Art | Theory | Criticism | Politics

OCTOBER

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High / Low
A Special Issue

Molly Nesbit — *The Rat's Ass*

David James — *The Unsecret Life: A Warhol Advertisement*

Annette Michelson — *"Where Is Your Rupture?": Mass Culture and the Gesamtkunstwerk*

Hal Foster — *Armor Fou*

Benjamin H. D. Buchloh — *From Detail to Fragment: Décollage Affichiste*

Rosalind Krauss — *"Nostalgie de la Boue"*

Jonathan Crary — *Capital Effects*

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Cover Photo: Window display,
Bonwit Teller, New York. 1961.

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Introduction

The title of this special issue, *High/Low: Art and Mass Culture*, stands in a kind of syncopated relationship to that of the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition title, "High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture," the one repeating the other and at the same time diverging from it. But then, this condition between the two of being somewhat "off-register" is meant, indeed, to indicate both the proximity of our discussion to the museum's own project as well as an intended disconnection from it.

In order to clarify the ambivalence of this position, I thought I might describe how the issue itself came about. Shortly after the Museum of Modern Art announced "High and Low" as a future exhibition project, Norman Bryson suggested to a group of *October* editors and writers that some kind of alternative manifestation seemed to be called for. This was apparent to all of us in part due to the tremendous sense of frustration generated by the museum's 1984 "'Primitivism'" exhibition and the general need, felt at that time, to reexamine in a public manner the kind of interpretation generated by the museum, of modern, Western art's relation to colonized cultures. We were not clear at first what form this alternative project might take and therefore discussed various options, including an exhibition of our own organized along entirely different lines.

It might be hard to imagine how, given the fact that the museum was just in the process of formulating its own exhibition and that we had no access to its plans, we could project these "different lines" with any kind of clarity or certainty. And of course, given our lack of access we could not make such a projection and be sure of its accuracy. But based on the "'Primitivism'" exhibition and on what we knew was the list of contributors to the second volume of the "High and Low" catalogue, we thought we could make a few predictions. It was our assumption that the way the museum's exhibition would plot the relationship between what it was calling high art and what—through its term "low"—it was designating as popular culture would be through what could be termed the "sublimation model." According to this model, the function of art is to sublimate or transform experience, raising it from ordinary to extraordinary, from com-

monplace to unique, from low to high; with the special genius of the artist being that he or she has the gifts to perform this function. In this sense, "low" forms of visual representation—graffiti, comic books, advertisements, etc.—constitute a subset of sources on which the artist draws, transforming these sources into the entirely separate set of concerns that structure the aesthetic domain, reconfiguring the material according to the needs, for example, of formal unity, or of style, or of aesthetic detachment. The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition would, we predicted, present the fruits of what would undoubtedly be impressive research into the specific mass-cultural sources for a wide range of twentieth-century art practice, ranging from cubist collage through pop art and beyond. It would work to demonstrate how the sources were then transformed, assuming—as the logic of the sublimation model requires—that such transformation was the product of individual artistic intention. In this, the sublimation model would, of course, be seen to be, for the most part, synonymous with the major model for art-historical research in general.

Now, whether we were right or not about the degree to which, or even if, the museum would employ the sublimation model in the organization of its exhibition, we were concerned with other ways of modeling the relationship between high art and mass culture, ways which differ from and oppose the sublimation model in questioning whether mass-cultural material constitutes a set of "sources" comparable to the resources on which artists have traditionally drawn (such as emblem books, religious texts, other works of art, and so forth). That is, the question for these other analyses is whether mass culture itself is not an historically specific phenomenon that cannot be assimilated into the art-historical model without overlooking the consequences of this historical specificity. The work of the Frankfurt School (Theodor Adorno) and of Walter Benjamin was consecrated to rethinking culture through the lens of mass culture, a lens whose historical and material consequences must, they argued, transform the very definition of art. Some, although by no means all, of the other models that have arisen as a consequence of such arguments could include: the simulation model (Jean Baudrillard), the desublimatory model (Roland Barthes), the cultural-political model (the Birmingham School), and the reappropriation model (Michel de Certeau). And it was these other models that, in our projections for our alternative exhibition, we tried to imagine being put to work.

Due to the limitations of time, energy, money, and perhaps will, we abandoned our notion of an exhibition and entered instead into the more modest undertaking of a symposium and special issue. But, as a continuation of our initial impulses, we were interested in projecting the subject through the perspective of the other models, and not, that is, mounting what would merely be a reactive critique to what the museum might or might not have done.

It is in this sense that our position is both proximate to and distant from the museum's own project. For by way of offering a critique of that project, we were intent on demonstrating alternatives to the way the sublimation model poses the

problem, and, hence, our distance. Yet, in retaining the notion of an interface between art and mass culture as the issue in question, and thus in not completely dissolving the category of art altogether, we were staying with the problem broached by the announced subject of the museum; and hence our proximity. But on the matter of this proximity, it was our feeling that to abandon entirely the consideration of the interface between the two spaces, the one inside what we could call the art world, and the other outside it, to abandon this entirely in the interests of a discussion in which the field of popular culture is projected as the only proper site of avant-garde activity or of resistance, would be to depart so entirely from the issues opened by the museum's exhibition as simply to constitute a refusal to engage them.

Having thus put ourselves in the peculiar position of engaging and not engaging the problematic of "high and low," we decided to invite a group of writers to present independently undertaken work, the theoretical underpinnings of which would arise from alternative models for thinking the interface between art and mass culture. The results of this constituted the core of the symposium held at the Dia Center for the Arts on November 3, 1990, and, here in expanded form, this issue.

ROSALIND KRAUSS

Les Sourires qui nous restent!

Photo Talbot

M^lle MISTINGUETT
des Variétés

Comœdia Illustré, Paris

"Les Sourires qui nous restent! Mlle Mistinguett des Variétés." Comoedia Illustré, *December 15, 1911.*

The Rat's Ass

MOLLY NESBIT

So many florins, so many rats.

—Sigmund Freud, "Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis"

On the burnished silver doorknocker soiled by time, soiled by time's dust, some kind of chiseled Buddha, long of forehead, ears dangling, with the allure of a sailor or a gorilla: it was Fantomas. He pulled on two ropes to bring down who knows what. His foot slipped, his life hung in the balance; he has to reach the alarm, the rubber apple, before the rat can bore into it. Now all this was only silver chiseled to make a doorknocker.

—Max Jacob, "Fantomas," *Les Veillées du 'Lapin Agile'*

The scene opens in the Salon Carré. The usual crowd is there, gathered in conversation like horseflies in summertime. The *Mona Lisa*, or as the French liked to call her, *La Joconde*, has attracted them. The dogs have not yet come.

Adolphe, don't put your finger in your nose. You are in the presence of *La Joconde.*
Look, Totor, how much She resembles Eugénie.
I tell you it's the portrait of an actress. Then you haven't seen her name: *Mona Lisa.* Even though she played *The Mad Virgin* at the Gymnase.
What a swell frame!
Old chap, it's the darling. Don't you see her smiling at you?
Kolossal, Kolossal, sehr natürlich.
Admire, my children. This is a painting worth five hundred million.
And *Le Jocond*, where is he?
I'll stand you to a pint if that there woman has ever smiled.[1]

1. Le Penseur Inconnu, "Jocondiana," *Fantasio* (September 1, 1911), p. 75.

In fact, this was all in the mind of a journalist searching to recall the happier days.

*

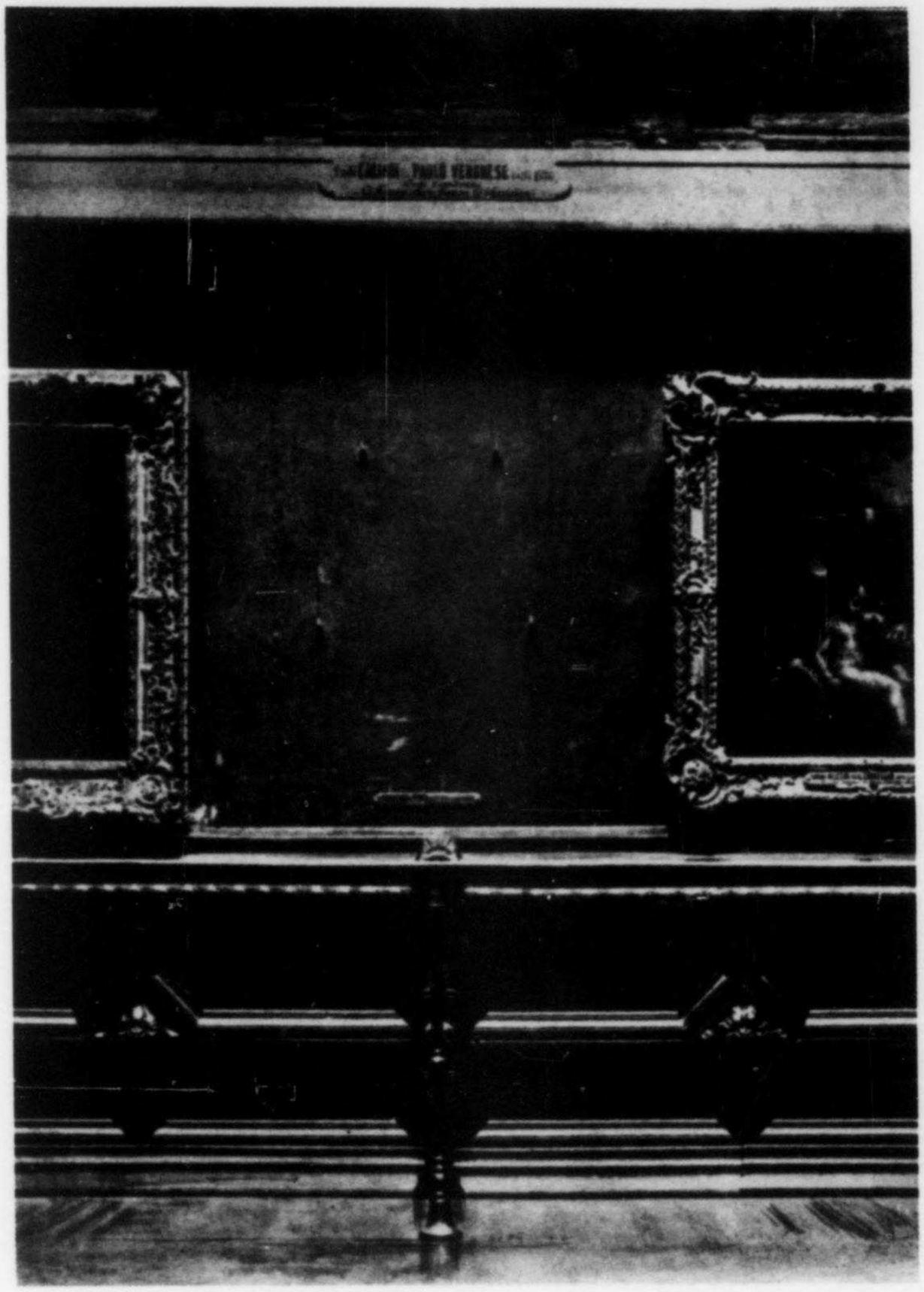
History has teeth. History tells us that high and low are adjectives expressing an unevenness. It also tells us that the unevenness is a multiplicity and that modernity obeys no single order, no single standard of measurement. Instead, at least two, best to call them patterns, have in their different ways governed the circulation of modern images in public. The first contained the remnants of early modern state culture, which had for a long time been presented through the genre of history painting, a painting that depended upon the play between civic virtue and classical beauty—what were thought to be antique ideals. By the twentieth century, state cultures put those ideals forward to serve both a fixed idea of the nation and a fixed relation between the classes; increasingly state cultures streamlined themselves, coalescing around a vertical ideal based on race. The other pattern, the pattern of capital, did not develop a rhetoric around ideals. Rather, it replaced the ideal with desire and spread out horizontally. Its business was done restlessly in a dynamic of bluster; it sought to produce new desires as often as possible, desires for physical comfort mainly—in a word, for pleasure: for anything from a cool breeze to perfect love.

In the twentieth century it has fallen to the advertisement to consolidate this rhetoric. The ad has risen to the level of category; it is no doubt one of the best we have with which to think culture. But it does not stand alone. The patterns of state and capital always coexist and cross. Let us take them not as monolithic designs, or theoretical rules, but as related unfoldings of power.[2] Power that is understood locally, as regionally various, full of difference, particular and general. Modernity was worked out at *many* levels. History can grasp them.

It is therefore impossible to speak of culture as simply high or low.[3] I shall not even try. Instead, let me tell a short but exemplary story, broken into parts. It begins with the *Mona Lisa* crossing over from one pattern into the other. One fine day, August 22, 1911, the *Mona Lisa* was stolen from the Louvre. They combed the national museum; they searched high . . . and . . . low. Dogs were brought in but to no avail. She was in neither place. She was loose. The theft made it possible for everyone to see that immortality did not hold an image still, any more than it could spare an image from modernity. And yet when the *Mona Lisa* fell into the hands of a robber, she did not fall in any other sense. She

2. In other words, to rise to the challenge to think through the thousand plateaux. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987).

3. Bourgeoisie and proletariat, or aesthetic and practical, or masculine and feminine would of course be possible, but the organizers of the MOMA exhibition shy away from adult abstractions.



Emplacement qu'occupait La Joconde *dans le Salon Carré du Louvre.* L'Illustration, *September 2, 1911.*

showed that she was alive, a rhizome, a hello. By 1914 she would go under several names. Brot. Zig-zag. Cubiste.

The robber, an Italian worker, came to call himself Leonardo Vincenzo. Later he would explain:

> One morning I reported for work with my decorator friends who were still working at the Louvre and I quite calmly exchanged a few words with them. I profited from a moment of distraction to move away, and I entered the room where *La Joconde* was to be found. The room was deserted and *La Joconde* smiled at me. Henceforth I was clear in my decision to steal her. In the twinkling of an eye I took the picture off the wall. I took off the frame and went underneath a staircase I knew and left the frame there. I repeat, it only took me an instant to execute my robbery. Several minutes later I returned to *La Joconde*'s room. I took the painting then and hid it under my smock. Then I went off without awakening the slightest suspicion. In effect, no one saw me. No one ever suspected me. No one ever thought of the

simplest of hypotheses, of the one where the theft could have been committed by a poor devil like me, who certainly wanted to profit from it, but was however possessed by a very great respect for the immortal work. I kept the canvas for two and a half years in my home, like a sacred thing. I didn't dare draw it from its hiding place, fearing constantly that I might be arrested.[4]

The paintings in the Louvre had been placed under glass in 1910 as a preventive measure against the acid and knife of lunatics, anarchists, and feminists. The second Leonardo had been involved with this procedure. The second Leonardo was a glazier, one of the team that had slipped the glass into the *Mona Lisa*'s frame. Oddly he had not been a suspect in the case. Even more strange, he had been difficult to track, though in the heat of the theft he left a glaring thumbprint on the glass. For more than two years the police followed other leads. Tips poured in.

Géry Piéret was a light-fingered man who had worked for a while as Apollinaire's secretary and for a time had rather compulsively lifted objects from the Louvre, objects like the Iberian sculptures which so impressed Picasso that he bought them. Early in September Géry Piéret went clandestinely to the offices of *Paris Journal*, showed them examples of his booty, and told them all about the lax museum security. The paper paid him well for his story. The police made the paper reveal its source. But by then the clever Piéret had skipped town. Meanwhile both Apollinaire and Picasso had become terrified of being implicated somehow. One famous night they sought to dispose of the Iberian objects in the Seine, then lost their nerve. The police came looking for Apollinaire. He was brought in for questioning, spent five days in prison, and went before a judge; Picasso, when interrogated, denied ever having known him; Apollinaire secured his own release. The trail to the thief again grew cold.[5] But not before the *Mona Lisa* had acquired a little cubist shine. Her theft reveals something about the way modern cultural hierarchies were operating. The avant-garde was not necessarily resisting. Categories of ideality were not operating. Immortality was material and mortal. It seems that everyone thought of the *Mona Lisa* first and foremost as a *she*. And that the second Leonardo was regarded her lover. Jaurès said so in the Chamber of Deputies.[6] This attitude toward the masterpiece was not a class attitude; it was the dominant attitude, and one with a respectable pedigree at

4. The alias appeared on notes he wrote contacting art dealers. His real name was Vincenzo Peruggia. Cited by Jérôme Coignard, *On a volé la Joconde* (Paris: Biro, 1990), pp. 108–9, quoting *Le Gaulois* (December 14, 1913).

5. Coignard's book is the indispensable and amusing account of the events. See also Roy McMullen, *Mona Lisa: the Picture and the Myth* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975) and Mary Rose Storey, *Mona Lisas*, introduction by David Bourdon (New York: Abrams, 1980).

6. Said Jaurès: "C'est un amoureux qui l'a volée, il la rendra." From the session meeting on December 6, 1911, quoted by Coignard, *On a volé*, p. 90.

that. The second Leonardo, without knowing it, was of the same mind as Walter Pater.

Pater wrote about the first Leonardo some forty years earlier that he could paint faces "embodied with a reality which almost amounts to illusion, on the dark air."[7] The *Mona Lisa* did not smile so simply at him. The image contained too much for its own means; it held too much life: "Perhaps of all ancient pictures time has chilled it the least."[8] He imagined the *Mona Lisa* to have had many lives:

> She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants: and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern philosophy has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.[9]

Immortality was live.

Pater's argument struck Freud as a good one. He especially liked the way in which Pater detached the smile and already saw it incorporeally lodged in Leonardo's brain. In 1910 Freud would move the idea toward the concept of narcissism when writing his book on Leonardo, and he would identify the smile as Leonardo's mother's smile, the smile that had loved him and wounded him, the smile that ruined him for all other women. For Freud the smile told of the painter's infantile sexuality; for him the vampire was mother. What was a sign of human excess in the painting for Pater was for Freud the sign that spoke of lack, of the day the little boy saw what he thought was a wound.[10]

Next year the second Leonardo became a Pater. And a Sarrasine, for he

7. Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, ed. Donald L. Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 87. First published as an essay in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1869. The book was first published in 1873.
8. Ibid., p. 97.
9. Ibid., p. 99. David Freedberg's book, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) is completely relevant here and equally necessary to any theoretical discussion of the mass media in our century.
10. Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, trans. Alan Tyson (New York: Norton, 1964), pp. 60–61.

Le Ministère des Joconds

C'est le grand argument des nouveaux ministres : « Nous avons le sourire, nous l'avons tous, grands et petits, maigres et gros; nous sommes pleins de cordialité, nous ne prenons rien au tragique, nous sommes de bons enfants prêts à faire toutes les concessions que l'on voudra, du moment qu'on nous laissera vivre et profiter de nos portefeuilles. A quoi bon s'indigner contre nous? Nous sommes des ministres souriants. »

Jocond Ier dit Doumergue

Et les foules se sont laissées prendre à cet argument. Dans les cinémas comme dans les interviews nos Excellences sourient, même M. Caillaux qui doit se forcer pour sourire. Aussi le souvenir de ce grrrand ministère ne peut pas être mieux interprété que par l'image de celle qui les symbolise si bien, et qu'une ironique bonne fortune a justement mêlée, de façon inattendue, à leurs débuts dans l'Histoire de France.

Jocond II, dit Monis.

Jocond III, dit Caillaux.

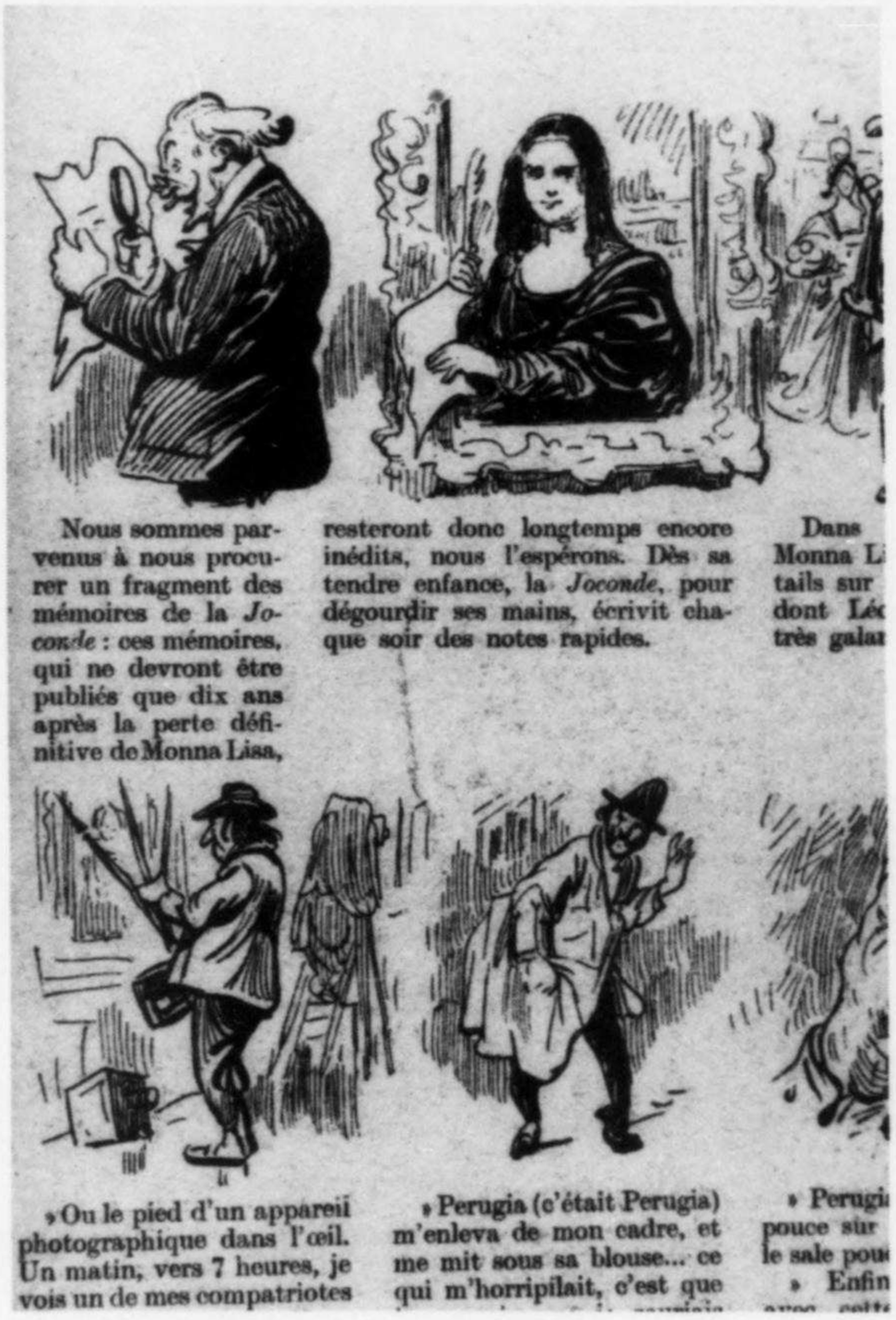
Clichés du Ministère des Beaux-Arts.

kidnapped the woman who smiled so well. The distinctions between the second Leonardo and the others are not critical, however; all of them find themselves characters in the same romantic plot. Many would embroider that plot. In 1914 a cartoonist explained that the *Mona Lisa* had been writing her memoirs for ages and that she would say about her kidnapping: "My thief was not a bad man. Once home he placed me on his bed and sang, accompanying himself on the mandolin: *Santa Luccia! Santa Luccia!* Then he drank down a bottle of chianti and ate. What will he do with me? I asked myself. . . . Cut me into pieces? No. . . . Into the box, into the box he cried . . . must take precautions, for *la Donna è mobile.*"[11] However, within a week of her capture a letter by her hand had been published

11. *L'Illustration* (January 3, 1914), Henriot cartoon.

"*Le Ministère des Joconds.*" Fantasio, *December 1913.*

Henriot. "La Revue Comique." L'Illustration, *January 3, 1914.*



Nous sommes parvenus à nous procurer un fragment des mémoires de la *Joconde* : ces mémoires, qui ne devront être publiés que dix ans après la perte définitive de Monna Lisa, resteront donc longtemps encore inédits, nous l'espérons. Dès sa tendre enfance, la *Joconde*, pour dégourdir ses mains, écrivit chaque soir des notes rapides.

Dans
Monna L
tails sur
dont Léo
très gala

» Ou le pied d'un appareil photographique dans l'œil. Un matin, vers 7 heures, je vois un de mes compatriotes

» Perugia (c'était Perugia) m'enleva de mon cadre, et me mit sous sa blouse... ce qui m'horripilait, c'est que

» Perugi
pouce sur
le sale pou
» Enfin

by *L'Autorité.* In it she explained that she had, in effect, divorced the museum: by having herself kidnapped she had staved off boredom, escaped both the heat and the low-level remark. She uttered long complaints:

> They've bored me stiff with this "famous smile!"

> In the last few years, the stupid reflections suggested by it have ended up giving me fits; if they had continued one month longer, I would have cracked like a simple Dürer from the museum in Nuremberg.

> You do not know women or you do not know them well. If I smiled with an "enigmatic" air it was certainly not for the ridiculous reasons attributed to me by the gentlemen of the literature. Ah! They could have made sonnets and rondos about my smile! Today they are all set; now they know what it meant.

> This smile marked my lassitude, my scorn for all the skunks who paraded endlessly before me, and my infinite desire to carry out my abduction.
>
> Yes, I smiled at the idea of the good joke I would play on M. Homolle [director of the Louvre] and on you all. I said to myself: what a face those officials will make when tomorrow the news will spread through all of Paris: *La Joconde has spent the night elsewhere!*[12]

Well before the painting itself was recovered, the *Mona Lisa* began to reappear. She came back in countless images, live and still, images that were slightly off, plagued by catachresis, skewed in the details. The image proved mutable. Indeed *she* had no fixed image, no fixed identity, no nostalgia for the vertical hierarchy. Her smile traveled to the faces of men and women, to stage actors, actresses, and politicians. Right away there were male impersonators in the cabarets; at Christmastime, *Comoedia Illustré* gathered together twenty actresses, asked each to pose as the *Mona Lisa*, and titled the collection *Les Sourires*

12. "Lettre Ouverte de la 'Joconde' à M. Dujardin-Beaumetz," *L'Autorité* (August 27, 1911), p. 1.

La Joconde. — Si j'ai quitté le Louvre, c'est qu'il est défendu d'y fumer. Maintenant je peux satisfaire mon désir grâce au papier à cigarettes « ZIG-ZAG ».

qui nous restent; in 1913, after the painting had been returned, *Fantasio* ran a story about the government's joy and the happy ministers, who now "possess the smile" themselves.[13] The heroine's gender had started to flutter and slip; the smile began to multiply and move. Stop the search, one sheet-music company declared: she is now the *Joconda-Valse* on every piano.[14] After four months of bare wall in the Salon Carré, the *Castiglione* was brought in to substitute. Concurrently High Life Tailor ran an ad claiming that the undersecretary of the Beaux-Arts, hoping to avoid public execution and torture, had implored the company to send over a photograph of their suits for the Salon Carré. In effect the company had replaced the masterpiece with an advertisement. This was not, as it happened, simply a theatrical gesture.

It became clear enough to the second Leonardo once he got the picture home that *she* was very much a *thing*. It was equally clear to everyone else that this

13. For the impersonator, see Guillaume Apollinaire, "Le Robinson de la Gare Saint-Lazare par une victime de la 'Joconde,'" *Fantasio* (September 15, 1911), p. 157, with the photograph of Raimu from the revue *Elle l'a le sourire.*

14. *Les Annales politiques et littéraires* (January 21, 1912), p. VIII, shows the advertisement for the *Joconda-Valse* by Gustav'Wagner.

Advertisement for High Life Tailor. Le Monde Illustré, *November 4, 1911.*

Advertisement for Zig-Zag. Pêle-Mêle, *August 18, 1912.*

Advertisement for Clavier Corset. Les Annales politiques et littéraires, *January 14, 1912.*

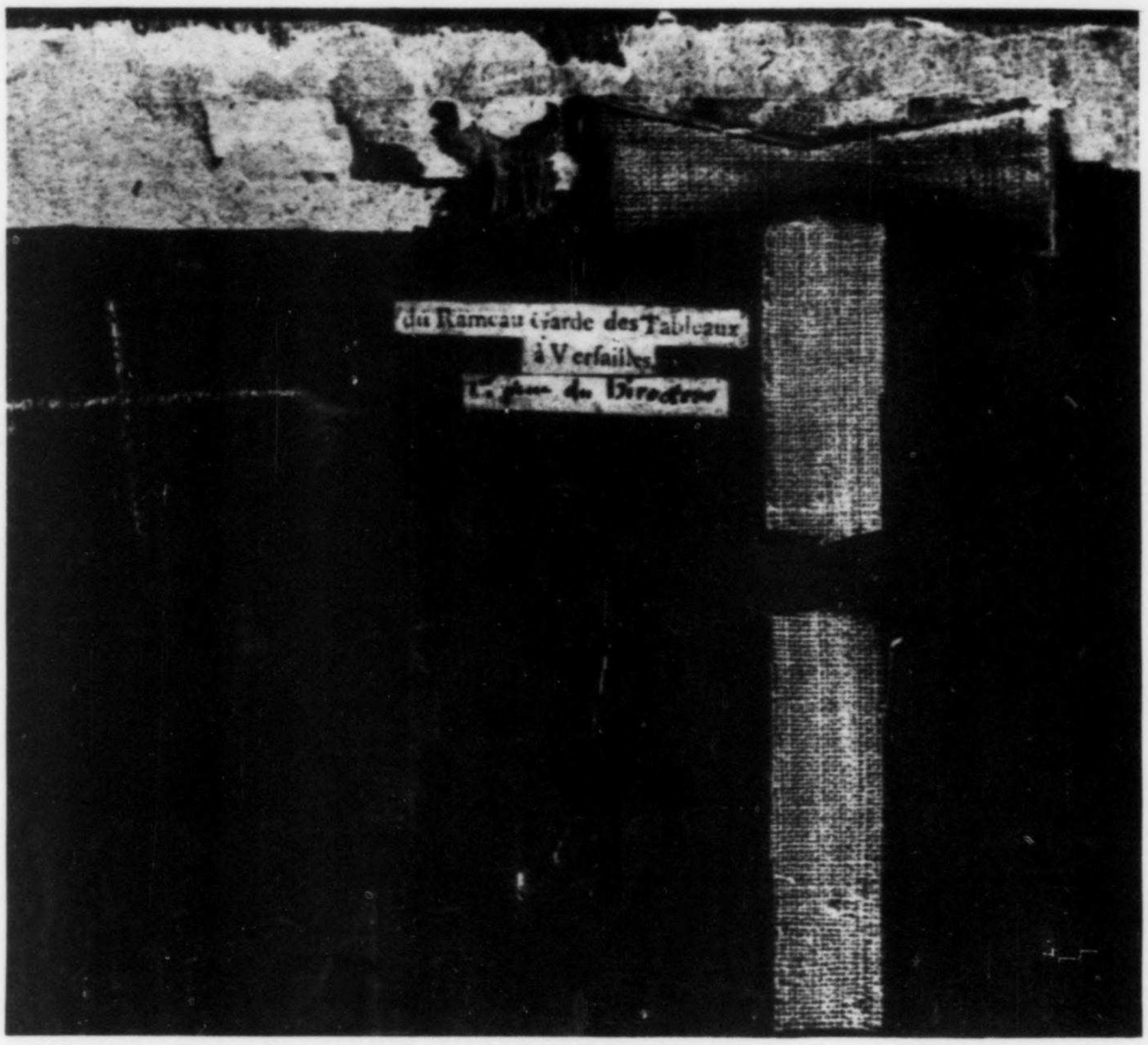
Advertisement for Brot. Femina, *February 15, 1914.*

A. Robida. "Nouvelle école." Almanach Vermont, *February 12, 1913.*

romance was going to be an affair of capital.[15] Once the masterpiece became stolen property, it was magically modernized in yet another way: now unattached property, ready to go, the masterpiece had become a commodity. It could fall prey to the black market. There was worried talk of a clandestine sale to an unscrupulous American, or German. Inevitably, it seemed, the *Mona Lisa* would participate in the circulation of goods and capital. And she did. But like all good

15. J. Paul-Boncour's book of 1912, *Art et démocratie* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1912), pp. 1–2, begins with a She or Thing hypothesis:

> We know that this statue from St. Peter's in Rome, to which the sculptor has given the unforgettable features of Giulia Farnese and laid out nude on a pope's tomb, one day fell victim to a violation: an ardent esthete climbed onto the sarcophagus and clutched the beautiful statue for a long time. If a watchman had not noticed this strange love, the young man would probably still be there in adoration before his marble divinity.
>
> Should this incident—which gives this lurid news item its unmistakably Renaissance aroma—be retained as a contribution to the psychology of the more serious violation that, since last August, we along with all the civilized world have bemoaned; and has the *Joconde* been raped by some unbalanced person, in love to the point of madness with the eyes and mouth which, for four centuries, have dared to offer lovers of art and thought the seductive enigma of their divine perfection? Or, more simply, is some swindler planning a profitable transaction through which, after having returned the original to the Louvre, he will convince some pig dealer from Chicago of the authenticity of one of the numerous old, or supposedly old, copies already in circulation?



