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The People Mobile. 1979.*

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Nausea and Noesis: Some Philosophical Problems for Sartre*

ARTHUR C. DANTO

Toward the beginning of *The Life of Reason*, Santayana observes that knowing is not eating, adding, with one of those graciously turned aphorisms that make him memorable as an author and almost irrecoverable as a philosopher, that knowledge is a salutation, not an embrace. Not devouring, not possessing in the active sexual sense of the expression: with these images we would agree, only wondering, having grown so accustomed to an inferential conception of knowledge as justified true belief, what the polemical occasion would have been for framing them. As though one were to encounter in an old text the observation that good is not a liquid, so not an especially sweet liquid—one will admit the premise and count the inference unexceptionable, but find oneself puzzled as to the point: what could someone also have believed who propounded the liquidity of values, even as a metaphor? Whatever model of cognition it was that eating should have been an exact and, I suppose, a devastating analogy for it, it has long since disappeared from philosophical consciousness; and the reconstitution of a possible context in which it could even begin to look plausible and something someone might be tempted to endorse belongs to a kind of conceptual archaeology, the very possibility of which suggests that the history of philosophy may be as discontinuous as it has become fashionable to believe the history of science to be: as though contemporary epistemology has not so much made progress as changed the subject. Iris Murdoch has observed that Moore is virtually unreadable today, and while this is exaggerated, it cannot be underestimated how much context has to be made visible before his claim that good is simple and unanalyzable can be made intelligible.

The Life of Reason appeared in 1902, but the model of knowledge there impugned survived, at least in France, with enough vitality and obviousness that Sartre should feel it necessary to attack it in 1939, in the pages of *La nouvelle revue Française*, in a short article titled "Intentionnalité—une idée fondamentale de

*An earlier version of this essay was presented at New York University on April 3, 1981, as part of the Columbia/New York University Colloquium on Sartre.

Husserl," also intended to bring a new philosophical idea to general attention. There Sartre begins by identifying that "illusion common to realism and idealism alike, according to which to know is to eat" (*Connaître c'est manger*). And academic philosophy is said by him to be, after a century, still fixated in a view of the mind which Sartre abusively caricatures as a spider—*l'esprit araignée*—which, having first trapped passing objects like insects in its web, covers them with a white drool and *lentement les déglutissait*, absorbs them until they become part of its substance. The theory, one may conjecture, must have been something like this: to know x is to be x ; so y cannot know x if y and x are not identical: so x must be metabolized, as it were, degraded (analyzed) like some complex molecule, and made one with the substance of the knower. The paradigm, if not the essence of knowledge is then self-knowledge—for with what am I identical save myself? So ingestion and appropriation of the world is inescapable if the world is to be known. Sartre's own theory, developed in the *Transcendence of the Ego*, is that *we* are things in the world in at least the sense that cognitive access to ourselves is not privileged over cognitive access to things, consciousness standing to both in the same sort of relationship, so that knowledge of things becomes the paradigm if not the essence of knowledge of the self. Sartre's whole philosophy is, so to speak, an eversion of the philosophy of cognitive alimentation, and it is characteristic of him to use the imagery of vomiting in an act of Rabelaisian violence so extreme that in the end the eater has spewed himself forth, to be a thing in the world and a man among men, leaving, it would please him to have to say, *nothing* behind. The title of his great philosophical novel, *Nausea*, was not his—it was suggested by his publisher Gaston Gallimard—but nausea was the central theme of that novel, and it is sobering to reflect that nausea is not an existentialist expression of revulsion against a disgusting world, but a metaphysical insight rendered in visceral imagery, the use of which is rhetorically justified by the apt characterization of its polemical counter-theory in terms of *gourmandise*. The world is not to be swallowed, and this is the allegorical meaning of the mysterious nausea whose onset marks the beginning and whose understanding marks the climax of the book. *Nausea* was published in 1938, a year before the paper on intentionality.

It has the form of a diary, and the first entries record an experience not especially odd but felt as odd by its writer, Antoine Roquentin, himself an isolated and solitary figure, so lightly situated in the world that one feels he almost practices the discipline of biography as a vampire—or a spider—seeking to gain substance from the life of his subject, a certain Monsieur Rollebon, an eighteenth-century rake and political provocateur. Roquentin's researches have taken him to the archives in the city of Bouville, where the philosophical drama is enacted. At a certain moment in the interval covered by the diary, he recognizes that Rollebon escapes him, that he cannot evoke that alien reality which is the personality of that man, and simultaneously with this recognition he abandons his project and *experiences* the fact of his own existence and his own superfluousness. The failure of Rollebon to sustain him does not altogether extirpate the need for a kind of

metaphysical host to which he can anchor himself, however, and at the end of the book Roquentin has a kind of Schopenhauerian vision of art as a possible shelter against the radical contingencies of existence. But both the recognition and the hope for relief occur against the background of a much more pervasive philosophical malaise I would like now to describe.

The occasion for diarizing is not, as first said, so much an odd experience as an ordinary event experienced as odd: Roquentin, seeing some children skipping rocks, picks up a stone to throw himself, instead of which he lets it fall from his hand. And this is the onset of the nausea. There is nothing in any way strange about the stone: I mean it is not a strange stone, but a commonplace one, and its commonplaceness is what makes the experience odd. Between himself and the stone a certain palpable strangeness has fallen, but it is a strangeness which soon sets objects of equivalent banality at a comparable and initially inscrutable distance. "There is something new about my hand," he observes, "a certain way of picking up my pipe or fork. Or else it is the fork which now has a certain way of having itself picked up." It is important to stress that what is new is not something which has just appeared, like a tremor or a blotch: it is the same hand, as familiar as anything, but the familiarity itself is strange. Roquentin feels something cold in his hand: "I opened my hand and looked: I was simply holding the doorknob." At one point he cannot pick up a piece of paper (and he *likes* to touch paper). This almost metaphysical paralysis makes an extraordinary impression on him. He feels as if he is no longer free. "I cannot do what I will," he says, this piece of paper suddenly marking a limit for the will though heretofore it had been, as a piece of paper, an instrumentality, as it were, for a certain perverse tactile pleasure. Stone, paper, pipe, even hand: these have been perceived as so many means, as so many extensions of the self, things we use without paying them any attention; and now they are disturbingly perceived as having a being of their own. "Objects should not touch," Roquentin complains, "because they are not alive. You use them, put them back in place, you live among them, nothing more. But they touch me, it is unbearable." The nausea is intensely felt in a cafe, in connection with the purple suspenders the man behind the bar wears. It is as though the suspenders were striving for chromatic identity, wanting and failing to become the color—purple—Roquentin would spontaneously have described them as before the nausea transfigured the commonplace world into something felt as so strange that Roquentin has turned to the diary in a desperate effort to bring it to descriptive stability. The key to the nausea is revealed over the cheese course in a mediocre restaurant, 165 pages after the episode of the dropped stone. It is, however this is to be understood, that the stone, the knife, the hand, as well as he himself, *exist*. "I exist—the world exists—and I know the world exists." It is not that he had had doubts which the appeal to his hands, as in a famous proof of the external world invented by G. E. Moore, was meant to remove. Of course he knew that he existed, and that things did, but only as an abstract acknowledgment. The nausea was a mode of experiencing existence as something tangible and opaque,

as though "existence" after all were, contrary to Kant, a real predicate and the existence of things a heretofore unregistered dimension of them.

The limits of the will have often been proposed in philosophy as the limits of the self: so there is something other than the self if there is something insulated from the action of the will. Descartes, in the Third Meditation, at least considers it *prima facie* arguable that some of his ideas must be explained with reference to independently existing objects since "they are not dependent upon my will. . . . And I see nothing more reasonable to me than to judge that this alien entity sends to me and imposes upon me its likeness rather than anything else." To be sure, he immediately finds weaknesses in this criterion, though he curiously concludes in the Sixth Meditation that there must be something to it after all. For Sartre, certainly, insulation from the will is the mark of something's reality or, as he says in his early book, *L'Imagination*, its *inertness*. "What is certain is that I cannot spontaneously produce the white of which I take note. This inert shape, which stands short of all spontaneities of consciousness, which must be observed and learned about bit by bit, is what we call 'a thing.'" And it is this inertness of everyday objects which makes them, figuratively, too heavy to digest, and which the nausea discloses. I want to stress this everydayness. What is charming about *Nausea* is that in addition to its dubious hero with his dim acquaintances, its *dramatis personae* is eked out with the simplest of things: pieces of paper, glasses of beer, forks and cheese knives, doorknobs and tables. The book is a series of almost philosophical still lifes, the nearest artistic predecessor being, perhaps, Chardin, where the humblest objects—a pitcher, an egg—are rendered eloquent in their ordinariness and metaphysical in their presence. There is something singularly bourgeois in Sartre's celebration of the things of daily life—*les choses de la vie*—as occasions for literature. But even more striking is the fact that it was the possibility of making *philosophy* out of such objects that initially attracted him to phenomenology, and which defined his reading of the idea of intentionality later on. One of my favorite moments in his life, or in the life of any philosopher, is recounted in *La Force de l'âge*. Simone de Beauvoir writes as follows of a meeting with Raymond Aron in 1932:

Raymond Aron was spending a year at the French institute in Berlin, and studying Husserl simultaneously with preparing an historical thesis. When he came to Paris he spoke of Husserl to Sartre. We spent an evening together at the Bec de Gaz in rue Montparnasse. We ordered the specialty of the house, apricot cocktails. Aron said, pointing to his glass: "You see, my dear fellow, if you were a phenomenologist, you could talk about this cocktail glass and make philosophy out of it." Sartre turned pale with emotion at this. Here was just the thing he had been longing to achieve for years—to describe objects just as he saw and touched them, and extract philosophy from the process.

It is this deliverance from the prison of consciousness that he expresses

novelistically in *Nausea*, and more philosophically if scarcely less vividly in the article on intentionality seven years after the meeting with Aron: "We shall touch things themselves. We are no longer imprisoned in our sensations like Proustian men. Consciousness is always outside itself, it is consciousness of something." Sartre was not acquisitive or materialistic, in the moral sense of that term. He was openhanded and selfless, and lived, like Socrates would have done had he been transferred to Paris, a Left-Bank existence, in cafes and hotel rooms. But where things are but illustrations for other philosophers—Berkeley's chair, Descartes's writing table and piece of wax, Russell's penny—they are the materials of philosophy as they are of life for Sartre, and important precisely because they are tangible and—outside.

It is difficult for philosophers of today to respond to the sense of deliverance, for it is difficult to empathize with the initial feeling of captivity. Russell recalls the years around 1902 when, as he says in his autobiography, he "was beginning to emerge from the bath of idealism in which I had been placed by McTaggart and Stout. . . . It was an intense excitement, after having supposed the sensible world unreal, to be able to believe again that there were such things as tables and chairs." And in "My Mental Development" he recurs to this emancipation in which Moore played a role parallel to that played by Husserl in Sartre's case, and writes with an excitement that can still be felt. "With a sense of escape from prison, we allowed ourselves to think that grass is green, that the sun and stars would exist if no one was aware of them. . . . The world which had been thin and logical suddenly became rich and varied and solid." These two characterizations of a world, which, from the one moment to the other, remained invariant so far as the content of experience is concerned, must underscore the difficulty—I should say impossibility—of finding differential experiences to settle the controversy between idealism and realism—for the experiences would be the same whatever posture one took philosophically. And it underscores in consequence the difference between any philosophical posture and what Husserl speaks of as the Natural Attitude, which is that of science. Part of the reason we are unlikely to sustain today either the frustration or the relief thinkers like Russell and Sartre so conspicuously sustained, is that we have a vivid sense of the difference between philosophy and science, the recognition of which—however haywire anything else he may have said is—is what makes Husserl so profound a thinker. Thus I have heard that the philosopher McNabb, who wrote on Hume, lost all interest in sense-data the moment he became convinced that the world is not made literally out of sense-data the way in which we suppose it to be made of fundamental particles. The very idea that it *could have been so framed* is the mark of a theory of meaning having transgressed the boundaries of philosophy to appear in the mask of a theory of the world. As may have happened, to cite a contemporary case, when thinkers dazzled by the semantics of possible worlds begin to think that there *are* possible worlds—a miscarried concreteness spoofed by Kripke when he pretends to spot a possible world through a telescope.

If there is a transgression of philosophy into science, and an unwitting interchange of what belongs to the two attitudes marked by Husserl, it is to be found in a philosophy of language-and-reality which parallels the spirit-and-reality philosophy it took the labors of Moore and Husserl to dissolve. For there is today a web of language and a *bave* of words as difficult to slip from as anything the *esprit-araignée* mocked by Sartre may have spun: a prison-house of discourse. And arguments parallel to any in the tradition may be found. When Berkeley says the idea of something un-present to consciousness is unintelligible because the moment we seek to produce an instance, we have produced something after all present to consciousness, we may match this with the challenge to specify something which cannot be put into words, *ipso facto* putting *it* into words. Or when Berkeley says that ideas can be compared only with other ideas, we can find writers in the positivist literature of the 1930s saying just that: that words can be compared only with words, and so when Schlick pretended to compare words with things—looking as it happened from Baedeker to cathedral—he was slapped with the charge of doing metaphysics and practicing nonsense. So there doubtless is a linguistic nausea to correspond with the nausea of consciousness, in as much as “putting things into words” may yield the same sort of transformation as does devouring something with one’s eyes, the expression out of the vernacular with which Sartre begins his 1939 essay. And indeed putting things into words in order to still the vertigo is the impulse of Roquentin’s diary. “Keep a diary to see clearly. . . . I must tell how I see this table, this street, the people, my packet of tobacco. . . . For instance, here’s a cardboard box holding my bottle of ink. . . . Well, it’s a paralleloiped rectangle, it opens. . . .” In his book of 1936 on the imagination, Sartre begins in just this way: “I look at this white sheet of paper lying on my desk. I perceive its shape, its color, its position. . . .” But things resist being *englouté* as much into language as into consciousness and in the great, almost mystical episode of *Nausea*, Roquentin confronts the root of a chestnut tree in the park in Bouville:

I couldn’t remember it was a root any more. The words had vanished and with them the significance of things, their methods of use, and the feeble points of reference which men have traced on their surface. I was sitting, stooping forward, head bowed, alone in front of this black, knotty mass, entirely beastly, which frightened me. Then I had this vision.

The vision is that things escape classification and description, that existence is ineffable and uncategorizable and hence “absurd.”

Even when I looked at things, I was miles from thinking that they existed: they looked like scenery to me. I picked them up in my hands, they served me as tools, I foresaw their resistance. But that all happened on the surface. If anyone had asked me what existence was, I would

have answered, in good faith, that it was nothing, simply an empty form which was added to external things without changing anything in their nature. And then all of a sudden it was clear as day: existence has suddenly unveiled itself. It had lost the harmless look of an abstract category: it was the very paste of things, this root was kneaded into existence. Or rather the root, the park gates, the bench, the sparse grass, all that had vanished: the diversity of things, their individuality, were only an appearance, a veneer. This veneer had melted, leaving soft, monstrous masses. . . . And without formulating things clearly, I understood that I had found the key to Existence, the key to my Nauseas, to my own life.

So things as things do not emerge intact from the maw of consciousness, like Jonah from the whale or his children from Chronos's belly: they come out as a mass, as though in the process of ingestion they have been reduced to their common element, a kind of parmenidian *bloc* which will reappear in Sartre's mature philosophy five years later as one of two fundamental ontological types, the *en soi*, undifferentiated and logically homogeneous, about which nothing can be said save that it is. And counterposed to it is consciousness itself, about which nothing can be said save that it isn't. And one wonders what has become of the pipe, the fork, the cheese knife, the comforting *choses de la vie* whose independence and solidity are heralded so triumphantly in the pages of the NRF? A place must be found for them between Being and Nothingness, when it is not logically plain that there is ontological space for them to occupy. It is against the background of this problem that we may begin to think of Sartre's conception of intentionality. I am uncertain the problem ever was or could be solved in his terms. *Veneer* is fine language for poetic visions, but what is its correlative in the hopefully more austere vocabulary of philosophy?

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We might somewhat ponder the fateful *of* in the phenomenologist slogan that all consciousness is consciousness *of* something, a slogan the younger Sartre took over with a convert's enthusiasm and a simultaneous bewilderment that intentionality—"the essential structure of all consciousness"—should have escaped the attention of philosophers and psychologists before Husserl. In his book on the emotions he conscientiously reviews theories of the emotions such as James's and Janet's, and indeed it does come as a kind of revelation when he sets out the first thing one would now want to say about the psychology of emotions, that emotions have objects, that fear is fear *of* as anger is anger *at*, and this, once recognized, must at least complicate discussion regarding the degree to which emotions can be understood in purely physiological terms. But Sartre is not merely interested in setting psychology off on the proper foot. Rather, he sees

intentionality as the key to the solution—it *is* the solution—to the Problem of the External World which has been more or less the problem of philosophy since Descartes. To be conscious of *x* is exactly for *x* to be external to consciousness, so one cannot coherently wonder, knowing oneself to be conscious, whether there is anything external to consciousness, as Descartes pretended to have done: the moment there is consciousness, there has to be something external, namely that, whatever it is, and there always has to be something—of which one is conscious. The principle of intentionality, so considered, is a vestpocket transcendental argument, in the respect that it seeks to stultify skepticism by showing that the doubts defined as skeptical presuppose for their very intelligibility something they seek to call into question. In the concluding chapter of *L'Imagination*, Sartre writes that a *radical* distinction has to be drawn between consciousness and objects of consciousness—as radical, we may comment, and as questionable in the consequences drawn from it, as the distinction between spirits and ideas in the philosophy of Berkeley—with the difference that Berkeley wished to argue that whatever is an idea must *ipso facto* be *in* consciousness whereas Sartre supposes himself licensed by the principle of intentionality to claim that whatever we are conscious of is *ipso facto* “outside consciousness, or is transcendent.” So the statement of the problem is the solution to the problem, and Sartre is able, with a kind of intoxication still felt in 1939, to write “contre la philosophie digestive” that “cet arbre-ci ne saurait entrer dans votre conscience ça elle n'est pas de même nature qu'elle” (an inversion of the Feuerbachian mot: “Man ist was man isst”). Even so, he argues, and argues with the conviction that the true brilliance of the phenomenological insight lies here, “La conscience et le monde sont donnés d'un même coup.”

Do we really want to say that the tree and consciousness of the tree are given “d'un même coup”? That sounds very much as if *cet arbre-ci* exists just and only just when one is conscious of it, and we are caught in the toils of an *esse est percipi* doctrine which directly jeopardizes the prized externality of pipes and cheese knives and, after all, trees. Well, Sartre may wish to say something like this: that such things as these have an existence only for consciousness, without it following that they are *in* consciousness (that is, they really are transcendent): in other words, they do not quite exist *en nous* nor *en soi*, but in some way *pour nous* even so, so that they occupy a kind of ontological *tiers monde*. They are not within us, because consciousness has no interior—“la conscience n'a pas de dedans,” he writes; it *only* has an outside. Still, that “même coup” is philosophically troublesome, and while one may wish to write it off as recklessness and overstatement (both of which, when perverse enough, were irresistible to Sartre), the intermediation of a *tiers monde* is too congenial to the problem of finding a locus for the tree before it gets swallowed by Being after having been regurgitated by consciousness (there is more than one form for a digestive philosophy to take). And it is just possible to see the relationship between consciousness and its objects as somehow internal, as though they were somehow “made for each other” as

Strawson maintains that facts and propositions were made for each other in the semantics of the *Tractatus*, so that when one gets rid of one, one gets rid of the other. Now *thinking* of the *Tractatus* reminds us that the propositions of the ideal language sketched there are construed as pictures. To be sure, they were pictures of facts, but that is an eccentricity of Tractarian ontology, and we might note in passing that all pictures are pictures of something (not all paintings, of course, are pictures) and surely the occurrence of the term *of* in both contexts—consciousness and pictures—must move us to wonder whether such strong conclusions as Sartre draws from the *of* of consciousness can be drawn from the *of* of pictorial representation, and if not, what licenses in logic the one inference and not the other? There is, after all, a pictorial intentionality and this may, to be sure along with some other conditions, mark out the “essential structure” of picturing.

Now the *of* is not, in either case, genitive: it is, as the grammarians say, deeply prepositional. Its model is not thus the *of* in the expression “Duke of Burgundy,” where it is Burgundy’s duke to which we refer, but the *of*, rather, in “bottle of Burgundy,” where it is, after all, not the *bottle*’s wine: we drink the wine but not the bottle; but an attack on the Duke is an attack on Burgundy. I shall speak of this as the *contentual of*, in the respect that the relation marked by the preposition is best exemplified in the container-contained relationship: the digestive model is not so grammatically farfetched as rhetorical ridicule may appear to make it seem. The *of* is, at the surface, sufficiently ambiguous that we cannot tell from the expression “picture of the Duke of Burgundy” whether we are being referred to something the Duke owns (a picture), or something whose subject—or content—is the Duke of Burgundy. Or both, in case he owns a portrait of himself, say by Rogier van der Weyden. I want to stress that it is a *striking fact* that we speak of content here, in the case of pictures, even though the picture is but a representation of such as the Duke of Burgundy, and we have a tendency to assimilate representation to some such semantical and external relationship such as denoting or naming (witness the first chapter of Nelson Goodman’s *Languages of Art*). For a “*philosophie digestive*” of pictures is not unknown: the iconodules and the iconoclasts of Byzantium alike spoke of the mystical presence of the saint in the icon: to picture *x* is, in that pictorial tradition, tantamount to trapping *x* in the medium of the picture, heretical in case $x = \text{God}$, but in any event content gives an explanation of why pictures or even plaster statues of the Virgin can work miracles. By the time it became innocuous to portray God, say in the paintings of Masaccio or Michelangelo, portraiture had become demythologized and subjects “transcendent,” in Sartre’s terms, rather than immanent. This is as fascinating a history to trace out as any, though it remains to be done. But I must restrict myself to grammar, and will only point out that there is a contentual *in* which is close prepositional kin to the *of*: a picture of Saint Athanasius has him “in” it, on Byzantine assumptions, as a bottle of Burgundy has Pommard in *it*. And the ambiguity remarked upon extends indeed to the Duke of Burgundy who is Burgundy’s duke by virtue of the mysterious presence of Burgundy in him: he is a

repository of *l'état même*, and the mysticisms of political representation arise to confront us here.

Our *of* has application across the class of representations: map of Egypt, story of O, name of Kripke; and the comparison between things being put into words and things entering consciousness was not fortuitous or casually introduced. Plato made a distinction, or has Socrates make one, between two sorts of representation, mimesis and diegesis; and a mimesis literally exemplifies what it represents, viz., the words the actor speaks are the very words the character is represented as having spoken. But the history of the concept of representation, also alas unwritten, provides numbers of semantic and other theories in which diegesis is treated mimetically (as in Aristotle, where a play is an imitation of an action), and *aboutness* is treated in terms of containment. Think just of names, and legendary resistance against having someone know one's name: it is as though the name is somehow also you, and knowledge of it is possession then of you, and "il la mangeait des yeux" takes on an almost cannibalistic connotation. But let us stick with pictures (incidentally treated as names both by Socrates in the *Cratylus* and by Goodman in the cited chapter), for which pictures the intentional idiom is at least natural and vivid, and a concept of pictorial intentionality seems unexceptionable—and there is, as we saw, a literal theory of pictorial content held by actual men; and where, finally, a theory of *esse est depinxit* can be made to seem to hold water before the leaks get too dangerous. For there is a sense in which pictures and *scenes* are "made for each other," in the respect that the very act of depiction gives to the world depicted a certain structure—a form, one might say—which the picture and the scene then share, and had we not the ability to encode pictorially, it is not clear that we would see the world in terms of scenes either. In any case it would be difficult to speak of the world as so structured without presupposing that mode of representation pictures exemplify. A certain obscurity must immediately infect the *Tractatus* when we place next to it the thought that the world is the sum total of scenes. How many scenes are there? what are their boundaries? are they classed as atomic and molecular? etc. In any case, we can only individuate scenes with reference to pictures, which is why they are made for one another, and though the questions just raised may cause vexations to Wittgenstein, they bring by contrast some sort of succor to Sartre if he means to argue that consciousness gives structures to the *en soi*, shapes it into the likes of pipes and trees and cheese knives, though in fact this is too extreme and magical on sober philosophical reflection: at best it could shape them into larger structures, scenes, or, to use his own word, *situations*. Nevertheless, the problem he mainly supposed intentionality to solve does not lie altogether here, and it really is with respect to that problem that I have introduced pictorial intentionality. I suppose the question to be whether there is a defensible argument that pictures and their objects must be radically distinct, where those objects must be "outside," whether pictures have no *dedans*, etc. And if not, are we not required to suppose that

something other than intentionality itself is needed to put quit to the Problem of the External World?

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A name without a bearer, Russell stipulated, is just a noise. So we may infer the existence of God from "God" being a name, and faith has nothing further to do if only it can tell that this *is* a name: but alas, there is no telling, from any manifest marks, which are the names and which the noises, naming being, on this view, a status externally conferred upon a noise when the relationship of denotation is satisfied. In a somewhat parallel way, someone might argue that a picture without a subject is not a picture, and by parity that a consciousness without an object is not a consciousness. Of course what we took as a picture remains a pattern, a set of lines and patches, when it fails of picturehood through lacking a subject. It remains a puzzlement what would remain left over when we subtracted subject from consciousness, and so perhaps there can be no subtraction of that sort, and there is nothing between which and consciousness it becomes an epistemological nightmare to effect a discrimination: there perhaps is nothing which underdetermines the difference, as there are physical marks and sounds which underdetermine the distinction in the cases of names and pictures. This may be what underlies Sartre's thought that consciousness is perfectly transparent—to the point of Nothingness. Nevertheless, the interdependency between pictures and subjects must be enough analogous to that between consciousness and objects to allow us to say, in both cases, that they must be given together, *d'un même coup*. And this analogy survives the collapse of another one, for an empty bottle remains a bottle, while there cannot be logically empty pictures: so the expressions "bottle of" and "picture of" must have diverged at some point in the evolution of language. And perhaps the divergence occurred just when it became apparent that there is this negative analogy, that it follows from "is a bottle of beer" that there is beer (for if there isn't, the initial description is false) but it does not follow from "is a picture of *x*" that there is *x* (for even if there isn't, the initial description can hold). Briefly, there can be pictures of *x* in an otherwise *x*-less world, so perhaps hyphens must be used between the words in that expression, none being required in "bottle of beer" where the connection between bottle and beer is loose enough to allow the independent existence of beer and bottle. So no inference from picture-of-*x* to *x* is licit, the hyphens marking that fact, and pictures accordingly become like propositions in just the respect that their meanings do not determine their truth, and a proposition can be about *x* in an otherwise *x*-less world. And this is a property of representations as a class: their sense underdetermines their truth. In brief, intentionality characterizes representations as a class, but then it also blocks the immediate inference to the ulterior independence of their objects. Or rather, the concept of "object" has two senses. In

the first, the object of a representation is simply the content of the representation, what it is about. So construed, the objects of representations are logically inseparable from the representations, they are logically proper parts of the representations that "contain" them. For objects in this sense, the alimentary theory is true! To say that *R* represents *a* merely classifies the kind of representation it is. In the second sense, the object of a representation is that in the world which makes the representation true if it is true, such objects are genuinely external to their representations, and for them, the alimentary theory is false. It does not follow, from *R* representing *a* in the first sense, that it represents *a* in the second sense. For representations can after all be false. Intentionality only guarantees an object in the first sense, not in the second. Now this *may* not extend to consciousness, but then, as I say, we need independent measures to distinguish the intentionalities of consciousness from the intentionalities of representations. Descartes, who identified consciousness with thought, would have acknowledged that there is no thought which is not a thought that, or of, something—but felt (I should say with justice) that this left unresolved whether any of one's thoughts were true (at least one's first-order thoughts). This directly yields a representationalist theory of thought and of mind, if mind be thought; and of self, if self be mind. Perhaps consciousness is different from thought in that way: but what reason have we for thinking it is?

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The problem arises in an especially acute form when we consider images, which after all have the structure of pictures, or are supposed to have: we speak of them as mental pictures. Suppose now we allow Sartre his *tiers monde* of commonsense objects, situated somewhere at the interface of the *pour soi* and the *en soi*: not in consciousness, but not in Being either, if this pomposity is allowed me. A distinction still has to be effected between routine commonsense knives, say those which are used to pare the *port salut*, and those more dubious knives which serve as objects for the haunted consciousnesses of Macbeths. This is not a great difficulty for painters: a painting by Bonnard of a cheese knife is easily distinguished from an engraving by Delacroix of Macbeth staring at the hallucinatory brand: there are conventional ways of marking that distinction. In both cases it is at least not unnatural to speak of the knives as *in* the pictures which are of them. Nor does there appear to be a great difficulty for representationalists in epistemology, as representationalism as a theory was tailored to accommodate the distinction: there is invariantly a knife-representation which merely lacks a real-world counterpart in the case of hallucination, allowing such writers as Taine (of whom Sartre is contemptuous) to claim that a perception is "a *true* hallucination." But Sartre has emptied consciousness, leaving then no place to lodge hallucinatory—or imaginary—objects save by complicating the *tiers monde*. So it is small wonder he wrote two books on the imagination: something must have troubled him, as

Hume's recurring to the problem of the self is evidence that he felt something was wrong in his analysis, even if he did not finally change his mind. We may incidentally observe that the same questions may be gotten to emerge with emotions as well. After all, granting that all feelings have objects, hence take intentional characterizations, leaves the possibility that a child may be afraid of ghosts, though there are none; that a Buddhist may adore Kuan Yin, though she does not exist; that Faust may lust after Helen of Troy, though she wasn't; that a paranoid may be jealous of his wife's lover, though she has none. And so forth. But let us remain with images. Sartre's theory of images is what philosophers today would call *de re*: someone is imaginatively conscious of some concrete particular thing. But suppose there is no such concrete particular to *be* conscious of, even imaginatively? It is this possibility which gives rise to *de dicto* theories of imagination. But this appears to require placing the object of imagination in consciousness, and Sartre cannot tolerate this because of his theory of consciousness. So *de re* theory is his only option.

The conception that an image should be *in* consciousness and an object of consciousness is, for Sartre, in contradiction with the concept of intentionality, and so the very phrase "mental picture" must be incoherent. "When I say I have an image of Pierre," he writes in *L'Imaginaire*, summarizing what he takes to be the views of philosophers, psychologists, and commonsense, "it is believed that I now have a certain picture of Pierre in my consciousness. The object of my actual consciousness is just this picture, while Pierre, the man of flesh and bone, is reached but very indirectly, in an 'extrinsic' manner, because it is he whom the picture represents." And he writes further: "What is surprising is that the radical incongruity between consciousness and this conception of the image has never been felt . . . [it is] impossible to slip these material portraits into a conscious synthetic structure without destroying the structure . . . consciousness would cease being transparent to itself; its unity would be broken in every direction by unassimilable opaque screens." So—to him—incoherent a view he attributes to "the illusion of common sense" and in a statement anticipatory of Ryle, Sartre writes that "the fact of the matter is the expression 'mental image' is confusing." Ryle, in the most controversial chapter of his controversial book, supposes that "x imagines y," rather than referring to a mental episode, which must, since mental episodes are myths, refer somehow to a piece of behavior, e.g., x behaves as though y existed, or plays a y-game, or some such thing. Ryle was, of course, a lapsed phenomenologist: Sartre's parsing of "x imagines y" is that "x is imaginatively conscious of y"—an analysis which would be anathema to Ryle, though both agree on the nonexistence of mental pictures, and each regards the language in question as somehow confused: though it is worth noting that the confusion, if it exists, is as much on the part of the plain man as the philosopher. "There are not and never could be images in consciousness," Sartre claims at the end of *L'Imaginaire*: "Rather, an image is a certain type of consciousness. An image is an act, not some thing." And this would almost be what Ryle would say, except that his conception of an act would be behaviorist.

