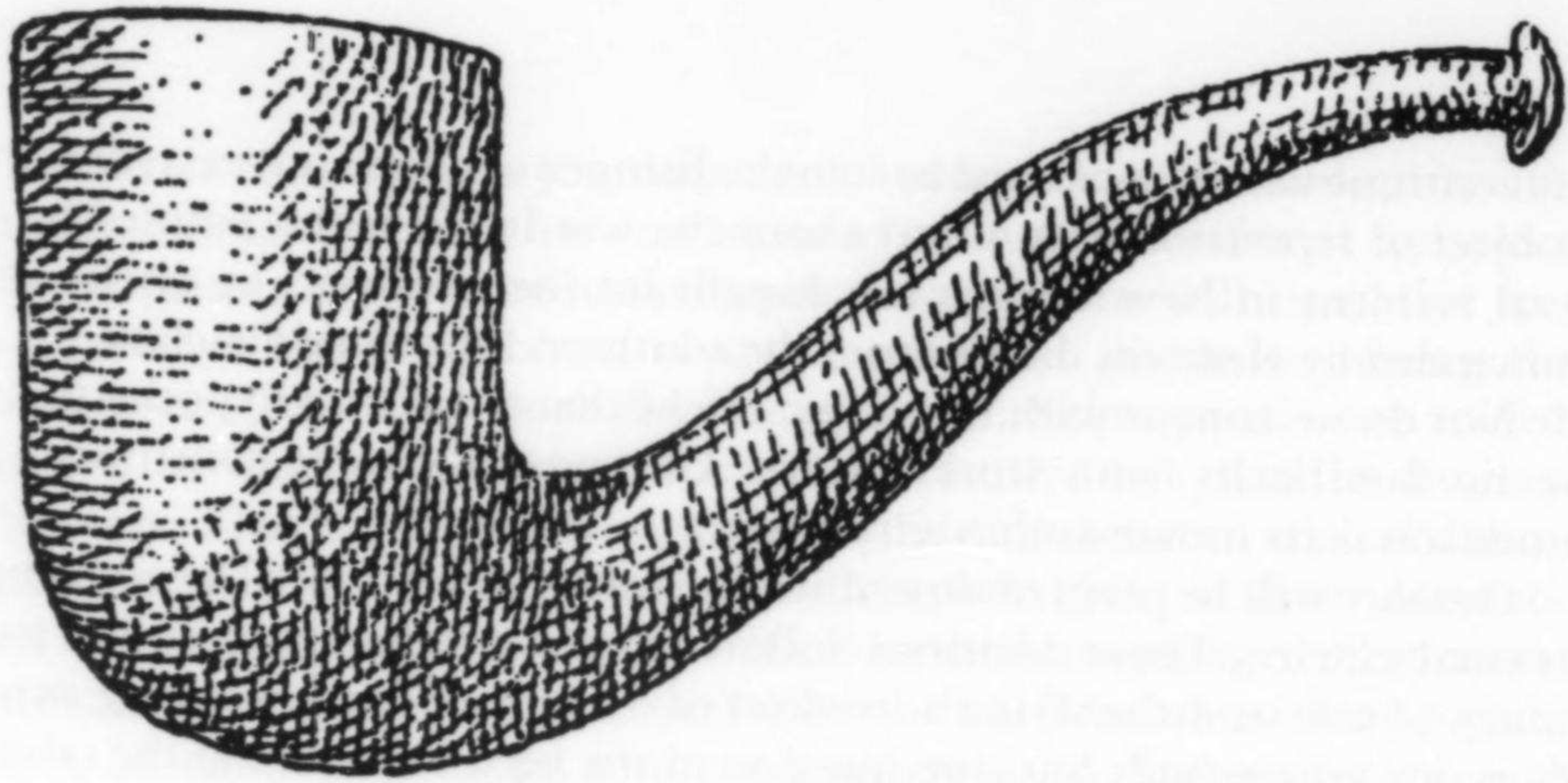
'October' is a reference which remains, for us, more than exemplary; it is instructive. For us, the argument regarding Socialist Realism is nonexistent. Art begins and ends with a recognition of its conventions. We will not contribute to that

social critique which, swamped by its own disingenuousness, gives credence to such an object of repression as a mural about the war in Vietnam, painted by a white liberal resident in New York, a war fought for the most part by ghetto residents commanded by elements drawn from the southern lower-middle-class.

Nor do we concur with the vulgar cliché that criticism's hypothetical readers have no familiarity with works of art. The most apparent constituent of that attitude too is its innate authoritarianism.

*October* will be plain of aspect, its illustrations determined by considerations of textual clarity. These decisions follow from a fundamental choice as to the primacy of text and the writer's freedom of discourse. Long working experience with major art journals has convinced us of the need to restore to the criticism of painting and sculpture, as to that of other arts, an intellectual autonomy seriously undermined by emphasis on extensive reviewing and lavish illustration. *October* wishes to address those readers who, like many writers and artists, feel that the present format of the major art reviews is producing a form of pictorial journalism which deflects and compromises critical effort. Limited and judicious illustration will contribute to the central aim of *October's* texts: the location of those coordinates whose axes chart contemporary artistic practice and significant critical discourse.

THE EDITORS



Magritte

## “Ceci n'est pas une pipe”

MICHEL FOUCAULT

TRANSLATED BY RICHARD HOWARD

### I.

### *Here Are Two Pipes*

First version, that of 1926, I believe: a pipe, carefully drawn; and underneath (in a regular, deliberate, artificial hand, the kind of schoolboy script you might find on the first line of an exercise book or remaining on the blackboard after the teacher's demonstration), this sentence: “This is not a pipe.”

The other version—and the last, I should think—can be found in *Dawn at the Antipodes*. Same pipe, same statement, same script. But instead of being juxtaposed in an indifferent space with neither limit nor specification, text and figure are placed within a frame, itself resting on an easel which stands on very evident floorboards. Up above, a pipe just like the one drawn in the frame but much larger.

In the first version, only the simplicity is disconcerting. The second visibly multiplies the deliberate uncertainties. The frame leaning against the easel and resting on wooden pegs suggests a painter's picture: a finished, exhibited work which bears, for a potential spectator, the statement commenting on or explaining it. And yet this naive script which is in fact neither the work's title nor one of its pictorial elements, the absence of any other indication of the painter's presence, the simplicity of the grouping, the broad planks of the floor—all this suggests a blackboard in a classroom; perhaps a wipe of a rag will soon erase both drawing and text; or perhaps it will erase only one or the other in order to correct ‘the mistake’ (drawing something which will not really be a pipe, or writing a sentence affirming that this is indeed a pipe). A temporary mistake (a ‘miswriting’, as we might say a *misunderstanding*) which a gesture will scatter into so much white dust?

But even this is only the least of the uncertainties. Here are some others: there are two pipes. Or rather two drawings of one pipe? Or else a pipe and its drawing, or else two drawings each representing a pipe, or else two drawings one of which represents a pipe but not the other, or else two drawings neither one of which is or represents a pipe? And now I catch myself confusing *be* and *represent* as if they were equivalent, as if a drawing were what it represents; and I also see that if I had (and I

have) to dissociate in all conscience (as the *Logic* of Port-Royal has urged me to do for over three centuries) a representation from what it represents, I should have to return to all the hypotheses I have just proposed and multiply them by two.

But this strikes me as well: the pipe represented in the frame—on slate or painted canvas, it doesn't matter—this pipe 'underneath' is firmly fastened in a space with visible points of reference: width (the written text, the upper and lower edges of the frame), height (the sides of the frame, the legs of the easel), depth (the grooves of the floorboards). A stable prison. On the other hand the pipe up above has no coordinates. The enormity of its proportions makes its placement uncertain (the converse effect of what we find in *The Wrestlers' Tomb* where the gigantic rose is confined within the most precise space): is this disproportionate pipe in front of the framed picture, pushing it far to the rear? Or is it suspended just above the easel like an emanation, a vapor which might have just detached itself from the picture—pipe smoke assuming the shape and volume of a pipe, thereby opposing and resembling the pipe (according to the same play of analogy and contrast we find in the *Battle of the Argonne* series between the vaporous and the solid)? Or might we not even suppose that the pipe is *behind* the picture on the easel and even more gigantic than it seems: it would be the picture's depth torn away, the interior dimension breaking through the canvas (or the panel) and slowly back there, in a space henceforth without references, dilating to infinity.

I am, however, not even certain of this uncertainty. Or rather what seems to me quite doubtful is the simple opposition between the unlocalized levity of the pipe up above and the stability of the one underneath. Looking closer, we can see that the feet of this easel holding the framed canvas on which the drawing appears, these feet resting on a floor whose very crudeness makes it visible and sure, are in fact bevelled: their contact surface is no more than three delicate points which deprive the whole rather massive grouping of all stability. Is a fall imminent? Collapse of the easel, the frame, the canvas or the panel, the drawing, the text? Broken pieces of wood, figures in fragments, letters separated from each other so that the very words can no longer be reconstructed—all this rubble on the floor, while up above the huge pipe with neither measurement nor reference point persists in its inaccessible balloonlike immobility?

## II.

### *The Broken Calligram*

Magritte's drawing (I am speaking for the moment only of the first version) is as simple as a page taken from a botany handbook: a figure and the text which labels it. Nothing easier to recognize than a pipe, drawn like this one—the French language has an expression which acknowledges the fact for us—"*nom d'une pipe!*" Yet what constitutes the strangeness of this figure is merely the 'contradiction' between the image and the text, and for a good reason: a contradiction can exist only between two statements, or within one and the same statement. Now I see that there is only one statement and that it cannot be contradictory, since the

subject of the proposition is a simple demonstrative. False, then? But who would seriously contend that this patch of cross-hatching above the text *is* a pipe? What is confusing is that we inevitably relate the text to the drawing (as the demonstrative suggests, as well as the meaning of the word *pipe*, and the verisimilitude of the image), and the fact that it is impossible to define the level on which we could say that the assertion is true, false, contradictory, necessary.

I cannot get rid of the idea that the mischief lies in an operation made invisible by the simplicity of the result but which alone explains the vague uneasiness it provokes. This operation is a calligram secretly formed by Magritte and then carefully undone. Each element of the figure, their reciprocal position, and their relation derives from this operation cancelled as soon as performed.

In its age-old tradition, the calligram has a triple role: to compensate for the alphabet; to repeat without the aid of rhetoric; to catch objects in the snare of a double graphic form. First it brings text and figure as close as possible to each other: it composes into lines which delimit the object's shape the lines which constitute the succession of letters; it lodges statements within the space of the figure, and makes the text say what the drawing represents. On the one hand, it alphabetizes the ideogram, populates it with discontinuous letters and thereby makes the silence of the uninterrupted lines speak. But conversely, it distributes writing in a space which no longer has the indifference, the accessibility and the inert whiteness of paper; its task is to distribute itself according to the laws of a simultaneous form. It reduces phonetism to being, for the instantaneous glance, no more than a gray murmur which completes the outlines of a figure; but it makes drawing into a thin envelope which must be penetrated in order to follow, from word to word, the unwinding of its inner text.

The calligram is therefore a tautology. But the converse of Rhetoric. Rhetoric exploits the superabundance of language; it employs the possibility of saying the same things twice in different words; it profits by the extra wealth which allows us to say two different things with one and the same word; the essence of rhetoric is allegory. The calligram makes use of this double property of letters to function as linear elements which can be arranged in space and as signs which must be read according to a single chain of phonic substance. As sign, the letter permits us to establish words; as line, it permits us to figure objects. Hence the calligram playfully seeks to erase the oldest oppositions of our alphabetical civilization: to show and to name; to figure and to speak; to reproduce and to articulate; to imitate and to signify; to look at and to read.

Pursuing twice over the thing of which it speaks, it sets an ideal trap: its double access guarantees a capture of which mere discourse or pure drawing is not capable. It undermines the invincible absence over which words never quite prevail by imposing on them, through the devices of a writing which functions in space, the visible form of their reference: cunningly arranged on the page, the signs summon from elsewhere—by the margin which they delineate, by the silhouette of their mass on the empty space of the page—the very thing of which

they speak. And in return, the visible form is emptied by the writing, belabored by the words which sap it from within and, exorcising the motionless, ambiguous, nameless presence, weave the network of significations which baptize, determine, establish it in the universe of discourse. A double trap, an inevitable snare: where are they now to escape, the flight of birds, the transitory form of flowers, the streaming rain?

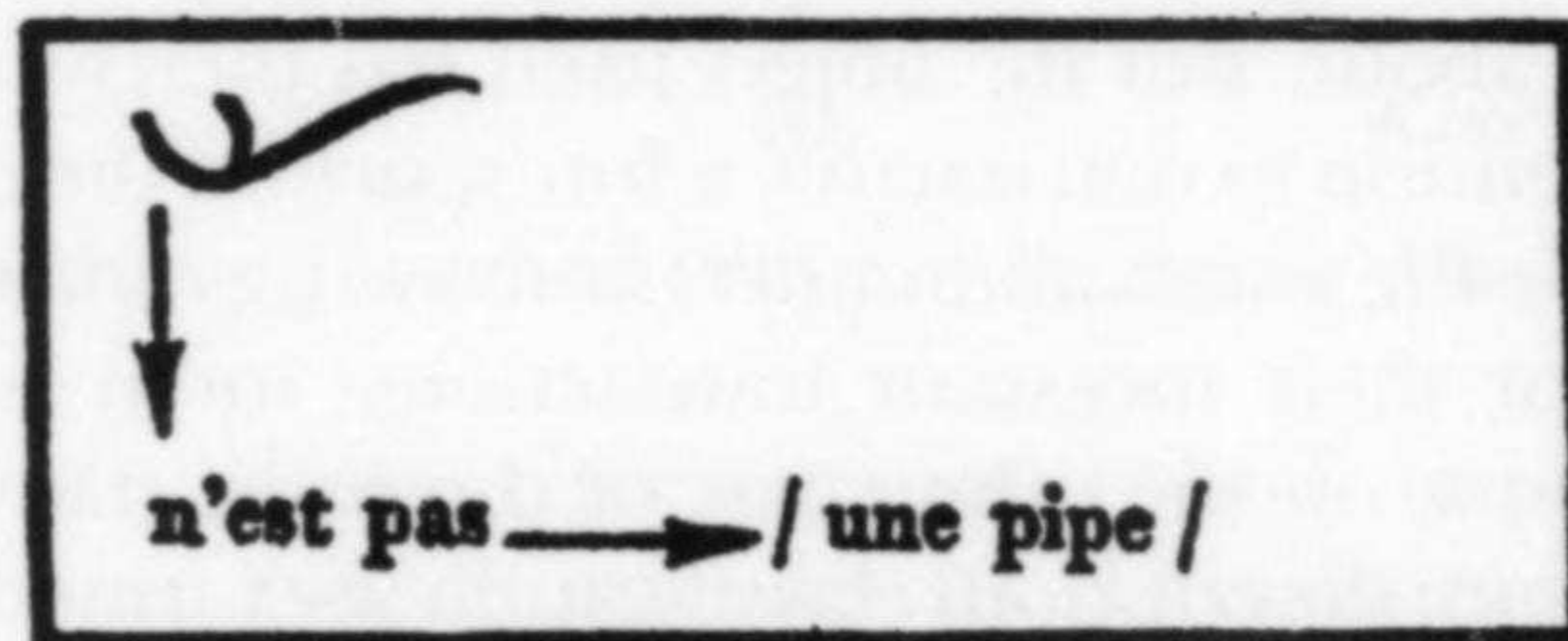
And now, Magritte's drawing. It seems to me to consist of the fragments of a broken calligram. In the guise of a return to a previous arrangement, it assumes the calligram's three functions, but in order to corrupt them, and thereby to disturb all the traditional relations of language and image.

The text which had invaded the figure in order to reconstitute the old ideogram is now back in place. It has returned to its natural site—down below, where it serves as a prop to the image, where it names, explains, and decomposes it, inserting it within the series of texts and within the pages of the book. It becomes, in the heraldic sense of the word, a legend once again. The form reascends to its heaven from which the complicity of letters with space had momentarily brought it down: free from any discursive bond, it can go back to floating in its native silence. We return to the page, and to its old principle of distribution. But only in appearance. For the words I can now read under the drawing are themselves words that have been drawn—images of words which the painter has placed outside the pipe but within the general (and, moreover, unassignable) perimeter of its drawing. From the calligraphic past I am forced to attribute to them, the words have retained their allegiance to drawing and their state as a drawn thing: so that I must read them superimposed upon themselves; they are, on the surface of the image, the reflections of the words which say that this is not a pipe. A text as image. But conversely the represented pipe is drawn by the same hand, and with the same pen, as the letters of the text: it extends the writing more than it illustrates it and compensates for its defects. We might imagine it filled with tiny jumbled letters, graphic signs reduced to fragments and scattered over the whole surface of the image. A figure as a graphic configuration. The invisible and previous calligraphic operation had hybridized writing and drawing; and when Magritte put things back in place, he made certain that the figure should remain written and that the text should never be anything but the drawn representation of itself.

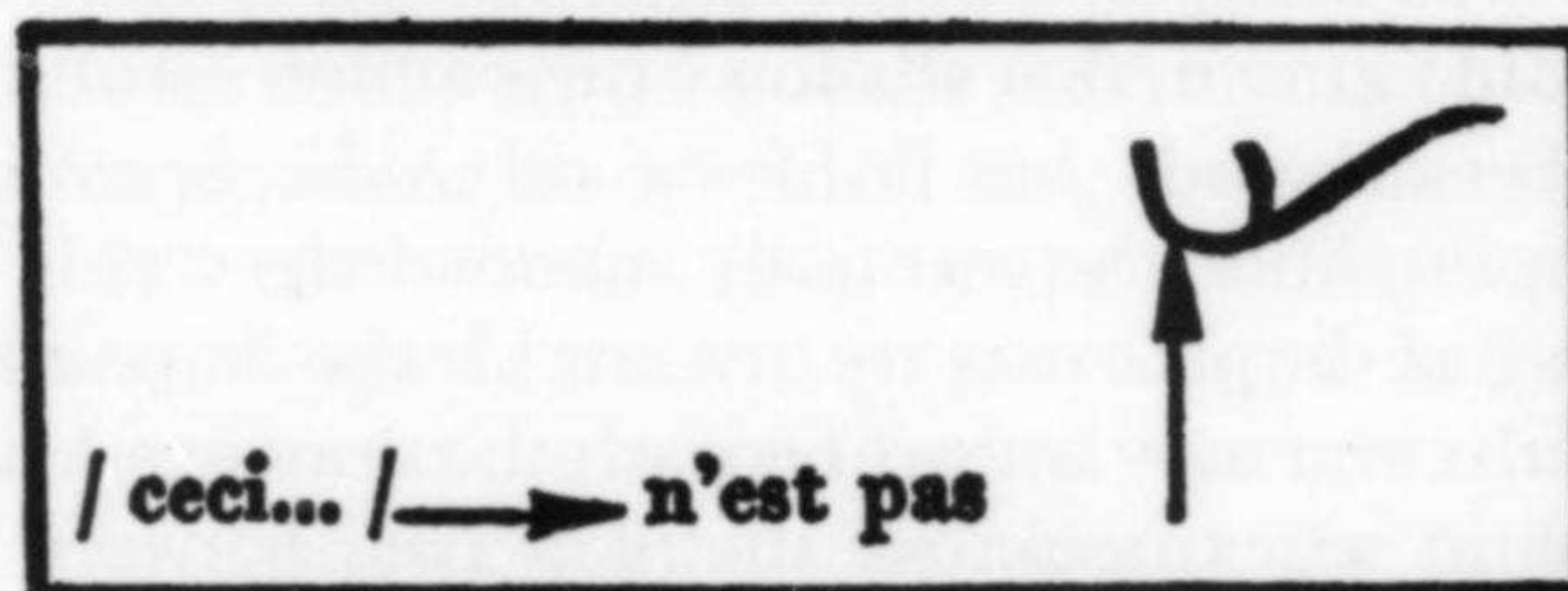
The same applies to the tautology. Magritte seemingly abandons calligraphic duplication for the simple correspondance of image to legend: a mute and sufficiently recognizable figure shows, without saying it, the object in its essence; and underneath, a name receives from this image its 'meaning' or rule of use. Yet compared to the legend's traditional function, Magritte's text is doubly paradoxical. It undertakes to name what obviously has no need to be named (the shape is too well known, the name too familiar). And so at the very moment when he should give the name, he gives it but in doing so denies that it is the name. What accounts for this strange interplay, if not the calligram?—The calligram which says the same

things twice over (where only once would surely be sufficient); the calligram which, without seeming to, introduces a negative relation between what it shows and what it says; for by drawing a bouquet, a bird, or a shower of rain by a sprinkling of letters, the calligram never says of this hypocritically spontaneous shape, "this is a dove, a flower, a shower of rain"; it avoids naming what the arrangement of graphic signs draws. To show what is happening through the words, in the half-silence of the letters; not to say what these lines are which, at the text's edges, limit and frame it. Now that Magritte has cast the text outside the image, the sentence must repossess, for its own sake, this negative relation and make it, within its own syntax, a negation. The 'not saying' which internally and silently animated the calligram is now spoken from outside, in the verbal form of "not." However, because of this calligram hidden behind it, the text which runs underneath the pipe is enabled to say several things at once.

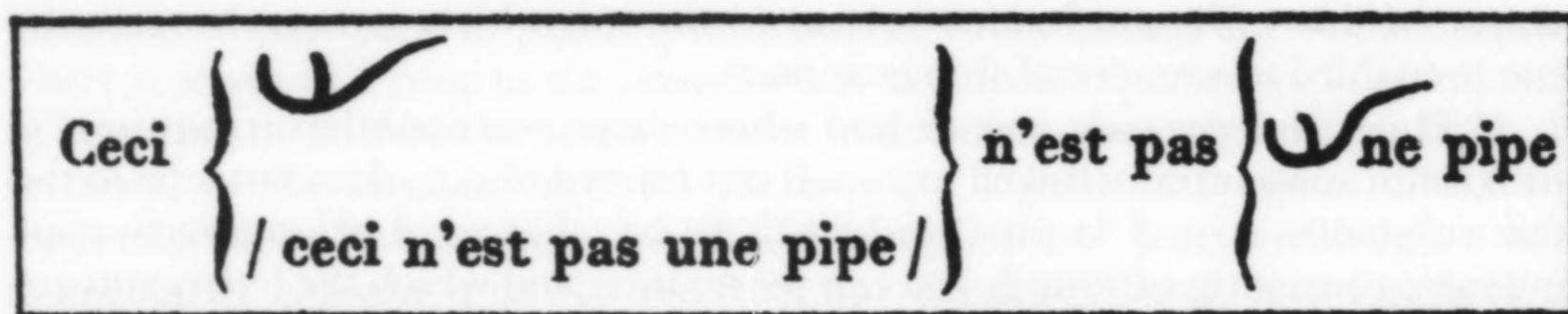
"This" (this drawing you see and whose shape you doubtless recognize) "is not" (is not substantially linked to . . . , is not formed of . . . , does not refer to the same substance as . . . ) "a pipe" (which is to say, that word belonging to your language, consisting of sounds you can pronounce, and which the letters you are now reading translate: *This is not a pipe* can thus be read as follows:



But at the same time, this same text states something quite different: "This" (this statement which you see arranged before your eyes in a line of discontinuous elements, and of which *this* is both the designator and the first word), "is not" (cannot be equivalent to nor substitute for . . . , cannot adequately represent . . . ) "a pipe" (one of those objects of which you can see here, above the text, a possible figure, interchangeable, anonymous, hence inaccessible to any name). Then we must read:



Now, it readily appears, all things considered, that what negates Magritte's statement is the immediate and reciprocal allegiance of the drawing of the pipe and of the text by which we can name this very pipe. To designate and to draw do not coincide, except in the calligraphic interplay which lurks in the background of the group, and which is exorcised simultaneously by the text, by the drawing, and by their present separation. Whence the third function of the statement: "This" (this group constituted by a pipe in the style of writing, and by a drawn text) "is not" (is incompatible with . . .) "a pipe" (that hybrid element which derives from both discourse and the image, and whose ambiguous being the calligram's verbal and visual interplay sought to produce).



Third disturbance: Magritte has reopened the trap sprung by the calligram on what it was speaking about. But the object itself has thereby escaped. We are not accustomed to pay attention to that narrow white space on the page of an illustrated book which runs above the words and under the drawings and which serves them as a common frontier for their incessant transactions: for it is here, on these few millimeters of whiteness, on the calm coast of the page, that all relationships of designation, nomination, description, classification are formed between words and shapes. The calligram has reabsorbed this interstice; but once it is reopened, the calligram does not restore it; the trap has been broken over the void: image and text fall apart, each according to its respective gravitation. They no longer have any common space, any place of intersection, where words can receive a figure and images enter into a lexical order. The slender, colorless and neutral strip which in Magritte's drawing separates figure from text, must be seen as a void, an uncertain and misty region which now separates the pipe floating in its image-heaven from the terrestrial march of the words successively parading on their line. It is even too much to say that there is a void or a lacuna: rather there is an absence of space, an erasure of 'common ground' between the signs of writing and the lines of the image. The "pipe" which was undivided between the statement which named it and the drawing which would figure it, that shadowy pipe which combined the lineaments of shape and the fiber of words, has fled for good. A disappearance which, on the other side of the gaping hole, the text sadly acknowledges: this is not a pipe. The now solitary drawing of the pipe may try to resemble the shape which the word *pipe* usually designates; the text may unfurl beneath the drawing with all the attentive fidelity of a legend in a textbook: all that can pass between them now is the

formulation of their divorce, the statement which contests both the name of the drawing and the reference of the text.

From this point on, we can understand Magritte's last version of *This is not a pipe*. By placing the drawing of the pipe and the statement which serves as its legend on the very clearly delimited surface of a picture (if it is a painting, the letters are only the image of letters; if it is a blackboard, the figure is merely the didactic continuation of a discourse), by placing this picture on a heavy wooden tripod, Magritte does all that is necessary to reconstruct (either by the everlastingness of a work of art, or by the truth of a schoolroom demonstration) the site common to image and language. But this surface is also contested: for the pipe which Magritte had so carefully juxtaposed to the text, which he had enclosed along with the text inside the institutional rectangle of the painting or blackboard, has now escaped: it is up above, floating without references, leaving between the text and the figure of which it should have been the link and the point of convergence on the horizon, only a tiny blank space, the narrow wake of its absence—as if it were merely the unparticularized mark of its escape. Then, on its beveled and so obviously unstable legs, the easel need only collapse, the frame break, the picture and the pipe roll on the floor, the letters scatter: the common ground—a banal work of art or an everyday demonstration—has disappeared.

### III. *Klee, Kandinsky, Magritte*

Two principles have governed Western Painting, I believe, from the 15th to the 20th century.

The first separates plastic representation (which implies resemblance) and linguistic representation (which excludes it). This distinction is articulated in such a way as to permit one or another form of subordination: either the text is governed by the image (as in those paintings in which a book, an inscription, a letter, a person's name are represented); or else the image is governed by the text (as in the books where drawing completes, as if it were merely taking a short-cut, what the words are intended to represent). It is true that this subordination seldom remains stable: for the text of a book may be only a commentary on the image and the successive route, by means of the words, of its simultaneous forms; and a painting may be dominated by a text of which it produces, plastically, all the significations. But the form of the subordination or the manner in which it is extended, increased, and inverted matters little; the essential thing is that the verbal sign and the visual representation are never given at the same time. They are always hierarchically ordered, and it is the sovereignty of this principle which Klee abolished by emphasizing in an uncertain, reversible, floating space (both page and canvas, sheet and volume, graph-paper and survey report, story and map) the juxtaposition of figures and the syntax of signs. In the interlacing of one and the same fabric he presents the two systems of representation: whereby (unlike the calligraphers who reinforced, by multiplying it, the interplay of reciprocal

subordinations) he collapsed their common space and undertook to build a new one.

The second principle proposes the equivalence between the fact of similitude and the affirmation of a representative link. That a figure should resemble a thing (or some other figure), that there should be a relation of analogy between them, is sufficient to assert in all our painting an obvious, banal, thousand-times-repeated and yet almost always silent statement (it is like an endless, haunting murmur which surrounds the figures' silence, invades it, seizes, dispossesses, and finally shifts it into the realm of things we can name): "What you see, is that." Here again the direction in which the relation of representation functions is of little importance whether the painting is referred to the visible world surrounding it or whether it creates for itself alone an invisible world which resembles it. The essential thing is that we cannot dissociate similitude and affirmation. Kandinsky delivered painting from this equivalence: not that he dissociated its terms, but because he simultaneously got rid of resemblance *and* representative functioning.

No one, it would seem, is further from Kandinsky and from Klee than Magritte, whose painting is so attached to the exactitude of resemblances that it deliberately multiplies them as though to confirm them: it is not enough that the pipe should resemble, in the drawing itself, another pipe, which in its turn, *etc.* . . . More than any other, Magritte's painting is determined to separate, deliberately, cruelly, the graphic element and the plastic element: if they should happen to be superimposed like a legend and its image, it is on condition that the statement contest the figure's manifest identity and the name we are about to give it. And yet Magritte's painting is not alien to the enterprise of Klee and Kandinsky; it constitutes, rather, starting from a system common to them, a figure at once contrary and complementary.

#### IV. *The Mute Labor of Words*

The exteriority of the graphic and the plastic elements, so evident in Magritte, is symbolized by the non-relation—or in any case by the very complex and very hidden relation—between the picture and its title. This immense distance, which keeps us from being able to be, at one and the same time, reader and spectator, assures the abrupt emergence of the image above the horizontality of the words. "The titles are chosen in order to keep others from locating my pictures in a familiar region which the automatism of thought would inevitably invoke in order to avoid anxiety." Magritte names his paintings in order to preserve respect for denomination (a little like the anonymous hand which has designated the pipe by the statement "This is not a pipe"). And yet in this broken and drifting space, strange relations are formed, intrusions occur, sudden destructive invasions, the fall of images among words, verbal explosions which crack the drawings and smash them to pieces. Patiently, Klee constructs a space without name or geometry by intertwining the chain of signs and the network of figures.

Whereas Magritte secretly undermines a space which he seems to maintain in the traditional arrangement. But he saps it with words: and the old pyramid of perspective is no more than a mole-hill about to collapse.

Even the most docile drawing requires only a caption like "This is not a pipe" to make the figure immediately emerge from itself, isolated from its space until it begins to float, near or far from itself—it is uncertain which, like or different from itself. The converse of *This is not a pipe* is *The art of conversation*. In a landscape that suggests either the beginning of the world or some gigantomania, two tiny characters are speaking: an inaudible discourse, a murmur immediately caught up in the silence of the rocks, in the silence of that wall whose huge blocks overhangs the two mute chatterers; yet these blocks, chaotically piled one upon another, form at their base a group of letters which it is easy enough to decipher as the word RÊVE (dream), as if all these fragile, weightless words had received the power to organize the power of the rocks. Or as if, on the contrary, behind the waking yet immediately lost chatter of the men, things could, in their silence and their sleep, compose a word—a stable word which nothing could ever erase; yet this word designates the most fugitive of images. But this is not all: for it is in a dream that the men, finally reduced to silence, communicate with the signification of things, and that they allow themselves to be reached by these enigmatic, insistent words which come from elsewhere. *This is not a pipe* was the incision of discourse in the form of things, was its ambiguous power to deny and to double; *The art of conversation* is the autonomous gravitation of things which form their own words in men's indifference, imposing without their knowledge upon their everyday chatter.

Between these two extremes, Magritte's *oeuvre* deploys the action of words and of images. The face of an absolutely serious man, without moving the lips, without blinking an eye, 'bursts' into a laughter which is not his own, which no one hears, and which comes from nowhere. *Evening falls* but cannot fall without breaking a windowpane whose fragments, still bearing reflections of the sun on their jagged surfaces, strew the floor and the sill: the words which name the disappearance of the sun 'a fall' have carried with them not only the glass but that other sun which has been drawn like a double on the smooth and transparent surface. Like a tongue in a bell, the key keeps to the vertical 'in the keyhole': it makes the familiar expression ring there to the point of absurdity. Here, moreover, is what Magritte himself says: "We can create new relations between words and objects, and specify certain characteristics of language and things generally ignored in everyday life." And further: "Sometimes the name of an object replaces an image. A word can take the place of an object in reality. An image can take the place of a word in a proposition." And this, which involves no contradiction, but refers both to the inextricable network of images and words, and to the absence of common ground which might sustain them: "In a picture, the words are of the same substance as the images. We see the images and the words in a painting differently."

Let there be no mistake: in a space where each element seems to obey the one principle of plastic representation and of resemblance, the linguistic signs which seemed to be excluded, which prowled at a distance around the image, and which the arbitrary quality of the title seemed to have averted for good, have surreptitiously reappeared; they have introduced into the plenitude of the image, into its meticulous resemblance, a disorder—an order which belongs to the eyes alone.

Klee wove, in order to arrange his plastic signs within it, a new space. Magritte allows the old space of representation to prevail, but only on the surface, for it is no more than a smooth stone, bearing figures and words; underneath, there is nothing. It is a tombstone: the incisions which draw the figures and those which have marked the letters communicate only by the void, by that non-site which is hidden under the marble's solidity. I shall note only that this absence occasionally rises to its surface and appears in the painting itself: when Magritte gives us his version of (David's) *Madame Récamier* or of (Manet's) *Balcony*, he replaces the characters of the traditional painting by coffins: the void invisibly contained between the waxed oak boards releases the space composed by the volume of the living bodies, the arrangement of the gowns, the direction of the gaze and all those faces about to speak, the 'non-site' rises 'in person'—in place of the persons and there where there is no longer anyone: *personne*, as we say in French.