L'Illustration, *January 3, 1914.*

commodities, she would not represent herself—instead she would help represent the desire for others. For the commodity needs help, needs other appearances, baffles, disguises. The commodity is Fantomas. The *Mona Lisa* became his beautiful accomplice. She entered the advertisement.

There she began to work within its system, a system that already depended upon brand names. The smile still worked as the identifying sign of the painting; it was still synonymous with *her* name, *Mona Lisa, La Joconde.* But the smile began to work in concert with the brand, or as the French would say, *marque.* In the fall of 1911, Clavier Corset came out with a new model that proposed an undergarment as the *Mona Lisa*, really taking only the name, but attaching it to an unfettered image. This *Mona Lisa* half undressed and promised perfect hips. Zig-Zag dressed the *Mona Lisa* up as a nicotine hound who leaves the Louvre in search of the perfect cigarette, her smile twisted into something of a smirk. One need not multiply examples in order to make the point. The *Mona Lisa* became the perfect figure for consumer desire, and her smile favored all kinds of amusements. Needless to say, it grew less and less trustworthy.

In December 1913, the *Mona Lisa* was found, thanks to the second Leonardo's clumsy attempt to sell the painting to an Italian dealer. The smile was not the means of authentification. Connoisseurs turned instead to a crack in the paint surface, a crack in the head. But identification only became certain when

the painting was turned over and a later repair to the crack was recognized as the one and only sign of Leonardo's work. There was a kind of celebration. The painting toured Italy and France. But afterward the image did not quite return to the wall. The *Mona Lisa* became a costume for a ball and a many-face for a mirror. It was suggested, in jest, that during the tour the original should be replaced by a cubist copy. (Cubist versions had already been imagined.) The play reached new levels. The *Mona Lisa* was an open image, a party image, a narcissus, a pile of lines no longer defined by the smile. Her smile had opened into a series of characters, a series of bodies, a range of desires. The masterpiece is telling us something. It is telling us that capital does not produce clear lines of separation between genders, between stealing and selling, between underwear and reflection, between amusements. It reveals that the image exists by shifting and changing, that it exists as a moving picture. Culture is expressed as a distance traveled, a desire mobilized, and sometimes a path of obsession.

L. H. O. O. Q.

To give a rat's ass, or not give a rat's ass, that is the question. For much has changed. The body has risen up through a letter to the smile, framed again by a beard. The difference now is that this smile opens the Freudian wound. This bearded smile returns us to the Q, which phonetically gives the obscene word for hole: *cul.*

Marcel Duchamp made *L. H. O. O. Q.* in 1919. With that acronym a phonetic sentence emerges and points to the warm seat of the *Mona Lisa*'s desire. *Elle a chaud au cul.* And so the *Mona Lisa* is rebranded by yet another name, another late cubism, another collection of old tropes and wandering lines, another attack on the idea of her desire. The repetitions are no surprise, but here they add up. Duchamp will be literal where Freud is not quite: as *Q* the smile or crack is fully, if unspecifically, genital. No doubt about it.[16] Whose crack, whose amusements does the hairy smile convey: that of the lady? that of Castiglione? that of the castrato? It matters not. The obscenity is more important than the gender here; gender is not important; besides, the smile will move on. Even Duchamp cannot hold it for long. It is extremely significant however that he has made that smile move logically: the obscenity comes forward as part of the logic of the new repetition that began in 1911; obscenity is a rigorous conclusion, not an immoral end. For the *Q* stands for the general obscenity that always dogged the advertisement and the art lover, nipping at their heels and seats. The obsession for something ever more extreme, something beyond the pleasure principle.

16. Duchamp later remarked: "The curious thing about that mustache and goatee is that when you look at it the *Mona Lisa* becomes a man. It is not a woman disguised as a man; it is a real man, that that was my discovery without realizing it at the time." Interview with H. Crehan, quoted in Arturo Schwartz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Abrams, 1969), p. 476–77. See also Theodore Reff, "Duchamp & Leonardo: L. H. O. O. Q.–Alikes," *Art in America* 65 (January 1977), pp. 82–93.

The phonetic sentence has replaced the brand name. The commodity is completely invisible. But by filling out and extending the unstated part of the desire for physical comfort, the *Q* summarizes the direction of capital, strips the signs of capital bare, and gives the brand that is not one. *Cul.* In so doing, the *Q* is being critical, the *Q* cares, the *Q* gives the rat's ass. So did Picabia. He ran a manifesto underneath this smile in 1920 on the pages of *391*. And while forgetting the goatee, he supplemented the image elsewhere: he supplied the missing market. The cubists, he wrote, wanted to drown dada by jerking off on it, and all because the cubists did not want dada to spoil their art market. Art, said Picabia,

Marcel Duchamp, L. H. O. O. Q. *1919.*

is a pharmaceutical for imbeciles, a safe-deposit box, comedy, comedy, comedy. Buy signed reproductions, he advised. Don't be a snob. The cubists want to cube everything, even money. Dadas want nothing, nothing, nothing, and know nothing, nothing, nothing. The dadas, one could add, by wanting nothing are seeing this market as nothing.

L. H. O. O. Q. had turned the advertisement inside-out; of course, it supported the manifesto. Not only had the obsession for the *Mona Lisa* been unmasked, but every bit of the advertisement's rhetoric had been negated or bruised. Ordinarily the advertisement was a machine for making profitable obsessions, rats that would haunt the consumer but finally lead to the cure, leading from thought to action, from thought to sale. The advertisement was intended to cure the very affliction it had provoked. *L. H. O. O. Q.* named the affliction and denied the cure. Duchamp was no Rat Man. Nor was he a Freud. The cure was replaced by a critique. His copy would not let capital flow merrily through it. Capital was clogged, stalled by a competing, raw desire radiating from the *cul*. No product rushed in to relieve the sensation; nothing removed the unwanted hair. The commodity called art was equally powerless. All economies were arrested by the dada. There could be no quick return to orthodoxy. Perhaps it will now be possible to see this temporary pause in the flow of the smile, the desire, the capital, as the result of a political move—a move that deserves our careful consideration, for it provides a critique of capital without any recourse to a concept of class.

In 1936, in the first footnote to "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin used the *Mona Lisa* as the example of an original whose history encompassed her copies.[17] The idea deserves extension. These copies lose connection to the original form, and come to exist not as mechanical replicas but virtually as human agents, embroiled in episodes, attached to all kinds of powers, filled with incalculable *bassesse*. We need to speak to the pattern of capital that keeps the image moving, keeps it alive, and asks it to be human. Signs there have not so much been exchanged as extended. Signs have a time. Their movement exceeds the control of the avant-garde. But if this power cannot be seized, it can still be stopped, caught for a second, bitten, and critiqued.

Fantomas ma Joconde. Hello Smile.

17. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 243.

The Unsecret Life: A Warhol Advertisement

DAVID E. JAMES

Culture . . . amalgamates with advertising.

—Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

As a film historian, not an art historian, I'm stepping a little outside my turf here, particularly since the formulation of the binary division of cultural production I would employ is somewhat different from that (high/low) subtending the MOMA exhibition. My excuse is that my attempt to think through the relation between fine and commercial art, an issue with whose crisis Warhol is preeminently associated, follows from a critical problem presented by his films, namely the relation between the early films—*Sleep*, *Kiss*, *Eat*, and so on—and late ones like *Trash*, *Flesh*, or *Frankenstein*.

On the one hand, the early films are still obdurate in their difficulty and resistance to popular pleasure and, at least in this, more amenable to the "high" than to the "low" pole in schematizations of culture of the kind associated with Theodor Adorno or Clement Greenberg. Quite remarkably, in addition to being dada films that perform the function of the historical avant-garde in resisting the values of museum art, they foreshadow what subsequently emerged as the three exemplary genres of anti-industrial filmmaking: they're virtually structural film, punk film, and diary film, all before these were otherwise invented. As I've argued before,[1] biographical events, including Valerie Solanas's attempt on Warhol's life in 1968 and Paul Morrissey's assumption of control over *Flesh* during his subsequent incapacitation, punctuate the division between these and the later films, which are clearly designed for public consumption and which did achieve a measure of both public success and financial return (though none as great as that of *The Chelsea Girls*).[2] Warhol's own distinction between "the period

1. David E. James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 63.
2. According to Victor Bockris, Warhol made more—$150,000—from *The Chelsea Girls* than

where we made movies just to make them" and a subsequent decision to make "feature length movies that regular theaters would want to show"[3] thus summarizes the difference between the two projects: the shift to increasingly sophisticated technologies; the change from private Factory showings to theatrical exhibition; and the engagement with the grammar of industrial cinema the latter also entailed.

On the other hand, across this break and throughout the oeuvre, there continued Warhol's overriding thematic preoccupations and compositional procedures concerned essentially with the investigation of the nature of subjectivity and self-consciousness in a media-saturated environment. The initial situation of a single individual before a single camera (John Giorno in *Sleep*) was successively restaged in more complex terms and eventually elaborated as the competitive interaction of several people as they negotiate quasi-fictional roles in ersatz versions of industrial film and television.[4] Warhol expanded the frame both of his reference and of his operations from the medium of film to the mass media at large virtually without hesitation and with such inexorable logic that, even if one sets aside the problem of where exactly the crucial rupture might come, to think of the early films as categorically different from the late ones is possible only if one disregards the master thematics that continue through them: the mass mediation of all subjectivity and the permeation of all artistic activity by the culture industries.[5]

Since these concerns with the nature of the mass media were investigated within modes of production ranging from that of the artisanal avant-garde to that of industry itself—extremes generally understood at the time by both camps to be mutually antagonistic—the films themselves remain especially complex and contradictory. But in this they exemplify a more general problem posed not so much by Warhol's art as by his career. For his was a career that was historically prototypical and prescient not because he engaged so many mediums, but because he engaged so many of them as an entrepreneur, carelessly crossing

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from any of his other movie projects; because of poor business deals with Carlo Ponti, he made nothing from *Frankenstein*, even though it grossed four million dollars. See *The Life and Death of Andy Warhol* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989).

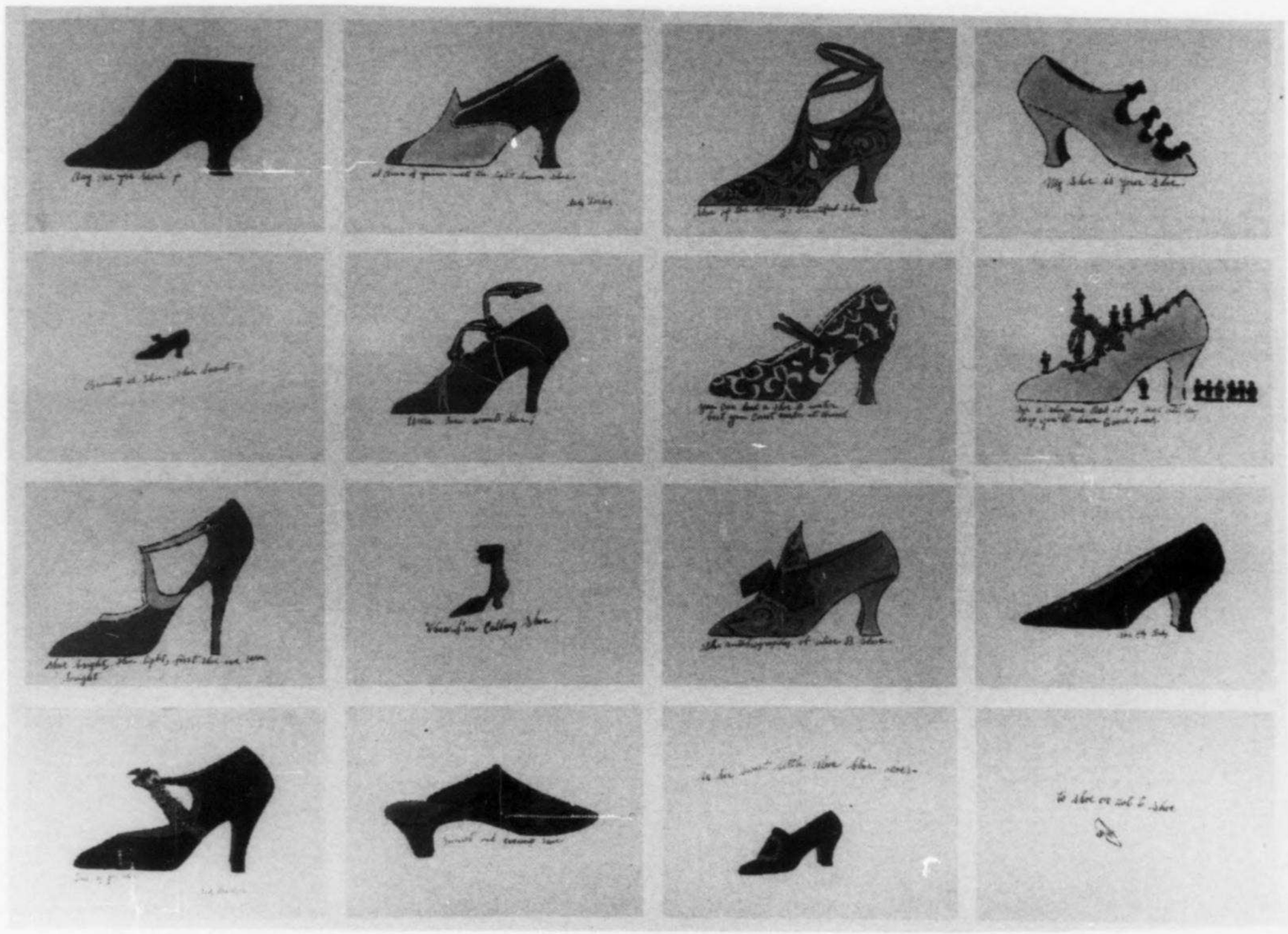
3. *Popism: The Warhol 60's* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), pp. 251–52.

4. For an account of this continuity, see James, *Allegories*, pp. 58–84.

5. Nevertheless, attitudes to the two bodies of work fall predictably into versions of the Frankfurt school position and its mirror image, a populist repudiation of it. Critics committed to the avant-garde find, for example, that after *The Chelsea Girls*, Warhol "quickly faded as a significant filmmaker" (P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde*, 2nd ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1979], p. 371); or that "something absolutely grotesque happened to Warhol's two finest gifts: his visual intelligence and his taste" (Stephen Koch, *Stargazer: Andy Warhol's World and His Films* [New York: Praeger, 1973], p. 100); while those invested in the entertainment film find, for example, that Warhol came "of age as a filmmaker . . . around the time that his collaboration with Paul Morrissey began" (John Russell Taylor, *Directors and Directing: Cinema for the Seventies* [New York: Hill and Wang, 1975], p. 137).

the ideological and functional boundaries of art itself, thus repudiating one of its most crucial criteria, its self-definition against advertising.

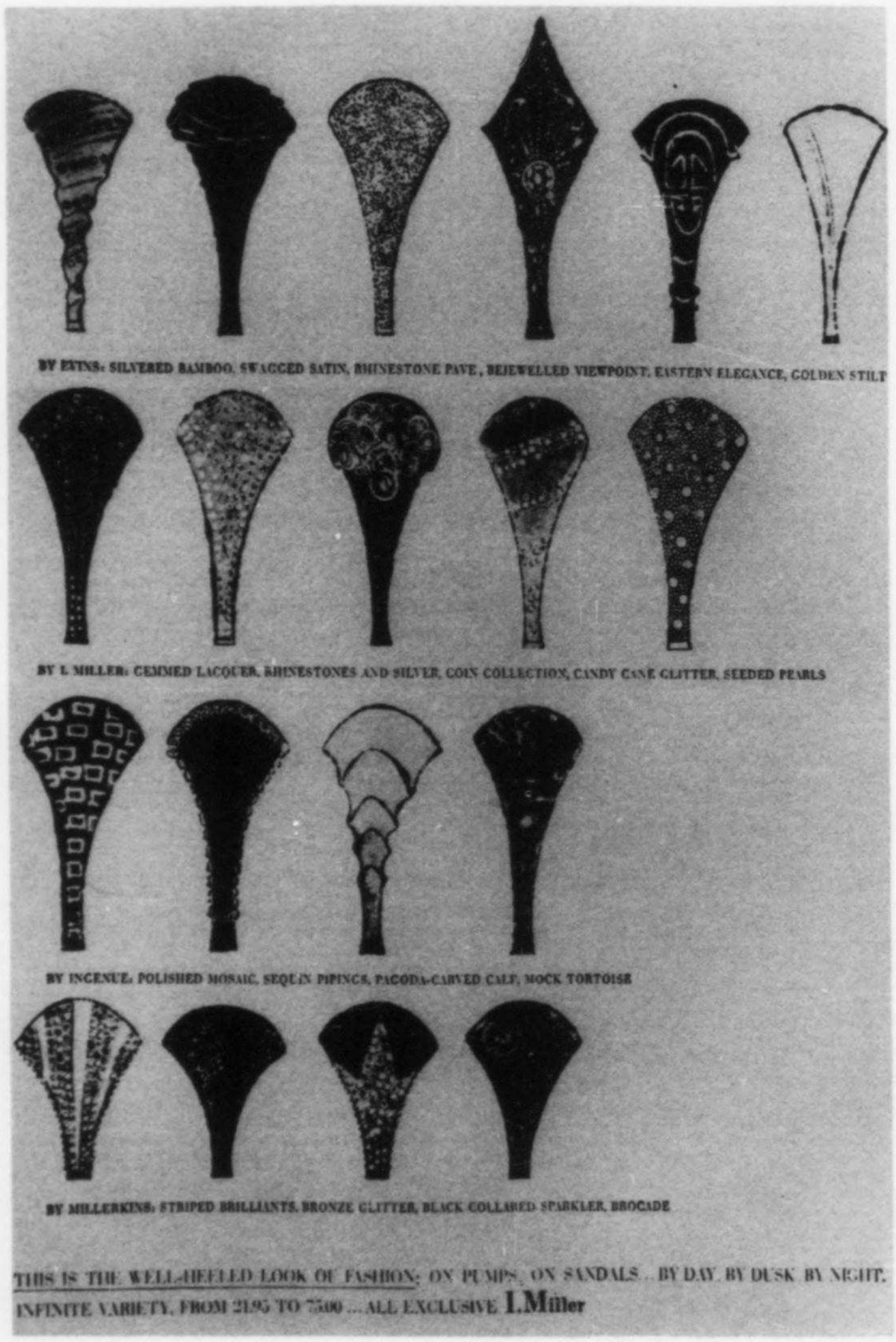
Within the world of the visual image, the textual interplays of the two modes are ubiquitous: for example, one of the ads for I. Miller shoes in 1955 that secured his first major advertising account employs the same decorative filigree, the same serial composition, and of course the same iconography as *À la Recherche du Shoe Perdu*, a lithograph of the same year; his first "real" paintings were themselves used in his window displays; his breakthrough paintings were reproductions of ads; and throughout his life he made paintings or silkscreens of advertisements, including, in 1985, a series titled "Ads" from among which one for candy was employed as a magazine cover in the same way as some of his earliest drawings were used. This fascination entered a new phase in the 1980s, however, when he returned to the pure advertising work of his early career. In this period, he either designed or appeared in many purely commercial projects: a billboard and album cover for the Rolling Stones; a car painted for BMW (also done by Stella and Lichtenstein); rum ads with Margaret Trudeau; a commercial for New York Airlines; modeling assignments for a Jordan Marsh catalogue; a schlock television show, "Love Boat"; a television commercial for Diet Coke; magazine ads for an eyeglass manufacturer, for Chemical Bank, for a New York



Andy Warhol. **À la Recherche du Shoe Perdu.** *1955.*

brokerage firm, and for a vodka manufacturer.[6] While Warhol's recourse to advertising for his visual imagery while working as a pop artist during the 1960s was anomalous only in its frequency, and while his early employment in the advertising industry was anomalous only in its success, his return to advertising after the establishment of his status as an artist was quite unique; but no more so than his claim that in his own practice—and by implication in the world at large—the two were inseparable. This trajectory fulfills the program announced in the famous, summary quote of the 1970s: "I started as a commercial artist, and I want to finish as a business artist. After I did the thing called 'art' or whatever

6. These are mostly culled from Pat Hackett, ed., *The Andy Warhol Diaries* (New York: Warner Books, 1989).



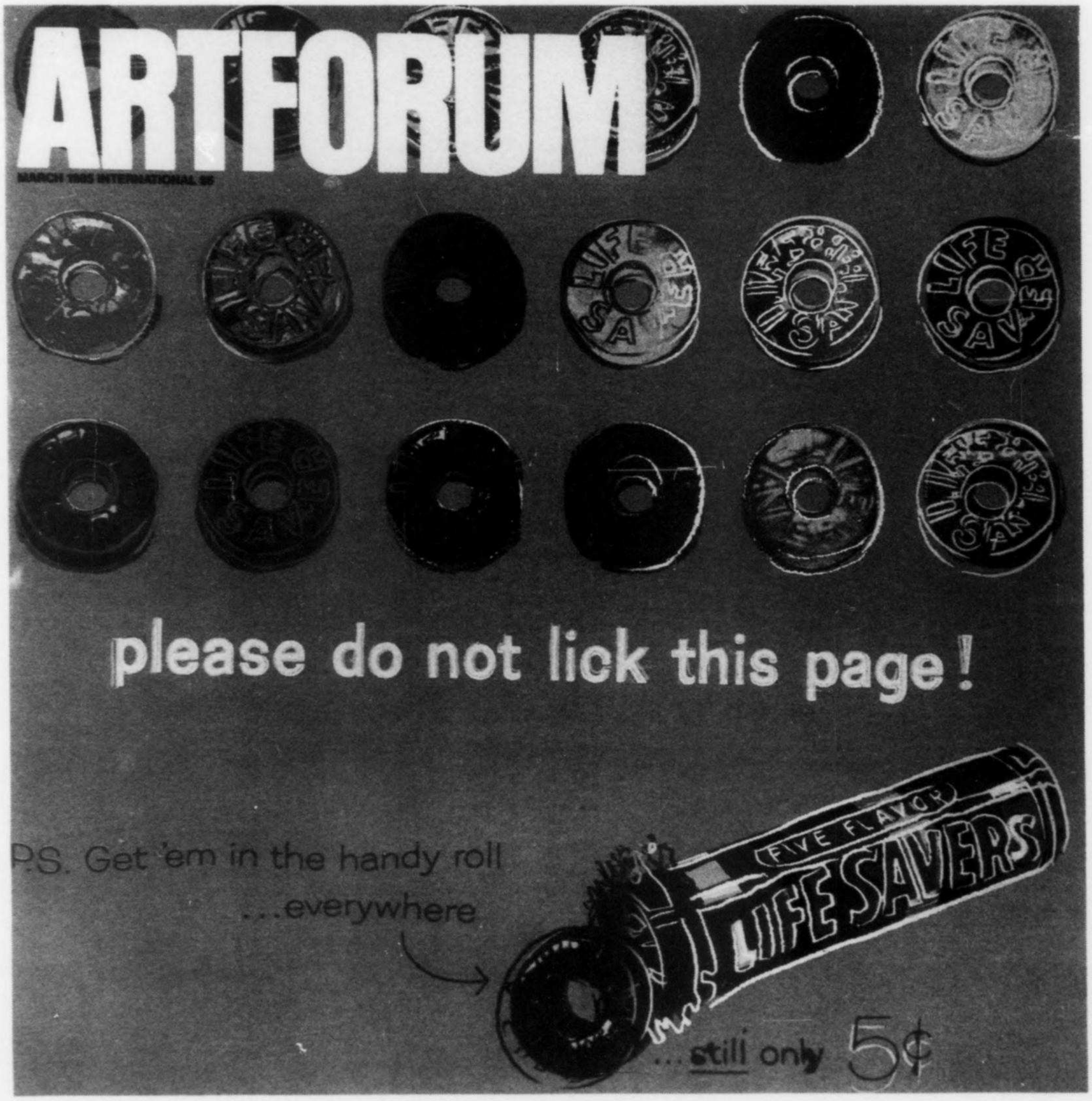
Advertisement for I. Miller Shoes. The New York Times, *1955.*

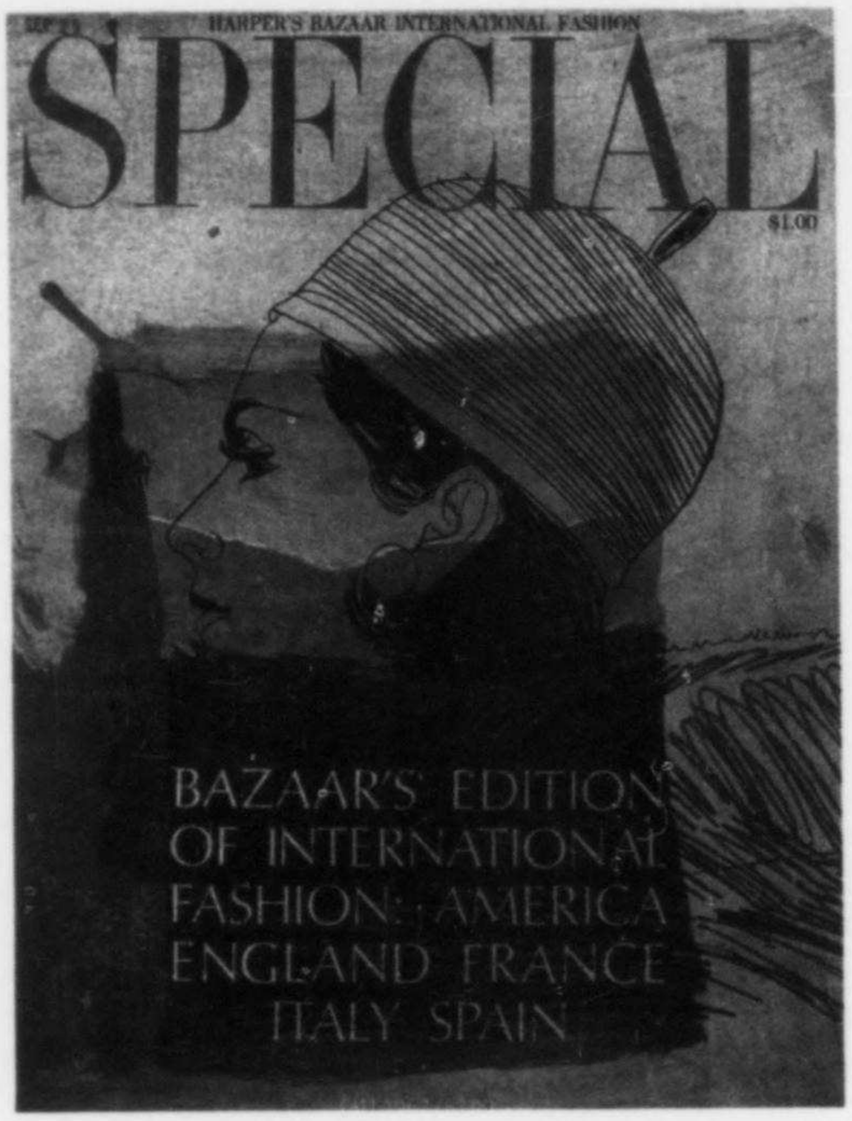
Magazine Cover. Artforum, *March 1985.*

it's called, I went into business art. I wanted to be an Art Businessman or a Business Artist. . . . making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art."[7]

There is no reason to suppose that Warhol was being any less disingenuous in this than in anything else he said; yet the lack of any real evidence to the contrary leaves us with a brazen dismissal of aesthetic autonomy that, confounding the categories of traditional commentary, has generated a spectrum of critical responses that take up three general strategies. The first attempts to retain traditional cultural categories by dismissing the entire career on the grounds that

7. Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 92.





Magazine Cover. Harper's Bazaar, *1962.*

none of what Warhol did was really art.[8] A second rewrites the early advertising as "art" by giving its formal properties precedence over its commercial function; thus the advertising and magazine illustration he did before he became an artist are assimilated to the art via accounts of the formal properties and genealogy of the Warhol "line."[9]

But more commonly, the difficulty of recovering either an unequivocal critique or an unequivocal endorsement of capitalist culture has forced those commentators concerned with the political implications of his work to distinguish between a "good" Warhol and a "bad" Warhol. There are as many fine tunings of this distinction as there are critics, but generally the good Warhol is the painter and printmaker operating between 1961 and 1968. In the work of this period, some painterly or compositional strategy is proposed as the signal of the works' difference from the newspaper, advertising, or publicity photographs

8. Most often such attacks come from neoconservative positions: Robert Hughes, for example, has indicted both the "perfunctory and industrial nature of Warhol's peculiar talent" and "the robotic character of the praise awarded it" ("The Rise of Andy Warhol," in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis [New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1985], p. 55). But there is a left version too. Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe complains that "Warhol's use of popular imagery is uncritical, completely acquiescent in that imagery's implications and actual function. . . . [It wants me] to believe that it is in fact adopting a critical posture towards that to which it has actually surrendered" ("Popular Imagery," in *Theories of Contemporary Art*, ed. Richard Hertz [Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1985], pp. 129–30).