Sartre philosophizes interestingly and even profoundly on imaginative consciousness. His most striking observations concern what one might call the cognitive poverty of imagining: "Nothing can be learned from an image that is not already known." And: "The image teaches nothing: it is organized exactly like the objects that do produce knowledge, but it is complete at the very moment of its appearance." Thus I may imagine the verso of a coin, even imagining turning it round to imagine that I shall see the double eagle; but there is no possibility of my being surprised at what I imagine seeing there when I perform the imaginative act. A more perspicuous case is fantasy; as when one imagines doing sexually marvelous things with, suppose, Natalie Wood. Steven Marcus has spoken of the poverty of what, in his description of Victorian pornography, he designates pornotopia. The repetitive monotony, the essential predictability of this genre of literature almost exactly exemplifies Sartre's theory of the imagination. Actual sexual life is full of surprises and dangers, the fear of which may be part of what drives men (and I dare say women) to fantasize; and this underlines what I would regard as the deep truth about will and imagination: there is nothing in an image, in a fantasy, to *resist* the will. So we are omnipotent in pornotopia, which may be why fantasy is the refuge of the truly impotent, and power rather than repressed sexuality is the explanation of the inversion; or sex is of interest only as a mode of power. Psychology to one side, however, the philosophical point is put by him, perfectly, thus: "The object of perception is constituted by an infinite multiplicity of determinations and possible relations. The most definite image, on the other hand, possesses in itself only a finite number of determinations, namely, only those of which we are conscious." To be imaginatively conscious of *y*: that must mean that all there is to *y* in the imaginative act is what one is conscious of. Cognitive consciousness consists in part in accepting that the object is inexhaustible, but if mental images were just pictures, this difference would have a natural and satisfying explanation. For pictures show objects only under an aspect and from a point of view, leaving unshown the infinite aspects and points of view in which the inexhaustibility of the object must consist. But Sartre's whole theory of imagination rejects the possibility of mental images.

In truth there really are mental pictures. Or whether there are is not to be determined by *a priori* argument but by science, in case we are not content with the deliverances of routine introspection. It can never be to a philosopher's interest to deny what are mere matters of fact, and if there are difficulties in accommodating mental "portraits" to the concept of a perfectly transparent consciousness, so much the worse for the transparency of consciousness if maintaining it as a theory requires us to deny matters of fact inconsistent with it. Philosophy must leave the world exactly as it finds it. The way the world is found to be has to be consistent with every philosophy, however inconsistent with one another these may be: and if the world, ourselves included in it, is found to have mental portraits in it, philosophy has to account for, not deny their occurrence. When philosophy pretends to deny what is really there, it has been insidiously behaving as science,

and prescribing on matters which are none of its business. When I say that it is a matter of fact whether there are mental pictures, I refer to the fact that only with reference to their occurrence can certain differential behavioral traits be accounted for. I have in mind in particular the recent experiments of Roger Shepard and Jacqueline Metzler, in which subjects are required to say whether certain pairs of drawings are of the same three-dimensional object or not. In effect the subjects are required *mentally to rotate* the drawings, and the time it takes them to answer the question appears to be an almost perfectly linear function of the size of the angle through which the picture must be rotated, invariantly as to whether the rotations were planar or in depth. Blind persons, it is true, show the same reaction time for images they detect by touch, but this does not show that they do not resort to mental imagery: or it is an empirical matter whether blindness entails the absence of pictorial images (and in any case tactile or kinaesthetic imagery remains a serious possibility). Shepard's work has generated a vast scientific literature on mental images, and while, as with theoretical explanation generally, the occurrence of mental rotation may be in question, it is laughable to suppose anyone in the field would be impressed by Sartrean argumentation. And perhaps Sartre's effort to resolve a scientific matter philosophically may be scientifically explained. Allen Paivio has been able to identify subjects with high and low abilities to manipulate mental images, and there exists strong evidence that these differences are correlated with differences in the alpha-rhythms of the brain. It is possible to speculate that Sartre—or Ryle for that matter—was a poor visualizer and so, like one of Galton's subjects, decided that a factual question about mental images must be a metaphysical question, as nothing in experience appeared to connect with it, and so it was not to be answered but to be dissolved (though Sartre is recorded as having been severely hallucinated at one period—hallucinated to the point of terror—by imaginary pursuing lobsters, a mania he transferred to his character Franz in *The Condemned of Altona*). Sartre, like Ryle, was a deeply imaginative writer, which shows that one can be imaginative without having images, if indeed they were imageless. Whether we have images or not seems to be altogether an individual matter, and really of no great philosophical importance. But treating images as he does seriously flaws Sartre's philosophy.

That the objects of imagination are "transcendental," that is, external to consciousness, was argued for in the Fifth of Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen*, and I suppose it must have been this in Husserl which so deeply impressed Sartre, as it promised a final evacuation of consciousness. Descriptive and imaginative prose might then differ as imagination and perception do on this view: as different structures for addressing the selfsame realities; so that whether as novelist or philosopher, Sartre might consider himself as "outside" and in touch with the only world there is. So we not surprisingly find subjects treated with the appropriate differences in *Nausea* and in the early noematic studies I compared it with: as though the novel demonstrated the theses the studies argued for, by treating *their* truths fictionally and imaginatively. "Imaginative consciousness," Sartre wrote at

the time, "goes out in search of its objects in the realm of perception and envisions the sensible elements that constitute this realm." This sounds like a famous thesis of Locke's, that imagination only has the power to rearrange the materials delivered it by the senses, and is impotent to create the simple ideas only sensation provides. And this has a certain analogy in artistic imagination: for the writer is constrained by the limits of his experience, and his powers of creativity are exhausted by rearranging these. Or such may be regarded a regulative principle of literary scholarship which seeks in the writer's biography and acquaintance the originals of the characters and episodes of his fiction. But this, alas, is but a causal theory, not a philosophical one, and a difference must be drawn between what a story is about—its *object* in that sense—and what may have caused the writer to conceive of that object. "Aboutness" is a semantical concept, not a causal one, even if what a story is about should be its cause. So even though Robert de Montesquiou may indeed be the original of the Baron de Charlus, Proust's novel is about Charlus, not Montesquiou. More important, though a logical truth that stories must have objects—to be a story is to be about something—it is only a matter of fact that stories have causes. There is a difference between the science and the semantics of literature, and while causes are external to stories, objects are not. Matters become more complex when we concern ourselves with *true* stories, as may be seen by reflecting that even if every story has a cause, this cannot mean that every story is true.

Truth, meaning, and causation are the philosophical coordinates of the concept of representation, whether it be mental representation or some other kind, and it is not to Sartre's discredit that he got them connected up wrong—almost nobody has gotten them connected up right. But it is fatal to his theory of intentionality that he got them connected up wrong, and thus disastrous to his philosophy. Imaginative consciousness of *x* does not entail the transcendental existence of *x*, any more than literary representation of *x* entails the transcendental reality of *x*—otherwise Cervantes's novel would be an ontological argument for the historicity of Don Quixote. Imagination remains the same epistemological nightmare for Sartre as for the classical epistemologists he supposed himself to have overcome: Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant. Intentionality only acknowledges that consciousness has a content, and does not connect us through its logic to the world. A nice philosophical try then, but a miss. Phenomenology fails to provide a guaranteed tether to the world and its things. The relationship between consciousness and content remains to be worked out.

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Is the system quite beyond repair? As always in philosophy, there are many options, and whole theories may be brought back from the brink by making the right distinction. The option which it occurs to me Sartre would have found least unappealing leaves consciousness logically empty, leaves a radical distinction

between consciousness and its objects, and locates the objects accordingly external to consciousness. That much of the theory of consciousness's intentionality may be kept. There can still be images, but these, though outside consciousness, are nevertheless in the mind. All that is required is that we suppose that minds, together with their contents, be outside consciousness and in the world. A given case of imagination may then be fairly complicated under intentional considerations. Suppose I imagine a painting by van Eyck. Then the act of imagination is the object of consciousness, the image of the painting the object of imagination, the painting itself the object of the image; and the painting itself, as an intentional structure, may have an object of its own—the Virgin, say, and her holy infant. Something can be in the mind and outside consciousness, which even allows Sartre a possibility he rejected in *Being and Nothingness*, namely a possibility of the unconsciousness. For though every state of consciousness may be such that we are conscious of that state when it is ours, still, not every state of mind need be conscious. So the *tiers monde* has minds in it as well as bodies; "object" after all is a logical notion, meaning something consciousness stands in a certain relationship to, and why should this not be mental as well as physical? I mean, the distinction between minds and bodies may have very little ultimate ontological interest, far less, perhaps, than the distinction between consciousness and its objects, or between the *pour soi* and the *en soi*.

That such a philosophy might have appealed to him is strongly suggested by the theory that he works out in the *Transcendence of the Ego*, which thrusts the self into the world, and which he lyrically celebrates in the paper on intentionality of 1939:

Nous voilà délivrés de Proust. Délivrés en même temp de la "vie intérieure." . . . puisque finalement tout est dehors, tout jusqu'à nous mêmes: dehors, dans le monde, parmi les autres. Ce n'est pas dans je ne sais quelle retraite que nous découvrirons: c'est sur la route, dans la ville, au milieu de la foule, chose parmi choses, homme parmi hommes.

Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière, *Vol. I,*
Attitudes Passionnelles: Extase. 1878.



Flavit et Dissipati Sunt

JOAN COPJEC

Flavit et dissipati sunt: for those who do not "have" Latin, "he blew and they were scattered." The title is not mine, but Freud's, or possibly Freud's; that is, he entertained it as a possible title for the chapter he would write on therapy in his work on hysteria.¹ But doubtless he thought better of it, for he never did use it, but substituted instead "The Psychotherapy of Hysteria," which has none of the imaginative attraction of the rejected, impossible title. This essay, a discussion of the photographs of hysterics which appear in the three-volume *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière* (Service de J.-M. Charcot)² reinstates this title, a colophon of speculation on its rejection and on its relation to hysteria. Outside the question of the inappropriateness of the particular image in the title—of the Janet-like position in which it places the analyst with respect to "the poor little thing," the hysteric;³ the hubris it reveals in the face of the doubts hysteria cast on scientific knowledge; and the Janus-like way it turns its back on the discovery of the resistances—there is the question of the inappropriateness of the image in general, of the image to scientific thought.

For some time Freud wanted to maintain a distance (as the particular image demonstrates) between himself, the analyst, and the hysteric, the analysand. The hysteric, in the very essay named by the substituted title, "The Psychotherapy of Hysteria," is characterized by him as being, as a rule, of a "visual" rather than a "thoughtful, verbal type." The psychotherapy consists in making a "picture" vanish "like a ghost that has been laid" to rest, in getting rid of it by turning it into words. The lines are clearly drawn: the analysand is on one side with images, the analyst on the other with thoughts. This notion of the inferiority of the image lingers even in Freud's obituary of Charcot, to whom he owed so much of his work on hysteria and whose picture hung always in Freud's office: Charcot, he summar-

1. See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey, New York, Avon, 1965, pp. 247-248, 508.

2. D.M. Bourneville and P. Regnard, *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière*, Paris, Vol. I, 1877; Vol. II, 1878; Vol. III, 1879-80.

3. See Pierre Janet, *The Major Symptoms of Hysteria*, New York, Macmillan, 1920.

ized, was not of the cognitive, reflective type, but (who can deny that the territory which abuts is not on the same, but an inferior, plane?) he had an artistic temperament; he was "a visuel, a seer." Our case rests here where Freud believes he rests this ghost. What we witness in this obituary (and Freud himself will develop in "Mourning and Melancholia" the concepts which allow us to say this) is a case of insufficient mourning. His thinking will not rid itself so easily of the image which will always haunt it from within. Although he will continue to reject images as imperfect, he will not cease to look for the appropriate ones, refusing at times to reject them even in their imperfections. At the conclusion of his attempt to explain the relation between memory and perception by way of the image of the photographic apparatus, he says, "I see no necessity to apologize for the imperfections of this or any other image."⁴

Perhaps the most vivid image of the psychotherapy of hysteria is one proposed not by Freud but by Anna O.: "chimney-sweeping," she named it in English. This is a particularly apt image for the song of innocence which psychoanalysis sang in its infancy. Breuer of Anna O.'s analysis: "I used to visit her in the evening when I knew I should find her in her hypnosis, and I then relieved her of the whole stock of imaginative products which she had accumulated since my last visit."⁵ The studies of hysteria had only just left the uterus and could still be pictured as a dusting and cleaning, an easy job as long as the "period of incubation" (Charcot's term for that period which Freud later renamed "elaboration," the period between the trauma and the symptom) had not progressed too far. Images could be plucked from thoughts, symptoms from bodies, meanings from dreams:

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he open'd the coffins and set them all free.

During this period of innocence it was indeed expected that "if all do their duty, they need not fear harm." But this period was not to last very long, for when Breuer thought he had finished his professional duty, it became clear that Anna O. had been shirking hers—she persisted in malingering, developed a hysterical pregnancy, and exposed the analyst to the harm of her imaginative production. Analysis, in short, had met the resistances which were to initiate it into the world of experience, that is, the psychoanalytic experience, or the transference. On the verge of recognizing this, Freud pronounced what would have served as a warning to Breuer if it had been spoken soon enough: "Treatment does not consist in extirpating a foreign body, but of melting resistances and thus enabling circulation to make its way into a region that has hitherto been cut off."⁶ Would I be guilty of preformationism to suggest that in this germ of a narrative is encased the

4. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 575.

5. Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, trans. James and Alix Strachey, London, Penguin, 1978, p. 83.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 377.

whole of the argument of this essay? That what we see here in miniature is the whole of the movement from the concept of images that can be plucked from thoughts to that of images which initiate the circulation of a chain of thoughts? Perhaps. It is only the future developments of Freud's own, as well as others', thoughts/images that retrospectively lends such significance to this one moment. By my consciousness of the finality of the future perfect, I have, of course, concealed a whole history.

I will begin again, therefore, at a specific historical point, one just anterior to Freud's intervention, just anterior to the discovery of the resistances. As it is the historical/philosophical relation of images to thought which we are attempting to define; as the study of hysteria foregrounds the problematic of this relationship—the illness of the malingerer, the hysteric, first presenting itself as an image which menaced knowledge, confusing categories of real and unreal illness, true perceptions and false images, making the physician a potential victim of trickery and deception and casting doubt on his senses which were the foundation of his knowledge, the image, in brief, conflated with madness and presented as inimical to thought; and as one of the most thorough documentations of this relationship is around the work of Charcot—the three volumes of his *Clinical Lectures on the Diseases of the Nervous System*⁷ in which he devotes over a third of his attention to hysteria, balancing, one might say, the three volumes of photographs of hysterics—the question of Freud's rejection of an image is reformulated around this material at hand: what is the relationship of the images of hysteria to the theory, the system of thought, of hysteria?

Illustrative. The reply is immediate and obvious. Seemly. The images were pedagogical props to be used to supplement Charcot's Tuesday and Friday Lectures. The biographers, including Freud, all offer support for this thesis: although Charcot's diction was remarkably clear, he was not a brilliant orator. (There is implied in this evaluation, this subordination and conjunction, a notion of rhetoric and of ornament which is not contemporary but of the era of Charcot). That is to say, he had a discursive failing which he made up for by the auxiliary of visual images. He instrumented his meanings with an array of illustrations that ranged from his own body, which mimicked the clinical symptoms (paralyses, contractures, muscular hyperexcitability, etc.); to projected images (he was one of the first to use projection equipment in a classroom); and charts, synoptic drawings, graphic diagrams, statuettes, and plaster casts. But all of these were only substitutes for the real image itself, the hysterical patient who was Charcot's primary illustration and whom he brought from the wards to the classroom. They usually obliged by imitating perfectly the major crises of hysteria. In return for this they were paid attention by the crowds who gathered in the Charcot amphitheater.

7. These were published in English by the New Sydenham Society, London, 1874–89. Freud obtained permission from Charcot to translate the lectures into German while he was studying with him in Paris. The lectures were published by Deuticke in Vienna in 1886.



To this amphitheater there was attached the "living pathological museum" (Charcot's term), that is, the infirmary wards; a studio for molding; a laboratory of pathological anatomy and physiology; an ophthalmological room; and, in 1876, a photographic laboratory. It was Duchenne de Boulogne who introduced Charcot to medical photography. Duchenne was a pioneer researcher in the field of electrophysiology. He experimented with the electrical excitation of muscles and wrote about the system of reflexes which produced physiognomic expressions. It was Albert Londe, however, who became director of the laboratory. Londe, it seems, was interested in photographing the "leading ladies" of hysteria, for he brought to Charcot three of the most famous, Louise Glaiz, Alphonsine Bar., and Blanche Wittmann. These women had the special talent of responding well to hypnotic suggestion and on this account they were used by hospitals, exchanged from one to the other throughout France for medical and legal experimentation.

We see in the photographs in the *Iconographie* the mark of these two men, or the mark, rather, of the historical concerns which they represented. We find in the



Iconographie, Vol. II, Hallucinations: Repugnance (far left), Terreur (left), Ironie (right). 1878.

three volumes a concentration on the physiognomies of the patients; that is, the facial expressions of the patients are the primary expressions of hysteria presented in the photographs. The mental conditions of the patients are their facio-somatizations. Anguish, surprise, disdain, irony, disgust, terror, repugnance—the inscriptions, unaided by any other “creative geography” (sometimes the backgrounds are scratched out; most often the face fills almost the entire frame), pretend to restate the physiognomic as fact, as though the image could reveal immediately what it was, as though existence and meaning were identical. Some of these inscriptions seem perfectly accurate. In volume I, for example, plate XXXV is a photograph of “repugnance,” which appears to be a correct naming of the facial expression—lips pursed as though they had just closed over something foul. Sometimes they seem unquestionably inaccurate; plate XXXIV, for example, is a photograph of “terror,” which looks decidedly more like anger or defiance. And sometimes they seem arbitrary, as in plate XXXII, which is a photograph of “irony.” What should a photograph of irony look like? There is irony, surely, in

the fact that these are photographs of hysterics, which means precisely that they are all under the sign of irony, of deception, that what seems, what appears, is not. It is not the emotional state but the disease which is the truth of these symptoms, these photographs.

We also find a concentration on, a privileging of the individual in these photographs. Augustine and Suzanne emerge as the "heroines" of the *Iconographie*. Which is also ironic, as the intention of the photographs is to mark out the identifiable, the repeatable characteristics of hysteria, which would entail, one also presumes, the effacing of the individuality of the hysteric. As these photographs of hysterics are at odds, then, on at least these two points, with the theory of hysteria, how can we say that they support the theory?

Lubrlicity, Charcot tells us over and over again in his lectures, is characteristic of hysteria, which is evanescent, mobile. There is a *carpe diem* theme throughout the lectures which offers the images as the rosebuds gathered by instantaneous photography. Volume III of the lectures reproduces part of a series of photographs, taken by Londe in the laboratory of the Salpêtrière, of a woman in the midst of an attack of rhythmical chorea, which Charcot is at pains to distinguish as specific to hysteria and thus different from the other tremors and choreiform movements which have an organic origin. The movements of rhythmical chorea include neither oscillations nor vibrations and are systematic. It is these traits which distinguish them from ordinary chorea. The photographs, then, trace these movements as a way of identifying the symptoms' difference from others, which would otherwise appear to be the same because the movements are executed too quickly and fluidly for the human eye to distinguish them. The images resemble and function similarly to those of Muybridge or the more physiologically oriented Marey, whose tambour was being used at this same time to register the muscular tremors of hysterics. The camera supplemented the eye which sought visual proof of the theory.

And yet it was not only lability which the photographs were to fix, but incompleteness as well. The most labile manifestation of the disease was the attack which Charcot carefully described in an effort to distinguish hysteria from epilepsy, a disease which was also accompanied by attacks and was often, for this reason, confused with hysteria. The hysteric crisis, as Charcot described it, was articulated in four phases: the epileptoid phase of convulsions; the phase of large movements of salutation, violence, arcs of circle; the hallucinatory phase of passionate attitudes; and the phase of terminal delirium. The syntagmatic progression of these crises became the paradigm of the disease—the Salpêtrière hysteric. The problem was, as Charcot statistically states, that one-third of the cases of hysteria never exhibited these attacks and not all of the other two-thirds exhibited the full attack. Many cases of hysteria were, then, according to Charcot, "incomplete." In one lecture, for example, Charcot uses two separate cases—that of Porz-, who had hysterogenic zones but no attacks, and that of Pin-, who had complete attacks but no hysterogenic zones—to supplement each other, fill in the

hiatus in the clinical picture of the other, to produce one plenitudinous picture of hystero-traumatic monoplegia. The first volume of the *Iconographie* is devoted to this graphic form of hysteria, the attack in four phases. The graph is not continuous, however, as the images of chorea are. Instead what is presented are the repetitions of each phase in several different patients so that the various patients and photographs together make up a whole picture.

It is not to be supposed that all this means that there was a classification—hysteria, complete hysteria—which existed in some pure form and became embodied in varying degrees of incompleteness in individual patients. We have not only Foucault's extensive analysis which tells us the difference between this classificatory approach in medicine, which historically preceded Charcot, and the anatomo-clinical approach with which he was contemporaneous, but we have also Charcot's own direct and indirect statements which suggest his adherence to the clinical method. The legend of Charcot includes the following repartee, quoted by Freud: a group of students, skeptical of Charcot's clinical observations, interrupted him by objecting that the observations he made contradicted the Young-Helmholtz theory which was then dominant. To these objections Charcot replied, "Theory is fine, but it doesn't stop things from existing."⁸ Freud refers to this incident as an example of his teacher's "practicing nosology,"⁹ a term Charcot himself uses to describe the clinical method of investigation which, it is implied, made possible the inauguration of the Clinical Chair of the Diseases of the Nervous System: nosology is that method "which argues from effect to cause, commencing with a study of disease at the bedside, as distinguished from the converse method of a prior reasoning, with the teachings of physiology for its base."¹⁰ In other words, clinically observable facts are primary and theory is an additive, syntactic transcription of them. A good clinician is one who has a fineness of sensibility, which fineness shades over to an appreciation of art (Charcot's collaborative studies of art with Paul Richter,¹¹ as well as the classical look of beauty—defined by the carefulness of composition, from drapery to lighting—which distinguishes these photographs of the *Iconographie* from the other medical photographs of the period;¹² the final placing of the Rubens sketch in the first volume, the luminosity of its lighting an analogue to the aura of the previous photographs, all bear witness to this), and to the significance of the variations of forms rejected by the classificatory method. Variation, by this approach, could

8. Quoted in Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, New York, Basic Books, 1981, Vol. I, p. 208.

9. A.R.G. Owen, *Hysteria, Hypnosis, and Healing: The Work of J.M. Charcot*, London, Dennis Dobson, 1971, p. 36.

10. Charcot, *Lectures*, Vol. I, p. 9.

11. *Les Démoniaques dans l'Art*, Amsterdam, Boekhandel and Antiquariaat. B.M. Israel, 1972 (Paris, 1887); and *Les Diffformes et les Malades dans l'Art*, Amsterdam, Boekhandel and Antiquariaat. B.M. Israel, 1972 (Paris 1889).

12. These are published in the multi-volumed *Revue Photographique des Hôpitaux de Paris*.



Iconographie, Vol. II. Sketch by Rubens:
Démoniaque.

not be discarded in favor of the invariable as in the medicine of species. Instead the abnormal had to be accounted for and counted, added together with other abnormalities to form the normal. Foucault quotes this in evidence: "The study of monsters or monstrosities of the human species gives us an idea of nature's teeming resources and of the gap to which she can lend herself."¹³ I quote Charcot's insistence on the importance to science of the work of artists who chose to copy, "not perfection, but deformities, infirmities, sickness, errors, deviations, aberrations of nature."¹⁴

Whereas Foucault analyzes this folding over of the one register onto the other, this adequation of seeing and knowing, in terms of the linguistic theories of the period, Sartre analyzes it in terms of the contemporaneous philosophical theories. His interest in the analytical method is, however, much more peripheral. His main concern in *Imagination: A Psychological Critique* is to examine the

13. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, New York, Vintage, 1975, p. 102.

14. *Les Difformes et les Malades dans l'Art*, "Introduction," p. iii.

philosophical history of the concept of the image. He never mentions the anatomo-clinical method, but he does mention some of its practitioners, among them Charcot: "From 1869 to 1885, Bastian, Broca, Kussmaul, Exner, Wernicke, and Charcot laid down the classical theory of aphasia, which inclines to nothing short of differential centers of imagery."¹⁵ The book is short because the history is (not short but) monotonous. Although Sartre differentiates three basic classical positions on the subject of images and their relation to thoughts, he finds that they are related in the way they treat images as things or, more accurately, inferior things immanent in the mind, copies of things outside. The classical positions are not controverted in the nineteenth century; instead this mistaken notion finds support from the method whose operation is dictated by the assumption of its validity. That is to say, associationism, the reigning psychological/philosophical discourse of the nineteenth century, which taught that concepts were formed from images which were repetitions of sensations, imprinted copies of things, found proof positive by the method of the clinicians, which was, though Foucault never names it, associationist. And where was this proof posited? In the brain, which during this period was discovered to be a differentiated and not a homogenous mass. Lesions and localization were thus the bedrock of the associationists. For, if areas in the brain could be located as original sites of images, then imagination and thought must be reducible to the elements found there and could not, *de facto*, be synthetic processes. Of course the argument was made more nuanced through particular debates like the one over hallucinations. The alienists still tried to maintain a radical separation between images produced by absent or nonexistent objects and sensations produced by real presences, but, for all intents and purposes, associationism held sway.

For the most part also we can agree with Sartre's placing of Charcot at the center and the avant-garde of this indexical neurology. Before electroencephalography, before electrocorticalology, it was Charcot who, by direct linking of cortical lesions with motor dysfunctions, prepared the way for neurological surgery. The supplementary chain of illustrative images which accompanied his lectures might be said to have located their final point in the brain, just as in the 1875 version of the *Iconographie*, which is composed solely of images (the other three volumes contain a text which includes case histories and analyses of the hysterics), the series of photographs, primarily shots of heads of hysterical patients resting against pillows, is concluded with a photograph of a brain resting against a backdrop of drapery. Although Charcot never tried directly in his lectures to enter this debate over hallucinations, we see in the *Iconographie* that the four phases of the attack are not represented equally. There is instead a privileging of the third phase, the period of hallucinations. If there is a position taken, it is, of course, on the side of the body against the mind, on the side of this brain which

15. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Imagination*, trans. Forrest Williams, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1962, p. 24.

impresses itself on these faces to produce expressions of anguish, surprise, disdain, etc. It is on the side of the body of science which determines, as Charcot and Richter say in their introduction to *Les Difformes et les Malades dans l'Art*, the limits of the possible against the imaginative impossible. Included in this book of deformities are images only of natural deformities and not of invented forms like sphinxes or sirens which do not belong to nature but to, in their word, "scissors."

Hysteria, then, is a disease of the imagination, of the production of images cut off from the natural. The hysteric, receiver of impressions, inhabits a realm of imagination, of bodily passivity, anaesthesia, and paralysis. Charcot makes clear in Lecture XX that paralysis is thus necessarily, objectively real, a paralysis by the imagination and not an imaginary paralysis. The hysteric was lifted by the whole *weight*, as Freud said, of scientific authority from the scandal of malingering. For, as opposed to Janet, for example, who believed that paralysis was caused by a failure of imagination, a failure of the hysteric to form the image of his/her limb which was necessary to move it, Charcot believed that movement was inhibited by the action of a fixed idea, an image of paralysis or of the absence of movement which made the formation of an image of movement impossible. For both it was the production of an image which was necessary to execute a movement, but for Charcot it was the positivity of another, a counter-image, rather than the simple lack of an image, which was the condition of the disease. For Janet, lack of imagination meant also lack of intelligence; thus the hysteric was a "poor little thing." Charcot, who granted the hysteric more imagination also granted him/her more intelligence. Both, it is clear, linked imagination and intelligence, images and thoughts, through their common, that is, their sensory, origin. Thoughts which were always reducible to images, their elemental form, were at the same time superior to them, their coherent, discursive organization. When images got out of line, when they became unreliable echoes of the objects which had produced them, they could be brought back, made isomorphic with reality again by a force which was aimed precisely at the imagination. "Medicine for the imagination" is what Binet and Fere called the therapeutic method of the Sâlpêtrière. "What has been done, can be undone," was Charcot's exact formulation of this undoing of the imagination through the imagination.¹⁶ Hypnosis, suggestion, was meant to encourage the formation of fresh images in the patient which would counter the diseased ones. And because the formation of an image was conceived as a mechanical operation, the hypnosis was often mechanically induced by "concentrating the patient's attention on a fixed point . . . gentle pressure by the fingers on the eyeballs . . . noise, bright lights . . . the confusional technique."¹⁷ The treatment, then, was the photographic image, the "*transfert*" of the disease. The third volume of the *Iconographie*, with its images of the phases of the hypnosis, is

16. Charcot, *Lectures*, Vol. II, p. 258.

17. Owen, p. 195.

presented almost as a reversal of the first, of the effects of the phases of the attack imaged in the first.

But not quite. That is to say, ideally, but not completely, not totally. It is this "not quite" which undermines the security of this reversal, this mensural principle of the analogical passion by which gradations of effect, perspectival figurations, trace and retrace the path between cause and effect, effect and cure. Where the ultimate photograph of Volume III—plate 40, "Lethargie. Contraction du Zygomatique," a photograph of a hysteric raising one side of her face toward an indicator which touches her cheek and is held by the in-frame hand of her hypnotist—may be viewed as an indexing of the index, lodging it as curator of these volumes of photographs, one must, nevertheless, abandon the "touching-touched" of this phenomenological reading if one considers these photographs as "participating in" the theory of hysteria.

For Charcot cannot quite, as Sartre has claimed, be credited with "laying down the classical theory of aphasia, which inclines to nothing short of differentiated centers of imagery."¹⁸ Charcot "never developed any anatomical, pathologic documentation of his own for aphasia"¹⁹ and remained until the end uncertain about Broca's theory of localization. Nor did Charcot employ theories of brain localization in his mapping of hysterical sites. Indeed, hysteria was seen as a disease which gave the lie to localization; it was a neuromimetic disease which could not be traced to any lesion of the brain. Instead Charcot defined a topography of the body, of hysterogenic zones located on the body, which when touched could produce or conclude a hysterical attack. This topography is analogous in impulse, of course, to the topography of the brain which neurophysiologists were trying to define at this time. But the dislodging of these zones from the brain and the shifting of them to the body began a displacement of the indexing of cause by the intermediary of the notion of the original site. This shifting, begun by Charcot, was to open a space for Freud and the jerrymandering which would result from the politics of his concept of the unconscious, the concept discovered as the resist which prevented the corrosive overlay of cause and cure.

As is clear from the photographs in Volume II, the three phases of hypnosis do not exactly reduplicate the four phases of the attack. It is important to remember that these four phases, discovered by Charcot at the Salpêtrière, were matter for considerable debate and were most consistently opposed by Bernheim of the Nancy School, who contested even the photographic "evidence" by proposing that hypnosis was all a matter of suggestion, that is, of external influence and thus not subject to the invariability of a regular sequence which physiological phenomena would produce. Freud, reporting the debate in "Hypnosis and Suggestion" (1888), sides with Charcot in the belief that hysterical symptoms are

18. Sartre, p. 195.

19. Georges Guillaumin, M.D. *J.M. Charcot 1825-93: His Life and Work*, trans. Pearce Bailey, New York, Paul B. Hoeber, 1959, p. 127.

governed by certain laws. But whereas for Charcot these were the laws of physiology, for Freud they were the laws of association. It is only later that Freud would understand them as the laws of the unconscious, but already he has defined a structure which resists pure suggestion, pure impressionability, a structure which resists finally, all appearances to the contrary, the pure associationism to which Sartre consigns him. It was in defining the mode of defense which hysterics exhibited towards association that Freud discovered an unconscious which was decidedly not the unconscious which Sartre attacked—not an inert repository of images, or the hypostatized *de jure* of thought which *must* exist to lend meaning to images, to supplement the essential poverty of images. Criticizing Freud as a naive realist, Sartre attempts to counter his supposed immanentism—by which images are seen as *things*, contents of consciousness—with his own immanentism—this time of meaning—by which consciousness is filled only with itself, is self-sufficient and thus independent of the existence of an unconscious, a latency.