#### V. *The Seven Seals of Affirmation*

The old equivalence between similitude and affirmation was thus dismissed by Kandinsky in a unique and sovereign gesture; he freed painting from the one as from the other. Magritte, however, proceeds by dissociation: to break their links, to establish their inequality, to make each function without the other, to maintain the one which derives from painting itself and to exclude the one which is closest to discourse; to pursue as far as is possible the infinite continuation of resemblances, but to free it from any affirmation which would undertake to say what they resemble. Painting of the 'same', freed from 'as if'. It is the converse of *trompe-l'oeil*, which seeks to pass off the heaviest burden of affirmation by a convincing resemblance: "What you see here is not, on the surface of a wall, an arrangement of lines and colors; it is a depth, a sky, clouds which have drawn back the curtain of your roof, a real column around which you can turn, a staircase which continues the steps you are taking (and already you take a step toward it, in spite of yourself), a stone balustrade over which are leaning toward you the attentive faces of ladies and courtiers, wearing the same clothes, the same ribbons as yourself, smiling at your astonishment and your smiles, making signs to you which seem mysterious only because they have already answered those you are about to make to them."

So many affirmations, supported by so many analogies, are opposed by Magritte's text which speaks right next to the most lifelike pipe in the world. But who is speaking, in this unique text in which the most elementary of affirmations

is dismissed? The pipe itself, first of all: "What you see here, these lines which I form or which form me, all this is not what you doubtless think; but only a drawing, while the real pipe, resting in its essence far beyond any artificial gesture, floating in the element of its ideal truth, is up above—look, just above this frame in which I am no more than a simple and solitary resemblance." To which the pipe up above replies (still in the same statement): "What you see floating before your eyes, outside of space, and without any fixed basis, this mist which rests neither on a canvas nor on a page—how could it really be a pipe? Make no mistake, I am merely a similitude—not something like a pipe, but that cloudy resemblance which, without referring to anything, traverses and unites certain texts like the one you can read and certain drawings like the one which is here, down below." But the statement, already articulated twice over by different voices, speaks for itself in its turn: "These letters which compose me and by which you expect when you start reading them to find the pipe named—how would these letters dare say they are a pipe, being so far from what they name? This is a graphic system which resembles only itself and which cannot be equivalent to what it is speaking about." There is still more: these voices unite in pairs to say, speaking of the third element, that "this is not a pipe." Linked by the frame of the painting or blackboard which surrounds them both, the text and pipe underneath enter into complicity: the words' power of designation, the drawing's power of illustration denounce the pipe up above and deny this apparition without references the right to call itself a pipe, for its unattached existence renders it mute and invisible. Linked by their reciprocal similitude, the two pipes contest the right of the written statement to call itself a pipe, since it is made of signs without resemblance to what they designate. Linked by the fact that each comes from elsewhere, and that one is a discourse capable of speaking the truth while the other is a kind of apparition of a thing-in-itself, the text and pipe up above unite to formulate the assertion that the pipe in the framed picture is not a pipe. And perhaps it can be supposed that beyond these three elements, an unlocalizable voice speaks in this statement, and that a shapeless hand has written it; it would be in speaking simultaneously of the pipe of the picture, the pipe which appears up above, and of the text which it is actually in the process of writing, that this anonymous being would say: "None of all this is a pipe; but a text which resembles a text; a drawing of a pipe which resembles a drawing of a pipe; a pipe (drawn as not being a drawing) which resembles a pipe (drawn in the manner of a pipe which itself would not be a drawing)." Seven kinds of discourse in a single statement. But it required no less to raze the fortress in which resemblance was a prisoner of affirmation.

Henceforth, similitude is referred to itself—extended out from itself and folded back on itself. It is no longer the index which perpendicularly crosses the canvas surface in order to refer to something else. It inaugurates a play of analogies which run, proliferate, propagate, and correspond within the picture plane, without affirming or representing anything. Which accounts for those

infinite interactions of purified similitude in Magritte, which never overflow outside the picture. They establish metamorphoses: but in what direction? Is it the plant whose leaves fly off and become birds, or the birds which slowly botanize themselves, thrusting into the ground in a final palpitation of green (*The Natural Graces*, *The Taste of Tears*)? Is it the woman who 'takes to the bottle' or the bottle which feminizes itself by becoming a 'naked body' (here occurs a perturbation of the plastic elements due to the latent insertion of verbal signs and the play of an analogy which, without affirming anything, nonetheless occurs, and twice over, by the playful instance of the statement)? Instead of mingling identities, the analogy has the power to break them: a woman's torso is sliced into three elements (of regularly increasing size, from the top down); the proportions preserved at each slice guarantee the analogy while suspending any affirmation of identity: three proportionals which lack, precisely, the fourth; but this fourth one is incalculable: the head (the final element = x) is missing: *Delusions of Grandeur*, the title says.

Another way for the analogy to free itself from its old complicity with representative affirmation: perfidiously (and by a ruse which seems to indicate the contrary of what it means) to combine a picture and what it should represent. In appearance, this is a way of affirming that the painting is its own model. In fact such an affirmation would imply an internal distance, a gap, a difference between the canvas and what it should imitate; in Magritte on the contrary, there is, from the painting to the model, a continuity in the plane, a linear passage, a continuous overflow from one into the other: either by a transition from left to right (as in *The Human Condition* where the sea's horizon continues without a break with the horizon on the canvas); or by inversion of distances (as in *The Waterfall* where the model advances on the canvas, envelops it on the sides, and makes it seem farther back in relation to what should be behind it). Conversely to this analogy which denies representation by effacing duality and distance, there is the opposite one which evades or mocks representation by means of the snares of doubling. In *Evening Falls*, the windowpane bears a red sun analogous to the one which remains fixed in the heavens (so much, then, *contra* Descartes and his way of resolving the two suns of appearance into the unity of representation); the contrary occurs in *The Field Glass*: on the transparency of a windowpane we see clouds passing and a blue sea sparkling; but the gap between the casements reveals a black space: what we see on the glass is a reflection of nothing at all.

## VI.

*To Paint Is Not to Affirm*

Rigorous separation between linguistic signs and plastic elements; equivalence of similitude and affirmation. These two principles constituted the tension of classical painting: for the second one reintroduced discourse (there is affirmation only where there is speech) in a painting from which the linguistic element was carefully excluded. Whence the fact that classical painting spoke—and spoke a great deal—even as it constituted itself outside language; whence the fact that it

rested silently upon a discursive space; whence the fact that it appropriated to itself, underneath itself, a kind of common ground where it could restore the relations of image and signs.

Magritte joins verbal signs and plastic elements, but without claiming any previous isotopism; he evades the basis of affirmative discourse on which resemblance calmly rested; and he brings into play pure similitudes and non-affirmative verbal statements in the instability of a volume without references and of a space without planes. An operation of which *This is not a pipe* provides a kind of formulary.

1. To devise a calligram in which we find simultaneously present and visible: image, text, resemblance, affirmation and their common ground.

2. Then to break the calligram so that it immediately decomposes and disappears, leaving only its own void as its trace.

3. To let the discourse fall of its own weight and acquire the visible form of letters. Letters which, insofar as they are drawn, enter into an uncertain, indefinite relation, intertwined with the drawing itself—but without any surface being able to serve as their common ground.

4. To permit, elsewhere, the similitudes to multiply out of themselves, to generate from their own vapor and rise endlessly in a less and less spatialized ether where they refer to nothing but themselves.

5. To make sure, at the end of the operation, that the precipitate of the last test-tube has changed color, that it has turned from white to black, that *This is a pipe* has indeed become *This is not a pipe*. In short, that painting has ceased to affirm.

1963

*Two Letters from René Magritte to Michel Foucault*

May 23, 1966

Dear Sir:

You will, I hope, be pleased to consider some reflections elicited by a reading of your book *The Order of Things (Les Mots et les choses)* . . .

The words Resemblance and Similitude allow you to suggest most forcefully the—absolutely alien—presence of the world and of ourselves. However, I think that these two words are inadequately differentiated; the dictionaries are anything but instructive as to their distinction.

It seems to me, for example, that peas have relations of similitude, both visible (their color, their shape, their size) and invisible (their nature, their taste, their weight). The same is true of the false and the authentic, *etc.* 'Things' have no

resemblances between themselves, they have or do not have similitudes.

It is only thought which can resemble. It resembles by being what it sees, understands or knows, it becomes what the world offers it.

It is quite as invisible as pleasure or pain. But painting causes a difficulty to intervene: there is the kind of thought which sees and which can be described visibly. *Las Meniñas* is the visible image of Velasquez's invisible thought. Then is the invisible sometimes visible? Provided thought is constituted exclusively of visible figures.

In this regard, it is obvious that a painted image—which is intangible by its nature—conceals nothing, whereas the tangible visible world always conceals another visible world—if we are to believe our own experience.

There has been for some time a curious primacy granted to the 'invisible' as a result of a confused literature whose interest vanishes if we recall that what is visible can be concealed, but that what is invisible conceals nothing: it can be known or unknown, no more. There is no reason to grant the invisible more importance than the visible, nor the converse.

What does not 'lack' importance is the mystery evoked *in fact* by the visible and the invisible, and which can be evoked *potentially* by the thought which unites 'things' in the order which evokes mystery.

I am taking the liberty of calling to your attention the enclosed reproductions of works I painted without concerning myself with an original investigation of painting.

Please accept . . . etc.

René Magritte.

June 4, 1966

Dear Sir,

. . . Your question (about my painting *Perspective, The Balcony* by Manet) asks what it already contains: what made me see coffins where Manet saw white figures, is the image shown by my painting in which the setting of the "Balcony" was suitable for the placing of coffins.

The 'mechanism' which functioned here might serve as the object of a learned explanation of which I am quite incapable. This explanation would be valid, even irrefutable, but it would still be no less of a mystery.

The first painting entitled *Perspective* was a coffin resting on a stone in a landscape.

The *Balcony* is a variation on this, there were others previously: *Perspective. Mme. Récamier* by David and *Perspective. Mme. Récamier* by Gérard. A variation with, for instance, the setting and figures of Courbet's *Burial at Ornans* would be more of a parody.

I believe it should be noted that these paintings named "Perspective" offer a

meaning which the two senses of the word Perspective do not have. This word and the others have a precise meaning in one context, but the context—you show this better than anyone in *The Order of Things*—can say that nothing is confused, except for the mind which imagines an imaginary world.

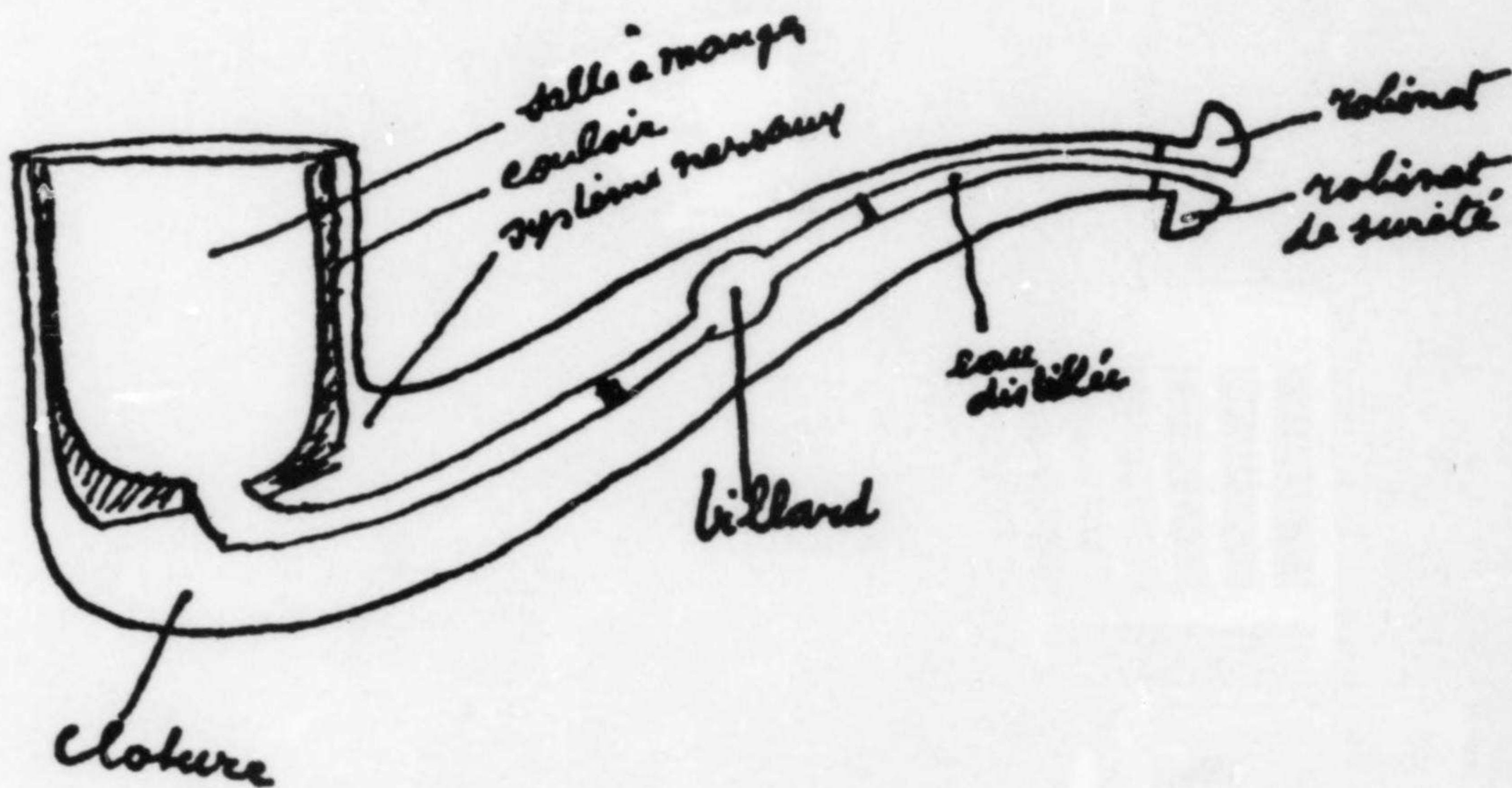
I am glad that you recognize a resemblance between Roussel and what I can think which deserves to be thought. What he imagines evokes nothing imaginary—he evokes the reality of the world which experience and reason consider in confusion.

I hope to have the opportunity to meet you during my exhibition in Paris, at the Iolas Gallery, toward the end of the year.

Please accept . . . etc.

René Magritte.

*Ci joint un plan de pipe:*





Richard  
Mangol

## The Carrot and The Stick

RICHARD FOREMAN

My method of procedure in generating texts for performance hasn't really changed in eight years in at least one rather peculiar way. I keep sending myself orders on 'how to proceed'—reminders of what I'm aiming at, and piles of these orders accumulate on my desk next to the notebook filled with the scratching that eventually gets shaped into a 'play'. What I REALLY want to be able to stage some day are these obsessive theoretical out-pourings—but I don't know how, yet . . .

One does not think words, or sentences, or acts, or stories—but only, wherever you are at this minute, waiting to make something—twist, and that twist is, somehow, the unit. And the work is built out of such units.

A certain rhythm of interruption and shifts on a repeating 'frame'. (Frames too, alter, but are always frame-like.)

\*

The art . . . must be isomorphic with the feeling aroused by itself. That means, chasing its own tail, which means in turn perpetual motion. The feeling comes after the art which causes the feeling, and yet the art which causes that feeling, made isomorphic with the feeling—and this all conceived *not* as a temporal process. But somehow learn how, in the instant, to shape the moment so that it will be resonant to whatever effects it will produce. Then, when the effect *does* occur, one is truly able to perceive the 'structure' of that effect. That's what we should build—models of effect-structures.

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Usually, feelings are aroused and out of those feelings one acts. Hate is aroused, murder results. The act *issues* from the emotion. How much better, to discover within the emotion, some sort of framework, along the struts and supports of which one can align one's body, one's imagination, one's gestures—so that the 'act', rather

than issuing from the emotion, etches its rather imaginary configuration in the materials of the real world. (The motive, of course, not change, but lucidity. The spiritual motive.)

\*

About four years ago, I discovered how, when suffering from a headache, to lie down on the couch and stop 'fighting' the pain, telling the headache to 'expand' as it were, until I was alone in a center of a vast web of the throbbing pain—and somehow in that center was a stillness and the pain—no longer resisted—vanished. In the same way—try to generate in the text certain points that are 'bad' (whatever that means) in a way that the pain of the headache is bad, and rather than trying to fight to eliminate those points—enter them, let them (the badness) inflate like an entire world in which you can find an entire structure within which a whole life of rigor, passion and intelligence can be lived. The end may be slightly different than the end of "headache elimination," but the starting point is the same. A relaxation and allowing of 'bad' material to expand to the very horizons so that *I* am on the inside of *it*, rather than *it* being experienced as a foreign agent within *me*.

\*

Trying to be centered . . . on the circumference. Something inside of you (like a headache, or your response to a 'bad' line of dialogue) is a feeling. Relax and let it expand to the horizon, then you are alone at the center. The feeling . . . has become the structure (world) within which you move. Then your movements (your art) indeed become isomorphic (you move along roads laid down by the expanded feeling) . . . with the feelings they, originally, created!

\*

I've always wanted my art to be *about* whatever it was that gave me the energy to make it. My works, therefore, are a mode of literary criticism, in which the object under analysis is itself.

Most literature expresses how the artist feels about a certain sustained 'subject'. I invariably choose to express how I feel about the preceding moment of generated text. Mostly, how I feel about the energy that generated that preceding moment. Or rather, the relationship between that energy and the one out of many possible ways it chose to crystallize itself. Continual judgments and reflections upon what just was 'there'. So the critique of the play is not so much built into the play—it is the body and flesh of the play. Indeed, the critique of a play that isn't there—and I feel the play *shouldn't* be there, because if it were there—it would only be there for the *moment* of its performance while what would remain (forever) would be the

memory of performance in individual spectators' minds—that memory (selective, judgmental, *etc.*) immediately a form of critique, and so I chose to make the work out of 'what-it-is-that-remains' rather than what is momentary (non-existing). So what is articulated and organized is not so much acts, as responses to and reflections upon acts.

\*

To understand the work, one should not, of course, ask what it 'means', but only—what need does it answer. In my case, the most consistent, passionate need . . . is the need to FILL A SPACE in which I find myself (mentally). That is, I suppose, a kind of erotics of thought . . . using thought to manipulate the imagination, which is a body. Fill that space (where one is now, and then now, and then now) not by being at the center (center: the placing (there) of a 'subject') but rather by a twist administered to the imagination-body: an un-natural extension of some sort, generating a new periphery, a difference.

\*

We lack a center, always. By definition (man). It's wrong to try and provide a center (the play should imitate what-it-is to be a self, which is to be centerless). We are peripherally defined creatures. Joy and exhilaration will be attained in the work if it imitates what we really are, which is a process involving a lack at the center which receives a collection of in-mixed traces, so that our mental antenna are constantly feeling out to the 'edges' where we imagine those traces to originate. Don't, therefore, think of filling the 'space' of the moment, but in the moment, distribute oneself at the periphery. That would be, a union (of 'X' with) *other* codes, traces. Then let that union, that in-mixing be the agent that does the act-ing. The 'I' doesn't act—the generated sentence, the gesture that results from fold layed back upon fold, the idea that appears as a wrinkle where one line of input stumbles over another—those are the agents of the 'act'.

\*

My experience continually (life experience, making-art experience) is one of "hummm, that's not quite right" and I try to back away for a new angle of approach, and be seized, there, away from my center, inspired (which means jolted out of line, twisted) by a trace, otherness, irrelevance, 'error', which in speaking through me will, as it were, change the rules of the game.

\*

The irony, which is still at the motivating place of the drama, simply attacks different 'objects' these days. With the Greeks, it was the irony of an act producing a result opposite to its intention (will effort followed by reversal and revelation). From Shakespeare to Ibsen, the irony was relocated in statements, where a statement is made and can no longer be believed to say what it says, because we know the character is lying, or pretending, or calculating. Now, the irony is in the very *field* of discourse. It pulls the very sentence apart. There is no longer a speaker, towards whom an ironic perspective is to be employed . . . but the total field of words, gestures, acts available to the 'speaker'—each 'item' in that field is now perceived as ironically meaning its opposite, causing its opposite to 'be' the minute it is performed. That is the modern, ironic, consciousness. The performing (or naming) 'A' evokes (invokes) in that instant, immediately, non-A. It is only against the field non-A that A can make its entry. We KNOW that. It is one of the few things we, in the historical period, know in a more *lived-in* mode of knowing than men of earlier eras.

\*

Poetics of production:

- 1) A 'meaningless' event.
- 2) A field of experience.
- 3) A point of view relating 1 to 2.

Think of life as a 'music' of these three interpenetrating moments/realms. The borders between them shifting all the time, of course. An item 'A', could shift, oscillating between 1, 2 and perhaps even 3.

1

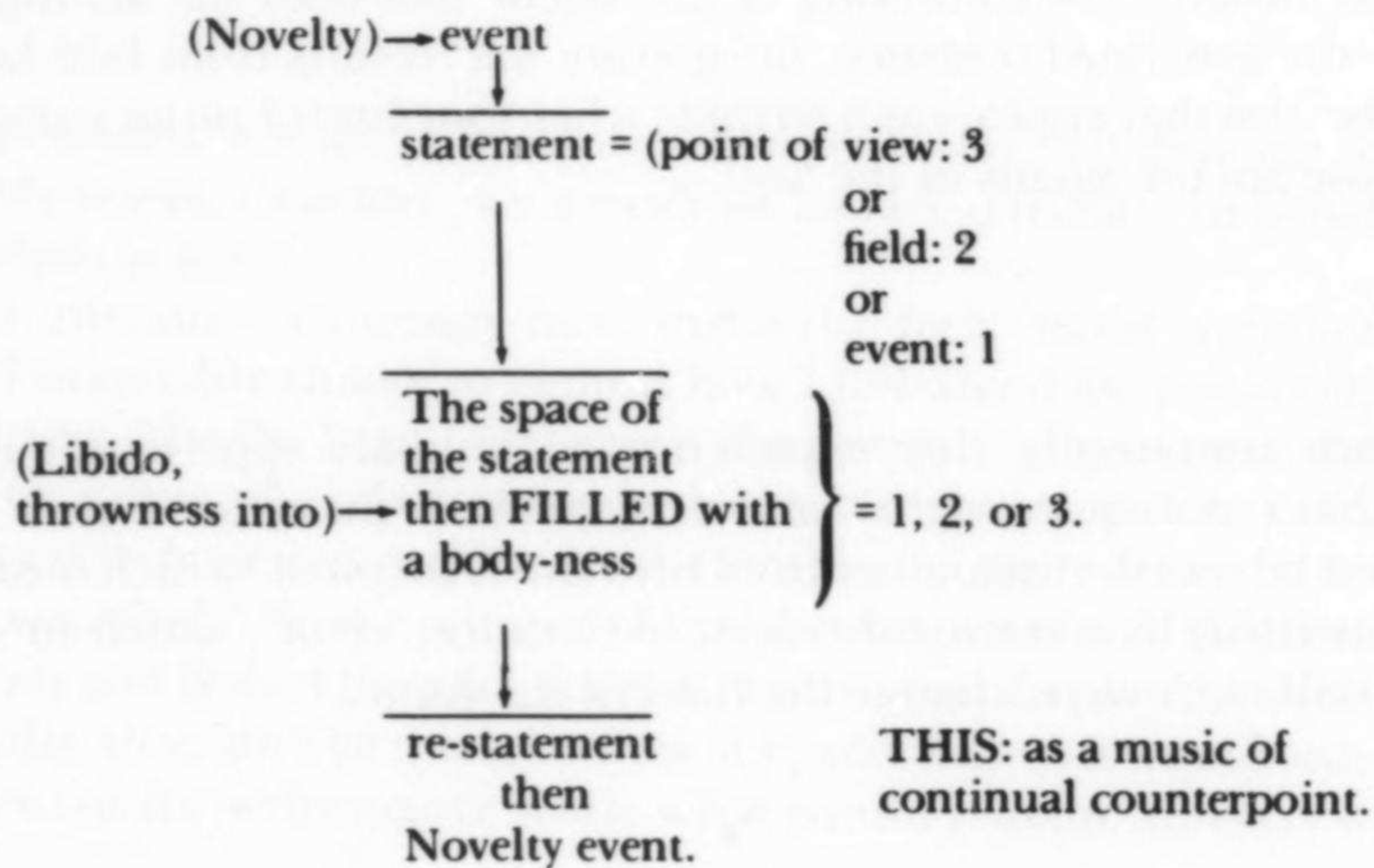
2

3

Listen-speak-click of release that's no-mind. Ah!

Learn-create-objective letting-be. Ah!

A possible sequence:



\*

The most interesting task is to discover the *shape* of the now-moment. So it becomes a matter of forms, more than a matter of structure.

What is the form of the present, and each succeeding present? Then, see what-can-be-done with the form that is the real form of the here-now. Those here-nows as the building blocks of some other structure. But the quality of the blocks determines the possible 'style' of the overall structure.

Now, the form of 'now' can be determined only as I try to twist my body (mental) until it FILLS somehow the moment, till it touches the borders of the moment. The meaning then, cannot be in a superimposed fable, but is in the modes found of being able to inhabit (fill the spaces of the present, and the sequence of those modes. Meaning is—"how do you live in a space?" Spaces arise, the way mutations are delivered upon the planet—and then life tries to inhabit that new, mutant species. In the attempt to make an arisen space 'habitable' (a species is also a 'space' for living)—meanings arise, such as "that plant is poisonous." I am concerned with such meanings.

\*

Meaning? Make an item (the play) that other items can allude to when they are making an effort to crystallize their own meaning-to-themselves. The play doesn't allude to a real world, through having a 'meaning'. Rather it is there to 'give meaning to' anything *else* that wants to take meaning from *it*.

What we need are models for a 'way-of-being-in-the-world' that we'd like to remember as a possibility. I'd like, myself, to be 'tuned' to the world in the way the play I create is tuned. I establish the world of the play so that hopefully, I can turn to it, and begin resonating to its rhythms.

\*

I generate a text, I make a composition out of what I 'know', that is to say—a collection of 'meanings' carried around inside me. One meaning . . . in conflict with another meaning. That means, of course, a continually shifting frame of reference. That means of course . . . that there is no conclusion . . . no beginning, middle and end . . . but, intermissions. Until I die, But then I won't be able to write about it.

\*

In the work of art, you are never talking about what you are talking about. You are always using talking-about-subject-'A' to really talk about subject 'B'. But most of the audience doesn't understand that, which makes of the theater especially a rather

absurd undertaking (if you would make art). Why do I do it? Well, I had my reasons, but I'm not sure I'll do it much longer.

One reason one makes art is to have more control than usual over what goes out and into one. Because if you are making a work of art, you devote a significant number of the available hours of the day to controlling that input and output. So the work of art is always a picture of one's ideal world, a postulated utopia. But again, it is not the 'things you are talking about' which constitute the content of that utopia, those 'things' are used to talk *really* about something else. So the utopia—there, before your eyes—is unseen by most people. Why both talk about what you are talking about? Ah—to talk about it is to first catch it, so that it can be 'displayed' (talked about in theatrical language). To catch it, to make it hold still, you have to kill it. Everything that is talked about (displayed on the stage) is a dead thing. I don't want to 'kill' what I REALLY want to talk about (utopia) so I have to talk about OTHER things I don't mind killing and then those dead things are talking about other things that somehow—because they don't have to be 'displayed', don't have to be killed.

\*

To EXPRESS something means you first killed it.

\*

One can hardly help generating things that give pleasure. We are built to 'take pleasure in'. But the effort must be made to try and insure that pleasure will feed not the 'I' (which should be the developer of will) but rather the disassociated not-I within us. The not-I is both a more sensitive, subtler, more intricate pleasure-experiencing machine than the I—and the sole field within the person which will NOT degenerate through repeated pleasure stimulation. Clearly the 'I', the ego, does so degenerate into sensualism if fed too rich a diet of pleasure. But inside of us there is all that 'passes through us' (the other, which is always threatening to disrupt the selfhood we feverishly hold onto) and that 'other' in us takes the pleasure it is fed, breaks it into a hundred small pieces and sends it flying to feed different parts of that energy system which because it is always challenging the coherence of the inner 'I', forces us to new efforts of will and invention.

How to feed the 'other' in us (the not-I, as opposed to ego) with pleasure? Ahh—but everything in this collection of notes is really speaking to that primary end, dealing with that primary problem.

\*

Ritual as anti-doing, the anti-pole to force (See Erik Gutkind). My life of writing is a ritual, I make nothing through force. I copy certain things (or, let rise certain things) and that doing-so renders me transparent. Erases me as a 'force'. My work . . . erases me. So, I am not. What I am finally, is a part of the composition that arises through me.

\*

We can postulate two (of many) systems going on inside us.

- 1) A 'receive perception' system (always a clean slate).
- 2) A memory store.

Those are 'imagined' systems, suggesting new ground rules for the game of art-making. As opposed to such an imaginary system there is a more verifiable neurological bi-part system in which

- 1) Certain neurons PROTECT us against the strength of incoming stimuli.
- 2) Certain others receive stimuli.

The fact is that we pick up the frayed ends of system 1 on system 2.

So I can suggest to myself—write the PROTECTION against noticing, generate gesture of defense against input.

Also:

The perceived may be read in (on) the past (the memory slate upon which past perceptions have left their imprint).

'Pure' perception would go in, and vanish, and be not.

Real perception is resistance to perception.

Can you imagine what kinds of texts, suggested by above procedures, might be generated? Would they not resemble my texts?

\*

Old paradigm: Universe consists of forces that solidify into units (Gestalts, objects, events) to which we *respond*.

New Paradigm: Universe consists of forces that leave traces which are not fully identifiable consciously, of which we see only residual evidence—and if we respond it is an 'error' of responding to what we *project* into those traces.

If you believe 1, your art tries to make something visible, and the life copied by that art is a responding-to-input from the 'world'.

If you believe 2, your (my) art tries to erase things (because they are obstacles) and the life copied by that art is a 'something else' that tries to resonate to inner output.

\*

The TREE of senses.

Man is currently the 'seeing' creature—that sense defines him vis-à-vis other creatures, who have more highly developed 'lower' senses.

Smell (taste)

Then: hearing

Then: seeing (man's current level)

Then: thinking (the next level, not yet achieved.)

THINKING . . . as a sense. As a way to respond to what is present

. . . by THINKING what is present, rather than smelling, hearing, seeing it.

So, try to make a new art about THINKING—THINKING treated as a *sensing*, as the sixth sense!

Try to imitate (anticipate) the next stage in the evolution of consciousness.

What that amounts to is a planned opposition (within the work) or restriction of organic releases (pleasure): which is also a way consciousness could be thought of—a restriction on immediate release in sensation.

Past achievement of man: to turn 'tree' into a sign, which can be held in the head. That's what men have achieved—symbol-making, sign-making ability, in which conscious experience mediates between man and encountered tree.

The next step might be to restrict the emotional release man now gets through his encounter with signs, and so see the sign (object) dissolve into a kind of web-of-association awareness. See the signs become nothing more than polarity-traces. That web-consciousness then mediates between man and signs and he no longer sees the 'signs'—just as in encountering the tree in the field he no longer really sees the 'tree'. Instead of the tree—he flashes the sign in his head 'tree'. So in the future—he no longer flashes the sign—but the entire web-of-associations and differences in which tree-sign occurs as an item.