9. These have been surveyed by Benjamin Buchloh in "The Andy Warhol Line," in *The Work of Andy Warhol*, ed. Gary Garrels (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989). Buchloh's analysis of the implications of the "consistently ambivalent relationship to both mass culture and high art" (p. 55) in Warhol's work is, to my mind, the most profound account of Warhol's position in and reference to the cultural transformations of the late-capitalist era.

from which their imagery typically derives. Rather than simply continuing the circulation of mass-media icons, the works are projected as operating a self-conscious denaturing of these icons that makes them, on some level, critical of late capitalism.[10]

The best of these analyses explicitly attempts "to separate Andy Warhol, the maker of his early paintings, from Andy Warhol, the maker of his own enduring public image."[11] In this case, the "good" Warhol existed only for a couple of years: around 1963–64, the period of the Marilyn Monroe, Jackie Kennedy, and Elizabeth Taylor portraits, which are proposed as "a kind of *peinture noire* . . . a stark, disabused, pessimistic vision of American life, produced from the knowing rearrangement of pulp materials" (p. 136). The case is made most fully and subtly with respect to the *Marilyn*s, into which Warhol is supposed to have build "a certain distance and reserve . . . through an initial transformation of his photographic material" (p. 133). The transformation is documented by a comparison of the angle of the face in the silkscreens and that in a publicity still, with the difference between them made to suggest that the silkscreen suppresses "Monroe's mannered and practiced way of pleasing the viewer through the camera" (p. 133). The drawback to this reading is that rather than modifying the angle of Monroe's face, Warhol simply used a different publicity still, one whose angle is exactly that of the silkscreens.[12]

The point here is not primarily to reject the argument (for it can always be restaged on the basis of some putative difference inserted by any other painterly quality) so much as to argue first that these works are sufficiently indeterminate that a political meaning (that is, a textual as distinct from a functional meaning) cannot be read off their surface as objectively present, but must be read in according to the disposition of the spectator.[13] And second, to document the strength of the desire to secure for a comfortable modernist paradigm work that, in so fundamentally cutting across its categories, reveals their historical supercession. Warhol can be saved for art only by ignoring his demonstration that there

10. An early monograph by Rainer Crone argued for a Brechtian Warhol, one who applied "Brecht's definition of realism and the instructive value of his alienation effect" to the visual arts; this allowed Warhol to be both populist and critical: "his work forces us to look critically at *every* form of visual communication—the class-dependent and exclusive easel painting as well as the communications media designed for mass distribution and consumption" (*Andy Warhol* [New York: Praeger, 1970], p. 23). Thierry de Duve similarly found Warhol to be a great artist, "at least between 1961 and 1968" ("Andy Warhol, or The Machine Perfected," trans. Rosalind Krauss, *October* 49 [Spring 1989], p. 4).

11. Thomas Crow, "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol," *Art in America* (May 1987), p. 129.

12. The still is reproduced in Kynaston McShine, ed., *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1989), p. 72, marked for the same cropping as in the silkscreens.

13. Cf., "the painting of 100 Campbell soup cans contains resistance to the commodity society only for the person who wants to see it there. . . . The Neo-avant-garde, which stages for a second time the avant-gardiste break with tradition, becomes a manifestation that is void of sense and that permits the positing of any meaning whatever" (Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw, [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984], p. 61).

was no longer a position outside corporate capital for art to inhabit. Less sentimental than his commentators, he recognized that in the period of its totalized commodification, all bourgeois art ends up as advertisement for capital.[14]

The era in which arguments for the Warhol-like collapse of autonomous art into its industrial other became commonplace also saw as a correlative development the increased currency of attacks on the second component in Adorno's argument: his dismissal of mass culture. These newer accounts of popular music, formula fiction, and even network television proposed moments of contradiction or empowerment or resistance in them that are not reducible to the one-dimensional, uninterrupted closures theorized by Adorno.[15] Like the general promotion of postmodernism, the currency or plausibility of these readings (and especially their valorization of industrial culture over disaffiliated cultural movements of the kind that in the 1960s had more directly and systematically confronted capitalist culture) is surely in part a reflex of the Reagan era, the trace of a cultural crisis not unconnected with the crises in finance and civic morality. Though other generalizations about them are premature, it can be offered that since such readings are predicated on supposed events within consumption, they can never be proved or disproved except empirically, and then only after all the general aporias of ethnographic cultural data analysis have been negotiated. Similarly they lack any methodological procedure to distinguish moments of real alterity from a spurious, gestural resistance that is already incorporated into a more comprehensive manipulative process—a version of the strategy (and rhetorical figure) that Barthes designated as *innoculation*: a "balanced economy" by which class-bound institutions admit localized subversions that actually protect them "against the risk of a generalized subversion."[16] Most specifically, any empowerment that is proposed through the consumption of commodity culture —whether or not this includes some form of symbolic resistance to capital itself—is possible only within the continued renewal of capitalist social relations which the economic transaction of purchase entails.

14. In this respect, it could be said that the contradictions of Warhol's project brings the historical mission of the bourgeoisie to completion; instead of merely supplying art to the bourgeoisie from some as-yet unincorporated precapitalist enclave (whose exception had, until his intervention, been marked by the singular survival in painting of the artisanal, precapitalist mode of cultural production), Warhol became the artist-as-bourgeois. In this, he prepared the way for artist-entrepreneurs even less sentimental than himself—Jeff Koons is exemplary. In the words of *The Communist Manifesto* these, inevitably, "for exploitation, belied by religious and political illusions [would substitute] naked, shameless, direct, brutal expoitation."

15. See, for example, theories of rock as "affective empowerment" in Lawrence Grossberg, "Is There Rock after Punk?" in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), pp. 110–23; of television spectatorship as "the productive use of industrial commodities," in John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 28; and of women's reading of romances as "a kind of tacit, minimal protest against the patriarchal constitution of women," in Janice Radway, "Interpretive Communities and Variable Literacies: The Functions of Romance Reading," *Daedalus* 113 (Summer 1984), p. 68.

16. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Paladin, 1972), pp. 150–51.

For the moment, however, I am not concerned with the implications of such readings of industrial culture so much as with high/low paradigms themselves. For whatever values they place upon industrial culture, and whatever terms they propose for its relation to some other—high versus low culture, art versus mass culture, intellectuals versus popular culture, and so on—the same operative categories remain as summary divisions of the field of cultural production as a whole. While radically different attitudes to the working class are sedimented in the various terms, all the formulations have in common their reduction of the field of culture to these two modes and the consequent exclusion from consideration of at least two other crucial areas of cultural activity.

First, these formulations make invisible the culture that people make for themselves. In the field of film, they exclude home movies most obviously, but also the more or less amateur, certainly noncommodity-oriented and anti-industrial participatory film practices developed from home movies, as well as the more clearly oppositional film-making of minority or dissident social groups—beats and hippies, ethnic minorities, political collectives like Third World Newsreel, the practices of gays and women. Though these come into being through various kinds of negotiation with capitalist film production, they are in many cases fundamentally opposed to it, even as they are equally different from avant-gardes aspiring to aesthetic autonomy. Similar forms of genuinely popular activity in other mediums, such as graffiti, jokes, diaries, mimeographed fanzines, photo albums, skateboard decoration, neighborhood murals, recreational dancing, gardening, dressing, and so on are also all excluded, both as they gravitate around the more self-consciously cultural events that have happened in popular music—punk and then hip-hop—and as they unfold in the less self-conscious way that comprises what, following Raymond Williams and British Cultural Studies, we think of as culture as an entire way of life. All these are the vestiges of folk art, its contemporary form, standing in for (and, to the extent that they are self-defined in nonclass terms, also tending to inhibit) a genuinely socialist culture that could otherwise cut through the divisions of a presently balkanized working class. They nevertheless reproach all who can imagine no popular culture other than the occasionally creative misreading of the culture industry's products or those who assume that industrial culture "arises spontaneously from the masses themselves."[17]

Second, the avant-garde / culture industry binary excludes the purely commercial forms of advertising itself, both as they have emerged in new identifications with art, and as they have been integrated into the political process at large. Lest we forget how complete these integrations are, think of the difficulty of separating advertising from art in television texts as different (yet as similar) as a Robert Longo "avant-garde" music video for an "alternative" band like New

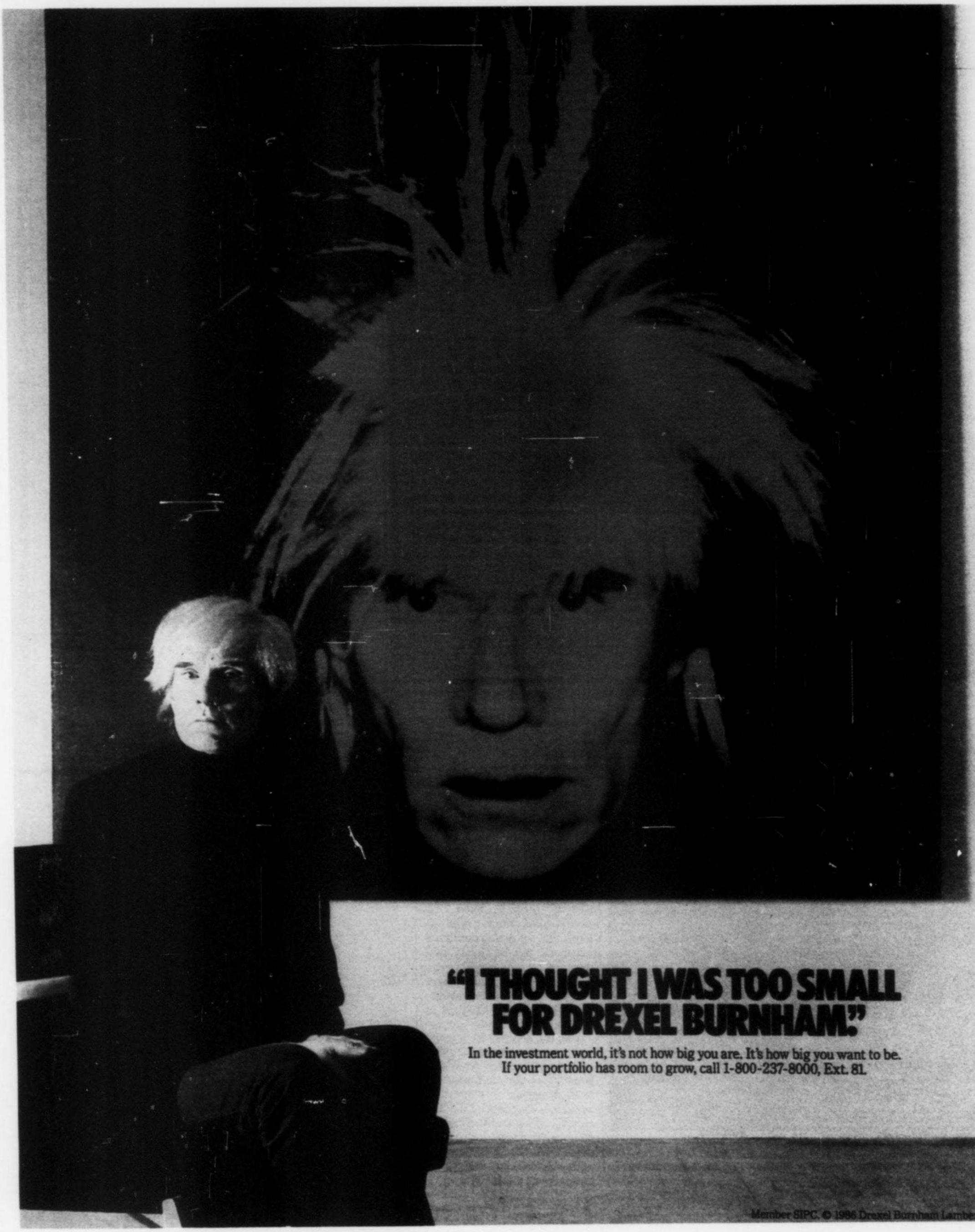
17. Adorno's use of the term "culture industry" was explicitly designed to preclude such a claim. See "Culture Industry Reconsidered," trans. Anson G. Rabinbach, *New German Critique* 6 (Fall 1975), p. 12.

Order, or the Home Shopping Network—or even in a good ad. And think of how the political process is steered by television advertising that employs the codes naturalized in ostensibly nonpolitical culture: the George Bush/Willie Horton commercial did its work in the ideological field created by the representation of working-class black people in entertainment cop shows and news reports.

This is not the place for a full elaboration of such a (at least) quadripartite analysis of the whole field of cultural production,[18] nor of the constant interaction between its components and the shifting of positions within them; instead, I wish only to note that one of the things that makes Warhol's oeuvre so complex is that he participated continuously in all of them: noncommercial culture (the early *jeux d'esprit*, decorated letters and booklets, or the films made "just to make them"); art (the orthodox serigraphs and paintings); industrial culture (the commercial portraits, "movies that regular theaters would want to show"); and purely commercial culture (his late advertising). Nor did he distinguish among these; each flowed in and out of the others, with formal motifs or compositional strategies passing through the entire field. While it is only with great difficulty that his work can be placed within the two middle categories—those constituting the traditional modernist paradigms—these supply what is commonly taken as the terms of his achievement; his work in the two flanking ones is generally not recognized at all. In the terms of their exclusion, the categories and the works inversely reflect each other. On the one hand, the early films, which are in principle part of the art, are practically quite distinct from it; on the other, the late advertising work is in principle inadmissible as art, yet in terms of practice, it's continuous with it. How can a line be drawn to distinguish artist from advertiser in the myriad of later roles including self-portraitist, society painter, television producer, actor, model (Warhol registered with both the Ford and the Zoli agencies), and ad designer? Yet, even for such summary documentations of his career as the Museum of Modern Art retrospective, the late advertising is anathema, unanalyzed and unincorporated. So, putting the films aside for the present, I will turn to this anathematized production, specifically to an ad he made for the brokerage firm Drexel Burnham Lambert Incorporated, in order to entertain the hypothesis that while the distopian integration of the entertainment industry, advertising, and politics is systemic here, it is not complete or without internal contradiction. Moments in it may, like a devious film noir or self-deconstructing rock song, sustain resistance or alterity parallel to that pro-

18. Not the least of the MOMA show's ideological obfuscations was its polarization of "high" culture (easel painting) against the unified category of "low," in which differences among the genuinely populist (e.g., graffiti), the culture industry (e.g., comic strips), and the purely commercial (advertising itself) were unproblematically elided. As is the case with emancipatory theories of industrial culture, this is made possible by the repression of the economic transactions commodity culture entails, the assumption that consuming industrial culture is the same as producing a popular culture—or that the latter no longer exists. It's hard to imagine a greater insult to the working class.

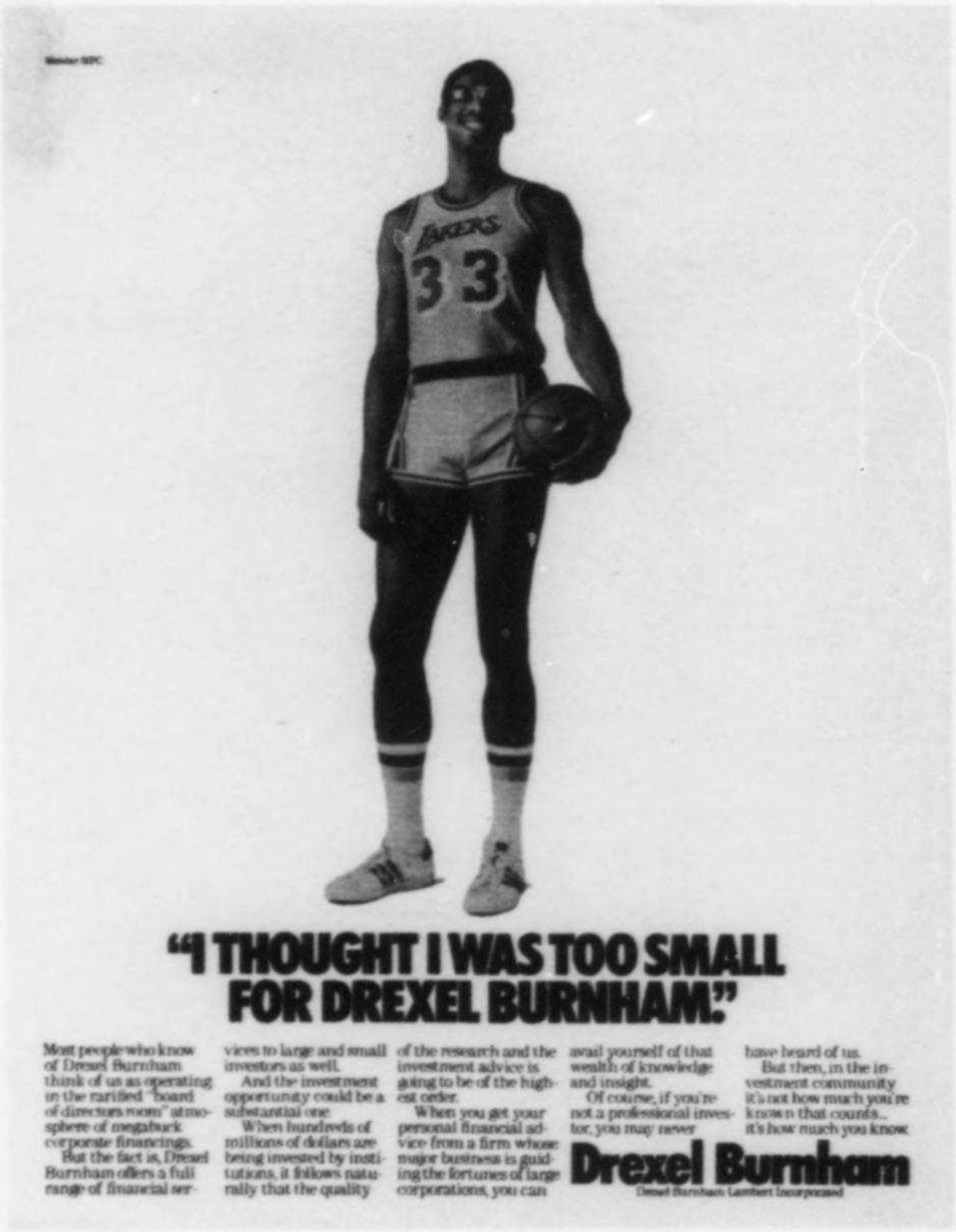
Advertisement. New York Times Magazine, *November 23, 1986.*



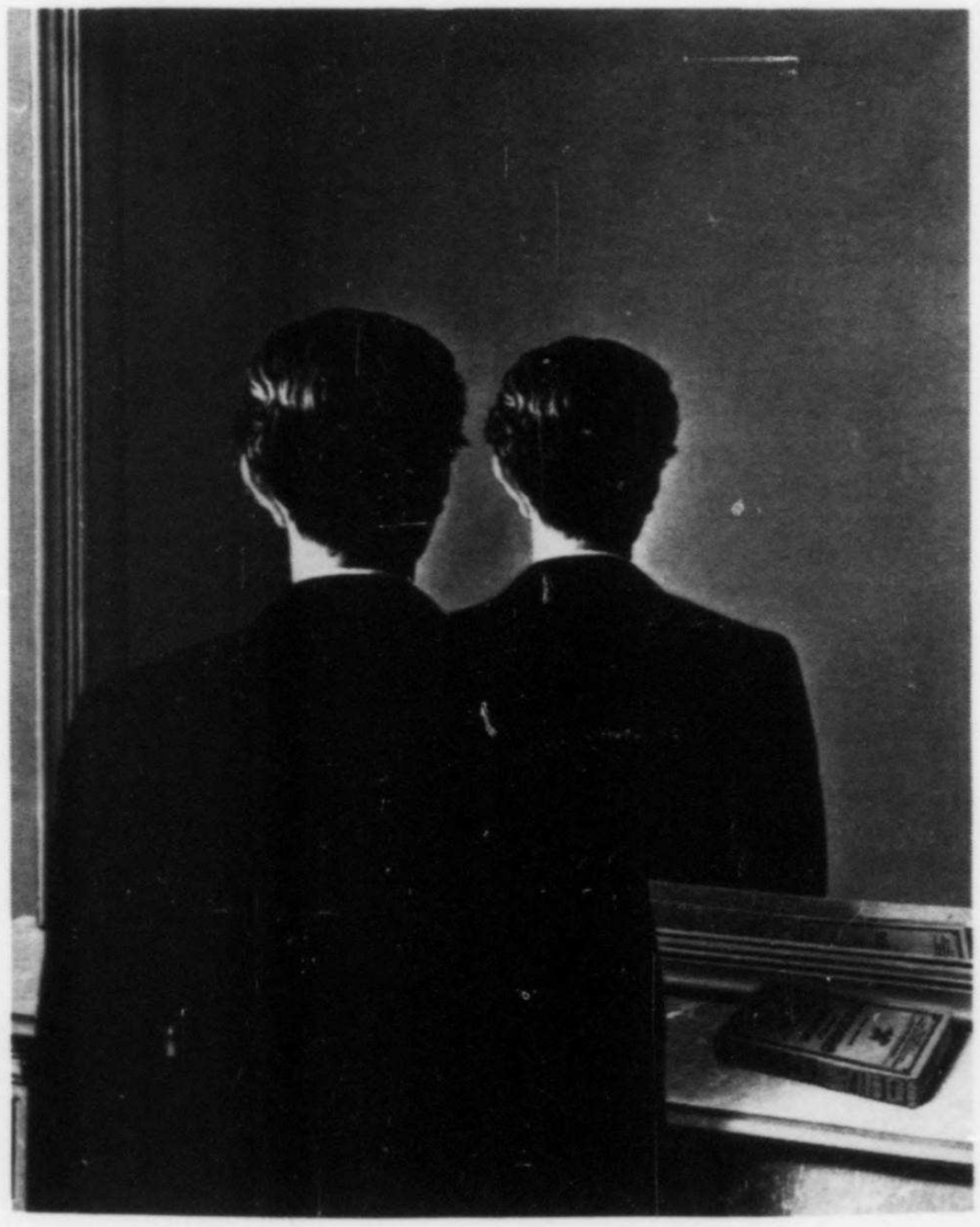
posed for popular culture as it is now conventionally conceptualized. The bad news may be that art is entirely "amalgamated with advertising"; the corresponding good news may be that, as the entire media apparatus has become itself a *medium*, it is vulnerable to creative intervention; and the uncertain news is that the dubious distinction between a "good" and a "bad" Warhol recurs in the similarly dubious distinction between Warhol the artist and Warhol the (self) advertiser. Since my reading appropriates elements of theories that conceive of mass culture as emancipatory at the point of consumption, it will be an account of my own consumption and so, of both necessity and principle, subjective and impressionistic.

I will use the strategy of Fredric Jameson's "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture,"[19] an essay more useful than subsequent critiques of the Frankfurt

19. Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," *Social Text* 1 (Winter 1979), pp. 130–48. For methodological guidelines, I am also indebted to Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni's readings of certain classic Hollywood films as internally fractured, so that rather than allowing ideology a free passage, they "make it turn back and reflect itself"; "while being completely integrated in the system and the ideology [they] end up by partially dismantling the system from within" ("Cinema/Ideology/Criticism," in *Movies and Methods*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 24–25.



Advertisement for Drexel Burnham Lambert Incorporated.



Magritte. The Secret Life.

position in that the proposed contradictions and the moments of empowerment they allow are neither gender specific nor limited to a youth or other subculture, but rather related to the working class as a whole. Jameson argued that the works of mass culture "cannot manipulate unless they offer some genuine shred of content"; they "cannot be ideological without at one and the same time being implicitly or explicitly Utopian as well" (p. 144). Transferred to advertising, the ideological or reified component appears as the repression of the real nature of late capitalism and of the possibility of resistance to it, while the utopian is not the symbolic possession of the advertised object or of the other pleasures with which it is associated (nor even the generalized promise of the world of endless consumption that each ad participates in); rather the utopian will be the presence of real anxieties or contradictions, the traces of negativity or of criticism of that consumer society which the ad promotes in general.[20]

The ad appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* on November 23, 1986; it was made by a team at Chiat/Day/Mojo in a campaign produced by Bruce Asher as one of a series done for Drexel.[21] Most of the ads featured famous athletes, including Phil Simon, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Wilt Chamberlain, and Pam Shriver, though Dizzy Gillespie and Ruth Gordon were also used. But Warhol's was anomalous in being both the only ad in color and in being pictorially much more complex. Though Warhol had no part in its design—the proposal was made to him, he agreed, and the ad was shot—I will claim it as a collaborative Warhol work and argue that its layering of utopian real content between reified discountenancing of the possibility of such content—the placement of these layers in terms of a mutual supplementarity—makes it as complex and sophisticated as any other work of art produced in the Reagan era. Its engagement of social issues may be oblique and hesitant, but is none the less real.

The ad appeared four months before Warhol's death and just eleven months before the 1987 Wall Street crash. Because it moved me in a way I didn't understand, I clipped it out and framed it. Looking at it at night, I noticed that if I stood about a yard away, the reflection of my face on the glass fit exactly over the face in the serigraph, a perfectly literal instance of the catoptric invitation of all Warhol's work and the narcissistic self-projection it facilitates. When Warhol

20. I do not mean to suggest that all Warhol's advertisements (and certainly not advertising in general) have such a utopian dimension. At least one other case, however, would seem to present something like the same contradictory possibilities. Thomas Lawson describes a fascination similar to my own with a Dior ad in which Warhol appeared. He comments, "There's a succinct elegance in the way in which Warhol's pose suggests a critical intervention in the seamless world of advertising, but ultimately withholds that, simply offering nothing" (Quoted in McShine, *Andy Warhol*, p. 450). While Lawson is unwilling to allow the Dior ad the degree of disruption I will propose for the Drexel ad, his further comments are especially interesting in that he takes Warhol's position in the Dior campaign as representative of the position of artists in postmodern culture—one which, of course, he is concerned to contest.

21. The team also included art director Tim Ward, copywriter Amelia Rosner, and photographer William Coupon.

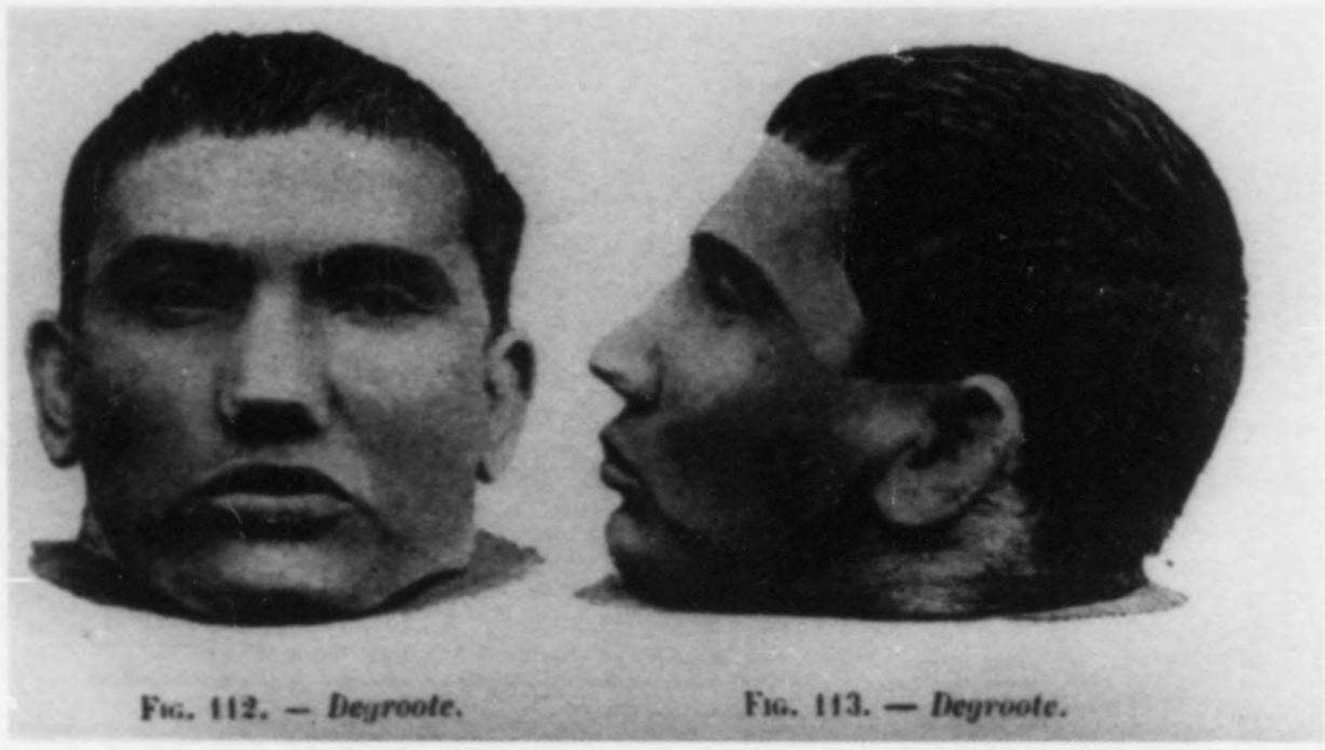


Fig. 112. — *Deyroote.* Fig. 113. — *Deyroote.*

From Charles Marie Debierre, Le crâne des criminels, *1895.*

Andy Warhol on "Saturday Night Live." (Photo: Grai St. Clair Rice).

Andy Warhol. Self-Portrait. *1967.*

died, its plangency seemed even more powerful and somehow summary of his whole life. I associated it with Magritte's painting *The Secret Life*, which it structurally parallels. And indeed, as it tells the other side of that story, I called it "The Unsecret Life," the life lived within publicity.

The serigraphed self-portrait before which Warhol sits, one of a series done earlier that year, is unusual among the self-portraits that he made throughout his life in the force of its expressivity. Others done in the '60s, for example, do hint at some subjectivity (a gay sensibility perhaps in the placement of the fingers in the 1967 *Self-Portrait*). But mostly Warhol only parades a characteristic distance and refusal of any humanist depth of feeling. This last series brings to a head an admission of angst that had been gradually emerging since the late 1970s: there is a suggestion of pain and fear in the eyes which, reduced to black balls pierced by a pinpoint of reflected light, glare out with haunted intensity, and this is reciprocated in the lipless void that forms the mouth and the sunken cheeks across which the skin is stretched.[22] These cadaverous resonances are underscored by the framing. Perhaps cropping is a better word, for it severs the head at the chin, recalling the heads of the guillotined criminals painted by Géricault and photographed by Charles Marie Debierre—or the special effect of himself decapitated that Warhol used in his appearance on "Saturday Night Live" in 1981! And why does the hair stand on end, as if electrified in fear? Does this erratic mohawk fly behind the head as it drops through space? Or does it splash through the icy water of some subterranean aquarium, against whose night and glassy walls Warhol pushes his face in a voiceless shriek? Is this Warhol's autobiographical invocation of Munch's *The Scream*? That would be going too far, though he had sketched it three years before.

My invocation of Munch would not be so pointed here had not the polarization of Warhol and Munch provided great leverage in a seminal account of so-called postmodernism—Jameson's essay "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism"—which proposed the Munch painting as "a canonical expression of the great modernist thematics of alienation, anomie, solitude, social fragmentation, and isolation," while the "glacéd X-ray elegance" of Warhol's serigraphs of the rich and famous, "commodified and transformed into their own images," summarize the present period, when such thematics of alienation and the subjectivity they sustain have been discredited.[23] In these terms, the self-portrait is more like a modernist expression of alienation than a postmodern denial of its possibility, especially when compared with another in the series, the *Camouflage Self-Portrait*, in which the self is disguised, as if Warhol were narrating the psychological repression of the major oeuvre preparatory to breaking with it in this work. The breakthrough of the anguished modernist artist recalls

22. *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective* usefully assembles self-portraits from 1942 on.
23. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (August 1984), p. 61.

Andy Warhol. The Scream (After Munch). *1983.*

Andy Warhol. Camouflage Self-Portrait. *1986.*

the resurrection of "the author" in Roland Barthes's last three books—termed the "egoist trilogy" by Todorov—where he mobilized the subjectivity of that very "person" who he had earlier argued was only a discursive function of capitalist ideology. Is this a similar last-minute recantation that implicitly denies the aesthetics and ethics of surface, of impersonality, and of collusion? I am reminded of Ezra Pound's last lines, "I have tried to write Paradise. . . . Let those I love try to forgive/what I have made." Only the Warhol version would be "I tried *not* to paint Paradise and this is what it feels like. . . . There was, after all, more to art than merely business."

But as soon as I do this I am halted at the recognition that whatever humanist regret or affirmation I might read in the silkscreen is framed and cancelled by its context and by its consignment to advertising. For when the anguished, disembodied head in the print is restored to history, it is to that of the bland vacancy of the man in the photograph. This Warhol has turned his back on his expressive self, a compositional reenactment of what I must now see as the prostitution of his selling this alarming work and his own body-image to Drexel Burnham. It's like something out of a John Le Carré novel. With the serigraph he tells me that he wants to come in out of the Warholian postmodern. But when I go out to meet him, he pulls this on me, destroying the last sentimentality: there

can be no life—nor even its negation; only image on the surface and in the service of capital.