It is clear that Sartre did not understand Freud, but he fought his battle with the unconscious on the proper ground—the imaginary. Sartre's work on the imaginary can be seen as part of the twentieth-century attack on the image, on associationism. The attack developed through the experiments of the Würzburg School, the philosophy of Bergson, and the intentional structure of consciousness introduced by Brentano. According to this structure, consciousness was directed at an object. No intermediary, no mental image separated the subject from the object of intention, for the ontological law which defined intention stated that there were only things in themselves and consciousness for itself. Images which were conceived as things in consciousness, that is, simultaneously in and for themselves, could not exist. It was on this ground that the unconscious was rejected as an impossibility. The imaginary replaced both images and the unconscious in the phenomenological system. The imaginary is a kind of consciousness, a way of apprehending, of presenting an object. The object and not the image is aimed at by consciousness and the image is nothing but the relationship of consciousness to the object. "Will and consciousness" were made the vortical reversal of the classical postulate which had described its subjects as receivers of impressions.

Freud's essay, "The Unconscious," was published in 1915, although the concept was outlined earlier in his other works. In 1928 Georges Politzer wrote his *Critique des fondements de la psychologie*, as a critique, basically, of this metapsychological concept. In 1936 Lacan's first essay on the mirror phase and Sartre's *Imagination* were both published. Four years later, Sartre extended his study in *The Psychology of the Imagination*, and five years after that, Lacan extended his in his second mirror phase essay. Politzer's critique, clearly a phenomenological one, is implicit (though never explicitly cited) in Sartre's, and Lacan's critique of the phenomenological critique, while implicit in his first essay, is in the second explicitly directed at Sartre, the philosopher of "being and

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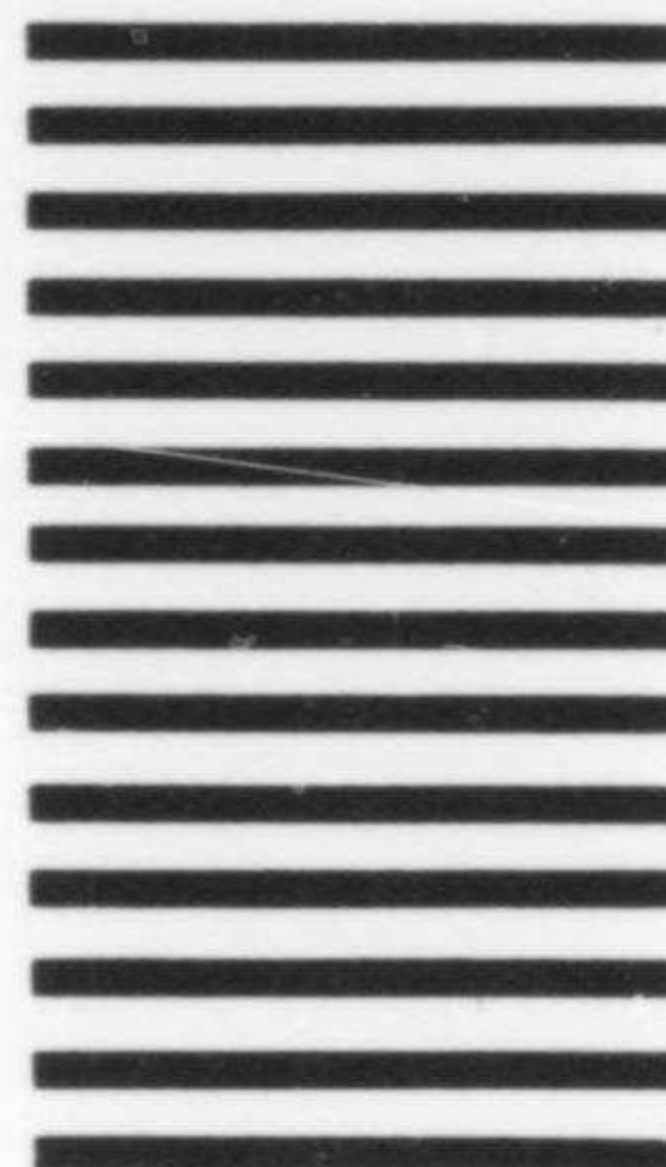
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nothingness." What this telescoped history marks is the imbrication of the concepts of images and the unconscious in French philosophical thought. The unconscious, a concept developed out of the work on the "imaginary" disease, hysteria, was displaced by the phenomenological concept of the imaginary. Lacan simply replaced back into the Freudian system this imaginary which it had attempted to reject. He demonstrated once again that the image, the Imaginary, is the precondition of the unconscious; that phenomenology, rather than being an adequate critique of the unconscious, was an orthopedic gesture, the prop of the possibility of the unconscious, which projected philosophy from the fantasies, produced by the associationists, of a fragmented body image to a form of the totality of a Being-in-the-world. Coming as they do before the birth of the concept of the unconscious, of psychoanalysis—wombed still in the study of neurology, medicine, the body—the images of the hysterics might be called the intra-organic mirror phase of psychoanalysis. That is, the specific premature birth of the subject of psychoanalysis was in these images of hysterics, these models of the corpus of medical knowledge. This first death of the body into an image was obscured for a time from its beholders by the dazzling beauty of the photographs, the aesthetic order of wholeness which it promised and which Sartre writes about in his conclusion to *The Psychology of the Imagination*. The second death comes from the theory of hysteria, from Lacan's reminder that this beauty, this wholeness is an imaginary synthesis which, despite Kant, Bergson, Sartre, and other manifold philosophers of the intensive intention, never, resisted as it is by the innervations from the unconscious, never *quite* takes place.

We must not forget that the theory of hysteria was from the beginning a theory of mimesis—of the hystriotics of the hysteric, their mimicry of physical diseases, and of the imitation produced by hypnosis. It is this fact which Lacan recalls in his elaboration of the mirror phase, which can only be seen as the grounding of thethetic, the positing and positioning of the ego and the object, in the theatrics of the Imaginary. There are, underlying the works of Sartre and Lacan, very different concepts of mimesis. Sartre's concept, defined by its antagonism to the associationists, can best be described by reference to their theory of mimesis:

(emotion in painter)	(sensed)	(work of art)	(sensed)	(emotion in viewer)
1	2	3	4	5

What is important to recognize is that 1 and 3 are not equivalent. The immaterial emotion of 1 was embodied in 3, but between the two there is a radical separation. Sartre's "objective correlative" theory of mimesis looked much more like T.S. Eliot's:

(object)	(painter)	(painting)	(viewer)	(object)
1	2	3	4	5

Between 1 and 3 there is a relationship of equivalence; 3 is not the embodiment of

I, not the externalization of a mental state. As Sartre said in his earlier work, *Imagination*, psychologism, though it had made psychic images the copies in the subject of physical images outside, had in its aesthetic theories radically separated physical images such as paintings and photographs from psychic images on the basis of their material difference. Beginning with Husserl, who saw images as a way in which consciousness aimed at its objects, phenomenology, however, could view photographs as "hyletically ambiguous," that is, as either external objects or as imaginative consciousness. A photograph was equivalent to an imaginative consciousness when it de-realized itself, became disembodied:

The painter does not realize his mental image on canvas at all; he has simply constructed a material analogue of such a kind that everyone can grasp the image provided he looks at the analogue. But the image thus provided with an external analogue remains an image. There's no realization of the imaginary, nor can we speak of its objectification. . . . The painting is an analogue, only what manifests itself through it is an unreal collection of new things . . . which do not exist in the painting nor anywhere in the world, but which manifest themselves by means of the canvas, and which have got hold of it by some sort of possession.²⁰

We recognize in this notion of possession an earlier analysis which Sartre conducted of the impersonation of Maurice Chevalier by Franconay—an explicit critique of associationism and the illusion of immanence which it maintains. According to Sartre, there is no force of resemblance, no relation of metaphor and metonymy which bring Maurice Chevalier to consciousness when Franconay is perceived. Resemblance, that is, does not precede consciousness; rather consciousness apprehends all at once that Franconay is (that is, is possessed of) Maurice Chevalier. Resemblance is replaced by possession and the unconscious is banished as that shadowy area where resembling elements are stored, waiting to be discovered. We are not far, it seems, from that pre-Freudian analysis of hysteria by which possession, rather than the unconscious, was thought to underlie the spasmodic symptoms of the hysterics.

What is it, in Sartre's system, that is being possessed? Being. The imaginary is finally that form of consciousness which produces the object which it desires in a form that it can possess; the imaginary negates the object, dispossesses it of its reality in order to take possession of it(self). Thus, included in consciousness's Being-in-the-world is its freedom from it, its ability to negate it by bringing it in relation to itself. Consciousness is freed from the world because of this capacity for autoaffection: "It is not because the unreal object appears close to me that my eyes are going to converge, but it is the convergence of my eyes that mimics the

20. Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of the Imagination*, London, Methuen and Co., 1972, pp. 220-222.

proximity of the object . . . My entire body participates in the make-up of the images."²¹

As opposed to this concept of mimesis as a matter of self-possession, Lacan describes it as a matter of self-dispossession. Instead of the world, it is the subject who experiences the "de-realizing effect" of mimicry. Where Sartre had made clear that it was "Being-in-the-world which is the necessary condition for the imagination," thus insuring the subject a place from which to act, Lacan describes the Imaginary as the necessary condition of Being-in-the-world, as the "dialectic which will henceforth link the *I* to socially elaborated situations." It is by becoming unreal, by being dispossessed of Being that the subject becomes inserted in the world (as meaning), that is, into a totality which exceeds it. Where for Sartre the subject's desire occasions the image, for Lacan the subject's assumption of an image occasions desire. The subject, that is, desires insofar as it is other, finds itself exteriorized in an image. Thus alienated from itself, the subject has, henceforth, a mediated relationship to itself and must seek validation by recognition from another. Mimesis, according to this theory, is no longer a matter of being impressed, or possessed of the positivity of another, but of covering up, camouflaging the gap which separates the other from itself.

The difference, to close this long parenthesis and to return to the photographs of the hysterics, is a matter of framing. According to the doctrine of phenomenology, consciousness has the ability to put the world in parenthesis; for Freudians it is consciousness itself which is put in parenthesis. Both Freud and Sartre inherited a critique of the copy theory of mimesis by way of Brentano's doctrine of "secondary consciousness." For Sartre this meant that consciousness was protected from being run through by the real by means of this secondary structure which was not a superadded power of consciousness but an essential part of its very realization. The world emerges out of the real, which is negated and presented to consciousness as imaginary. External perception results from this relationship of consciousness with itself and with its presentation of the implicit meaning of the real to itself. Freud, however, extended this doctrine of secondary consciousness into that of a second consciousness—the unconscious. His critique of the copy or inscription theory was thus carried out by doubling the inscription. Beginning with the "Project," we can see Freud's attempt to define the index or trace against the notion of analogical resemblance, and in the essay "The Unconscious," we see that analogy once again fails to grasp the structure of the unconscious, this second consciousness. The unconscious as an ungraspable structure is the condition of the impossibility of the subject to fulfill the two different functions of memory and consciousness. Between the two structures, consciousness and unconsciousness, there exists not a relationship of adequation—the unconscious as the meaning of the conscious manifestation, the

21. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

superfluousness of consciousness's immanence—but of conflict. The subject, made up of separate mental agencies, is not the site of the inscription of psychic contents, but rather a conflictual structure of object relationships.

Consciousness's relationship with the world is not direct, but mediated through its relationship with the unconscious. Once again, it was Lacan who redefined the Imaginary in terms which made it not the replacement but the precondition of the unconscious. The subject, caught up in the lure of the Imaginary, projects itself out of itself. Thus the auto-perception which phenomenology describes must traverse this space, this internal foreign territory which separates the subject from itself. The world is returned not through consciousness, but through the unconscious.

Sartre's imaginary consciousness is turned towards the real in a defensive stance. The something which is negated, denied is the real which is surpassed, presented to consciousness as meaning. The image, according to Sartre (as well as Pound) is always the *adequate* symbol; the relationship of a dream, expression, symptom to its content is one of complete adequation, of simultaneous translation. Pleasure is manifest in a smile. Freud's consciousness defends itself from its unconscious, its introjected outside. Between these two forces there is a relationship of conflict and compromise; unconscious thoughts are displaced, condensed, converted by the conscious system. Dreams, symptoms are formations which result from a compromise between repressing and repressed ideas. There is no reading back from a dream or symptom to its simple presence, coextensive in the unconscious. For these formations are precisely displacements of lacunary eruptions of the unconscious which they expell. The Freudian concept of the unconscious eliminates the possibility of simple linear reversal as it institutes a structure of overdetermination into the process of the subject.

Hypnosis, once again, was related in its beginnings to the mechanical devices of *transfert*, of simple reversals of symptoms from one side of the body to the other. It was discovered one day at the Salpêtrière, while a patient was undergoing treatment with an "aesthesiogenism" (an agent which is employed for its action upon the patient's *sensations*), that while hearing was restored to the patient's hemianesthetic side, the loss was transferred to the other, the normal side. This phenomenon whereby paralyses, anesthetics, disorders of vision, hearing disappeared only to be replaced by their symmetrical other soon became identified as one of the salient characteristics of hysterical symptomology. At the same time as hypnosis was introduced as a method of investigation and treatment, metallotherapy, which drew symptoms, by means of large magnets, back and forth between the left and right sides of the body, was also being used to produce a primitive and mechanical, though "physiologically intelligible" (Freud refers to the phenomenon of *transfert*) form of abreaction. One of the most adamant champions of this method of treatment, this attention to mechanical reversal, was Paul Regnard, who, while an intern at the Salpêtrière, actually took the photographs for and, with Bourneville, coauthored the *Iconographie*, a kind of photographic staging of this very process of left-right reversal.

In as much as the *Iconographie* is imprinted by its own historical period, is grounded, in the first volume, in the associationists' debates over hallucinations, the differential diagnosis in the second, the mechanical aspects of hypnosis in the third; in as much as it is intent on registering the traces of this lubricious disease, hysteria; in as much, in short, as the *Iconographie* is an index of the *shifting* symptoms of its hysterical subjects and an imprint of a counterbalancing therapeutic image, the photographic images are aligned, as they always have been by Western thought, on the side of presence. Images are deviated thoughts, a debased form of pure knowledge which thought secures. They are characterized by distortions, vagueness, and references to absent objects, and yet in spite of (or perhaps because of) their deviation (the "poverty of the image" giving the resource of thought that which it does not have—lack), they supplement thoughts by making present the distance they traverse, the distance which threatens presence with annihilation. For, by the commutative law of Western thought, the order of operations may be reversed, makes no difference. And in as much as Freud inherited this tradition, he had to abdicate his original title to the "Psychotherapy of Hysteria."

Yet the title does belong to Freud, nevertheless; it is his "original sin"—in the sense that Lacan uses this catholic term to describe the relationship of hysteria to psychoanalysis. The title, borrowed from the inscription of a medal, had its returns, its remuneration, in the theory of psychoanalysis, of the unconscious, Freud's unconscious, which is the other side on which this inscription is engraved. Freud's fascination with this inscription and his rejection of it reveals/disguises his unconscious desire for recognition, his desire that his work on hysteria be recognized as "germinal" and sustain him in his role as father of psychoanalysis. This original sin, related as it is to psychoanalysis, is problematically "original," problematically "sinful"—is, in fact, behovely, for it is the "stain" which allows the invisible unconscious to emerge in the conscious field. Freud wrote in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, "An unconscious idea is as such quite incapable of entering the preconscious . . . and it can only exercise any effect there by establishing a connection with an idea which already belongs to the preconscious, by transferring its intensity on to it and by getting itself 'covered' by it."²² Psychoanalysis, it seems, was developed out of a deception perpetuated not only by the hysterical analysand, but also by the analyst. Mimicry, as it is elaborated by Lacan from the "Mirror Phase" to the seminars on transference, is just such a "cover up," a camouflaging which inserts the unconscious into a series of conscious thoughts by means of a "*méconnaissance*" (Lacan), or a "*mésalliance*" (Freud in *Studies on Hysteria*). Mimesis is related from its beginnings to the tragic flaw, the *hamarita*, that is, literally, the inevitable and productive "missing the mark." The drama of the subject is instituted by this Imaginary instance.

It is the transference which comes to replace in Freud's thought, in psycho-

22. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 377.

analytic technique, the notions of *transfert*, of hypnosis, of the techniques of photographic reversal. For the compromise between the forces pressing towards cure and those of the unconscious gathered to oppose it is another symptom of the resistance, another "artificial illness"—the transference. Hysteria's artificiality is thus raised (we see this clearly enough in the case of Dora) to another power, is projected out of itself and played out in another field—the field of the power of the other. "This," Freud says in "The Dynamics of the Transference," "is the ground on which the victory must be won," for "in the last resort no one can be slain *in absentia* or *in effigie*." This Imaginary grounding of the subject, then, absents the subject from itself, makes of it an effigy of an effigy. This battleground, pictured as internecine, this new symptom, employs an image, a concept of the Imaginary which is alienated from any notion of presence or of a symptom as unambiguous, diagnostic indicator of an unconscious content with which it is copresent.

How, then, raised by these theoretical concerns out of the historical context in which the photographs were produced, are we to understand the relation of the *Iconographie* to the theory of hysteria? If not a pedagogic prop, then what? If we can not find there the tracings of the theory, what can we find? How can we say, as we have, that the theory of the unconscious is imprinted there? We would be hard pressed not to admit that the theory has found a support in these photographic images, that they have been a prop for this discussion as well as for Charcot and the theory of hysteria. But as a result of leaning on this function of the images, we have witnessed an important deviation of the theory of the image itself, a theory which founds the image in this deviation.

From the first viewing of the photographs of the *Iconographie*, what has seemed most striking is that it is the lack of parity between the first and the third volumes which makes the photographs parturient of psychoanalysis. This deviation can only be described as the effect of the gradual, metonymic intrusion of the analyst into the clinical picture—the tremendous deviation from the demands and practice of medical photographs taken in the Paris hospitals at the same time. The third volume depicts not only the hypnosis, the analyst's intervention in the disease, but the analyst himself; at first only metaphorically and metonymically by means of his hypnotic apparatus—"bruit du diapason," "lumière vive," "brusque de la lumière"—but finally in actuality, as his hand is revealed in the process. It is from the time that the analyst is caught up, mirrored in these images, that images enter the Imaginary. That is to say, what is important is no longer what is present in them so much as what is absent. The product of this Imaginary is, of course, the ego, that is, both a metaphor of the subject, a carrying over of the subject into the field of the Other, and a metonymy, a differentiated part, an agency of the subject. The product of the Imaginary, then, is a displacement, not a presence. It installs presence as an elsewhere, displaces it, as it displaces, is the displacement of associationism, which maintained that the subject sought and found objects by means of the laws of metaphor and metonymy, and the displacement of Sartre, who displaced the laws of metaphor and metonymy by the laws of intention.



Iconographie, Vol. I, Attitudes Passionnelles: Appel (left), Erotisme (right). 1878.

The object is no longer sought and found as a result of the concept of the Imaginary, but displaced, which is the precise meaning of the famous Freudian formulation, "The finding of an object is the refinding of it." The theory of hysteria uncovered the fact that the stigmatic loci of hysterics were not primary, but were conferred on any part of the body by sexual fantasies which displaced the object of the instinct by the representation of the drive. Hysteria names the recognition of this deviation of the object and "the hysteric," as Moustapha Safouan has said, "renounced being what men fight over,"²³ renounced, that is, being the object of their desire.

23. Moustapha Safouan, "In Praise of Hysteria," in *Returning to Freud: Clinical Psychoanalysis in the School of Lacan*, ed. and trans. Stuart Schneiderman, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1980, p. 59.

Yet, something still remains in place, even in this final recognition in which it is implied, here as always, that the hysteric is a woman. This implication brings us to the final question about the relationship between the images and the theory: how, anyone who has seen the photographs may ask, how has she managed to discuss the *Iconographie* without mentioning that all the photographs are images of women? This is true. All the images are images of women, but I have avoided stating this obvious fact in this way. Which is not to say that it is neither here nor there. For it is—here and there, *fort* and *da*, man “thinking with his thing,” attempting to master the gap opened up by the absence which sustains him. Although one of Charcot’s main contributions to the study of hysteria was his demonstration that it is a disease found in men as well as women, although he exhibited hysterical men in his classroom and delivered long lectures on male hysteria, all the photographs in the *Iconographie* are images only of women.

My deliberate neglect of this fact as my starting point is to be taken as part of a strategy which refuses to sanction those discussions which continue to theorize hysteria as essentially a female disease, refuses to sanction a theoretical tradition which even Charcot, who, as we have said, initiated the break from it, continued in some ways to support. In the clinical lectures male hysteria is usually traced back to an accident, a physical trauma, while female hysteria is ascribed to a psychic trauma, the implication, even the explanation, being that the female is disposed constitutionally to the disease. Sometimes, more often in men Charcot is careful to say, hysteria is inherited, and in these cases the inheritance is through the mother, for it is her influence which is so “*deleterious*.” Charcot often cites the caprices of hysterical patients, “even male ones,” for hysteria is related to antic dispositions. The women patients, as the biographers have said, were often “excellent comedians.” It is the same tradition which links women essentially to hysteria that also links women to humor, makes humor humoral, which this essay attempts to stem. Women must be theorized outside the “vapeurs” which, before Charcot’s theory of hysteria, constituted her originally as sick. So too must she be thought outside the “poverty of the image” as the image is theorized in its relation to thought.

Nor can feminist theory continue to use the formulation “images of women” to name the site of its intervention without first examining the intentional structure of that formulation and the phenomenal illusion to which it binds the theory. This essay has been written in opposition to this structure, this placing of the subject on the one side and the object on the other. We must take care to examine how this structure, which is so seemingly natural, and so hale, makes itself vigorous through its exhalation of women, constituting them as the nonexistent objects of an imagining and purely subjective subject.

Roland Barthes and the Moving Image*

DANA B. POLAN

From "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" (1966) to *S/Z* (1970), Roland Barthes's work on narrative constitutes an essential source of ideas about the nature of narrative in film. With *S/Z*, for example, film scholars have found a way to understand texts as an interplay, an interweaving, of voices rather than as the unmediated expression of themes. The notion of codes in *S/Z* moves beyond Christian Metz's less analytic discussion in *Language and Cinema* of the imbrication of specific and nonspecific codes and provides a method to approach the complexity of film as textuality.

Yet, significantly, it is precisely as *method*, and not as a philosophy, that Barthes's work has been useful to narratologists. Even though *S/Z* alternates its semic "rewriting" of *Sarrasine* with longer meta-theoretical digressions which derive from a specific poststructuralist ideology, it is the detailed analysis which scholars have picked up from *S/Z*, while the ideological underpinning is left behind. It is not surprising that *S/Z* and *Mythologies* tend to be the books from Barthes's career to which scholars most often refer; these two texts are Barthes's most seemingly practical, providing a way to think about the structurings of mass-cultural practices in their intricacy and detail. Barthes's work becomes no more than the source of a *technique* which can be applied to no matter what end.

While I agree with the estimation of usefulness for Barthes's work, I am interested here in discussing the link, or lack thereof, between this specific application of Barthes and the less analytic, less methodological aspect of his work which achieves its fullest representation in *The Pleasure of the Text*, *The Empire of Signs*, *Sade/Fourier/Loyola*, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, *A Lover's Discourse*, and Barthes's final book, *Camera Lucida*. But for a few comments on the need to develop an aesthetics of textual excess,¹ scholars concerned to develop analytic methods have found little of interest in Barthes's later work. Indeed, from

* This essay was first presented at a conference of the Society for Cinema Studies held at the City University of New York in April of 1981.

1. See, for example, Kristin Thompson, "The Concept of Cinematic Excess," *Ciné-Tracts*, vol. 1, no. 2 (Summer 1977).

1970 on, Barthes's work elicits mainly a feeling of embarrassment or willful ignorance, his emphasis on pleasure and erotics appearing as a betrayal of analysis's more distanced stance toward experience. My aim is not to justify this later work—indeed, I want to argue that some discontent is perhaps the appropriate response to Barthes's evolution—but to suggest that this later phase cannot be something that has no effect on his methodology, that one cannot easily separate “good” Barthes from “bad” Barthes, that there finally may be a contamination of the semiotic cultural analysis by another force, one most clearly indebted to classical phenomenology and its sense of immersion in the “flow” of experience.

The cinema stands as one of the central figures in this confrontation of two approaches, two stances. While Barthes's narratology has irrevocably altered the ways we approach film narrative, paradoxically and surprisingly Barthes felt unable to apply his own theories of narrativity to film. His scattered comments on film demonstrate a certain belief in Godard's adage that film is truth twenty-four times a second. The inexorable flow of images through the projector creates a force that, for Barthes, is beyond analysis, beyond any possible demythologizing or demystifying stance. One of the fragments in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* sums up this attitude: Barthes understands the flow of cinema as creating a fullness, a plenitude, that disarms the critic and allows him no more than a

resistance to the cinema: the signifier itself is always, by nature, continuous here, whatever the rhetoric of frames and shots; without remission, a continuum of images; the film . . . *follows*, like a garrulous ribbon: statutory impossibility of the fragment, of the haiku. Constraints of representation . . . make it necessary to receive everything: of a man walking in the snow, even before he signifies, everything is given to me.²

Barthes reverts here to the Bazinian tradition of understanding film and seems to invoke Metz's early sense of film as a *language* without a *langue*. Film exists apart from signification; it is a brute thereness in which signifiers slide smoothly into each other by a process of natural induction which is pre- or arhetorical.

Only when Barthes is able, as in “The Third Meaning: Research notes on some Eisenstein stills,” to stop the flow and literally break the film down into fragments does film seem amenable to analysis, to an assertion of the researcher's power to step back from the text and transform it through a type of reading that Barthes in *S/Z* calls rewriting. Referring in “The Third Meaning” to a signification that he calls the filmic, Barthes argues that this filmic meaning only appears when one stops the film, when one refuses the way in which narrative flow converts signifiers into inescapable signifieds:

2. *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard, New York, Hill and Wang, 1977, p. 54-55.

Forced to develop in a civilization of the signified, it is not surprising that . . . the filmic should still be rare. . . . Nor is it surprising that the filmic can only be located after having—analytically—gone across the ‘essential’, the ‘depth’ and the ‘complexity’ of the cinematic work. . . . Which is why to a certain extent . . . the filmic, very paradoxically, cannot be grasped in the film ‘in situation’, ‘in movement’, ‘in its natural state’, but only in that major artefact, the still.³

What this argument finally leads to is an either/or understanding which banishes any possibility of internal contradiction: there is either film—by nature, for Barthes, an art of the *vraisemblable*, of experiential depth—or the filmic—the fleeting accidents, as Barthes calls them, of *signifiante*, where obtuse meaning “exceeds psychology, anecdote, function, exceeds meaning. . . .”⁴ Among other consequences, this either/or structure prevents Barthes from imagining a cinema like the one for which Brecht argued and which Godard tried to put into practice—a cinema which would itself become analytic, fragmenting diegetic flow through a meta-discourse which would qualify immediate realities, to speak “as if quoting,” as Juliette says in *Two or Three Things I Know about Her*. In “Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein,” Barthes expressly deals with Brecht’s fragmentation of scene into representative social gestic. He argues that even if such fragmentation means that “at the level of the play itself, there is no development, no maturation . . . no final meaning, nothing but a series of segmentations,”⁵ nonetheless this fragmentation leads not to an alienation effect, an analytic distance, but to a fetishized involvement. Any, every watching of a scene by an audience establishes representation, involvement in spectacle rather than critical awareness:

The theatre is precisely that practice which calculates the place of things *as they are observed*. . . . Thus is founded—against music (against the text)—*representation*.

Representation is not defined directly by imitation: even if one gets rid of notions of the ‘real’, of the ‘vraisemblable’, of the ‘copy’, there will still be representation for so long as a subject (author, reader, spectator or voyeur) casts his *gaze* towards a horizon on which he cuts out the base of a triangle, his eye (or his mind) forming the apex.⁶

Increasingly, Barthes sees cinema as a grand metaphor for the very submission of self to system: “Ideology is, in effect, the imaginary of an epoch, the Cinema of a society.”⁷ This declaration sums up Barthes’s understanding of film.

3. Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, New York, Hill and Wang, 1977, p. 65.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

7. Roland Barthes, “Upon Leaving the Movie Theater,” trans. Bertrand Augst and Susan White, in

The conflation of cinema and ideology within the concept of the Imaginary pictures a situation outside codifiability, outside semiosis. Ideology is no longer, as it is for Althusser and others, a discursive interpellation, but instead a nondiscursive immersion, a pure bathing in a "festival of affects." Where an early, semiotic essay, "The Rhetoric of the Image," had argued for the necessity of understanding the photograph as precisely a rhetoric, a coded articulation, Barthes now suggests that we can no longer even *understand* ideological practices; we are either totally inside them, caught up phenomenologically in ideology's flow, or outside them, running for the safety of a subversive music, the "grain of the voice."

But without a scientific attitude, an articulated step back from phenomenological immersion, it would seem that the only options open are a kind of anarchic, Nietzschean play or—what may amount to the same thing—an attempt to outrun ideology by parody. In an interview with Stephen Heath, Barthes suggests that "the great problem is to outplay the *signifié*, to outplay law, to outplay the father, to outplay the repressed—I do not say to explode it, but to outplay it."⁸ What Barthes applauds are experiences on the edge of ideology, on the edge of the Cinema of our society. But, as with any politics of parody, this outplaying only works as long as the forms one is outplaying remain in situation, maintain their force, and so provide a measure against which one can judge the outplaying. Barthes's poststructuralist invocation of the play of the signifier is, in gestalt terms, a figure which is visible only when it stands in relation to a ground; indeed, play necessitates that ground which is the very ideology it seems to set itself against, and it thereby perpetuates that ideology. Barthes separates the player from history and allows that history to continue on its course. In *The Empire of Signs*, for example, Barthes's formalism—his conversion of politics into play—regards the overpopulation evident in Tokyo streets as the "source of an intellectual jubilation." Barthes's observing eye, divorcing ends from means, makes him the modern equivalent of Baudelaire's dandy, gliding through real streets, real situations, and transforming them by an aestheticization, a *plaisir*. Social reality becomes language, not in the demythologizing sense that it is amenable to analysis, but simply as something that speaks to you, captures you in its grain, its diction: the Japanese street, for example, becomes a "new dialectic of *parole* and of *langue*, of the series and the individual, of body and race. . . . It is the transformation of quality by quantity."⁹

Where *S/Z* has the power of a teaching manual, a guide to social analysis which critics can employ (it is not accidental that *S/Z* is the result of a seminar, a

University Publishing, no. 6 (Winter 1979), 3; originally published in *Communications*, no. 23 (May 1975).

8. Stephen Heath, Colin MacCabe, and Christopher Prendergast, eds., *Signs of the Times: Introductory Readings in Textual Semiotics*, Cambridge, Instaprint, n.d., p. 49.