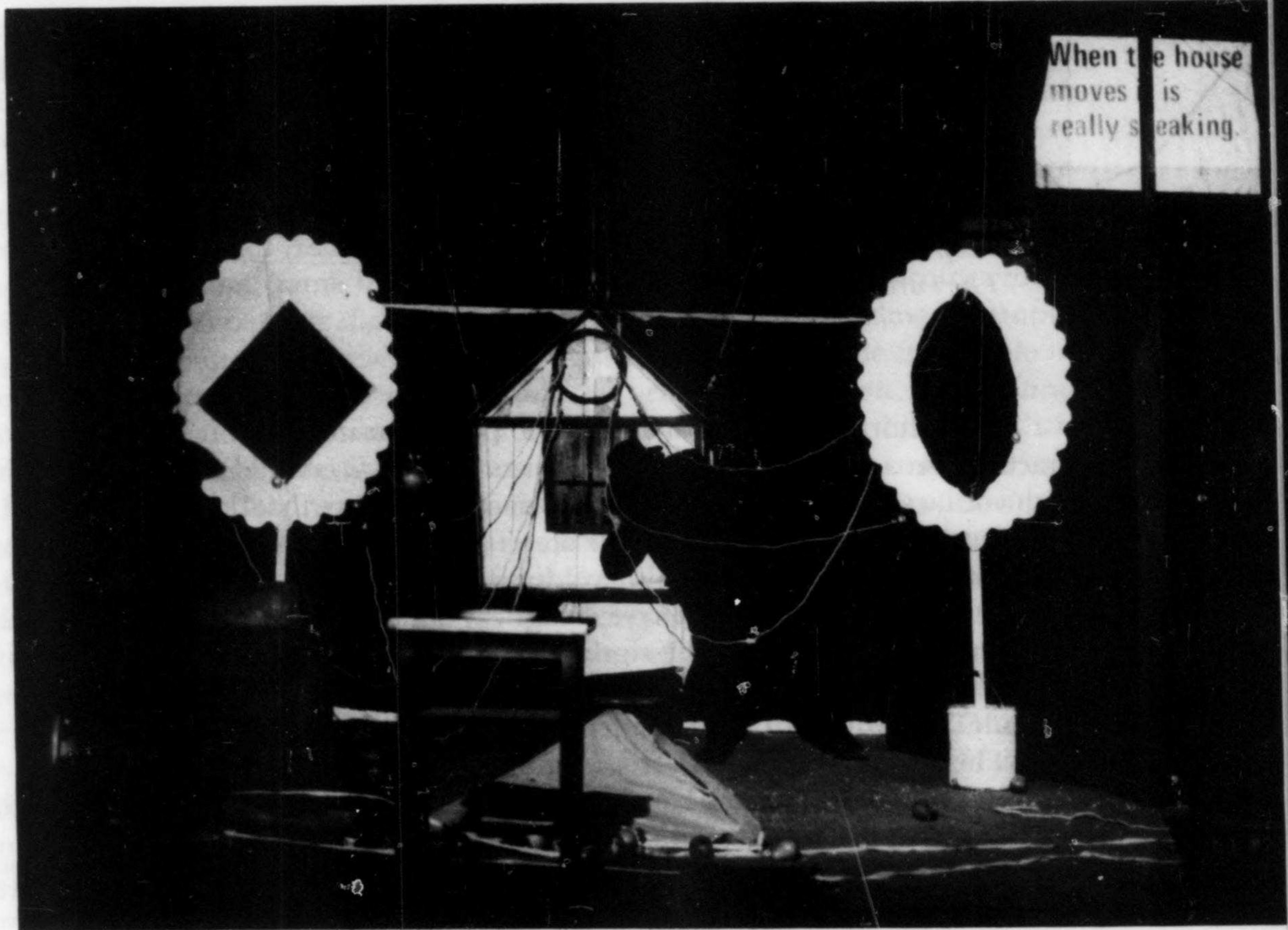
Then: thinking . . . as a sense. In the way that 'seeing' now mediates between man and experience—separates him from experience because it translates outside into inside—so thinking could be a similar translator . . . KNOW THAT, and make the ENJOYMENT of that be the art enjoyment. Because to separate himself from nature, and then from experience even . . . seems more and more to be man's destiny! Man is the abstracting animal. Keep going.

KEEP GOING!

New York, 1975

To the Bizarre  
Towards a Theory of  
Japanese Film

The first part of the book is devoted to a study of the Japanese film industry and its development. The author discusses the role of the film industry in Japanese society and the influence of Western cinema on Japanese film. He also examines the work of several Japanese filmmakers, including Yasujiro Ozu, Akira Kurosawa, and Mikoyuki Saito. The second part of the book is a study of the Japanese film industry in the post-war period. The author discusses the impact of the American occupation on the Japanese film industry and the role of the film industry in the reconstruction of Japanese society. He also examines the work of several Japanese filmmakers, including Akira Kurosawa, Mikoyuki Saito, and Yasujiro Ozu.



Richard Foreman. Hotel China. 1971. (Photo: Babette Mangolte.)

To the Distant Observer:  
Towards a Theory of  
Japanese Film

NOËL BURCH

*To the distant observer  
They are chatting of the blossoms  
Yet in spite of appearances  
Deep in their hearts,  
They are thinking very different thoughts*

Ki no Tsurayaki

Very shortly after film first began to be shown in Japan, it became common practice that a live commentator, known as the *benshi*, should accompany the film with vocal explanations. There is every reason to believe that this was not based on any simple calculation that "people aren't going to understand"; rather, it was an *historically determined* natural development. It was not, as has been suggested, because "the Japanese like to have things explained to them."<sup>1</sup> The assertion that "the Japanese like to have the signifier disjoined" may be scarcely more convincing; nevertheless it does point to the existence within Japan of a concept, a 'module', present in all human activity.

The *benshi* is not a bastard outgrowth of a specifically Japanese defect, or 'convention'<sup>2</sup> as it is likely to be called when it appears in the doll-theatre<sup>3</sup> and other

1. During the very first decade or so of film-making in France, England, America and elsewhere, when screenings were held mainly in an amusement park context, this practice also held sway, with the outside barker often stepping inside to continue his spiel. But as the mores of the bourgeois theatre took over, in the auditorium as well as on the screen, it gradually disappeared. If ever there were needed conclusive proof of the profound *otherness* of the Western primitive cinema by comparison with the standard post-Griffith product, this extraordinary brief encounter with the cinema of Japan provides it.

2. This word is often used to mask the ethnocentric repugnance for non-transparent representation: it implies that in the culture which produced the *sign*, it is read as fully transparent, "their representations are just like ours," basically everyone is like us; all have their conventions and all take them for 'the real thing'. But it is just possible that the audience at the *Bunraku* aren't crying over characters at all but over dolls.

3. The best descriptive analysis of the doll-theatre, known as *Bunraku*, is provided by Roland Barthes in *l'Empire des signes*, Geneva, Skira, 1970. This form of dramatic narrative is enacted by dolls "from three to six feet high, little men or women whose limbs, hands and mouths can move; each doll is manipulated by three men in full view (of the audience) who surround, support and accompany it . . . These men move about in a shallow pit which leaves their bodies visible . . . On one side there is a platform for musicians and narrators: their role is to *express* the text (as one squeezes juice from a piece of fruit). This text is half-spoken, half-sung."

approved cultural products. Neither is there anything intrinsically 'low' about the *kabuki*-derived genre called *chambera*<sup>4</sup> which, during the later part of the silent era (1920-1936), literally monopolized the screen. This ideological repression of *intertextual ramifications* of the two traditional arts in which the cinema of this early period is clearly rooted, is doubly significant. It reflects the onus traditionally attached to the Western cinema as a consequence of its theatrical beginnings: the sense of shame, not unrelated to the notion of Original Sin, which those beginnings continue to inspire in occidentals. However, we know that in fact these very origins—in theatre—provide the instrumentality of what we might call the camera 'stripped bare'. The camera's essential transformational powers (its production of meaning) are thereby *acknowledged*, since even filming the theatre stage as such (*i.e.* filming the entire proscenium) destroys the representational effect, *causes the image to appear as that of a stage*. The Lumières' belated attempts to give their production bourgeois status, as in *l'Assassinat de Marat* (1898)—were framed in such a way that proscenium arch and frame-lines coincide: the depersonalization becomes more radical here than ever, since the characters are tiny puppets, overwhelmed by empty height. This situation prevailed until a system emerged that made it possible to recover *the theatre's power of characterization, personalization, etc.*, via *editing* (reverse-field with eyeline match, *etc.*). For the development of this, Griffith is celebrated as the man who brought cinema out of the 'theatrical' stage. The so-called 'theatricality' of the earliest cinema is in many instances a rudimentary transformation of the illusionist theatre of that period into a prefiguration of Brecht's epic theatre. It is not surprising that this period of cinema should be, in Japan as in the West, the object of a systematic repression.

Analysis of prevailing attitudes towards the relations between the cinema and the popular theatre of Japan reveals a phenomenon that I shall term 'repression of the Japanese text'; the presupposition that Cinema is One, just as Man is One, that the Hollywood 'codes' are those of Cinema East and West, the Codes of Man! We consider an individual who plays on them, disrupts or subverts them, to be a genius—or a charlatan. But, anyone who simply ignores them, who pretends they don't exist, and wishes to preserve the cinema in the state which it knew before the coming of the Codes, who keeps on 'doing his thing' is either a fool or slightly backward. Yet this is exactly what Méliès and, to a large extent, Feuillade, were doing between 1910 and 1915, until the former had to abandon the cinema forever and the latter was condemned to making futile efforts to 'catch up'. It is what the whole of Japanese cinema did for some ten years after the start of the Griffith 'revolution' but also, to a surprising extent, throughout the 1920s! In contrast to the European situation, the 1920s do not seem to have been a very 'rich' period in Japanese cinema. It was this stubborn refusal to 'grow up' which nevertheless provided the condition for the remarkable preservation through the 1920s of several of the basic elements of the 'primitive' attitude, and which ultimately made possible

4. An onomatopoeia suggesting the clash of swords.

the remarkable developments of the 1930s. The *benshi* played an historically positive role in this period of tacit resistance.

The function, perhaps the need of the *benshi*, derived from the theatre of Edo and from the many solo narrative genres which abound in Japan. The first generation of *benshi* seem to have been predominantly composed of politically ambitious men intent on improving their oratory, or ex-street vendors seeking to rise in life.<sup>5</sup> The *benshi* soon became a public figure of considerable importance. In the late teens and early twenties, people went to the pictures to hear their favorite *benshi* rather than to see a particular movie star, and would call out his nick-name at the beginning of the performance in the manner of a *kabuki* audience. There is no evidence as to whether this was also done during the film; nor do we know how, if at all, it was related to the *benshi*'s delivery or to the music that accompanied him. These men, who are generally felt to have been of singularly modest intellectual capacities (at least until around 1919) seem to have acquired a considerable say in the actual *production* of films. If the finished work seemed in some way unsuitable to their talents, they demanded cuts, the shooting of new scenes; they wanted scenes lengthened to allow for development of their discourse (e.g. touching farewells). Above all, they fought bitterly against the introduction of new narrative structures such as the flashback. As may already be evident, however, the conservatism with which the *benshi* is traditionally taxed primarily reflects not only his efforts to save his means of livelihood but also a certain *mode of presentation* which incarnated the central artistic ideology of his class and nation. On the evidence of this limited data, we can concur with those who see the influence of the *benshi* as profound and diverse, without accepting the all-but unanimous opinion that his role was harmful, that he 'retarded' the growth of the Japanese cinema.<sup>6</sup>

Needless to say, the films of this earliest period had absolutely no intertitles (or 'spoken titles' as they were to be called in Japan when they were first introduced in the early 1920s), except for an occasional indication of the setting that was to follow or a title given to a section of the film. In the early days (roughly, until about 1912), the *benshi* not only supplied a voice for all the characters, but provided a running commentary on every detail of the image and action, often repeating himself in chanting patterns if he ran out of anything new to say. The style of many *benshi* was fairly straightforward, but some tried using the techniques of other narrative arts. And of course there was a musical accompaniment, consisting generally of a mixture of native Japanese instruments (shamisen, taiko, etc.) and such convenient European instruments as the violin. At the same time, and though admirers of the traditional occidental theatre may only

5. This and other information in this essay I owe to private conversations with the Japanese film scholar, Yoshida Tioe, who has published in Japanese a history of the *benshi* ("Katsuben no rekishi" in *Eigashi Kenkyun*, nos. 1 and 2, 1973). The rest of the information is from Donald Richie and Joseph Anderson, *The Japanese Film*, New York, Grove Press, 1960, unless otherwise stated.

6. The title of the second chapter of a recent, rather superficial history of Japanese cinema expresses this attitude: "Exit *Benshi*, Enter Beauty."

scoff at this degraded version of a sophisticated art, the effect described by Barthes as a fragmentation of the representational gesture *could not help but be produced*.

It would be naively ethnocentric of us to consider the *benshi* procedure as simply a "crude dubbing effect," a puerile attempt to "make the picture talk" before the advent of sound. For Japanese (as opposed to foreign) films, the time did come (in the 1920s) when several such speakers divided up the various roles. However, the desire for ever greater realism was certainly not as strong in the Japanese of the first quarter of the century as it was in the Western middle-class, for of course it was *they* who shunned the silent cinema and came in droves to the talkies, thereby determining the second and final stage of the process by which Western cinema was subordinated to middle-class ideology.

The key to these 'film performances'<sup>7</sup> is the fact that the image on the screen was purged of speech by the *benshi*, and to an almost equal degree, relieved of narrative burden. In this sense the Japanese silent film was the most silent of all, if by silence we mean, as most people do when they are talking about that film era, the absence of speech. Speech was indeed explicitly absent, since it was *removed*, put to one side. The Voice was there, but detached from the film itself, whose actors became all the more mute and were, moreover, in many instances, confined to remarkably static renderings of the scenes unfolding through the *voice*, much like the dolls of *Bunraku* or, to a lesser extent, the actors of *kabuki*.<sup>8</sup> And the 'transference' of the written word from its Western position 'between the pictures' to a 'libretto' on the *benshi's* lectern is as significant here as the analogous phenomenon in the doll-theatre. In the dominant Western cinema, the dialogue titles always made it clear that Speech, the Word, was an intangible, ineradicable presence *inside* the diageisis, that *printing* was merely its passive outward vehicle: this was implicit in the way in which the title demanded a momentary *suspension* of the images. It was isolated in a decorative frame, signifying the suspension not the acknowledgement of representation, with an 'infinite' black background, and was rarely, except in experiments such as l'Herbier's *l'Homme du large*, superinscribed on the picture, as it so often was in the Japanese films of the 1920s, a phenomenon we shall examine in the next section.

To return for a second to the 'libretto' just mentioned, it should be explained that it eventually came to exist only for the foreign films which, contrary to the Japanese product, did have intertitles . . . in their native language.<sup>9</sup> The *benshi*

7. Of course, they weren't really *film* performances at all, since often the *benshi* was felt to be the center of interest (though in practice it is probable that there was oscillation of that center between *benshi* and screen, as happens in the doll-theatre). It is this 'decentering' of the performance that most outrages the contemporary 'serious' film-goer, whose quasi-religious attitude towards the screen is epitomized in the pew-like seating architecture of the first Anthology Film Archive theatre in New York.

8. A film made in 1922, at the height of the *benshi's* popularity by Oboro Gengo, *Minin Shizuka* (*Two People Named Shizuka*), consists almost entirely of static conversations between seated figures and of course absolutely no intertitles other than 'chapter headings'.

9. Contrary to the practice among Western nations of supplying untitled prints and letting the distributors title them in the local tongue, Japan was supplied with *exhibition prints* prepared for the internal use of the exporting country.

was supposed to translate those titles in addition to giving his usual 'redundant' comments on the heroine's dress, the weather, *etc.*, but in actuality he often made up the lines entirely, and significantly enough, *even changed the narrative meaning of the images* at his pleasure. It is also said that the characters in foreign films were nearly always given the same names: Mary for the heroine, Jim for the hero and Robert for the villain.<sup>10</sup> Obviously, this practice may be seen as a deconstruction of the Hollywood film, read in terms of its stereotypical structure by a culture which *values* the stereotype. We may consider the entire *benshi's* discourse as a kind of *reading* of the images. It was the diagesis which was being 'read', and it was *designated* as diagesis, thereby ceasing to function as diagesis ('imaginary referent'), and instead becoming what it had in fact never ceased to be: *a field of signs*. The most 'transparently' representational film, whether Western or Japanese, could not be read as transparent by Japanese spectators, because it was already being read as such for them, and hence had irrevocably lost its transparency! This is a basic mutation, which we will discuss further in examining the role of the *benshi* during the twenties.

In conjunction with the metonymic dissociation effected by the *benshi*, it is necessary to mention a 'paradigmatic' dissociation which, although less extensively practised, is nonetheless highly symptomatic. It appears that in earliest years of film-showing, at least one exhibitor set up rows of seats in the rear of the auditorium *perpendicular to the screen* which allowed spectators who wished to do so *to watch the projection rather than the film*.<sup>11</sup> Together with the early practice of commencing every performance by a demonstration of the workings of the projector, this would seem to provide evidence that the cinema made its debut in Japan under the auspices of what we may call, again taking our cue from Barthes, the co-presentation of *effective gesture* and *effected gesture*.

By 1915 practices of this kind were anomalous in the cinema of the West. In the earliest period they were not. For several years the projector was in the auditorium, and due to the early absence of titles there was, briefly, a Western equivalent of the *benshi*. As well, the flicker effect, whose eradication coincided with the beginning of a veritable mutation in the modes of representation of Western cinema, was presumably present to a far more 'irritating' extent in Japanese cinema until around 1912. It seems to have persisted well into the 1920s for certain types of films. In Japan it was the practice to shoot at twelve frames per second rather than the sixteen to twenty frame average which was customary in the West. In Japan as in the West, the projector, like the camera, was hand-operated; it is probable that the projectionist varied the speed of the film as he did in the West, according to the nature of the action. Needless to say the flicker produced at such low speeds was one which had rapidly become intolerable in the West, impinging

10. Richie and Anderson, *The Japanese Film*, p. 25.

11. Richie and Anderson allude to this procedure (*The Japanese Film*, p. 24), and I owe some complementary information to a private conversation with Mr. Richie. The original source is Tanak Junichiro.

as it did upon the illusionist force of the filmic image.

The 'look' of the Japanese film during the period of the Western Primitives, was very close to that of the European film. It is with the beginning of the formative period in the West (ca. 1909) that differences began to appear,<sup>12</sup> since the Japanese continued along their original path. Japanese film-makers were quite aware of new developments in the Western cinema; Western films, after all, were shown in Japan with increasing frequency, and, according to Richie and Anderson,<sup>13</sup> Griffith's pioneering short films had already been seen there by 1913. The common assumption is that the Japanese directors paid no attention to these innovations from abroad and in consequence did not know how to use them. We have evidence that this was not the case. In this matter, too, we encounter the ethnocentrism of Western scholars, and we must also reckon with the unfortunate tendency among all but the youngest Japanese scholars to accept unquestioningly Western and 'Western-type' ideas and criteria regarding the cinema. Most Japanese, one feels, are unconsciously inclined to consider films as the 'natural property' of the West.

If we examine what may or may not be Shozo Makino's first full-length version of *Chushingura* (*The Forty-Seven Rônin*), (1913-1917),<sup>14</sup> we find that he "kept his camera running without interruption through an entire sequence and never moved it from its front-on angle of a spectator at a stage-play," and "completely ignored Griffith's editing concepts."<sup>15</sup> Except that he did not ignore them *completely*. There are, in fact, several match-cuts in this film<sup>16</sup> which show that Makino had mastered the technique of cutting on movement far better than Feuillade ever mastered it. Far better indeed, than *most* Western directors did until about 1915. In any case we need hardly dwell on the well-known rapidity with which the Japanese grasp new *techniques*. There are also lateral reframing pans which show that his cameraman was skilled in manipulating tripods that were every bit as manoeuvrable as Hollywood's (they might even have been American or French). There is a brief, but exemplary sequence, Lord Asano's attack on Kira, in punishment for which Asano will be sentenced to commit ritual suicide. This is the starting point for the whole saga of the Forty-Seven Rônin. It is immediately followed, during the period of 'shocked reaction', by a brief flurry of perfectly proper Griffithian editing, involving a rapid succession of medium close-ups in

12. The differences could be observed in Japan, not in the West. The first Japanese film to be shown (to non-Japanese audiences) in the West was Kinugasa's *Crossways* (1928).

13. Richie and Anderson, p. 32.

14. There is serious conflict as to the date of this film: Richie and Anderson give it as 1913, the catalogue of the Matsuda Film Library, where it is preserved, as 1917. I find the later date better substantiated by internal evidence, but in the event that the earlier were proved correct it would certainly give greater weight to the claim made here.

15. Richie and Anderson, p. 32.

16. The earliest 'theatrical production' that I have seen, Taikoki Judanme (ca. 1908, director unknown) also contains several perfectly smooth lateral and vertical pans serving to enlarge the fragment of a *kabuki* set used as the principal background.

reverse-field construction<sup>17</sup> introduced and terminated by a pair of match-cuts. The passage occurs very near the beginning of the film and, with the exception of a few more match-cuts deftly executed, such editing never recurs.<sup>18</sup> As later developments amply demonstrate, the Western codes had impinged upon Japanese perception but the Japanese were simply not interested in them *as a system*; they merely used them on occasion to produce special dramatic effects! The implications of this are clear. By 1913, certainly by 1917, the reverse field and match-cuts, the medium close-up, the cut on movement, were, in the United States and most of Europe, *banal devices*. They were not perceived as the signifiers of anything more strictly definable than 'continuity', 'contiguity', and the other basic semes of linear representation. Makino, in contrast, uses them as privileged dramatic signifiers, comparable to the *signs* used in Japanese theatre to displace the gesture of emotion (the *oyama* tugging at the sleeve of her kimono to signify weeping).

Such a reading of the Makino film would scarcely be conclusive were it not for the fact that throughout the 1920s and particularly during the later years, the Western codes were to be greeted in Japan with three distinct attitudes. The first of these was utter unconcern, shown by the rare but 'technically' correct introduction of Western editing devices either as privileged signifiers, as in the early instance just cited, or in a way which can only be described as *arbitrary*. The second response was the adaptation of devices to signification within a completely different and more 'open' code. The signifiers thus adopted were secondary, 'specialized' signifiers in their Western context, such as the swish-pan or dissolve. The third and rarest response was mastery and constant utilization of the codes according to the norms of Western practice; this seems to have been true of Ozu and Mizoguchi, whose earliest films have come down to us and who, by 1928, had nothing left to learn from Hollywood.

The overwhelming majority of films from this early period, then, drew their substance from the *kabuki* repertoire, or from the repertoires of its derivatives *shimpa* and *shin-kabuki*. If scholars dispute the importance of *kabuki*'s 'influence' on the Japanese cinema,<sup>19</sup> this is due to a misunderstanding about the nature of influences. This is a matter which could be clarified only through a reconstruction of the historical role of the *benshi* during the 1920s, and a definition of the most general relationships of the whole of Japanese theatre to the cinema. But in this early period, there can be absolutely no doubt that the pertinent *visual* traits of *kabuki* appear constantly on the screen as a surrogate of that presentational

17. I use the term reverse field in this historical context to designate generally the contiguity cut involving eye-line matching. It was not until the early 1920s in the West that the reverse field as we understand it today (exchange of eye-lines directed towards the camera) was added to the illusionist edifice, in fact became its visual keystone.

18. Even if the film is a compilation (such as were often presented immediately after the Pacific War), at one specific point in his early career, Makino did film this long sequence consisting of two typically 'primitive' shots, interrupted by this brief 'flurry' of editing. The perfection of the matching (movement, costumes, lighting, make-up, sets, emulsion quality, *etc.*) excludes the possibility that these shots were added afterwards by the hypothetical compiler or even by Makino himself.

19. Donald Richie feels that it was insignificant, while Iwamoto Keiji holds the opposite view.

character defined by Earle Darnst as common to all Japanese theatre.<sup>20</sup> They helped to guarantee the Japanese cinema against the ideology of 'realism' which was then taking over Western cinema. The stylized fighting sequences in which no actual blows are exchanged, the use of the backward somersault signifying the 'death' of a fighter, the translation into Méliès-like 'special effects' of the transformational machinery of *kabuki*, and, above all, the 'action-stopping' *mie*, or *tableau-vivant*<sup>21</sup> which in Makino's early *Chushingura* terminates most of the scenes, are clear 'distancing' devices which need no special elucidation. Less self-evident, perhaps, is the even greater importance of the use in film of traditional theatrical make-up and its corollary, the *oyama* (the male actor who plays female roles).

It is not surprising that one of the great 'battles' fought during the second and third decades of the century, at the beginning of the movement to import the Hollywood codes, concerned the attempt to eliminate the *oyama* from films. His presence was absolutely inimical to those codes whose goal may be schematically summarized in terms of the 'psychological depth' of the image, and the fusion of the narrative with a 'real world' in which "women are women" and "men are men." As for the theatrical make-up which remained customary in *chambera* until the mid-1920s, it was of course in complete contrast with that of the West. Although visible as such until about the same period, make-up in Western film was designed to heighten the expressiveness of the face, which was felt to be diminished by the absence of words, of three-dimensionality, and of color. *Kabuki* make-up, on the other hand, is purely graphic; it reduces the face's expressiveness as well as its singularity.

One of the aspects of Makino's early *Chushingura* that strikes the modern viewer as most significant is the fact that the super-star, Matsunosuke, plays at least three different roles (and possibly one of the *oyama*). He is first seen as Lord Asano. After the latter's forced suicide, he acts Oishi, his principal retainer and organizer of the Rônin's vendetta against Kira. Finally, during the vendetta (in which in this version, Oishi does not participate), he plays Kira's principal body-guard. This practice also derives from *kabuki*, in which certain plays call explicitly for double roles, and spectacular stage-business is derived from the possibilities thus created.<sup>22</sup> Its preservation in films, especially *without any change*

20. That is until the advent in 1906 of *shingeki*, the first 'reasonable facsimile' in Japan of Western theatre, and which was to play its role in the cinema when the Western codes were introduced in the 1920s.

21. It is interesting to compare this *kabuki*-derived practice with a similar device used by Griffith in one of the films of his crucial early period, *A Corner in Wheat*. The characters are all shown in a frozen *tableau vivant* between two black-outs in a device clearly derived from the vaudeville and melodrama stages where it had, as in the film, a function diametrically opposed to that of the *mie*: it introduced into a 'life-like' context a 'symbolic', 'allegorical' gesture designed to generalize the meaning of the play/film. Nothing could be further from the *mie* which functions as the quintessence of the presentational attitude and has absolutely no 'expressive' role whatever.

22. The heroine and one of the male principals in *Takaido Yousuya Kaidan* (1825) are played by the same actor, which allows for the presentation in rapid succession of their dead bodies on opposite sides of a door floating down the river in one of the play's most famous scenes (it is to be seen in Mizoguchi's masterpiece, *Zangiku Monogatari*).

of *make-up* (as was the case, not only in Makino's early *Chushingura*, but, I am told, in many other films up through the mid-twenties) implied, of course, the audience's perfect familiarity with every detail of a story like *Chushingura*. It also required the presence of the *benshi* in the theatre to identify the successive characters for any members of the audience whose memory might be deficient. The *benshi*'s task was not to 'restore' to the image some virtual reality, which had been garbled by an unfortunate effect of the star-system, but simply to name the roles which were quite unmistakably, avowedly being played by one and the same actor, by Matsunosuke. Once again the *benshi* was part of a fragmentation of the signifier.<sup>23</sup>

We find the most remarkable instance of metonymic disjunction in early Japanese film in a genre known as *rensa-geki* (chain-theatre), which presented *shimpa* pieces in which the interior scenes were performed by live actors on stage whilst the exteriors were performed by the same actors on a motion picture screen. Though the filmed sections of one or two of these pieces have survived (in the Matsuda collection) we have only scant accounts of the actual nature of the full performances. The most remarkable quality of *rensa-geki*, however, was its long life (eighteen years, 1904-1922); similar attempts at *mixed media performances* were made in the West, within the period we call Primitive (here again the encounter with the contemporary avant-garde is striking). An acrobat from Jean Durand's troop of "Pouittes" opened a roof trap-door (on film) and clambered down a ladder onto the actual stage of the Gaumont Palace. In Australia, one of the world's earliest feature-length audio-visual productions (staged, ca. 1906 by the Salvation Army, was a mixture of film, lantern-slide and scenic tableaux. All of these were short-lived. Their discontinuous structure was incompatible with the unity of the 'illusionist' system.

In this connection, one should also cite, in the early version of *Chushingura*, and in many other films of the late twenties, the juxtaposition of tableaux representing out-of-door scenes by ostentatiously painted backdrops, with other scenes actually shot on location. These often involved the *papier-maché* props of the theatre. A striking example is to be seen in a Porter film, *Saved from the Eagle's Nest* (1906), involving a 'close' contiguity cut from a location shot to a reconstruction of the same setting; but this practice of mixing obvious studio shots with location shots had long since disappeared from the Western cinema, since it was quickly seen as a hindrance to *credibility*.

It is but one step from this evocation of the use of backdrops in the early films to the vital problem of the representation of space as practised in *Chushingura* and in most other films of this period. This is a matter of far-reaching implications; it raises the problem of illusionist depth, in both a literal and a

23. Of course, the hypothesis that this is a composite film might modify the reading of such a practice. I have been assured (by Sato Tadao) that this was indeed a general practice at the time. Moreover, Japanese audiences did at one time or another see and presumably 'accept' the 'feature' version which I have seen . . . and the relation of the *benshi* to the film was inevitably as I describe it.

figurative sense of the word. For the moment, however, one might observe that the flatness derived from the *kabuki* and doll-theatre stages seems to have been the general rule<sup>24</sup> in the early films; it is a trait which lasted late into the twenties, and left an indelible mark on the films of some of the masters of the next decade. The same is true of the most striking compositional feature of these early films: the amount of 'empty space' left above the characters' heads, due to the simple fact that most of the time they are sitting on the floor. No effort is made to 'compensate' for this, whereas it would automatically have been made in 'advanced' Western films from about 1912 on. The 'decentering' which was one of the principal traits of Western Primitive cinema was preserved in Japan for many decades and may still be seen to this day. Just as Japan has acted as the custodian of much ancient Chinese culture that has been lost in the vicissitudes of her great neighbor's history, she is also the 'store house' of the primitive modes of filmic production.

It is possible to detect, during this early period, signs of the problem also elicited by the camera's 'realist vocation', *i.e.* its faculty for recording facsimile representations of actuality. The pressure exerted by the 'Westernness' of the machine is of course implicit in the use made of the camera in *rensa-geki*. Perhaps more significant are the subtle changes which that realist pressure brought about in the techniques of *kabuki* as these were transferred to the screen. One such example is to be seen in the very early *Taikoki Judanme* (ca. 1908): it is part of *kabuki* practice that whenever an important property has ceased to serve an active purpose on stage it is removed by one of the black-clad stage assistants (*kurombo*). In *Taikoki Judanme*, the hero at one point lays his bowl-shaped straw hat on the ground. In a live performance, it would have been deftly carried off by an 'invisible' stage assistant; here, however, it is whisked out of shot at the end of an invisible thread. I have, in fact, never seen a silent film in which the stage assistants appear. Considering the degrees of theatrical artifice which survived 'naturally' in the Japanese cinema for so long, it is difficult to understand why this particular practice should have been so systematically excluded. It can be seen as a first (perhaps the first) effect of Western attitudes defining the cinema as more realistic than the stage, inaugurating a conflict which was to persist throughout the next two decades and which was to determine the entire course of Japanese cinema. It is to the development of that conflict that we must now turn.

We know that the modes of representation of volume and depth as developed in the visual arts of the West between the 13th and 15th centuries provided them

24. A Makino film entitled *Jirai-ya (Thunder Boy)*, a good example of the Méliès-like trick films which were his speciality, involves a considerable amount of axial movement in location sequences, which shows that he, at least was not insensitive to this lesson of Western cinema. However, the date assigned to this film in the Matsuda catalogue—1914—seems very unlikely (in many other ways, the film seems more Westernized than *Chushingura*) so that it is difficult to know how important this example was. In any case, axial movement did not become common in the Japanese films, so far as I have been able to ascertain, until the late twenties, one of the earliest examples I know being Makino's last version of *Chushingura* (1927).

with a fresh point of departure. We know, as well, that the increasingly systematized realism implicit in post-Renaissance art became inseparable from the tenets of bourgeois ideology. Therefore, one of the first obligations felt by those who subsequently undertook to codify the modes of filmic representation was to implement a filmic response to that ideologically motivated need for the rendering of depth.<sup>25</sup> Setting aside the complex, though ultimately trivial, problems of 3-D, 'total cinema', etc., it may be said that by the time the illusionist codes had been perfected, thanks to the establishment of the enveloping reverse field, the cinema had succeeded in acquiring the illusionist strategies of painting, sculpture, theatre and literature in the 19th century.

To the contrary, the general lack of concern with visual depth in the arts of the East and particularly those of Japan (*e-makimono*, Muramachi screens, *ukiyo-e*; *nô*, *kabuki*, doll-theatre), were preserved in cinema long after the 'laws'<sup>26</sup> of depth-representation by the camera were established in the West. The acknowledgement of the pictorial surface in Japanese painting and the tendency of Japanese poetry to focus the reader's awareness on its *material and textual surfaces* may be correlated with the two-fold matrix, visual and dramaturgical, which was imposed upon the cinematograph in the West during its formative period. As we have already noted, some of the major efforts to set the Hollywood system at a critical distance (Godard, Dreyer's *Gertrud*, Michael Snow) have been directed against its modes of depth representation. The very first film to undertake such a task, *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, returns to the flat frontality of the Primitive cinema and a sophisticated use of the surface/depth and materiality/transparency dichotomies. In *Caligari*, strategies of relief (oblique trajectories, perspectival convergence) are introduced with a pictorial system whose painterly flatness contradicts and in fact *explodes* those conventions which had by 1919 been developed to an unprecedented degree of efficiency in the cinema of the West.

The flattening of the image in the work of, say, Ozu after 1933, may legitimately be regarded as a deliberate 'throw-back', comparable to the strategy of *Caligari*. The persistence of *primitive flatness* in so many Japanese films during the 1920s is to some extent 'accidental': it was a collective phenomenon and came about through the interaction of Western editing methods and traditional Japanese architecture. Yet insofar as it was overdetermined by the general 'surface orientation' of the arts of Japan, especially by her architecture, it was, of course, no accident at all.

25. It is not true that the machine itself, the camera, 'produced' from its very inception a linear perspective in happy conformity with the needs of that bourgeoisie whose science had produced the machine. This is amply demonstrated by the history of the early cinema, the patent flatness of 'Primitive space', and the developments which gave the depth-producing strategies the status of a system.

26. I have already referred to the hard and fast 'film-school' ban on filming a wall at right-angles. One might add the even more stringent rules against 'zooming' in such a position. These laws also include the complex codes manipulated by the lighting cameraman and set-designer, directly derived from the principles of post-Renaissance perspective, and most important of all perhaps, the elementary but crucial rules of eye-line matching.