Plucked from my modernist nostalgia, I find myself back among the vertiginous ironies and incommensurate signifying systems of postmodern pastiche. The composition is made up of both images and words in the way that became fashionable in Reagan-era art, and indeed the text itself—"I thought I was too small"—especially in its dark block type, has the same ominous, but catchy, sententiousness that Warhol-influenced artists have so successfully exploited. But also, purely pictorially, the ad juxtaposes serigraphy and photography, or rather it juxtaposes a photograph of a subject (no longer a person, certainly not an individual) with a photograph of a silkscreen of a photograph of that subject, its surface collapsing the differences between the two media and the two degrees of mediation. As I look at these two images in the magazine, the more real is diminished, while the less real is approximately life-sized. Given the thematics that the caption proposes, these inversions in size are not unimportant, for "In the investment world, it's not how big you are. It's how big you want to be." The rhetoric is flawless, the logic unanswerable; but the story is puzzling.

Occupying the space between the two images, the text invites me to use the present realization of the folly of ever thinking oneself too small for Drexel to

narrate the relation between them. But the problem is, which Warhol speaks? Is it the real-life Warhol, now calmly sharing with us his earlier fears, the fear that caused the anxiety the serigraph records, the fear that caused him to make this enormous image of himself, or indeed that fear of cosmic loneliness (or material poverty) that caused him to become a business artist?

Or is it rather the haunted figure in the serigraph who speaks, expressing the inner turmoil actually felt by the figure who sits before him, and whose impassivity I must now read as repression or dissembling? And if so, how am I to correlate the intervention of Drexel with the other agencies (photographic enlargement, making a self-portrait, etc.) that allowed the monstrous inflation to whose success he here testifies? And, if this is what it feels like finally to be big, was it worth it?

Or does this discourse not have a single, self-identical subject? Shall I abandon my search for a unitary, phallic voice (however much the priorities of being big and of having room to grow seem to imply one), and admit a split or doubled source, a vulvalogocentric voice spoken simultaneously by both Warhols, or perhaps by the vagina he has insinuated between his legs? I cannot say; what before seemed simple has been ruined by a textual excess not reducible to single economy of signification.

But before I surrender my drive for knowledge, before I back off and accept that Warhol's relation to Drexel's specific promise is arbitrary and merely decorative, I remember his "I want to be an Art Businessman" and how accurately (if obscurely) the integration of art and business in the composition as a whole reflects the itinerary of Warhol's life: the ambition that took a second-generation immigrant, a frail and devastatingly neurotic working-class boy to the size where potentates like Mick Jagger and the Shah of Iran came calling. For finally, this class migration and the transgression of class boundaries mark the propriety of Warhol's association with Drexel, the firm where junk bond–fueled corporate takeovers levitated stock prices to make financial services the major growth "industry" (really a pseudoindustry) in the Reagan era—the coincidence of the pure operation of capital and putative postindustrialization commonly proposed as postmodernity.

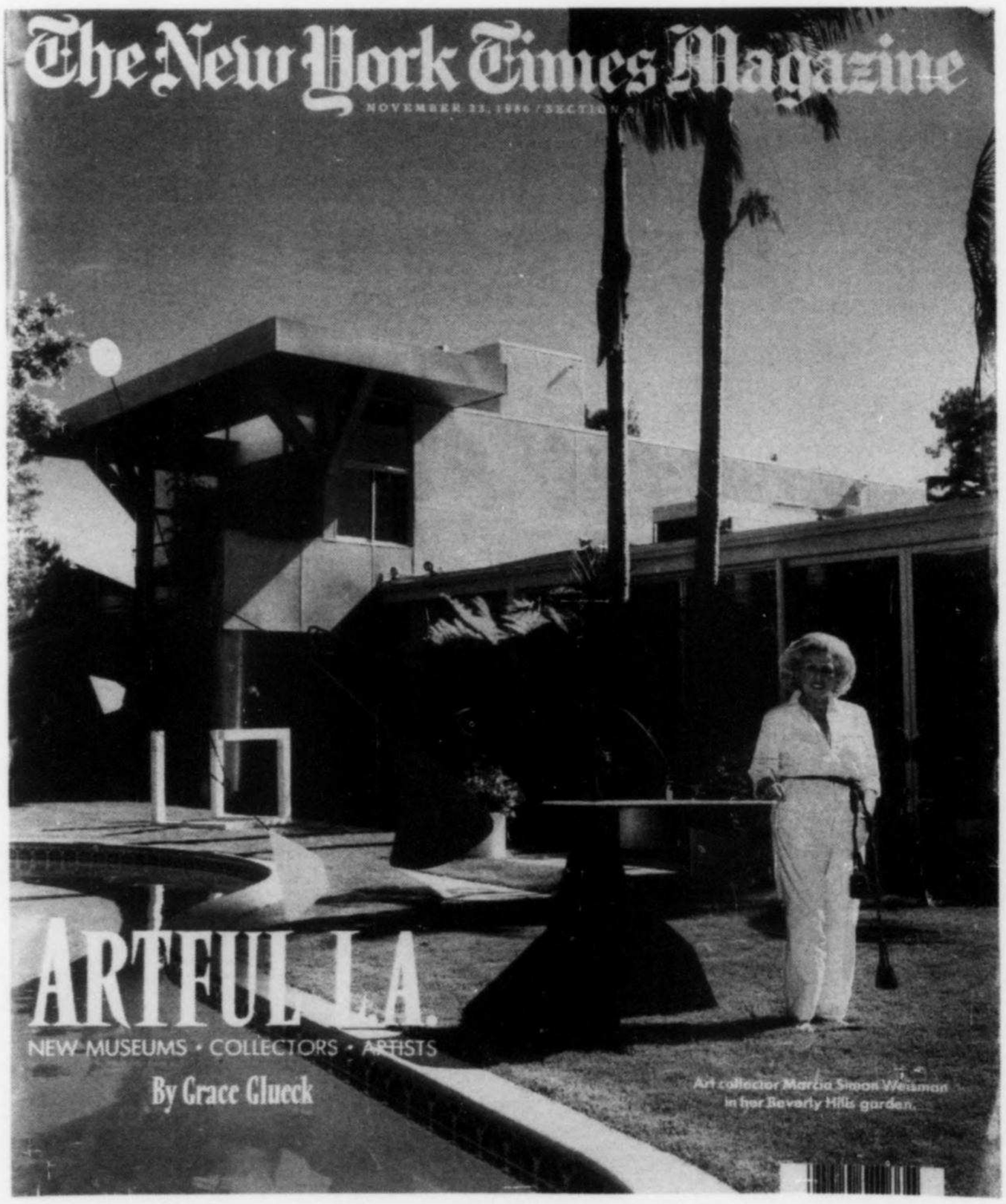
The similarities between Warhol's and Mike Milken's projects—they are both parables of exemplary late-capitalist labor, entailing the mobilization of aesthetic affect in the one case and of capital in the other, each without any real content—establishes parallels sufficiently significant for me to find in the ad a biographical narrative they share. Both men were social upstarts whose working habits and initial success endeared them to a mass public while outraging the Eastern establishments. The dismissal of Warhol by "real" artists like Johns and Rauschenberg, his denigration as the producer of junk paintings, was recapitulated in Milken's ostracism by real financiers for dealing in junk bonds (or "Jew bonds" as they were also called). Don't we have here then a fully articulate, if schematic autobiography in which Warhol tells the story he doesn't tell else-

New York Times Magazine, *November 23, 1986.*

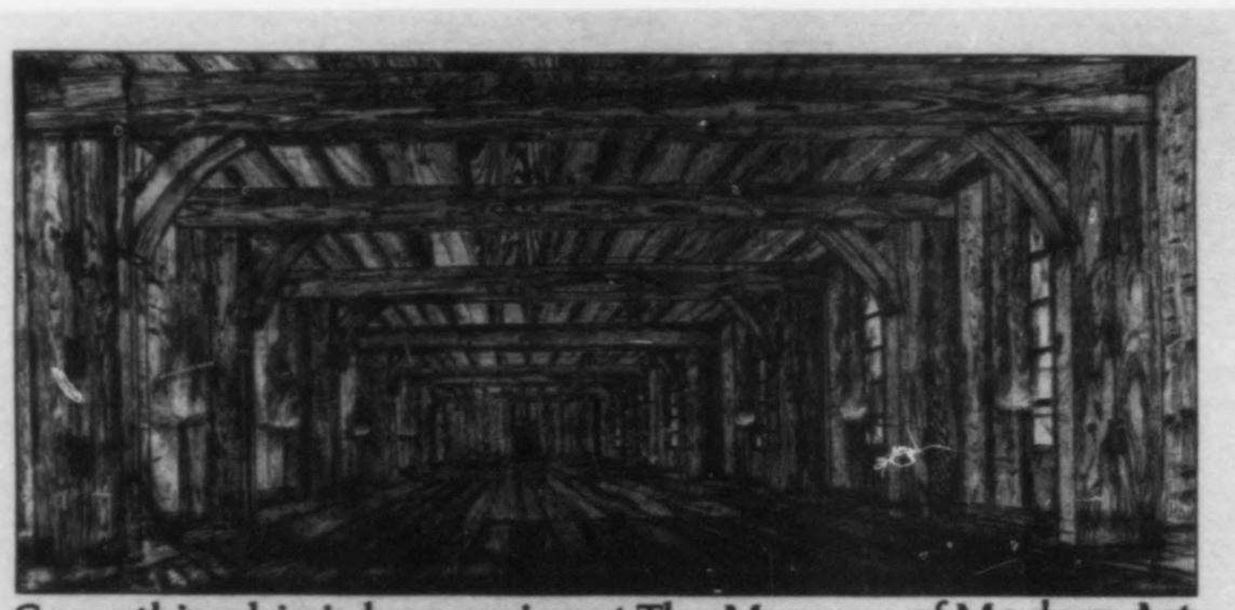
where: the desire to be big, the decision to engage in business art, the schizophrenia it entailed?

*

The ironies of my engagement with this work reflect the tension between the pleasure it gives me—the fantasy projection it allows, but also the visual and textual complexity that supplies my interpretation and persuades me that there's real content in it—and my opposition to the ideological work I know it is trying to do and the political system it is trying to work for. Perhaps I am able to take this pleasure because it is not addressed to me; my portfolio does indeed have room to grow, but when I called the number, the receptionist was not forthcoming, and all I could get out of her was a very unprepossessing brochure. On the other hand, I know I would not find its complexities so pleasurable if I were one



New York Times Magazine, *October 16, 1988.*



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THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE OCTOBER 16, 1988 43

of the victims of that system—either one of the people who suffered directly rather than indirectly in the manipulation of junk bonds, or one of the working-class people exploited by American finance capital worldwide.

Since it is with these that my allegiances lie, I will stop advertising this advertisement for capital, allowing myself only a final glance through the *New York Times Magazine.* It's pretty interesting, especially if you live in Los Angeles. It used to be said that there was no art in L.A., only mass culture, but it turns out that Sun Belt/Pacific Rim Capital is giving us two new museums, and we also have "major collectors," i.e., people who have expropriated the labor of the working class sufficiently to start their own mini-museums. In the *New York Times* account of this art world, the integration of art and capital is seamless, uninter-

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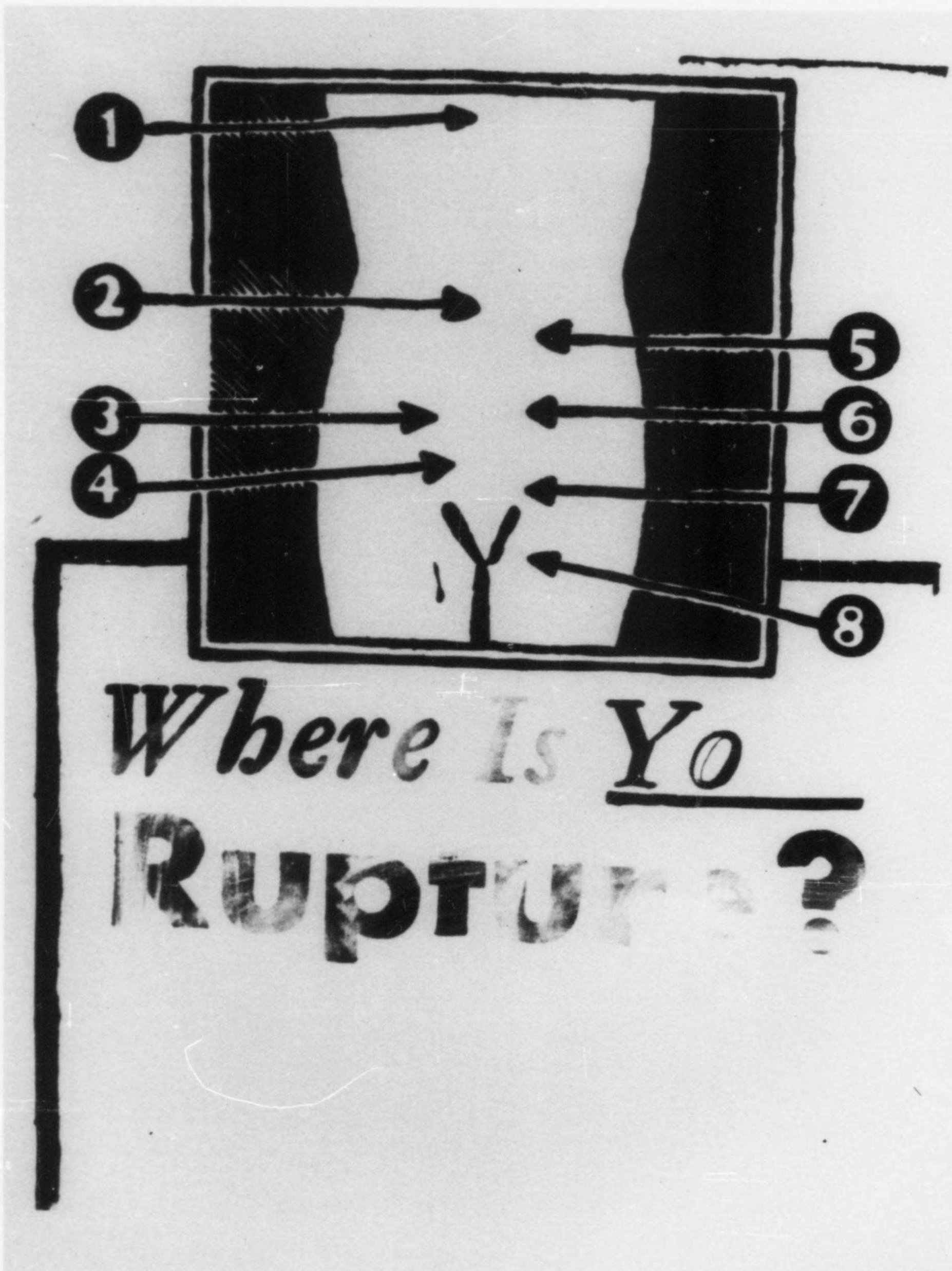
rupted by even the minor disturbances of Warhol's oblique self-advertising. For other artists are not even up to this. Van Gogh, according to the same issue of the *New York Times*, is working for another brokerage firm, E. F. Hutton, and Stuart Davis is working for IBM. And it's not just dead artists who are so unequivocally employed: Anselm Kiefer—the Kiefer who in a later interview in the *New York Times Magazine* claimed that "Andy Warhol was doing perhaps the same things as I'm doing. . . . I can see he was looking into the depths, like me"[24]—is already working for Ford.

24. Quoted in Paul Taylor, "Painter of the Apocalypse," *New York Times Magazine*, October 16, 1988, p. 80.

Andy Warhol. **Where is Your Rupture?** *1960.*



"Where Is Your Rupture?": Mass Culture and the Gesamtkunstwerk

ANNETTE MICHELSON

And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul?

—Walt Whitman

A specter haunts the theory and practice of the arts throughout our century: the specter of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a notion born of late romanticism, nurtured and matured within the modernist moment, and never wholly exorcised in the era of postmodernism and of electronic reproduction. To Adorno, writing in 1944, television promised a synthesis of radio and film that would so impoverish artistic production that "the thinly veiled identity of all industrial products" would reveal itself,

> derisively fulfilling the Wagnerian dream of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*—the fusion of all the arts in one work. The alliance of word, image, and music is all the more perfect in *Tristan* because the sensuous elements which all approvingly reflect the surface of social reality are in principle embodied in the same technical process, the unity of which becomes its distinctive content. This process integrates all the elements of the production, from novel (shaped with an eye to film) to the last sound effect. It is the triumph of invested capital, whose title as absolute master is etched deep into the hearts of the dispossessed in the employment line; it is the meaningful content of every film, whatever plot the production team may have selected.[1]

To the specter of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, already somewhat faint and failing, Moholy-Nagy had delivered, in 1925, a telling, though not fatal, blow. It is in the text of *Painting, Photography and Film*[2] that he says, when speaking of the projects

1. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London: Allen Lane, 1973), p. 124.
2. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film*, trans. Janet Seligman (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969).

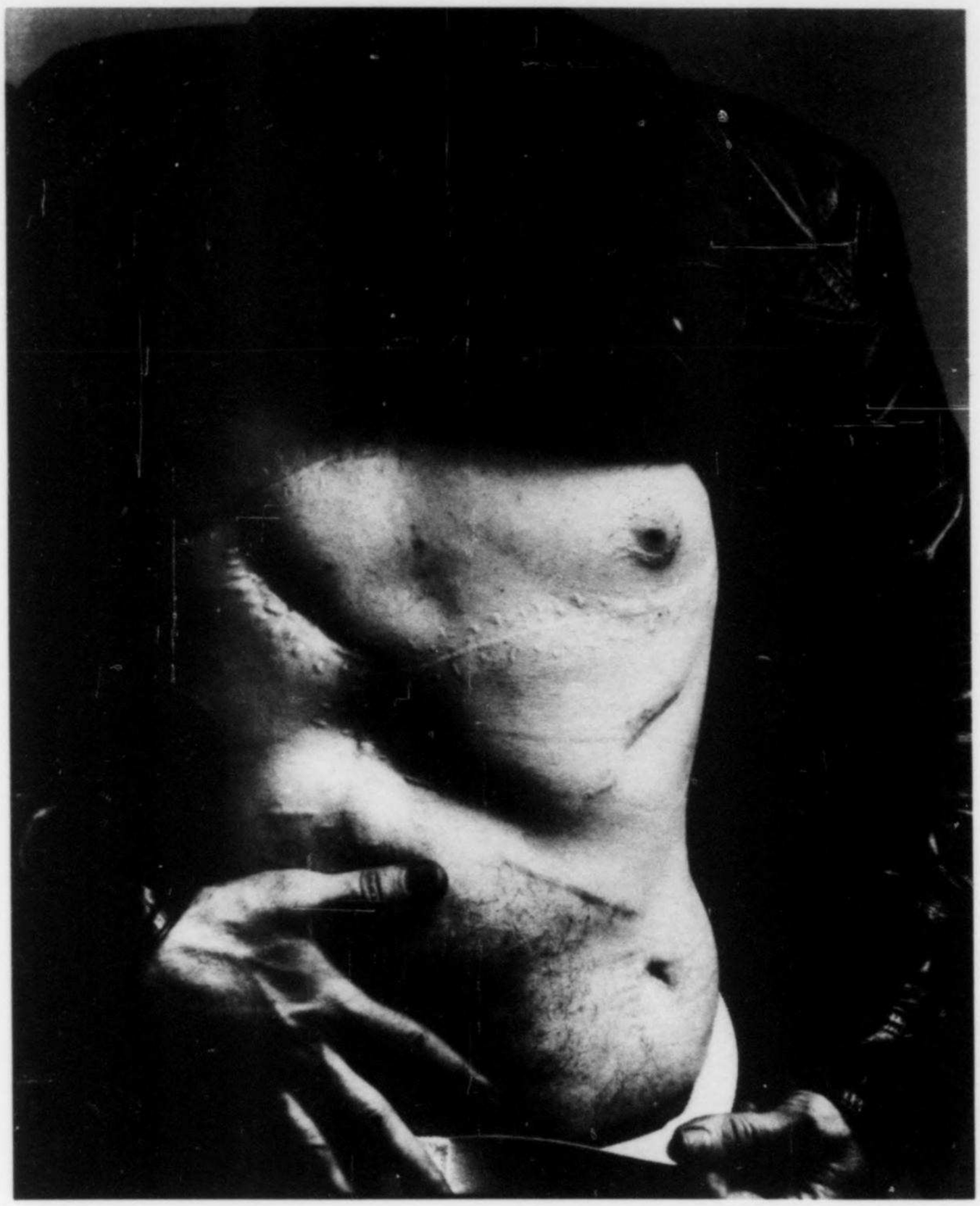
of cubism and constructivism, that they attempted a purification of the expressive component of "art" (one notes the quotation marks); that they led an attack upon the subjectivism of a previous generation, whose relegation of art to preoccupations of leisure time went hand in hand with an excessively sublimated notion of artistic production, issuing in an art that was trivial and derivative, severed from its roots in social collectivity. He then evokes a second line of protest, described as "the attempt to bring together into one entity, singular works or separate fields of creation that were isolated from one another. This entity was to be the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the form of architecture as the sum of all arts." Such was the project of de Stijl and of the Bauhaus in its first period.[3] But this project Moholy defines as produced within a specific historical moment, that of the triumph of specialization. And this we understand retrospectively as the consequence of the division of labor as the dynamic of the industrial revolution. It is with characteristic acuteness that Moholy perceives this ideal as a compensatory reaction to a general fragmentation of existence and therefore incapable of providing the ground for an art of social collectivity, an art of necessity. For it provides, as it were, merely an addition to the present state of things, an increment.

"What we need," he says, "is not the *Gesamtkunstwerk* alongside and separate from which life flows by, but a synthesis of all the vital impulses spontaneously forming itself into the all-embracing *Gesamtwerk* (life) which abolishes all isolation, in which all individual accomplishments proceed from a biological necessity and culminate in a universal necessity."[4]

There would seem to have been two major, antithetical programs for the achievement of this radically utopian aesthetic in our century. One might call them, roughly speaking, those of the Yogi and the Commissar, casting Eisenstein as Commissar and recasting (with the respect and apologies due a Zen Master) John Cage as the Yogi. I wish, however, to consider a third attempt of the recent past, one whose deviant logic was preeminently of our time, producing a mediate or degraded version of this project. I have in mind a site of artistic production perspicuously exempt, if only for a brief period of time, from industrial criteria of production, modes of distribution, and forms of commodification. It was, as it happens, a film studio. I shall not, however, be proposing, in the manner of Moholy's contemporaries, the cinema as the ultimate *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Rather, I shall consider the structure and dynamics of this site of production as a late variant upon Moholy's model, subject, however, to the powerful constraints and perversions of its particular moment within late capitalism.

The site and period, then, are those of Andy Warhol's old Factory, described by Warhol himself as those in which "we made movies just to make them" rather than that in which he was producing "feature-length movies that

3. Ibid., p. 17.
4. Ibid.



regular theaters would want to show." It is the shot from Valerie Solanis's gun in 1968 that marks the boundary between two sites and modes of production, the moment of replacement of a previous artisanal mode of production by a systematic division of labor. When, as has been noted, Warhol began increasingly to delegate authority as in the later films, his participation was limited to the work of financing and publicity. *The Chelsea Girls* is the major work that concludes the first period. After 1968, Warhol assumed the role and function of the *grand couturier*, whose signature sells or licenses perfumes, stockings, and household linens manufactured elsewhere.[5] Warhol's "business art" found its apogee in the creation of a label that could be affixed to the feature films made under the

5. Warhol is known to have placed the following advertisement in *The Village Voice* in 1966: "I'll endorse with my name any of the following; clothing, AC-DC, cigarettes, small tapes, sound equipment, Rock 'N Roll records, anything, film and film equipment, Food, Helium, WHIPS. Money; love and kisses Andy Warhol. EL 5-9941." This text is reproduced in Patrick S. Smith, *Andy Warhol's Art and Films* (Ann Arbor: U.M.I. Research Press, 1986), p. 167.

Richard Avedon. Andy Warhol, Artist, New York City, 8/20/69. *1969.*

direction of Paul Morrissey. And Morrissey's role in the suppression of films made prior to his accession to power is linked to the marketing of the new product, coded with an eye to industrial norms.

*

Consider, then, the image that provides the title of this text. Dated 1960, this work is, of course, the rendering of an advertisement for surgical trusses, an early instance of Warhol's deployment of the found image; he was to rework it more than once. It is, as well, an image of poignantly proleptic resonance, and we may therefore quite appropriately juxtapose it with *Andy Warhol, Artist, New York*, Richard Avedon's portrait, made in 1969, in which the artist displays the surgical scars that memorialize the assault upon his life made the preceding year by the Executor-in-Chief of the Society to Cut Up Men.

I shall, however, in what follows, be rehearsing neither the Orphic nor the hagiographic iconography that this juxtaposition may appear to generate. More significantly, these two images mark the limits of Warhol's intervention as a major and pivotal force within American independent cinema. And it is through that intervention that one may trace the passage, within that cinema, from the body's analytic representation to one of synthetic incorporation.

Most simply put, the notion of rupture will center on the break within American independent cinema in the representation of the body as effected by Warhol and the consequences of that break: the passage from a cinema postulated on the primacy of the part object to that of the whole body, in its parallel passage from one of assertive editing to that of long shot/*plan séquence*. What later followed was the development of a cinema tending to incorporeality, as in the work of Snow and Frampton—to "the taste's quick glance of incorporeal sight," a cinema of literal textuality.[6]

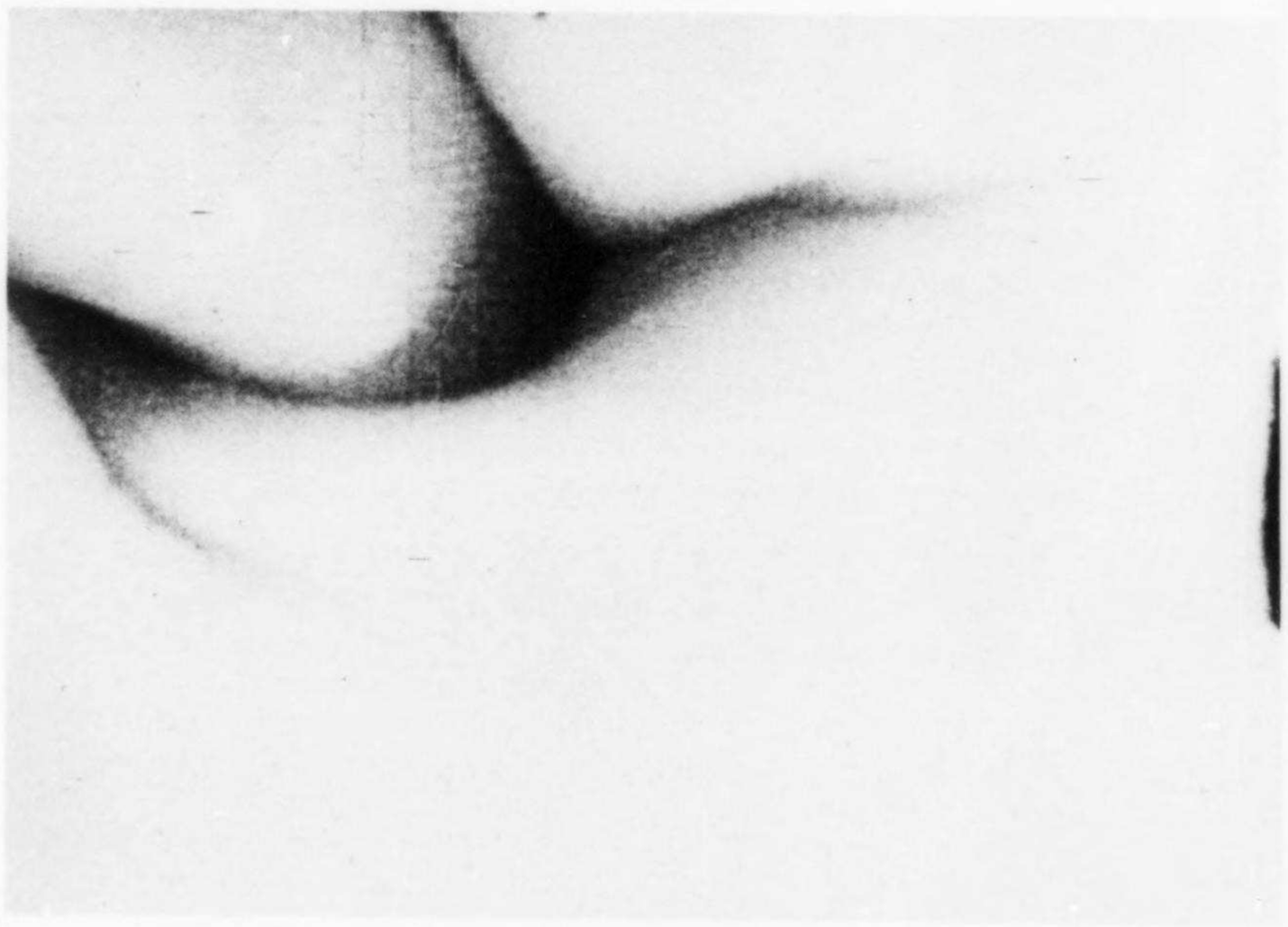
If it may be claimed that the desire for the mode of representation which came to be that of cinema is grounded in the phantasmic projection of the female body,[7] we may see confirmation of that claim in a founding myth of cinematic practice, that of Kuleshovian montage. One of its powerfully constituent elements posits the desiring gaze of the male subject, directed at the female object as inferred, synthesized by, the spectator from a sequence of shots of the actor Mosjoukine and an anonymous female. We have, however, an even more impressively demonstrative instance of cinema's synthetic properties, its construction of the female body, the ideal object of desire as synthesized, once again, by the viewer, as if inevitably, from the juxtaposition of part objects.

6. The increasingly sublimated erotics of avant-garde film practice in the 1970s and '80s culminates in the production of Hollis Frampton's *Poetic Justice* and Michael Snow's *This is*, both films composed entirely of text to be read from the screen.

7. This claim is advanced in Annette Michelson, "On the Eve of the Future: The Reasonable Facsimile and the Philosophical Toy," *October* 29 (Summer 1984), pp. 3–20.

Willard Maas. Geography of the Body. *1943.*

This second, alternative founding moment is inscribed within a tradition of Russian literature that extends from Gogol to Bely. Indeed, in Bely's *Petersburg* (1912), we find the following: "Alexander Ivanovich was thinking that features of Zoya Zacharovna's face had been taken from several beautiful women: the nose from one, the mouth from another, the ears from a third beauty. But all brought together, they were irritating."[8] In this passage Bely anticipates, as well, the early spectator's uneasy reaction to assertive editing and the extreme close-up.



In the United States, a new era in the representation of the body begins in the period following the Second World War, with the early films of Maya Deren, to be sure, but perhaps more pertinently for present purposes, in the work of collaboration between the filmmaker Willard Maas and the British poet George Barker, at that time resident in New York. Through the succession of extreme close-ups in which skin, fold, membrane, hair, limb, and member are transformed into plateaus, prairies, pools, caves, crags, and canyons of uncharted territory, *Geography of the Body*, produced, like *Meshes in the Afternoon*, in 1943, develops the grand metaphor of the body as landscape. Estranged, the body

8. Andrei Bely, *Petersburg*, trans. Robert Maguire and John Malmsted (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 210.

appears as an "America," a "Newfoundland," its lineaments suffused with the minatory thrill of exploration. Through close-up, magnification, and patterns of editing, this film text works to disarticulate, to reshape and transform the body into landscape, thereby converging, in a manner that is both curious and interesting, with that filmic microscopy which now offers us passage through the canals of the reproductive and cardiovascular systems.