9. Roland Barthes, *L'Empire des signes*, Paris, Flammarion, 1980, p. 128.

group effort), Barthes's later work moves increasingly to privatize experience, to promote individualist ways to take personal pleasures in the face of an ostensible vast ideological repression. *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* begins with photographs as a source of play: "To begin with, some images: they are the author's treat to himself for finishing his book. His pleasure is a matter of fascination (and thereby quite selfish)."¹⁰ With a monolithic conception of ideology as cinema, cinema as ideology—both as society's Imaginary—Barthes can only promote a postromantic egoism as revolutionary act.

This egoism reaches an extreme in *Camera Lucida*. Admitting that "it is not impossible to perceive the photographic signifier . . . , but it requires a secondary action of knowledge or of reflection,"¹¹ Barthes nonetheless goes on to argue that the force of the photograph is finally one which disarms such knowledge or reflection: "In this glum desert, suddenly a specific photograph reaches me: it animates me, and I animate it. . . . This is what creates every adventure."¹² Barthes's interest is precisely in photography as a personal art, an art in which particular photographs touch the self while others have no effect. Barthes's discovery of a (for him) haunting photograph of his deceased mother becomes his proof that one can step outside social codes and have an experience which is unremittingly personal; the photo confirms Barthes's subjective irreducibility, his difference. Where *S/Z* had argued that difference is not individuality, but a particular enunciation of social codes (somewhat like the later Sartre's sense of the person as interiorization of exteriority), *Camera Lucida* equates the two and reaffirms a centrality of the subject that poststructuralism had claimed to disavow. Against ideology's ostensible force of immersion, photography is an art predicated, so Barthes claims, on the sanctity of the asocial self: "It is my *political* right to be a subject which I must protect."¹³

It is not surprising that *Camera Lucida* is dedicated to the Sartre of *L'Imaginaire*, for Barthes's narrative of his personal involvement duplicates the agon of the existential individual central to Sartre's early work. As Ron Aronson suggests in his book on Sartre,¹⁴ this existentialism projects the objective world, the world of the Other, as a brute materiality which is beyond understanding or transformation (except through the escapism of aesthetic imagination). Barthes accepts this notion of the impenetrability of the experience of the Other. He sees the cinema, for example, as an overwhelming experience; in "Upon Leaving the Movie Theater," he describes the cinema as a pure capturing:

I am locked in on the image as though I were caught in the famous dual

10. *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, p. 3.

11. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, New York, Hill and Wang, 1981, p. 5.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

14. Ron Aronson, *Sartre: Philosophy in the World*, New York, Schocken, 1980.

relationship which establishes the Imaginary. The image is there before me, for my benefit: coalescent, . . . analogical, global, pregnant: it is a perfect lure. I pounce up it. . . . I glue my nose, to the point of disjoining it, on the mirror of the screen.¹⁵

Against this lure, Barthes resorts to an existentialism which celebrates the interiority and specificity of the particular subject and his/her project.

To be sure, Barthes's poststructuralism, with its emphasis on the decentering of the subject by the codes that traverse it, tries to disavow any celebration of an immediacy of the "I" (see his deconstruction in *S/Z* of the phrase, *Je lis le texte*), but it finally reinvokes phenomenology's proscription of "true" experience as an *immediate* experience which brackets out social codes, which searches for an affect before or beyond such codes: "Looking at certain photographs, I wanted to be primitive, without culture."¹⁶

The Soviet critic Mikhael Bakhtin, in a number of works, such as *Rabelais and His World* and *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, argues for an understanding of language, semiosis, as a dialogic activity where every personal expression is always already a social experience, an interaction with the voice of the Other. Barthes eliminates the dialogue, sees the interaction of subject and Other as an immersion of one in the other. He retreats to individualism; significantly, *A Lover's Discourse* is not a dialogue of lovers but a monologue in which a lover waits for a rendezvous. Writing of Kenneth Burke's eccentric criticism, Fredric Jameson captures the political force of such a monologue:

The greatest aesthetic productions of capitalism prove . . . to be the cries of pain of isolated individuals against the operation of transindividual laws, the invention of so many private languages and subcodes in the midst of a reified speech, the symptomatic expressions, finally, of a damaged subject and the marks of his or her vain efforts to subvert and to negate an intolerable social order.¹⁷

Following Jameson, I would suggest that rejection of Barthes's modernism does not have to lead back to a naive theory of experience and subjectivity: modernism is itself that sort of theory. This is not to dismiss modernism as an irrelevance; the modernist concern with play still maintains a strong hold over the ways we as scholars live our practice. What we can do, though, is situate Barthes, understand the force and social source of his odes to the privatization of experience, and go dialectically "beyond the fragments" of modernist experience to a critical position in which we work together to understand and deal with the social codes and determinants of our lives.

15. "Upon Leaving the Movie Theater," p. 3.

16. *Camera Lucida*, p. 7.

17. Fredric Jameson, "Symbolic Inference: or Kenneth Burke and Ideological Analysis," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 4, no. 3 (Spring 1978), 519.

The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition

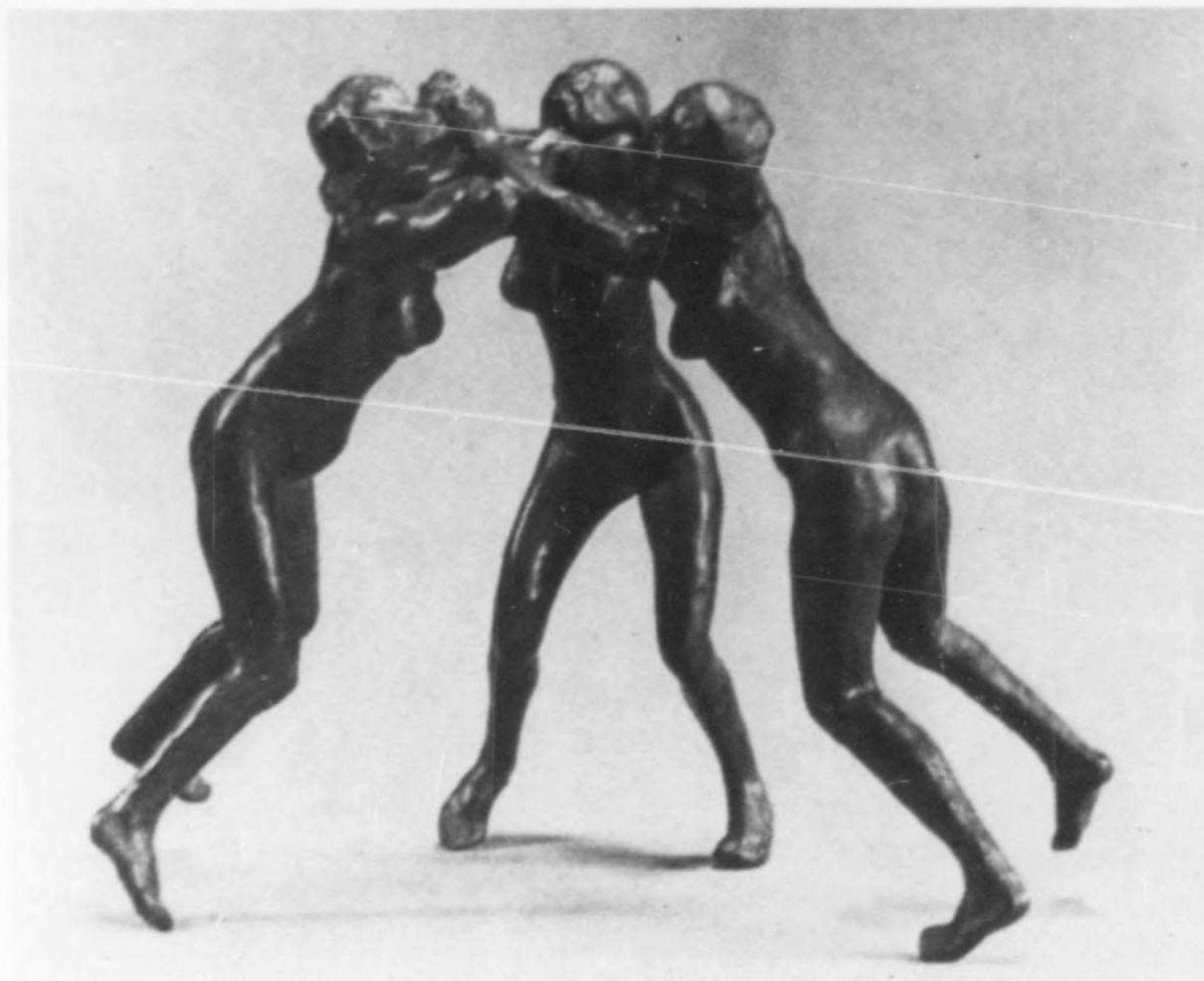
ROSALIND KRAUSS

This summer the National Gallery in Washington installed what it proudly describes as "the largest Rodin exhibition, ever." Not only was this the greatest public gathering of Rodin's sculpture, but it included, as well, much of his work never before seen. In certain cases the work had not been seen because it consisted of pieces in plaster that had lain on the shelves in storage at Meudon since the artist's death, closed off to the prying eyes of scholars and public alike. In other instances the work had not been seen because it had only just been made. The National Gallery's exhibition included, for example, a brand new cast of *The Gates of Hell*, so absolutely recent that visitors to the exhibition were able to sit down in a little theater provided for the occasion to view a just completed movie of the casting and finishing of this new version.

To some—though hardly all—of the people sitting in that theater watching the casting of *The Gates of Hell*, it must have occurred that they were witnessing the making of a fake. After all, Rodin has been dead since 1918, and surely a work of his produced more than sixty years after his death cannot be the genuine article, cannot, that is, be an original. The answer to this is more interesting than one would think; for the answer is neither yes nor no.

When Rodin died he left the French nation his entire estate, which consisted not only of all the work in his possession, but also all of the rights of its reproduction, that is, the right to make bronze editions from the estate's plasters. The Chambre des Députés, in accepting this gift, decided to limit the posthumous editions to twelve casts of any given plaster. Thus *The Gates of Hell*, cast in 1978 by perfect right of the State, is a legitimate work: a real original we might say.

But once we leave the lawyer's office and the terms of Rodin's will, we fall immediately into a quagmire. In what sense is the new cast an original? At the time of Rodin's death *The Gates of Hell* stood in his studio like a mammoth plaster chessboard with all the pieces removed and scattered on the floor. The arrangement of the figures on *The Gates* as we know it reflects the most current notion the sculptor had about its composition, an arrangement documented by numbers penciled on the plasters corresponding to numbers located at various stations on *The Gates*. But these numbers were regularly changed as Rodin played with and



Auguste Rodin. The Three Nymphs.

recomposed the surface of the doors; and so, at the time of his death, *The Gates* were very much unfinished. They were also uncast. Since they had originally been commissioned and paid for by the State, they were, of course, not Rodin's to issue in bronze, even had he chosen to do so. But the building for which they had been commissioned had been cancelled; *The Gates* were never called for, hence never finished, and thus never cast. The first bronze was made in 1921, three years after the artist's death.

So, in finishing and patinating the new cast there is no example completed during Rodin's lifetime to use for a guide to the artist's intentions about how the finished piece was to look. Due to the double circumstance of there being no lifetime cast *and*, at time of death, of there existing a plaster model still in flux, we could say that *all* the casts of *The Gates of Hell* are examples of multiple copies that exist in the absence of an original. The issue of authenticity is equally problematic for each of the existing casts; it is only more conspicuously so for the most recent.

But, as we have constantly been reminding ourselves ever since Walter Benjamin's "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," authenticity empties out as a notion as one approaches those mediums which are inherently multiple. "From a photographic negative, for example," Benjamin argued, "one can make any number of prints; to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense."



Auguste Rodin. The Two Dancers (left). The Three Shades (right).

For Rodin, the concept of the “authentic bronze cast” seems to have made as little sense as it has for many photographers. Like Atget’s thousands of glass negatives for which, in some cases, no lifetime prints exist, Rodin left many of his plaster figures unrealized in any permanent material, either bronze or marble. Like Cartier-Bresson, who never printed his own photographs, Rodin’s relation to the casting of his sculpture could only be called remote. Much of it was done in foundries to which Rodin never went while the production was in progress; he never worked on or retouched the waxes from which the final bronzes were cast, never supervised or regulated either the finishing or the patination, and in the end never checked the pieces before they were crated to be shipped to the client or dealer who had bought them. From his position deep in the ethos of mechanical reproduction, it was not as odd for Rodin as we might have thought to have willed his country posthumous authorial rights over his own work.

The ethos of reproduction in which Rodin was immersed was not limited, of course, to the relatively technical question of what went on at the foundry. It was installed within the very walls, heavy with plaster dust—the blinding snow of Rilke’s description—of Rodin’s studio. For the plasters that form the core of Rodin’s work are, themselves, casts. They are thus potential multiples. And at the core of Rodin’s massive output is the structural proliferation born of this multiplicity.



Auguste Rodin. *The Prodigal Son* (left). *Gates of Hell* (center and right).

In the tremulousness of their balance, *The Three Nymphs* compose a figure of spontaneity—a figure somewhat discomposed by the realization that these three are identical casts of the same model; just as the magnificent sense of improvisatory gesture is strangely bracketed by the recognition that *The Two Dancers* are not simply spiritual, but mechanical twins. *The Three Shades*, the composition that crowns *The Gates of Hell*, is likewise a production of multiples, three identical figures, triple-cast, in the face of which it would make no sense—as little as with the nymphs or dancers—to ask which of the three is the original. *The Gates* themselves are another example of the modular working of Rodin's imagination, with the same figure compulsively repeated, repositioned, recoupled, recombined.¹ If bronze casting is that end of the sculptural spectrum which is inherently multiple, the forming of the figurative originals is, we would have thought, at the *other* end—the pole consecrated to uniqueness. But Rodin's working procedures force the fact of reproduction to traverse the *full length* of this spectrum.

1. For a discussion of Rodin's figural repetitions, see my *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, New York, Viking, 1977, chapter 1; and Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria*, New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 322-403.



Auguste Rodin. Fugit Amor.

Now, nothing in the myth of Rodin as the prodigious form giver prepares us for the reality of these arrangements of multiple clones. For the form giver is the maker of originals, exultant in his own originality. Rilke had long ago composed that incantatory hymn to Rodin's originality in describing the profusion of bodies invented for *The Gates*:

. . . bodies that listen like faces, and lift themselves like arms; chains of bodies, garlands and single organisms; bodies that listen like faces and lift tendrils and heavy clusters of bodies into which sin's sweetness rises out of the roots of pain. . . . The army of these figures became much too numerous to fit into the frame and wings of *The Gates of Hell*. Rodin made choice after choice and eliminated everything that was too solitary to subject itself to the great totality; everything that was not necessary was rejected.²

This swarm of figures that Rilke evokes is, we are led to believe, composed of *different* figures. And we are encouraged in this belief by the cult of originality that

2. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Rodin*, trans. Jessie Lemont and Hans Frausil, London, Grey Walls Press, 1946, p. 32.

grew up around Rodin, one that he himself invited. From the kind of reflexively intended hand-of-God imagery of Rodin's own work, to his carefully staged publicity—as in his famous portrait as genius progenitor by Edward Steichen—Rodin courted the notion of himself as form giver, creator, crucible of originality. Rilke chants,

One walks among these thousand forms, overwhelmed with the imagination and the craftsmanship which they represent, and involuntarily one looks for the two hands out of which this world has risen. . . . One asks for the man who directs these hands.³

Henry James, in *The Ambassadors*, had added,

With his genius in his eyes, his manners on his lips, his long career behind him and his honors and rewards all round, the great artist affected our friend as a dizzying prodigy of type . . . with a personal lustre almost violent, he shone in a constellation.

What are we to make of this little chapter of the *comédie humaine*, in which the artist of the last century most driven to the celebration of his own originality and of the autographic character of his own kneading of matter into formal life, *that* artist, should have given his own work over to an afterlife of mechanical reproduction? Are we to think that in this peculiar last testimony Rodin acknowledged the extent to which his was an art of reproduction, of multiples without originals?

But at a second remove, what are we to make of our own squeamishness at the thought of the future of posthumous casting that awaits Rodin's work? Are we not involved here in clinging to a culture of originals which has no place among the reproductive mediums? Within the current photography market this culture of the original—the vintage print—is hard at work. The vintage print is specified as one made “close to the aesthetic moment”—and thus an object made not only by the photographer himself, but produced, as well, contemporaneously with the taking of the image. This is of course a mechanical view of authorship—one that does not acknowledge that some photographers are less good printers than the printers they hire; or that years after the fact photographers reedit and recrop older images, sometimes vastly improving them; or that it is possible to re-create old papers and old chemical compounds and thus to resurrect the look of the nineteenth-century vintage print, so that authenticity need not be a function of the history of technology.

But the formula that specifies a photographic original as a print made “close to the aesthetic moment” is obviously a formula dictated by the art historical notion of period style and applied to the practice of connoisseurship. A period style is a special form of coherence that cannot be fraudulently breached. The

3. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

authenticity folded into the concept of *style* is a product of the way style is conceived as having been generated: that is, collectively and unconsciously. Thus an individual could not, by definition, consciously will a style. Later copies will be exposed precisely because they are not of the period; it is exactly that shift in sensibility that will get the chiaroscuro wrong, make the outlines too harsh or too muddy, disrupt the older patterns of coherence. It is this concept of period style that we feel the 1978 cast of *The Gates of Hell* will violate. We do not care if the copyright papers are all in order; for what is at stake are the aesthetic rights of style based on a culture of originals. Sitting in the little theater, watching the newest *Gates* being cast, watching this violation, we want to call out, "Fraud."

*

Now why would one begin a discussion of avant-garde art with this story about Rodin and casts and copyrights? Particularly since Rodin strikes one as the very last artist to introduce to the subject, so popular was he during his lifetime, so celebrated, and so quickly induced to participate in the transformation of his own work into kitsch.

The avant-garde artist has worn many guises over the first hundred years of his existence: revolutionary, dandy, anarchist, aesthete, technologist, mystic. He has also preached a variety of creeds. One thing only seems to hold fairly constant in the vanguardist discourse and that is the theme of originality. By originality, here, I mean more than just the kind of revolt against tradition that echoes in Ezra Pound's "Make it new!" or sounds in the futurists' promise to destroy the museums that cover Italy as though "with countless cemeteries." More than a rejection or dissolution of the past, avant-garde originality is conceived as a literal origin, a beginning from ground zero, a birth. Marinetti, thrown from his automobile one evening in 1909 into a factory ditch filled with water, emerges as if from amniotic fluid to be born—without ancestors—a futurist. This parable of absolute self-creation that begins the first *Futurist Manifesto* functions as a model for what is meant by originality among the early twentieth-century avant-garde. For originality becomes an organicist metaphor referring not so much to formal invention as to sources of life. The self as origin is safe from contamination by tradition because it possesses a kind of originary naiveté. Hence Brancusi's dictum, "When we are no longer children, we are already dead." Or again, the self as origin has the potential for continual acts of regeneration, a perpetuation of self-birth. Hence Malevich's pronouncement, "Only he is alive who rejects his convictions of yesterday." The self as origin is the way an absolute distinction can be made between a present experienced *de novo* and a tradition-laden past. The claims of the avant-garde are precisely these claims to originality.

Now, if the very notion of the avant-garde can be seen as a function of the discourse of originality, the actual practice of vanguard art tends to reveal that "originality" is a working assumption that itself emerges from a ground of

repetition and recurrence. One figure, drawn from avant-garde practice in the visual arts, provides an example. This figure is the grid.

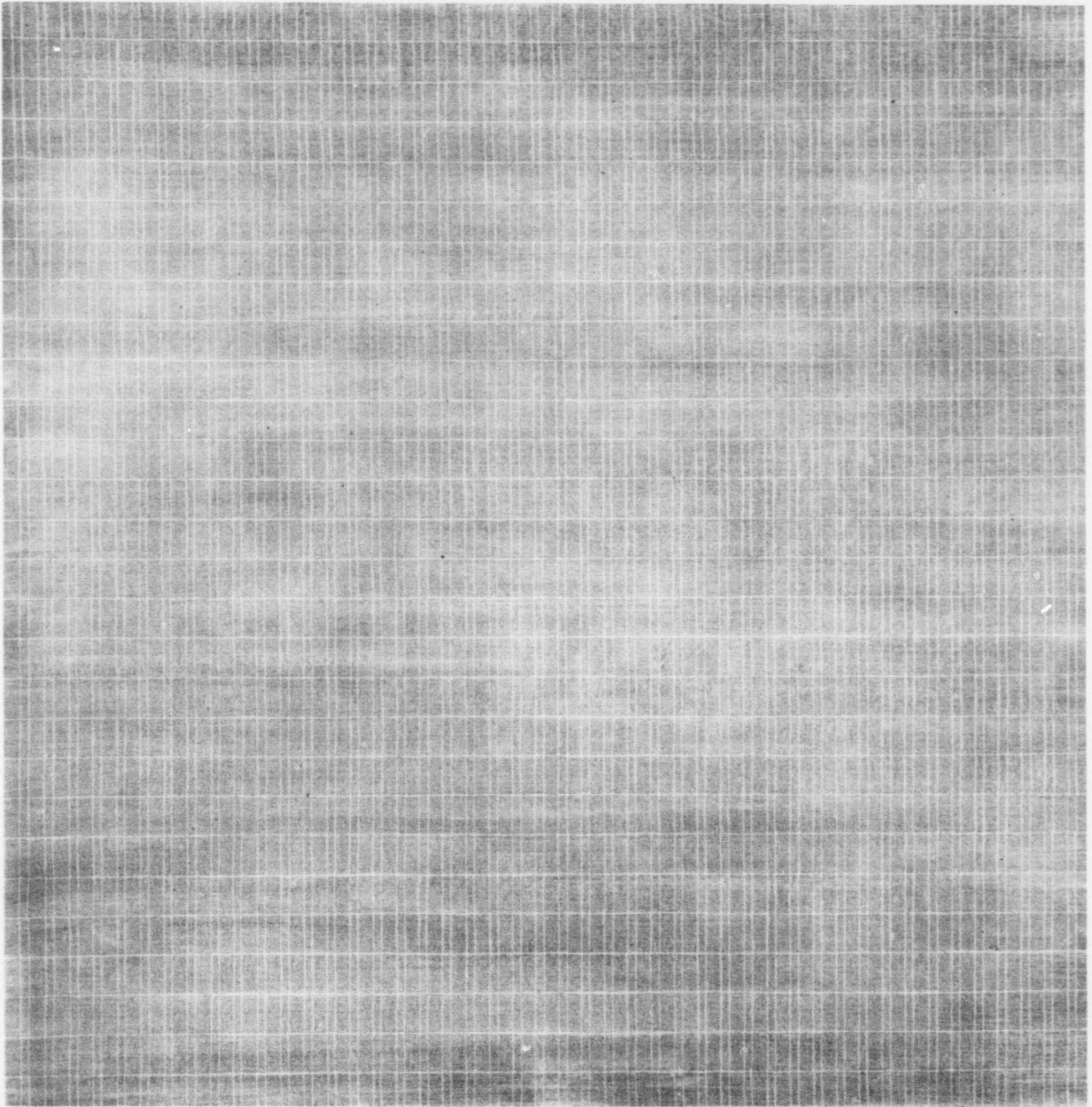
Aside from its near ubiquity in the work of those artists who thought of themselves as avant-garde—their numbers include Malevich as well as Mondrian, Léger as well as Picasso, Schwitters, Cornell, Reinhardt and Johns as well as Andre, LeWitt, Hesse, and Ryman—the grid possesses several structural properties which make it inherently susceptible to vanguard appropriation. One of these is the grid's imperviousness to language. "Silence, exile, and cunning," were Stephen Dedalus's passwords: commands that in Paul Goodman's view express the self-imposed code of the avant-garde artist. The grid promotes this silence, expressing it moreover as a refusal of speech. The absolute stasis of the grid, its lack of hierarchy, of center, of inflection, emphasizes not only its anti-referential character, but—more importantly—its hostility to narrative. This structure, impervious both to time and to incident, will not permit the projection of language into the domain of the visual, and the result is silence.

This silence is not due simply to the extreme effectiveness of the grid as a barricade against speech, but to the protectiveness of its mesh against all intrusions from outside. No echoes of footsteps in empty rooms, no scream of birds across open skies, no rush of distant water—for the grid has collapsed the spatiality of nature onto the bounded surface of a purely cultural object. With its proscription of nature as well as of speech, the result is still more silence. And in this new-found quiet, what many artists thought they could hear was the beginning, the origins of Art.

For those for whom art begins in a kind of originary purity, the grid was emblematic of the sheer disinterestedness of the work of art, its absolute purposelessness, from which it derived the promise of its autonomy. We hear this sense of the originary essence of art when Schwitters insists, "Art is a primordial concept, exalted as the godhead, inexplicable as life, indefinable and without purpose." And the grid facilitated this sense of being born into the newly evacuated space of an aesthetic purity and freedom.

While for those for whom the origins of art are not to be found in the idea of pure disinterest so much as in an empirically grounded unity, the grid's power lies in its capacity to figure forth the material ground of the pictorial object, simultaneously inscribing and depicting it, so that the image of the pictorial surface can be seen to be born out of the organization of pictorial matter. For these artists, the grid-scored surface is the image of an absolute beginning.

Perhaps it is because of this sense of a beginning, a fresh start, a ground zero, that artist after artist has taken up the grid as the medium within which to work, always taking it up as though he were just discovering it, as though the origin he had found by peeling back layer after layer of representation to come at last to this schematized reduction, this graph-paper ground, were *his* origin, and his finding it an act of originality. Waves of abstract artists "discover" the grid; part of its



structure one could say is that in its revelatory character it is always a new, a unique discovery.

And just as the grid is a stereotype that is constantly being paradoxically re-discovered, it is, as a further paradox, a prison in which the caged artist feels at liberty. For what is striking about the grid is that while it is most effective as a badge of freedom, it is extremely restrictive in the actual exercise of freedom. Without doubt the most formulaic construction that could possibly be mapped on a plane surface, the grid is also highly inflexible. Thus just as no one could claim to have invented it, so once one is involved in deploying it, the grid is extremely difficult to use in the service of invention. And thus when we examine the careers of those artists who have been most committed to the grid, we could say that from the time they submit themselves to this structure their work virtually ceases to develop and becomes involved, instead, in repetition. Exemplary artists in this respect are Mondrian, Albers, Reinhardt, and Agnes Martin.

But in saying that the grid condemns these artists not to originality but to repetition, I am not suggesting a negative description of their work. I am trying instead to focus on a pair of terms—originality and repetition—and to look at their coupling unprejudicially; for within the instance we are examining, these two terms seem bound together in a kind of aesthetic economy, interdependent and mutually sustaining, although the one—originality—is the valorized term and the other—repetition or copy or reduplication—is discredited.

We have already seen that the avant-garde artist above all claims originality as his right—his birthright, so to speak. With his own self as the origin of his work, that production will have the same uniqueness as he; the condition of his own singularity will guarantee the originality of what he makes. Having given himself this warrant, he goes on, in the example we are looking at, to enact his originality in the creation of grids. Yet as we have seen, not only is he—artist *x*, *y*, or *z*—*not* the inventor of the grid, but *no one* can claim this patent: the copyright expired sometime in antiquity and for many centuries this figure has been in the public domain.

Structurally, logically, axiomatically, the grid *can only be repeated*. And, with an act of repetition or replication as the “original” occasion of its usage within the experience of a given artist, the extended life of the grid in the unfolding progression of his work will be one of still more repetition, as the artist engages in repeated acts of self-imitation. That so many generations of twentieth-century artists should have maneuvered themselves into this particular position of paradox—where they are condemned to repeating, as if by compulsion, the logically fraudulent original—is truly compelling.

But it is no more compelling than that other, complementary fiction: the illusion not of the originality of the artist, but of the originary status of the pictorial surface. This origin is what the genius of the grid is supposed to manifest to us as viewers: an indisputable zero-ground beyond which there is no further model, or referent, or text. Except that this experience of originariness, felt by

generations of artists, critics, and viewers is itself false, a fiction. The canvas surface and the grid that scores it do not fuse into that absolute unity necessary to the notion of an origin. For the grid *follows* the canvas surface, doubles it. It is a representation of the surface, mapped, it is true, onto the same surface it represents, but even so, the grid remains a figure, picturing various aspects of the "originary" object: through its mesh it creates an image of the woven infrastructure of the canvas; through its network of coordinates it organizes a metaphor for the plane geometry of the field; through its repetition it configures the spread of lateral continuity. The grid thus does not reveal the surface, laying it bare at last; rather it veils it through a repetition.

As I have said, this repetition performed by the grid must follow, or come after, the actual, empirical surface of a given painting. The representational text of the grid however also precedes the surface, comes *before* it, preventing even that literal surface from being anything like an origin. For behind it, logically prior to it, are all those visual texts through which the bounded plane was collectively organized as a pictorial field. The grid summarizes all these texts: the gridded overlays on cartoons, for example, used for the mechanical transfer from drawing to fresco; or the perspective lattice meant to contain the perceptual transfer from three dimensions to two; or the matrix on which to chart harmonic relationships, like proportion; or the millions of acts of enframing by which the picture was reaffirmed as a regular quadrilateral. All these are the texts which the "original" ground plane of a Mondrian, for example, repeats—and, by repeating, represents. Thus the very ground that the grid is thought to reveal is already riven from within by a process of repetition and representation; it is always already divided and multiple.

What I have been calling the fiction of the originary status of the picture surface is what art criticism proudly names the opacity of the modernist picture plane, only in so terming it, the critic does not think of this opacity as fictitious. Within the discursive space of modernist art, the putative opacity of the pictorial field must be maintained as a fundamental concept. For it is the bedrock on which a whole structure of related terms can be built. All those terms—singularity, authenticity, uniqueness, originality, original—depend on the originary moment of which this surface is both the empirical and the semiological instance. If modernism's domain of pleasure is the space of auto-referentiality, this pleasure dome is erected on the semiological possibility of the pictorial sign as nonrepresentational and nontransparent, so that the signified becomes the redundant condition of a reified signifier. But from *our* perspective, the one from which we see that the signifier cannot be reified; that its objecthood, its quiddity, is only a fiction; that every signifier is itself the transparent signified of an already-given decision to carve it out as the vehicle of a sign—from *this* perspective there is no opacity, but only a transparency that opens onto a dizzying fall into a bottomless system of reduplication.

This is the perspective from which the grid that signifies the pictorial

surface, by representing it, only succeeds in locating the signifier of another, prior system of grids, which have beyond them, yet another, even earlier system. This is the perspective in which the modernist grid is, like the Rodin casts, logically multiple: a system of reproductions without an original. This is the perspective from which the real condition of one of the major vehicles of modernist aesthetic practice is seen to derive not from the valorized term of that couple which I invoked earlier—the doublet, *originality/repetition*—but from the discredited half of the pair, the one that opposes the multiple to the singular, the reproducible to the unique, the fraudulent to the authentic, the copy to the original. But this is the negative half of the set of terms that the critical practice of modernism seeks to repress, *has* repressed.