When, as happened with increasing frequency, the traditionally minded Japanese director of the 1920s began moving his camera in for medium and close shots, he felt no need whatever to modify the 90° angle of camera to background. (I am referring, of course, primarily to interior sequences or to exteriors involving architectural planes.) This practice continued to prevail in the Japanese approach to the master shot, as it had during the long period when sequence and master shot had remained entirely coextensive. The significant absence of furniture in the Japanese interior, the comprehensive articulation of every surface area in terms of asymmetrically disposed *rectangles* (the purest expression of the concept of two-dimensionality), mechanically precluded the issue of illusionistic depth from the 'situation shot'. The Japanese presumably felt that the introduction of depth in the inserted close-ups, as these came into use (by shooting them at angles oblique to the wall plane), was an unnecessary departure from a traditional mode, the introduction of an alien vision. This resistance to a key element of Western illusionism suggests something other than a passive traditionalism; rather, it corresponds to an essential, *active* component of the Japanese attitude towards representation. Compare it, for example, with those uniquely Japanese picture gardens, which are laid out in such a way as to be visible only from a single vantage point and *to create the illusion of flatness in a three-dimensional context*:

A wall of plaster or board generally enclosed three sides of the plot: within this frame, the gardener 'painted' a picture, using stones for brushstrokes . . . To compensate for the distortion brought about by having the 'picture plane' stretch away from the observer along the ground, predominantly vertical shapes were grouped at the rear and the ground itself was often pitched downward imperceptibly toward the veranda, from which the garden is seen. At *Daitokuji* temple, in the garden of *Diansen-in*, . . . there is a white plaster wall, now half-hidden, that once carried the tone of the sand-strewn ground up behind all the clipped shrubs, thus flattening onto an imaginary picture plane objects in reality some distance from each other.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time, as a supreme sophistication, the graphic techniques of Chinese perspective were reintroduced, as it were, into the flattened 'picture plane' to indicate a scale many times that of the actual garden: "At *Daisen-in* too . . . because the waterfall is supposed to be at a great distance away, the trees behind it are smoothly clipped: the stone bridge, which indicates the middle distance is much larger in scale, and trees in the foreground, also larger in scale, are left untrimmed so that they may have the detail one expects near at hand."<sup>28</sup> This apparent commingling of Japanese and Chinese modes of representation is an exemplary result of such 'borrowings', a further refinement and radicalization of the dominant element in this union; the Japanese *system* which we have already

27. Arthur Drexler, *The Architecture of Japan*, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1955, p. 176.

28. Drexler, p. 179.

seen at work in so many areas is that 'system of surfaces' which pervades Japanese thought and life.

As previously mentioned, aspects of Japanese architecture that might have contributed to a 'Westernization' of the Japanese approach to pro-filmic space, seem to have been almost systematically neglected by most film-makers until the very late twenties. One notes, particularly, the neglect of those successions of communicating rooms, which in the future were to play such an important role in developing a sophisticated manipulation of ambiguous depth/surface relationships. A noteworthy exception to this rule is Makino's final version of *Chushingura* of 1927. Besides its spectacular finales, *Chushingura* contains numerous, briefer instances of oblique 'deep focus' shots, especially in the opening sequence, which are evocative of Mizoguchi's masterpiece. Apart from this film, the very exceptional work of Kinugasa and the films of Futagawa Montabo (the epitome of the academic neo-Western director), the depth potential of Japanese architecture is neglected in all of the other films of the 1920s that I have seen.

There is a small but significant point of interest in this negative trait. Many of these films attest to a sense of the possibilities of the *shoji* (sliding partition) in a manner suggestive of the *kabuki* stage and of the spatio-dramaturgical subtleties to come. Whereas in later years, the *shoji* would be used to reveal depth suddenly (either within the complex systems of Ozu and Mizoguchi or the Western-style deep-focus blocking of, say, Ichikawa), during this period it functioned within the system of flat frontality we've been discussing: when a *shoji* fills the frame at the beginning of a shot (less significant as 'door' than as detail of the general rectangular pattern), then opens to reveal a character about to enter a room, the knowledge of depth revealed by such an action is contradicted by the head-on, rectangular flatness of the final image, with its neutral, 'distanceless' background behind the human figure framed in the opening. An *expectation* of depth is met by flatness.<sup>29</sup> This flattening effect is directly related to a procedure employed in *kabuki*'s on-stage interior sets: a sliding partition is drawn back by an unseen hand to reveal a character or scene hitherto off-stage, adding another panel, as it were, to the picture plane of the acting area.<sup>30</sup> Often in these early films, but also in later ones, the composition of the shot is such that the opener's hand is indeed invisible. In the films of the 1920s this type of entry soon became standard procedure, along with the complementary mode of exit. In each instance, the shot either began or ended with an 'empty frame' as the camera focused on the austere rectangles of the exposed wooden ribbing. The 'wipe' effect by which characters thus appeared or disappeared was a chief factor in confining the image to the two-

29. Such *strategies of disappointment*, characteristic of so much advanced Western art are also related on a more general plane, to another aspect of Japanese garden art: the 'walking garden', arranged in such a way that only small fragments are visible at any one time and never 'clearly' (cf. Gardens of the Katsura Rikyu, Kyoto).

30. And it is remarkable that, as with all the stage effects of *kabuki*, this device is not used to heighten the illusion of reality but on the contrary to 'distance' the action even further, since in 'reality' this door would be opened by the actor behind it.

dimensional screen surface. Kurosawa's systematic use of the hard-edge wipe is a significant echo of this practice.

The acknowledgement of the surface is most strikingly and significantly exemplified in Japanese films of the silent era's last decade by the practice of *superinscription*, which seems to have spread with the development of titling itself. It became common for the so-called spoken titles to 'overlap' the image which preceded and/or followed them, and for explanatory titles to overlap the 'establishment shots' at the beginning of certain sequences. In Makino's 1927 *Chushingura*, when a bonze-in-waiting (*chabosu*) warns Lord Asano that the all-important ceremony has begun without him, an allusive cutaway to the ceremony in progress serves as background for the bonze's superinscribed speech. Later, immediately after the assault on Kira, a 'voice' calls the bonzes to assemble in titles which appear in the center of a long shot of the scene, and which, by an animation effect, increase in size as they advance towards the spectator. This grossly 'expressive' device produces an effect of volume, but it is *on the near side of the screen*, as it were, in a space which is not that of the diagesis.<sup>31</sup>

In Inagaki's *Mabuta noHaha*, the hero's challenging shout, uttered during the rescue of an ally, 'echoes across the valley', in the form of exclamations superinscribed on the pan shot of a landscape inserted into the editing scheme. In Fuyushima Taizo's *Toribeyama Shinju (Double Suicide at Toribeyama)*, (1928), the cry for help of a young woman tied up in a closet is superinscribed on a fragment of the design painted on the closet door, offering a doubly inscribed surface. One of the loveliest examples of this practice is found in a very late silent film by a famous director of the next decade, Goshō Heinosuke, one of the Japanese to master the Western codes of editing and to exploit them unstintingly throughout his career (within a narrative framework correctly regarded as truly 'Japanese'). Goshō's *Izu no odoriko (The Dancing Girl from Izu)*, (1934), tells of the travels of a group of entertainers making their way to Izu, the traditional seaside gathering place of their trade. A medium shot showing the group's arrival in the fishing village is overlaid by an extensive 'extra-diagetic' title giving particulars of the tradition which brings them here. Later, as the brother of the female lead holds her in his arms to comfort her over the loss of the student who had been sharing their travels but has now gone his way, the embracing figures are shown framed in a doorway at the end of a corridor, and the image is overlaid by a *tanka* related to the film's theme and mood. This shot does *not* mark the end of the film. It is a composed image, in which one of the depth-producing strategies—by then commonplace in the Japanese cinema—is accompanied by superinscription, and is typical of the continuing acknowledgement of surface, however incidentally, in Japanese film.

31. Superinscription was used in only a few European experiments, such as *l'Homme du large* partly because Western films, unlike those of Japan, were to be shown to audiences in many different countries. This consideration does not diminish the significance of this remarkably widespread practice in Japan.

Even today, this relative indifference towards one of the vital premises of Western illusionism is instanced daily on commercial television channels, since at any moment, in the midst of the most thoroughly encoded gangster serial or samurai drama, large, often ingeniously animated characters may invade the lower portion of the screen to remind us of the merits of a deodorant or a Korean barbecue house. The procedure of superinscription, already evoked in connection with the mirrors of Heian-kyo and the role of calligraphy in painting, provides us with a remarkably enduring instance of the manner in which the notion of *surface* and *writing* reveal their essential affinity within the text which is Japan.

Paris, 1975

## The Giant on Giant-Killing

RICHARD HOWARD

*Homage to the bronze David  
of Donatello, 1430*

I am from Gath where my name  
in Assyrian means *destroyer*, a household word  
by now, and deservedly. Every household needs  
a word for destroyer—nothing secret in the fact,  
nothing disgraceful about a universal need—  
and my name is a good word.

Try the syllables on your own tongue, say *Goliath*.  
It sounds right, doesn't it—powerful and Phillistine  
and destructive, somehow. It always sounded like that  
to me. *Goliath!* I shouted, and the sun would break  
in pieces on my armor.

The world, as far as I could see, was the sun breaking  
on things, making them break. So I was hardly surprised  
when the world came to an end because the sun broke *through*:  
no pieces, unbroken, whole—no longer flash but flesh.

The end came as a body.

You see, I am past the end, or I could not know it:  
look at my face under his left foot and you *will* see,  
look at my mouth—is that the mouth of a man surprised  
by the end of the world? Notice the way my moustache turns  
over his triumphant toe

(a kind of caress, and not the only one), notice  
my full lips softened into a little smile. You see:  
the triumph is mine, whatever the tale. And the scene  
on my helmet tells the true story: a chariot,  
eight naked boys, wingèd ones,  
and the wine, the mirror, the parasol—my triumph  
inherits me. He holds my sword. He is what I see,

that is why you see him: the naked boy without wings.  
There is a wing, but it happens to be my helmet's  
and inches up the inside  
of his right thigh stiffening to allow the feathers  
an overture, covertly spread, to that focus where  
nothing resembles a hollow so much as a swelling.  
*That* focus?—those. Find one place on his fertile torso  
where your fingers cannot feed,  
one interval to which all the others fail to pay  
their respects, even as they take the light, the shadows.  
It is why the sun broke through me that morning—no stone  
could lay Goliath low. See it still in the boy's hand?  
No need for a stone! My eyes  
were my only enemy, my only weapon too,  
and fell upon David like a sword. The body is  
what is eternal; the rest—boots, hat ribboned and wreathed,  
even the coarse, boy's hair that has not once been cut—  
a brevity, accidents,  
though it is no accident when it is all you have.  
Almost I think his face too is an accident, dim  
under the long pointed brim. Call it an absence then,  
an absence where life is refreshed and comforted  
while the body has its way:  
a presence, a proof emptied of past and future, drained  
of obligations pending. Climb across the belly,  
up the insolent haunches from which the buttocks are  
slung (there, that is the boy's sling), scan the rhyming  
landscape of the waist between  
the simple nipples arched by his simpler, supple arms—  
even the vulnerable shoulderblades, the vain wrists  
are present but not the face, not David's mouth that is  
the curved weapon used to kill a smile. And the carved eyes,  
what are they seeing? Only  
the body sees, the eyes look neither down at me nor  
out at you. They look away, for they cannot acquit  
what is there: the eyes know what the body will become.  
It is why they are absent, not blind like mine, not blank  
as iridescent agates.  
They see the white colossus which in eighty years will come,

unwelcome: marble assertion of a will to wound  
against which no man or music can survive. It is  
what giant-killers must become. Michelangelo . . .

They become giants: no head  
of Goliath kisses those unsolicited feet,  
no one is there . . . Yes, I go, I have gone already.  
I would rather mourn my going than mourn my David.  
I am the man Goliath, and my name in Israel

is also a household word,  
every household needs the word—perhaps there *is* a shame  
in that, a secret about such universal need—  
but it is a good word, my name; try it on your own  
tongue, savor the hard syllables, say *Goliath*  
which in Hebrew means *exile*.



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*Vito Acco*

## Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism

ROSALIND KRAUSS

It was a commonplace of criticism in the 1960s that a strict application of symmetry allowed a painter "to point to the center of the canvas" and, in so doing, to invoke the internal structure of the picture-object. Thus "pointing to the center" was made to serve as one of the many blocks in that intricately constructed arch by which the criticism of the last decade sought to connect art to ethics through the "aesthetics of acknowledgement." But what does it mean to point to the center of a t.v. screen?

In a way that is surely conditioned by the attitudes of Pop Art, artists' video is largely involved in parodying the critical terms of abstraction. Thus when Vito Acconci makes a video tape called *Centers* (1971), what he does is literalize the critical notion of 'pointing' by filming himself pointing to the center of a television monitor, a gesture he sustains for the 20-minute running time of the work. The parodistic quality of Acconci's gesture, with its obvious debt to Duchampian irony, is clearly intended to disrupt and dispense with an entire critical tradition. It is meant to render nonsensical a critical engagement with the formal properties of a work, or indeed, a genre of works—such as 'video'. The kind of criticism *Centers* attacks is obviously one that takes seriously the formal qualities of a work, or tries to assay the particular logic of a given medium. And yet, by its very *mis-en-scène*, *Centers* typifies the structural characteristics of the video medium. For *Centers* was made by Acconci's using the video monitor as a mirror. As we look at the artist sighting along his outstretched arm and forefinger towards the center of the screen we are watching, what we see is a sustained tautology: a line of sight that begins at Acconci's plane of vision and ends at the eyes of his projected double. In that image of self-regard is configured a narcissism so endemic to works of video that I find myself wanting to generalize it as *the* condition of the entire genre. Yet, what would it mean to say, "The medium of video is narcissism?"

For one thing, that remark tends to open up a rift between the nature of video and that of the other visual arts. Because that statement describes a psychological rather than a physical condition; and while we are accustomed to thinking of psychological states as the possible subject of works of art, we do not think of

psychology as constituting their medium. Rather, the medium of painting, sculpture or film has much more to do with the objective, material factors specific to a particular form: pigment-bearing surfaces; matter extended through space; light projected through a moving strip of celluloid. That is, the notion of a medium contains the concept of an object-state, separate from the artist's own being, through which his intentions must pass.

Video depends—in order for anything to be experienced at all—on a set of physical mechanisms. So perhaps it would be easiest to say that this apparatus—both at its present and future levels of technology—comprises the television medium, and leave it at that. Yet with the subject of video, the ease of defining it in terms of its machinery does not seem to coincide with accuracy; and my own experience of video keeps urging me towards the psychological model.

Everyday speech contains an example of the word 'medium' used in a psychological sense; the uncommon terrain for that common-enough usage is the world of parapsychology: telepathy, extra-sensory-perception, and communication with an after-life, for which people with certain kinds of psychic powers are understood to be Mediums. Whether or not we give credence to the fact of mediumistic experience, we understand the referents for the language that describes it. We know, for instance, that configured within the parapsychological sense of the word 'medium' is the image of a human receiver (and sender) of communications arising from an invisible source. Further, this term contains the notion that the human conduit exists in a particular relation to the message, which is one of temporal concurrence. Thus, when Freud lectures on the phenomenon of telepathic dreams, he tells his audience that the fact insisted upon by reports of such matters is that the dreams occur at the *same time* as the actual (but invariably distant) event.

Now these are the two features of the everyday use of 'medium' that are suggestive for a discussion of video: the simultaneous reception and projection of an image; and the human psyche used as a conduit. Because most of the work produced over the very short span of video art's existence has used the human body as its central instrument. In the case of work on tape this has most often been the body of the artist-practitioner. In the case of video installations, it has usually been the body of the responding viewer. And no matter whose body has been selected for the occasion, there is a further condition which is always present. Unlike the other visual arts, video is capable of recording and transmitting at the same time—producing instant feedback. The body is therefore as it were centered between two machines that are the opening and closing of a parenthesis. The first of these is the camera; the second is the monitor, which re-projects the performer's image with the immediacy of a mirror.

The effects of this centering are multiple. And nowhere are they more clearly named than in a tape made by Richard Serra, with the help of Nancy Holt, who made herself its willing and eloquent subject. The tape is called *Boomerang* (1974), and its situation is a recording studio in which Holt sits in a tightly framed close-up

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wearing a technician's headset. As Holt begins to talk her words are fed back to her through the earphones she wears. Because the apparatus is attached to a recording instrument, there is a slight delay (of less than a second) between her actual locution and the audio-feedback to which she is forced to listen. For the ten minutes of the tape, Holt describes her situation. She speaks of the way the feedback interferes with her normal thought process and of the confusion caused by the lack of synchronism between her speech and what she hears of it. "Sometimes," she says, "I find I can't quite say a word because I hear a first part come back and I forget the second part, or my head is stimulated in a new direction by the first half of the word."

As we hear Holt speak and listen to that delayed voice echoing in her ears, we are witness to an extraordinary image of distraction. Because the audio delay keeps hypostatizing her words, she has great difficulty coinciding with herself as a subject. It is a situation, she says, that "puts a distance between the words and their apprehension—their comprehension," a situation that is "like a mirror-reflection . . . so that I am surrounded by me and my mind surrounds me . . . there is no escape."

The prison Holt both describes and enacts, from which there is no escape, could be called the prison of a collapsed present, that is, a present time which is completely severed from a sense of its own past. We get some feeling for what it is like to be stuck in that present when Holt at one point says, "I'm throwing things out in the world and they are boomeranging back . . . boomeranging . . . eranging-ing . . . anginging." Through that distracted reverberation of a single word—and even word-fragment—there forms an image of what it is like to be totally cut-off from history, even, in this case, the immediate history of the sentence one has just spoken. Another word for that history from which Holt feels herself to be disconnected is 'text'.

Most conventional performers are of course enacting or interpreting a text, whether that is a fixed choreography, a written script, a musical score, or a sketchy set of notes around which to improvise. By the very fact of that relationship, the performance ties itself to the fact of something that existed before the given moment. Most immediately, this sense of something having come before refers to the specific text for the performance at hand. But in a larger way it evokes the more general historical relationship between a specific text and the history constructed by all the texts of a given genre. Independent of the gesture made within the present, this larger history is the source of meaning for that gesture. What Holt is describing in *Boomerang* is a situation in which the action of the mirror-reflection (which is auditory in this case) severs her from a sense of text: from the prior words she has spoken; from the way language connects her both to her own past and to a world of objects. What she comes to is a space where, as she says, "I am surrounded by me."

Self-encapsulation—the body or psyche as its own surround—is everywhere to be found in the corpus of video art. Acconci's *Centers* is one instance, another is his *Air Time* of 1973. In *Air Time* Acconci sits between the video camera and a large

mirror which he faces. For thirty-five minutes he addresses his own reflection with a monologue in which the terms "I" and "you"—although they are presumed to be referring to himself and an absent lover—are markers of the autonomous intercourse between Acconci and his own image. Both *Centers* and *Air Time* construct a situation of spatial closure, promoting a condition of self-reflection. The response of the performer is to a continually renewed image of himself. This image, supplanting the consciousness of anything prior to it, becomes the unchanging text of the performer. Skewered on his own reflection, he is committed to the text of perpetuating that image. So the temporal concomitant of this situation is, like the echo-effect of *Boomerang*, the sense of a collapsed present.

Bruce Nauman's tapes are another example of the double effect of the

*Vito Acconci. Air Time. 1973.*



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performance-for-the monitor. In *Revolving Upside Down* (1968), Nauman films himself through a camera that has been rotated so that the floor on which he stands is at the top of the screen. For sixty very long minutes, Nauman slowly moves, turning on one foot, from the depths of his studio forward towards the monitor and then back again, repeating this activity until the tape runs out.

In Lynda Benglis's *Now*, there is a similar leveling out of the effects of temporality. The tape is of Benglis's head in profile, performing against the backdrop of a large monitor on which an earlier tape of herself doing the same actions, but reversed left and right, is being replayed. The two profiles, one 'live' the other taped, move in mirrored synchrony with one another. As they do, Benglis's two profiles perform an auto-erotic coupling, which, because it is being recorded, becomes the background for another generation of the same activity. Through this spiral of infinite regress, as the face merges with the double and triple re-projections of itself merging with itself, Benglis's voice is heard either issuing the command "Now!" or asking "Is it now?" Clearly, Benglis is using the word "now" to underline the ambiguity of temporal reference: we realize that we do not know whether the sound of the voice is coming from the live or the taped source, and if from the latter, which level of taping. Just as we also realize that because of the activity of replaying the past generations, all layers of the "now" are equally present.

But what is far more arresting in *Now* than the technological banality of the question "which 'now' is intended?" is the way the tape enacts a collapsed present time. In that insistence it connects itself to the tapes by Nauman and Acconci already described, and ultimately to *Boomerang*. In all these examples the nature of video performance is specified as an activity of bracketing out the text and substituting for it the mirror-reflection. The result of this substitution is the presentation of a self understood to have no past, and as well, no connection with any objects that are external to it. For the double that appears on the monitor cannot be called a true external object. Rather it is a displacement of the self which has the effect—as Holt's voice has in *Boomerang*—of transforming the performer's subjectivity into another, mirror, object.

It is at this point that one might want to go back to the proposition with which this argument began, and raise a particular objection. Even if it is agreed, one might ask, that the medium of video art is the psychological condition of the self split and doubled by the mirror-reflection of synchronous feedback, how does that entail a 'rift' between video and the other arts? Isn't it rather a case of video's using a new technique to achieve continuity with the modernist intentions of the rest of the visual media? Specifically, isn't the mirror-reflection a variant on the reflexive mode in which contemporary painting, sculpture and film have successively entrenched themselves? Implicit in this question is the idea that auto-reflection and reflexiveness refer to the same thing—that both are cases of consciousness doubling back upon itself in order to perform and portray a separation between forms of art and their contents, between the procedures of

Lynda Benglis. Now. 1973.



thought and their objects.<sup>1</sup> In its simplest form this question would be the following: Aside from their divergent technologies, what is the difference, *really*, between Vito Acconci's *Centers* and Jasper John's *American Flag*?

Answer: The difference is total. Reflection, when it is a case of mirroring, is a move toward an external symmetry; while reflexiveness is a strategy to achieve a radical *asymmetry*, from within. In his *American Flag*, Johns uses the synonymy between an image (the flag) and its ground (the limits of the picture surface) to unbalance the relationship between the terms 'picture' and 'painting'. By forcing us to see the actual wall on which the canvas hangs as the background for the pictorial object as-a-whole, Johns drives a wedge between two types of figure/ground relationships: the one that is internal to the image; and the one that works from without to define this object as *Painting*. The figure/ground of a flat, bounded surface hung against a wall is isolated as a primary, categorical condition, within which the terms of the process of painting are given. The category 'Painting' is established as an object (or a text) whose subject becomes this particular painting—*American Flag*. The flag is thus both the object of the picture, *and* the subject of a more general object (*Painting*) to which *American Flag* can reflexively point. Reflexiveness is precisely this fracture into two categorically different entities which can elucidate one another insofar as their separate-ness is maintained.

Mirror-reflection, on the other hand, implies the vanquishing of separate-ness. Its inherent movement is toward fusion. The self and its reflected image are of course literally separate. But the agency of reflection is a mode of appropriation, of

1. For example, this completely erroneous equation allows Max Kozloff to write that narcissism is "the emotional correlate of the intellectual basis behind self-reflexive modern art." See, "Pygmalion Reversed," *Artforum*, XIV (November 1975), 37.

illusionistically erasing the difference between subject and object. Facing mirrors on opposite walls squeeze out the real space between them. When we look at *Centers* we see Acconci sighting along his arm to the center of the screen we are watching. But latent in this set-up is the monitor that he is, himself, looking at. There is no way for us to see *Centers* without reading that sustained connection between the artist and his double. So for us as for Acconci, video is a process which allows these two terms to fuse.

One could say that if the reflexiveness of modernist art is a *dédoublement* or doubling back in order to locate the object (and thus the objective conditions of one's experience), the mirror-reflection of absolute feedback is a process of bracketing out the object. This is why it seems inappropriate to speak of a physical medium in relation to video. For the object (the electronic equipment and its capabilities) has become merely an appurtenance. And instead, video's real medium is a psychological situation, the very terms of which are to withdraw attention from an external object—an Other—and invest it in the Self. Therefore, it is not just any psychological condition one is speaking of. Rather it is the condition of someone who has, in Freud's words, "abandoned the investment of objects with libido and transformed object-libido into ego-libido." And that is the specific condition of narcissism.

By making this connection, then, one can recast the opposition between the reflective and reflexive, into the terms of the psychoanalytic project. Because it is there, too, in the drama of the couched subject, that the narcissistic re-projection of a frozen self is pitted against the analytic (or reflexive) mode.<sup>2</sup> One finds a particularly useful description of that struggle in the writing of Jacques Lacan.

In *The Language of the Self* Lacan begins by characterizing the space of the therapeutic transaction as an extraordinary void created by the silence of the analyst. Into this void the patient projects the monologue of his own recitation, which Lacan calls "the monumental construct of his narcissism." Using this monologue to explain himself and his situation to his silent listener, the patient begins to experience a very deep frustration. And this frustration, Lacan charges, although it is initially thought to be provoked by the maddening silence of the analyst, is eventually discovered to have another source:

Is it not rather a matter of a frustration inherent in the very discourse of the subject? Does the subject not become engaged in an ever-growing dispossession of that being of his, concerning which—by

2. Freud's pessimism about the prospects of treating the narcissistic character is based on his experience of the narcissist's inherent inability to enter into the analytic situation: "Experience shows that persons suffering from the narcissistic neuroses have no capacity for transference, or only insufficient remnants of it. They turn from the physician, not in hostility, but in indifference. Therefore they are not to be influenced by him; what he says leaves them cold, makes no impression on them, and therefore the process of cure which can be carried through with others, the revivification of the pathogenic conflict and the overcoming of the resistance due to the repressions, cannot be effected with them. They remain as they are." Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, trans. Joan Riviere, New York, Permabooks, 1953, p. 455.

dint of sincere portraits which leave its idea no less incoherent, of rectifications which do not succeed in freeing its essence, of stays and defenses which do not prevent his statue from tottering, of narcissistic embraces which become like a puff of air in animating it—he ends up by recognizing that this being has never been anything more than his construct in the Imaginary and that this construct disappoints all his certitudes? For in this labor which he undertakes to reconstruct this construct *for another*, he finds again the fundamental alienation which made him construct it *like another one*, and which has always destined it to be stripped from him *by another*.<sup>3</sup>

What the patient comes to see is that this 'self' of his is a projected object, and that his frustration is due to his own capture by this object with which he can never really coincide. Further, this "statue" which he has made and in which he believes is the basis for his "static state," for the constantly "renewed status of his alienation." Narcissism is characterized, then, as the unchanging condition of a perpetual frustration.<sup>4</sup>

The process of analysis is one of breaking the hold of this fascination with the mirror; and in order to do so the patient comes to see the distinction between his lived subjectivity and the fantasy projections of himself as object. "In order for us to come back to a more dialectical view of the analytic experience," Lacan writes, "I would say that the analysis consists precisely in distinguishing the person lying on the analysts' couch from the person who is speaking. With the person listening [the analyst], that makes three persons present in the analytical situation, among whom it is the rule that the question . . . be put: Where is the *moi* of the subject?"<sup>5</sup> The analytic project is then one in which the patient disengages from the "statue" of his reflected self, and through a method of reflexiveness, rediscovers the real time of his own history. He exchanges the atemporality of repetition for the temporality of change.

If psychoanalysis understands that the patient is engaged in a recovery of his being in terms of its real history, modernism has understood that the artist locates his own expressiveness through a discovery of the objective conditions of his medium and their history. That is, the very possibilities of finding his subjectivity necessitate that the artist recognize the material and historical independence of an external object (or medium).

In distinction to this, the feedback coil of video seems to be the instrument of

3. Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self*, trans. Anthony Wilden, New York, Delta, 1968. p. 11.

4. Explaining this frustration, Lacan points to the fact that even when "the subject makes himself an object by striking a pose before the mirror, he could not possibly be satisfied with it, since even if he achieved his most perfect likeness in that image, it would still be the pleasure of the other that he would cause to be recognized in it." *Ibid.*, p. 12.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 100. Although *moi* translates as 'ego', Wilden has presumably retained the French here in order to suggest the relationship between the different orders of the self by the implicit contrast between *moi* and *je*.

a double repression: for through it consciousness of temporality and of separation between subject and object are simultaneously submerged. The result of this submergence is, for the maker and the viewer of most video-art, a kind of weightless fall through the suspended space of narcissism.

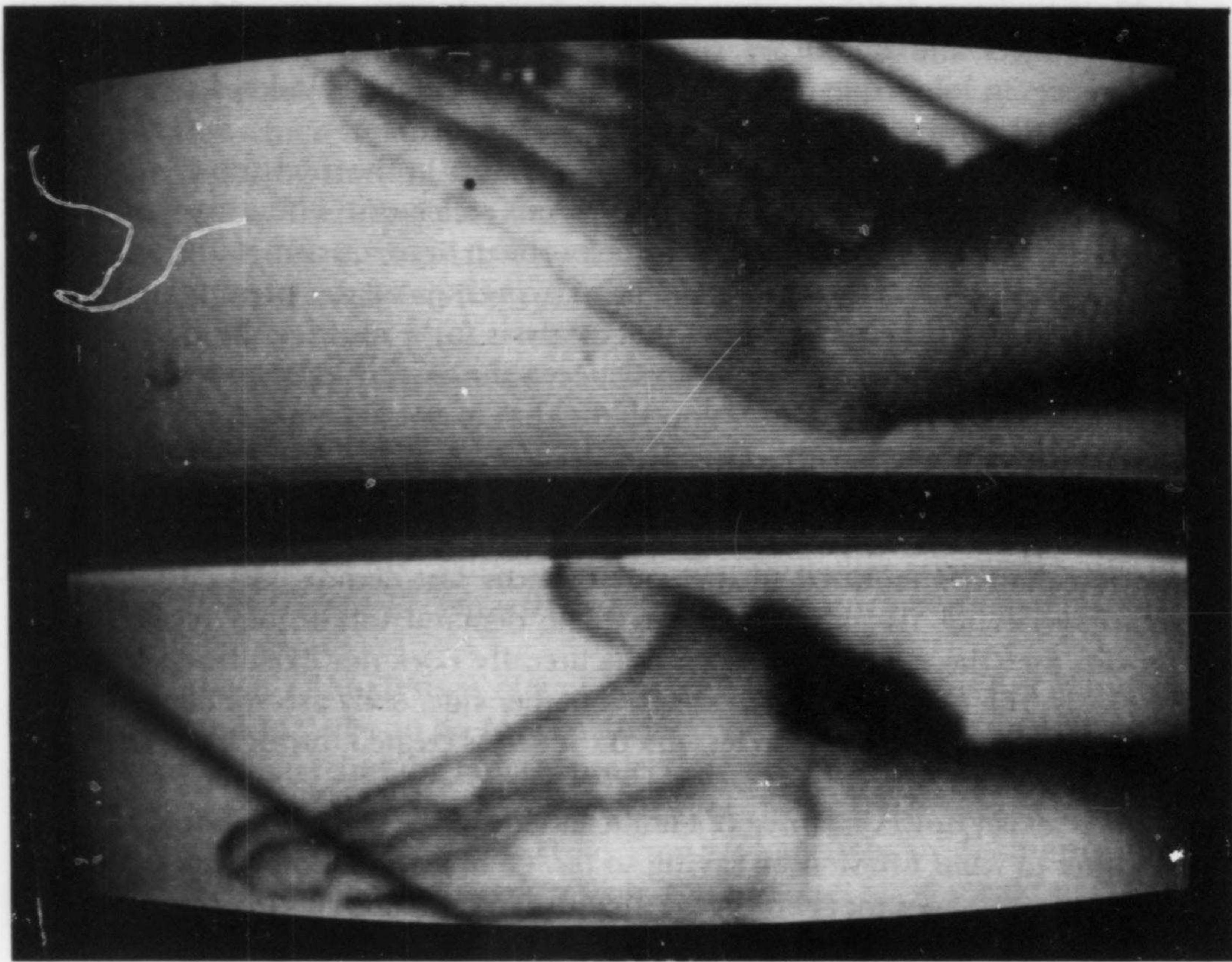
There are, of course, a complex set of answers to the question of why video has attracted a growing set of practitioners and collectors. These answers would involve an analysis of everything from the problem of narcissism within the wider context of our culture, to the specific inner workings of the present art-market. Although I would like to postpone that analysis for a future essay, I do wish to make one connection here. And that is between the institution of a self formed by video feedback and the real situation that exists in the artworld from which the makers of video come. In the last fifteen years that world has been deeply and disasterously affected by its relation to mass-media. That an artist's work be published, reproduced and disseminated through the media has become, for the generation that has matured in the course of the last decade, virtually the *only* means of verifying its existence as art. The demand for instant replay in the media—in fact the creation of work that literally does not exist outside of that replay, as is true of conceptual art and its nether side, body art—finds its obvious correlative in an aesthetic mode by which the self is created through the electronic device of feedback.

There exist, however, three phenomena within the corpus of video art which run counter to what I have been saying so far. Or at least are somewhat tangential to it. They are: 1) tapes that exploit the medium in order to criticize it from within; 2) tapes that represent a physical assault on the video mechanism in order to break out of its psychological hold; and 3) installation forms of video which use the medium as a sub-species of painting or sculpture. The first is represented by Richard Serra's *Boomerang*. The second can be exemplified by Joan Jonas's *Vertical Roll*. And the third is limited to certain of the installation works of Bruce Nauman and Peter Campus, particularly Campus's two companion pieces *mem* and *dor*.