It was the project of Stan Brakhage to chart this landscape, and, through hyperbolization of montage, radical suppression of the establishing shot, and systematic use of close-up, to expand, with a view to its cosmic extrapolations, the disarticulated body's analogical virtuality, as in *Prelude, Dog Star Man* (1964). And we can now clearly see that the trajectory initiated in *Window Water Baby Moving* (1958), the early masterwork produced to document the birth of his first child, culminates in *The Act of Seeing With One's Own Eyes* (1974), filmed in the Pittsburgh morgue. Brakhage now offered the autopsist's literal, manual dismembering of the human cadaver: the cutting up of men and women.

There is a dominant trend toward this representation of a body-in-pieces, of what is in Kleinian theory termed the part object, that runs, like an insistent thread, a sustained subtext, through much of American artistic production (and through its painting and sculpture in particular) in the decades of the 1950s and '60s. Art objects as part objects, then. Locating the sources, we encounter, once again, in a surprisingly wide range of work, the haunting and seminal presence to whom artists of that period paid, in varying forms and degrees of intent, a

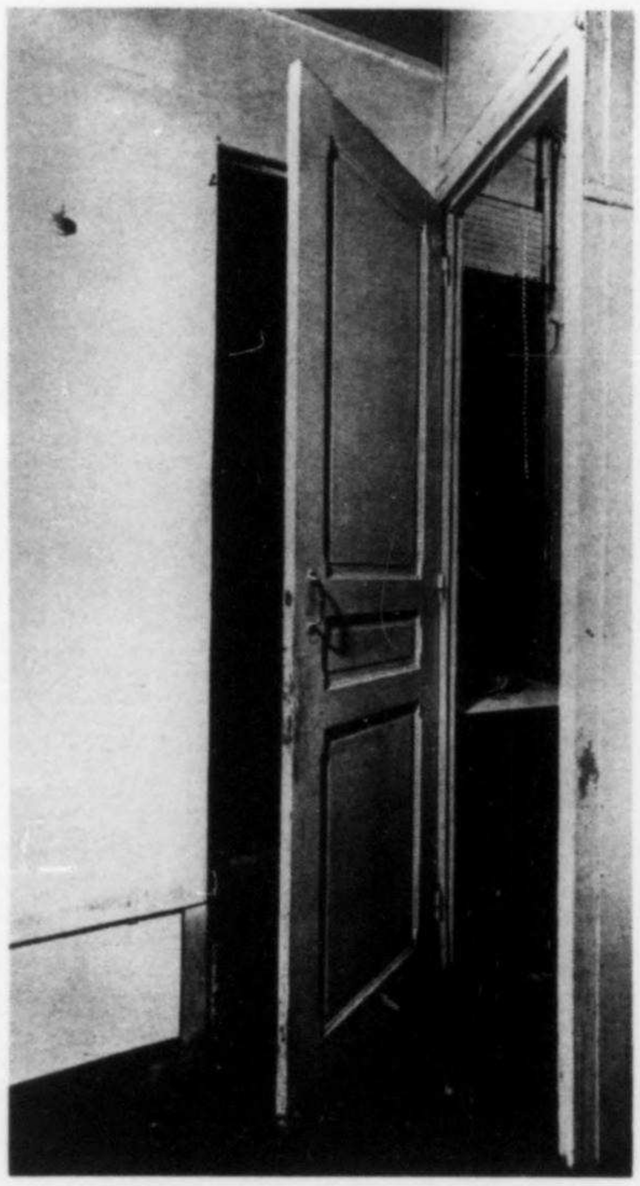
Mike Chikiris. Stan Brakhage filming
The Act of Seeing. . . .

steadily intensifying tribute: that of Marcel Duchamp. This effort of location entails consideration of a few works of emblematic import.

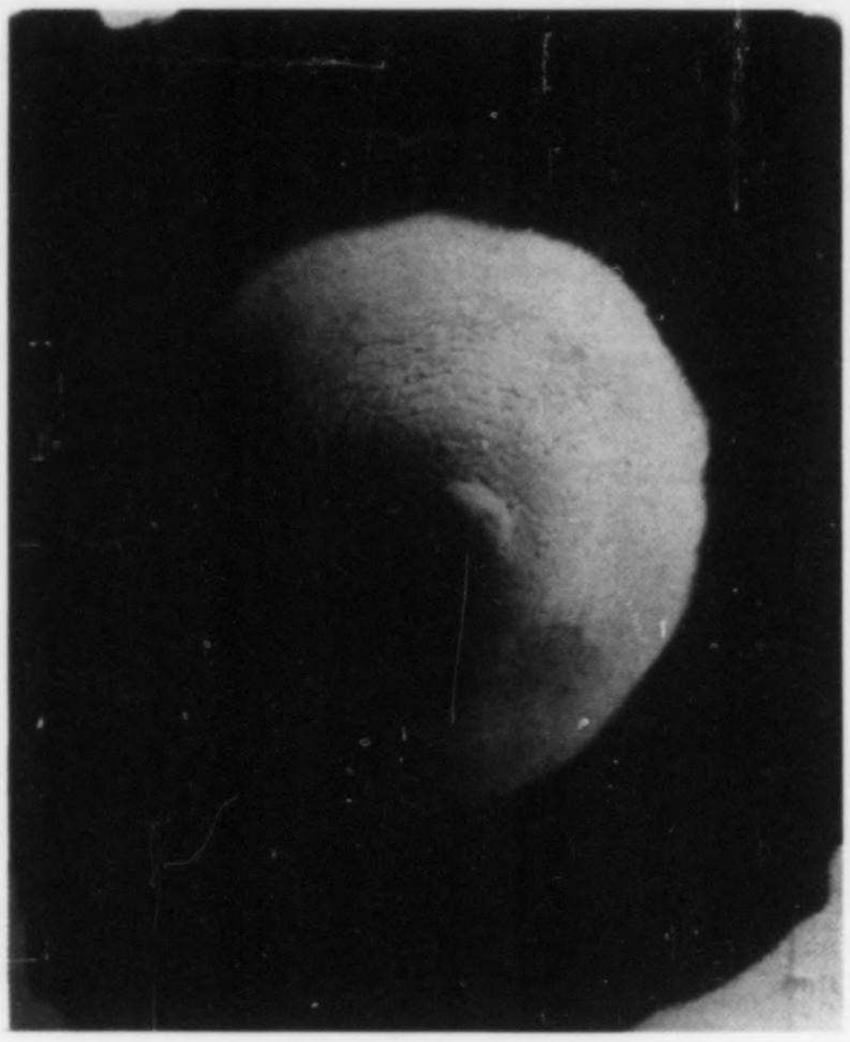
The first of these is *11, rue Larrey*, that door which, in defiance of the apothegm, stands both open and closed, at one and the same time. Reflecting now, more than a quarter century later, upon the old Factory, one recalls that site whose threshold was indeed marked by a door both open and closed: the space in which one could, as the saying goes, "swing both ways," where stern imperatives of choice, the strict polarity of either/or, reified in the austere ethos of abstract expressionism, were abrogated, displaced by what is currently termed "sexual preference." In this arena, whose ecumenicity accommodated homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, asexuality, *MARiée* and *CELibataire* were daily conjoined, and frequently within the prototypical single body, single persona.

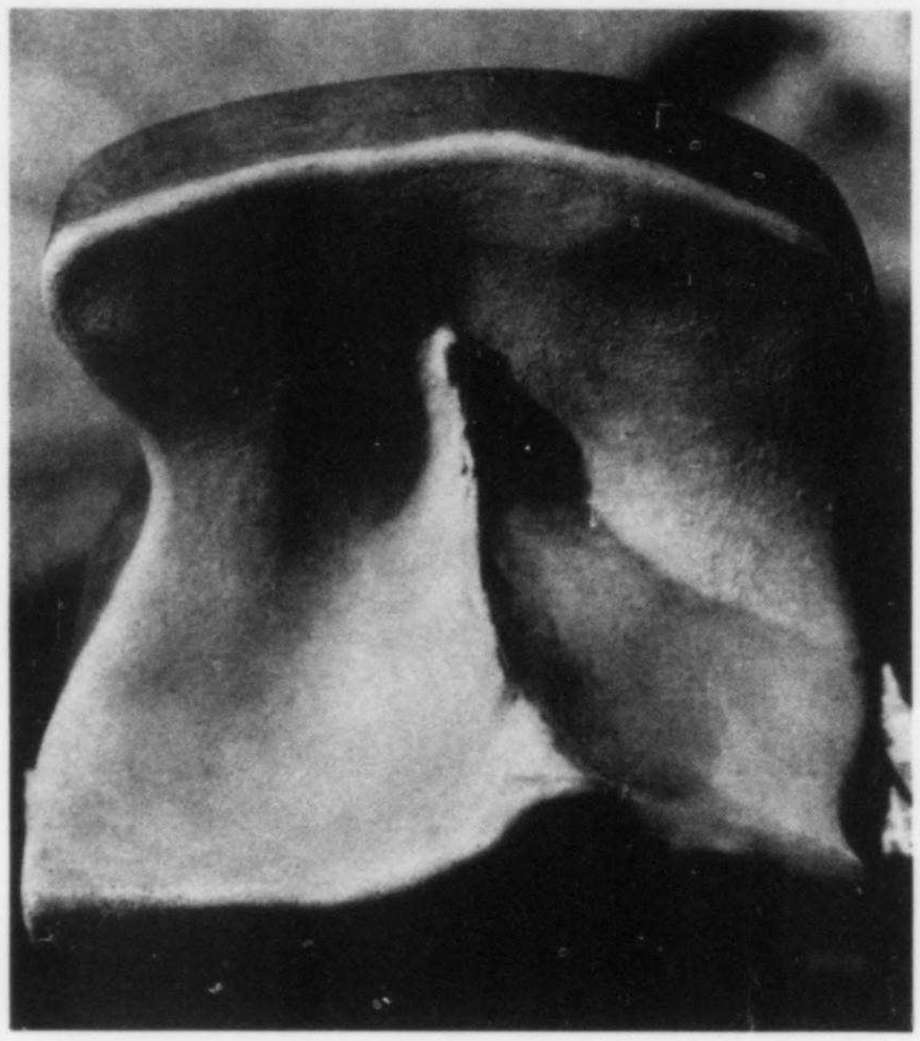
Duchamp has offered us, however, in addition to this emblem of indifference, another set of images, representations of that supreme part object, the prime object of infantile identification and projection: the breast. *Prière de toucher* (1947) was to be followed by the sculptural renderings of the male and female sexual parts, *Objet-Dard* (1951) and *Feuille de Vigne Femelle* (1950). And we are, I shall want to claim, justified in seeing *Rotary Demi-Sphere (Precision Optics)* (1925) as a prototype of *Anemic Cinema* (1927), which conflates, in its spirals' alternately receding and projecting movement, penis and breast—often identified by the infant as one and split off in impulses of rage and/or love. I

Marcel Duchamp. Marginal notation from The Green Box.



Marcel Duchamp. 11 rue Larrey. *1927.*



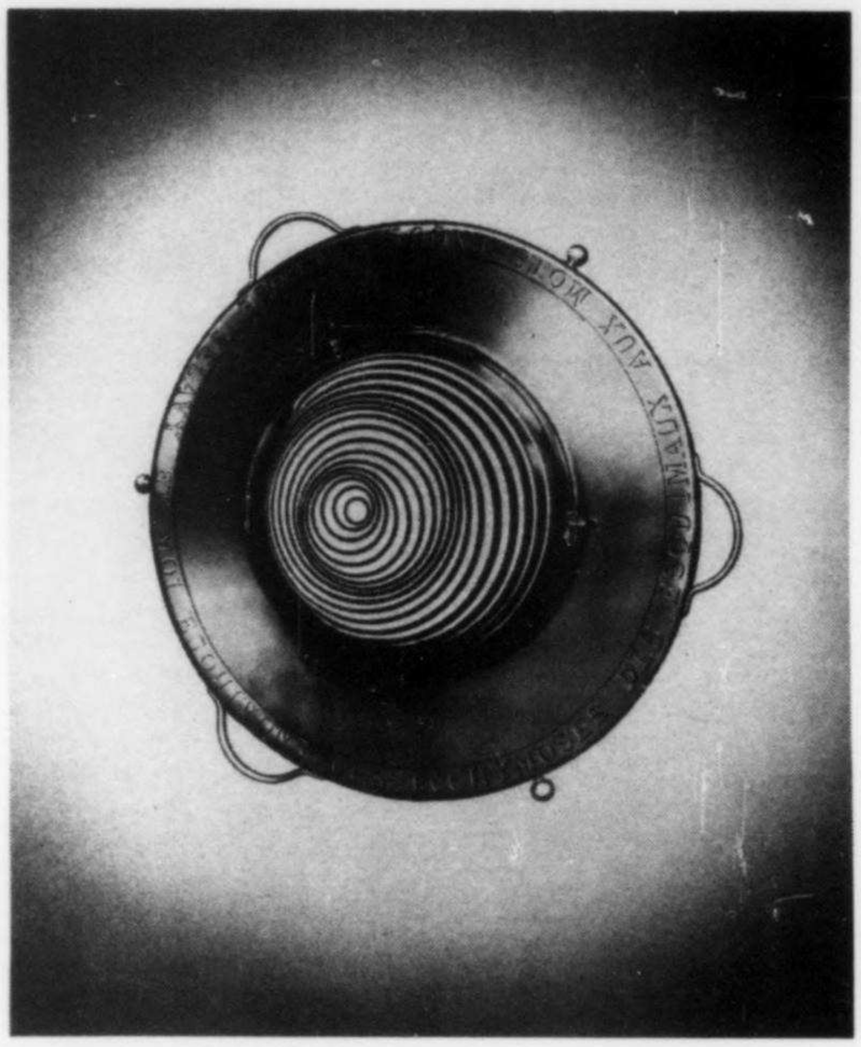


refer here to the theorization of the part object by Melanie Klein, founded upon that of Karl Abraham in his attribution of the importance for the child of the relation to part objects such as the breast (or feces) in his work on Melancholia.

Klein later posits the initial introjection, by the child, of the mother's breast and a constant splitting of its good (giving) and bad (rejecting) aspects, aimed at introjection of a good breast and the projection and annihilation of a bad one. Moreover—and this will have bearing upon one's readings of Duchamp and of other artists whose work concerns us—the cannibalistic relation to the breast is, during the second oral stage, transferred to the penis as well; both are revealed in significant case histories as the objects of deepest oral desires. Klein was to go on to observe that the sadistic, cannibalistic fantasies and anxieties aggravated by weaning would lead the child to displace its interest onto the whole of the mother's body, so that a primitive Oedipal envy and jealousy is thereby added to the oral sadism. And a urethral and anal sadism, added to the oral, would lead to the stage described by Melanie Klein as the stage of maximum sadism.

> Every other vehicle of sadistic attack that the child employs, such as anal sadism and muscular sadism is, in the first instance, leveled against its mother's frustrating breast, but it is soon directed to the inside of her body, which thus becomes at once the target of every highly intensified and effective instrument of sadism. In early analysis, these anal-sadistic, destructive desires of the small child constantly alternate with desires to destroy its mother's body by devouring and wetting it, but their original aim of eating up and destroying her breast is always discernable in them.[9]

9. Hanna Segal, *Melanie Klein* (New York: Viking Press, 1980), p. 46.



Marcel Duchamp. Prière de toucher. *1947.*

Marcel Duchamp. Feuille de Vigne Femelle. *1951.*

Marcel Duchamp. Rotative Demi-sphère (Optique de Precision). *1925.*

The Kleinian scenario of infantile development is, of course, that of a horror feature, the longest-running one known to us. Klein and Hanna Segal were to go on to elaborate upon the notion of children's art and art in general as involving the desire to repair and make restitution to the object of destructive fantasies.

Our most compelling point of entry into the consideration of the role of the part object within the art of the mid-1950s through the '60s is to be found in the work of Eva Hesse. This choice is dictated by the conviction that it was the major achievement of a woman artist, through her obsessive constitution of a repertory of part objects (and this within the minimalist moment) to have produced the elements of a radical renewal of the sculptural enterprise, of its grammar and its materials. It is this primal image, the archetypal part object, that is more generally inscribed within the broadest range of late 1950s and '60s American artistic production, in forms and variations so diverse as almost to defy inventory. Even as it ranged from the work of Kenneth Noland to that of Jasper Johns, its presence was effectively masked by the dominant critical and theoretical discourse of the period. In reading Johns's celebrated and enigmatic *Target with Plaster Casts* (1955), we discern, in addition to the part objects cast and placed in the upper-level compartments, the image of the main panel as more than a representation of "surface."

It is therefore interesting to consider the reading Leo Steinberg offers of this work in 1963, engaged as he then was in a pioneering critique of the claims of "formalist" criticism. Remarking on the manner in which Johns's subjects tend to be "whole entities" or complete systems seen from no particular angle, Steinberg infers a refusal to manifest subjectivity. Turning to *Target* and noting Nicholas Calas's criticism—"One-ness is killed either by repetition or fragmentation"—Steinberg records Johns's explanation of the inserted anatomical frag-

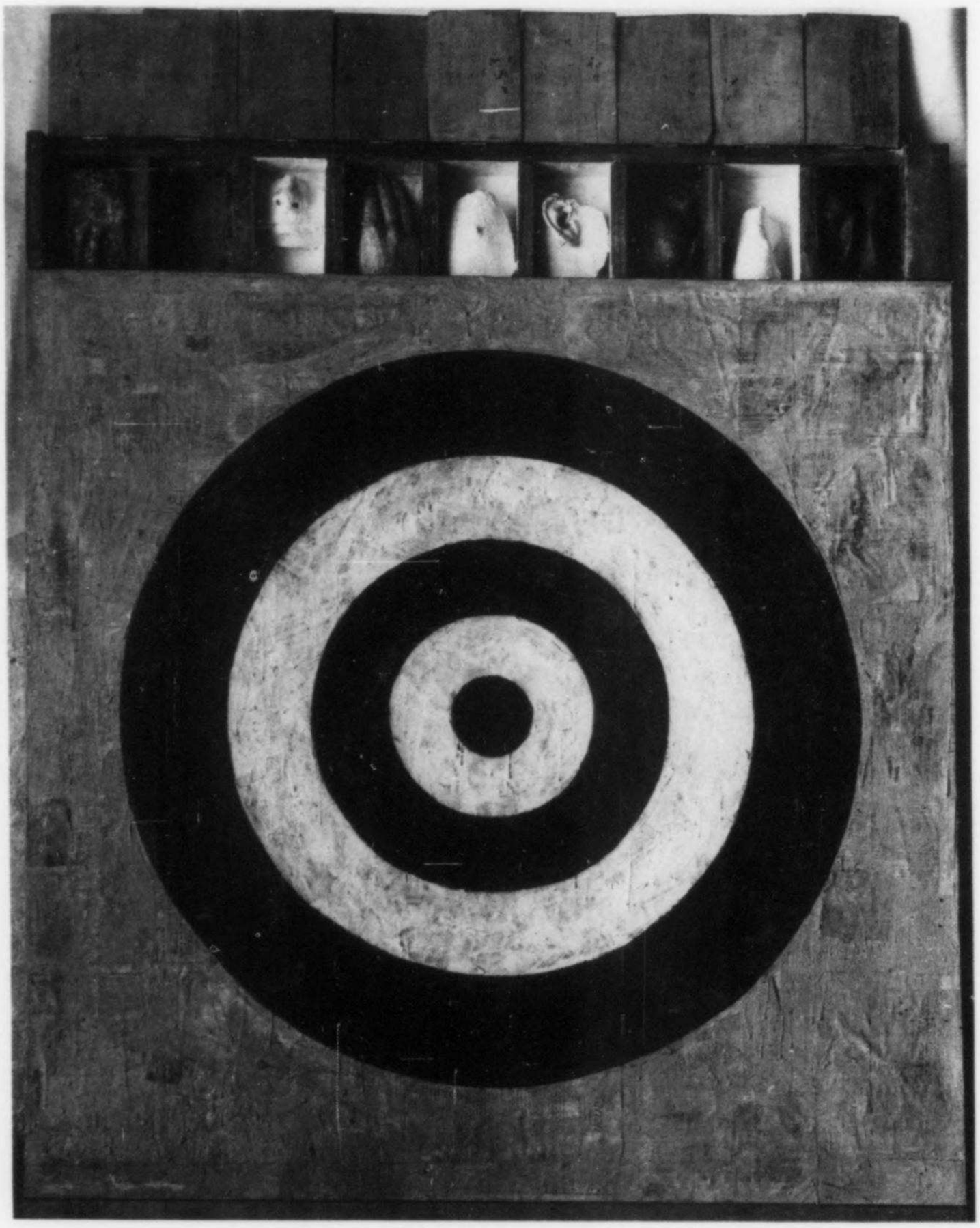
ments as the casual adoption of readymades (they "happened" to be around in the studio), and goes on to remark on "the fact that these anatomical parts are not whole, that only so much of them is inserted as will fit in each box, that they are clipped to size." From this he concludes that "the human body is not the ostensible subject. The subject remains the bull's-eye in its wholeness, for which the anatomical fragments provide the emphatic foil."[10]

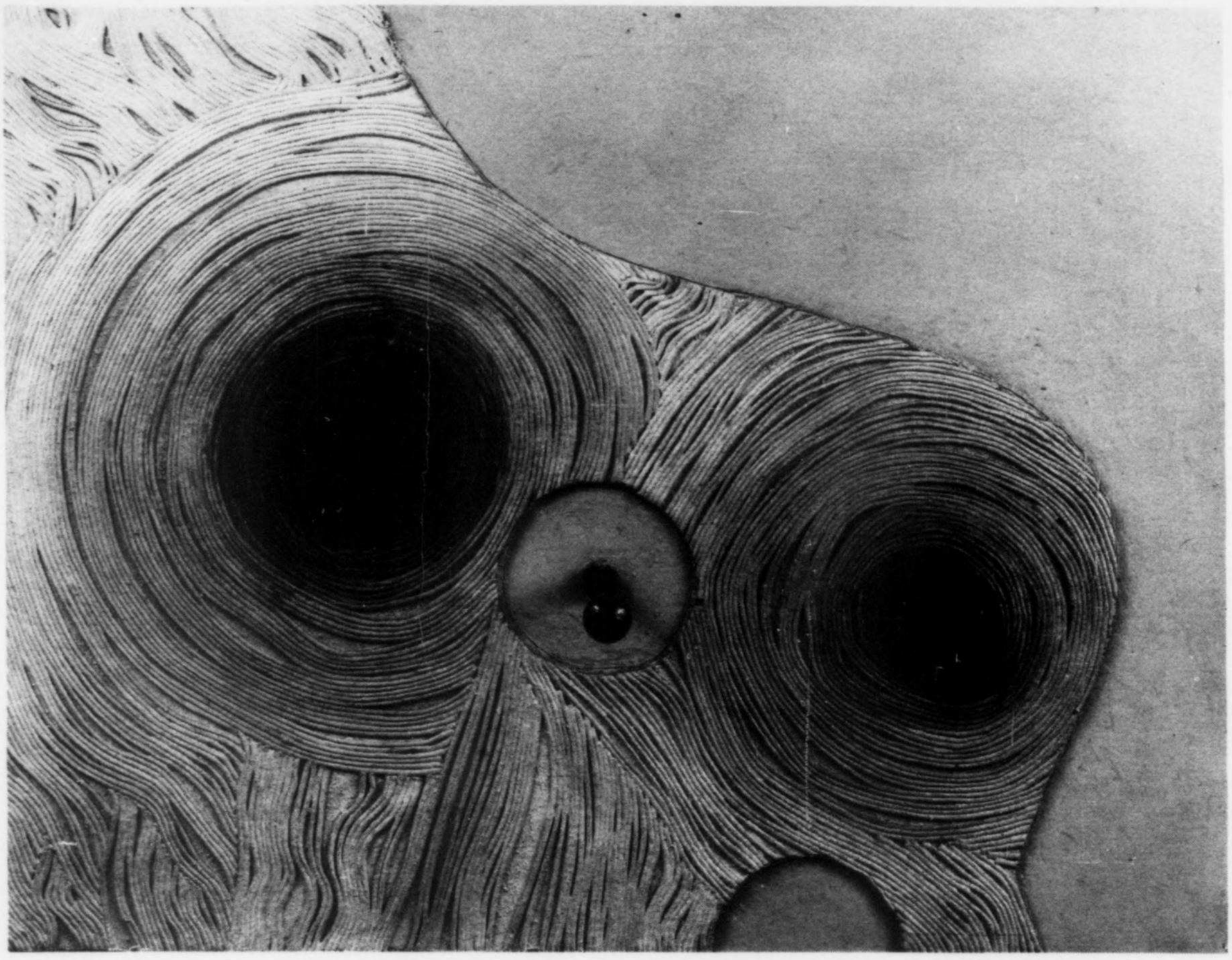
What then follows is the account of a verbal jousting between Steinberg and Johns, with Johns characteristically insisting on the absence of either overt or implicit emotional content, of his desire (as seen by Steinberg) to excise meaning from them.

10. Leo Steinberg, "Jasper Johns: The First Seven Years of His Art," in *Other Criteria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 37.

Jasper Johns. Target with Plaster Casts. *1955.*

Eva Hesse. 2 in 1. *1965.*





But Steinberg is characteristically uncomfortable with this position, for "when affective human elements are conspicuously used, and yet not used as subjects, their subjugation becomes a subject that's got out of control. At any rate, no similar fracturing of known wholes has occurred since in Johns's work."[11] And "the assumption of a realism of absolute impersonality always does fail—if taken literally. That assumption is itself a way of feeling; it is the ascetic passion which sustains the youthful drive of a youthful Velásquez, or a Courbet, while they shake the emotional slop from themselves and their models."[12]

Against Steinberg's reading of his paintings as works of absence, Johns's contention leaves Steinberg with a feeling of almost palpable dissatisfaction. He has certainly circled in closer to these elusive works, but he has not, as it were, quite grasped them. But hasn't he passed too rapidly over the central panel, that of the target, the bull's-eye? For the target is surely another conventionalized variant of that primal object whose interest is, in this instance, heightened for us in that it is represented as the implicit object of aggression.

11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 52.

Bearing in mind this consideration of the part object, epitomized in a range of practices—in those, among others, of Duchamp, Johns, Noland, Hesse, and in the editing patterns of Brakhage, as inheritor of the "classical" or postrevolutionary tradition of montage—I return to the Factory, reentering through that swinging door. I do so, however, by way of a detour.

*

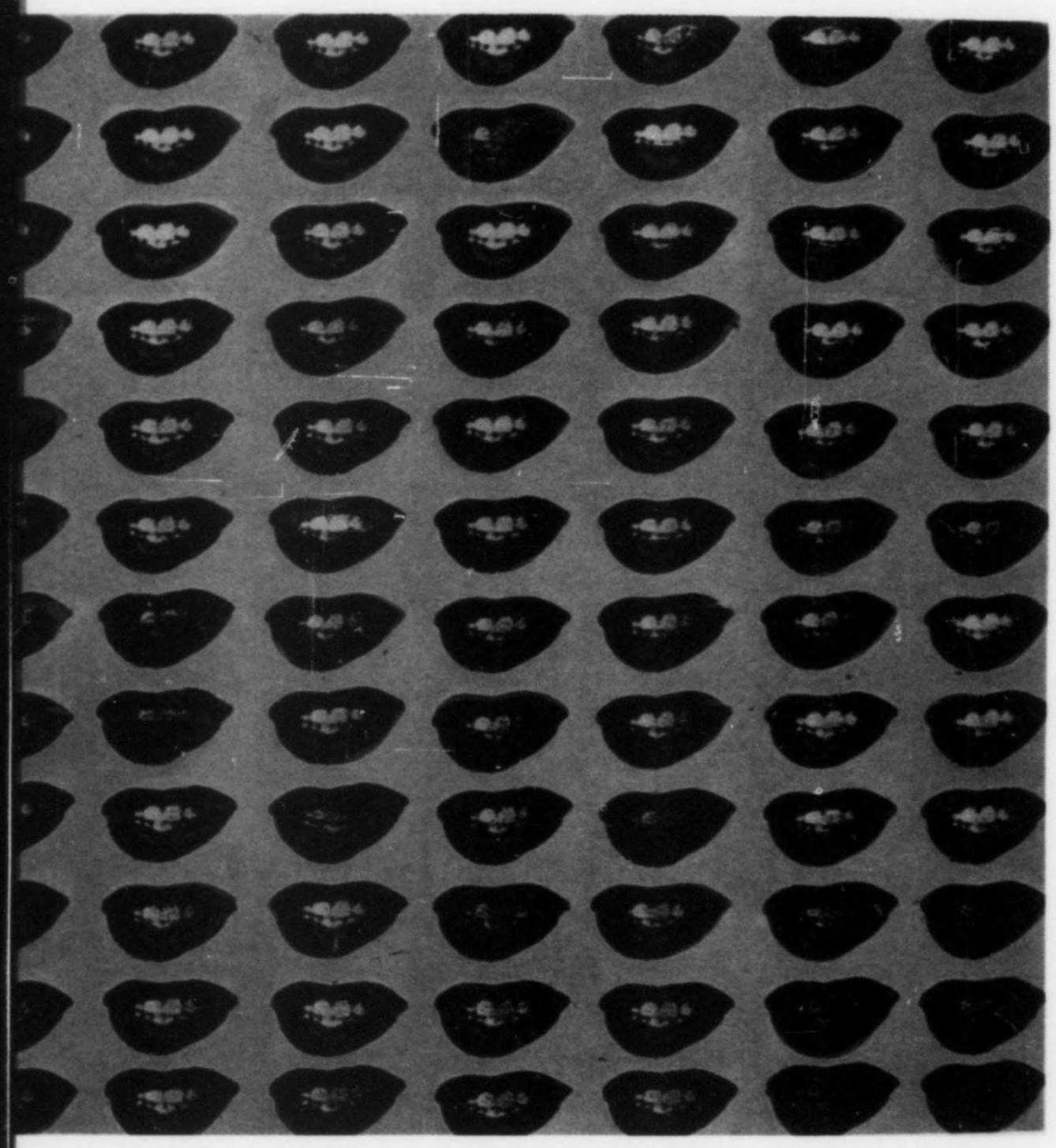
There is a story—apocryphal perhaps—of Verlaine's impoverished last years, of the Paris garret and its meager furnishings, entirely covered in gilt paint. To the visitor, bewildered as to the how and why of this fancy, Verlaine's reply was, "But this is how poets should live!" Grandeur, as tribute to and warrant of the artist's vocation, was not, one imagines, the point of Billy Linich's decoration of Warhol's studio walls. That would, in fact, have been distinctly at odds with the aesthetic of the tacky which prevailed in this latter-day version of Bohemia. Rather, tin foil bestowed, as gold would not, the minimal reflective potential upon surfaces, which could transform the Factory into a dim Hall of

Andy Warhol. Marilyn Monroe's Lips. *1962.*

Mirrors, redoubling in its confusion of actor and audience the narcissistic dynamic of the site's theatrical economy.

Here was a factory located outside the codes and standards that govern and sustain industrial labor. To understand the old Factory is to absorb that paradox and to reconstruct a world in which the prohibitions and restrictions that determine and sustain the structures of production are bracketed.

We reconstruct, then, a milieu in which, as well, the prohibitions and restrictions that govern the structure of everyday life are suspended, together with the decorum that underwrites traditional forms of social hierarchy. From this world are excised the pity, piety, and etiquette linked to those forms. Here distances between persons are abrogated and eccentricity is exalted. Parodistic expression defines the center, the core of a continuous representation governed by a principle of inversion. Here the world is seen in reverse, as it were, or askew, or upside down. Travesty and humiliation are central tropes of representation. And through this place, from time to time, came the sound of laughter, shrill and ambivalent, both mordant and revitalizing, both aggressive and self-destructive.