From this perspective we can see that modernism and the avant-garde are functions of what we could call the discourse of originality, and that that discourse serves much wider interests—and is thus fueled by more diverse institutions—than the restricted circle of professional art-making. The theme of originality, encompassing as it does the notions of authenticity, originals, and origins, is the shared discursive practice of the museum, the historian, and the maker of art. And throughout the nineteenth century all of these institutions were concerted, together, to find the mark, the warrant, the certification of the original.⁴

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That this would be done despite the ever-present reality of the copy as the *underlying condition of the original* was much closer to the surface of consciousness in the early years of the nineteenth century than it would later be permitted to be. Thus, in *Northanger Abbey* Jane Austen sends Catherine, her sweetly provincial young heroine, out for a walk with two new, rather more sophisticated friends; these friends soon embark on viewing the countryside, as Austen says, “with the eyes of persons accustomed to drawing, and decided on its capability of being formed into pictures, with all the eagerness of real taste.” What begins to dawn on Catherine is that her countrified notions of the natural—“that a clear blue sky” is for instance “proof of a fine day”—are entirely false and that the natural, which is to say, the landscape, is about to be constructed for her by her more highly educated companions:

. . . a lecture on the picturesque immediately followed, in which his instructions were so clear that she soon began to see beauty in every

4. On the discourse of origins and originals, see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, New York, Pantheon, 1970, pp. 328-335: “But this thin surface of the original, which accompanies our entire existence . . . is not the immediacy of a birth; it is populated entirely by those complex mediations formed and laid down as a sediment in their own history by labor, life and language so that . . . what man is reviving without knowing it, is all the intermediaries of a time that governs him almost to infinity.”

thing admired by him. . . . He talked of fore-grounds, distances, and second distances—side-screens and perspectives—lights and shades;—and Catherine was so hopeful a scholar that when they gained the top of Beechen Cliff, she voluntarily rejected the whole city of Bath, as unworthy to make part of a landscape.⁵

To read any text on the picturesque is instantly to fall prey to that amused irony with which Austen watches her young charge discover that nature itself is constituted in relation to its “capability of being formed into pictures.” For it is perfectly obvious that through the action of the picturesque the very notion of landscape is constructed as a second term of which the first is a representation. Landscape becomes a reduplication of a picture which preceded it. Thus when we eavesdrop on a conversation between one of the leading practitioners of the picturesque, the Reverend William Gilpin, and his son, who is visiting the Lake District, we hear very clearly the order of priorities.

In a letter to his father, the young man describes his disappointment in the first day's ascent into the mountains, for the perfectly clear weather insured a total absence of what the elder Gilpin constantly refers to in his writings as effect. But the second day, his son assures him, there was a rainstorm followed by a break in the clouds.

Then what effects of gloom and effulgence. I can't describe [them]—nor need I—for you have only to look into your own store house [of sketches] to take a view of them—It gave me however a very singular pleasure to see your system of effects so compleatly confirmed as it was by the observations of that day—wherever I turned my eyes, I beheld a drawing of yours.⁶

In this discussion, it is the drawing—with its own prior set of decisions about *effect*—that stands behind the landscape authenticating its claim to represent nature.

The 1801 Supplement to Johnson's Dictionary gives six definitions for the term *picturesque*, the six of them moving in a kind of figure eight around the question of the landscape as originary to the experience of itself. According to the Dictionary the picturesque is: 1) what pleases the eye; 2) remarkable for singularity; 3) striking the imagination with the force of paintings; 4) to be expressed in painting; 5) affording a good subject for a landscape; 6) proper to take a landscape from.⁷ It should not be necessary to say that the concept of singularity, as in the part of the definition that reads, “remarkable for singularity,” is at odds semantically with other parts of the definition, such as “affording a good subject for a

5. Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, 1818, Vol. I, Chapter XIV.

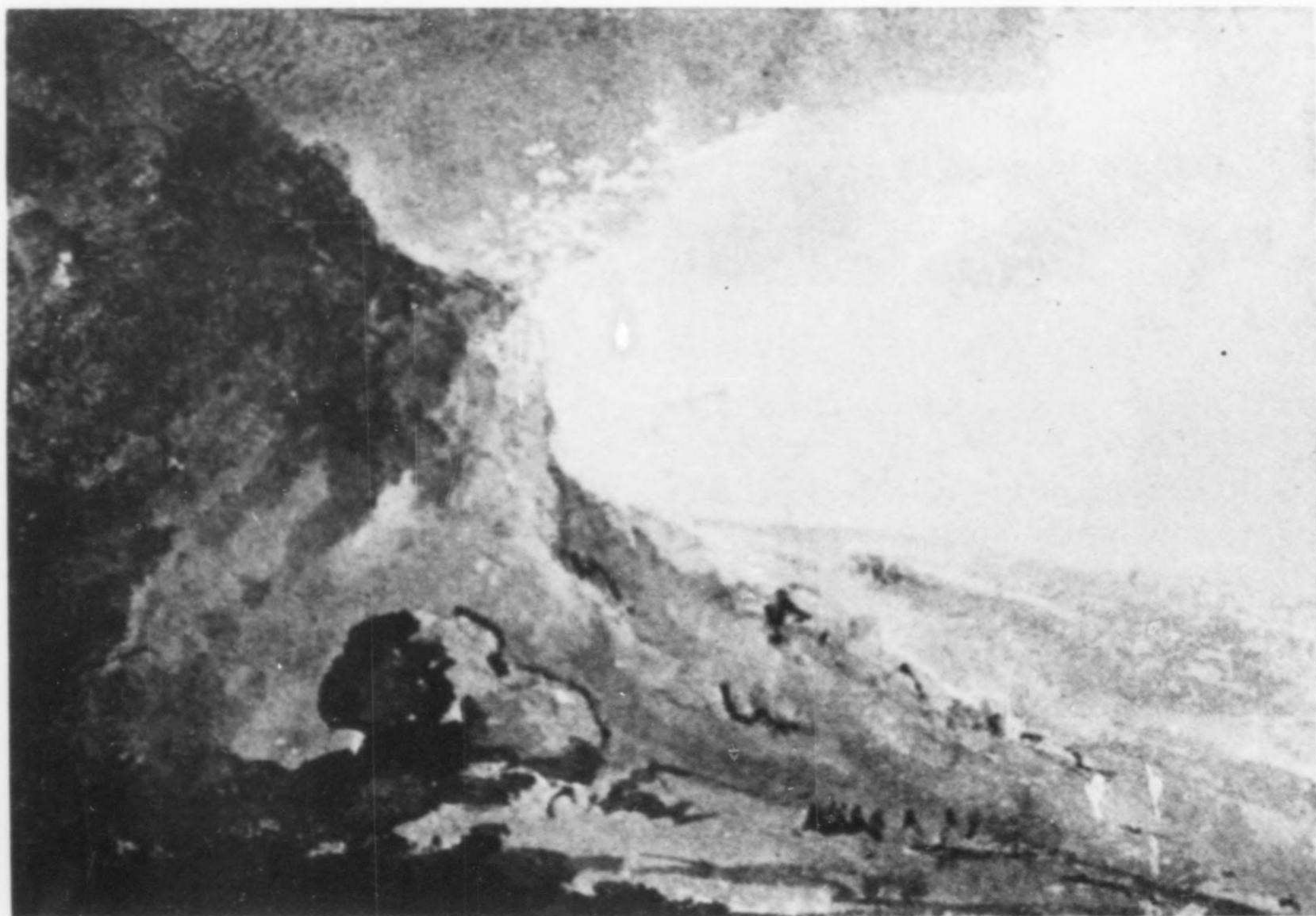
6. In Carl Paul Barbier, *William Gilpin*, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1963, p. 111.

7. See Barbier, p. 98.

landscape," in which *a landscape* is understood to mean a type of painting. Because that pictorial type—in all the formulaic condition of Gilpin's "effects"—is not single (or singular) but multiple, conventional, a series of recipes about roughness, chiaroscuro, ruins and abbeys, and therefore, when the effect is found in the world at large, that natural array is simply felt to be repeating another work—a "landscape"—that already exists elsewhere.

But the *singularity* of the Dictionary's definition deserves even further examination. Gilpin's *Observations on Cumberland and Westmorland* addresses this question of singularity by making it a function of the beholder and the array of singular moments of his perception. The landscape's singularity is thus not something which a bit of topography does or does not possess; it is rather a function of the images it figures forth at any moment in time and the way these pictures register in the imagination. That the landscape is not static but constantly recomposing itself into different, separate, or singular pictures, Gilpin advances as follows:

He, who should see any one scene, as it is differently affected by the lowering sky, or a bright one, might probably see two very different landscapes. He might not only see distances blotted out; or splendidly



William Gilpin. *Sketch for A Fragment*. 1764.

exhibited; but he might even see variations produced in the very objects themselves; and that merely from the different times of the day, in which they were examined.⁸

With this description of the notion of singularity as the perceptual-empirical unity of a moment of time coalesced in the experience of a subject, we feel ourselves entering the nineteenth-century discussion of landscape and the belief in the fundamental, originary power of nature dilated through subjectivity. That is, in Gilpin's two-different-landscapes-because-two-different-times-of-day, we feel that the prior condition of landscape as being already a picture is being let go of. But Gilpin then continues, "In a warm sunshine the purple hills may skirt the horizon, and appear broken into numberless pleasing forms; but under a sullen sky a total change may be produced," in which case, he insists, "the distant mountains, and all their beautiful projection may disappear, and their place be

8. William Gilpin, *Observations on Cumberland and Westmorland*, Richmond, The Richmond Publishing Co., 1973, p. vii. The book was written in 1772 and first published in 1786.



William Gilpin. The Waterfall. 1774.

occupied by a dead flat." Gilpin thus reassures us that the patent to the "pleasing forms" as opposed to the "dead flat" has already been taken out by painting.

Thus what Austen's, Gilpin's, and the Dictionary's picturesque reveals to us is that although the *singular* and the *formulaic* or repetitive may be semantically opposed, they are nonetheless conditions of each other: the two logical halves of the concept *landscape*. The priorness and repetition of pictures is necessary to the singularity of the picturesque, because for the beholder singularity depends on being recognized as such, a re-cognition made possible only by a prior example. If the definition of the picturesque is beautifully circular, that is because what allows a given moment of the perceptual array to be seen as singular is precisely its conformation to a multiple.

Now this economy of the paired opposition—singular and multiple—can easily be examined within the aesthetic episode that is termed *the Picturesque*, an episode that was crucial to the rise of a new class of audience for art, one that was focused on the practice of taste as an exercise in the recognition of singularity, or—in its application within the language of romanticism—originality. Several decades later into the nineteenth century, however, it is harder to see these terms still performing in mutual interdependence, since aesthetic discourse—both official and nonofficial—gives priority to the term originality and tends to suppress the notion of repetition or copy. But harder to see or not, the notion of the copy is still fundamental to the conception of the original. And nineteenth-century practice was concerted towards the exercise of copies and copying in the creation of that same possibility of recognition that Jane Austen and William Gilpin call taste. Thiers, the ardent Republican who honored Delacroix's originality to the point of having worked on his behalf in the awarding of important government commissions, had nevertheless set up a museum of copies in 1834. And forty years later in the very year of the first impressionist exhibition, a huge Musée des Copies was opened under the direction of Charles Blanc, then the Director of Fine Arts. In nine rooms the museum housed 156 newly commissioned full-scale oil copies of the most important masterpieces from foreign museums as well as replicas of the Vatican Stanze frescoes of Raphael. So urgent was the need for this museum, in Blanc's opinion, that in the first three years of the Third Republic, *all* monies for official commissions made by the Ministry of Fine Arts went to pay for copyists.⁹ Yet, this insistence on the priority of copies in the formation of taste hardly prevented Charles Blanc, no less than Thiers, from deeply admiring Delacroix, or from providing the most accessible explanation of advanced color theory then available in print. I am referring to the *Grammar of the Arts of Design*, published in 1867, and certainly the obvious text in which the budding impressionists could read about simultaneous contrast, complementarity, or achromatism, and be introduced to the theories and diagrams of Chevreul and Goethe.

9. For details, see Albert Boime, "Le Musée des Copies," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, LXIV (1964), 237-247.

This is not the place to develop the truly fascinating theme of the role of the copy within nineteenth-century pictorial practice and what is emerging as its necessity to the concept of the original, the spontaneous, the new.¹⁰ I will simply say that the copy served as the ground for the development of an increasingly organized and codified sign or sense of spontaneity—one that Gilpin had called roughness, Constable had termed “the chiaroscuro of nature”—by which he was referring to a completely conventionalized overlay of broken touches and flicks of pure white laid in with a palette knife—and Monet later called instantaneity, linking its appearance to the conventionalized pictorial language of the sketch or *pochade*. *Pochade* is the technical term for a rapidly made sketch, a shorthand notation. As such, it is codifiable, recognizable. So it was both the rapidity of the *pochade* and its abbreviated language that a critic like Chesnaud saw in Monet’s work and referred to by the way it was produced: “the chaos of palette scrapings,” he called it.¹¹ But as recent studies of Monet’s impressionism have made explicit, the sketchlike mark, which functioned as the *sign* of spontaneity, had to be prepared for through the utmost calculation, and in this sense spontaneity was the most fable of signifieds. Through layers of underpainting by which Monet developed the thick corrugations of what Robert Herbert calls his texture-strokes, Monet patiently laid the mesh of rough encrustation and directional swathes that would signify speed of execution, and from this speed, mark both the singularity of the perceptual moment and uniqueness of the empirical array.¹² On top of this constructed “instant,” thin, careful washes of pigment establish the actual relations of color. Needless to say, these operations took—with the necessary drying time—many days to perform. But the illusion of spontaneity—the burst of an instantaneous and originary act—is the unshakable result. Rémy de Gourmont falls prey to this illusion when he speaks in 1901 of canvases by Monet as “the work of an instant,” the specific instant being “that flash” in which “genius collaborated with the eye and the hand” to forge “a personal work of absolute originality.”¹³ The illusion of unrepeatable, separate instants is the product of a fully calculated procedure that was necessarily divided up into stages and sections and worked on piecemeal on a variety of canvases at the same time, assembly-line style. Visitors to Monet’s studio in the last decades of his life were startled to find the master of instantaneity at work on a line-up of a dozen or more canvases. The production of spontaneity through the constant overpainting of canvases (Monet kept back the Rouen Cathedral series from his dealer, for

10. For a discussion of the institutionalization of copying within nineteenth-century artistic training, see Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the 19th Century*, London, Phaidon, 1971.

11. Cited by Steven Z. Levine, “The ‘Instant’ of Criticism and Monet’s Critical Instant,” *Arts Magazine*, vol. 55, no. 7 (March 1981), 118.

12. See Robert Herbert, “Method and Meaning in Monet,” *Art in America*, vol. 67, no. 5 (September 1979), 90-108.

13. Cited by Levine, p. 118.

example, for three years of reworking) employs the same aesthetic economy of the pairing of singularity and multiplicity, of uniqueness and reproduction, that we saw at the outset in Rodin's method. In addition, it involves that fracturing of the empirical origin that operates through the example of the modernist grid. But as was true in those other cases as well, the discourse of originality in which impressionism participates represses and discredits the complementary discourse of the copy. Both the avant-garde and modernism depend on this repression.

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What would it look like not to repress the concept of the copy? What would it look like to produce a work that acted out the discourse of reproductions without originals, that discourse which could only operate in Mondrian's work as the inevitable subversion of his purpose, the residue of representationality that he could not sufficiently purge from the domain of his painting? The answer to this, or at least one answer, is that it would look like a certain kind of play with the notions of photographic reproduction that begins in the silkscreen canvases of Robert Rauschenberg and has recently flowered in the work of a group of younger artists whose production has been identified by the critical term *pictures*.¹⁴ I will focus on the example of Sherrie Levine, because it seems most radically to question the concept of origin and with it the notion of originality.

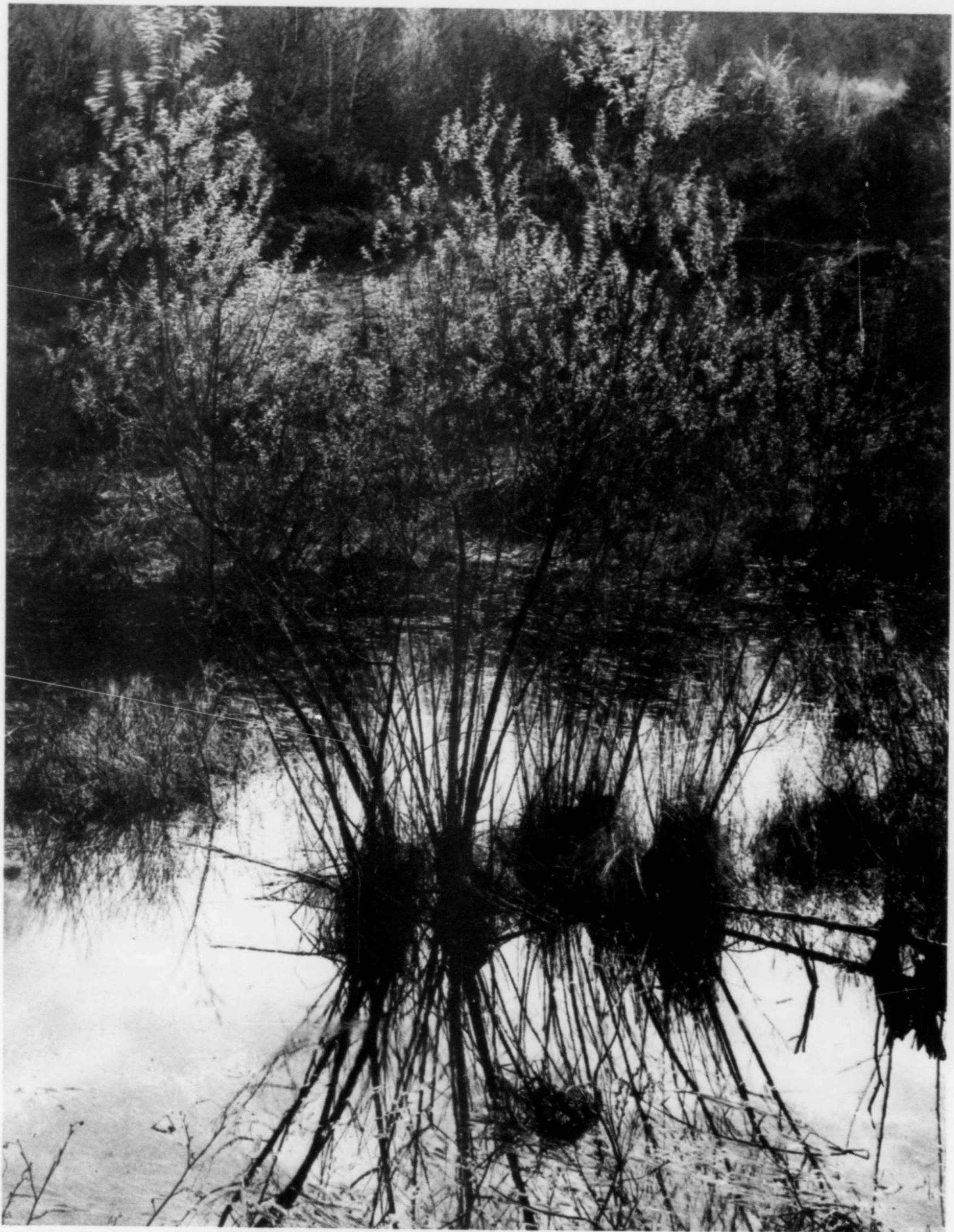
Levine's medium is the pirated print, as in the series of photographs she made by taking images by Edward Weston of his young son Neil and simply rephotographing them, in violation of Weston's copyright. But as has been pointed out about Weston's "originals," these are already taken from models provided by others; they are given in that long series of Greek kouroi by which the nude male torso has long ago been processed and multiplied within our culture.¹⁵ Levine's act of theft, which takes place, so to speak, in front of the surface of Weston's print, opens the print from behind to the series of models from which it, in turn, has stolen, of which it is itself the reproduction. The discourse of the copy, within which Levine's act must be located has, of course, been developed by a variety of writers, among them Roland Barthes. I am thinking of his characterization, in *S/Z*, of the realist as certainly not a copyist from nature, but rather a "pasticher," or someone who makes copies of copies. As Barthes says:

To depict is to . . . refer not from a language to a referent, but from one code to another. Thus realism consists not in copying the real but in copying a (depicted) copy. . . . Through secondary mimesis [realism] copies what is already a copy.¹⁶

14. The relevant texts are by Douglas Crimp; see his exhibition catalogue *Pictures*, New York, Artists Space, 1977; and "Pictures," *October*, no. 8 (Spring 1979), 75-88.

15. See Douglas Crimp, "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism," *October*, no. 15 (Winter 1980), 98-99.

16. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller, New York, Hill and Wang, 1974, p. 55.



In another series by Levine in which the lush, colored landscapes of Eliot Porter are reproduced, we again move through the "original" print, back to the origin in nature and—as in the model of the picturesque—through another trap door at the back wall of "nature" into the purely textual construction of the sublime and its history of degeneration into ever more lurid copies.

Now, insofar as Levine's work explicitly deconstructs the modernist notion of origin, her effort cannot be seen as an *extension* of modernism. It is, like the discourse of the copy, postmodernist. Which means that it cannot be seen as avant-garde either.

Because of the critical attack it launches on the tradition that precedes it, we might want to see the move made in Levine's work as yet another step in the forward march of the avant-garde. But this would be mistaken. In deconstructing the sister notions of origin and originality, postmodernism establishes a schism between itself and the conceptual domain of the avant-garde, looking back at it from across a gulf that in turn establishes a historical divide. The historical period that the avant-garde shared with modernism is over. That seems an obvious fact. What makes it more than a journalistic one is a conception of the discourse that has brought it to a close. This is a complex of cultural practices, among them a demythologizing criticism and a truly postmodernist art, both of them acting now to void the basic propositions of modernism, to liquidate them by exposing their fictitious condition. It is thus from a strange new perspective that we look back on the modernist origin and watch it splintering into endless replication.

Richard Serra: Sculpture Exceeded*

DOUGLAS CRIMP

During the course of the year 1968-69, Richard Serra made nearly a hundred works that involved simple manipulations of lead. They followed, in effect, from the instructions to himself Serra had made the previous year in the form of a list of transitive verbs—"to roll, to crease, to fold, to splash, to spill"—together with nouns indicating structural conditions—"of tension, of gravity, of entropy, of equilibrium."¹ Among these works, several have been taken as paradigmatic not only of Serra's own procedures, but also of the more general trends in the art of that crucial moment in our recent history: *Splashing* and *Casting*, both made by tossing molten lead into the juncture of wall and floor; *Hand Catching Lead*, the film in which chunks of lead are dropped from above the frame showing a hand successively catching (or missing) and dropping them; and the various prop pieces, most particularly *One-Ton Prop (House of Cards)*, whose separate lead plates hold together only through the elementary force of gravity. Such works were initially seen as a repudiation of the stability and refinement of minimal objects in favor of process and a resulting raw pictorialism. They seemed thereby to be evidence of yet another swing of an art-historical pendulum from *disegno* to *colore*, from classicism to romanticism—renamed this time, from minimalism to postminimalism. The grandfather generation, abstract expressionism, was said to be returning in a new guise:

Serra's loose lead work can be associated with a shift in modernist sensibility, omnipresent throughout the winter of 1968 and the spring of 1969. . . . This new sensibility tends to be anti-precisionist and anti-geometric. It once again fosters the values connected with Abstract Expressionism. That is to say, it sponsors the sensibilities covered by

* An earlier version of this essay appeared in French in *Artistes*, no. 7 (January-February 1981), 31-37.

1. The list appears in Gregoire Müller, *The New Avant-Garde: Issues for Art of the Seventies*, New York, Praeger, 1972; it is reprinted in *Richard Serra: Interviews, Etc. 1970-1980*, Yonkers, The Hudson River Museum, 1980, pp. 10-11.

Wölfflin's term *malerisch*. In this respect Serra's lead splashes and "tearings" are almost the *sine qua non* of the new sensibility.²

This Wölfflinian shift is, of course, understood to occur still within the enterprise of modernism, and thus the characterization of the "sensibility" as expressionist goes hand in glove with an essentialist view of art typical of modernist theory: "The earliest problem of sculpture was to reproduce the verticality of the human being in contrast with the horizontality of the earth" or "Serra is interested in the problem of what sculptural properties may encompass."³

Undaunted by the difficulties much recent art has posed for this mode of analysis, such art criticism, informed as it is by the Principles of Art History, continues to view its task as one of describing and evaluating the vicissitudes of sensibility or style within an otherwise continuous flow of artistic creation. In so doing, categories like modernism, sculpture, and pictorial are tenaciously maintained against all the evidence of the work they are said to describe.⁴ And so when Serra tossed molten lead into the corner, the hardened splash was called sculpture. After all, Carl Andre had placed 144 steel plates on the floor; if *that* was sculpture, then surely this was too, only a bit more *malerisch* than the steel-tile grid.

As early as 1964, Donald Judd had posted a warning against this too-easy assimilation of what he called the "new three-dimensional work" to the category of sculpture, and he also cautioned against making much of the distinction between "that which is something of an object . . . and that which is open and extended" since "there isn't as great a difference in their nature as in their appearance."⁵ But critics like Pincus-Witten were so focused in on those fluctua-

2. Robert Pincus-Witten, "Slow Information: Richard Serra," *Artforum*, vol. III, no. 1 (September 1969), 38. Pincus-Witten can be credited with the invention of the term *postminimalism*, which serves as the title of his collection of essays about a number of artists who emerged, for the most part, in the late 1960s (*Postminimalism*, New York, Out of London Press, 1978). Pincus-Witten's desire to claim this work for expressionism led him to write criticism heavily grounded in biography. Subsequently he has progressed to writing an autobiographical chronical in lieu of criticism. In one of his recently published diary entries, he returns to Wölfflin, defending his Principles against the antagonisms of what he calls the *October* circle ("Entries: If Even in Fractions," *Arts Magazine*, vol. 55, no. 1 [September 1980], 22). See also the exchange of letters between Pincus-Witten and Rosalind Krauss and myself in *Arts Magazine*, vol. 55, no. 5 (November 1980), 22. In this same issue, Pincus-Witten's diary returns to the work of Serra, reiterating the claims of the earlier essay, but now adding that the return to the grandfather generation is the result of a "profound Oedipal syndrome that marks the evolution of American style. . . . The father totem, in this case—David Smith" (p. 130).

3. Pincus-Witten, "Slow Information," pp. 35, 36.

4. For a sustained discussion of the failure of historicist criticism to comprehend recent sculpture, see Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October*, no. 8 (Spring 1979), 31-44. Krauss is also the first critic to have contested the separation implied by the term *postminimalism*; see her "Sense and Sensibility," *Artforum*, vol. XII, no. 3 (November 1973), 43-53; and the final chapter of her book *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, New York, Viking, 1977, pp. 248-288.

5. Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook*, 8 (1964), 78; reprinted in Donald Judd, *Complete Writings 1959-1975*, Halifax, The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design/New York, New York University Press, 1975, pp. 181-189.

tions of appearance that they failed to notice that the very nature of artistic practice had changed drastically, so drastically as to render their accustomed style analyses utterly useless. Style criticism may have had a limited utility when applied to the rigidly adhered-to categories of the individual modernist arts, to painting and sculpture, but, as Judd said, "the best new work in the last few years has been neither painting nor sculpture . . . [which] are particular forms, circumscribed after all, producing fairly definite qualities. Much of the motivation of the new work is to get clear of these forms." And later in the essay he zeroed in on sculpture, dealing it the final blow: "Sculpture can probably be only what it is now—which means that if it changes a great deal it will be something else; so it is finished."⁶

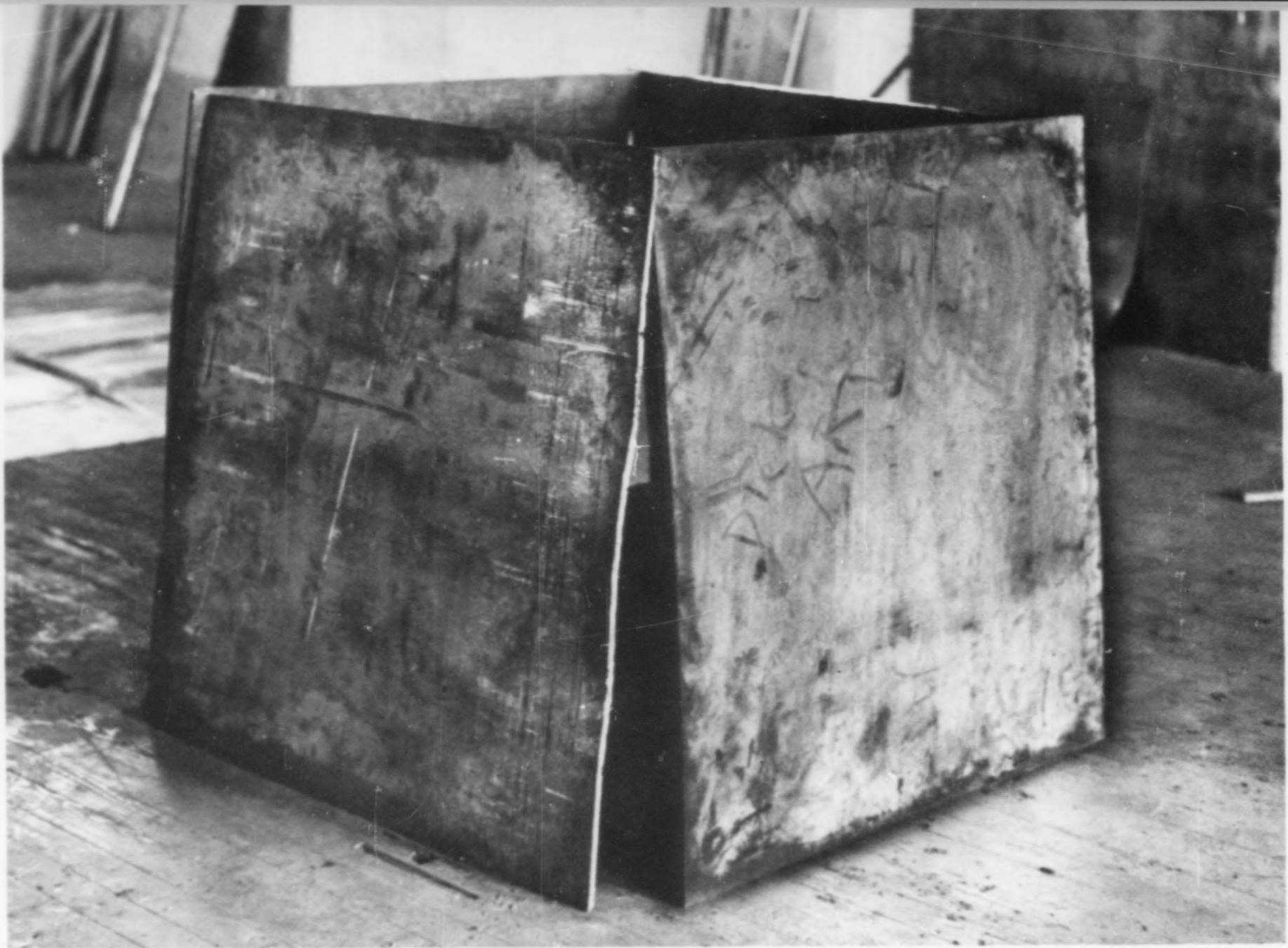
Judd could not have foreseen how much sculpture would indeed change by the end of that decade, how truly *finished* it would be. But already in 1964 he could see that there were particularly significant works—Rauschenberg's *Monogram*, Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble*, and, of course, the first minimal objects, for which his essay was written as a defense—that could not be classified as either painting or sculpture. Nor were they simply confrontations of the two specialized branches of art within the same work. Instead they were full-fledged mutations, "perversions" even, according to Michael Fried's notorious attack on Judd's position.⁷ And these new works were symptomatic of an irreparable breach with the enervated modernist art for which Fried remained an apologist. For, however modernist art was understood, it was never understood apart from its "particular forms," the mediums which were the source of its integrity, its autonomy, which is to say, its idealism. As art began to exceed those forms, modernism itself was exceeded, replaced by works which were hybrid, contingent, materialist.

By the time Serra began working in the late sixties, then, the categories through which modernism had operated in the visual arts had lost their stability and slid into that "something else" Judd spoke of. Included among Serra's works listed at the opening of this essay is one whose medium is film. Yet its place among the others is one of equivalence; its strategies and procedures are the same. When Serra made those works it no longer seemed relevant to ask whether they were sculpture. Artists spoke tellingly of their *pieces*, not their sculptures or paintings or films or dances.⁸ The notion that Serra's work represented a shift to the

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 74, 78.

7. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum*, vol. V, no. 10 (Summer 1967), 12-23; reprinted in Gregory Battcock, ed., *Minimal Art, A Critical Anthology*, New York, E. P. Dutton, 1968, pp. 116-147. The passage in question reads, "The view of modernist painting as tending toward objecthood is implicit in Judd's remark, 'The new work obviously resembles sculpture more than it does painting, but it is nearer to painting'; and it is in this view that literalist sensibility in general is grounded. Literalist sensibility is, therefore, a response to the *same* developments that have largely compelled modernist painting to undo its objecthood—more precisely, the same developments *seen differently*, that is, in theatrical terms, by a sensibility *already* the trical, already (to say the worst) corrupted or perverted by theatre" (p. 136).

8. It was, of course, overly optimistic simply to ignore the question of what these "pieces" were,



Richard Serra. One-Ton Prop (House of Cards). 1969

Robert Rauschenberg. Monogram. 1955-59.



malerisch style, figured on the axis minimal-postminimal, still within the sphere of modernist sculpture, must therefore be discarded. Serra is not a postminimalist, but a postmodernist, and this is no mere quibbling over terminology. The former links Serra, through superficial aspects of style, to those artists working in the late sixties and early seventies in an expressionist mode,⁹ while the latter term, discarding the false unities of both style and chronology, makes it possible to see the significant relationships among those artists who have exceeded the rigid categories of modernist practice and who, in so doing, have repudiated the ethos of idealism. Works that share little or nothing of style alone—works such as Andre's lead squares and Serra's lead splashes, even works such as Rauschenberg's *Monogram* and Serra's *One-Ton Prop*—can now be understood to occupy a shared position.

Minimal art had launched an all-out attack on the prestige of the artist, granting that prestige instead to the spectator, whose copresence with the minimal object is necessary for its completion. The artist's own lowered prestige was fully exemplified by, but not limited to, the fact that these works were manufactured to specifications from readymade industrial materials. It was therefore a recuperative desire, a nostalgia, which made critics so willfully latch onto process in Serra's early works as the welcome sign of a return to expressionism. Process, or its evidence in a completed work, was said to point to the artist's interiority. And the artist thereby became the work's ultimate signified. It was the lesson of "action painting" relearned: Serra's splashes were the materialized version of Pollock's drips. And we were thus enjoined to imagine Serra struggling with the massive plates of lead, rolling, creasing, folding, twisting, tearing, balancing, propping . . . in a great wrestling match of Art. Indeed, Robert Fiore's film of Serra and his assistants setting up the *One-Ton Prop* is a direct recapitulation of Hans Namuth's film of Pollock painting a picture. (And, at the level of utmost vulgarity in our continuing myth of the Artist, Serra inherits Pollock's role as powerful male wresting art from raw stuff.)

But is this really what we think when we encounter the *One-Ton Prop*? Do those four plates of lead balanced against one another's corners just to achieve temporary stability really refer us to the act of assembling them? or to their assembler? On the contrary, *One-Ton Prop* appears to contest the place of the

not to theorize the rupture between the defined modernist forms and the hybrid postmodernist ones. One consequence of this failure has been the false assimilation of work such as Serra's to the history of modernist sculpture; another has been the nearly unquestioned renewal of activity in outmoded forms.

9. In addition to Pincus-Witten, Max Kozloff, for example, compared Serra's work with an academic mode of painting from the same period which did indeed look backward to abstract expressionism: "It was perhaps inevitable that sculpture would respond to that same impulse to airiness and luminosity which has recently informed current painting. But instead of the chromatic brilliance and sensory power which earmarks the canvases, the sculpture concentrates on bodily and tactile co-efficients of the painterly development" ("9 in a Warehouse," *Artforum*, vol. VII, no. 6 [February 1969], 39).

artist as generator and guarantor of the work. On the one hand, the material itself and the simple laws of mechanics occupy that position. And on the other hand, *One-Ton Prop* cannot be construed as a document of process which has come to closure around the artist because closure is precisely what the work literally refuses. It does not cohere, is not fully constituted as a thing, an object. Insofar as it exists at all *as a work*, the *One-Ton Prop* exists only during the time for which it is set up. That it will eventually collapse is not its point; it is not simply a demonstration of entropy. Rather it shows us the entirely conditional nature of its existence, and it thereby denies the timelessness of art. It refuses, then, not only the classification sculpture but also the ideology by which art in our culture is consumed, the ideology of authenticity.

For Serra's works such as *One-Ton Prop*, this conditional status remains internal to the work itself. The fact that it cannot be moved intact does not mean that it cannot be reconstituted elsewhere. It was, for example, first set up in Serra's studio, then in the Whitney Museum. It retained, then, the self-referential character of the modernist object and the attendant ability to inhabit unproblematically that object's idealist space, the space of the museum. If it was no longer a work of sculpture precisely, it was nevertheless *sculptural*: its frame of reference still remained modernist sculpture. That was its particular necessity at the historical moment of its making, for otherwise is refusal, its "corruption" or "perversion," of the classification sculpture would have been lost. Modernism remains a condition of postmodernism to the extent that postmodernism can only exceed but cannot forget or abandon the achievements of modernism altogether. The alternative is a nostalgic return to a premodernist "innocence" such as we currently see in the resurgence of sculpture cast in bronze and other atavistic forms.¹⁰

Serra's recognition of the *external* preconditions of his work, his recognition, that is, of the particular constraints of the museum and its culture, came about as if by accident while he was working on a piece in situ for Jasper Johns:

I was using a small plate of steel placed perpendicular to the wall. I would splash against it, and then pull the hardened lead off the mold. Then I placed the steel plate in the corner, splashed along the wall and the edge of the sheet. I realized that the corner would function as a

10. Nowhere is this nostalgia more evident than in the enterprise known as postmodernist architecture, for example the historicist eclecticism of Michael Graves's recent work. The important differences between notions of postmodernism in the fields of art and architecture constitute a particularly important question requiring a full study. An interesting case to consider would indeed be Graves, insofar as he considers himself painter, sculptor, and architect. For his Portland Public Service Building commission, he himself is fulfilling Portland's percent-for-art requirement. In a lecture in Seattle during the summer of 1980, in which Graves presented the project and in which he insisted upon his fidelity to the tradition of humanism, he unveiled his plans for *Portlandia*, a three-story-high "allegorical" figure of the city. Graves somewhat embarrassedly confessed that his historical justification for the figure—a kitsch pastiche of beaux-arts and *Rappel à l'Ordre* pseudoclassicism—was a figure on the seal of the city of Portland whose real name was not *Portlandia* at all, but Commerce.



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structural support for the plate. That led me to a group of works that redefined the spaces of rooms by propping plates in their corners.¹¹

The result was something like a reversal of the *One-Ton Prop*, whose four plates, now of steel, were flung to the four corners of the gallery room assigned to Serra at Documenta V; the work was called *Circuit*. Now the experience of the work could no longer be separated from the experience of the gallery space that housed it. Without the enclosing walls of the gallery, the work had no support, no possible existence. *Circuit* and other similar works thus made literal the hidden condition of modernist sculpture, whose "abstract" space could only be guaranteed by the museum (commercial galleries, collectors' homes, the lobbies and plazas of corporate headquarters are merely extensions of the museum idea). By exposing the very real institutional conditions of that work's precarious existence, Serra's work thoroughly exceeded modernist sculpture, which had always depended upon disguising its real-world constraints to secure its idealist discourse. From that moment forward, Serra's works for museums and galleries have been site-specific, made within and for the special characteristics of the spaces in which they were installed.

The site-specific works do not, however, accommodate themselves to the spaces of galleries and museums. Rather they strain against the limits of what is possible, or even thinkable, within those spaces. Serra's working always at the threshold of the possible—visually, structurally, ideologically—discloses the very real limitations imposed on artistic practice by these fundamentally nineteenth-century institutions of bourgeois culture. The questions that Serra's recent works solicit are what might be called ship-in-the-bottle questions: How did it get here? What is it doing here? These are precisely the questions that modernist sculptures, so comfortable in their museum and gallery surroundings, can never pose. They are questions of the material contingencies of cultural work, of the dialectic between that work and its deployment.

Take, for example, the work called *Slice*, installed last spring in Leo Castelli's Greene Street gallery. A continuous curve of steel plates, over 10 feet high and 124 feet long, divided the gallery room into two separate, noncommunicating areas, a perimeter space accessible through the gallery's street entrance and an internal area entered through the door off the building's lobby. In order to see the opposite sides of the work, the viewer was forced to leave and reenter the building. The work's scale and placement were absolutely determined by the physical dimensions of the gallery and, for the time of its installation there, the gallery's space was entirely the function of the sculpture's presence. *Slice* belonged only in that space, could logically belong nowhere else, yet it had no business being there. That is to say, it physically disrupted the usual commerce of that

11. In Douglas Crimp, "Richard Serra's Urban Sculpture: An Interview," in *Richard Serra: Interviews, Etc. 1970-1980*, p. 181.

space. A prospective collector could not so much as move from the front door to the office, nor was there any work of art that could logically be the product of commerce. The condition of modernist sculpture is thus completely reversed. A modernist sculpture does not logically belong in any gallery, does not belong anywhere in particular. Yet paradoxically it *does* properly belong to the gallery that offers it for sale; it is a product of commerce precisely because it can as easily belong in the home of a collector or a room in a museum as in the studio where it was produced and the gallery which first displayed it. It properly belongs within that institutional system of commerce.

When art abandons the institutional framework which has sequestered it during the period of modernism, however, it risks becoming invisible. And this is especially true for those works which refuse assimilation to the recognizable categories of art. Of course, any work can reenter the institutional framework through the medium of photography; as Malraux relentlessly reminded us, museums do not necessarily have walls. It has been the special pathos of the massive earthworks of a decade ago that they exist for most spectators only in the form of photographs. Serra's earliest attempts to escape the confines of the museum share in this pathos. As if to insist upon this very fact, one of his most often reproduced works is *To Encircle Base Plate Hexagram Right Angles Reversed*.¹² The work, installed in a dead-end street in the Bronx, was the first of its kind that Serra built in America, and it is one that almost no one saw in situ. Rejecting an identifiable sculptural vocabulary, rejecting the context of the museum, Serra also rejected the kind of site—a park, plaza, or approach to a public building—that would normally be occupied by public sculpture. Serra later explained this choice:

It could have gone into a park, but I felt that a park would designate the sculpture as something different from what I wanted. Usually you're offered places which have specific ideological connotations, from parks to corporate and public buildings and their extensions such as lawns and plazas. It's difficult to subvert those contexts. That's why you have so many corporate baubles on Sixth Avenue, so much bad plaza art that smacks of IBM signifying its cultural awareness.¹³

Modern sculpture's attempts to meet the demands of public sculpture had, of course, been contradictory from the very first. How could an art predicated upon the collapse of representation embody the meaning of those events which public

12. Photographs appeared on the covers of *Artforum*, vol. IX, no. 7 (March 1971), and of *Richard Serra: Works 66-77*, Tübingen, Kunsthalle, and Baden-Baden, Kunsthalle, 1978; and in the catalogues of the 1970 *Whitney Annual Exhibition, Sculpture*, New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, 1970, and the *Guggenheim International Exhibition*, New York, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1971.

13. In Douglas Crimp, "Richard Serra's Urban Sculpture," p. 166.

sculpture is asked to commemorate? What is the possible function of sculpture in public spaces at a time when art has specifically abjured function? Late modernist public sculpture is, in fact, nothing other than enlarged and displaced museum sculpture; its real site remains that idealist one; it signifies only art, and in so doing is reduced to banal decoration. Particularly during the recent period of aggressive public arts policies in the United States, our urban spaces have everywhere become burdened by these homeless, overscaled objects. It is this highly problematic situation which Serra's recent urban works confront, again making explicit the veiled conditions of modernist sculpture.

Serra has just recently completed a commission in New York City under the auspices of the General Services Administration's percent-for-art program. On the plaza of one of lower Manhattan's ugliest new buildings, the Jacob K. Javits Federal Building, Serra has installed a leaning curved wall of steel plates which blocks views toward the building's entrance from the the street, and toward the plaza's fountain and adjoining Thomas Paine Park from the building. The work stands as a huge barrier which one must walk around simply in order to enter or leave the building. In Michael Fried's attack on minimalism, he castigated those works as things which "must somehow *confront* the beholder—they must, one might almost say, be placed not just in his space but in his *way*." Fried opposed this confrontation whereby the beholder is made part of the situation of the work—"the situation itself *belongs to* the beholder—it is *his* situation"—because

Richard Serra. Tilted Arc (Installation). 1981.



it contravened what for Fried was the necessary condition of modernist art, the *exclusion* of the beholder.¹⁴ For as soon as the beholder is admitted, the work's idealism collapses; the privatized, disinterested contemplation of the work gives way to public confrontation. Serra's recent work is in this sense truly public. It aggressively occupies public space, openly confronts its public.

Unwilling to pretend to resolve the contradictions inherent in public art at this historical juncture, Serra's work is also unwilling to serve an innocuous decorative function for its architectural site,¹⁵ or to serve a false ideological function for its supposed constituency. Serra thus refuses to participate in the liberal bureaucracy's program for the rehabilitation of an exhausted modernism through its reconciliation with a public:

An artwork can become significant to its public through the incorporation of content relevant to the local audience, or by the assumption of an identifiable function. Assimilation can also be encouraged through a work's role in a larger civic improvement program. In the first case, recognizable content or function provides a means by which the public can become engaged with the work, though its style or form might be unfamiliar to them. In the latter, the work's identity as art is subsumed by a more general public purpose, helping to assure its validity. In both cases, the personal sensibilities of the artist are presented in ways that encourage widespread public empathy.¹⁶

In the same article where this extraordinary disclosure of public arts policy appears, Serra's work is discussed as a perplexing example of art which makes no concessions to function, content, or civic improvement and consequently encounters "physical and verbal abuse." But we are to be reassured finally that "Serra's sculpture may eventually win a greater measure of acceptance within its community."¹⁷ "A greater measure of acceptance" is surely the flattest, most pathetic aspiration to be attributed to the art of this century, and it is a telling symptom of modernism's exhaustion that such statements can appear in a major art publication. Simultaneous with its complete capitulation to the system of commerce, it appears that modernism has also become merely a matter of official public policy.

14. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," p. 127. For Fried's more recent work concerning the origins of this condition of modernism, see his *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California, 1980.

15. A number of commissions awarded to Serra have, for this reason, been sabotaged by architects; among the most important were commissions from the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, opposed by Robert Venturi, and the Centre Georges Pompidou, opposed by Renzo Piano. For a discussion of these and other failed commissions, see Douglas Crimp, "Richard Serra's Urban Sculpture," pp. 171-175, 181-185.

16. John Beardsley, "Personal Sensibilities in Public Places," *Artforum*, vol. XIX, no. 10 (Summer 1981), 44. Beardsley is preparing a book on the Art in Public Places program for the National Endowment for the Arts.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

How Should Acconci Count for Us?

Notes on a Retrospect *

STEPHEN MELVILLE

The question, first and last, is who we are, since we are not given here at the outset. I—"I" am a latecomer to art, its criticism, its history, its appreciation; I come to it through a very particular point of view, associated with Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried. This means, or seems to mean, that I can come to the work of Vito Acconci only to condemn it as the latest and fullest flowering of a certain theatrical sensibility that has been already condemned, set aside, counted out of the world of art.

My question, then, has to be about whether or not I can do Acconci justice, and in the tradition of Greenberg and Fried this will also be a question about whether Acconci can do me justice; about how far a community can exist around the work and how far the work offers only the pretense of community; or about the modes of our presence to one another and to Acconci and his works, questions of persons and positions. "My" problem about the creation of a "we"—about something like a community of criticism—is intimately bound to my difficulty in doing Acconci justice, and this in its turn is bound to Acconci's work: my audience, his audience; my singularity and his and yours; how you and I and he and a certain work can count in and for each other—such terms and relations are the matrix of these notes, to be filled out in time.

There are a number of ways to describe Acconci's progress. As he frequently retells it, his development is essentially the story of a progressive and experimental re-creation of the world from a position of radical skepticism. This re-creation is—or wants to be—also a passage from passive to active, from stalemated poetry to politically active art. The central issues in this career are those of action and the ground for action (epistemological issues, we might say); its decade-long progress

* This essay was occasioned by the exhibition *Vito Acconci: A Retrospective 1969 to 1980* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, March 21-May 18, 1980. It draws upon Judith Russi Kirshner's catalogue essay, "Vito Acconci: Language and Space," as well as interviews with Acconci by Jack Burnham (*The New Art Examiner*, vol. 7, no. 8, May 1980), Robin White (*View*, vol. 2, no. 5/6, October/November 1979), and Judith Russi Kirshner (on tape as part of the exhibition).

is most simply one of finding its way off the page and into the streets. These streets are, in the beginning, just those walked upon while reading (so that the literal time thus spent becomes the "external referent" whose achievement released Acconci from his "poetic context" into an "art context"); and then walked alone and passive in *Following*; and then the public and political streets of Europe. Acconci would now build houses that erect themselves, vehicular shelters, domestic transport, enclosing the street, recovering that which is most public for privacy, for habitation.

This same progress can be put another way: it is the most literal living through of the formalist project of "radical self-criticism" that seems currently imaginable. *It would seem that a kind of art nearer the condition of nonart could not be envisaged or ideated at this moment.* How else could one describe such pieces as *Conversions*, with Acconci's doomed effort to become a woman (his claim to "become the woman I've cancelled out"), or *Reception Room*, with its double apologetic and self-deprecating audio tapes? On this view, the political criticism of *The American Gift* or *Tonight We Escape from New York* simply responds to a new version of the self, appearing too precisely as an escape from the "trap" of psychology and taking its sense only from that apparent escape. Putting things this way may perhaps show how this work belongs properly in the wake of minimalism and how minimalism itself belongs properly to the formalist project (as—I will want to say—the way in which it is given to misconstrue itself, to go astray; or the way in which it is given to disavow itself; or the way in which it is given to take itself seriously, literally . . . but here we are ahead of ourselves).

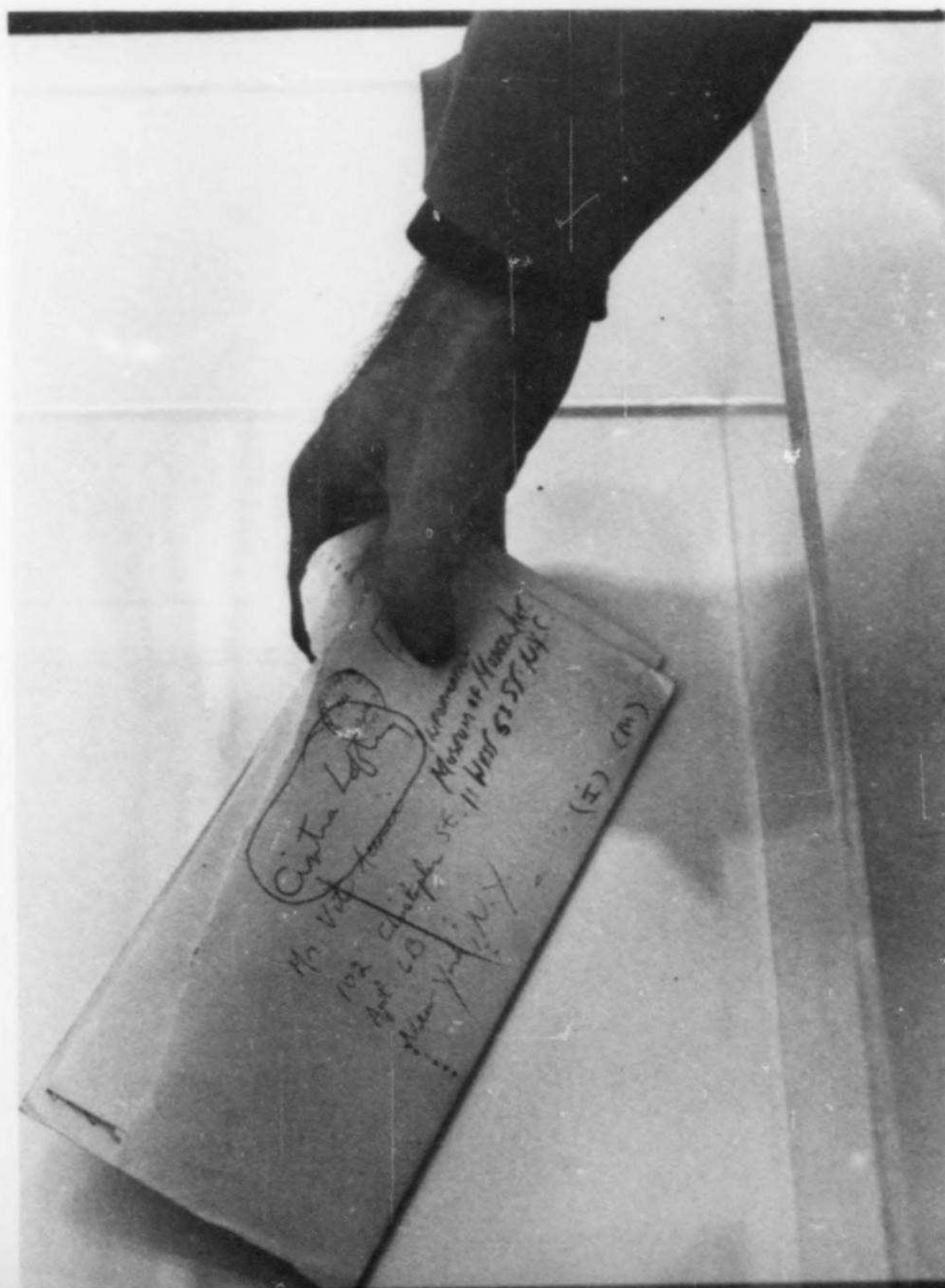
Acconci's progress can be described one last way: he moves forward—off the page and into the world—only by arranging a series of increasingly complex traps behind himself, rendering each present, each position, untenable and forcing some further movement. Acconci's audience is always the means by which he would force upon himself a self he cannot deny. *His work demands a special complicity of the beholder, demands that he take it into account, that he take it seriously—and the fulfillment of that demand consists simply in being aware of it.* *Air Time* is perhaps the most radical such performance—to the point that Acconci himself now calls it immoral; but he remains unable to deny its power within his notion of art (and this itself is one more instance of trap logic). Acconci is always the work at the bottom of the dark stairs *waiting for you* to force him to kill, *refusing, obstinately, to let you alone, to stop confronting you, distancing you, isolating you.* He is always the man at the end of the night wharf inviting your blackmail, or on the operating table with his pimpled ass in the air, demanding your decision upon it, his penis, his fantasies, his self. It is you that will give him his self, his reason for being there; and the relations between you (between, that is, you and him) are always explicit, contractual.

In each of these pictures Acconci's progress, his development, becomes finally visible as a turning in place which may or may not be a real movement as well. (What would qualify here as a "real movement"?—finding a way beyond

skepticism? meeting “you,” the beholder? arriving at a viable politics? moving beyond the self? finding a way to action? to art? By all these standards we will want, in the end, to say that Acconci falls short of real movement. Do we then mean that there is nothing to be seen “in retrospect”? But Acconci’s career has never appeared as anything other than a “career” and a history, its own story—has always already appeared to itself “in retrospect,” submitted to retelling.)

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One of Acconci’s earliest pieces, *Service Area*, involved having his mail forwarded to the Museum of Modern Art, where he would pick it up from time to time. As with *Following*, the justification for the piece was that it gave the artist a reason to move—in one instance through the imposition of a rule upon a month’s behavior, and in the other through the simpler and more elegant necessity of receiving his correspondence. The piece is a transparent example of the trap logic we have noted at work in his art. It is a transparent example also of the way in which the artist first attempted to get out of himself and into the world, to insert, as he might put it, “private self into public space.” One of the things Acconci says he became aware of during the course of this piece was the fact that his mail, sitting in the public space of the museum, was open to theft. In the logic of his



Vito Acconci. *Service Area*. 1970.

progressive and experimental re-creation of the world, this fear becomes an evidence for the existence of other minds, a world of intersubjectivity. The piece can be said—is said by Acconci as he tells the story of his self—to touch off the series of pieces (described as “live” and “I-you”) that occupied him through 1973 (and the advent of the video works for which we will need a supplementary account).

Acconci is, of course, not the only person to have been worried by the thought of stolen mail or the way such an event arises at a complex intersection of public and private, self and other; and it may prove to be of more than passing interest to set the consequences Acconci forces from his fear alongside the pages Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida have devoted to Poe’s story of “The Purloined Letter” in their controversy over psychoanalysis.¹

That this is more than a simple coincidence of motifs—that in some measure Acconci and (a certain version of) psychoanalysis are caught up in a larger “postal system” (a phrase I take from Derrida)—is perhaps evidenced by some of Acconci’s own remarks.

When I look at my work in retrospect, I think one way I can look at it is like a child, a kind of child growing up. . . .

The first piece is—child realizes he or she is there, so I examined myself. I turned to my own body, I turned to my own self physically. . . .

I find myself there, and play with myself a little bit, then I realize there is another person there, so that these pieces with interaction—the two agents acting with each other. Then, gradually, I realize—well, these things can exist, you don’t have to be there. . . .

I guess every—anybody who does art can say this—the presence seems to have been shifted to a kind of “behind the scenes” presence. This person going from place to place, setting up—setting up something.

We may be astonished that Acconci finds it necessary to go so far simply to arrive at the realization that he makes things, sets up something—this can suggest that “authority” itself may present special problems for Acconci’s work—but we should be astonished as well at the way in which a psychological progression is here intertwined with a progress out of skepticism which appears as a quasi-*Phenomenology* of the artistic spirit. (And here we should remark that Acconci’s early poetic dead end and its resolution [*Aufhebung?*] into an “art context” reenacts precisely the opening chapter of the Hegelian *Phenomenology*.)

1. Jacques Lacan, “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter,’” *Yale French Studies*, no. 48; Jacques Derrida, “The Purveyor of Truth,” *Yale French Studies*, no. 52. See also Barbara Johnson, “The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida,” *Yale French Studies*, no. 55/56.

In Lacan's reading of Poe's story, the theft of a letter sets in motion a series of events that are susceptible of a double interpretation. At the most obvious level—the level of the characters and their announced intentions—a game is played out between interlocking sets of "I's" and "you's"—the Queen and her minister, the minister and Dupin. The game is for two players, and its basic rules follow from the tempting pseudologic of a certain face-to-face: "You see that I see, so I see you seeing me seeing . . ." As anyone who has ever played by these rules knows, their very clarity and sheer reciprocity become the means of their most radical dissimulation and concealment; they are the intersubjective matrix for that "hiding in plain sight" exemplified in the purloined letter itself. Dupin can find the letter (Dupin argues) because he is master of this logic.

Lacan's psychoanalytic reading of the story would uncover a deeper logic to the series. Dupin's argument is wrong: there is no such thing as winning at the game he describes at the logical level he assumes because the play of identification between the two players is always open to a further reflex and so always collapses back into nothing more than random (if well-decorated) guessing. To the extent that the game is played out in the story, it is played out in a more complex arena than any of the characters can recognize—and the limitations on their ability to recognize the arena in which they play are themselves a consequence of the game and its rules. The game sets in motion, among other things, a structure of misrecognition, conceals itself.

In this new game, the primary player is the letter itself; its trajectory determines the course of the narrative, and its position at any given time determines the position of the characters in the story. To hold the letter, for example, is to be feminized (says Lacan). We can say that one of the rules of the game is: the recipient of the letter is a woman. This is, at first and in the end, true: it is to the Queen that the letter is sent, and she is, of course, a woman. But it is also true every step of the way, because (on Lacan's reading) whoever finds himself in possession of the letter finds himself feminized. And this means that the purloined letter has, in a sense, never really been stolen or diverted from its course at all. This line of thought leads directly to Derrida's criticism of this reading—a criticism that can be boiled down to the charge that it is a necessary condition of the success of Lacan's reading that it forget precisely the first fact of the case—that a letter has been stolen, gone astray, and might, in fact, not be recovered, might be burned or torn or lost or altogether too well hidden. (In putting the issue this way we elide that layer of Derrida's critique which bears on the status of the literary text in order to get clearly at this central issue.) It is, Derrida insists, very hard to think what it is for something to be lost, go astray, be untouchable.

And we are saying, here, that it is just this that Acconci must have set out to think when he entered the "art context," when he began to follow people about the city, when (above all) he made himself worry about his mail, let it force him into the complex intersection of public and private, self and other, on which it plays, in which it circulates. What he wants is to touch the other as what he cannot



Vito Acconci. *Claim*. 1971.

control and to make this inability to control that other a proof of the other's existence and presence to him, so that though he is sometimes afraid his use of audio may work merely to numb the viewer, he hopes that it will instead make the viewer rebel, make him fight back: he *crowds* his audience, as if to force it out of its silence, force it to ratify his speech. *The experience of coming upon Acconci unexpectedly*—at the bottom of the stairs in *Claim*, for example—*can be strongly, if momentarily, disquieting in just this way*. The viewer cannot but feel himself caught up in a complex game of person-and-surrogate-person where the final ontological burden lies on his shoulders. The logic deployed here is one that, in effect, always counts down from the other toward the self: the other's presence to me proves my presence; the reaction of the other limits and so displays my action; what I cannot control shows what I can control, that I do control. One of the more interesting consequences of this position is that the achievement of authority itself defeats the declared goals of the work. For Acconci this paradox appears most acutely, most painfully, in the situation of the "art star"—whose very success determines his failure (and whose failure is his only possible success): the "art star" cannot be known by the other.

What needs to be stressed here is that the lesson Acconci drew from his thought of theft was not first of all (or only mediately) about his audience, but

about himself: if my letters can be stolen (by an other), then I have letters to receive that are properly mine—so I had better examine my self. It is this curious structure that dictates the trap logic of so many of the pieces and enforces a certain failure upon them (which then becomes the motor pushing Acconci's work forward). So that if we say that it was precisely the other as beyond his control that Acconci first set out to think, his first thinking followed from a forgetting of that other by whom the project was determined. In this sense, Acconci occupies the same position as Lacan, a position which can never be other than psychological, even as its central energy is directed precisely to breaking the hold of psychology upon it. (So that, for example, what it wants to have as its politics ends up looking like therapy: "PARdon me now while I SPEAK to the TERRORists . . . COME to US my TERRORist . . . SIT NEXT to the NORmal people . . . SPEND a normal DAY with us . . ."—*The Peoplemobile*.)

Behind Lacan's reading of "The Purloined Letter" lies a picture of normal development and of a therapy in which one develops out of the enclosure of narcissism into the intersubjective fullness of society and its system of (at least) three persons. Acconci invites us to believe in such a therapeutic and developmental scheme as, in effect, the meaning of "radical self-criticism" and to view his own progress accordingly as a passage out of some primal narcissism through a dialectic of self and other into the fullness of a properly political space (in which the role of the third person may be filled by the cultural specificity of the given space). For both Lacan and Acconci the Oedipal passage implied here is understood to be a passage beyond mere psychology; "mere psychology," reflection on and of the self, ends by falling inevitably back into narcissism.