I have already described how narcissism is enacted in *Boomerang*. But what separates it from, say, Benglis's *Now*, is the critical distance it maintains on its own subject. This is primarily due to the fact that Serra employs audio rather than visual feedback. Because of this the angle of vision we take on the subject does not coincide with the closed circuit of Holt's situation, but looks onto it from outside. Further, the narcissistic condition is given through the celebrated form of language, which opens simultaneously onto the plane of expression and the plane of critical reflexiveness.

Significantly, Serra's separation from the subject of *Boomerang*, his position outside it, promotes an attitude toward time that is different from many other works of video. The tape's brevity—it is ten minutes long—is itself related to discourse: to how long it takes to shape and develop an argument; and how long it takes for its receiver to get the 'point'. Latent within the opening situation of

Joan Jonas. *Vertical Roll*. 1972.



*Boomerang* is its own conclusion; when that is reached, it stops.

*Vertical Roll* is another case where time has been forced to enter the video situation, and where that time is understood as a propulsion towards an end. In this work access to a sense of time has come from fouling the stability of the projected image by de-synchronizing the frequencies of the signals on camera and monitor. The rhythmic roll of the image, as the bottom of its frame scans upward to hit the top of the screen, causes a sense of decomposition that seems to work against the grain of those 525 lines of which the video picture is made. Because one recognizes it as intended, the vertical roll appears as the agency of a will that runs counter to an electronically stabilized condition. Through the effect of its constant wiping away of the image, one has a sense of a reflexive relation to the video grid and the ground or support for what happens to the image.

Out of this is born the subject of *Vertical Roll*, which visualizes time as the course of a continuous dissolve through space. In it a sequence of images and actions are seen from different positions—both in terms of the camera's distance and its orientation to a horizontal ground. With the ordinary grammar of both film and video these shifts would have to be registered either by camera movement (in which

the zoom is included as one possibility) or by cutting. And while it is true that Jonas has had to use these techniques in making *Vertical Roll*, the constant sweep of the image renders these movements invisible. That is, the grammar of the camera is eroded by the dislocating grip of the roll. As I have said, the illusion this creates is one of a continuous dissolve through time and space. The monitor, as an instrument, seems to be winding into itself a ribbon of experience, like a fishing line being taken up upon a reel, or like magnetic tape being wound upon a spool. The motion of continuous dissolve becomes, then, a metaphor for the physical reality not only of the scan-lines of the video raster, but of the physical reality of the tape deck, whose reels objectify a finite amount of time.

Earlier, I described the paradigm situation of video as a body centered between the parenthesis of camera and monitor. Due to *Vertical Roll's* visual reference through the monitor's action to the physical reality of the tape, one side of this parenthesis is made more active than the other. The monitor side of the double bracket becomes a reel through which one feels prefigured the imminence of a goal or terminus for the motion. That end is reached when Jonas, who has been performing the actions recorded on the tape, from within the coils of the camera/monitor circuit, breaks through the parenthetical closure of the feedback situation to face the camera directly—without the agency of the monitor's rolling image.

If it is the paired movement of the video scan and the tape-reel that is isolated as a physical object in *Vertical Roll*, it is the stasis of the wall-plane that is objectified in Campus's *mem* and *dor*. In both of the Campus works there is a triangular relationship created between: 1) a video camera, 2) an instrument that will project the live camera image onto the surface of a wall (at life- and over-life-size), and 3) the wall itself. The viewer's experience of the works is the sum of the cumulative positions his body assumes within the vectors formed by these three elements. When he stands outside the triangular field of the works, the viewer sees nothing but the large, luminous plane of one of the walls in a darkened room. Only when he moves into the range of the camera is he able to realize an image (his own) projected onto the wall's pictorial field. However, the conditions of seeing that image are rather special in both *mem* and *dor*.

In the latter the camera is placed in the hallway leading to the room that contains the projector. Inside the room, the viewer is out of the range of the camera and therefore nothing appears on the wall-surface. It is only as he leaves the room, or rather is poised at the threshold of the doorway that he is both illumined enough and far enough into the focal range of the camera to register as an image. Since that image projects onto the very wall through which the doorway leads, the viewer's relation to his own image must be totally peripheral; he is himself in a plane that is not only parallel to the plane of the illusion, but continuous with it. His body is therefore both the substance of the image and, as well, the slightly displaced substance of the plane onto which the image is projected.

In *mem* both camera and projector are to one side of the wall-plane, stationed in such a way that the range of the camera encompasses a very thin corridor-like

slice of space that is parallel to, and almost fused with, the illumined wall. Due to this, the viewer must be practically up against the wall in order to register. As he moves far enough away from the wall in order to be able to see himself, the image blurs and distorts, but if he moves near enough to place himself in focus, he has formed such closure with the support for the image that he cannot really see it. Therefore in *mem*, as in *dor*, the body of the viewer becomes physically identified with the wall-plane as the 'place' of the image.

There is a sense in which we could say that these two works by Campus simply take the live feedback of camera and monitor, which existed for the video artist while taping in his studio, and recreate it for the ordinary visitor to a gallery. However, *mem* and *dor* are not that simple. Because built into their situation are two kinds of invisibility: the viewer's presence to the wall in which he is himself an absence; and his relative absence from a view of the wall which becomes the condition for his projected presence upon its surface.

Campus's pieces acknowledge the very powerful narcissism that propels the viewer of these works forward and backward in front of the muralized field. And, through the movement of his own body, his neck craning and head turning, the viewer is forced to recognize this motive as well. But the condition of these works is to acknowledge as separate the two surfaces on which the image is held—the one the viewer's body, the other the wall—and to make them register as absolutely distinct. It is in this distinction that the wall-surface—the pictorial surface—is understood as an absolute Other, as part of the world of objects external to the self. Further, it is to specify that the mode of projecting oneself onto that surface entails recognizing all the ways that one does not coincide with it.

There is, of course, a history of the art of the last fifteen years into which works like *mem* and *dor* insert themselves, although it is one about which little has been written. That history involves the activities of certain artists who have made work which conflates psychologistic and formal means to achieve very particular ends. The art of Robert Rauschenberg is a case in point. His work, in bringing together groupings of real objects and found images and suspending them within the static matrix of a pictorial field, attempts to convert that field into something we could call the plane of memory. In so doing, the static pictorial field is both psychologized and temporally distended. I have argued elsewhere,<sup>6</sup> that the impulse behind this move arose from questions that have to do with commodity-fetishism. Rauschenberg, among many other artists, has been working against a situation in which painting and sculpture have been absorbed within a luxury market—absorbed so totally that their content has been deeply conditioned by their status as fetish-prizes to be collected, and thereby consumed. In response, Rauschenberg's art asserts another, alternative, relationship between the work of art and its viewer. And to do this Rauschenberg has had recourse to the value of time: to the time it takes to read a text, or a painting, to rehearse the activity of cognitive differentiation that that entails, to

6. See my "Rauschenberg and the Materialized Image," *Artforum*, XIII (December 1974).



*Peter Campus. mem (below) and dor (above). 1974.  
(Photo: Bevan Davies.)*



get its point. That is, he wishes to pit the temporal values of consciousness against the stasis of the commodity-fetish.

Although responsive to the same considerations, the temporal values that were built into the Minimalist sculpture of the 1960s were primarily engaged with questions of perception. The viewer was therefore involved in a temporal decoding of issues of scale, placement, or shape—issues that are inherently more abstract than, say, the contents of memory. Pure, as opposed to applied psychology we might say. But in the work of certain younger sculptors, Joel Shapiro for example, the issues of Minimalism are being inserted into a space which, like Rauschenberg's pictorial field, defines itself as mnemonic. So that physical distance from a sculptural object is understood as being indistinguishable from temporal remove.

It is to this body of work that I would want to add Campus's art. The narcissistic enclosure inherent in the video-medium becomes for him part of a psychologistic strategy by which he is able to examine the general conditions of pictorialism in relation to its viewers. It can, that is, critically account for narcissism as a form of bracketing-out the world and its conditions, at the same time as it can reassert the facticity of the object against the grain of the narcissistic drive towards projection.

N.Y., 1976

Gravity's Rainbow and  
the Spiral Jetty

JEREMY GILBERT-ROLFE AND JOHN JOHNSTON

*(The result of a protracted collaboration between John Johnston and myself, this essay is dedicated to those students at Princeton with whom we had the pleasure of conducting a seminar on the subject in the Spring of 1975—JG-R.)*

“. . . He had no real grasp of the opposites. 'The act of injuring and the act of being injured are joined in the behavior of the whole injury.' Speaker and spoken-of, master and slave, virgin and seducer, each pair most conveniently coupled and inseparable—the last refuge of the incorrigibly lazy, Mexico, is just this sort of ying-yang rubbish. One avoids all manner of unpleasant lab work that way, but what has one said?"

"I don't want to get into a religious argument with you," absence of sleep has made Mexico more cranky today than usual, "but I wonder if you people aren't a bit too—well, strong, on the virtues of analysis. I mean, once you've taken it all apart, fine, I'll be the first to applaud your industry. But other than a lot of bits and pieces lying about, what have you said?"

It isn't the sort of argument Pointsman relishes either. But he glances sharply at this young anarchist in his red scarf. "Pavlov believed that the ideal, the end we all struggle toward in science, is the true mechanical explanation. He was realistic enough not to expect it in his lifetime. Or in several lifetimes more. But his faith ultimately lay in a pure physiological basis for the life of the psyche. No effect without cause, and a clear chain of linkages."

"It's not my forte, of course," Mexico honestly wishing not to offend the man, but really, "but there's a feeling about that cause-and-effect may have been taken as far as it will go. That for science to carry on at all, it must look for a less narrow, a less . . . sterile set of assumptions. The next great breakthrough may come when we have the courage to junk cause-and-effect entirely, and strike off at some other angle."

"No—not 'strike off'. Regress. You're thirty years old, man. There are no 'other angles'. There is only forward—*into it*—or backward."

Mexico watches the wind tugging at the skirts of Pointsman's coat. A gull goes screaming away sidewise along the frozen berm. The chalk cliffs rear up above, cold and serene as death. Early barbarians of Europe who ventured close enough to this coast saw these white barriers through the mist, and knew then where their dead had been taken to.

—*Gravity's Rainbow*<sup>1</sup>

The objects discussed here, a novel and a piece of sculpture or landscape architecture, are made in such a way that those who wish to experience them are encouraged to compare the historical and the archaic. Joyce and Mallarmé effected such a comparison by striking, in their careful choice of words, reverberations which make the experience of reading them an occasion for the consideration of that past which, in being pre-historical, is conventionally perceived as the provider of ahistorical themes. For this reason one turns towards these writers for theory and practise which may, through an interpretation that attempts to be literal, i.e., uninterpretative, in its bias, illuminate *Gravity's Rainbow* and the *Spiral Jetty*.

This is to say that *Gravity's Rainbow* and the *Spiral Jetty* are modernist works whose complexity derives from a straightforward manipulation of technique, and it is this that this essay seeks to explore. Both Smithson and Pynchon seem to locate their efforts in the space bounded, in the above passage, by the phrases "taken it all apart" and "taken to"; between empiricism's destructive knowledge and an awareness of proclivities that cannot be fully known—it would be better to say fully felt—but which nonetheless remain a pervasive feature of the landscape, physical facts like any others but sedimented, etymologically and archaeologically, within the geologies of words and things.

Saussure's notion of an anagrammatic basis for language—the subject of a monograph by the Swiss scholar Jean Starobinski<sup>2</sup>—which led the nineteenth-century linguist to say that he tended to suspect that any given sentence contained all the anagrams in the world, is relevant here, as, also, is Mallarmé's theme of whiteness—an emptiness which structures meaning—and his suggestion that art breaks through the bubble of the present by articulating the terms the latter provides. That going "forward—*into it*" is inseparable from going "backward":

I prefer, faced with aggression, to respond that some of my contemporaries don't know how to read—

Except a newspaper; that, to be sure, has the advantage of not threatening to interrupt the chorus of their preoccupations—

To read—

1. Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*, New York, Viking, 1973, pp. 88-9.
2. Jean Starobinski, *Les mots sous les mots*, Paris, Gallimard, 1971.

This practise—

Which affords to the page the ability to support its own ingenuousness against the whiteness which inaugurates it, even to overlook the heading that speaks too loudly: and, as chance is ordered, word by word, through scattered and minimal breaks, whiteness enters, indefatigably, previously gratuitous but now specific, establishing that there is nothing beyond as it confirms that silence with itself—

Emptiness, which, confronted with an attentiveness adequate by virtue of its transparency, bisects itself as it were into two kinds of candor, each of them nascent proofs of the Idea—

Beneath the text a tune or song directs the reading from here to there by way of a motif borne on invisible devices and appendages.

This passage brings Mallarmé's *Quant au Livre* (1895), to which we shall refer several times in the pages that follow, to a close. After taking note of the customary charge of unreadability, it proceeds to briskly summarize the intrinsic assumptions and situational circumstance of every ambitious work of art that's come since. A literary critic, Scott Simmon, has already noted the striking similarity, in both substance and syntax, of the Pulitzer Prize committee's comments on *Gravity's Rainbow* in 1973 and those of the critic employed by the *London Times* on the first edition of *Ulysses*: the syntax was utterly dull and may be left aside; the substance was that both books are unnecessarily obscene and gratuitously hard to read, a direct confirmation of Mallarmé's suspicion.<sup>3</sup> That combination of greed and impatience which Baudelaire warned against as an avidity always active in public taste has continuously been met with manipulations of the commonplace that it can't stand. Ordinary language defamiliarized, simple acts which displace. Considered as a tactic of this sort—a perverse displacement intended to mystify—Smithson's choice of the Great Salt Lake as a site for the *Spiral Jetty* would seem exemplary; and indeed he was critically taken to task for the work's physical inaccessibility. But to think of it in that way would be as misleading as thinking of *Gravity's Rainbow*—as some have—as a novel which surrenders to a Puritan view of apocalypse. The *Spiral Jetty's* location, like Mallarmé's choice of words, is internally generated, making of sculpture an intersection with a specific bit of landscape and its contents, which include a Red Indian legend that places a whirlpool at the bottom of the body of water in which Smithson's work is located. It is this kind of internal generation which makes it an apt subject for comparison with Pynchon's novel, as we shall see.

Also like Mallarmé, both works have a structure which is based on a consistent digression, a digressiveness which always leads one to a reconsideration of one's starting point—an obligation to reread responsible for the imputation of unreadability—and which does not preclude the machinations of chance. Smith-

3. Scott Simmons, "Gravity's Rainbow Described," *Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction*, XVI, No. 2 (1974).

son's spiral offers a platform every part of which echoes the curve that runs throughout but is identical with no other part, like the perspectival shift from object to object characteristic of Cézanne's grid. The flexibility of Cézanne's grid, its capacity for digressiveness, comes from an attentiveness to the example provided by the earlier painter Poussin not unlike Mallarmé's preference for the Alexandrine, a poetic structure understood as one which was decadent at birth, and insofar as Cézanne's and Mallarmé's choices seem in this sense directly analogous, they ought probably to be thought of in the light of Saussure's description of classical poetry as an art of combination, an ensemble designed to conserve and transform. In *Gravity's Rainbow* digression becomes the whole through an approach to writing which, again as in Cézanne, unifies all data by insisting on a model which substitutes redistribution for climax.

It is the entropy model that provides the terms for this substitution, since, in both artists' work, entropy—the tendency of closed systems to move towards energy loss and disorder—is constantly evoked in order that it may in its turn be reversed or frustrated, through opening up the 'system' to a larger, more encompassing, system or set of systems. In Pynchon's first story, "Lowlands" (1959), a group of characters spiral through a landscape—a garbage dump—at the center of which another, more vital, world is literally unearthed.

Another closed system is the world of the paranoid, a system predicated on the belief that each signifier has only one possible signified, so that what Jacques Lacan would call the barrier of signification is a prohibition of alternative signifieds that might, if acknowledged, act against the entropy initiated by the one-to-one relationship. The physics model itself, developed during the latter part of the last century in a language supposedly purged of ambiguity, immediately began to admit of more than one possible signified. The equation that describes entropy as a closed system, discovered simultaneously but independently in Germany and America by, respectively, Ludwig Boltzmann and Willard Gibbs, was subsequently found also to be the exact equation in information theory for the amount of information made available (contained) by that same system. By applying statistical analysis to physics Boltzmann and Gibbs spelled the end of Newtonian ideas of order through the elaboration of notions which concern the extent to which answers that one may give to questions about one set of systems become probable among a larger set of systems.

Given the corollation between the entropy model and the determination of quantities of informational content in a specific system, it is perhaps odd that a critic like Simmons should want to say that *Gravity's Rainbow* isn't about entropy because it's about Freud.<sup>4</sup> *Gravity's Rainbow* is indeed about Freud, and manages to internalize the Freud of *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930) precisely because of its use of the idea of entropy to neutralize death's pathos. To propose, in other words, a paradigm that Freud himself seemed to feel might be necessary but which

4. Simmons.

he said psychoanalysis had, as it were instinctively, shunned:

The assumption of the existence of an instinct of death or destruction has met with resistance even in analytic circles; I am aware that there is a frequent inclination rather to ascribe whatever is dangerous and hostile in love to an original bipolarity in its own nature . . . I know that in sadism and masochism we have always seen before us manifestations of the destructive instinct (directed outwards and inwards) strongly alloyed with eroticism; but I can no longer understand how we can have overlooked the ubiquity of non-erotic aggressivity and destructiveness and can have failed to give it its due place in our interpretation of life.<sup>5</sup>

The entropy model occurs most emphatically in the work of both artists as an acknowledgment of an irreversibility which, like the life of a language, produces history as much as it is a product of it. Saussure's proposition that the signifier precedes its signified—proposing a relationship which, if not the reverse of cause-and-effect, is quite unlike it—is in this sense a search for *invariants*. This search for properties which remain constant under changing conditions in turn links his speculation to Freud's and both to the exactly scientific project of Boltzmann and Gibbs, of which the author of *Civilization and its Discontents* need not be presumed to have been unaware: "In the last century the search for linguistic invariants began in parallel with the growth of the application of invariance in the exact sciences. Historians of mathematics aver that the whole importance of the concept of invariance was grasped only when it was supported by the theory of general relativity. This observation is equally applicable to the history of linguistics. It is verily symptomatic that the same year, 1916, marked the appearance of both Einstein's *Foundations of the General Theory of Relativity* and Saussure's *Cours* with its insistence (indeed revolutionary in its consequences) on the purely relative character of the linguistic components . . ."<sup>6</sup>

It is as a condition of the premise that the signifier's preceding the signified is dependant on a notion of invariance that decay is constructed into the *Spiral Jetty*. Its building redistributed the landscape but didn't introduce any new materials into it. The conversion of the landscape into art was an entirely historical process which barely interrupted nature, whose inexorability is thereby confirmed by the work. In *Gravity's Rainbow* the signifier is made to precede signification at a number of levels, most obviously in the Pavlovian conditioning of Slothrop, the novel's American hero, who as a child has been, or is said to have been, conditioned to have an erection immediately before he hears a loud bang.

The entropy model, a reliance on digression, and the idea of the signifier preceding the signified, are the three features which seem to connect the Mallarméan

5. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, New York, Norton, 1960, p. 66ff.

6. Roman Jakobson, "The Kazan' School of Polish Linguistics," *Selected Writings*, Vol. II, The Hague, Mouton, 1971, p. 427.

modernism of these two works to one's associations with the archaic, most especially to the trappings of epic form. *Beowulf*, the closest thing to an epic in English, proceeds through digression,<sup>7</sup> while the name itself, in designating a monster-slayer, means 'to be monster.' Digression allows the epic to anticipate large events in small ones, and is itself therefore a structural feature at one with the kind of preceding of the signified that occurs with *Beowulf's* name. As for entropy, perhaps we can say that the model provided by the second law of thermodynamics is a means by which modernism substitutes the idea of omnipresence for unacceptable notions of omniscience, an artistic accounting for that which Freud said he'd tended to avoid, and for which the epic had a name long since fallen into disrepute:

It stands to reason that the actual chronicle of the archaic ages is full of 'barbaric' events. What such migrations as those of the Cimmerians, of the Mongols, of the Peoples of the Sea achieved in the way of destruction and dispersal is beyond our imagination. One calls this the primitive way of life, and blithely conjectures extermination in the biological sense, forgetting what biology has to say of real conflicts among animal tribes. It is only man, more especially modern man, who knows the art of total kill, the quick and the slow. But archaic cultures, devoid of history but steeped in myth, did not find in events the surprise of the *fait accompli*, stunning and shattering to the mind in the way Auschwitz is to us. Mythical experience has its own ways of meeting catastrophe. Men were able to see things nobly. Narration becomes epic.

The great epic of the Fall of the Nibelungen mirrors in its own way the invasion of Attila and his Huns, the 'scourge of God'. Official history might counter the Mongol hordes with the Roman victory of the Catalaunic fields, but the Attila of legend, chief of Gog and Magog, remains more imposing, even as he passes silently out of the scene, than Jenghiz or Tamerlane with their historic conquests and pyramids of skulls. He has little to act, he is the typical emperor of myth. Like Theodoric, like Arthur, like Kai Khusrau, he is the unmoved chess king around whom figures move. The Nibelungen story shows how mythical thought dealt with the crisis. It is Nemesis who destroys the German warriors at the last. Attila, 'king Etzel', suffers in his turn, without losing the authority of the conqueror. His child dies at the hands of Hagen, last of the sinful brood who is cut down as a captive by his infuriated mother, destroyed in turn by Hildebrand, reconciled to the conqueror, who brings the drama to a catharsis. Attila the Hun and Theodoric the Goth, are left to weep together the death of great heroes. No hatred, no terror left, except at the working of Fate.<sup>8</sup>

7. See Adrien Bonjour, *Digression in Beowulf*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1965, and Eric Auerback, *Mimesis*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957, Chapter 1.

8. Giorgio de Santillana and Herta von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill*, Boston, Gambit Inc., 1961, p. 355ff.

A number of themes pertinent to this essay are introduced in this passage, which is from Giorgio de Santillana and Herta von Dechend's *Hamlet's Mill*. For one thing, it brings us back to that excavation of the extra-historical which was identified with Joyce and Mallarmé in this essay's first paragraph. We shall return to this as we come to the specifically historical background of the works at hand, and say that history and myth are not opposites but rather, as de Santillana's book suggests, exist in a relationship in which one kind of measurement obscures another, and calls its victim ahistorical as it does so. We shall say that the reconciliation between historical enemies undertaken in the *Nibelungen*—and echoed in the fact that for a very long time the rest of the world has referred to the Germans as "Huns"—has direct affinities with the tautological endeavor that we intend to identify with *Gravity's Rainbow* and the *Spiral Jetty*. In both of which, it may be important to note, there is a bringing together of Indo-European and Ural-Alteic content. In regard to things which exist both mythically and historically, like national character, we shall say that in superimposing a map of America onto that of Europe—which is what we think he does—Pynchon reminds us that Tacitus, in the *Germania*, described a people who preferred to live in rather scattered communities, coming together to undertake political decisions in huge conventions, and who identified freedom with the ownership of property and each man's right to bear arms. At this point it is also pertinent to note Jakobson's observation that "It was Saussure who, in his notes on the *Nibelungen*, perspicaciously advocated the semiotic interpretation of myths: 'It is true that as one goes deeply into things, one sees in this region, as in the parent region of linguistics, that all incongruities of thought come from a lack of consideration as to what is identity—or marks of identity—when we approach a non-existent being like the *word*, or the *mythical person*, or a *letter of the alphabet*, which are only different forms of the SIGN, in its philosophical sense.'"<sup>9</sup>

In the way that Saussure's theory of an anagrammatic substructure comes to resemble Mallarmé's tune or song beneath the text, it may be admissible to say that what Mallarmé referred to as a "bisection into two kinds of candor" became for Freud—who of course responds immediately to the deficiency he identified in his own thinking—what he calls the struggle between Eros and Death, a conflict he chooses to describe in epic terms: "And it is this battle of the giants that our nursemaids try to appease with their lullaby about heaven."<sup>10</sup>

Pynchon and Smithson's references to the archaic are made possible through a devout regard for the banal. The newspaper, the factual, becomes mysterious but not concealed as it is employed as an agent of the ordinary that can make the work intersect with historical space. This is where *Gravity's Rainbow* and the *Spiral Jetty* are seen to respond most explicitly to the two traditions at whose conver-

9. Jakobson, *Main Trends in the Science of Language*, New York, Harper and Row, 1970, p. 34.

10. Freud, p. 69.

gence they are seen to lie. These are a European involvement with opposing the mundane to the fantastic—Mallarmé observing the structure of narrative in the fact that a newspaper's pages, blown by the wind, successively obscure one another, a defamiliarization of the text's continuity with its support that we shall want to relate here to the Surrealism of Duchamp on the one hand and of Breton on the other—and an Anglo-American passion for the ordinary encapsulated in Pynchon's demonstrable regard for the writing of Henry Adams, and Smithson's overt respect for that author's near-contemporary, Frederick Law Olmsted, who built Central Park in New York and Prospect Park in Brooklyn. Adams and Olmsted should come first, because *Gravity's Rainbow* and the *Spiral Jetty* are American works, and their use for the two kinds of Surrealism to which we just referred seems predicated on that.

Like *Gravity's Rainbow*, *The Education of Henry Adams* takes place largely outside the United States—although not nearly so completely as does the novel—and is similarly concerned with science. Chapter 25 of the *Education* is the first instance of the application of the term entropy to any theory of history. Much has been written about Pynchon's use of paranoia, and we have already suggested one sense in which entropy may be said to provide a model for that state. It is in Adams that one finds the bare bones of Pynchon's attitude to paranoia, and this too touches on other things which have already been said here: "[T]he man of science must have been sleepy indeed who did not jump from his chair when, in 1898, Mme. Curie threw on his desk the metaphysical bomb she called radium. There remained no hole to hide in. Even metaphysics swept back over science with the green-water of the deep sea ocean and no one could longer hope to bar out the unknowable, for the unknowable was known."<sup>11</sup>

In Pynchon's prose the positivism of *The Education of Henry Adams* has long since been converted into something else. In an episode in *V* involving two characters who will reappear in *Gravity's Rainbow*, Weissman (Blicero) and Mondaugen, a message which seems to have originated in atmospheric disturbance comes over the air and is decoded as Wittgenstein's "The world is all that the case is."<sup>12</sup> One would want to say that the relationship between Pynchon and Adams was like that between neo-positivism and positivism—between Wittgenstein's sense that science could advance only by accounting for the limits inherent in its own methodology and Compté's belief in science's limitless capacity for explanation—but to do so would be to run the risk of caricaturing the earlier writer, of presenting the difference between the two as one like that between Pointsman and Mexico in the passage with which we began. There is more to Adams than that, and more to Pynchon's internalizing of his thinking than that. There is, for example, a description in the *Education* of a train journey to London, of entering a tunnel and of "a violent contrast between this dense, smoky, impenetrable darkness, and the

11. Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1961, p. 452.

12. Thomas Pynchon, *V*, New York, Bantam, 1964, p. 259. Pynchon gives a literal translation of this sentence from the *Tractatus*, usually it appears in English as "The world is all that is the case."

soft green charm that one glided into, as one emerged—the revelation of an unknown society of the pit—made a boy uncomfortable, though he had no idea that Karl Marx was standing there waiting for him, and that sooner or later the process of education would have to deal with Karl Marx much more than with Professor Bowen of Harvard College or his Satanic free-trade majesty John Stuart Mill.”<sup>13</sup>

What Pynchon gets from Adams, more than anything else, is a way of describing a materialist skeleton found just beneath the crudely idealist skin of everyday life. Their writing shares the assumption that social thinking will provide itself with scientific metaphors and that clear thinking will depend on recognizing the appeal and the flaws of that metaphoricality. In both, the possibility that metaphor will usher in a repetition of the metaphysical obscurantism against which science sets itself is anticipated by a persistent use of metonymy, and it is through the latter, a banal alternation of commonplaces, that metaphoricality is both held in check and allowed full rein. One is struck, in *Gravity's Rainbow*, as it unfolds to displace the quest for the grail into a search for a secret called just that, the *S Gerät*, at the ease with which the language of science bears the burden of the literary; and it is this which returns one to Mallarmé's book, in which art and history would meet.

For Mallarmé, for Adams, for Pynchon and for Smithson, coherence depends on an image of quantifiability that qualifies reference to the infinite—that uses metonymy to control metaphor—and, in so doing, presents an alternative tradition to that of well-entrenched anthropocentricities—to those tattered strands of Idealism which attribute to anthropocentrism a metaphoricality that provides direct access to infinity. As he comes to the end of his book, Adams announces his “Dynamic Theory of History,” of which he says: “A dynamic theory, assigning attractive forces to opposing bodies in proportion to the laws of mass, takes for granted that the forces of nature capture man.”<sup>14</sup> One may compare this not, for the moment, with Pynchon, but with a remark of Smithson's: “You will always be faced with limits of some kind. I think that actually it's not so much expanding into infinity, it's that you are really expanding in terms of a finite situation.”<sup>15</sup>

Smithson rejected the materials habitually used by sculptors because they had already been processed, acculturated. Steel, he said, was already exhausted by its manipulation at the foundry before it got to the artist.<sup>16</sup> His career—cut short by an airplane crash—reached its stride when he began to make work which, as it recorded a given geographical location, simultaneously pointed to the conventional neutrality of the art object; to the idealism of the frame. These were the *Site:Nonsite* pieces, in which photographs of and detritus from a particular spot were brought into an art gallery and displayed. These precede the *Spiral Jetty* and anticipate its juxtapo-

13. Adams, p. 72.

14. Adams, p. 475.

15. Robert Smithson, Interview by Anthony Robbins, *Art News*, LXVII (February 1969), 50.

16. Robert Smithson, “A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects,” *Artforum*, XII (February, 1973), 63.

sition of signifier and signified, its use of materials which will erode at the same pace as their context instead of ritualistically denying the ravages of time, which is what Smithson saw other monumental sculpture as doing. The *Site:Nonsite* pieces, in the clarity of the opposition on which they're based, anticipate the opposition proposed by the *Spiral Jetty* in this way: the places they depict became the content of art through information about them being taken elsewhere, and in this they anticipate the *Jetty's* inscription onto its landscape of an image of reflexiveness dependant on the withdrawal of conventionalized atemporality, and it is this withdrawal which becomes that which provides one with the experience of information drawn in. The *Jetty* was built with the help of earth moving machines and trucks, a process dutifully recorded in the film *The Spiral Jetty*, which Smithson referred to as an "industrial film." The sculpture juts out from the shore to form its spiral, continuous with the bank but distinct from it, all traces of its production erased, its origins therefore preserved only in the self-evident fact that nothing but a human agency could be responsible for the redistribution that has given these rocks and dirt a shape isomorphically reminiscent of the direction taken by the growth of the salt crystals which accumulate below its water line.

The *Spiral Jetty* complicates the dialectic postulated by the *Site:Nonsite* opposition by identifying the frame with that which it frames, and in a similar way the polarities on which Pynchon built his fiction at the beginning of his career are made, in *Gravity's Rainbow*, to be generative of a new level of complication. We shall eventually want to say that one ends up with a model that's quadratic, literature which imitates language and, in that, invokes Mallarmé's remark: "Science, having found a confirmation of itself in language, must now discover a CONFIRMATION of language."<sup>17</sup>

In "Entropy," published fifteen years ago, Pynchon used the entropy model as the armature of a story about two apartments. A party roars on in the one below, constantly receiving new arrivals, while upstairs a WASP aesthete named Callisto resists input of any sort. His tropical birds and plants depend on an equilibrium quite independant of the weather outside. An equation is drawn between the self-sufficiency of the party downstairs—its capacity to maintain an input that will keep it going—and the maintainance of Callisto's hermetic world above. The party downstairs continues because the host, who is called Mulligan as his party is also an expansive social and ethnic mix, resists the temptation to withdraw into a cupboard to sleep. Callisto's world ends when his mistress puts her hand through a window, letting in the cold night air, a larger system into which the smaller one dissipates.

Like the collapse into each other of the site and the nonsite, landscape and frame, in *Spiral Jetty*, polarities which were held apart in "Entropy" have become properties differently pervasive in *Gravity's Rainbow*. To give the most obvious example, one is told more about Slothrop than about anyone else in the novel. In that sense he is its most thoroughly developed character. But by the end of the book

17. Quoted by Jakobson, *Main Trends in the Science of Language*, p. 7.

Slothrop is literally the most insubstantial figure it contains, to the extent that only his friend Seaman Bodine can actually identify him as a physical presence: "He's looking straight at Slothrop (being one of the few who can still see Slothrop as any kind of integral creature any more. Most of the others gave up long ago trying to hold him together, even as a concept—'It's just got too remote' 's what they usually say.)"<sup>18</sup>

Writing on the *Spiral Jetty*, Smithson makes a list, entitled "Dialectic of Site and Nonsite":

*Site.*

1. Open limits.
2. A Series of Points.
3. Outer Coordinates.
4. Subtraction.
5. Indeterminate Certainty.
6. Scattered Information.
7. Reflection.
8. Edge.
9. Some Place (Physical).
10. Many

*Nonsite.*

- Closed limits.  
 An Array of Matter.  
 Inner Coordinates.  
 Addition.  
 Determinate Certainty.  
 Contained Information.  
 Mirror.  
 Center.  
 No Place (Abstract).  
 One.