Such was the milieu of the old Factory in its prelapsarian era (1960–68), the site of Warhol's most productive period. In that world, choice, risk, transgression had lost their ground; the enveloping air breathed, sanctioned, enabled, the abolition of those interdictions that constitute their terrain. The old Factory of East Forty-seventh Street was, in the expansionist climate of the early 1960s, preeminently the site upon which Duchamp's door of *11, rue Larrey* opened to reveal the din and clutter, the revelry and theatrics of Bakhtinian carnival, as described in the great works on Rabelais and Dostoyevsky. The old Factory, the site of Warhol's recasting of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, solicits analysis in terms of Bakhtin's master category, defined as the "sum total of all diverse festivities of the carnival type."[13]

One recalls the manner in which carnival, in its most general form, is defined as syncretic pageantry of a ritualistic sort, producing variants and nuances that vary with period and with differences of cultic origin and individual festivity. As Bakhtin puts it, carnival has "worked out an entire language of symbolic concretely sensuous forms—from large and complex mass actions to individual gestures." And most significantly, "As theatrical representation, it abolishes the dividing line between performers and spectators, since everyone becomes an active participant and everyone communes in the carnival act, which is neither contemplated nor, strictly speaking, performed; it is lived."

Within this life, several particular modalities are distinguished. Those of especial relevance here are: 1. Abolition of distance and establishment of free and familiar contact and exchange; 2. Eccentricity; 3. Mésalliance; 4. Profanation. In carnival, behavior and discourse are unmoored, as it were, freed from the bonds of the social formation. Thus, in carnival, age, social status, rank, and property lose their powers, have no place; familiarity of exchange is heightened.

Linked to this is the possibility of "carnivalistic mésalliances": "All things that were once self-enclosed, disunified, distanced . . . are drawn into carnivalistic contacts and combinations. Carnival brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, . . . the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid." And, of course, the high with the low.

It thus becomes that nexus within which mésalliances are formed. As Kathy Acker has pointed out in a recent account of the Factory, "the uptown world of society and fashion" here joined that of prostitution and the general "riffraff of Forty-second street, that group which at the same time no decent person, even a hippy, would recognize as being human." It was in this social nexus that Edie Sedgewick (among other "girls of good family") enjoyed her brief celebrity. Here the hustler could play Tarzan to Jane, "sort of."

And since in carnival, parodistic images parody one another, variously and

13. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), p. 122. This and succeeding characterizations of carnival are drawn from pp. 122–24 of chapter four.

Andy Warhol in the old Factory.

from varying points of view, Roman parody is described as resembling "an entire system of crooked mirrors, elongating, diminishing, distorting in various directions and to various degrees." We may say that the tinfoiled studio literalized this practice. More than that, it was Warhol's strength to have revised the notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, displacing it, redefining it as site of production, and recasting it in the mode of carnival, thereby generating for our time the most trenchant articulation of relation between cultures, high and low. In the picture of carnival as a system of representation, we can recognize the old Factory, that hall of mirrors whose virtual space generated improbable encounters and alliances, eliciting the extravagant acts, gestures, "numbers," that composed the serial parody of Hollywood production that overtakes the Warholian filmography of 1960–68.

It is, however, Bakhtin's definition of the essential and defining carnivalistic act that completes and confirms one's characterization of the old Factory as carnivalistic system. That act is "*the mock crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king.*" Italicizing the phrase, he insists upon its presence in all festivities of the carnival type—in the saturnalia as in European carnival and festival of fools.

> Under this ritual act of decrowning a king lies the very core of the carnival sense of the world—*the pathos of shifts and changes, of death and renewal*. Carnival is the festival of all-annihilating and all-renewing time. Thus might one express the basic concept of carnival. But we emphasize again: this is not an abstract thought but a living sense of the world, expressed in the concretely sensuous forms . . . of the ritual act.

The crowning ritual is, however, invested with a dualism, and ambivalence; its shifts celebrate the "joyful relativity of all structure and order, of all authority." For

> Crowning already contains the idea of immanent decrowning: it is ambivalent from the very start. And he who is crowned is the antipode of a real king, a slave or a jester; this act, as it were, opens and sanctifies the inside-out world of carnival. In the rituals of crowning . . . the symbols of authority that are handed over to the newly crowned king and the clothing in which he is dressed—all become ambivalent and acquire a veneer of joyful relativity; they become almost stage props. . . . From the very beginning, a decrowning glimmers through the crowning.

And Bakhtin stresses the manner in which, for the medieval festival of fools, mock priests, bishops, and popes were chosen *in place of* a king. It is indeed in the climactic sequence of *The Chelsea Girls* (1968)—the crowning work of Warhol's significant film production—that the Factory, which generated the continuous

parodistic procession of divas, queens, and "superstars," produces, like the world of the medieval carnival, as its culminating ritual its own *parodia sacra*: the election of a pope. Ondine, the virtuoso performer at the center of the film's most brilliantly pyrotechnical sequence, does indeed insist that he has been *elected* Pope.

He comes on with his paper bag,

> from which (with much noisy crinkling on the sound track) he extracts a syringe. Using his belt to tie his arm, he proceeds through the methodical ritual of giving himself a shot of Methedrine. . . . Ondine then turns to the camera and asks if he should begin. "Okay? Okay. Well now, let's see." He arranges himself more comfortably. "As you are all well aware, uh, I am the Pope. And, uh, the Pope has many duties. It's a crushing job. I can't tell you. And—uhhh—I've come down here today in order to give you all some kind of inside view of my life, and what I've been doing with my uhhhhh"—there is a long tracking pause—"Popage? Right, my Popage. Not just the Pope as Pope, but the Pope as a man. Right? First of all, you will undoubtedly want to know who, or what, I am Pope of. Well, uhhhh," a mock faggot groan, running his fingers through his hair. "Jesus! There's nobody left. Who's left?"
>
> Time is being filled. . . . But now, back on the left, a woman walks on; somebody new has come to give her confession to Ondine, as Ingrid Superstar did at the beginning of the film. As she sits down and begins to talk, something seems slightly wrong, slightly off . . . somewhat smirkily, she sets out to question the Pope's spiritual authority. She announces that she is hesitant to confess. Exactly Ondine's meat. "My dear, there is nothing you cannot say to me. Nothing. Now tell me, why can't you confess?" The inattentive ear hears the remark fall: "I can't confess to you because you're such a phony. *I'm* not trying to be anyone."

Ondine replies,

> "Well, let me tell you something, my dear little Miss Phony. You are a phony. You're a disgusting phony. May God forgive you," and Ondine slaps her again, more violently, then leaps up in a paroxysmic rage. With his open hands he begins to strike the cowering bewildered girl around the head and shoulders. "You Goddamned phony, get the hell off this set. Get out."

Ondine then breaks down and

> circles the room, hysterical—"I'm sorry, I just can't go on, this is just too much, I don't want to go on"—it is the longest camera movement

> in the film. Her husband is a loathsome fool, she is a loathsome fool, and so it goes. Phase by slow, self-justifying phase, Ondine, who has been beside himself, slowly returns to himself—that is, to the camera. And, as he calms himself, the camera reasserts its presence."[14]

Ondine's interlocutor, in questioning his papal authenticity, has transgressed the limits, violated the canon, opened a breach in the regime of carnival, the ground of Ondine's papal incarnation. If Ondine cannot go on, it is because that breach is, indeed, a grave one, involving not merely an error of style, a *faux pas*, a loss of "cool," but a radical assault upon the Factory's regime of representation and, by implication, upon its spatiotemporal axes.

The time of carnivalistic representation is that of undifferentiated distension. This carnivalistic Factory constructed, enclosed within a world where time is indeed money, suspended, annulled, in turn, the spatiotemporality of productivity's *ratio*. Carnival time is indeed expended, not clocked or measured. Day and night succeeded each other in scarcely visible sequence within the tinfoiled precinct of the old Factory. And this was fundamental to the sense in which its production had introduced a rupture within filmic practice as well.

The cinema of part objects, epitomized in the hyperbolic montage of Brakhage, had, as we know, been that of aspiration to a continuous present, one image succeeding another at a pace that allows no space or time for recall or anticipation. The spectator is positioned within an hallucinated *now*. Warhol's films generate another kind of temporality, for they take, as it were, their time, the distended time of contemplation and expectation: Robert Indiana slowly, slowly eating what appears to be a single mushroom; a man receiving a blowjob; John Giorno sleeping; the light changing on the Empire State Building. That time, punctuated only by the flares of successive reel endings, is also time in which to wonder: "What's going to happen? Do I have time to go and buy some popcorn or to go to the bathroom without missing anything? How long, oh Lord, how long?" In an industrial film—say Douglas Sirk's *Written on the Wind*—the gap is not irreparable; in *Window Water Baby Moving* it is; for Brakhage's categorical rejection of the narrative codes has, in fact, as one of its primary purposes, to insure that irreparability.

Brakhage saw in Warhol's work an elimination of subjectivity. He, Brakhage, had insisted on a preeminence of subjectivity that required a radical assault upon the space of representation, upon the radical separation of signifier and signified. Not simply the suppression of objects, actors, and actions, but the radical transformation of the spatiotemporality which was their precondition: the elision of their determinant coordinates. In his filmic perpetual present, inspired

14. This account of the climactic sequence of *The Chelsea Girls* is drawn from Stephen Koch's exceptionally fine study, *Stargazer: Andy Warhol's World and his Films* (New York: Marion Boyers, 1985), pp. 94–96.

by the poetics of Gertrude Stein, images and sequences thus follow in the most rapid and hyperbolic fluidity of editing, eliminating anticipation as vector of cinematic construction. Both memory and anticipation are annulled by images as immediate and fugitive as those we call hypnagogic, that come to us in a half-waking state. Like them, Brakhage's films present a nonstop renewal of the perceptual object which resists both observation and cognition. The hypnagogic, as Sartre had noted, can excite attention and perception; "one sees something, but what one sees *is* nothing."

This is a vision that aspired to a pure presence in which the limits separating perception and eidetic imagery dissolve in the light of vision as Revelation, uncorrupted by the Fall that is called the Renaissance, as perpetuated in the very construction of the camera lens.

Brakhage is known to have uttered a howl of rage at the emergence of Warhol's film work—largely, one surmises, because *it seemed not to be work*. But surely, mainly because the old Factory regenerates, as it were, through the

Andy Warhol. Eat. *1963.*

celebrated unblinking voyeuristic stare of Warhol's camera, the time, the temporal axis of expectation along which narrative can be reinstated. What Brakhage foresaw, no doubt (with an anticipatory shudder rather reminiscent of Eisenstein's, just three decades before, at the approach of sound) was that along the temporal axis the narrative syntagma could be restored, and with it the space of the whole body as erotic object of narrative desire.

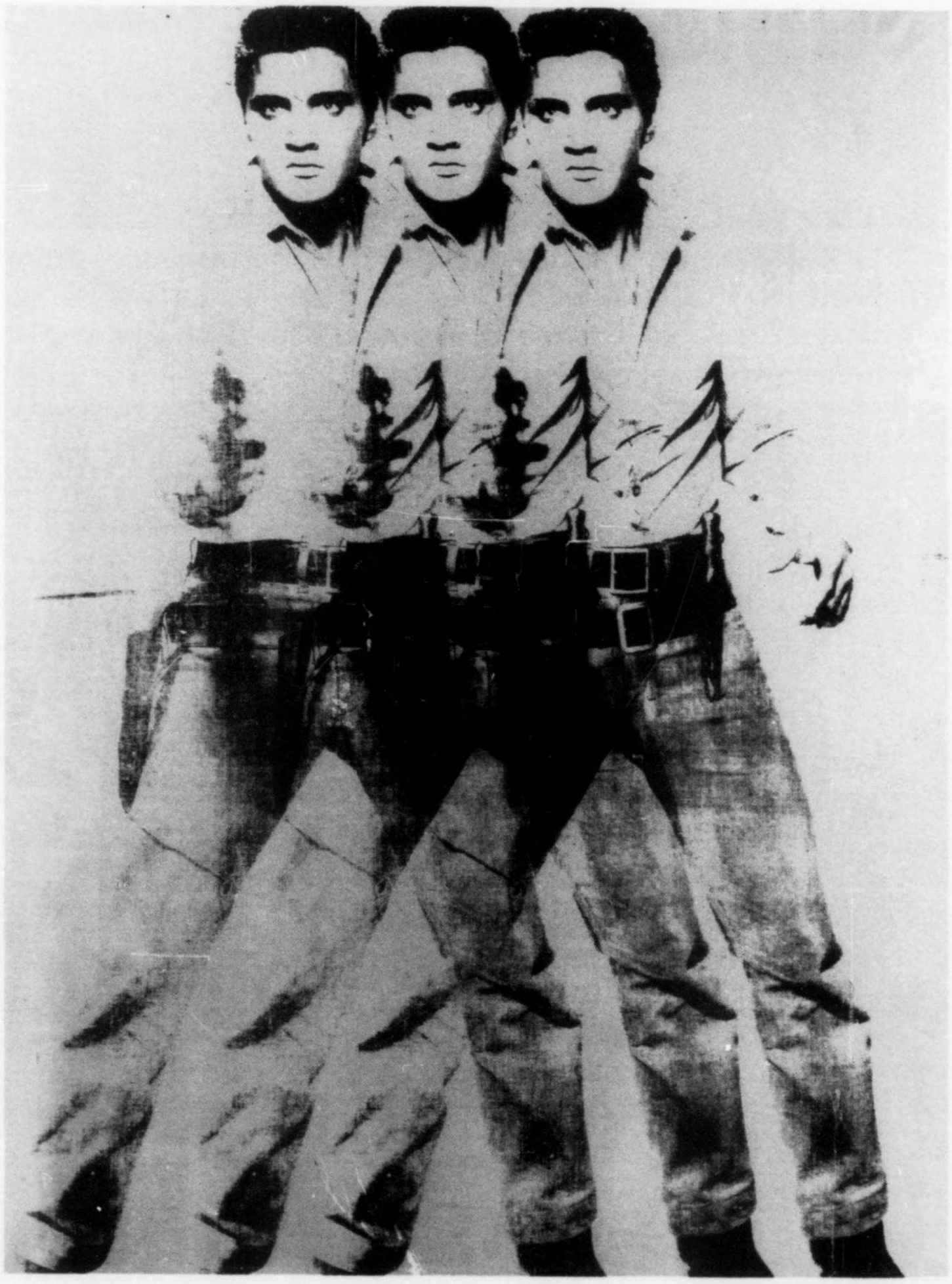
Warhol's parody of the film factory stands, nevertheless, as a powerful gloss on the Frankfurt analysis of the culture industry. To reread that text is to recall to what degree it focuses upon film production as the paradigmatic mode of the culture industry, and how sharply its critique is directed at what we now see as the construction and positioning of the spectator.

For the last decade and a half the discipline of cinema studies has worked to analyze and theorize that positioning. There is, however, a sense in which the recent ascension of cultural studies begins to work against this theorization through its determination to valorize the spectator, now cast as resistant. (One thinks of a recent characterization of Madonna's body as "site of semiotic struggle.") For Warhol, stars were, in Horkheimer and Adorno's phrase, "a pattern around which the world embracing garment is cut," a pattern they warn us "to be followed by those shears of legal and economic justice with which the last projecting ends of thread are cut away." For as they put it, in the note entitled "Mass Society,"

> The opinion that the leveling-down and standardization of men is accompanied on the other hand by a heightened individuality in the "leader" personalities that corresponds to the power they enjoy, is false and an ideological pretense. [Rather they are] focal points at which identical reactions of countless citizens intersect . . . a collective and overexaggerated projection of the powerless ego of each individual.
>
> They look like hairdressers, provincial actors, and hack journalists. Part of their moral influence consists precisely in the fact that they are powerless in themselves but deputize for all the other powerless individuals, and embody the fullness of power for them, without themselves being anything other than the vacant spaces taken up accidentally by power. They are not excepted from the break-up of individuality; all that has happened is that the disintegrated form triumphs in them and to some extent is compensated for its decomposition. The "leaders" have become what they already were in a less developed form throughout the bourgeois era: actors playing the part of leaders.[15]

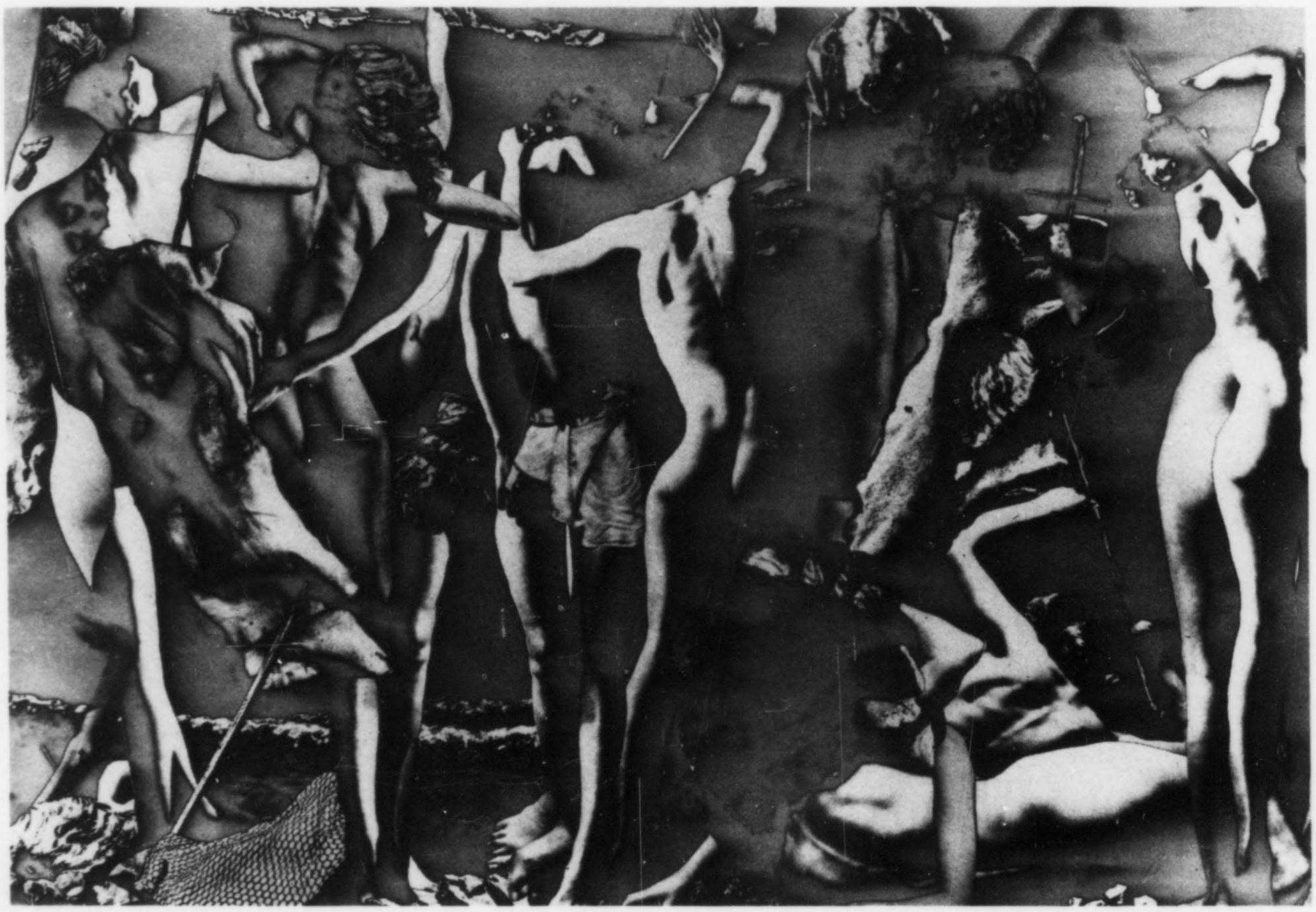
15. Horkheimer and Adorno, pp. 236–37.

It is the supposedly resistant spectator of cultural studies, "glued," as they say, to the television, who, having somehow converted the family living room into a site of resistance, elected—not once, but twice—just such an actor to the presidency of the United States of America.



Andy Warhol. Elvis. *1964.*

Raoul Ubac. The Battle of the Amazons. *1939.*



Armor Fou

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This essay attempts to relate several works of Max Ernst and Hans Bellmer to a psychic apprehension of the body as *armor*, an apprehension I want to consider tentatively in terms of fascism. It arises out of a silence following a lecture I heard several years ago that presented the first theory of surrealist photography read through such Bataillean concepts as the *informe* and the base.[1] Not only are formal conventions and idealist values subverted in these manipulated images by Brassaï and Kertész, Man Ray and Maurice Tabard, Raoul Ubac and Hans Bellmer; so too is the female body, a common ground of this subversion, often deformed, violently so, in a way that no avant-gardist claim can quite justify. Indeed, the apparent sadism of the photographs raised the specter of surrealist misogyny; but it also pointed to an adjacent issue no less difficult: are these surrealist transgressions of the body related to actual transgressions of the body during the period—from the mutilations of World War I to the atrocities of the Nazi regime? If so, why are these fantasies visited upon the female body? Do they partake in a putatively fascist imaginary, a peculiarly damaged ego that seeks a sense of corporeal stability in the very act of aggression against other bodies somehow deemed feminine by this subject (Jews, Communists, homosexuals, "the masses")?[2]

The first question was broached hesitantly after the lecture, and it startled many auditors in a way that went beyond the nasty *frisson* of any mention of fascism: suddenly the great antitype of twentieth-century modernism was bluntly juxtaposed with one of its most privileged instances (at least of late). In its very absence, this antitype is crucial to the art-historical construction of modernism. Rarely is fascist art included, or fascist ideology mentioned, in narratives of

1. See Rosalind Krauss, "Corpus Delicti," in Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston, *L'Amour fou: Photography & Surrealism* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1985).
2. This is essentially the argument of Klaus Theweleit in *Male Fantasies* (1977/78), 2 vols., trans. S. Conway, E. Carter, C. Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987/89). I draw on this provocative, problematic text at several points in this article.

twentieth-century art.[3] Indeed, the one fascist instance that *is* often ritually cited, the 1937 Nazi exhibition of "degenerate" modern art, serves to purify such art politically as well as aesthetically. Thus, when "Nazi" brushed against "surrealist" that night, I wanted to deny such associations, and I doubt I was alone.[4] Bellmer, the most troublesome case, came immediately to mind, but had he not posed his *poupées* precisely as an *attack* on fascist father and state alike? Clearly the question violated a critical taboo, and a nervous silence ensued: it was the sound of a hermeneutic breakdown.

I didn't think about this silence for several years (such was the strength of *my* denial), at least not until I turned to representations of the mechanical-commodified body in dada and surrealism, mostly dysfunctional automatons and dismembered mannequins. Rarely do these caustic figures appear in mappings of modernism around the machine or the commodity, even though they are the dialectical complements of the mechanical-commodified body variously celebrated in constructivism, purism, and the middle Bauhaus.[5] However, these figures, I came to see, may also oppose another type outside the common purview of modernist studies: the (proto)fascist ideal, forged in the aftermath of World War I, of the male body become weapon, the Jüngerian figure of the soldier-worker about which (proto)fascist authors wrote so obsessively in the 1920s and '30s.[6]

This tenuous connection led me to an early suite of Max Ernst collages in which the body, also usually gendered male, is treated as a ridiculous weapon or

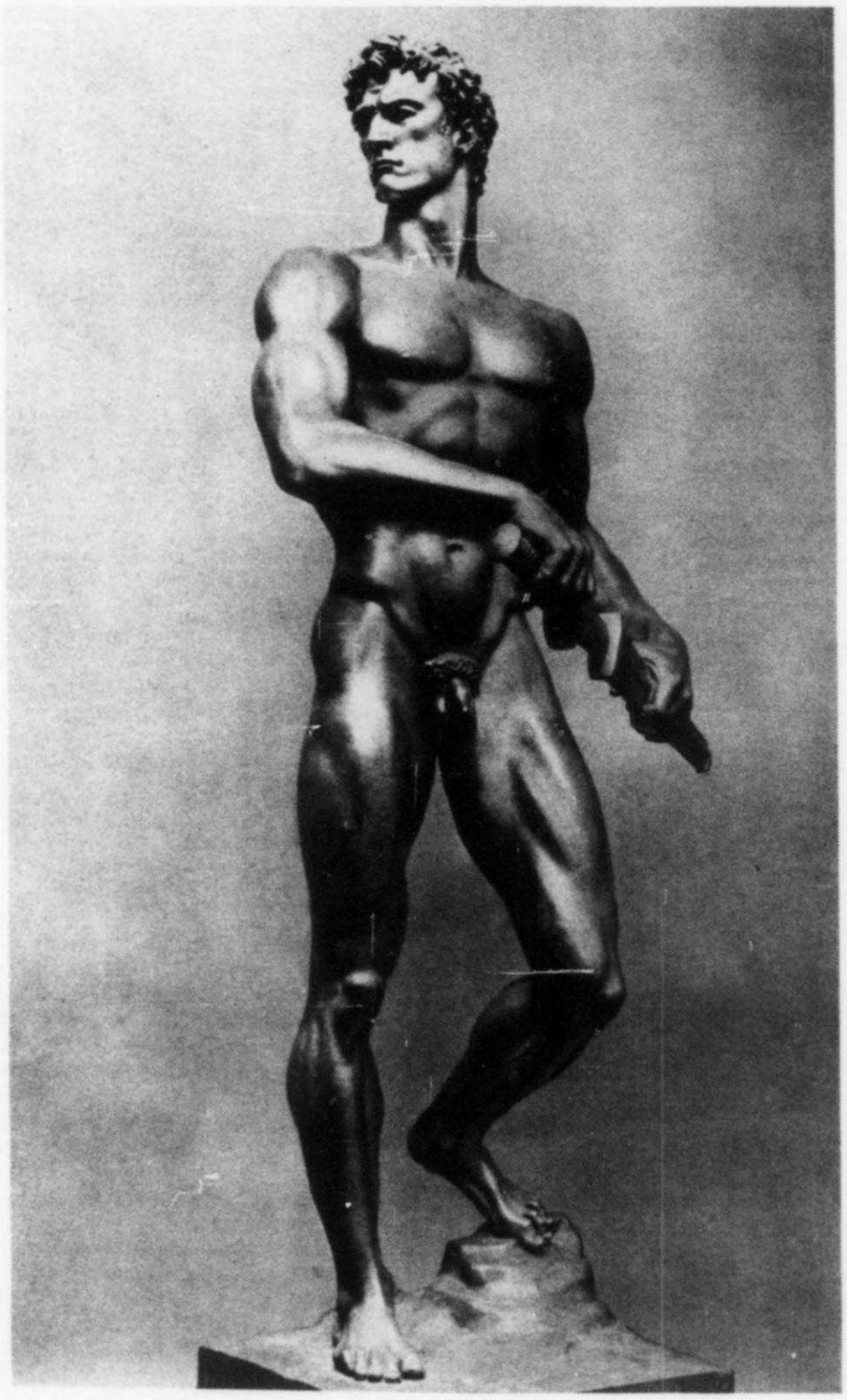
3. Indeed, seldom is the modernist movement closest to fascism, Italian futurism, pursued to the point of its political involvement, or when it is, it is merely noted. In this regard literary studies of fascist modernisms are far more advanced than art-historical studies (why this is so is significant in its own right). Two important examples in English are Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) and Alice Yeager Kaplan, *Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature, and French Intellectual Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986). For a provocative account of fascist modernism in Germany, see Russell A. Berman, "Written Right Across Their Faces: Leni Riefenstahl, Ernst Jünger, and Fascist Modernism," in *Modern Culture and Critical Theory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp. 99–117. I am also indebted in this regard to the work of my friend Steven Kasher. I am aware that even as I question the antitypal function of fascism I mostly preserve it here.

4. I mean associations that can be culled from surrealist practices. Fascist sympathies were, of course, expressed programmatically by some early associates (e.g., Drieu la Rochelle) and scandalously by some late members (e.g., Dalí).

5. See my "Exquisite Corpses," *Visual Anthropology Review* (Spring 1991). This text was my contribution to the "'High/Low': Art and Mass Culture" symposium organized by Rosalind Krauss at the Dia Center for the Arts in November 1990.

6. Opposed ideologically, these figures, the dadaist-surrealist and the (proto)fascist, share an historical referent: the soldierly body of World War I. In the (proto)fascist ideal this body is steeled, its psychic and physical mutilation disavowed. In dada, on the other hand, this body is often represented critically as such—as actually mutilated or as dysfunctionally machinic. Meanwhile, in surrealism, it returns uncannily, its mutilation displaced to the female body (e.g., dismembered mannequins, ruined torsos, and the like), where its psychic stake becomes manifest as castration. For an iconographical account of related historical associations see Sidra Stich, *Anxious Visions: Surrealist Art* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), pp. 26–31.

an impossible tool. Here, after the Bellmer dolls, was a different set of "bachelor machines"[7] created amidst the Freikorps terror soon after the First World War, just as the *poupées* were produced amidst the Nazi militarization of society that led to the Second World War. To a degree, the critical relation of dada and surrealism to fascism became encrypted for me in the autistic machines of Ernst and the sadomasochistic scenarios of Bellmer. I wanted to frame these works less as historical parentheses of this relation than as ambiguous explorations of the (proto)fascist obsession with the body as armor, and to see this armor as a

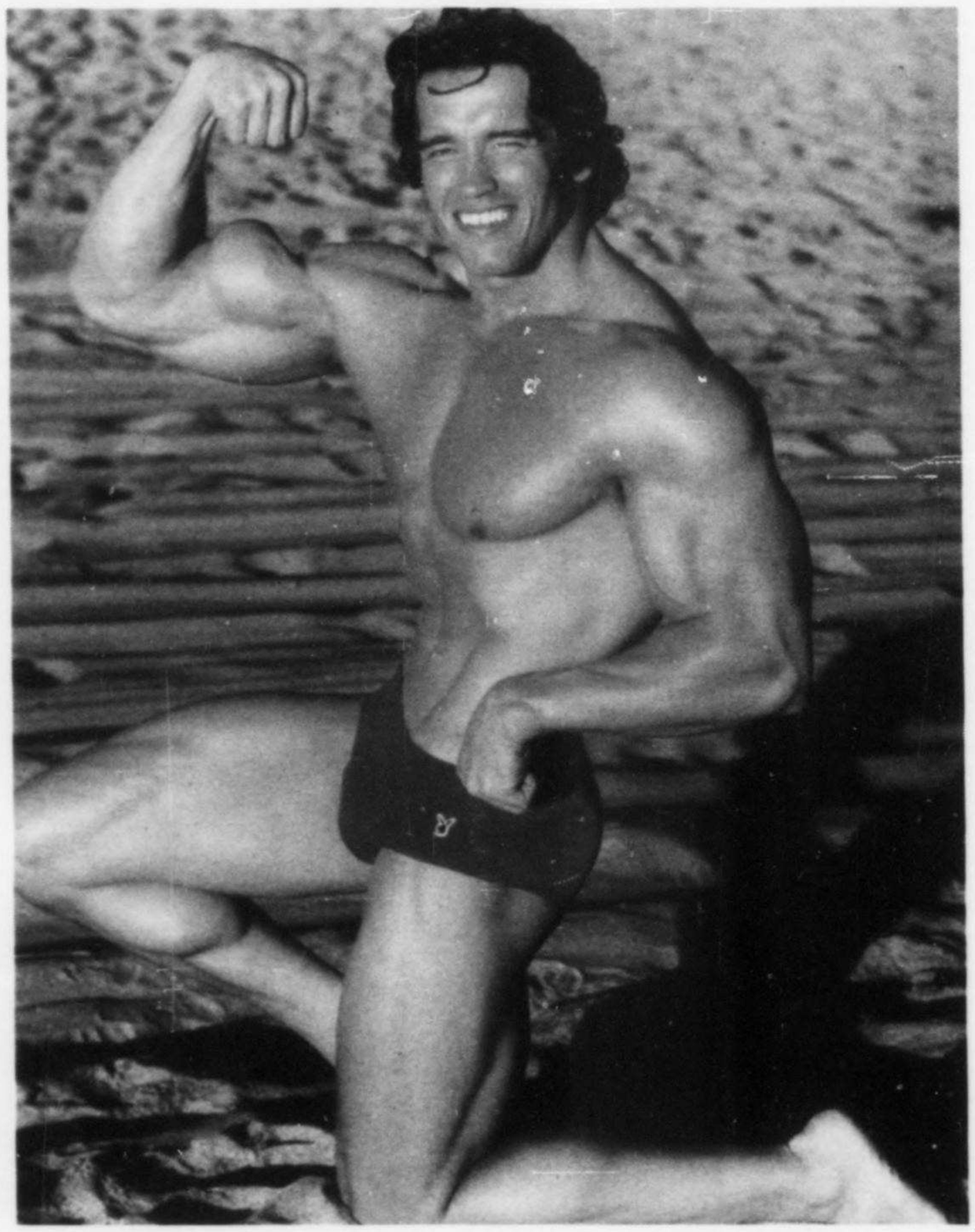


7. The classic text is, of course, Michel Carrouges, *Les machines célibataires* (Paris, 1954), though Carrouges considers neither the Ernst nor the Bellmer works.