For Acconci, this Oedipal passage is probably most explicit and most accessible in *Seedbed*. This work climaxes the series of the "live, I-you" pieces which constitute Acconci's acknowledged period of narcissistic and psychological self-involvement. In *Seedbed* he withdrew from the face-to-face and attempted to recognize his relation to the viewer as fundamentally fantastic (that is, he attempted to force the viewer to recognize him as fantasizing about the viewer, to make that undeniable: the central fantasy here appears to be that of the viewer's fantasy about him) and to recognize the ways in which metaphor is centrally constructive of human relatedness and selfhood. But of course all this playing with himself (how many players in this game?) took place apart from the viewer, literalizing an abstraction of the viewer that has always been at work in Acconci's pieces. Notice, for example, the way in which he speaks of the audience for *The People Machine*: "If viewer unhooks swing, one swing after another will swing out window, catapult will be released, ball will be shot, flag will wave and fall into heap." This is abstract art with a vengeance, and its radically schematic abstraction appears even where one would least expect it, in the (unimaginable) description of the video images of *VD Lives/TV Must Die* as "STILL: PILE OF PRICKS AND CUNTS" and in the masturbation of *Seedbed*. Such abstraction idealizes in advance the very space Acconci would open to the outside, an other,

accident, contact; the space of encounter (*Where We Are Now* [*Who Are We Anyway?*], for example) is always articulated by a prior, implicit or explicit, contract which assures that a law will be either obeyed or not, but will not in any case be put into play. (It is, of course, the space of a theater, and of that particular theater for which the glow of the footlights, the arch of the proscenium can figure only as barriers, transgressed or obeyed, submitted to or not, but incomprehensible in their real function as means to encounter, recognition, acknowledgment.)

The passage operated by *Seedbed* can end only as a passage back into and a renewal of the psychological and narcissistic—the sexuality it dares remains simply an insertion of private into public and not an accession to the more complex conditions of publicity. The withdrawal of the “art star” beneath the platform or behind/before the video camera/screen changes nothing in the structure of Acconci’s pieces. (And here I am in implicit agreement with Rosalind Krauss’s view that the medium of video is narcissism; the present essay can be read, in part at least, as an attempt to spell out what it means to have narcissism as a medium, over and above the particular devices—conceptual or performative, audio or video, etc.—through which particular pieces may be realized. If narcissism is a medium, it is one that lies between the arts and their particular mediums; *what lies between the arts is theater.*)

*

If we want, then, to say that the passage Acconci claims for himself is not as he sees it, is only a transformation within an embracing medium that is itself destined to psychology, to narcissism, can we still accept the more general invitation of his work to believe in a certain therapeutico-developmental scheme as the meaning of “radical self-criticism”?

At the heart of Greenberg’s essay “Modernist Painting” lies the following paragraph:

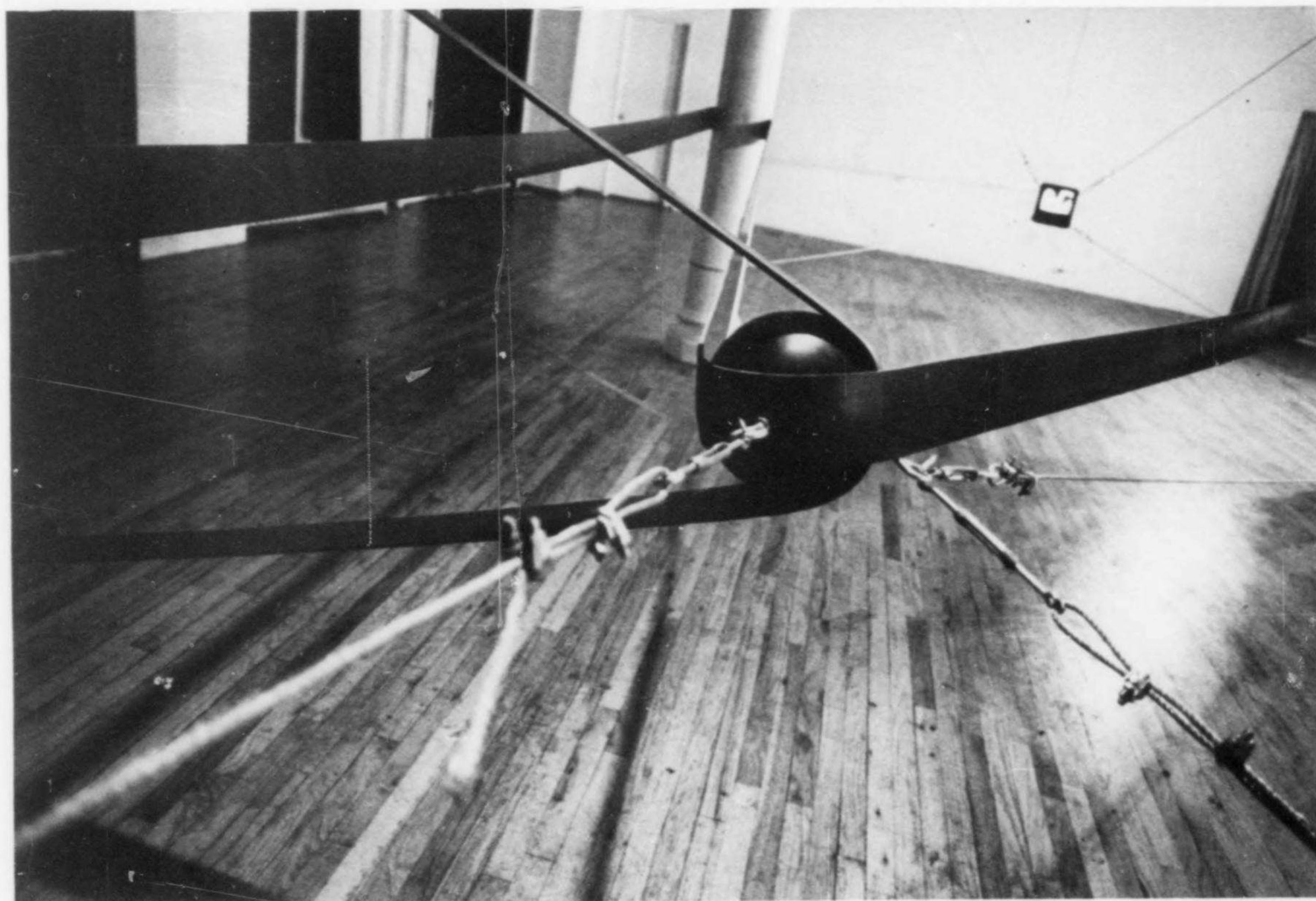
We know what has happened to an activity like religion that has not been able to avail itself of “Kantian” immanent criticism in order to justify itself. At first glance the arts might seem to have been in a situation like religion’s. Having been denied by the Enlightenment all the tasks they could take seriously, they looked as though they were going to be assimilated to entertainment pure and simple, and entertainment itself looked as though it were going to be assimilated, like religion, to therapy.²

If we choose to remain true to our formalist heritage here (and I know that I have yet to make it “ours,” am presuming upon community), we are going to

2. Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting,” in Gregory Battcock, ed., *The New Art*, New York, Dutton, 1973, p. 67.

want to say that a therapeutic and developmental scheme is quite precisely not the real meaning of radical self-criticism: it is rather the one thing that cannot figure as such a meaning (the crisscrossing of entertainment and therapy, we might say, is what we mean by "theatricality"). If we are more generous, we may want to say that this can come only through the promotion of the self—or a certain grasp of the self—to the status of medium. And if we are honest we are going to have to say also that precisely this promotion has been inevitable since Greenberg began writing, articulated this possibility. *I am suggesting that a kind of latent or hidden psychologism lies at the core of formalist theory and practice—and, equally, that the meaning and the hiddenness of this psychologism are incurably theatrical.*

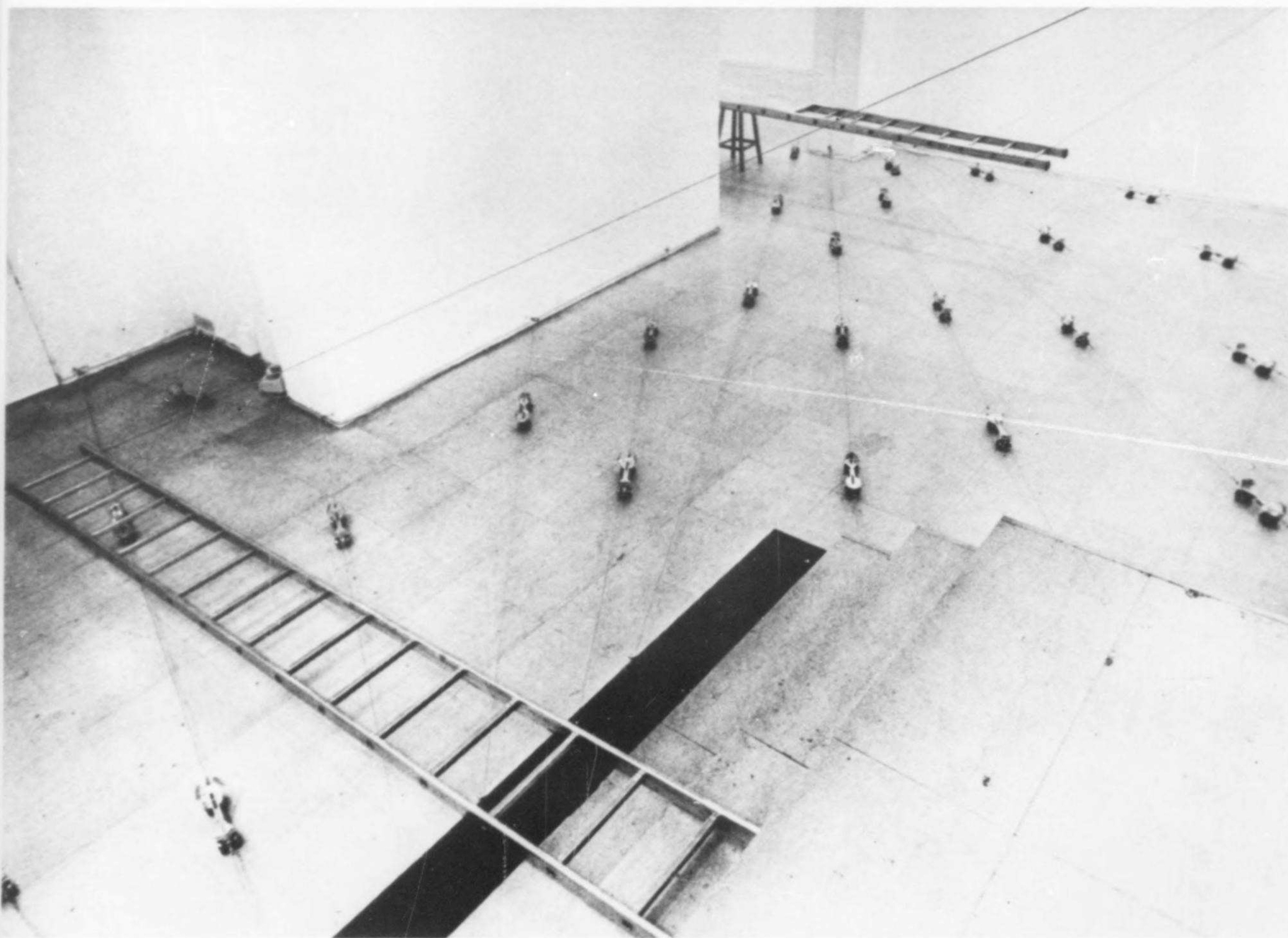
Greenberg's essay is itself a letter destined to whosoever reads it and destined to find in that reader something other than its true receiver; it is open to accident, contingency, and—god knows—misreadings from which it cannot be protected: it cannot appear except as it is traversed *by a sensibility already theatrical, already (to say the worst) corrupted or perverted by theater.* Its first misreader was, beyond question, Greenberg himself, who never understood what he meant by "Kantian immanent criticism" except as it seemed a means to stage the truth of painting. Its



Vito Acconci. VD Lives/TV Must Die. 1978.

most powerful misreader to date has been Michael Fried, who has been also its greatest protector. What Fried has been most prone to misunderstand, to lose, is exactly what Greenberg most misunderstood: the way in which art must be—before it is strong or weak, graceful or merely literal—a letter open to contingency and loss. And nowhere is Fried more visibly the heritor and betrayer of Greenberg's blindness and vision than in "Art and Objecthood"—the essay upon which these notes are built and which they echo, allude to, steal from—where what he takes away as the truth and essence of painting with one hand, he restores as "seriousness" with the other.

It is only by so understanding Greenberg's essay that we can make sense of its fear: art is something with no guaranteed core, no final and unarguable central line of development, no sharp limit that marks off its relation to an outer world, no certain seriousness (although it promises, temptingly, all of these, lets us



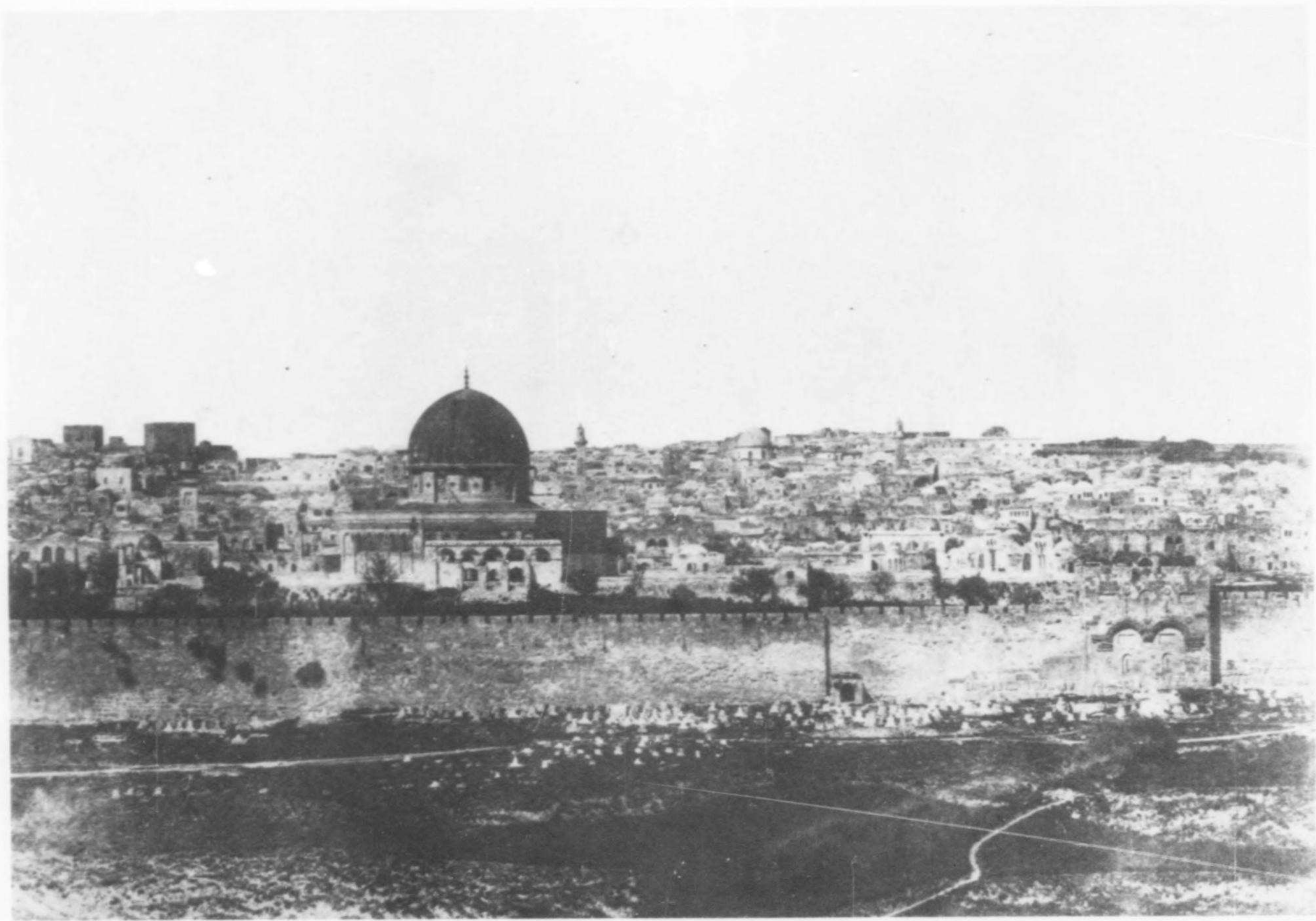
pretend we could include or exclude, count in or out, take seriously or dismiss as frivolous, such works as Duchamp's *Fountain* or Tony Smith's *Die* or Acconci's *Seedbed*; it may even be that critically and practically such exclusions are forced upon us—and this perhaps because the art world is itself not something that at every moment is wholly manifest or because of the utter pervasiveness of a sensibility or mode of being corrupted or perverted by theater—perhaps).

The enterprise of art—we need to say—is such that we would not know what it would be for it to have changed so drastically that nothing more than the name remained; if it had done so we could not know that it had. Art—how do we want to say this? does it really matter how we fail to get it right?—is a letter purloined from itself always finding and not finding its proper receiver, its audience—even when it would deny that audience. But then we want to say that we are (and here “we” are, whether we speak of ourselves as beleaguered and belated formalists or as, more simply, those who must stand in the place of Acconci's abstracted viewer)—we are finally what Acconci can never quite touch, neither as we are forever exterior to him, one step beyond the circuit of self and self (however it be relayed through tapes and television), nor as he is continually interior to us, as our temptation, misreading, possibility.

There are, then, things we cannot tell about Acconci: How far, for example, the history of his self belongs to the history of art. How far his turning in place is not also a turning through places, a movement of a sort—one whose logic we may not yet understand—an *Exercise Machine* (perhaps) for an *Eternal Return*. How far his work is a doing and how far an undoing of the legacy of literalism (how far it repeats minimalism, how far it assumes and betrays its “failure”). How far it reflects or measures or participates in a certain decline (of art, of standards, of seriousness) and through what tenses that decline is to be conjugated.

No destinies, no certain destinations, order these choices or allow their simple resolution—except in future perfect retrospect—and there all has always already been decided: wherever the letter has been, there will have been its destination. It is not for us to count or not count Acconci nor even for Acconci to count for us—that has happened already. Perfect and pluperfect.

If there is a lesson to be drawn from Acconci it is a lesson about the inevitability of self, the final and necessary failure of criticism (in art, of art), the continuing need for it, the insistence of modalities of time more complex than duration and instantaneousness, deeper than distinctions of presence and presentness, and, of course—still and always—the rarity of grace.



Auguste Salzmann. Jerusalem, Walls of the Temple,
General View of the East Side. 1856.

A Photographer in Jerusalem,
1855:
Auguste Salzmann and His Times

ABIGAIL SOLOMON-GODEAU

If ripeness is all, no better illustration could be found than in the trajectory photography has described from its simultaneous birth in the two most industrialized and powerful countries in the world. Engendered by science,¹ with ambitions to art, and popularly believed to incarnate the absolute measure of optical truth, its success was guaranteed. Indeed, it is significant that almost all of photography's eventual uses were foreseen at its very outset. And while the traumatic implications of photography constitute a largely suppressed discourse in the mid-nineteenth century, the general awareness of its magnitude and import was widely expressed. Histories of photography appeared as early as 1856, and in France alone there were by 1854 eight or nine photography journals in addition to coverage in the press.² Photographic exhibitions were regularly held and widely attended, and there were at least two court cases in France which attempted to determine if photography was subject to art copyright law.³

The excitement and self-consciousness generated by photography in France reached a watershed of sorts in the period between 1850 and 1865. The decade of the fifties is thus a crucial one in the history of photography, having witnessed one of the highest levels of artistic achievement in the medium's history as well as the use of photography for the creation of new forms and structures for the organization of knowledge. The decline in both the level of quality and serious inquiry by the mid-sixties is traditionally linked to photography's evolution from an artisanal stage to an intensely commercialized and industrialized one.

1. A more recent hypothesis has it that the generative principle was art. See Peter Galassi, *Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography*, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1981.

2. See *The Second Empire 1852-1870: Art in France under Napoleon III*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1978.

3. In one case, the history painter Yvon commissioned the elder Bisson to photograph Napoleon III for use in the preparation of his painting *L'Empereur au képi*. Bisson subsequently sold copy prints from his negative, Yvon brought suit, and the court decided in favor of Yvon. In *Mayer & Pierson v. Betheder and Schwabbe*, a suit between two competing photographic firms, "the defendants relied on the 'photography as non-art theory,' while the plaintiffs maintained the contrary view. . . . The case went through several appeals, with the final decision establishing photography as art." Both cases cited in Gisele Freund, *Photography and Society*, Boston, Godine, 1980, pp. 81-84.

The rediscovery of the extraordinary flowering of what Nadar was the first to refer to as French primitive photography has been the inevitable consequence of the appropriation of all of photography into the art market. Formerly the esoteric preserve of scattered collectors, aficionados, and a handful of scholars, these images on paper or on glass are now being retrieved from the archives, libraries, government offices, and private attics where they have been resting (and in some cases disintegrating) for over a hundred years. Recently assimilated to the world of museum, gallery, and corporate and private collections to a degree doubtless undreamed of by the long dead photographers themselves, these fragile images are now the subject of anxious efforts of conservation, a historical pendant to those of the Photographic Society of London's Fading Commission of 1855.⁴ But although these images may have originally been produced from widely different purposes to serve vastly different ends, the terms of their rediscovery have largely functioned to obscure such distinctions. For nowhere have the institutional methods of conferring aura been more clearly revealed than in the apotheosis of early photography, a process initiated by collectors, followed by galleries and museums, and now being academicized by a new generation of photographic historians and graduate students. The tendency to lump together willy-nilly under the unifying rubric of art the photographic work of physiologists and physicians (Marey and Duchenne de Boulogne), entrepreneurs and artists (Disdéri and Le Secq), archeological documentarians and the makers of tourist views (Salzmann and Braun) has resulted in the neglect, if not obfuscation, of important questions of intent, context, and production. Because the terms of the contemporary photography world involve the assimilation of photography *toute entière* into an art discourse, it should not be surprising that these are equally the terms of the rediscovery and reassessment of early photography. To a significant degree, this process was anticipated in the very nature of the photography-as-art discourse as it has evolved in the past fifty years. When Edward Steichen mounted at MOMA an exhibition of aerial views and bombardments made during World War I by the military, he was effectively stating that the art of the photograph is not contingent on intentionality. Inevitably, connoisseurship has to a great extent taken the place of criticism or analysis.

In discussing the work of Auguste Salzmann—a photographer whose principle body of works lends itself especially well to the connoisseur's act of formal delectation—I am less concerned with demonstrating its high quality than in trying to place its maker within a specific context of photographic production in the early years of the Second Empire. Many of the questions which are raised by work such as Salzmann's are not presently answerable. It does seem, however, that a meaningful approach to the history of photography needs to stress the context—in the broadest sense—of both its production and its reception.

4. The fading and discoloration of photographs, often due to improper wash or fix, was the subject of a study by the Photographic Society of London. It was considered to be particularly serious in that it threatened the purchase of expensive art photographs.

Like many of the acknowledged masters of French primitive photography, Auguste Salzmänn (1824-1872) is both exemplary and enigmatic. As far as is currently known, he produced only two bodies of photographic work: 174 calotypes of Jerusalem and its environs printed by Blanquart-Evrard and published with a text in 1856 under the title *Jérusalem: Étude et reproduction photographique de la ville sainte*, and, some years later, a volume on the objects and frescos excavated from the Necropolis at Kamiros (Rhodes), which contained only a few photographic reproductions of the art works to illustrate the text. From contemporary biographical dictionaries we know that he was an unremarkable painter of orientalist and landscape subjects with some knowledge of archeology. After 1856 he virtually disappears from the scene (with the exception of the Kamiros book, which appeared between 1858-1860) both as painter and photographer. Nothing is thus far known about the remaining eighteen years of his life. Although he received a gold medal for his photographic panorama of Jerusalem

Auguste Salzmänn. Valley of Josaphat. 1854.



displayed in the photography pavilion of the Exposition Universelle in 1855 (the largest photography exhibition mounted to that date), the photography critics of his day seem not to have considered the formal qualities of his photographs markedly different from those of any other well-regarded photographer.

In all these respects Salzmänn is typical of that generation of photographers whose greatest work was produced in the decade 1850–60. This second generation came of age at a period when the process of printing from paper negatives had been considerably refined since Fox Talbot's initial invention. Even more important, the calotype in France was almost immediately granted an aesthetic legitimacy by artists and connoisseurs, which the daguerreotype, with its plethora of undifferentiated detail, mirrorlike precision, and generally small scale, was denied. Delacroix's conversion to the new medium was largely brought about by the calotype process and its sophisticated practitioners,⁵ not by the principally commercial daguerreotypists, whom Baudelaire was to scourge in his *Salon of 1859* ("A vengeful God has granted the wishes of the crowd. Daguerre is becoming its messiah").

The calotype produced singularly beautiful images; the paper on which it was printed, either salted or albuminized, determined relative degrees of softness or precision. The negative itself could be waxed to provide greater sharpness (a technique invented by Gustave Le Gray) and sensitized up to two weeks before exposure. The additional merit of its portability compared to the glass plates used for the contemporary wet-collodion process (although both techniques necessitated a darkroom in situ) made it a logical if not inevitable choice for photographing abroad.

Salzmänn's professional training as a painter is typical of the photographic milieu of the fifties. Nègre, Le Secq, Le Gray, Fenton, Baldus, Flachéron, Constant, Vallou de Villeneuve, and many others started out as painters—the first four in fact came out of the atelier of Paul Delaroche. It was of course the same Delaroche, early enthusiast of the daguerreotype, who is remembered more now for his cry "From today, painting is dead" than for his *Death of the Duc de Guise*. Others were trained as architects (Normand) or illustrators and designer-engravers (Nadar and Marville). It is a testimony to their sense of the vitality and potential of the new medium that this group of young artists abandoned their ateliers and embraced photography. It is probable that neither their talent nor commitment to the prevailing *juste milieu* painting (none of these men, with the exception of Vallou de Villeneuve, were in any way associated with the realist school) was very great and that they saw in photography a form of expression that had not yet produced either an Ingres or a Delacroix—indeed, even a Vernet—against whom to invite invidious comparison. Photography, as opposed to daguerreotypy,

5. Delacroix was a founding member in 1851 of the Société Héliographique, which became in turn the Société Française de Photographie.

represented an open field, an artistic *tabula rasa*, in which the very nature of the debate—art or technology—functioned as a spur to creation.

But like Salzmänn, within ten, or at most fifteen, years, a significant number of the most gifted photographers of this period had either overtly repudiated or quietly ceased their production. As early as 1856, Henri Le Secq, considered by many to have been the greatest of the early photographers, had quit altogether and henceforth devoted himself to his museum of ironwork. Le Gray left Paris in 1859 to become a drawing instructor in Egypt and thereafter produced only a few known photographs. Regnault renounced photography; Nègre left Paris for his native Arles, where most of his work was consecrated to perfecting methods of mechanical reproduction. The Bisson Frères went out of business in 1864; Mestral vanished altogether; Baldus devoted himself largely to photo-mechanical reproduction; and Blanquart-Evrard closed his *Imprimerie* in Lille in 1864. Although all accounts attribute the body count to the effects of commercialization ushered in by Disdéri's exploitation of his *carte-de-visite*, this seems too pat and mechanistic to account entirely for the phenomenon. The bourgeoisie who flocked to have *cartes-de-visite* made at a few francs each did not belong to the same milieu that bought prints by Le Gray at as much as 100 francs each. By the same token, the subscribers who ordered the sumptuous albums produced by Blanquart-Evrard were not the same that bought the scenic views of Adolphe Braun & Cie. Lastly, the well-heeled *savants*, *notables*, and *nobles* that made up a substantial part of the membership of the Société Française de Photographie were not in most cases making their living from photography and were thus in no way affected by the activities of Mayer & Pierson, Disdéri, and the other commercial photographers.

If the abrupt and unexplained closure of these photographic careers is problematic, perhaps even more so are those photographic careers which, also like Salzmänn's, produced a single body of beautiful and formally innovative images that, as far as is known, were preceded neither by preliminary experimentation nor followed by later development. Such is the case of Maxim du Camp, whose photographic album *Egypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie* was Blanquart-Evrard's first publishing and printing venture (1851); of Félix Teynard; John B. Greene; and Louis de Clercq, who also photographed in Jerusalem.

With respect then to the choice of the calotype, his training as a painter, the apparent brevity of his photographic career, even his disappearance from the scene, Auguste Salzmänn represents what might be considered a paradigm of photography's early history.

The enigmatic aspect of Salzmänn's production resides in the marked contradiction between his professed intentions (purely documentary) and the quality of the work itself (not so much nondocumentary as *anti*-documentary); that, and the fact that this body of photographs which seems as stamped with a personal vision as any produced in the nineteenth century was, according to Salzmänn's accompanying text, a collaborative work. An assistant named Durheim, about whom nothing at all is known, worked with him and remained in

Jerusalem to complete another fifty calotypes after Salzmann, stricken with fever, was forced to leave. Of the 174 photographs printed by Blanquart-Evrard, no one has been able to separate stylistically those made by Salzmann from those made by Durheim. Collaborative photography has, of course, always been acknowledged as an important aspect of early photography, Hill and Adamson being the very model of such a partnership. But that Salzmann should indicate, as casually as he did, that fifty of the images were made by his assistant strongly suggests that Salzmann's intentions had nothing to do with the use of the camera as a device of personal expression or individual style.

Salzmann's mission in Jerusalem was typical of all the other photographic missions of the period—an act of scientific documentation and objective reporting to be rendered with the impartial and truth-telling eye of the camera. Specifically, he was charged by the Ministry of Public Instruction with the documentation of the holy city and its environs in order to validate the theories of his friend Louis

Auguste Salzmann. Village of Siloam. 1854.



Ferdinand de Saulcy, who had initiated the project and to whom Salzmänn dedicated it. These theories concerned the dating by stylistic attribution of various Jewish, Islamic, and Christian architectural works, theories that had been published by de Saulcy in 1851, illustrated with drawings, and largely rejected by the archeological milieu to which they had been addressed.

De Saulcy seems to have thought that this rejection was due to the inadequacy or assumed subjectivity of his visual documentation. In a letter published in the newspaper *Le Constitutionnel* in 1856, which was reprinted the same year in the *Bulletin of the Société Française de Photographie*, he stated that he had asked Salzmänn, "history painter, archeologist, and savant," to undertake the photographic documentation. How this ultimately became an official commission by the Ministry of Public Instruction is unclear. The intermingling between the worlds of officialdom and photography were such that the connection could have been made in any number of ways.⁶ With the conspicuous exception of the fiercely republican Nadar, photography and bohemia had little to do with each other in the Second Empire.

Nowhere was the implicit confidence in the objective truth of the camera's vision more clearly demonstrated than in the French government's official sponsorship of various photographic missions. Photography in France had from the beginning been granted official recognition, sanction, and patronage. The decade of the fifties began with the launching of the Missions Héliographiques under the aegis of the Commission des Monuments Historique headed by Prosper Mérimée.⁷ Napoleon III, himself totally indifferent to art, was keenly aware of the public relations, if not propaganda, purposes which photography could serve. Under direct imperial commission were such projects as Charles Nègre's photographs of the Asylum at Vincennes, Le Gray's series of army manoeuvres at Châlons, Baldus's albums of the railroads, and such icons of imperial piety as Le Gray's portrait of the Empress Eugénie at her prie-dieu.

The enormous production (both official and private) of photographic documentation of architecture, historic sites, and ruins was to a certain extent fueled by the passion for documentation itself. The mid-nineteenth century was

6. Consider, for example, a few connections. Eugène Durieu was a founder of the Société Héliographique and made nude photographs for Delacroix, whom he also instructed in photography. In 1848 he was named director of the Administration des Cultes, which reported to the Ministry of Public Instruction. As a member of the Cultes he was also a member of the Commission of Historic Monuments. Count Léon de Laborde, also a founding member of the Société, served variously as curator at the Louvre, director of the National Archives, and he worked for the Commission of Historic Monuments. He studied photography under Gustave Le Gray together with his two nephews, Benjamin and Edouard Delessert, who accompanied de Saulcy on his first voyage to the Middle East in 1851.