*Range of Convergence.*

The range of convergence between Site and Nonsite consists of a course of hazards, a double path made up of signs, photographs and maps that belong to both sides of the dialectic at once. Both sides are present and absent at the same time.<sup>19</sup>

This could reasonably serve as a key to *Gravity's Rainbow*, whose prose makes reference to, and is itself built upon, the mandala shape, a circle containing or contained by a cross, a juxtaposition of open and closed limits. As to the second opposition on Smithson's list, an interesting essay on mathematics in Pynchon shows how he uses the mathematical concept of a singular point or singularity to structure the novel; to provide a first layer of text beneath the text:

The two most obvious (and related) differentiating mathematical characteristics of a singular point are the indeterminacy of the function's first derivative at the point (a condition which is sometimes represented by the symbol for infinity,  $\infty$ ) and the fact that an infinite number of tangents to the curve can be drawn at a singular point. These mathematical characteristics have metaphorical import in Pynchon's use of the singular point image. A singularity is a point which, though an element

18. *Gravity's Rainbow*, p. 740.

19. Robert Smithson, "The Spiral Jetty," *Arts of the Environment*, ed. G. Kepes, New York, 1972, p. 231.

of the function like other points, nevertheless possesses a property (the indeterminacy of the first derivative) that makes it strange: one cannot tell the point is different from the rest until one tries to take the first derivative of the function there. Likewise, the characteristic that an infinite number of tangents to the curve can be constructed at a singular point gives it a potential for an infinity that other points of the function do not possess. In the novel's terms the implications of these mathematical conditions would be that at a 'singular' point in a character's experience his (or her) life would be indeterminate (not determined or controlled) and would partake of an infinity or eternity beyond the material world. . . .<sup>20</sup>

In equations of motion the first derivative—which is in calculus the first transformed version of the equation with which one began—measures rate of change. At 'singular points' the rate of change can't be measured (because, like dividing by zero, it yields infinity), and therefore it specifies a moment or place of transition which can't be quantified, although the context in which it occurs can be. In *Gravity's Rainbow* a transition from silk stocking to skin causes other images to be proposed as singularities:

Consider cathedral spires, holy minarets, the crunch of trainwheels over the points as you watch peeling away the track you didn't take . . . mountain peaks rising sharply to heaven, such as those to be noted at scenic Berchtesgaden . . . the edges of steel razors, always holding potent mystery . . . rose thorns that prick us by surprise . . . even, according to the Russian mathematician Friedman, the infinitely dense point from which the present Universe expanded . . . In each case, the change from point to no-point carries a luminosity and enigma at which something in us must leap and sing, or withdraw in flight. (*author's elisions*).<sup>21</sup>

According to L.J. Ozier, the author of that essay, such singular points are "unknowable" but can be indicated mathematically. Inherent in them is the "idea of transformation from one world order to another or from one state of being into another" within a quantifiably known context, and it is in these terms that they contribute, within the novel, to a "pattern of imagery that reveals coherence where there appears to be dissolution."<sup>22</sup>

This is an example of what is meant by qualifying an image of infinity through an image of quantifiability, where the latter becomes that through which order is discerned within an "array of matter" containing putative associations with the infinite.

20. L. J. Ozier, "Mathematics in *Gravity's Rainbow*," *Twentieth Century Literature*, XXI, No. 2 (1975), 209.

21. *Gravity's Rainbow*, p. 369.

22. Ozier, p. 194.

In Pynchon's work and Smithson's, then, complication develops within a model whose limits—since it is taken from science—are always presented tautologically, as an equation of which "Both sides are present or absent at the same time." The difference between the early work and the later is in both cases one which follows from developing the internal elasticity of the tautology, its maturation into a more fluid context of transitionality, a denser "range of convergences." Pynchon's novel is divided into four sections, four protagonists are wholly preoccupied with the search, and the book begins with a quote from Werner von Braun—already obliquely introduced here—to the effect that science doesn't know death but only redistribution. This is how one is persuaded to see both works as a series of strategies designed to allow "nature to capture man," and to do so in terms of a bifurcation consistent with Smithson's observation, in response to a definition of nature as that which was not made by man, that there was something problematic about a definition which put man outside nature.

The other side of that coin whose first face is the scientific spirit is the liberal imagination, and Adams and Olmsted are as much representatives of the one as of the other. Which raises another set of questions about Smithson and Pynchon's relationship to them. The observation about the singular point's connection—within the terms of a quantifiable model of indeterminacy—to the infinite becomes especially suggestive when, in an essay on Olmsted, Smithson opposes Burke's ideas on the Sublime to Hegelian Idealism, identifying them instead with what we've called an Anglo-American regard for the ordinary. The Price and Gilpin he mentions were English landscape artists, of whom Smithson says: "Inherent in the theories of Price and Gilpin, and in Olmsted's response to them, are the beginnings of a dialectic of the landscape. Burke's notion of 'beautiful' and 'sublime' functions as a *thesis* of smoothness, gentle curves, and delicacy of nature, and as an *antithesis* of terror, solitude, and vastness of nature, both of which are rooted in the real world, rather than in an Hegelian Ideal. Price and Gilpin provide a *synthesis* with their formulation of the 'picturesque' which is on close examination related to chance and change in the material order of nature."<sup>23</sup>

Burke himself said, "Whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime." By and large this notion of the Sublime, a regard for the extraordinary signification offered by the ordinary, which is still functioning when Adams, in his description of a railway journey, introduces the image of an unknown society of the pit (not to mention the prescience of his attribution of the word 'Satanic' to John Stuart Mill) has now fallen into bankruptcy. Where the ordinary once revealed the extraordinary, the ordinary is nowadays more often seen only as a pathway not to a banality which reveals but only to one that confirms a certain clearly established hierarchy of concerns. Anglo-American delight in the mundane has been dulled.

23. Robert Smithson, "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape," *Artforum*, XII (February, 1973), 63.

Thus, despite all evidence to the contrary, Smithson is without qualification labelled a 'Romantic' artist (without lapsing into Empiricism one might say that if the liberal intelligentsia were to take its vacations elsewhere than in Vermont, where the countryside invites empathy with Wordsworth, much of the criticism written in America in recent years might have taken a different direction . . .) while Pynchon has if anything suffered more harshly still, because in his case a blunted taste for ordinariness has led to active misrepresentation of his novel's intersection with fact.

This misrepresentation has, by and large, been consistent. Pynchon's use of the banal and the quantifiable has led to one reading after another that represses the book's most obvious subject matter in the interests of a manipulation of metaphor whose poverty invests the world with Romantic Pathos. A Pathos which conceives of itself as a long complaint about the defeat of the liberal imagination by the scientific spirit. This is an affair of class rather than individual despair—although its protagonists would deny the distinction—and it is on that level that Pynchon's novel resists appropriation by an ideology which, undaunted—determined to see itself as the end of the world—has insisted on describing his work as apocalyptic when it is clearly directed towards frustrating just such a reading. That ideology is enshrined in the words of a British agent in a novel by John le Carré, who, with Evelyn Waugh, is one of the few popular writers to make a measurable contribution to *Gravity's Rainbow's* prose. Here, the fulminations of Le Carré's agent follow two passages from Adams that cast light on the involvement with Germany which, in Pynchon as in historical fact, brackets Anglo-American thinking, gives direction to its liberalism, and therefore identifies the nature of its sense of pathos:

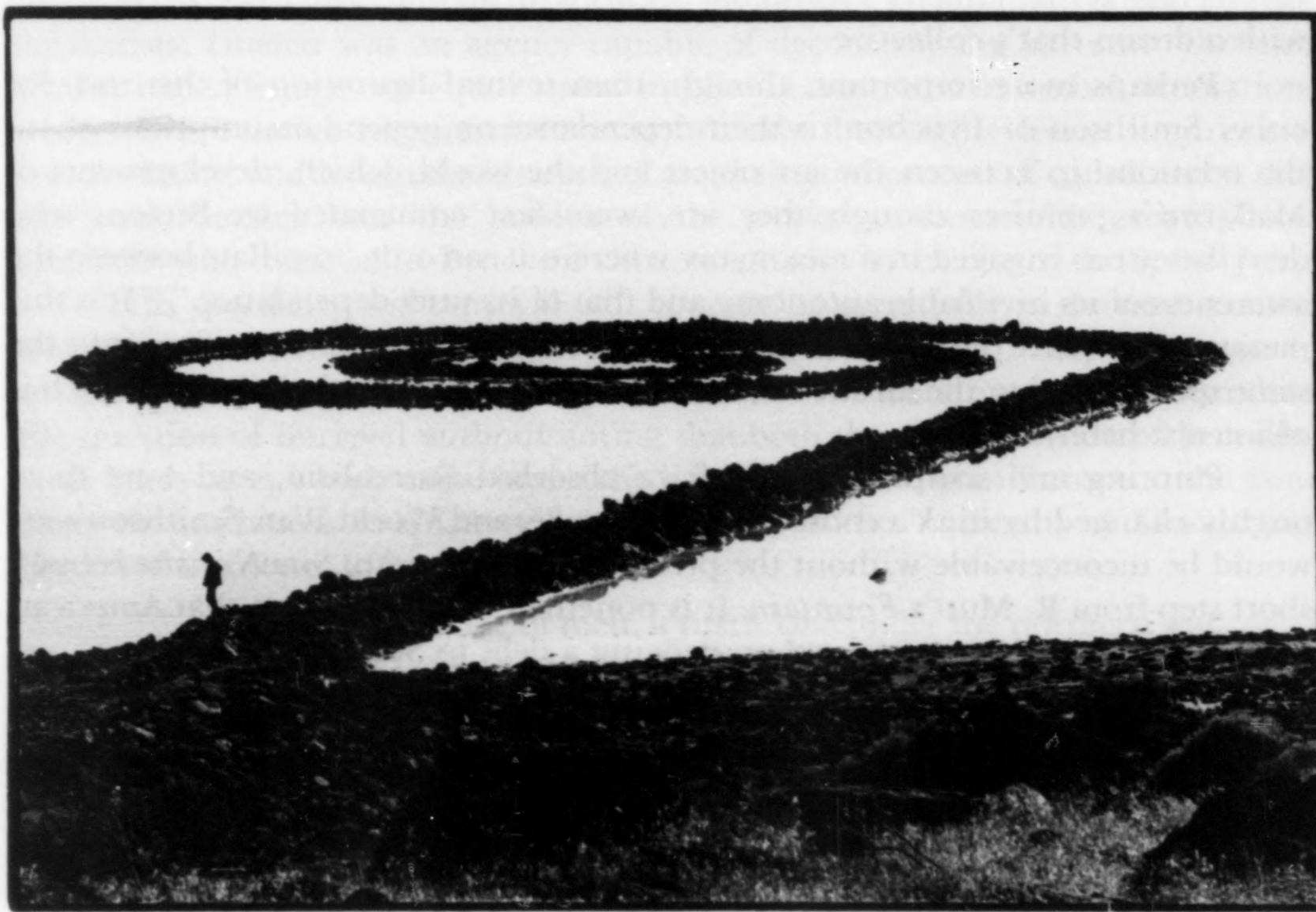
Even the typical grumbler Carlyle, who cast doubts on the real capacities of the middle class, and who at times thought himself eccentric, found friendship and alliances in Boston—still more in Concord. The system had proved so successful that even Germany wanted to try it, and Italy yearned for it. England's middle-class government was the ideal of human progress.<sup>24</sup>

The middle class had the power, and held its coal and iron well in hand, but the satirists and the idealists seized the press, and as they were agreed that the Second Empire was a disgrace to France and a danger to England, they turned to Germany because at that moment Germany was neither economical nor military, and a hundred years behind western Europe in the simplicity of its standard. German thought, method, honesty and even taste, became the standards of scholarship. Goethe was raised to the rank of Shakespeare—Kant ranked as a law-

24. Adams, p. 33.

giver above Plato. All serious scholars were obliged to become German, for German thought was revolutionizing criticism.<sup>25</sup>

"Both we and the Germans have been through democracy, and no one's given us credit for it. Like shaving. No one *thanks* you for shaving, no one *thanks* you for democracy. Now we've come out the other side. Democracy was only possible under a class system, that's why: it was an indulgence granted by the privileged. We haven't time for it anymore: a flash of light between feudalism and automation, and now it's gone."<sup>26</sup>



Robert Smithson. Spiral Jetty. 1969-70. (Photo: Gianfranco Gorgoni.)

In Breton's *Arcane 17*, written during the Second World War—with a postscript added in 1947—there's the line: "The military dictatorship surely found it advantageous to follow the destruction, more meticulous each day, of semantic

25. Adams, p. 61.

26. John Le Carré, *A Small Town in Germany*, New York, Dell, 1975, p. 124.

value, the sort of destruction to which the most obscene and cynically venal journalism was predisposed." The north pole and star appear in *Arcane 17*, as does the Rock of Percé.<sup>27</sup> In Nordic-Teutonic myth, the world was created as a mountain which grew out of a mist, an image reminiscent of how an amino-acid was first produced in a laboratory, out of ammonia gasses shot through with electricity, in Berkeley in 1950. Lying off the Canadian coast, the Rock of Percé appears and disappears in the varying light and mist. In *Gravity's Rainbow* the closest Slothrop ever gets to obtaining the *S Gërat* is when he's in the vicinity of Kap Arkona, the Baltic Mount Olympus, at the northern tip of the Island of Rügen. Rügen itself is replete with pagan associations that are Balto-Slavic as well as Nordic-Teutonic. Kap Arkona and the Rock of Percé are in roughly the same latitude, which gives some support to one's feeling that Pynchon may be responsive to a Surrealist example in this as in other respects. Another basis for this feeling is that *Gravity's Rainbow* begins with an individual's dream and ends with a dream that's collective.

Perhaps more important, though, than textual figuration of this sort, for either Smithson or Pynchon, is their dependance on general assumptions about the relationship between the art object and the world, which, developments of Mallarmé's premises though they are, were first enunciated by Breton, who describes art as engaged in a metonymy wherein it can only "oscillate between the awareness of its inviolable autonomy and that of its utter dependance."<sup>28</sup> It is this metonymy, which proposed to allow the public and the private to flow into the same space, to bring the dream into an active relationship with daily life, which is of interest here.

Painting and sculpture in America absorbed Surrealism, and were thoroughly changed by it, as a consequence of the Second World War. Smithson's art would be inconceivable without the precedent of Duchamp. *Site:Nonsite* is but a short step from R. Mutt's *Fountain*. It is nonetheless worth noting that American artists have by and large insisted on denying a debt to Surrealism.

However, in literature the situation was much worse, as if everybody who wrote darted off back to points pastoral the minute the first emigré disembarked. While the first sentence in *Gravity's Rainbow*—"A screaming comes across the sky"—is a quote from Hemingway, its ending owes little to American writing: "The screen is a dim page spread before us, white and silent. The film has broken, or a projector bulb has burned out. It is difficult even for us, old fans who've always been at the movies (haven't we?) to tell which before the darkness swept in. It may have been a human figure, dreaming of an early evening in each great capital luminous enough to tell him he will never die, coming outside to wish on the first star. But it was *not a star*, it was falling, a bright angel of death. And in the

27. See Anna Balakian, *André Breton*, New York, Oxford, 1972, p. 92.

28. André Breton, "Second Manifesto of Surrealism," *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, Anne Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1974, p. 155.

darkening and awful expanse of screen something has kept on, a film we have not learned to see . . . it is now a closeup of a face, a face we all know—" 29

In the twentieth century, Mallarmé's whiteness is the whiteness of the screen.

In this closing sequence—a few more lines and the book's over—Pynchon addresses the reader directly for more than a brief aside, as he does nowhere else in the novel. It is a final emerging of the present tense, which is made, throughout his writing, to combine fluently with the varieties of past tenses, so that there is casual but persistent recognition of the sense in which reading is an act in which one is connected to an object situated in the present by its reader but in the past by virtue of its having been written, that past becoming therefore the subject of the act of writing. Nothing in *Gravity's Rainbow* exists as background; all information is transitive, none is privileged. *Gravity's Rainbow's* virtual exclusion of the reader until the last page is a function of its premise that the reader is immanent in the object scrutinized, but severed from it by its identity as a transcription. For the Surrealists, cinema was an agency capable of deconstructing literature through attributing to images an equal status implicitly frustrated by verbal denotation, where their relative importance was an already thoroughly learnt linguistic—social—habit, and it is in the interests of an analogous process of equalization that cinematic devices bear the burden of the works' concern with geographical specificity and retrieval in Pynchon's fiction and also in the film of the *Spiral Jetty*.

This specificity and retrieval will concern us more fully in the next section, where we shall investigate Pynchon's use of limits derived from a map of America to structure the field of action in *Gravity's Rainbow*.<sup>30</sup> Also, one ought not to introduce the question of retrieval without noting that both the works considered here deal with landscapes which came under the influence of Christian Europe at the same time, that as late as 1545 Georg Sabinus, rector of the University of Königsberg, described in a letter to his Cardinal:

. . . a savage race of men, a rustic one under the northern star,  
which as yet has no knowledge of true religion:  
But it worships as deities bluish snakes,  
and performs unspeakable rites by slaughtering a ram.<sup>31</sup>

Breton's constant references to himself as a man of the North will be said to refer, in part at least, to the recognition that in Europe the North is a gateway to the

29. *Gravity's Rainbow*, p. 760.

30. The map of America is transferred to that of Europe through corollation like the fact that the southern tip of the Axis was Tripoli, whose latitude is the same as Florida's. At the very center of America is Decatur, Nebraska—42.05°N, 96.04°W—and it is mentioned of this town on page 665 of the novel, amidst a welter of North German ones in the vicinity of the Luneberg Heath, that gives the key to the gridding which has taken place; Decatur is where the United States keeps its chief stock of nuclear weapons in readiness for that Magic Moment.

31. Jaan Puhvel, "The Baltic Pantheon," *Baltic Literature and Linguistics*, eds. A. Ziedonis, J. Puhvel, R. Silbajoris, and M. Valgmae, Ohio, Association For the Advancement of Baltic Studies, Inc., 1973, p. 105.

most recently pre-Christian past. In a similar sense we shall say that Pynchon's choice of the Baltic shore and points immediately south for most of what happens in *Gravity's Rainbow* needs to be compared with Joyce's interest in Bérard's studies of the extent to which the Homeric epics are built on a Phoenician base which the Greeks adopted wholesale, not even bothering to change the names of seaports as they did so, so that place names in Homer are of islands constantly visited by Carthaginian sailors but never by Greeks. Old Prussian, a Balto-Slavic language, has been wiped out by German with a completeness which rivals the disappearance of most American Indian languages, may even be a more thoroughly excoriated tongue than those indigenous to the Americas (in the north part of the continent), and both these extinctions have occurred in exactly the same amount of time. These are items of collective recall—dreaming, as Pynchon has the character Katje Borgesius dream about her Dutch ancestor's participation in the extermination of the Dodos—which *Gravity's Rainbow* excavates through a continuity and structure which finally comes to call itself cinematic.

The film of the *Spiral Jetty* uses montage to equate earth-movers with dinosaurs—a comparison which Smithson also made in writing "The Monuments of Passaic"<sup>32</sup>—and to comment upon the already noted affinity between the upward spiralling of crystal formations and the shape of the sculpture. This isomorphism which Smithson identifies elsewhere with the spiral formed by a reel of film and with regard to the filming itself: "For my film (a film is a spiral made up of frames) I would have myself filmed from a helicopter (from the Greek *helix*, *helikos* meaning spiral) directly overhead in order to get the scale in terms of erratic steps."<sup>33</sup>

*Gravity's Rainbow* proceeds entirely through such erratic steps, which, in their apparent discontinuity point, as in cinematic montage, to other affinities which otherwise lock disparate images together. As in montage, those affinities emerge within the paradoxical context of a continuity founded on a dialectic of disjunction. Carrying over from one sequence to another involves an opposition rather than a mimicry between the two. On page 359 of *Gravity's Rainbow* one comes to the end of a chapter which has been dealing with an event in the past of Tchitcherine, Slothrop's Russian counterpart:

Tchitcherine will reach the Kirghiz light, but not his birth. He is no aqyn, and his heart will never be ready. He will see it just before dawn. He will spend 12 hours then, face-up in the desert, a prehistoric city greater than Babylon lying in stifled mineral sleep a kilometer below his back, as the shadow of the tall rock, rising to a point, dances west to east and Dzaqyp Qulan tends him, anxious as child and doll, and drying loam laces the necks of the two horses. . . .

32. Robert Smithson, "The Monuments of Passaic," *Artforum*, VI (December, 1967), 49.

33. Smithson, "The Spiral Jetty," p. 226.

Shortly after this the chapter ends and another begins. In its second paragraph one meets Slothrop, who at this point in the book's 'present' is in Berlin in the summer of 1945:

So here he is, under the trees in summer leaf, in flower, many of them blasted horizontal into chips and splinters—fine dust from the bridle paths rising in the sunrays by itself, ghosts of horses still taking their early morning turns through the peacetime park. Up all night and thirsty, Slothrop lies on his stomach and slurps up water, just an old saddle tramp at the water hole here . . . Fool . . . (*author's elisions.*)<sup>34</sup>

This description of Slothrop as a saddletramp—substituting the wild west for Asia—completes an identification with Tchitcherine initiated by the mention of "ghosts of horses" and established by the American's lying on his face drinking water while the Russian lay on his back in the sun. It is a use of posture to unite different spaces in such a way that their contents reinforce one another and which works, like film, primarily through visual images with regard to which the text claims a broad if not absolute freedom of access. This capacity for moving from one state to another, the Surrealist ambition of placing shots—memories—of the inside next to traces of the outside, is the ability which has persistently been restored to literature through cinematic example; a point amplified rather than undermined by such examples as the beginning of *Bleak House*, which moves one around a series of places in a way that must be reminiscent of film for a modern reader. One might also note here that Saussure's preferred term for the opposition of vocal statics and dynamics was *kinematics*.<sup>35</sup>

Not surprisingly, it is in Joyce that one finds the literary antecedent for the type of continuity employed by Pynchon. The first fact we learn about Leopold Bloom is his liking for the inner organs of beasts and fowl: "most of all he liked grilled mutton kidneys which gave to his palate a fine twang of faintly scented urine." (*Ulysses*, p. 55.) Which makes us remember Stephen's reflection of a few pages before: "death I living breathe, tread dead dust, devour a urinous offal from all dead." (p. 51.)

With the question of how transitions are handled in these works—of their dependance on cinematic example or analogy—we are returned to others raised here so far. According to Mallarmé, it is through gaps in the surface that organization and therefore the most crucial level of signification emerge; the work's transitions are the work.

In both cases a redistributive model mimics but at the same time mocks pathetic notions of death, perhaps endorsing Iris Murdock's remark that "only the greatest art invigorates without consoling." Certainly neither work is responsive

34. *Gravity's Rainbow*, p. 359ff.

35. Roman Jakobson, "The Kazan' School of Polish Linguistics," p. 421.

to the demand, usually advanced under the banner of humanism, that art bear testimony to the adequacy of a liberal sensibility. Rather, they tend to show how the assumptions of that sensibility have long been demolished by the application of its own procedures. And it is in this sense, at the level of implicit ideology, that *Gravity's Rainsow* and the *Spiral Jetty* testify to liberalism's defeat at the hands of science, in that they are rendered incomprehensible—or, worse, misleadingly clear—by the attribution to them of Romantic intent, or of a preoccupation with erotic destructiveness which precludes the antithesis of a non-erotic sense of death offered by Freud. Benjamin said that: "Comfort isolates; on the other hand it brings those enjoying it closer to mechanization."<sup>36</sup> It would seem that this proximity is felt as a subversion of the very comfort it is meant to promote. A comfort which has historically been assured by liberalism's possession of a scientific approach compatible with an individualism which forgets to admit that the individuals concerned are by definition privileged, in the way that the laboratory provides the empirical method with an Ideal continuum wherein data exists to confirm predictions about its own behavior. Liberalism is that doctrine which uses the exigencies of scientific method to conceal the nature of the relationship between the one and the many as that occurs not in an Ideal, hermetic, universe, but in the world at large. The world in which we in fact live is an environment not closed by tautology but rather torn asunder by contradictions which science itself has unearthed.

Without losing sight of Freud's metonymy of Eros and Thanatos, it is now time to further consider the dialectic between the present and its past. This opposition, which in both the *Spiral Jetty* and *Gravity's Rainbow* is dependant on a specific sense of place, returns us to the question of modernism's relationship to the disinterestedness of the epic, and the notion, originally Saussure's, of the signifier preceding the signified. Those are the coordinates of the investigation which will concern us for the rest of this essay, bringing us back to Breton—as well as to Joyce and Mallarmé—and introducing that definitive critique of empiricism's secret pathos, Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.

\*

About one mile north of the oil seeps I selected my site. Irregular beds of limestone dip gently eastward, massive deposits of black basalt are broken over the peninsula, giving the region a shattered appearance. It is one of few places on the lake where the water comes right up to the mainland. Under shallow pinkish water is a network of mud cracks supporting the jig-saw puzzle that composes the salt flats. As I looked at the site, it reverberated out to the horizons only to suggest an

36. Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, London, NLB, 1973, p. 131.

immobile cyclone while flickering light made the entire landscape appear to quake. A dormant earthquake spread into the fluttering stillness, into a spinning sensation without movement. This site was a rotary that enclosed itself in an immense roundness. From that gyrating space emerged the possibility of the Spiral Jetty. No idea, no concepts, no systems, no structures, no abstractions would hold themselves together in the actuality of that evidence. My dialectics of site and nonsite whirled into an indeterminate state, where solid and liquid lost themselves in each other. It was as if the mainland oscillated with waves and pulsations, and the lake remained rock still. The shore of the lake became the edge of the sun, a boiling curve, an explosion rising into a fiery prominence. Matter collapsing into the lake mirrored in the shape of a spiral. No sense wondering about classifications and categories, there were none.<sup>37</sup>

\*

But, if I'm riding through it, the Real Text, right now, if this is it . . . or if I passed it today somewhere in the devastation of Hamburg, breathing the ash dust, missing it completely . . . if what the IG built on this site were not at *all* the final shape of it, but only an arrangement of fetishes, come-ons to call down special tools in the form of 8th AF bombers *yes* the "Allied" planes all would have been, ultimately, IG built, by way of Director Krupp, through his English interlocks—the bombing was the exact industrial process of conversion, each release of energy placed exactly in space and time, each shockwave plotted in advance to bring *precisely tonight's wreck* into being thus decoding the Text, thus coding, recoding, decoding the holy Text . . . If it is in working order, what is it meant to do? The engineers who built it as a refinery never knew there were any final steps to be taken. Their design was "finalized", and they could forget it.<sup>38</sup> (*author's elisions.*)

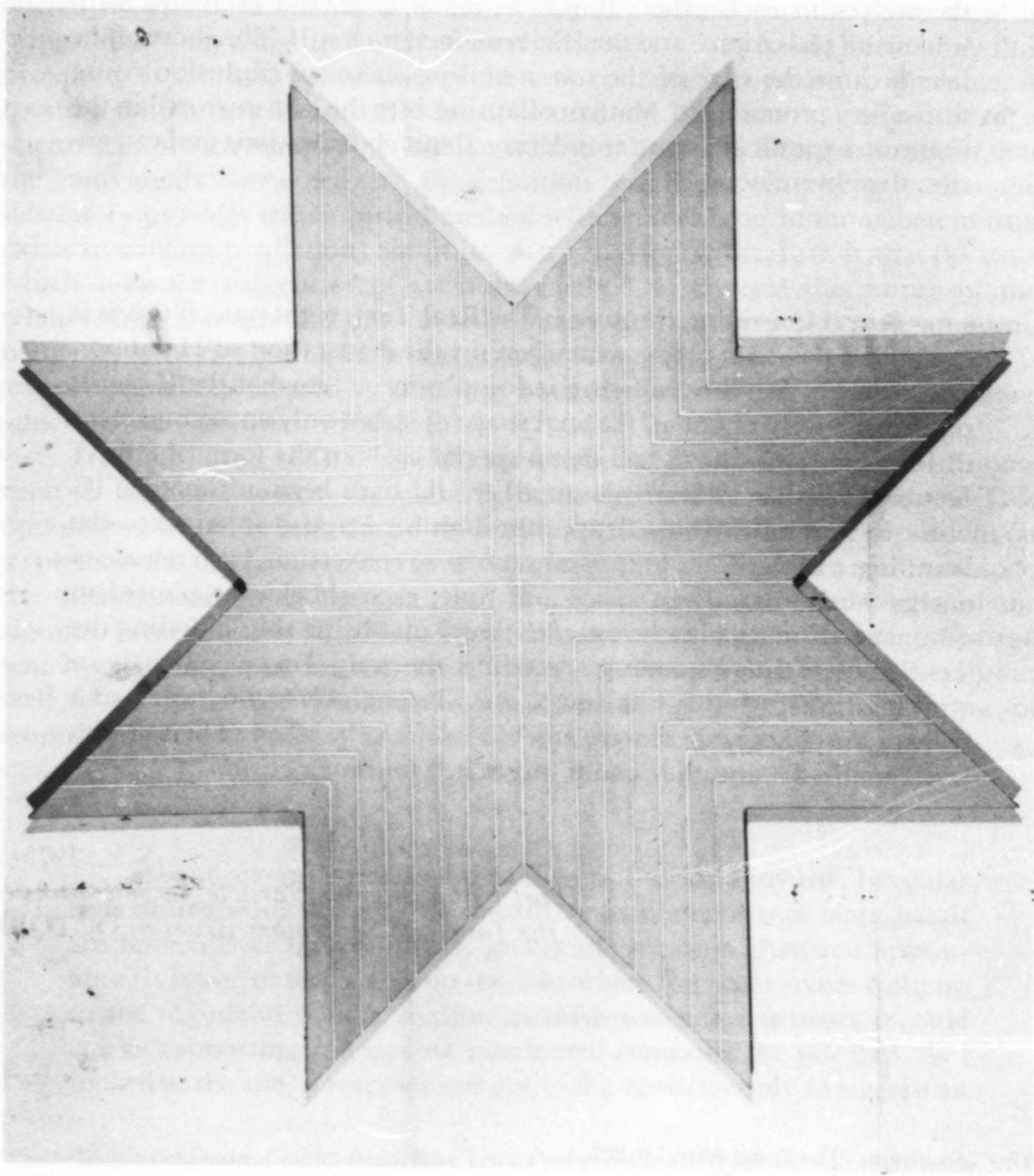
N.Y., 1975-1976

(*Part 1 of a three-part article, to be continued in the June and September issues of OCTOBER.*)

37. Smithson, "The Spiral Jetty," p. 223.

38. *Gravity's Rainbow*, p. 529ff.

*Frank Stella. Black Adder. 1965. Metallic powder in polymer emulsion on canvas. 77 by 178 inches. (Coll: Mrs. Leo Castelli.)*



## JEAN-CLAUDE LEBENSZTEJN

TRANSLATED BY JOHN JOHNSTON.

... Let us begin with a banality. Talking about painting is difficult because of an enigmatic and disproportionate disparity (not necessarily gigantic, but worse: indeterminate) between painting and its critical commentary. This disparity applies less to the distance between them than to their heterogeneity: no common standard will measure the relationship between two objects situated in different spaces. The relationship, shall we say, is infinite, as Michel Foucault writes: "It is not that speech is imperfect, and in a deficit relation to the visible which it strives vainly to make up. Rather, the two are irreducible to one another: we try in vain to say what we see, what we see never resides in what we say, and in vain we try to show, through images, metaphors, comparisons, what we are saying; but the space in which they shine is not that unfolded by the eyes, but one defined by syntactic successions."<sup>1</sup>

It is still more difficult to talk about Frank Stella, whose painting eliminates every trace of discourse and perspective, brushing aside their very forms. The difficulty is evident in two books that set out to talk about this painting.<sup>2</sup> Considered on their own terms, they are both ideal: full of information, highly intelligent, as they say; and even "superbly written", as one says of the other.<sup>3</sup> Above all, both books reveal an analytic precision lacking in our own writing on art. They cruelly demonstrate, in every way, the difference between American art criticism—precise, economical, controlled—and French—garrulous, excited, ridiculous.

After reading them, however, one retains as an after-taste, the impression that everything has not been said, and consequently that nothing has been said. That it's possible that everything remains to be said and that nothing can be said. That Stella's work may be entirely deprived of interest through dislocation from the pictorial field to the plane of criticism.

One of the authors acknowledges, on two separate occasions, the impossibility of adequate commentary on painting of this sort. The black paintings of 1959 "seem

1. Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*, Paris, Gallimard, 1966, p. 25.

2. William Rubin, *Frank Stella*, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1970; Robert Rosenblum, *Frank Stella*, Baltimore, Penguin, 1970.

3. Rubin, p. 84.

to defy interpretation."<sup>4</sup> And when the commentary aspires to overcome this impossibility—to try would only be a description of what happens in the painting—it becomes tedious and unreadable. Thus the passages on what are known as the colored labyrinths of *Hyena Stomp* or *Jasper's Dilemma*: "The predictable patterns that govern these works are as tedious to describe in words as any other configurations in plane geometry, but the results are totally alive and exhilarating."<sup>5</sup>

Who, then, is going to account for this life and enthusiasm elicited by the visible product? Certainly not Robert Rosenblum, the author of the above text, except to say that he cannot say anything. (And what, actually, is one to say of these black stripes in regular, symmetrical configurations, these parallel zigzags, these interpenetrating planes, these arcs of interlaced circles? Nothing. The iconographic study will be made three hundred years from now, assuming the world hasn't changed by then.)