Arno Breker. Readiness. *1937.*

prosthesis that served to shore up a disrupted body image or to support a ruined ego construction. In some way, I thought, the Ernst machines evoked this armoring in psychic and social terms, while the Bellmer dolls attacked it with the very force against which it was pledged: sexuality and desire represented (for this subject at least) by the feminine. The question was *how* to make these connections and, even more obscure at least to me, *why* I wanted to do so. The text that follows is thus provisional at best, and I present it here only because I can now bear its fractured argument better than I can the restive silence which preceded it.[8]

8. These last considerations point to an essay I may only displace here. I am, however, aware of at



Arnold Schwarzenegger.

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Max Ernst was drafted into an artillery regiment of the German army in 1914 at the age of twenty-three. Though soon transferred away from the front, he was wounded twice and so nicknamed "Iron Head." "We young people came back from the war in a state of stupefaction," he would later remark.[9] "Max Ernst died the 1st of August 1914. He resuscitated the 11th of November 1918. . . ."[10] This account of the war in terms of shock is telling, as is the alienation of the first person by the third, for it is precisely in such terms of psychic disturbance as evoked by the war that I want to consider five or six of his early collages. This is to suggest not that Ernst was so disturbed, but rather that he deployed certain characteristics of such disturbance, familiar to him from prewar studies in psychology at the University of Bonn, to critical ends.[11] Thus, when he "resuscitated" from the war, he did so in a *quasi*-autistic guise—as "Dadamax" (short for Dadafex Maximus), machinic maker of machinic figures. At this time of strikes and street battles, Red councils and White terror, Ernst not only figured the body in mechanistic terms but also took the machine as a persona. In so doing he effectively assumed the trauma of the military-industrial reconfiguration of the body in order to delineate its psychophysical effects—

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least one contemporary motive of this text: the sense that the figure of the armored body pervades the imaginary of American commercial culture. The militaristic posture of this figure has hardly disappeared; it is only repositioned along many faceted fronts where the individual body is shot through with the body politic: e.g., the Straight Body versus the AIDS Body, the Unmarked Body versus the Ethnic Body, the Pumped-up Body versus the Desiring Body, the Aerobic Body versus the Aging Body, all perhaps governed by the opposition of Pure Body and Abject Body. Though sometimes parodic, even critical, the armored figures of commercial culture symbolically treat fantasmatic threats to the normative social ego: for instance, visions of cities given over to drugged minorities (e.g., Robocop), of environments culturally invaded and genetically mutated (e.g., Ninja Turtles), etc. In 1951 Lacan suggested that such armored figures "exteriorize the protective shell of [the] ego [of the heterosexual male], as well as the failure of his virility" ("Some Reflections on the Ego," delivered to the British Psycho-Analytical Society on May 2, 1951). How much more complicated is the present complex where such shells are more developed, such virility more aggressive, and the technological devices at the disposal of this ego no longer exterior to the body (on the one hand) or within its control (on the other)? With its deadly technophilic Orientalism the Gulf War is in part a continuation of this complex by other means.

9. Ernst in an interview with Patrick Waldberg, "La Partie de Boules: Die Boules-Partie," in *Max Ernst in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Hamburg, 1969), p. 35; extracted in Diane Waldman, *Max Ernst: A Retrospective* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum), p. 21.

10. Max Ernst, *Beyond Painting* (New York: Wittenborn and Schultz, 1948), p. 14. This art-treatise-*cum*-auto-analysis includes several texts, the earliest of which dates from 1927. Needless to say, this framing of the war contrasts sharply with its (proto)fascist celebration.

11. Ernst first read Freud in 1911, though it seems that his psychology courses were largely Wundtian in bias, i.e., skeptical of the unconscious. Also at this time Ernst became familiar with the Kraepelin classification of mental disorders in his *Textbook of Psychiatry* (1896). For his use of such material see Elizabeth R. Legge, *Max Ernst: The Psychoanalytic Sources* (Ann Arbor: UMI Press, 1989), pp. 11–16.

more, to deploy these effects against the very social order which produced them.[12]

Begun in fall 1919, the collages in question were produced from rough proofs that Ernst found at a Cologne printer.[13] Each work combines diagrams of mostly mechanical systems with different devices, lines, and symbols to produce schematic figures, the reading of which is often keyed by titular inscriptions.[14] Of course, to find meaning in these bizarre images may seem forced, especially as they tend to be read (if at all) as so much dada nonsense. Yet this nonsense is purposeful—not only in its disruption of conventional signification but also in its double imaging of a mechanistic body and a schizophrenic representation.[15] For through this imaging the collages pose a modern subject that is at once diagrammatic (so many abstract elements to be redesigned) and dysfunctional (overcome by desiring production that serves "to short-circuit social production, and to interfere with the reproductive function of technical machines . . .").[16]

The titles of two collages, *Le Mugissement des féroces soldats* and *Trophée hypertrophique*, point directly to a military-industrial subject. In the first work the *mugissement* or roaring of the *féroces soldats*, a phrase which derives from the French national anthem, ironically suggests a loss of speech or reason, a becoming other of the "ferocious soldiers"—a trope that would soon be standard in surrealism for a becoming unconscious. However, in the immediate postwar context, this roaring refers to a becoming machine and/or weapon as well. And indeed, the ferocious soldiers, mechanically meshed as they are, evoke nothing so much as a war machine that has become both autonomous and involuted, even internecine.

In *Trophée hypertrophique*, an even more disjunctive figure made up of mechanical designs and calibrational devices, this becoming machine and/or

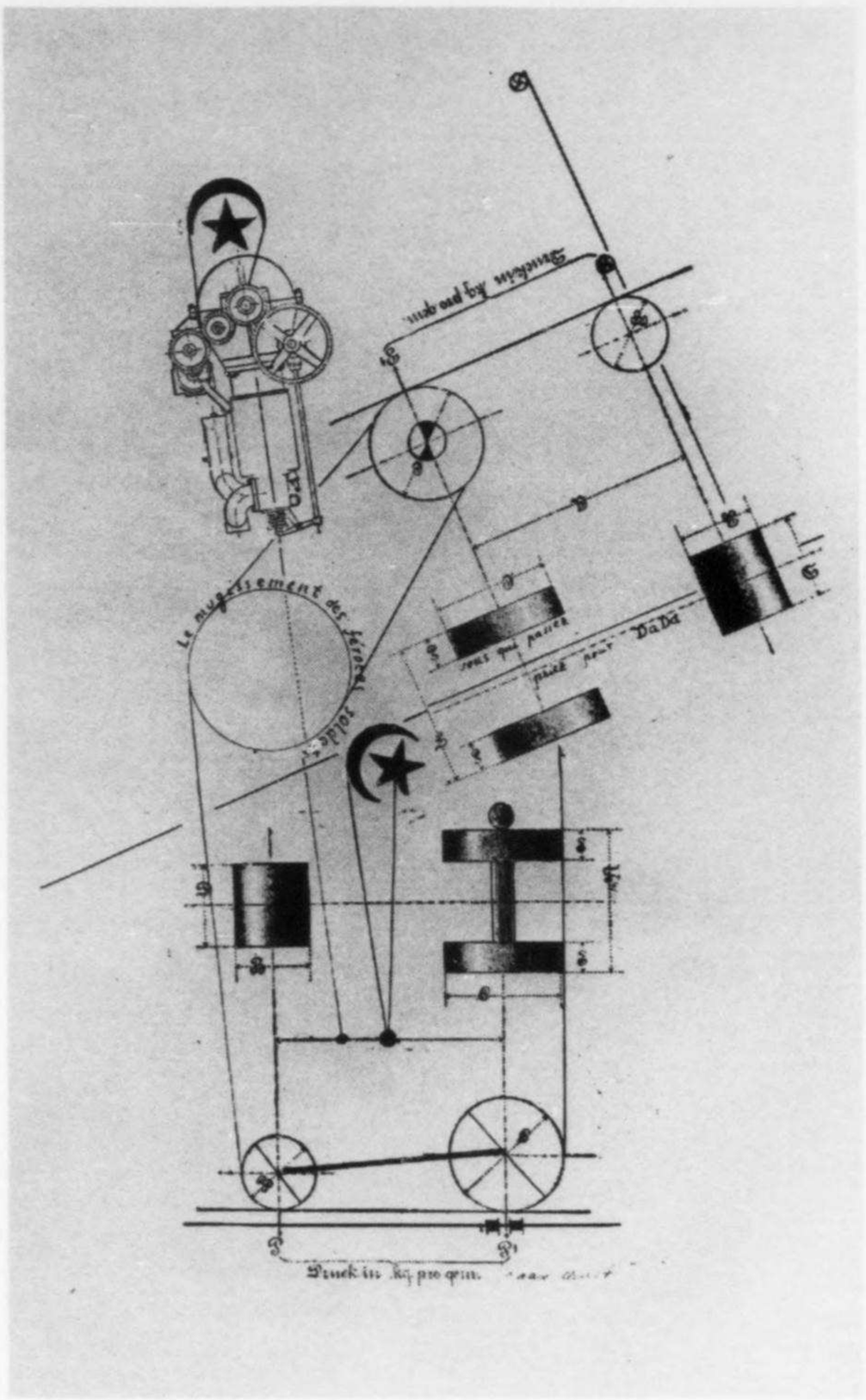
12. Meanwhile, his fellow Cologne dadaist, a rich radical named Alfred Gruenwald, identified with the commodity via the pseudonym "Baargeld" or "ready money."

13. Apparently there were many so produced, most of which are now lost. Although all but one discussed here are included in the Werner Spies catalogue of Ernst collages (*Max Ernst: Les collages* [Paris: Gallimard, 1984]), these printer proofs on paper altered with pencil, ink and/or gouache are not as materially various as most dadaist collages.

14. Though automatist in principle, the collages advance a mechanization of artistic procedure as well as of bodily image. This points to the dialectical relation in dada between the automatist and the mechanical, a relation that is further complicated in surrealism with the invocation of the unconscious.

15. Although my partially iconographic approach to the Ernst collages may seem perverse, its pertinence points to a problem in modernist art history: that practices like dada (or pop) often project iconographic themes even as they work to defy such meaning. (Benjamin Buchloh alludes to this problem in Gary Garrels, ed., *Warhol* [Seattle: Bay Press, 1989].) I have intentionally bracketed the familiar art-historical associations of the Ernst collages to Duchamp and Picabia as well as to de Chirico; for these associations see Werner Spies, *Max Ernst: Les collages.*

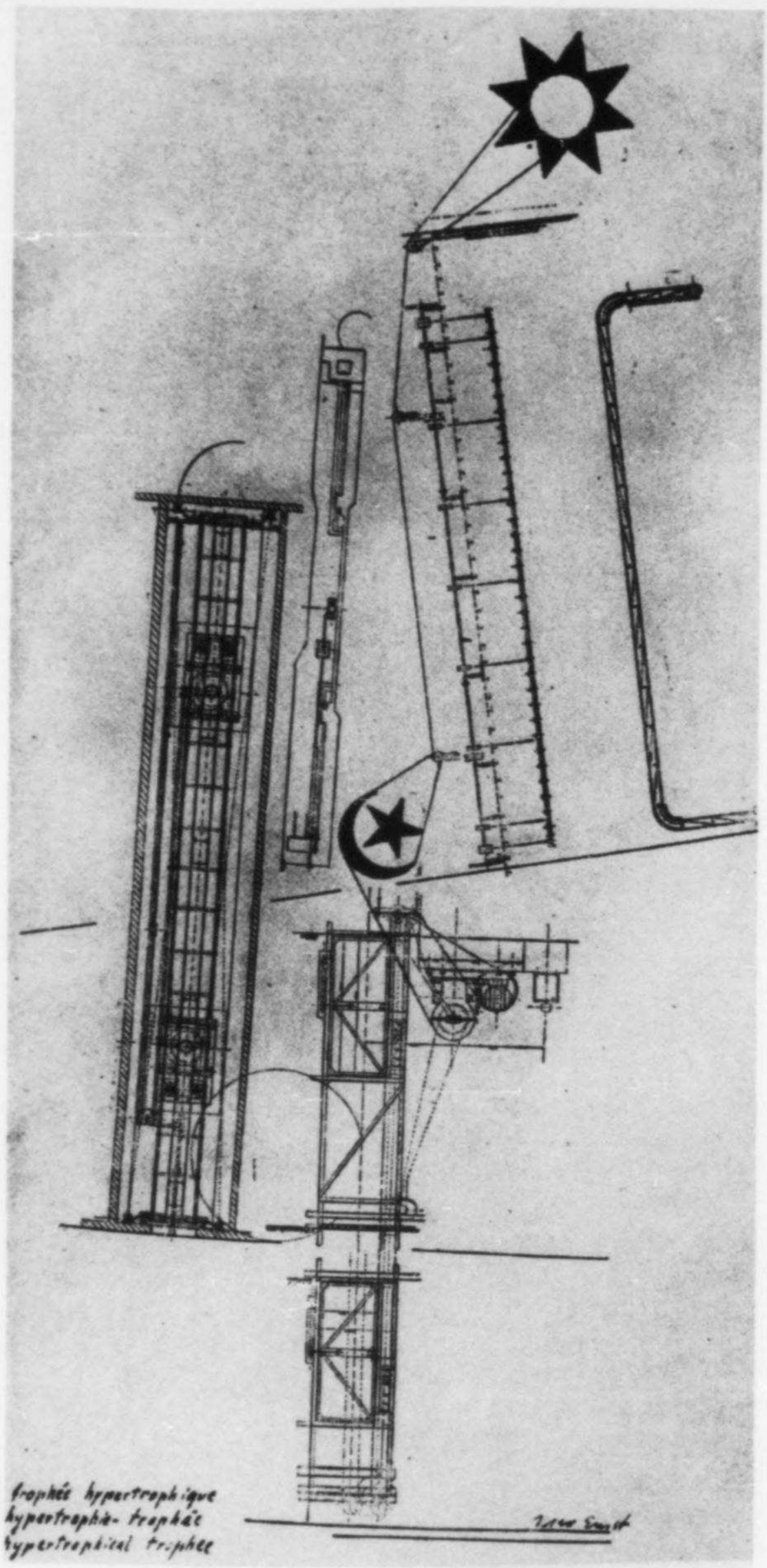
16. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972), trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem, H. Lane (New York: Viking Press, 1977), p. 31. The collages are thus bachelor machines in the sense elaborated in this text as well.



Max Ernst. Le Mugissement des féroces soldats. *1919.*

weapon is almost literal. Here the title, written like a legend in French, German, and English, seems to commemorate at least three major combatants of the war. Although the commemoration (war dead as *trophies*?) is mordantly ironic (especially from an antichauvinist German veteran), this is precisely the first definition of "trophy": "Arms etc. of vanquished enemy set up on field of battle or elsewhere to commemorate victory" (*Concise OED*). In the trophy the body is displaced by arms; death renders it so much armor. This play on the figure "trophy" is deepened by the term "hypertrophied." Of a different Greek root than "trophy" (*trophia* rather than *tropaion*), "hypertrophy" concerns the "enlargement (of organ etc.) due to excessive nutrition." "Trophée hypertrophique," then, suggests not only that the war has enlarged the number of soldier-trophies, and so nourished death excessively, but also that it has armored the (male) body, and so made of it precisely a hypertrophied trophy.[17]

17. Collaterally, in a few wartime paintings Ernst suggests a mechanizing of landscape, and in a few 1920 collages a metallizing of organic forms. In one such collage, *Démonstration hydrométrique à tuer par la temperature*, he evidently refers such deathly processes to entropy, to the second law of



Max Ernst. Trophée hypertrophique. *1919–20.*

Why, we should ask here provisionally, does Ernst present such figures of the military-industrial, and why in this manner of abject impersonality? As is well known, dada intends a "kynical" attack on the ideals of fine art and humanist

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thermodynamics. In the same year, 1920, Freud extrapolated from this law in his theory of the death drive (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*). For technical and cultural elaborations of such energistic concepts, see Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990). In some ways the Ernst imaging of a military-industrial body plays critically on the fundamental redefinition of the worker detailed brilliantly by Rabinbach.

individuality cherished by the "cynical" classes that produced the war.[18] "Our rage had to find some expression somehow or other," Ernst would say in retrospect. "This we did quite naturally through attacks on the foundations of the civilization responsible for the war."[19] But the intent is not merely to cauterize this civilization; at some level it is curative as well. "Contrary to general belief," Ernst continues, "Dada did not want to shock the bourgeoisie. They were already shocked enough."[20] This implies that dada acts not only to produce shock effects but also to work over trauma—that the two operations cannot in fact be separated. This hint is given, albeit obliquely, in *Le Mugissement*, where Ernst adds the inscription "vous qui passez priez pour DaDa." This note casts "the roaring of the ferocious soldiers" in infernal terms ("vous qui passez . . ."), and yet it also suggests that dada somehow treats this trauma, even redeems this hell (". . . priez pour DaDa"). This is hardly to deny that dada exploits the shock of the military-industrial for purposes of critical negation; it is only to insist that it also seeks to recoup this shock—to "prepare" (as Freud wrote grimly of the symptomatic nightmares of World War I shock victims) for a trauma that had already come.[21]

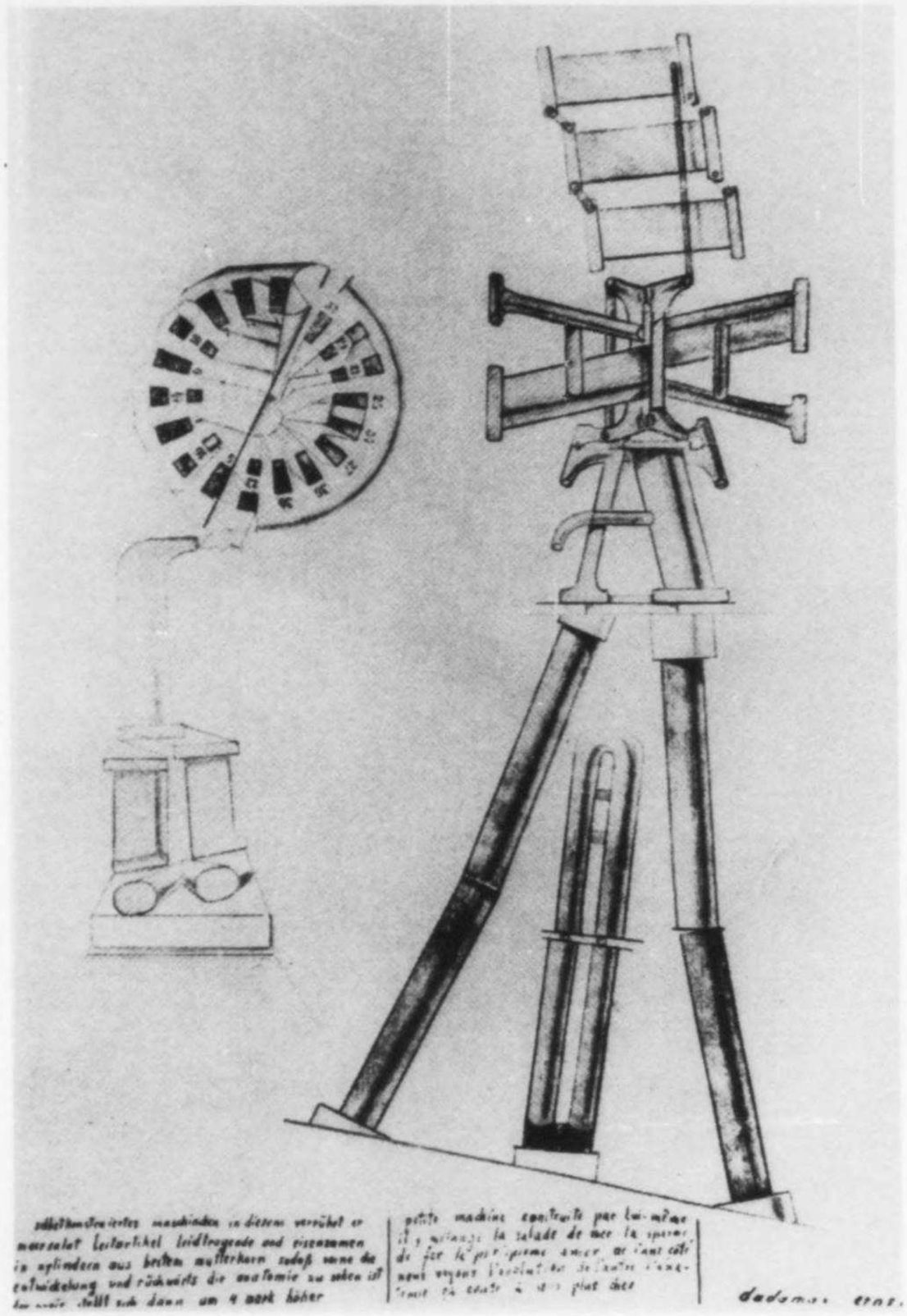
In any case, in *Le Mugissement* and *Trophée hypertrophique*, a mechanizing of the (male) body is evoked, only to be subverted, at least symbolically. A similar strategy governs *Petite machine construite par lui-même*, where such mechanizing is seen to penetrate the very beginnings of this body. Here the image is literally split: on the left is a drum figure with numbered slots, on the right a tripod personage, an animate camera or gun. Below is a text, in German and in French, the latter of which reads:

18. Peter Sloterdijk develops this distinction in his *Critique of Cynical Reason*, trans. Michael Eldred (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). There, in terms appropriate to the Ernst collages, he writes of the "kynical irony" of "a bashed ego" exercising "resistance in the form of unresisting accommodation" (p. 441). In this light Ernst does to the pictorial image in relation to reification what Baudelaire, according to Benjamin, does to the lyric poem in relation to the commodity.

19. Ernst in *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*, p. 21.

20. Ibid. By now I have cut up this 1969 statement so much that I ought to reproduce it intact: "Contrary to general belief, Dada did not want to shock the bourgeoisie. They were already shocked enough. No, Dada was a rebellious upsurge of vital energy and rage; it resulted from the absurdity, the whole immense *Schweinerei* of the imbecilic war. We young people came back from the war in a state of stupefaction, and our rage had to find expression somehow or other. This we did quite naturally through attacks on the foundations of the civilization responsible for the war."

21. See Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), trans. James Strachey (New York, W. W. Norton, 1961), pp. 6–7, 23–27. In a different way Walter Benjamin relates the communist revolts of the time to the shock of the war: "In the nights of annihilation of the last war the frame of mankind was shaken by a feeling that resembled the bliss of the epileptic. And the revolts that followed it were the first attempt of mankind to bring the new body under its control. The power of the proletariat is the measure of its convalescence." See "One-Way Street" (1928) in Walter Benjamin, *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p. 94. Incidentally, this psychic work of the dadaist image, at once disruptive and restorative, would soon be fundamental to the surrealist image, at least as developed by Ernst precisely out of such collages as these. See my "Convulsive Identity," forthcoming.



Petite machine construite par lui-même
il y mélange la salade de mer la sperme
de fer le périsperme amer de l'une côté
nous voyons l'évolution de l'autre l'ana-
tomie ça coute 2 sous plus cher.

Though allusively schizophrenic, this text is actually descriptive of the "self-constructed small machine." "On the one side" (perhaps the left) is an "anatomy" that "mixes" within a "bitter perisperm" both "iron sperm" and "sea salad" (*la salade de mer* also evokes through *mère* "maternal salad," and through *merde* "shitty mess").[22] This bachelor machine thus conflates, as in childhood theories of birth, the sexual and the scatalogical. Yet not only is the sexual-scatalogical

22. The use of "salad" here may be a derisive allusion to the Kraepelin dismissal of schizophrenic representation as "word or picture salad." ("Perisperm," meanwhile, is a tegument that covers some kinds of seeds.) Thanks to Denis Hollier and Benjamin Buchloh for their sense of humor with these riddles.

Max Ernst. Petite machine construite par lui-même. *1919.*

used to mock the mechanical, but the mechanical is also seen to enter, even to replace, the sexual-scatalogical—in terms not just of the automatism of such acts or drives but of the very substance of the species (e.g., sperm becomes iron).

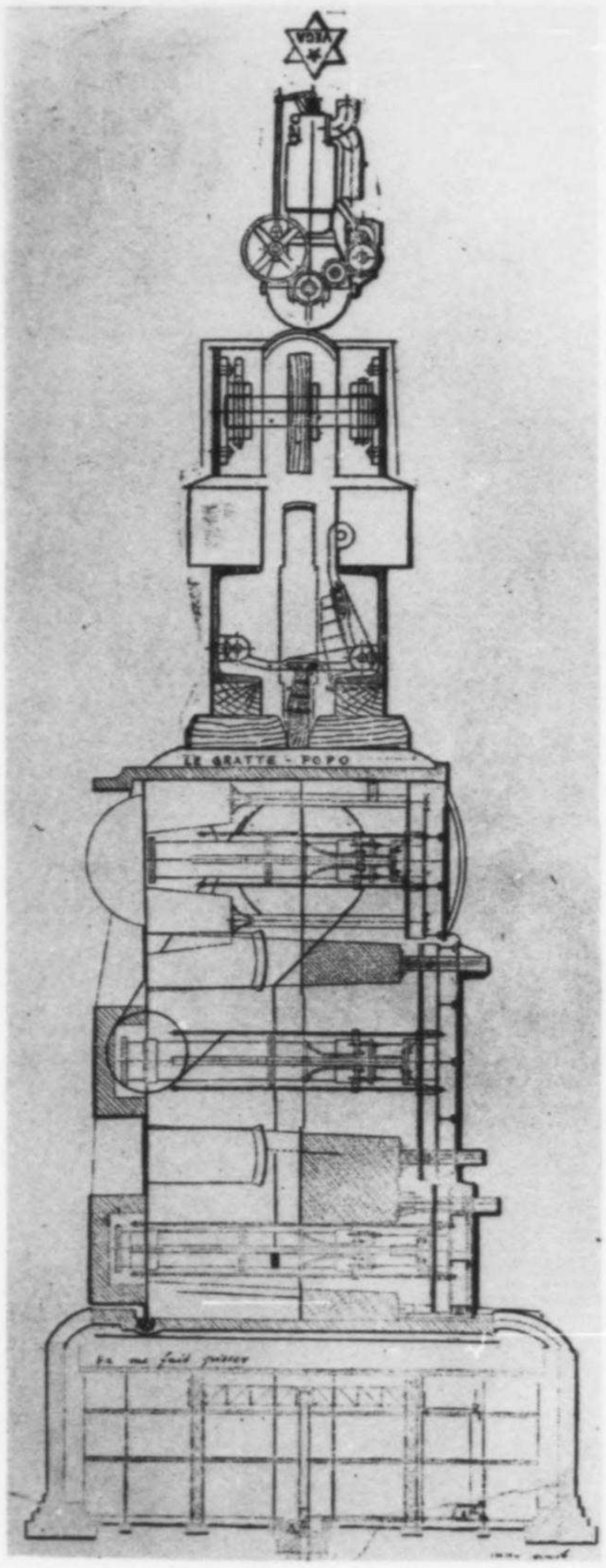
In this way, *Petite machine* points to a genetic mechanizing of the body, one which degenders it under the sign of the masculine.[23] So too *Petite machine* points to an historical armoring of the body, for the caption also alludes "on the other side" (perhaps the right) to an "evolution" of "anatomy." Here, under the shocks of massive industrial war and pervasive capitalist exchange ("ça coute 2 sous plus cher"), the (male) body has become an instrumental camera or gun. Paradoxically, however, this very instrumentality renders it dysfunctional as a body image, and this in turn points to the psychic dimension of the collage. For a certain autistic system is intimated: this armored body, this "self-constructed small machine," suggests a defensive shield, perhaps even a machinic substitute, for a damaged ego, one which, however, debilitates this ego all the more. (Indeed, Ernst is not an "I" here; the machine is signed "Dadamax Ernst," again the third-person signature of an alienated subject.[24]) In effect, then, these armored figures may allude not only to military-industrial shock but also to the disturbed body image or ego construction attendant upon such shock.