7. This first and most ambitious of photographic documentation projects engaged five photographers—Hippolyte Bayard, Henri Le Secq, Edouard-Denis Baldus, O. Mestral, and Gustave Le Gray—to photograph those sites and works of architecture designated by Viollet-le-Duc and the Commission; 120 sites throughout France were photographed.

the great period of taxonomies, inventories, and physiologies, and photography was understood to be the agent par excellence for listing, as it were, the things of the world. Like physiology in its sociological application (no fewer than 200 books appeared between 1839 and 1860 bearing the word *physiologie* in the title, encompassing everything from Brillat-Savarin's *Physiologie du Gout* to Ernest Lacan's *Physiologie du Photographe*) or, for that matter, phrenology, photography was a method of comprehending the world in terms of its exterior appearance. Photography itself was the technical analogue to the absolute belief in the legibility of appearances, a belief whose philosophical expression was, of course, positivism and whose artistic expression was realism and naturalism.

But this belief in the definitive truth of the photograph is a curious phenomenon. That the photograph of the 1850s did not produce color or clouds or anything moving, that the world it depicted was largely vacant, was very quickly taken for granted and such deficiencies discussed almost exclusively in the context of the critical debate that focused on photography versus painting. Even with respect to architectural views, the photographer could not generally do interiors and could take only those views possible with a large camera mounted on a tripod. Nonetheless, the prevalent belief that photographic documentation constituted an unassailable and objective truth was largely unchallenged throughout the century. It was, in fact, the very quality of unmediated verisimilitude that was perceived as its greatest weakness as an art form. Thus, when Salzmann wrote in his text that "the photographs are not narratives [*récits*], but facts endowed with a conclusive brutality," he was describing the attributes that photographs were thought to have rather than the particular quality of his own work, which, in its abstraction and suppression of documentary information, appears to contradict Salzmann's stated goals.

*

"Anybody," wrote Walter Benjamin, "will be able to observe how much more easily a painting, and above all sculpture or architecture can be grasped in photographs than in reality."⁸ This realization was fully formed by the early 1850s and many of the best photographers of the period—including the artist-photographers—photographed works of art with the same assiduity and commitment as they brought to their own work. Charles Marville was for many years the official photographer of the *Musées Nationaux*, in which capacity much of his photographic work was what we would call copy-stand work. The copying of paintings, engravings, and sculpture was viewed as a serious photographic enterprise in its own right.⁹ Benjamin further pointed out:

8. Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," trans. Phil Patton, *Artforum*, vol. XV, no. 6 (February 1977), 50.

9. In the exhibitions at the *Société Française* and the *Expositions Universelles*, reproductions of

At about the same time as the formation of the technology for reproduction the conception of great works was changing. One can no longer view them as the productions of individuals: they have become collective images, so powerful that capacity to assimilate them is related to the condition of reducing them in size. In the final effect, the mechanical methods of reproduction are a technology of miniaturization and help man to a degree of mastery over the works without which they are no longer useful.¹⁰

It is revealing to contrast Benjamin's retrospective account of the implications of a technique for miniaturization with a contemporary one. Addressing Napoleon III and his court in 1862, Viollet-le-Duc, in rhetoric that recalls nothing so much as M. Homais at the Agricultural Fair, stated:

In France perhaps no other government has shown a greater interest in the arts than that of the present. Within the space of a dozen years more buildings have been constructed than since the time of Louis XIV. Painting has been able to create one of the greatest chapters in history; sculpture has become exalted; our museums have been further enriched; our libraries made still more vast and capable of receiving the ever-increasing number of uses. The discoveries of exploratory expeditions have thus been passed on to artists and scholars immediately. And to add to our good fortune, photography has placed in our hands the masterworks of all periods and all cultures, just as the great exhibitions of London and Paris have brought to light a vast quantity of art normally hidden in private collections. . . . [Further] the railroad has allowed us to see more monuments in a week than it would have been possible to visit in a month.¹¹

That Viollet-le-Duc, connected through the Monuments Historiques with some of the most gifted photographers of the period, should have uniquely stressed the ability of photography to place "in our hands the masterworks of all periods and all cultures" is indicative of the awareness that photography, like the expeditions and the railroads, was an agent of cultural transmission. Thinking along similar lines, the art and photography critic Francis Wey had proposed in 1851 that the Louvre consecrate a gallery to photographs of important paintings by French artists not represented in French museums. Thus, Malraux's Imaginary Museum was presaged a century earlier; in both cases the governing impulse

works of art were shown side by side with art photographs and *essais* in photo-mechanical reproduction. Le Secq, the Bisson Frères, Salzmann in Camiros, among many others, produced significant amounts of copy work.

10. Benjamin, p. 50.

11. Cited in *The Second Empire*, p. 254.

effects a standardization; all works of art, monuments, sites, and objects are ultimately reduced to the status of image.

Benjamin's use of the verb *grasping* is also suggestive. As has been pointed out often enough, the camera can be used appropriatively, and Salzmänn's photographic mission to Jerusalem should be understood within this larger framework. The appropriation of the world by the camera during the Second Empire—a period of expansion and imperialist adventures—was not unremarked at the time. The discourse of Second Empire imperialism was couched in terms either of a *mission civilisatrice* or, most conspicuously in the case of Palestine, of a systematic denial of the existence of native inhabitants.¹² The photographs of the Middle East that appeared in greater and greater numbers from the beginning of the 1850s depicted essentially vacant spaces, empty cities and villages. Although it was the conditions of early photography that determined the human absence, it is reasonable to assume that such photographic documentation, showing so much of the world to be empty, was unconsciously assimilated to the justifications for an expanding empire.

In urging the government to subsidize photographic missions abroad, Francis Wey, again writing in 1851, described them as "conquêtes pacifiques." And in no part of the world were these peaceful conquests made so frequently as in the Middle East. Salzmänn's mission in Jerusalem took place even as the war in the Crimea was being waged, a war which was presented to the French people as being fought to defend the holy places. Between 1850 and 1862, Egypt, Syria, and Palestine received legions of photographers: Du Camp, Frith, Teynard, Banville, Greene, de Clercq, Bedford, Benecke, Maunier, Beato, Trémaux—and these are only the well-known ones. Certainly one of the tributaries to this tide was the contemporary interest in orientalist subjects which had originated in the eighteenth century and peaked with French romanticism. But after the publication of Lerebours's *Excursions Daguerriennes* (engravings made from daguerreotypes which appeared between 1841–1844) it was the wonder and fascination elicited by places and monuments "miniaturized" by the camera which both maintained and contributed to the widespread interest.

Salzmänn was thus not the first and certainly not the last young Frenchman with a camera to fix the ancient stones of Jerusalem with his lens. We assume that de Saulcy's choice of the thirty-year-old Salzmänn was knowledgeable, as it is unlikely he would have requested a photographic documentation of such ambition and personal importance had he not been convinced of Salzmänn's skill. And although Salzmänn was not a member of the Société Française, and may not have even photographed before, the distinction between amateur and professional was not yet strongly drawn. Du Camp, for example, had been taught by Le Gray to take photographs immediately before his voyage and specifically in order to record it. "To learn photography," he wrote, "is no great thing; but to transport the

12. See Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine*, New York, Times Books, 1979.

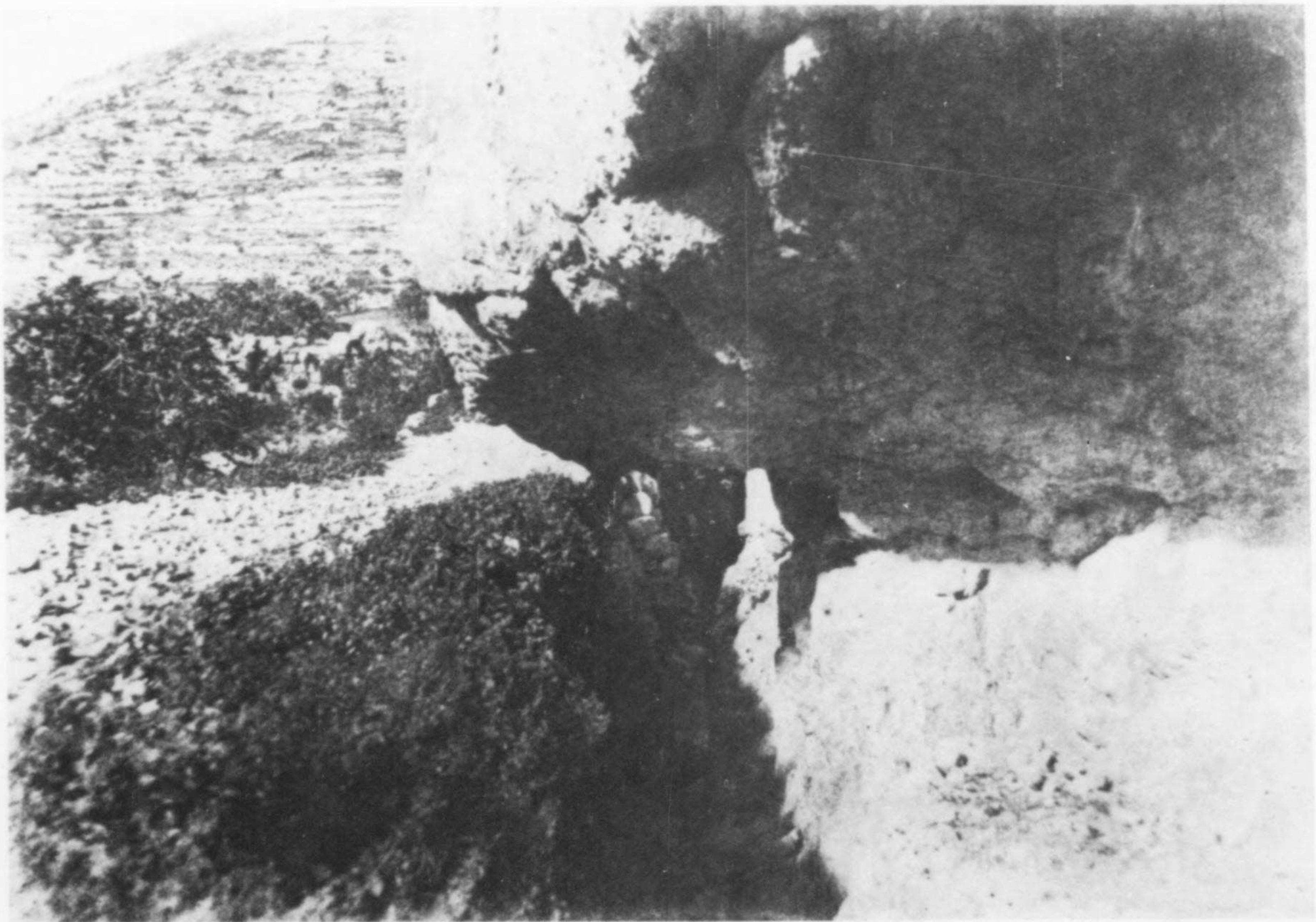
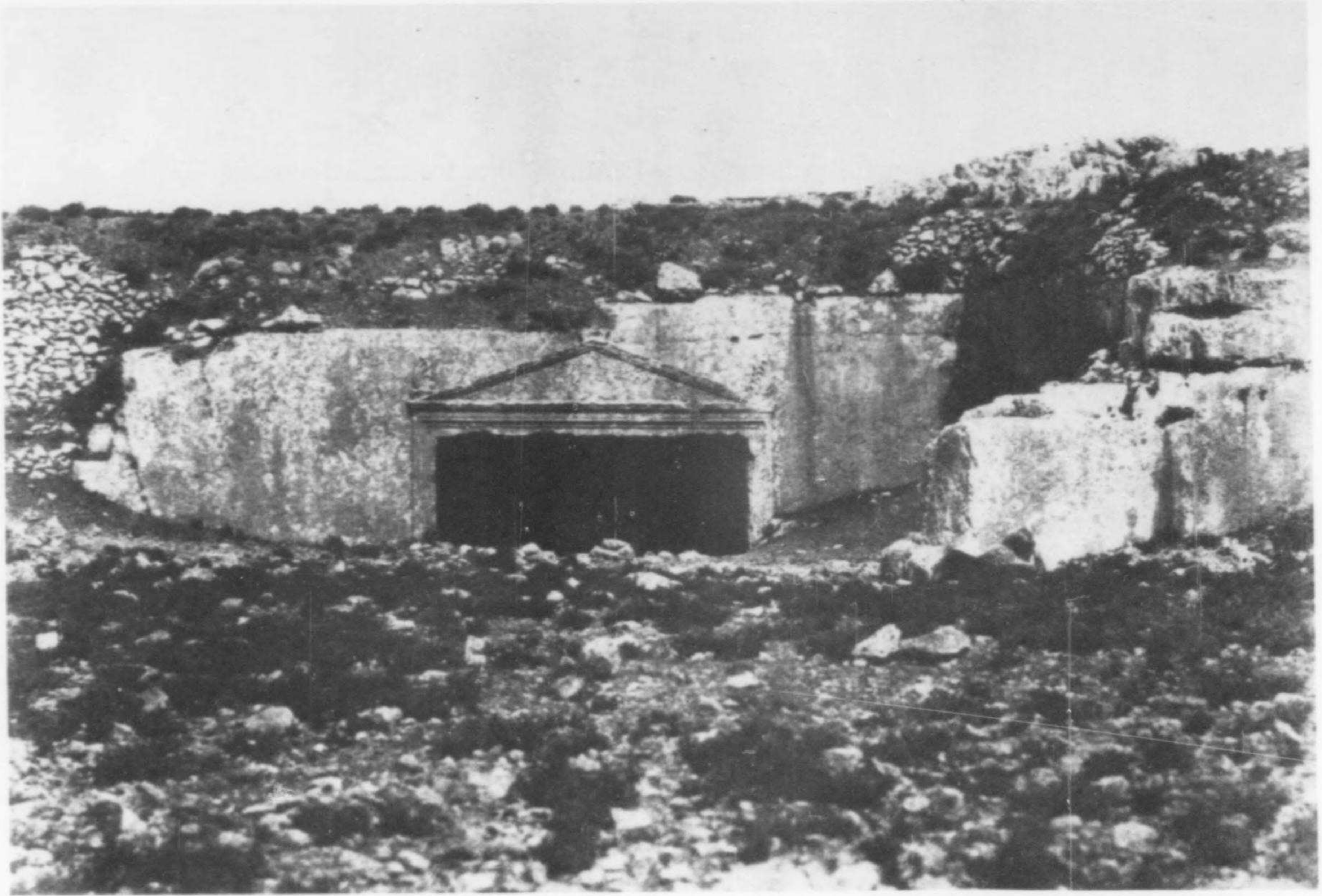
equipment on the back of mules, camels, and man was a difficult problem".¹³ It was probably infinitely more important to De Saulcy, then, that Salzmann had some background in archeology and was sympathetic to his theories.

In January of 1854 Salzmann arrived in Jerusalem after a three-week voyage. The little currently known about these months of photographing derives almost exclusively from de Saulcy's letter in *Le Constitutionnel* and the few hints in Salzmann's text. Neither of these sources provides a key to the images, not the barest allusion to his artistic goals and purposes nor any reference to justify the supposition that he conceived of his photographs in such terms. And yet what has struck almost every contemporary viewer is how utterly different these photographs are from others of the same period, even those using the same process and depicting the same subject. Such a comparison reveals more than the ability of photography to express individual vision. It shows rather the extent to which Salzmann was departing from the customary conventions of photographic composition. That standard practices were derived essentially from rules for the organization of pictorial space in painting was due as much to the number of photographers with training in the traditional fine arts as to the fact that the battle to legitimize photography was waged on painting's terms. Many of the photographic texts and treatises of the period—from Le Gray to Disdéri—specifically instruct the photographer in principles of pictorial composition. Even though photography imposed its own necessities and, implicitly or explicitly, its own topoi, photographers were very much guided by traditional ideas of what constituted good design, balanced composition, and spatial coherence. Most important, however, was legibility, for if this was the intent of mid-nineteenth-century painting, it was especially understood to be the intrinsic merit and excellence of photography. From the most humble to the most self-consciously artistic practitioners, landscape and archeological photographers generally delineated a progression from foreground through middleground to background and framed their images so as to articulate and emphasize the principle subject. In photography of specifically documentary intention, as was Salzmann's, these were cardinal virtues.

But the documentary intention of Salzmann's photographs is seemingly denied by the images themselves; the visual information that a photographic record is ideally suited to convey is markedly, almost perversely absent. The ubiquitous standing figure—fellaheen, porter, guide, or companion—who appears in archeological photography to indicate scale is never present in Salzmann. Views are cropped in such a way that the colossal appears diminutive, the small monumental. Landscape either dwarfs the photographed site or is virtually eliminated; the visual signposts one requires to judge scale, terrain, distance, placement, and context are, in short, almost completely suppressed.

What Salzmann has created instead is an abstract vision of textures and

13. Cited in *En Egypte au Temps de Flaubert* (exhibition catalogue), Paris, Kodak-Pathé, n.d.



surfaces in which the ostensible subject is engulfed or submerged, either by a plenitude of overall surface detail or an overwhelming landscape. By frequent use of high horizon lines or the elimination of horizon altogether, the image is pushed towards the surface plane and all suggestion of spatial depth negated. Often when photographing rock-cut tombs and grottoes, Salzmänn organizes the image around a black void, as in the *Tomb of the Judges*, where the almost startling opacity of the rectangular tomb mouth contrasts with the wide range of tonalities of all the other modulated gray surfaces. The use of shadow in the *Tomb of the Judges*, as in so many of the other photographs, is not so much employed for the articulation and exposition of mass as for purely formal purposes; there is no way to determine whether the tomb entrance is shallow or immeasurably deep—an element of archeological information that could have been given if Salzmänn had chosen. Beyond the emphatic blackness of these various portals and tombs, the eye cannot follow and is refused entrance into the image in which they are both compositional center and optical barrier. Salzmänn's placement of the camera is often selected because it draws areas that are at different distances from his lens into a contrived and planar unity; in the *Tomb of the Judges*, the rock outcropping at the right optically leads into the tomb face which is then linked to the stones of the hillside. As is typical with Salzmänn's work, the tomb itself might be five feet high, or fifteen; no way of gauging it is provided.

In the view of the *Village of Siloam*, the piling up of surfaces and texture militates against any reading of depth. What is stressed is the different qualities of stone, finished or rough, bricklike or massive, pebbly or smooth. In photographs such as *The Pool of Siloam*, *Canal Cut in the Rock*, Salzmänn's inventive and sophisticated use of shadow is particularly evident. Here the space is dramatically simplified through the use of contrasting light and shadow areas almost to divide the image into quadrants. It is, at the same time, almost impossible to derive any information about the canal which is the ostensible subject of the photograph—where it goes, how it has been cut, even exactly where it is. Possibly Salzmänn was caught up with what he could do with the camera, how by balancing bleached out lights with various darks he could create formal designs for which no prototype—either in painting or photography—existed.

A comparison between a photograph of the same subject by Salzmänn and Louis de Clercq is useful for what it reveals of Salzmänn's strategies of framing and cropping. De Clercq photographed in Jerusalem five years after Salzmänn and like him produced a single known body of work (the four volumes that comprise *Le Voyage en Orient*, 222 photographs altogether). De Clercq's photographs were printed on albumin paper and Salzmänn's on salt paper, but both employed paper negatives and comparable cameras. The subject is the Gate of Damascus (Bab-el-Ahmoud). Where de Clercq has chosen a frontal view of the structure and constructed a carefully composed progression from foreground to middleground to the architecture, Salzmänn, quite typically, has chosen an oblique view. By framing the gate more tightly, he eliminated both the view of the city that lies



*Louis de Clercq. Gate of Damascus, 1858-59. (left).
 Auguste Salzmänn. Gate of Damascus, 1854. (right).
 (Both photographs courtesy the Gilman Paper
 Company Collection).*

behind it, which is indicated in the de Clercq by the minarets on the left and the domes on the right. Salzmänn depicts the portal itself as another of his black voids while de Clercq is concerned to show that it is recessed and several feet deep. Salzmänn swathes the right slope of the stony ground in shadow, which also shrouds the side of the right flank of the gate. In employing more extreme contrasts of light and shadow, texture is almost bleached out on the left and strongly emphasized in the central pathway to the door. Unlike de Clercq, it is the surface texture and expressive possibilities of intense light and shadow to which Salzmänn seems drawn. De Clercq uses shadow principally for information; thus the pool of shadow in front of the main gate signifies a hollow; at the same time that it strengthens the composition it provides information.

We do not know what Salzmänn's public or the Ministry of Public Instruction thought about his *Jérusalem*. Critical response to his panorama exhibited at the Exposition Universelle and a series of Jerusalem photographs exhibited the following year in Brussels was positive but the qualities on which the critics



elaborated pertained to their truth, their verisimilitude, their attention to detail. Evidently the photographs were understood by De Saulcy, by the Ministry, and by the critics as having accomplished their documentary purpose. As is clear from his letter in *Le Constitutionnel*, De Saulcy considered his theories vindicated by the images, although in fact his dating has never been accepted, having been, as his critics charged, totally inaccurate.

What finally are we to make of a work such as Salzmann's? In what terms should we discuss it and how is it to be evaluated and understood, both with relation to photographic production of his contemporaries and its meaning for us now?

The weight of the evidence is that, irrespective of how the photographs appear to us now, Salzmann was not intentionally working in an art tradition. Unlike many of his contemporaries who were, he did not even sign his negatives. That his photographs appeared under the title *Study and Photographic Reproduction of the Holy City* explicitly refers to a documentary impulse. And it cannot be overemphasized that in the mid-nineteenth century photographs were seen as

and understood to be factual documents, a far stronger determinant of their reception than what individual photographs may have looked like. In view, then, of what is known about both photographic practice and theory in the early years of the Second Empire, and the very little currently known about Salzmänn and his mission, it is unwarranted to project onto these photographs a concept of artistic intentionality for which there is no evidence.

Although Salzmänn was never entirely forgotten—he is discussed, for example in Raymond Lecuyer's classic *Histoire de la Photographie* of 1945—the beginning of his prominence as one of the most highly esteemed of the French primitive photographers begins with the publication of an article on *Jérusalem* by André Jammes in 1965. Jammes, a scholarly collector and connoisseur, was careful to point out that for Salzmänn the central concern was whether the stones and structures he was photographing were Jewish, Roman, or Christian. In the time that has elapsed since the appearance of Jammes's article, however, the general apprehension of photography has undergone a considerable shift, clearly evidenced in the way early photography is now viewed. So powerful has been the impulse towards reification of the photographic image that the overriding tendency is to assess the photographs of the past in the terms of the present.

The art history of photography now being created (and I refer here to recent exhibitions, catalogues, and exhibition reviews as much as texts) is an endeavor which depletes the photographs of their original meaning and fills them with a new one. This new meaning—aesthetic—involves a double distortion. Proposing an art history of photography, in which photography is understood as a history of style, supposes that one can make a distillation of the cultural solution from which the image will precipitate out. Because the history of photography is integrally bound up with numerous discourses—those of science, of geographic expansion and imperialism, of reproduction, of architecture, of archeology, and so forth, the extraction of art ends finally with the suppression of all the others. The discourse of art as it intersected with photography was only one of many, but to an ever increasing extent it is being treated as though it were the only one.

As serious inquiry into the effects of a global environment of photographic imagery has only recently begun, it augers ill that photography's intersection with other discourses is already being written out of the picture. Further, the imposition of an art history of photography creates fanciful misreadings; a tendency, for example, to confer on mid-nineteenth-century photographers the status of modernist artists *avant la lettre*, which distorts in fundamental ways the context in which their work was produced. While modernist art in France occupied a cultural adversary position, photography, then as now, was everything and everywhere. The smiling communards who posed for the camera would shortly thereafter be executed when the photograph was in other hands.

Although the impulse to view Salzmänn (or Greene, or Charney, or Teynard . . .) as an artist-photographer seems justified by the beauty of the photographs, this titular elevation is an ahistorical projection of contemporary attitudes

and assumptions about photography that inevitably has more to do with the imperatives of the current market boom than with the goals and values that informed his work. To liberate Salzmänn from history in order to retrieve him for art is to suppress the circumstances and conditions that made Salzmänn's work possible. A single plate from *Jérusalem*, removed from the folio volumes where it was intended to be seen as an ensemble, remains a fragment of what should be preserved as an autonomous whole. In the great rush to discover the art of photography's past, we run the risk of destroying its history.

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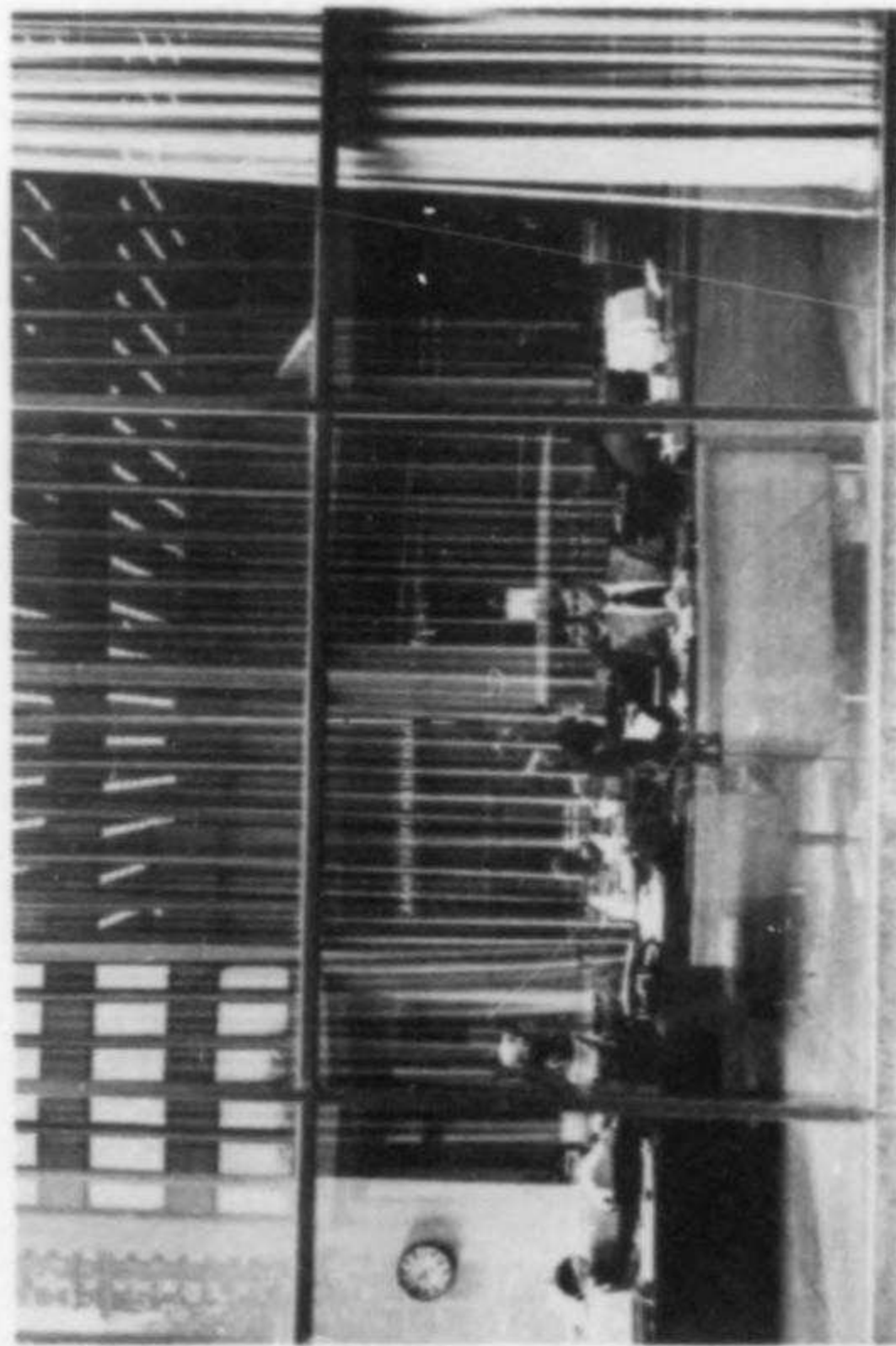
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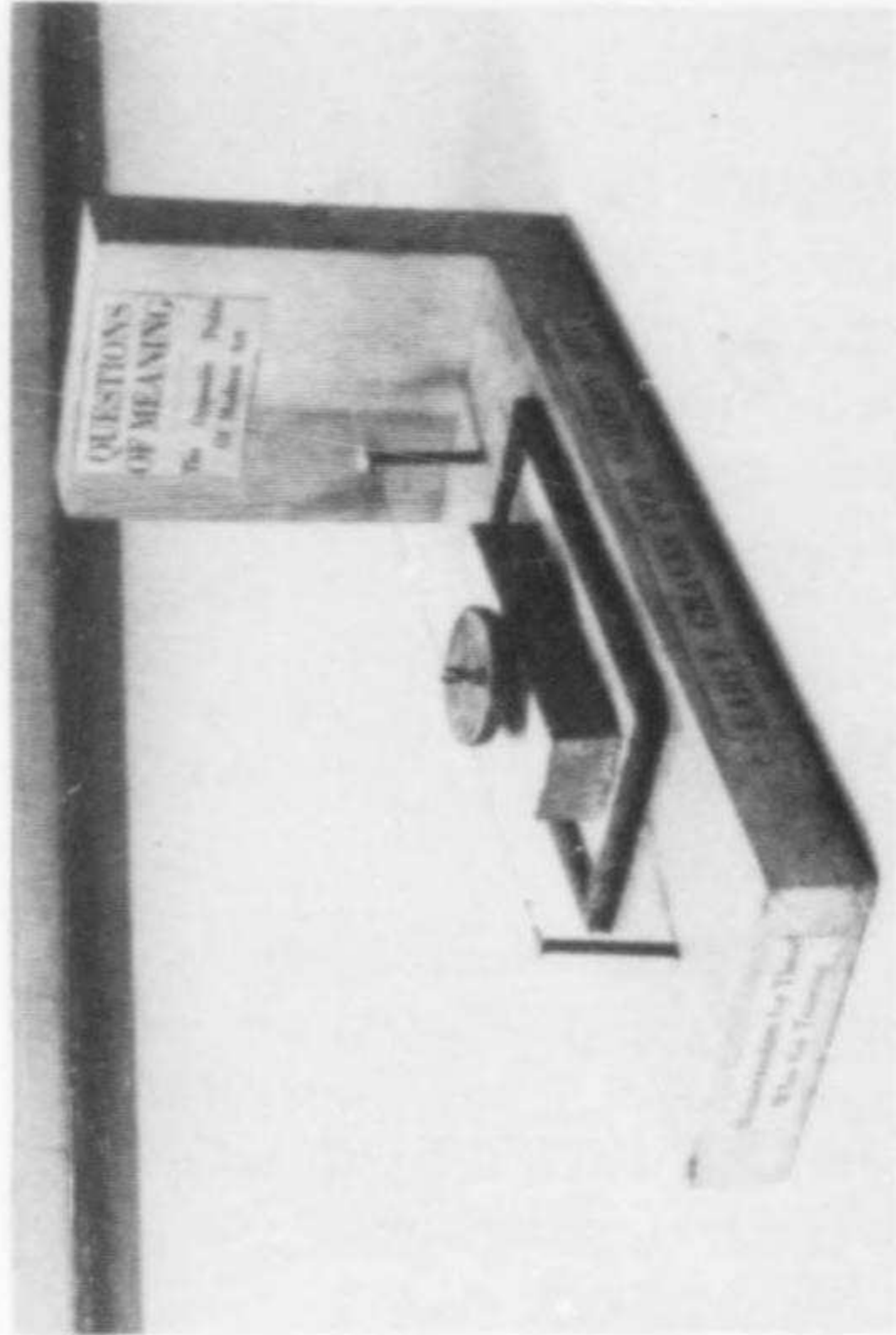
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