Speaking of painting and of the Abstract Expressionist Painters (with a capital P, which they themselves believed in), who dominated the artistic scene when he himself started to work, Stella says, "I began to feel very strongly about finding a way that wasn't so wrapped up in the hullabaloo, or a way of working that you couldn't write about."<sup>6</sup> In any case, a way of working about which the critic can say nothing that appeals to the life of the painter, to his psychology, to his torments—nothing which does not alter the laws of the critical genre. Stella forces us to try to invent another type of discourse; or to note, by default, the inadequacy of traditional discourse on art. His work makes us admit that critical commentary, disguised as a transparent neutrality, is a loaded discourse and frequently inapplicable.

What is it, in Stella's work, that stops critical comment, (and can we ask this question without abandoning it?) It may be this: our visual field, within which the aesthetic discourse is inscribed, is still overwhelmingly figurative. Although the system of representation established in the Renaissance may no longer be available, it continues to shape our way of seeing. Our aesthetics and our discourse are invisibly structured by it.

(The age-old and mimetic foundation of this system has only begun to decompose. The work of Jacques Derrida, which is not unrelated to this development, directs attention to it through strangeness, and through the extravagant patience of its strategy.)

One must not forget that after sixty years the break with representation is still not wholly acceptable to our cultural conscience. As William Rubin reminds us, "Stella is one of the first major painters in the modern tradition to have been formed virtually entirely through the practice of abstract art."<sup>7</sup> We certainly

4. Rosenblum, p. 11.

5. Rosenblum, p. 30.

6. Frank Stella, interview given to a television network in 1966, cited in Rubin, p. 13.

7. Rubin, p. 8.

accept abstract art. The corrections inflicted over the past century by the judgment of history upon our predecessors force the cultivated man to overcome his distaste. The artist, however, is first required to have demonstrated his abilities by delivering his mastery of representation to History. "Some critics place a kind of moral value on representational competence, as if such competence guaranteed an artist's professionalism and gave him the right to be abstract."<sup>8</sup>

Stella's painting cuts these underground roots away. To begin with, it rejects the traditional values transmitted through Abstract Expressionism: creation, expression, discourse. It rejects: art understood as "constantly a record of your sensitivity,"<sup>9</sup> as an emanation expression of the artist; the artist as father and tormented creator of his work; the work as a visible form of an invisible depth that transcends it, analogous to the soul transcending the body of which it is nonetheless the necessary incarnation. Finally it rejects the apocalyptic or sentimental sauce which, in Abstract Expressionism, binds all these elements: "Although Stella had a high opinion of Motherwell's *Je t'aime* paintings, he was put off by what he considered the romantic pretentiousness of the French inscriptions painted across the surfaces of the paintings. In his parody of the series, Stella inscribed such titles as 'Your lips are blue' and 'Mary Lou douches with pine-scented lysol.'"<sup>10</sup>

It is here that paradox intervenes. With one near exception concerning the pictorial field's shape, Stella's painting, at least up to 1966-7, is not very remarkable for its invention of forms. Reflection, not incompetence, is involved.

The paradox consists not in the rejection of values linked to lyric abstraction, or of those linked to geometric abstraction, but in the simultaneous rejection of both, and of the very basis of that sort of taxonomy. Stella's painting dismisses both of these stubborn oppositions: discourse and aesthetic, content and form, art for something else and art for art's sake, the transcendental signifier and the transcendental signified. In both lyric and geometric abstraction each of these valorized terms implies the other, since, through a dual exteriority, each bears the other's hollow imprint. Stella acknowledges neither.

Stella's work is one of signification. But in his work the signifier is not understood as a given. It is constructed according to a complex and problematic process. Here are some of the rules:

Let us first recall what's at stake: the extraction of the figurative roots of abstract art—discourse, figure-ground relationship, illusionistic space. The figure-ground relationship, which in the 20th century has replaced perspective in order to restore an illusionistic space, generally presupposes quantitative differences, of extension and recurrence. If we have, on the one hand, relatively few units of extension and relatively numerous units of recurrence, and, on the other hand, relatively numerous units of extension and few units of recurrence, we tend to read

8. Rubin, p. 8.

9. Stella, 1966 interview, cited in Rubin p. 13.

10. Rubin p. 151, n. 10.

the first as units of a figure, the second as units of a ground. If the quantities are equal, or constant in relationship, if they take the form of rectilinear bands of equal width and identical color which do not overlap, the figure-ground relationship, and thus the restoration of illusionism, is halted. One might claim it is still possible to regard such a painting as an outline drawing. The bands act as ground, the lines which separate them as figures. In Stella's work, however, this reading becomes unfeasible. In the series of black paintings, for example, the four-inch-wide bands are painted black and the thin white lines of separation are unpainted. They are lines of reserve. They form a negative web through which the prime of the canvas reappears. A dilemma arises. One must either assume that the 'figure' (the web) is not marked, which contradicts our notion of the figure as the locus of the mark, or else suppose that the mark establishes the large black bands as figure. But this contradicts the quantitative relationships according to which a figure, in order to be read as such, provides a certain field in the ground. And this problematic reversal follows logically from the work's restriction of means: no color other than black, no form other than the rectilinear bands, parallel and of unvarying width. "As is often the case in twentieth century art, this stark reduction of pictorial means produced ends of high visual complication . . . Stella's relation here of black stripe to white linear ground exists in a constant ambiguity of solid and void, with extremes of light and darkness shifting their roles as positive and negative areas."<sup>11</sup> One notes the manner in which the commentary, in correctly describing a situation that subverts the figure-ground relationship, it still caught up in figurative habits, which determine the description of the white web as ground. The result, however, is clear: "Even such vestiges of illusionistic space as remained in Abstract Expressionist pictures . . . have been largely expunged from the picture."<sup>12</sup>

Other rules are here implied, such as the principle of repetition, obsessive in Stella—"I began to think a lot about repetition"<sup>13</sup>—and in the art of the 1960s in general.

There is also the principle of non-hierarchization, as in the monochromatic paintings of 1961, or in those of the Moroccan series of 1964-5, in which the bands "totally annihilate the sense of major and minor components."<sup>14</sup> (In these, the notion of a radiating center generally takes its place, restoring a problematic hierarchy which is no longer discontinuous with respect to the parts of the field, but is continuous with its density.)

Or again, the principle of symmetry, generally eliminated from geometric painting since the 1920s or 1930s: "The idea of symmetry was in disrepute among painters, but it seemed to me that it could be used."<sup>15</sup>

11. Rosenblum, p. 17.

12. Rubin, p. 20.

13. Stella, in Rubin, p. 20.

14. Rosenblum, p. 33.

15. Stella, in Rubin, p. 45.

Symmetry has as its corollaries the abandonment of composition, and the elimination of illusionistic space.<sup>16</sup> Reversability strikes another blow at figuration. In the space of representation, whether perspectival or not (as, for example, in Egypt or the Middle Ages), the parts of the pictorial field are differentiated. The top and bottom, right and left sides are not given the same values.<sup>17</sup> And in Western culture, the most frequent order of reading, from left to right (and top to bottom) creates a link between habits of writing or reading and the narrative thread of a pictorial text.<sup>18</sup> When the representational system began to be dismantled, at the beginning of the 20th century, three solutions appeared. The painter could retain the traditional narrative sequence, as in figurative abstraction. This solution is exemplified in the work of Kandinsky, which maintains and systematizes the classic differentiation between left and right, top and bottom.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the painter could introduce a more complex temporal order into the pictorial text, through which he referred to models of writing and a different temporality. Or finally, the painter constructed his surface on a structural model which called for a total apprehension of the field. Matisse provides an example: "Expression derives from the colored surface which the spectator perceives as a whole."<sup>20</sup>

Stella rejects the first solution, since it is attached to a discursive system of painting. A problematic residue does remain, nevertheless, in the zigzags of 1964-5, which impose a horizontally oriented reading that is simultaneously disrupted, and in the protractor series of 1967-8, which, for the most part, rest solidly on horizontal bases. But he radicalizes the last two solutions. For his paintings, in order to be perceived in their symmetrical alignment, suspend the traditional differentiation of the parts of the field, "demanding an instantaneous visual grasp of the oneness."<sup>21</sup> At the same time one or more temporal orders are superimposed, from one or several centers towards the edges and from the edges towards the center or centers. "Like a diagram of sound waves that radiate from a generating center, these metallic stripes can be seen to reverberate outwards, in ever-expanding patterns; or contrariwise, their concentricities may produce an effect of inward contraction."<sup>22</sup>

These complex effects of reading account for the fact—Stella doesn't sign his canvases—that their hanging is often problematic. The same is true of the non-symmetrical canvases. For example, *Creede I*, a picture in the shape of an L, is

16. On these points see Stella in Bruce Glazer, "Questions to Stella and Judd", in *Minimal Art*, ed. Gregory Battcock, New York, Dutton, 1968, pp. 149-50.

17. See Meyer Shapiro, "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs," *Semiotica*, I, No. 3 (1969), 230-234.

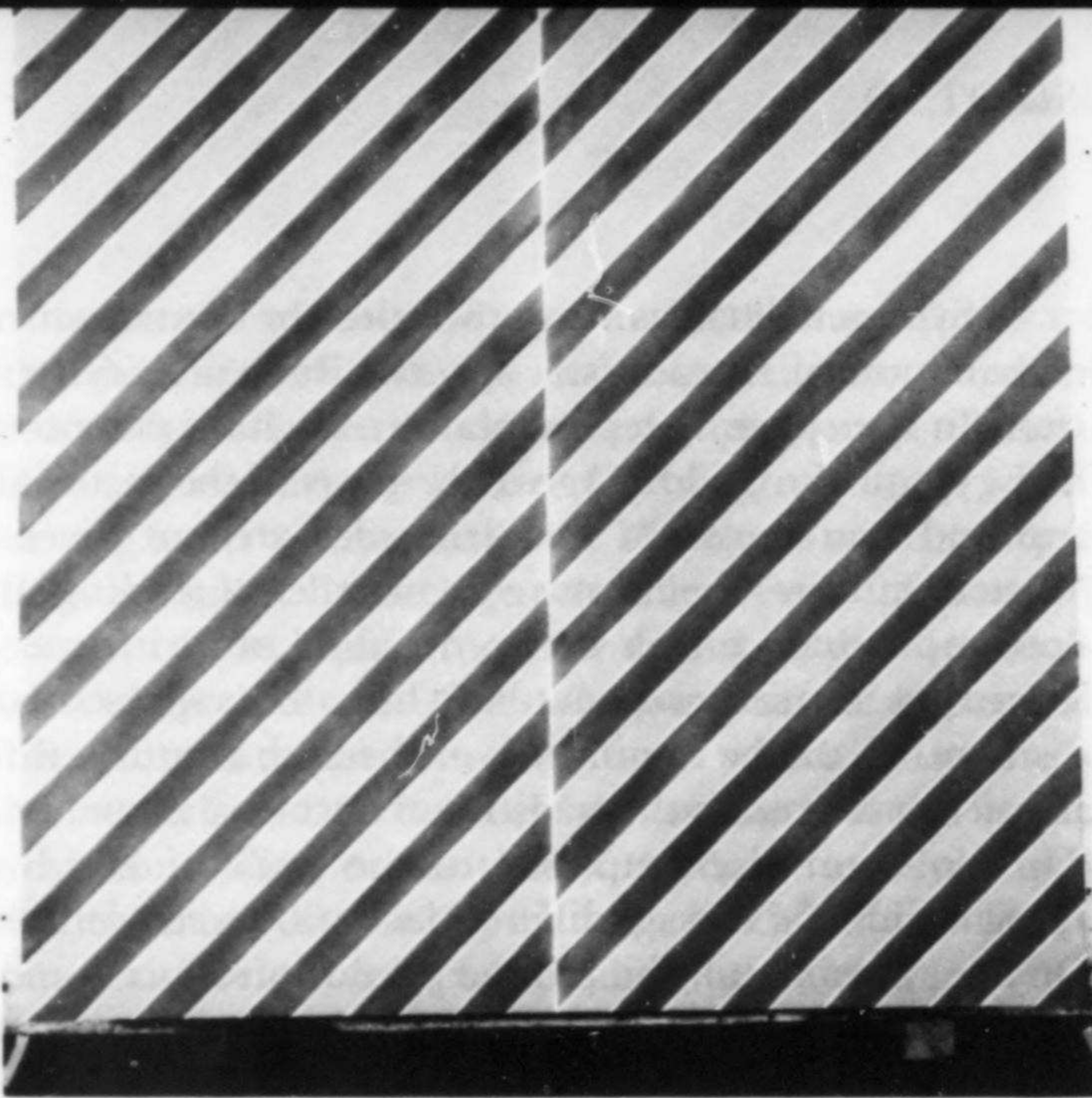
18. See Rubin, pp. 24-5 and 152, n. 32.

19. Wassily Kandinsky, *Point-Ligne-Surface*, Paris, Editions de Beaune, 1926, pp. 99-104.

20. Henri Matisse, "Propos à Tériade," *L'Intransigeant* (January 14, 1929); cited by R. Escholier, *Matisse, se vivant*, Paris, Fayard, p. 98.

21. Rubin, p. 25.

22. Rosenblum, p. 21, regarding the pictures of the aluminum series (reproduced in Rubin, pp. 48-62, and Rosenblum, pp. 20-2.)



Frank Stella  
77 by 77 inc

sometimes reproduced reversed, as an  $\lrcorner$ .<sup>23</sup> *Jasper's Dilemma*, in which two spiral squares—one of values, the other of hues—coexist, is reproduced with the grisaille sometimes on the right, sometimes on the left.<sup>24</sup> The direction of its hanging is unimportant; these pictures function as well either way. Or rather, it's this indifference to hanging that matters, for with it something disappears: the irremovable, intangible character of the work of art, whose signature has guaranteed its direction or sense (in the full meaning of that word) and unity.

There are other rules which emphasize the deconstructive aspects of Stella's work. One is the form of the thin white lines which, in all of Stella's work to date, separate and connect the colored unities. These lines are never painted. Stella insisted on this point in a letter addressed to an American weekly in which the art critic seemed not to have noticed the gaps: "Those who battle for the claims of 'taste' should remind themselves occasionally that the arts are based upon concrete data."<sup>25</sup>

Another rule concerns the relationship between the work and its boundaries, or what Michael Fried calls "deductive structure."<sup>26</sup> Roughly, as Fried defines this relationship, pictorial convention is deduced from the framing edge of the picture field. Differently stated, the boundaries are no longer denied, as they are in Classical painting from the Renaissance to Cézanne, but acknowledged as determinants. Like Rosenblum, Rubin, who discusses the notion of deductive

23. Reproduced thus  $\lrcorner$  in Rubin, p. 66; thus  $\llcorner$  in Rosenblum, p. 23.

24. On the right: in Rubin, p. 77, and in the exhibition catalogue *Frank Stella*, London, Hayward Gallery, 1970, n. 17. On the left: in Rosenblum, p. 30, and in the American Pavilion catalogue of the Venice Biennale, 1964 (not paginated, towards the end.)

25. Stella, letter to *Newsweek*, Feb. 1st., 1961, cited in Rubin, pp. 16-18. This letter, Rubin says, was actually written by Hollis Frampton, the well-known film-maker. It was not published.

26. Michael Fried, preface to the exhibition catalogue *Three American Painters: Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella*, Cambridge, Mass., Fogg Art Museum, 1965.

Frank Stella. Tetuan 3. 1964. Fluorescent alkyd on canvas.  
77 by 77 inches. (Coll: Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Hopper.)

structure in detail, feels—perhaps more justly—that the relationship between the framing edge and the picture's motifs is not deductive but correlative. "Thus the aluminum stripes parallel, with strict obedience, the canvas edge. Just as conversely, the canvas edge parallels the pattern of the stripes."<sup>27</sup>

The acknowledgment of limits is in this sense aggravated by their transgression. The word transgression should be used with caution. One might say that Stella, as he dispenses with a system which does not acknowledge the framing edge, does away with the framing edge as a supposedly absolute separation between the work and that which lies outside it. The dynamic quality of the work as signifier presses one writer to extend the work beyond the limits that it nevertheless acknowledges and affirms, and which genuinely constitute it. Thus, beginning with the black paintings of 1959: ". . . As in Mondrian, these rectilinear relationships never produce discrete, self-sufficient shapes, but radiate beyond the canvas edges. Stella's rectangles . . . imply infinite extendibility, the taut fragments of a potentially larger whole."<sup>28</sup>

In the aluminum series of 1960 the principle of acknowledgment-transgression logically leads to cutting out parts of the field parallel to the motifs. And, reciprocally, the whole play of exchanges, of interpenetrations between inside and outside, visibly and materially calls into question the closure of the classical pictorial field.

At times, as in the violet series of 1963, the center of the picture will even be occupied by an empty space, where the wall reappears, parallel to the motif drawn by the bands and to the outer polygonal edges. The relationship of the picture to its frame is thereby inverted: the picture appears as the frame of a picture formed by the resurgence of the wall.

I am not going to enlarge at this point upon the three principles involved in the structural function of restraint, the acknowledgment of limits and their transgression. They raise serious questions as to the status of art, general notions of fullness and emptiness, of the mark and the non-mark, of inside and outside, division and limit—all questions too serious to settle in a few lines. We will have the occasion to return to them. Setting aside Stella's own statements, which on this subject remain separate from his work as a painter, we can say that the very status of art and of culture are implicated in art's claim to ignore both its location and the material and cultural limits which define it.

Stella demystifies art. In our historical space, painting inclines us to forget what it is materially, to substitute the hand of the painter (that is to say his spirit), for the brush, the facture (the trace of his genius) for the pigments, the transcendental depth of content for the material depth of the support. For his part, Stella tries to prevent these substitutions, to make painting vulgar. Thus he avoids pigments and media with 'high art' connotations. Regarding the series of polygons

27. Rubin, pp. 54-60.

28. Rosenblum, p. 17.

with hollowed out centers, painted in metallic violet: "I was looking for a very vulgar color."<sup>29</sup>

Or again: his work evokes the actual connection between 'the art of painting' to the profession of housepainting. Stella uses its tools, medium, gestures: large brushes, paint from a can applied without the effects of a personal touch, absence of positive design, movement of the arm rather than the hand.

Stella worked as a housepainter, and consciously links the reference to housepainting—by which art is vulgarized—with the concern to expel illusionistic space from the pictorial field. The latter is the means to the former. "The solution I arrived at . . . forces illusionistic space out of the painting at a constant rate by using a regulated pattern. The remaining problem was simply to find a method of paint application which followed and complemented the design solution. This was done by using the housepainter's technique and tools."<sup>30</sup> For there is a relationship between illusionistic space, which cancels its materiality, and the privileged status of painting, which establishes itself as a high art only on condition that it efface its material constituents. And it can attain the title of art, in the particular meaning our culture gives to this word, only if it respects the dividing line which sets it apart from everything else while wholly effacing the evidence of this separation. Representation, illusionistic space, an unacknowledged reverence for the frame, and the valorization of art, conspire to build the classic system of western painting. And 'avant-garde' attempts to challenge these terms singly are doomed to succumb eventually to the return of others, which take over a system only slightly revised.

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A star. Or rather an asterisk. When supplemented by a blank space, in *OCTOBER*, it is the sign of discontinuity. (In other places three asterisks arranged in a triangle signal and support a textual break.)

Most often Stella paints in series, following a tradition that dates back to, among others, Dubuffet, Mondrian, Monet. The series creates a higher and problematic unity in a painter's work. The variable interstices between paintings have a unifying function within this unity, like the celestial 'field' which relates the stars of a constellation. The field—in this case the space of a gallery or a catalogue—is thereby recognized. The individual work assumes its shape only within the field of the series. It no longer denies its cultural space through the unity of the rectangle.

Stella's work generates, on all its levels, a recurrent shape, the broken line. When open, it's a zigzag, when closed, a star. Their discontinuous movement traverses the work (the relationship amongst motifs), the series (the relationship among the works), the totality of the production (the relationship among the series).

29. Stella, in Rubin, p. 82.

30. Stella, statement given at Pratt Institute, 1959-60; reprinted in Rosenblum, p. 57.

When speaking of a painter's development, one frequently forgets to consider its form. Stella seems to construct this form with the same attentiveness as the motifs of his canvases. But can one still speak of development, in the sense of evolution? Not if development or evolution as we now understand it suggests continuity in a painlessly changing transformation. Development implies the form of a straight line or, less frequent and more archaic, of a circle.<sup>31</sup> A shape, in every case, continuous, foreseeable (retrospectively), oriented. We are familiar with the political effects of this linearity. Revolutionaries are also preoccupied with evolutionism, and with the violence that puts an end to violence. And violence silently pervades the evolutionism that denies it by trying to smooth out or round off its angles.

Stella's career is predicated on discontinuity. He certainly feels himself to be rooted in Abstract Expressionism, from which he had adopted the materials, the gestures, the vast all-over composition of surface. Stella admits to these roots: "I still feel rooted in Abstract Expressionism—or New York School—as I probably always will be."<sup>32</sup>

But Stella did not retain everything from Abstract Expressionism: only certain material decisions and not the pathos, the conception of art and the artist. "I see it a little differently now and I began to see it differently then—what I saw, what I liked, was the openness of the gesture, the directness of the attack."<sup>33</sup> "I was very taken with Abstract Expressionism, largely because of the obvious physical elements, particularly the size of the paintings and the wholeness of the gesture. I had always liked house painting anyway, and the idea that they were using larger brushes . . . seemed to be a nice way of working."<sup>34</sup>

Stella shrewdly reverses the question of influence as art criticism, including Rubin's, has tended to put it. It's not a question of X's influence on Y, but (and these obvious facts still bear repeating) of how Y has seen X, what he has adopted and rejected. Stella, in rejecting Abstract Expressionism's idealist point of view, in retaining only its working material, transforms this work deeply, foregrounds it, raises it from the low estate to which it had been consigned by the idealism of painters themselves and of their critics. In spite of this, it is the break and not the link with Abstract Expressionism which must concern us, as it struck those who, in 1959, confronted the black paintings.

Stella's work contains another, even more remarkable, principle of discontinuity. Stella is, obviously, a distinct figure whose paintings are easily recognizable. But the work is not all of one piece. His progress has been neither continuous nor linear.

For example: the acknowledgment of the framing edge is achieved through

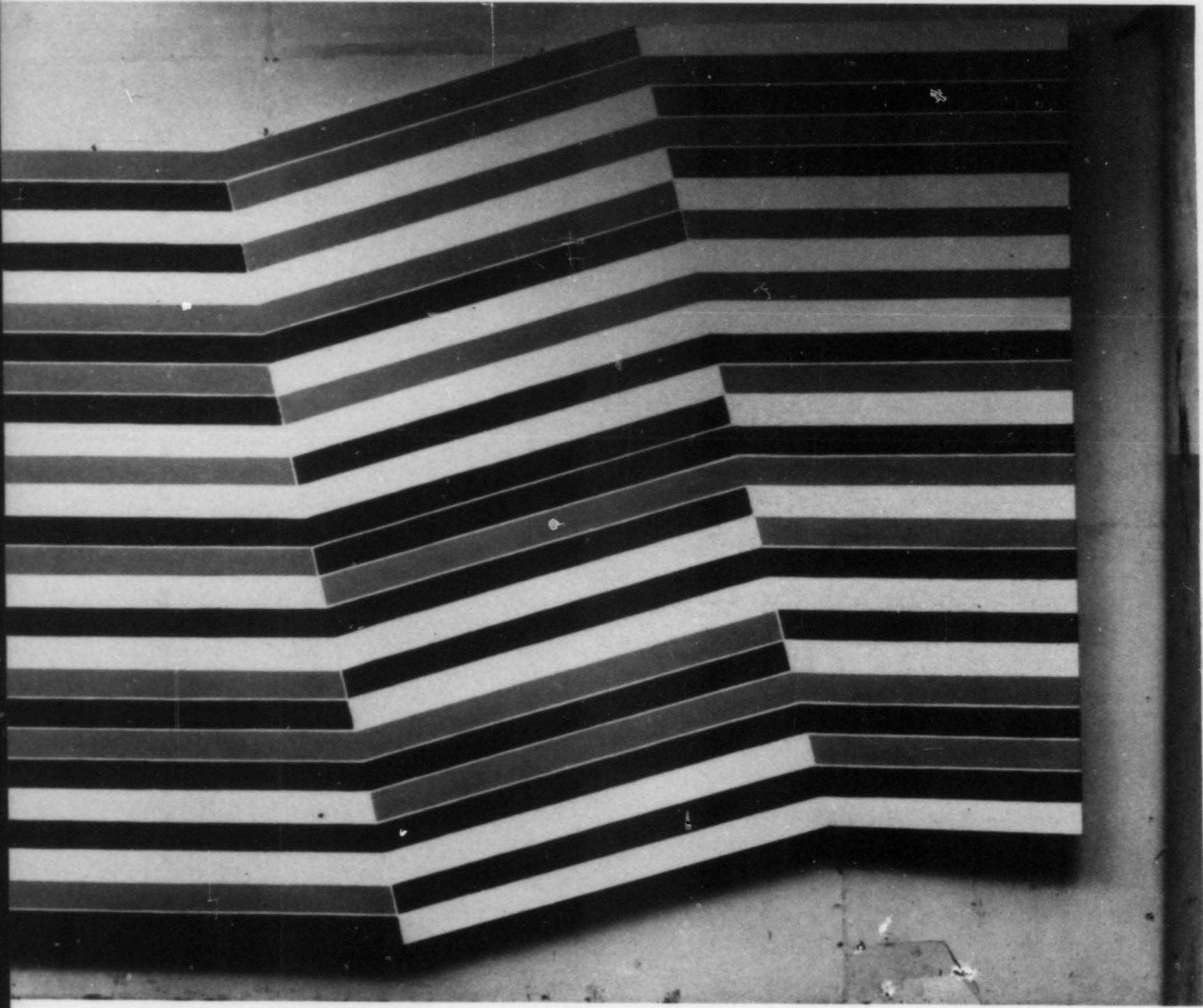
31. Jacques Derrida, "Positions," *Promise*, No. 30-31 (1971), 23: "In a linear fashion, as you recall, in a straight or circular line."

32. Stella, televised interview in 1966, cited in Rubin, p. 10.

33. Rubin, p. 10.

34. Rubin, p. 9.

*Frank Stella. Bam. 1966. Fluorescent alkyd on canvas.  
90 by 148 inches. (Coll: Kasmin Gallery, London.)*



two contrary modalities. Some series adhere to the traditional form of the field, rectangular or square: the series of black paintings of 1959, the monochrome ones of 1961, the concentric squares and labyrinths of colors (1962-3), the Moroccan series (1964-5), the Saskatchewan series (1968-9). Others are constructed according to various polygonal forms. These shaped canvases, perhaps Stella's most striking formal invention, are produced concurrently with the other type: the aluminum series of 1960, the curved series (1960-2), the violet series with the open centers (1963), the series of V's and zigzags (1964-66), the irregular polygons of (1966-7), the protractor series (1967-9).

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As Rosenblum observes, the rectangular series and the cut-out series often alternate.<sup>35</sup> But not according to a simple alternation; that would retrace, in a way, a linear development, and some very different series have actually been made simultaneously. In 1964-5, Stella worked on the zigzags, V, and Moroccan paintings all at the same time. That is to say, simultaneously on the shaped canvases—both monochrome and multi-hued, in which the colors only serve to emphasize the cut-outs, and on the square polychrome canvases, where the squareness engenders a more or less complex play of color relationships.

Our idea of a painter's evolution is doubly challenged. For we expect an evolution without too many turns, and one that at the same time escapes the painter's control; that the risks of life and history direct its course. Here, nothing of the sort. In Stella's work the transformations are simultaneously violent and calculated. From their breaks, regressions, disagreeable proposals, he extricates a shape neither rectilinear nor circular. Whether zigzag or star, it is as if the shapes that organize the canvases also dictate the forms of transformation in their production.

In this homomorphy, a series is like a shape. Such is the case in the series of zigzag and star canvases of 1963, whose titles are taken from the names for Florida cities: *Plant City*, *Polk City*, *Tampa*. From these paintings two types of series seem to radiate. In 1964 their configurations generate simultaneously the V-multiples (named after English sailboats) and the Moroccan canvases, the latter being squares divided equally from the center and comprised of four or eight sections constituted by bands of alternate colors, the ensemble of sections producing an alternation of alternations.

A sheet of graphpaper, dated 1964, seems to confirm these links. It depicts four designs: two of the Moroccan canvases, one of the star-canvases, and one of the zigzags. If these star-canvases date from 1963, as Rubin says, and the two other series from 1964-5, we can assume that the star-canvases have given rise simultaneously to consecutive series that are very diverse, or at least that the three series, as well as the V-multiples, are closely related.

Stella doesn't sign his work, a condition of their reversability, since the signature would impose a top and bottom. This relationship between the name (the signature, authority, patronage) and implicit hierarchy, deserves further consideration.

The signature, in pointing towards the top, establishes the painting as an irreversible, unique, irreplaceable object—as original, as art, and as figure. The figurative function, name, God, the origin—a cluster which acts to establish our historical idea of the transcendent work of art. Everything that confers shape, sense, and value is condensed in the signature.

In a certain way, however, Stella does sign his work. He does so more elegantly, invisibly, totally, reversibly, questioning the rectangular support (even

35. Rosenblum, p. 43.

when present): by the play of protruding and returning angles; by the paradigm of the star; by the arrangement of the work into series—which is to say, constellations; in the starred course traced by the series of series.

To efface the signature requires delicate, patient, strategy. The time for anonymity has not yet arrived. The artists, writers, gallery owners, editors, critics, experts, buyers, who represent the forces at work in the production of art and literature, derive their profit from the privilege conferred upon the name of the artist in our culture.

Stella, then, eliminates his signature but not his name. And these days, with a name like his, one doesn't play down the effect of its brilliance. The use of metallic or fluorescent paint, absorbing and reflecting light in disjunctive scintillation, and emitting it in turn, is also there to make the star shine. And the "literary or glamorous" titles of the aluminum series, which refer to "Arab philosophers, bullfighters, and racing drivers"<sup>36</sup> evoke another sense of the word star. For Stella himself is also a star.

All of which is rather trivial. The most serious criticism is that which attends to its function, checking the fetishism of the artist's name.

Otherwise the name takes revenge by returning to play in the text unacknowledged. For example, in the title of an article in which Stella is implicated: "Constellation by Harsh Daylight."<sup>37</sup> Or in the course of a little, somewhat pedantic, book, in which the notion of constellation, applied to the structural constellations of Joseph Albers, comes to inexorably haunt the text.<sup>38</sup>

The critical text, blind to what governs it—the fetishism of the name—cannot entirely cover over Stella's work. It represses the point of rupture, it multiplies the problematic play. But this repression returns to the text in the ludic form of the paragrammatized name.

We now return to the critical texts of Rubin, an intelligent curator, and Rosenblum, an intelligent art critic-historian. There are three ways in which these texts both miss and mask Stella's problematic work. They reduce the effect of a break by a 'linear' pasting-over; they cancel the obliteration of the signified with an expressionist rhetoric, they co-opt the devalorization of the transcendental signifier through a formalist valorization.

It is at this point that the old battery of influences is hauled out. Rubin discusses Stella's development in terms of influences, beginning with Pollock and Jasper Johns. There is an extensive consideration of the scope of Barnett Newman's influence. And, finally, that of Matisse. We note, in passing, that Stella's name returns to play quietly in the text: "It is primarily under *his* star that Stella's enterprise has evolved in recent years."<sup>39</sup>

36. Stella, in Rubin, p. 63.

37. Lucy R. Lippard, "Constellation by Harsh Daylight: The Whitney Annual," *Hudson Review*, (Spring 1968), 174-82.

38. Max Indahl, *Frank Stella, Sanborville II*, Stuttgart, Philip Reclam jun., 1970, pp. 24, 28-30.

39. Rubin, p. 149.

These claims are undoubtedly true. However, given the tireless citing of influences, sources, origins, declarations, one must insist that the critic fails to account for the intensity of the break that characterizes the work. If Stella is to be related to other painters, he must be connected to other artists of the fifties and sixties who have shared in that same break (in reading these monographs, one gets the impression that Stella exists all alone); and, in this connection, not as a link in a chain of influences, but as an element in a system, or as part of a lineage of discontinuity: Cézanne—Matisse—Mondrian—Pollock, which is to say, in a tradition of problematic painting. To state it differently: seen in a tradition of discontinuity, Matisse and Pollock no longer occur as providers of forms and stylistic formulae, but as painters whose work irrevocably questions painting as to its very nature. This series of breaks must be seen, not as an avant-garde succession—in which an evolution of discontinuity is substituted for the evolutionism of continuity—but in the form of a problematic constellation, whose systemics set off the 20th century as a deconstructive synchrony.

Rubin even effaces the paratactic divergences of Stella's career by presenting the series in a linear succession, one after another. Every so often, a sentence calls attention to this practice: "Stella's development from the Black through the Purple series impresses one in retrospect by the taut, step-by-step logic with which it unfolds (despite the tangential offshoots from the Benjamin Moore pictures)." <sup>40</sup> This logic, in effect, is striking, but his deviations are no exception. If the different series are deduced from each other, it's according to a logic which is broken, bifurcated. Alternation of the rectangular and shaped canvases must not be considered as a simple opposition or deduction. The two types are structured by the same set of problems, the acknowledgment and transgression of limits. And the logic of these problems, which shapes Stella's career, opens up an extravagant and divided path.

Certainly there are remedies to make the breaks disappear. One is to erase the marks of a far too visible effacement. The adjectives now march by: "their numb, enigmatically vacant simplicity." <sup>41</sup> "The severely heraldic designs, whose ritualistic dignity is wittily echoed in one of the titles, *Luis Miguel Dominquin*, the name of a bullfighter." <sup>42</sup>

The pathos of adjectives is not only decorative and emotional; it has a function within the text. It allows the trenchantly problematic nature of the work as signifier to be effaced, "to preserve the old humanistic values"; to reestablish continuity with the art from which this work sets itself apart; to re-attach art to life, the man to the work, the pictorial work to the private drama. The black paintings "perpetuate the mood of the 1950s in their heroic, Newmanesque scale and in the persistent aura of

40. That is to say, the monochrome squares of 1961 traversed by rectilinear shapes. Rubin, p. 89.

41. Rosenblum, p. 21. He is referring to the black paintings.

42. Rosenblum, p. 21. He is referring to the aluminum paintings. We recall that, according to Stella himself, the title of the picture in question makes no reference to its "ritualistic dignity," but to its glamorous brilliance.

some private drama that must lie behind their solemn, monkish presences."<sup>43</sup> The artist is indeed the transcendental father of the work, it is he who inhabits its beyond, he who is doubly signified by the work's emotional depth.

Finally, the glory to which the criticism contributes, and which it never questions, is art itself. Take, for example, the 1967-8 series, with the circular colored bands: "Its fluorescent pinks, reds, oranges, yellows, and indigos give *Tahkt-i Sulayman I* something of the air of psychedelic design—although, of course, in the form of high art."<sup>44</sup> Stella can work to render problematic the status of art and the values that are there embodied; the commentary is here to reassure us. Of course, there is high art, presented to us in a form within a form, and criticism can make allowance for differences, set up a hierarchy, distinguish its levels.

And Stella, following a classic procedure in talking about art, certainly evokes other artists. But in so doing Stella remains no less unique: "Yet for all these external connections with the style and the taste of the late 1960s, whether on the level of the finest pictorial achievements and the most serious critical attitudes of these years or simply on the level of a popular vogue for psychedelic colors and extravagant geometries, Stella's art remains magnificently unique."<sup>45</sup>

In order to understand this weird reasoning, one must retrieve a few elided elements. Stella allows the well-stocked memory to summon up the names of many painters, thereby placing him within the great family of painters, in the consoling continuity of our cultural heritage. But since art (high art) is, as we know, the domain of the unique, the more the artist can evoke the names of other artists, the more he can awaken our capacity for association and can extend our 'Museum without Walls', the more will he be unique.

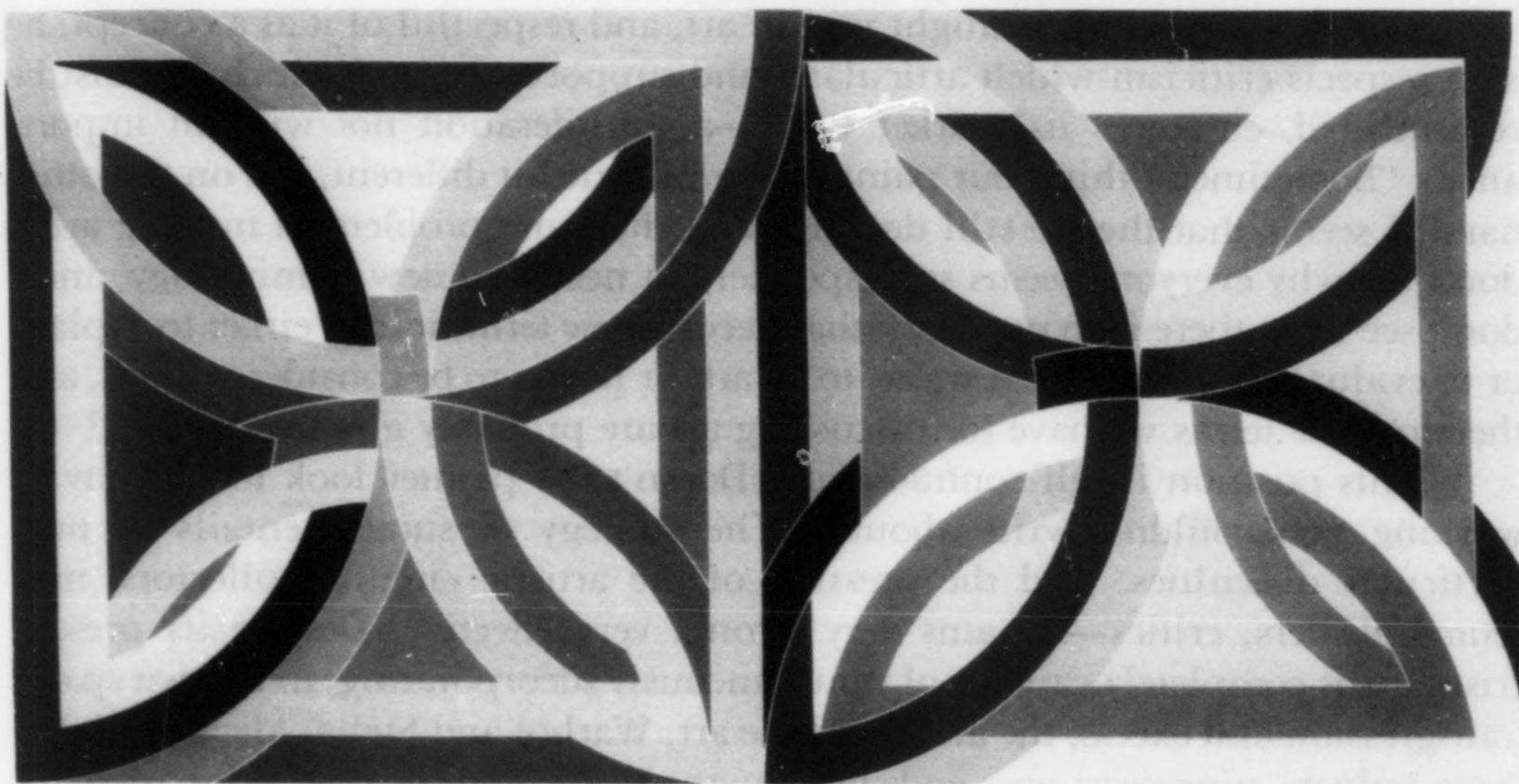
Thus, in spite of the painter's effective disruption of high art (and the hierarchies of taste, feeling, and the stock-exchange values that such concepts support), his work is co-opted through the institutional discourse of the museum and the art critic. Stella does also elude discourse of this sort, for it is powerless to convey the shock-effect in which his principle strength resides. It is precisely the system on which this criticism is based (a system whose values are evolutionism, the author, intrinsic work, belief in art as a superior value, the form-content opposition) that Stella's work tends to undermine.

Why, then, need we discuss his work? Because that is precisely the function of discourse in a threatened culture. Criticism is like an antibody through which the cultural organism defends itself and tries to reduce the virus which attacks any point in its organization. One should, however, in the defence of criticism, add the following: if Stella can be incorporated, hoisted by criticism to the level of high art, it is because his work does exhibit certain ambiguities, contradictions, points which offer a foothold to that discourse. Stella remains largely caught up in the concepts of the oeuvre, of art, of the positivism of the visible. The antitheses of art

43. Rosenblum, p. 21.

44. Rubin, p. 135.

45. Rosenblum, p. 50.



Frank Stella. Tahkt-I-Sulayman Variation I, 1969.  
Fluorescent alkyd on canvas. 120 by 240 inches. (Coll:  
Dr. John Shuey.)

and everything else, of the artist and the non-artist, continue to their function as constitutive elements of his work. The function of art is not a problem for him. He navigates successfully in the space of the gallery and museum. These questions demand further exploration, but we can say for the present that it could be otherwise; Stella could depart from his own cultural space.

Since abstraction and Dada, the double strategy of excess and transgression has disrupted art. It may be that those artists who try to make an exit, vanishing around art's other side in a transgression of its limits, are finally responsible for the restoration of those values they wished to leave behind. The readymade, in questioning the notion of the work of art, insured the triumph of the Artist and the Museum. Ecological and environmental art, in staking out a space outside the museum, deny the cultural space in which they are grounded, "thereby providing an alibi for the Museum/Gallery which didn't make good its avowed claim."<sup>46</sup> And the strategy of the cross-over, which pretends to dissolve oppositions, to inject art into everything and everything else into art, to cross the limits separating them, respects, in the movement of this crossing, the line of separation, the opposition between inside and outside on both sides.

The most incisive strategy, the shrewdest, is probably that of painters (like Matisse, like Klee, like Mondrian, like Stella) who work within the domain of art, who stand firm within its limits, pressing hard on them, declaring them, exceeding them.

46. Daniel Buren, *Limites critiques*, Paris, Yvon Lambert, 1970, p. 5.

But if Stella remains caught within art, and respectful of it as a concept, he also respects criticism which articulates and supports art (and which, it must be remembered, enhances its market value—a consideration not without importance): “Sometimes I think our paintings *are* a little bit different, but on the other hand it seems that they’re still dealing with the same problem of making art. I don’t see why everyone seems so desperately in need of a new terminology, and I don’t see what there is in our work that needs a new terminology either to explain or to evaluate it. It’s art, or it wants to be art, or it asks to be considered as art, and therefore the terms we have for discussing art are probably good enough.”<sup>47</sup>

This position is self-contradictory. Doesn’t the painter look for a “way of working you couldn’t write about?” The strategy of success entails its own particular difficulties. And the pressure of the artistic circuit—collectors, museums, dealers, critics—remains very strong, very effective. Despite its present crisis, art is completely capable of simultaneously incorporating, in its own space, transgression and excess, the artist and the art, Warhol and Stella. Metallic violet, “very vulgar” nine years ago, ends by growing mild. And the disruption of art in 1960, ten years later, becomes art, even high art. From this conversion, Stella has everything to win, everything to lose.

Stella’s art, since it wants to be art, doesn’t need a new critical terminology. Criticism, in order to clarify the problematics of this art, does, in spite of itself, need something more: a new set of theoretical tools (not evolutionist, not expressionist, not religious); a new procedure (not linear); a new syntax, a new page lay-out.

(At this point, candour demands that we heed a rising voice: “But you, Sir, who judge accordingly, from what position do you consider yourself to speak; aren’t you a critic like any other?” Of course.)

—Paris, 1972.

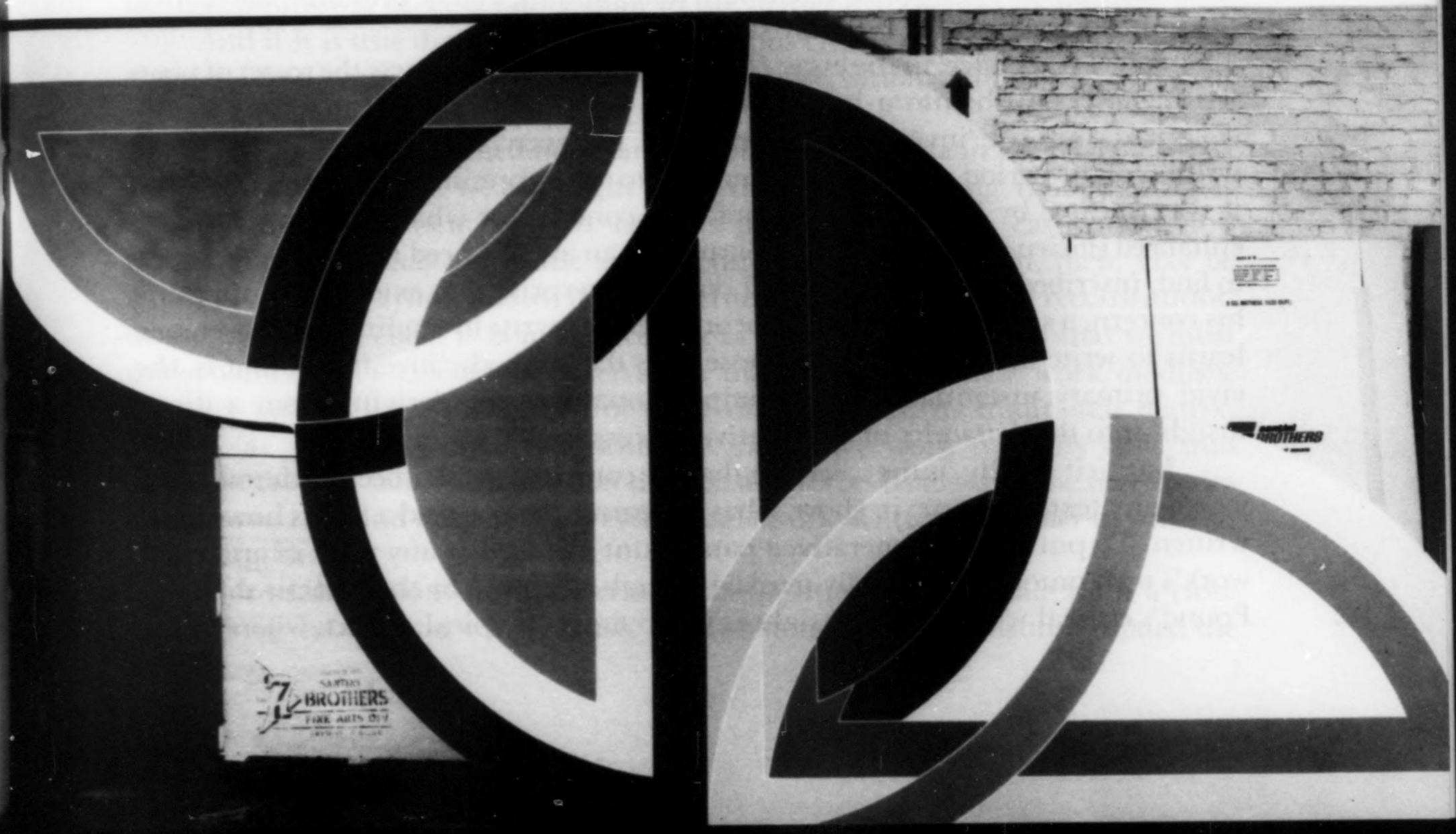
*(The illustrations for this essay, which has been slightly abridged, are editorially selected. A subsequent issue of OCTOBER will present a discussion of Stella’s work since 1969 by Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe.)*

47 Stella, in *Minimal Art*, p. 163.

Notes on Compositing  
in Film

The process of compositing in film is a complex one, involving the combination of multiple images to create a single, unified scene. This technique is often used to create special effects, such as the creation of a composite image of a person's face, or to create a sense of depth and perspective. The process involves the use of a variety of techniques, including the use of multiple cameras, the use of a composite image, and the use of a variety of optical effects. The result is a scene that is both visually striking and technically impressive.

Frank Stella. Haran I. 1968. Fluorescent acrylic on canvas. 120 by 240 inches. (Coll: Mr. William Ehrlich.)



## Notes on Composing in Film

HOLLIS FRAMPTON

In a letter of the year 1914, the poet Ezra Pound tells his correspondent that it took him ten years to learn his art, and another five to unlearn it. The same year saw the tentative publication of three cantos for a "poem of some length" that was to become, though nameless and abandoned, the longest poem in English . . . prominent among whose denumerable traits were a lexicon of compositional tropes and a thesaurus of compositional strategies that tend to converge in a reconstitution of Western poetics.

Since it has been widely asserted that art can be neither taught nor learned, that it is a gift from Jehovah or the Muse, an emanation from the thalamus, or a metabolite of the gonads, we may pause to wonder what Pound, a failed academic and life-long scholar of diverse literatures and arts, meant by the verb *to learn* . . . let alone *unlearn*. In the same letter, Pound himself is obliquely illuminating; he had begun, he says, around 1900, to study world literature, with a view to finding out *what* had been done, and *how* it had been done, adding that he presumes the motive, the impulse, to differ for every artist.

A few years later, in the essay *How to Read*, Pound diffracts the roster of poets writing in English into a hierarchic series of zones, of which the most highly energized comprise 'inventors' and 'masters'. The essay, like most of Pound's prose writing of the period, is addressed primarily to other (presumably younger) writers; it is permeated by Pound's highly practical concern for what might be called an enhanced efficiency in the process of 'learning' an art. We need not look very deeply to find, inscribed within the pungent critical enterprise that extends and supports his concern, a single assumption: that one *learns* to write by reading. Moreover, one learns to write mainly by reading those texts that embody 'invention', that is, the vivid primary instantiation of a compositional strategy deriving from a direct insight into the dynamics of the creative process itself.

Implicit, finally, is the assertion that the compositional process is the oversubject of any text whatever: in short, what we learn when we read a text is how it was written. To put it more generally, a paramount signified of any work of art is that work's own ontogeny. Partially masked though it may be by the didactic thrust of Pound's critical writing, this insight is by no means atypical; in fact, where we do

not find it among the procedural givens of any major artist of this century, we experience a certain malaise, as if confronting a mental anomaly whose gestural consequences somehow elude detection. Indeed, at this moment we find ourselves at a critical pass that divides work that is serious from work that is not, quite precisely along the boundary between reflexiveness and naiveté.

According to a new transposition of the ancient notion that the artist is nothing other than a conduit for energies that he incarnates in the things he makes, the Elsewhere whence those energies come is now imagined to be, in the largest sense, the 'material' of the art itself. For example, the notion that language, considered as a disincorporate faculty of an entire psycholinguistic community, should, of its own nature, tend to secrete poems, is our legacy from the Symbolists. By implication, the work of the poet must be an investigation into the internal economics and dynamics of language; a theory of poetry, an enunciation of the axiomatics of language; and the poem, a demonstration consequent upon the self-interference of these axiomatics.

As for the activity of poetry, so also for poesis at large. Without a similar understanding with regard to music, to painting, or to film, the work of a Varèse or a Berg, a Mondrian or a Pollock, an Eisenstein or a Brakhage, is not only impenetrable, it is utterly unapproachable. But, given that much, *and nothing more*, the individual work of art is virtually self-explicating: to understand it is to be struck by the nature of art, and indeed, in some measure, by the nature of thought itself.

Thus the artist of the modernist persuasion outlines, if he does not utterly preempt, the terrain, the contours, of that critical activity which shall best serve language in its anguished compulsion to encompass and account for every other code: a criticism, that is, that shall direct its attention to the energies deployed in the compositional process rather than to the matter disposed in its result.

And if it is true that the object before us thus clearly predicts the vector of our research, then we might expect as well that close observation of that object will yield specific methodological prescriptions.

Since the learning, the understanding of an art consists in the recovery of its axiomatic substructure, we can begin to say that the 'unlearning' that Pound cites as indispensable to new creation, consists in the excernment, castigation, and transvaluation of that axiomatic substructure. New composition, then, may be seen as an activity synonymous, if not co-terminus, with the radical reconstitution of the imbedding code. It is in the context of such a reconstitution that we must understand Eliot's celebrated observation that every really new work modifies, however subtly, the equilibrium of every other term in its traditional matrix. Indeed, at its most fecund, a drastically innovative work typically calls into question the very boundaries of that matrix, and forces us to revise the inventories of culture . . . to find out again for every single work of art, the manner in which it is intelligible.

Our examination of the process of composition must radiate from a close scrutiny of the ways in which artists have anatomized and transubstantiated the

assumptions of the several arts. Rather than simply postulating the existence of this compound activity as an undifferentiated field, we should attempt at the very outset to construct an explicit paradigm of the ways in which axiomata are transformed. The revision appears to transpire in one or another of two modes, the first of which we might agree to call reading and the second, misreading.

The mode we call reading entails a correct extrapolation of the axiomatic substructure from the artist's immediately apprehensible tradition. Once the set of axioms has been isolated and disintricated, the artists may proceed to modify it in any of four ways: by substitution, constriction, augmentation, or by displacement. A single example will illustrate each of these ways.

1. When Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg received the tradition of music into their hands, a norm of composition stipulated that the deforming criterion of tonality must be superimposed upon the centerless grid of the chromatic scale. Reasoning that the extraction of a subset of diatonic intervals from that scale amounted to the acceptance, *a priori*, of a nucleus of melodic material, the serialists deleted entirely the axiom of tonality and *substituted* for it another: that every work must be generated in its entirety from melodic material that would guarantee its access, at any moment, to an unconstricted field of compositional options. Only a row that comprised the entire chromatic octave could do this.

2. In reply to a publisher who demanded that he expunge or modify certain portions of his *Dubliners*, James Joyce wrote that it was not possible to change or subtract so much as a single word. He had written his stories, he said, according to his own best understanding of the "classic canons" of his art. But every serious writer tries to do as much; and yet very few may be construed as setting such store by these single words. If it is self-evident that the canons of writing may be derived from the works that make up a tradition, nonetheless what works and what authors are included in that tradition is by no means obvious. For his own purposes, Joyce has *constricted* the axiom: the works from which he has derived the laws that govern his writing are those of one author, Gustav Flaubert, the encyclopaedic comedian who once spent six days on the engineering of a single paragraph that imperceptibly negotiates a transition from the active to the passive voice . . . and who dreamed of writing a novel about *nothing*.

3. From Fielding onward, it is a discernible assumption of prose fiction, understood as a homeostatic system, that no element that enters the work may exit until it has been accounted for. Prior to Joyce, this assumption had not been extended to cover very much beyond the *dramatis personae*. In *Ulysses*, Joyce seizes upon this axiom, and *augments* its force, applying it without exception to every detail of the work, both structural and textural. On the structural level, the title of the book is no casual allusion; rather, every episode in the voyage of Odysseus has its precise counterpart in Joyce's palimpsest. Early on, among Bloom's ruminations, we hear him mindspeak: "Potato. I have." What about potato? We are sure to find out, some three hundred pages later.

4. It has been customary to assert, of words interacting with one another,

that each word is, as it were, segmented into a dominant part, or denotation, and a subordinate attenuated series of connotations. Some have reasoned that writing consists in joining denotations, in such a way as to suppress connotations; others have been content to let the connotational chips fall where they may; and a third school proposes to fabricate the connotational subtext and to let the denotative text take care of itself. But if we examine words, whether as a system of marks ordered upon a surface, or a system of sounds disturbing the air, we can discover no difference between the manner in which they denote and the manner in which they connote. It is possible, then, to view the denotation of a word as no more than that particular term in a series of connotations which has, through the vicissitudes of history, won the lexicographical race. In a word, a denotation is nothing more than the most privileged among its fellow connotations. In *Finnegans Wake* Joyce, while implicitly accepting the assumption that words are made up of parts, *displaces* the privilege of the denotation, making of the word a swarm of covalent connotations equidistant from a common semantic center. Which such connotations will be identified with the notation, then, is decided in each case not within the cellular word, but through interaction with its organic context.

All axiomatic sets that derive by any of these four ways from the mode we have called 'reading' have one thing in common: they entirely supercede their predecessors, and thus, sooner or later, assume the historical role of all norms. In the moment that a new axiom vanishes into the substrate of an art, it becomes vulnerable. On the other hand, this is not true of those novel structural assumptions that derive from the mode that we have called 'misreading'. The incorrectly read or imperfectly disentangled compositional assumption invariably remains to haunt the intellectual space usurped by its successor. Thus new works building upon axioms derived by misreading from the structural assumptions of older works, must be forever contingent. Our experience of such works . . . that is, our recovery of the rules governing their composition . . . goes forward with the strain of a double effort, for we must ourselves simultaneously read and misread. In such a predicament, where the sum of compositional options never fully presents itself as a single figure clearly separated from the ground of cultural givens, the new work risks impenetrability, presenting itself in the aspect of an open set that elides, rather than emphasizes, the articulations among the elements and operations of which it is composed.

For an artist who would question the conventional boundaries of the artist's relation to the act of making, the risks consequent upon intentional misreading will seem justified. Crucial to one normative view of the relation between artist and artifact is the assumption that every trait of a work owes its presence to a deliberate decision made by the artist. The composer John Cage, by way of a constellation of intricate stratagems of abdication, has deflected the force of this assumption. The adoption of a whole phylum of procedures, called "chance operations," as a pathway alternative to rationalizing intentionality, has resulted in making the artist more conspicuous by his presumed absence. That Absence

which replaces the artist cannot, by definition, 'choose'; it can only make non-choices. To choose is to exclude; to negate choice is, by implication, to include everything. But to subvert the notion of choice is to invert the intellectual perspective within which choice operates. To make non-choices is to situate oneself, as an artist, at an intersection of inclusion and exclusion where, in the absolute copresence of every possible compositional option and every conceivable perceptual pathway, the notion of choice becomes irrelevant. For example, to inquire whether or not any particular realization of *Fontana Mix* is superior to any other, is to pose a meaningless question, for there is no fixed thing called *Fontana Mix*. Cage has derived seminal work from an intentional misreading of the axiomatics that have encapsulated the artist's task, contending that composition is the devising of ways to recognize, and annihilate, every test for distinguishing art from non-art. This is not to say that there is no such thing as art, or that everything is art; rather, it is to state that there can be no certainty, no final determination, about where we may expect to find art, or about how we are to recognize it when we do find it.

\*

That our examples, in the present writing, have been drawn either from literature or from music (an art that has had a long and various commerce with language) reflects doubly upon the state of research, and indeed upon the possibilities for research, in film. In the first instance, it is obvious that language and film subsist within incommensurable spaces. To render film accessible to written discourse, it is necessary that it be studied under conditions that permit random access to the text in both space and time. In the second instance, it is imperfectly obvious that film, an art that we might characterize as verging upon adolescence, remains profoundly conditioned by mutually contradictory or inhibitory axiomatic substructures derived by both reading and misreading from every literary type, from music, and from the more venerable visual arts.

If we grant that the goal of our research is to recover the axiomatics of composition in film, and to discover among them a dynamic morphology, then we must necessarily find the following conditions indispensable:

1. We must reject at the outset any suggestion that film, thus far, exhibits a coherent normal paradigm. Most especially, we must meet with skepticism the assertion that the narrative fiction film, with synchronous sound track, offers such a paradigm. Even during the heyday of its empire, the hegemony of the fiction film was seriously challenged on the axiomatic level by competing genres: instructional, documentary, newsreel.

2. We must have available to us, in a manner that encourages and facilitates deliberate investigation, the cinematic material. That is, we must be able to take the film strip in hand, at our extended leisure, and examine it frame-by-frame and splice-by-splice.

3. We must bring to our research into the working assumptions of film, a thorough grasp of the axiomatics of every discipline from which film has, willingly or unwillingly, borrowed . . . because, for our purpose, the whole history of art is no more than a massive footnote to the history of film.

It is only after we have accomplished these three conditions that we shall be able to attempt the most important:

4. We must invent a terminology, and a descriptive mode, appropriate to our object: a unique sign that shall have as its referent the creative assumptions proper to film and to film alone. The compound sign and referent is, of course, a closed system; and all closed systems, as we know, tend to break down and to generate discrepancies and contradictions at their highest levels. On the other hand, inquiry into the nature of film has reached its present impasse on account of contradictions at the very lowest levels of discourse, instigated by the casual expropriation of terminologies from other arts.

Hitherto, the study of film has been compartmentalized horizontally, in a search for diachronically parallel evolutions, and vertically, by a rough typology that distinguishes cinematic species from one another according to their social use. Such a morphology assumes that individual films, and indeed entire bodies of work in film, are isolated objects; it implies that understanding of film involves nothing more than determining its precise location on a predetermined grid.

We propose another, radically different morphology . . . one that views film, not from the outside, as a product to be consumed, but from the inside, as a dynamically evolving organic code directly *responsive* and *responsible*, like every other code, to the supreme mediator: consciousness.

We base our morphology upon direct observation of how films are actually made. The making of a film is an action which may be seen as comprising two stages. At first, the material of the film is generated. That material is nothing else but the image-bearing film strip; to generate it is to film a pretext, that is, to impress images upon the photographic emulsion. Then, the cinematic material is structured. To structure the cinematic material is to determine, by whatever means, which film strips shall enter the composition and which shall not; whether they shall enter the composition entirely or in part; and in what order the film strips shall be joined. This second stage in the activity of film-making is usually called editing; a number of film-makers have argued that the editing process, sufficiently generalized, may extend into, and even engulf, the gathering of cinematic material (filming). For some film-makers, editing is nothing more than the closure of a scheme that has pre-established every quality of the cinematic material, and every aspect of its gathering. For others, to edit is to decode into rationality the implications of cinematic material gathered in an intentional void. Between these two poles, as between filming and editing, there is no zone of demarcation, but rather a horizontally modulated continuous field.

Again, the process of film-making has variously been seen as independent from or contingent upon the imperatives of other codes. Where film has been seen as

subordinate to language, film composition has amounted to nothing more than the realization of a minutely specific scenario. Whenever the act of film-making has achieved full independence from language, a *découpage*, or metric shot-list, empirically synthesized after the fact of the completed work, displaces the scenario in a gesture of temporal inversion. Often, the scenario becomes rarefied, taking the shape of brief verbal directions, graphic sketches, or even numerical notations; at its most remote, the 'script' dwindles to a more or less complete previsualization within the eye of the mind. The intellectual space between these meridians of intentionality is, again, modulated continuously, and vertically.

From a cartoon of this alternate morphology, we may easily construct a model for detailed investigation, selecting four film-makers whose work suggests that they diverge from one another as far as possible with respect to the vertical axis of intentionality, and with respect to the distribution of their energies in the structuring of a work mapped along the horizontal axis. We might elicit from these four artists all the materials pertaining to a single film; such materials must necessarily include not only prints of uncut footage to match against the finished work, but also every retrievable scrap of concrete evidence relating to the compositional process.

Of course, if these four personages do not exist, then it is our humane duty to invent them.

It had something to do with lemon trees, or orange trees, I forget, that is all I remember, and for me that is no mean feat, to remember it had something to do with lemon trees, or orange trees, I forget, for of all the other songs I have ever heard in my life, and I have heard plenty, it being apparently impossible, physically impossible, short of being deaf, to get through this world, even my way, without hearing singing, I have retained nothing, not a word, not a note, or so few words, so few notes, that, that what, that nothing, this sentence has gone on long enough.

—Samuel Beckett, *First Love*

This text was written for and delivered at the Conference on Research and Composition at the State University of New York at Buffalo in October, 1975.



The New Am  
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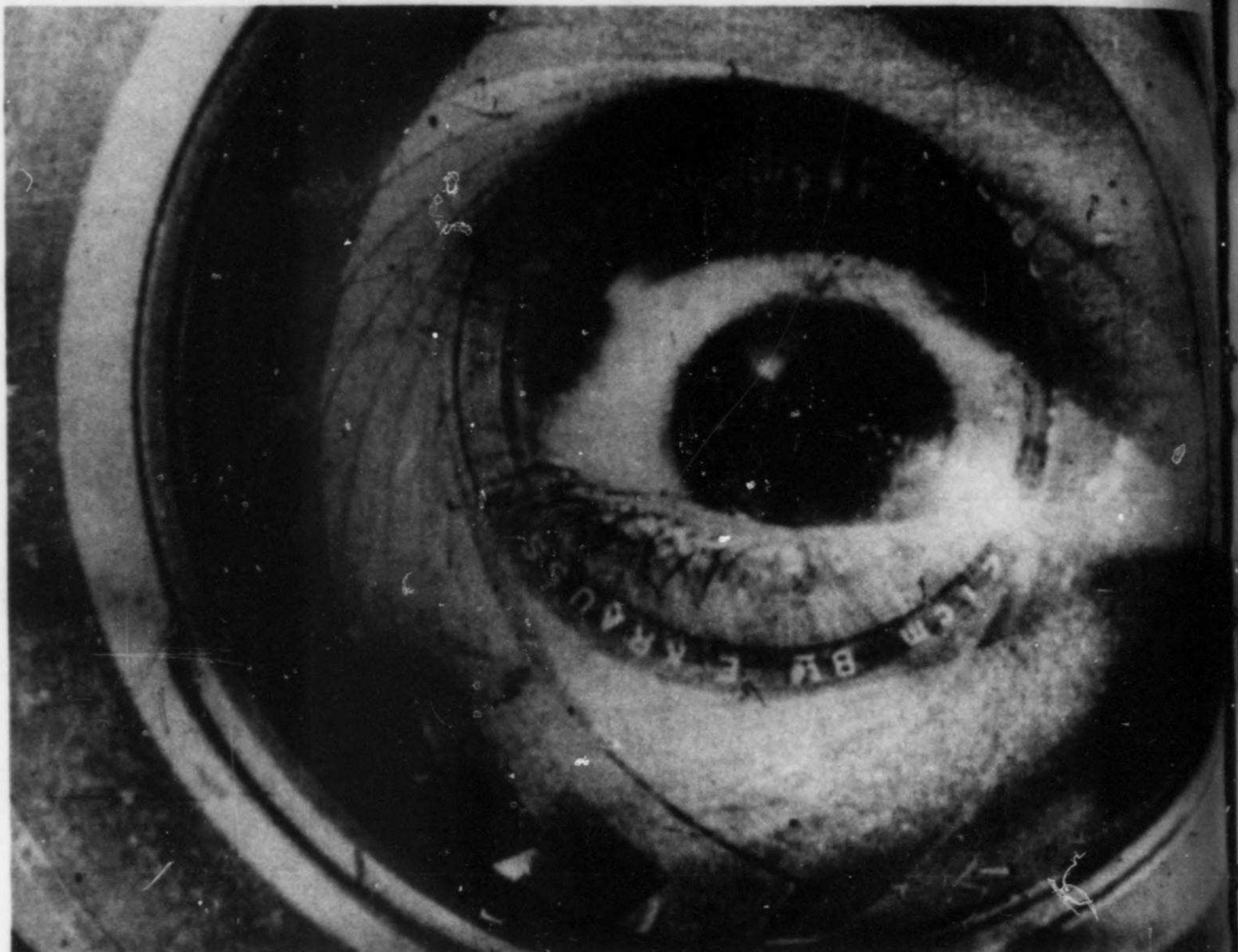
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