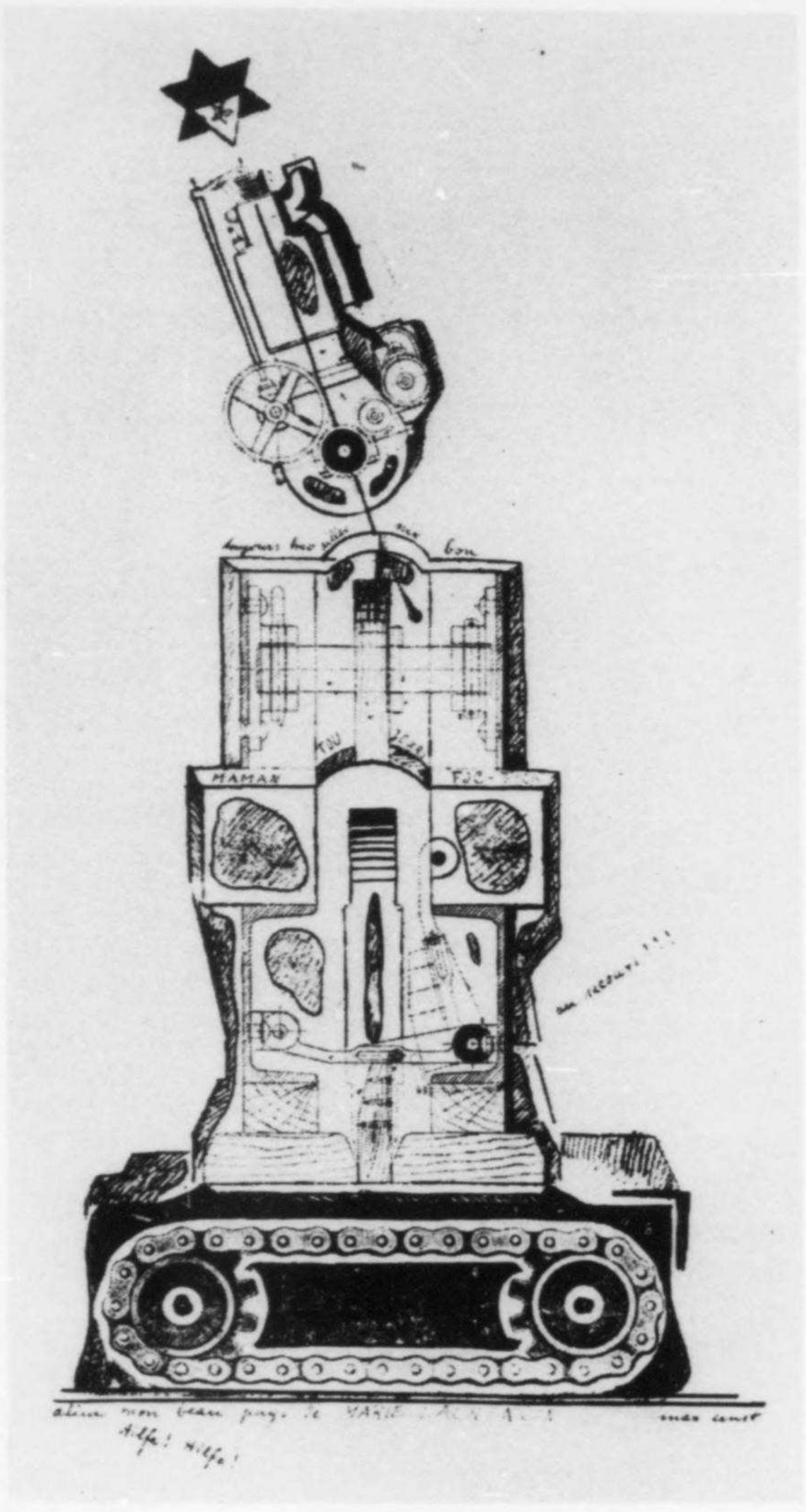
The historical armoring of the male body is also nuanced in psychic terms in the last two collages to be mentioned here. *Ça me fait pisser* appears based on a diagram of an engine or pump; indeed, the title suggests that the male body is little more than a mechanical or hydraulic penis. At the same time the figure resembles an elevation of a tower with a star, a *gratte-ciel*, and in fact the word "LE GRATTE-POPO" is inscribed atop its second stage. This neologism is nicely ambiguous. On the one hand, it grounds the meanings of the image in its production (*gratter*, to scratch), which Ernst was wont to eroticize.[25] On the other hand, it confirms the phallic aspect of the figure as a scratcher not just of "skin" (*peau*) but of "ass" as well (*popo* is German slang). *Gratter*, moreover, means "to cross out" as well as "to scratch," and *popo* recalls "papa" too. In this regard the phallic tower may be more than another monument to dada-scatalogy; it may also stand as a paternal figure, one which is implicitly challenged (crossed out) as well

23. Like some other bachelor machines (e.g., the Picabia *Girl Born without a Mother* [1916–17]), this self-constructed small machine plays upon a patriarchal fantasy of technological creation outside the maternal body, a perverse family romance in which a machinic conjunction substitutes for a biological origin. This fantasy is a staple of twentieth-century modernisms across the political spectrum from Marinetti to Léger; indeed, it is difficult to distinguish a specifically fascist version. (In this regard, this remark on modern technology by the "expressionist philosopher" Adrien Turel may only state explicitly what many other modernists think subconsciously: "This technical prosthetic system, which is a typically masculine achievement, can only be compared with the prenatal, complete enclosure in the body of the mother" [from his 1934 *Technokratie, Autarkie, Genetokratie*, quoted in Sloterdijk, p. 459].)

24. Almost all the other collages, some of which also intimate autistic systems, are signed "Max Ernst." I return to the autistic aspect of the machinic figures below.

25. See note 37.





as desired (scratched). This is precisely the tension between the "positive" pole of a contentious identification with the father and the "negative" pole of a persistent love for him that Freud came to see as intrinsic to Oedipus. Here, however, the tension, which fascinated Ernst more than any other dadaist or surrealist, appears less resolved than stalemated ("ça me fait pisser" suggests arousal—but only to piss, not to come).[26] In short, this representation of a "father-scraper"

26. For Freud even the resolved form of this tension amounts to a difficult double injunction: "You ought to be like this (like your father)" *and* "You may not be like this (like your father)—that is, you may not do all that he does; some things are his perogative." See *The Ego and the Id* (1923), trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1960), p. 24, where Freud also discusses the poles of the Oedipus complex. Accounts of Oedipal conflict are commonplace in the literature on Ernst (cf. Legge), indeed, on surrealism generally, but the literature entirely misses this crucial ambivalence.

Max Ernst. Ça me fait pisser. *1919.*

Max Ernst. Adieu mon beau pays de Marie Laurencin. *1919.*

may point to an uneasy address to the paternal image, a suspended relation of scorn, even defilement of the symbolic order.

However playful, such puns also point to psychic pain. This is glimpsed too in *Adieu mon beau pays de Marie Laurencin*, which seems to address the other side of Oedipus. The figure resembles a schematic weapon, a missile-*cum*-tank, and yet its inscriptions, the titular mention of the artist Marie Laurencin as well as the additional phrase "MAMAN TOUJOURS FJC-TICK," appear to gender it female. Many personal associations are possible here as elsewhere,[27] but might not the image be more profoundly autobiographical? That is, just as *Ça me fait pisser* might be an ambiguous representation of the paternal relation, might *Adieu mon beau pays* be an ambivalent imaging of the maternal body? If so, it is an almost Kleinian nightmare of stone organs and machine parts encased in a weapon-body, a projection which threatens the subject ("Hilfe! Hilfe!" and "au secours!!!" are scribbled around the image) even as the subject also longs for it, this maternal body, as its *beau pays*.

In a sense, then, an historical armoring of the body, as evoked in *Le Mugissement* and *Trophée hypertrophique*, is referred, in *Petite machine*, *Ça me fait pisser*, and *Adieu mon beau pays*, to a psychic deforming of the subject. Apparently in each collage a dysfunctional machine is associated with a narcissistic disturbance—as if the first were an attempt to image the second and/or to "rectify" it. However elliptically, these works may even juxtapose a *development* of a military-industrial type of body with a *regression* to a (pre)Oedipal (dis)organization of the drives. These meanings are obviously tentative and in tension, the first involving historical agencies in (proto)fascist Germany, the second traumatic events in psychic life, but it is this tension, or tense connection, that the Ernst collages may ask us to think. To do so here will involve two disconnected steps: first to relate the collages to certain schizophrenic, even autistic representations, and then to consider the social formation of the (proto)fascist subject from various psychoanalytical perspectives.[28]

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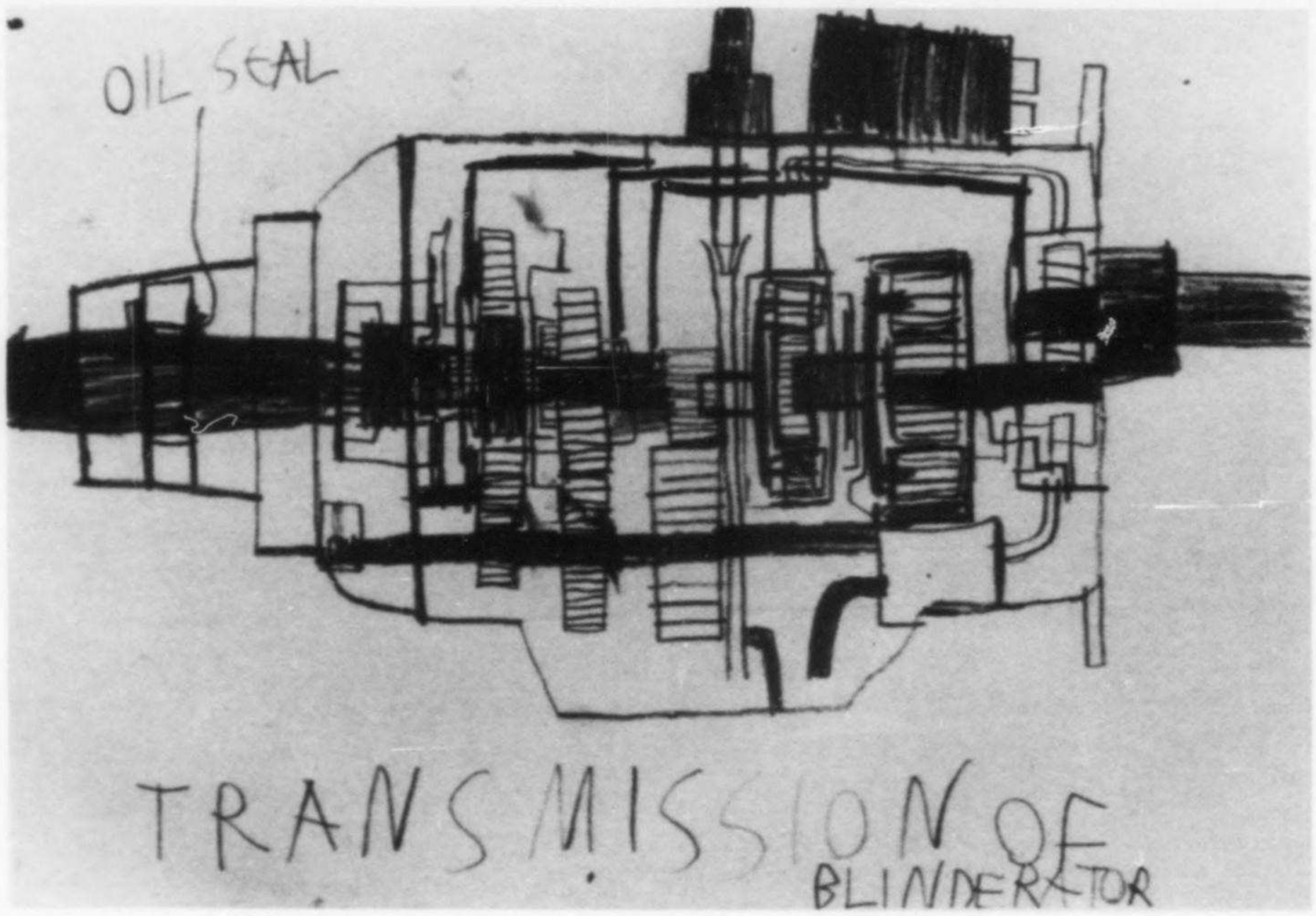
It is well known that Ernst studied "the artistry of the mentally ill" and, for that matter, that the Nazis scorned it, especially in association with modernist art. His early collages converge with such representations in several respects: e.g., not only a heteroglossic mixing of writing and drawing but also a contradictory

27. For example, Marie Laurencin had tried to get Ernst a visa—without success. See Uwe Schneede, *Max Ernst* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), p. 21.

28. There are many psychoanalytical theories of (proto)fascist subjectivity, e.g., from Freud (*Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*) and Reich (*The Mass Psychology of Fascism*) through the Frankfurt School (*The Authoritarian Personality*) to Deleuze and Guattari (*Anti-Oedipus*) and Theweleit (*Male Fantasies*). I am aware of the political dangers of such theories, as I am of their ideological incompatibilities. But no one account seems adequate to me (at least not in relation to the Ernst and the Bellmer works), though I do draw mostly on the Theweleit here.



imaging of bodies as often both disjunctive and mechanistic.[29] Such symptomatic signs were familiar to Ernst at the time of his machinic figures, i.e., even before the 1922 publication of the classic Hans Prinzhorn text *The Artistry of the Mentally Ill*; but his use of such visual cues goes beyond the stylistic.[30] In some sense Ernst intuited that this disturbed image-making articulated a disturbed ego construction, and that, if repositioned in a (proto)fascist milieu, it might be politically incisive precisely because it was psychologically incisive.[31]

29. In such representations boundaries are also treated paradoxically, e.g., sometimes totally ignored, sometimes excessively elaborated. Often this insistence on boundaries, prompted perhaps by an anxiety about boundlessness, produces this very effect.

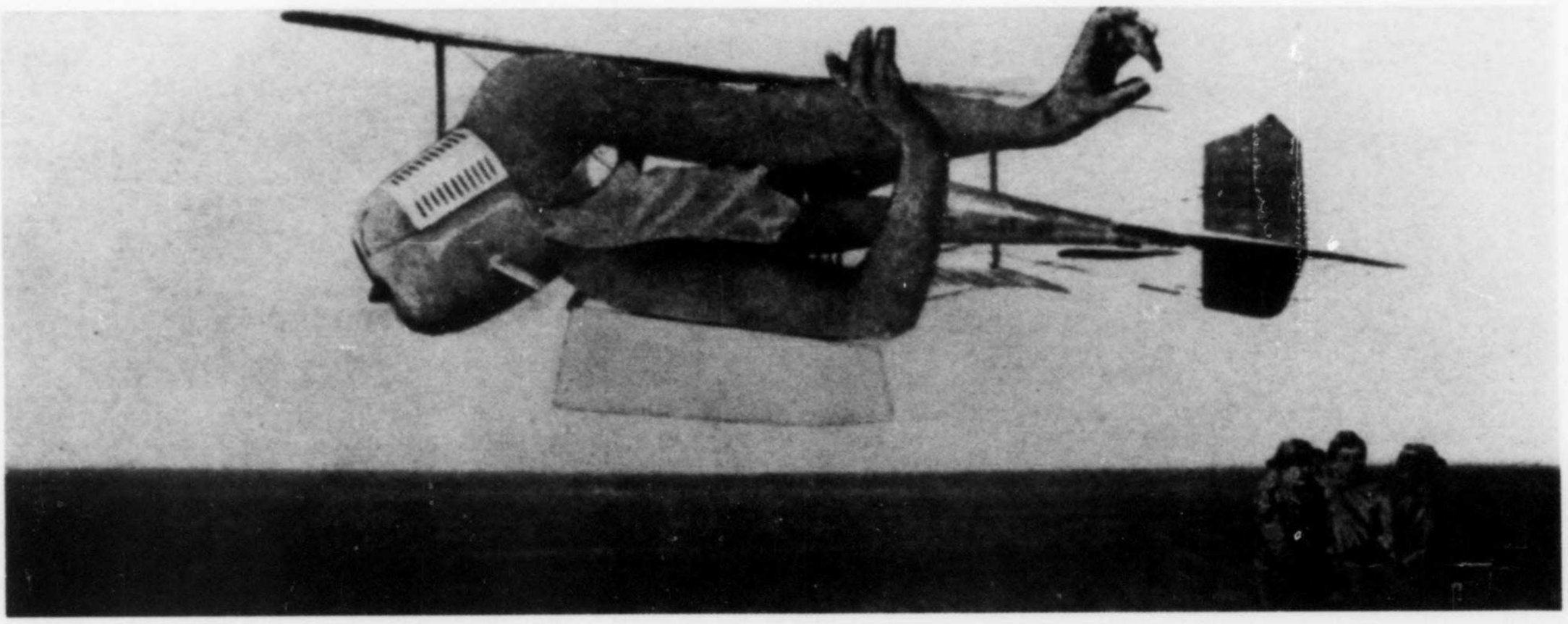
30. *Bildnerei der Geistenkranken* (1922) contains some 5,000 works by some 450 artists, which Prinzhorn organized around six general categories: a need to express feelings, playfulness, ornamentation, a need for order, a compulsion to copy, and a tendency to visual-verbal systems. Although the text appeared after the Ernst collages in question, Ernst knew related work; indeed, he once planned to write a book on the subject. Moreover, as Sander Gilman has noted, the "mythopoesis of mental illness . . . dominated the German intellectual scene in the opening decades of the twentieth century." See his "Madness and Representation: Hans Prinzhorn's Study of Madness and Art in its Historical Context," in Stephen Prokopoff, ed., *The Prinzhorn Collection* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois, 1984), p. 11, as well as his *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 217–38. Then as now the use of "schizophrenia" as a cultural diagnostic bordered on cliché. On its dangers see Jacqueline Rose, "Sexuality and Vision: Some Questions," in Hal Foster, ed., *Vision and Visuality* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988).

31. It should be noted that some of the collages were circulated in the thousands in publications edited by Ernst and Gruenwald (the most important, *Der Ventilator*, was suspended by the British army of occupation after six numbers).

Drawing of a machine devised by the autistic child Joey.
From Bruno Bettelheim, The Empty Fortress, *1967.*

Above I intimated that his postwar "resuscitation" as Dadamax all but mimed an autistic defense, indeed, that his "self-constructed small machines" recalled autistic systems. This claim might be supported, at the level of representation, by reference to a famous case study of an autistic child that also centers on machinic figures. In 1967 the psychotherapist Bruno Bettelheim published an analysis of a boy named Joey whose autism was marked by certain characteristics also evident in the Ernst collages: e.g., a type of speech neither oriented around an ego nor directed toward others, and a sense of the body as "run by machines."[32] These machines, which Joey both constructed and represented, served not only to drive him but also to protect him, i.e., as a "defensive armoring" against dangers from within and without, an armoring further required by his relative inability to distinguish between the two realms. This armoring placed Joey in a double bind, for he also needed periodic release from it—a release that came in the form of catastrophic "explosions." These explosions left him, in the depths of his autism, with the apprehension that he had no body at all, and thus

32. See Bruno Bettelheim, *The Empty Fortress: Infantile Autism and the Birth of the Self* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), pp. 233–339. I use this case history, distant though it is from the Ernst images, for three reasons. First, the formalism of the Prinzhorn text renders it mostly inattentive to the aspects of "the artistry of the mentally ill" that interest me here. Second, Joey's representations occasionally resonate with Ernst's figures, just as Bettelheim's reading of this autistic child occasionally converges with Theweleit's account of the (proto)fascist subject. These associations might then allow us to relate Ernst's figures to Theweleit's account. Third, I have an important theoretical precedent: in "'Anemic Cinema': Reflections on an Emblematic Work" (*Artforum*, October 1973), Annette Michelson refers to this same case history to think the Duchamp oeuvre as a complex imaging of a fissured self.



Max Ernst. Untitled. *1920.*

that its waste was everywhere, that he lived in a "world of mire."[33] The machines, then, were attempts to abject this world, to reestablish his boundaries. Needless to say, they were hardly satisfactory, and "his defensive armoring ended in total paralysis."[34]

Bettelheim points to several sources of this autism that again resonate with the Ernst images:[35] a parental indifference to Joey as an infant, an inadequate cathexis of his body, and a resultant tendency to treat his functions as mechanical. Also involved were possible effects of a primal scene, i.e., a vision of parental coitus witnessed, inferred, and/or fabulated by the subject, around which questions of personal origin are teased out. Joey, Bettelheim speculates, may have defended against the threat of this scene through the substitution of machines for bodies, of machinic connections for sexual ones—a substitution from which he then would not be exempt.[36] In his images and texts Ernst often replays exactly such a scene for its disruptive potential.[37] Indeed, very soon after his machinic figures come three collages, one of which, *La Chambre à coucher de max ernst*, appears to allude directly to a primal scene. More importantly for us, the other two evoke this traumatic experience, only to relate it to military-industrial shock. In the first (untitled) work, part of a female body is coupled with part of a biplane, while a wounded soldier is carried from the field; in the second (*Le Cygne est très paisible*), three putti displaced from a nativity onto a triplane gaze upon a swan identified with a rape.[38] In both works, images of peace and war, sex and death are collided, and it is precisely in this collision, which appears to be temporal as well as spatial, that the trauma of these scenes is registered (as if in accordance with the Freudian formula of the *Nachträglichkeit* or "deferred action" of trauma).

33. Ibid., pp. 272–83. As we will see, Theweleit detects a related double bind, and a similar fear of "mire," in his (proto)fascist subjects.
34. Ibid., p. 319.
35. As they do again, and even more so, with the Theweleit account.
36. This points to a possible nonsociological reason why the fantasy of creation outside the mother is often figured in machinic terms.
37. In *Beyond Painting* Ernst presents the advent of most of his primary techniques (painting, collage and frottage) in terms evocative of a primal scene. In a well-known passage on the collages he writes: "One rainy day in 1919 . . . I was struck by the obsession which held under my gaze the pages of an illustrated catalogue. . . . There I found brought together elements of figuration so remote that the sheer absurdity of that collection provoked a sudden intensification of the visionary faculties in me and brought forth an illusive succession of contradictory images . . . peculiar to love memories and visions of half-sleep" (p. 14). This association of an aesthetic discovery with the sexual-visual confusions of the primal scene underlies not only his definition of collage ("the coupling of two realities, irreconcilable in appearance, upon a place which apparently does not suit them" [p. 13]) but also his understanding of its purpose: like the primal scene, collage is to disturb "the principle of identity" (p. 19), even to "abolish" the concept of "author." At some level it is this "coupling" which the Ernst collages recapitulate, this trauma which his art as a whole works over—in form as well as in content. For more on his rewriting of "convulsive beauty," see my "Convulsive Identity," forthcoming.
38. The long title refers to Jupiter and Leda as well as to Lohengrin and Elsa.

Finally, the emergence of Joey from his autism is also suggestive vis-à-vis the Ernst imaging of damaged subjectivity. For in his "symbolic re-experience of earliest infancy"[39] Joey achieves subjecthood through a process of reimaging. Indeed, his self-representations evolve only as his machines devolve—in favor of other figures that he first acts out against, then trusts in, and finally identifies with. In his work of the 1920s, Ernst recapitulates a related process of recovery (if a reconstructed Oedipality can be so called). As noted, after the "perturbation" of his youth, he turns first to machinic figures suggestive of an autistic defense, then to images evocative of a primal scene, and finally to surrealist works more strictly Oedipal in theme. In so doing Ernst elaborates a practice of "convulsive identity" around questions first of narcissistic disturbance and then of sexual difference, a practice governed first by an autistic persona, "Dadamax, self-constructed small machine," and then by a hybrid figure, "Loplop, the Superior of the Birds," who functions sometimes as an external superego (especially when identified with a castrative father).[40] Regarding the final moments of his "hatching process," Joey says: "I laid myself as an egg, hatched myself, and gave birth to me."[41] In the final moments of his self-analysis, Ernst echoes this curative fantasy: "Now and then he consulted the eagle who had hatched the egg of his prenatal life. You may find the bird's advices in his work."[42]

Such associations, I know, are dangerous, but my purpose is hardly to conflate the autistic and the avant-gardist. It is rather to suggest that the Ernst collages evoke such disturbed representations in a way that reflects on the damaged construction of military-industrial subjects immediately after World War I, subjects perhaps prone to fascism. But how can this connection to (proto)fascist subjectivity be made?

For countless veterans, World War I was "a narcissistic wound of the first order."[43] In this regard it may not be coincidental that Freud turned to such disorders roughly around this time.[44] Above I noted his reconsideration of

39. Bettelheim, *Empty Fortress*, p. 294.

40. See Max Ernst, "Some Data on the Youth of M.E. as told by himself," in *Beyond Painting*, pp. 26–29. Also see Werner Spies, *Max Ernst, Loplop: The Artist in the Third Person* (New York: George Braziller, 1983), pp. 79–80. Alternatively, perhaps, the early work is about the social deformation of the subject, about an inadequate ego construction, while the later work concerns the psychic disruption of the subject, a convulsed ego construction.

41. Bettelheim, *Empty Fortress*, p. 325. Freud uses the metaphor of a bird egg to describe a closed psychological system in "Formulations Regarding the Two Principles in Mental Functioning" (1911), as does Margaret Mahler in *On Human Symbiosis and the Vicissitudes of Individuation* (New York: International Universities Press, 1968), where her term "hatching process" designates the slow separation from maternal symbiosis.

42. Ernst, *Beyond Painting*, p. 29.

43. Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 2, p. 357. In "Theories of Fascism" (1930), a review of an essay collection on the war edited by Ernst Jünger, Benjamin remarks that its loss came to be treated as "the innermost essence" of Germany (as worked over, for example, in Spenglerian narratives of decline). See *New German Critique* 17 (Spring 1979).

44. Theodor Adorno points to this turn in Freud in "Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist

Dora Maar. Père Ubu. *1936.*

trauma soon after the war in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), prompted in part by the shock of soldiers subject to new military-industrial technologies.[45] More pertinent to the Ernst imaging of damaged subjectivity, however, is his conception of narcissism, fully developed in "On Narcissism" (1914), published around the outset of hostilities. In this paper Freud posits this phase, after that of anarchic autoerotism but before that of external attachment, as one in which the subject is its own libidinal object.[46] At this point the ego tentatively emerges, in a way thus dependent on an image of the body, on a *cathexis* of this image. (Indeed, Freud came to define the ego as "first and foremost a bodily ego," "the projection of a [corporeal] surface.")[47] It follows, then, that if this image is disturbed or this cathexis is inadequate, the subject will not fill in, as it were, and its object relations will be disrupted—an important point to retain when we relate the Ernst images to the Theweleit account of the (proto)fascist subject as "not fully born."

Lacan, of course, reformulated this Freudian conception in "The Mirror Stage" (1936/49), wherein the infant of six to eighteen months is said to identify with an anticipatory image of bodily unity in a way that founds the ego precisely as imaginary. Importantly for us, Lacan regards the anarchic phase of autoerotism, which he relates to a fantasy of "the body in pieces" (*le corps morcelé*), as a *retroactive* effect of this imaginary unity of the mirror stage.[48] Accordingly, if there is a breakdown of imaginary unity, a crisis in narcissistic identification, the subject feels threatened by this bodily "chaos." For Lacan this threat renders the ego not only paranoid but also aggressive, and this in turn compounds the aggressivity already immanent to its fragile foundation in the field of the other.[49]

Propaganda" (1951), in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), p. 120.

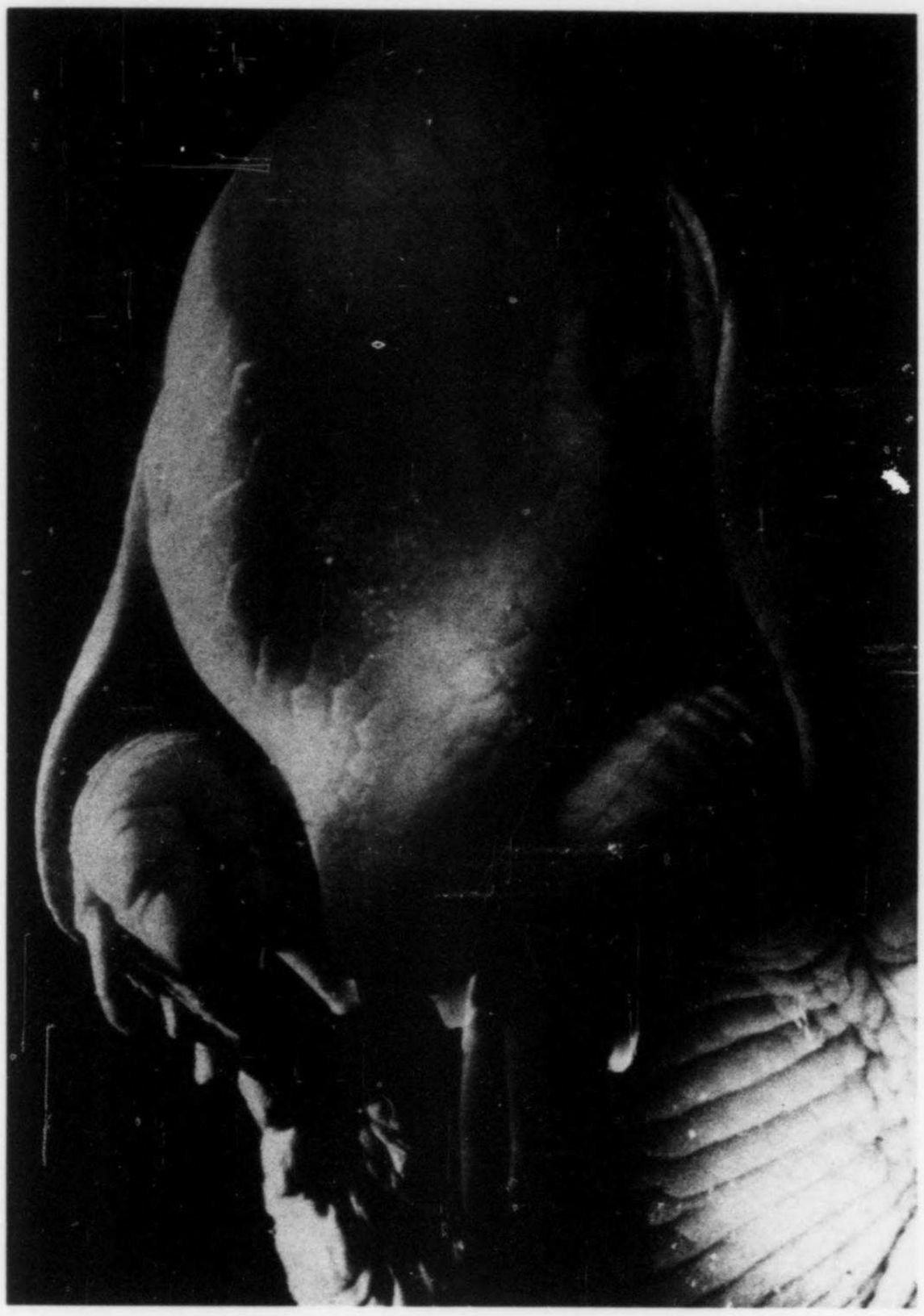
45. For Freud shock occurs on the piercing of "the protective shield" (*Reizschutz*) of the body, an extruded layer of matter said to protect the organism against excessive stimuli. This quasi-physiological model, resurrected in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, resonates with our discussion of the armored body, perhaps even with the Ernst imaging of an "evolution" of "anatomy" as a "hypertrophied trophy" or "bitter perisperm." Indeed, this model was taken up to think the development of a military-industrial body as sketched above. See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (1939), trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), and, more synoptically, Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (1977) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 134–70. Concerned with armoring as a psychic phenomenon, Theweleit is ambivalent about this sociological account. On the one hand, he speaks of "the technization of the body"; on the other hand, he argues that "it has nothing to do with the development of machine technology" (vol. 2, pp. 202, 162).

46. Of course, one can hardly speak of a subject as such at this point. Moreover, this conception, like most others in Freud, metamorphoses over time (e.g., he later distinguishes between primary and secondary narcissism).

47. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p. 16.

48. Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as formative of the function of the I," in *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), p. 15. If Freud refined his notion of narcissism partly in the context of war, Lacan developed his notion of the mirror stage partly in the milieu of surrealism.

49. In his model narcissism is bound up dialectically with aggressivity: "Aggressivity is the correla-



In his account of the (proto)fascist subject, Theweleit draws on ego psychology and object-relations theory more than on Freud and Lacan.[50] For him "armor" is not part and parcel of any ego; rather, it appears almost in lieu of a formed ego, hypertrophied if you like.[51] Theweleit does not hesitate to think this

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tive tendency of a mode of identification that we call narcissistic . . ." ("Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis," *Ecrits*, p. 16). On the one hand, the subject arrives at coordination, keeps the fragmented body at bay, through aggressivity; on the other hand, aggressivity recalls the very imagos of the fragmented body that threaten the subject. (Significantly vis-à-vis Bellmer, Lacan cites the example of dolls torn to pieces by children.) Such reflections lead him elsewhere to question the advantage of "a strong ego"; see "Some Reflections on the Ego," p. 16.

50. *Contra* Freud, Theweleit questions whether the (proto)fascist subject ever achieves Oedipus, and *contra* Lacan he takes up the Deleuze-Guattari polemic against a conception of desire as founded in lack. Nevertheless, he is more indebted to both than he wishes to admit, just as he uses specific aspects of ego psychology (e.g., Margaret Mahler) even as he is generally critical of it.

51. "The armor of these men can be seen as constituting their ego" (Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 2, p. 164). In the psychoanalytic literature Reich speaks of "armoring" explicitly but also generally: for him it is fundamental to all character formation. See *Character Analysis* (1933), trans. Vincent R. Carfagno (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), pp. 43, 237. In "The Mirror Stage" Lacan speaks of "the armour of an alienating identity" (p. 4).

subject in terms developed for the psychotic child: the (proto)fascist is said to suffer from a "basic fault" (Michael Balint) in which object relations are never resolved and individuation processes never completed (Margaret Mahler).[52] Unable fully to cathect his body image or even to bind his periphery, he is not formed, as it were, from the inside out.[53] Thus, when faced with stimuli that cannot be discharged, he feels threatened with dissolution, and other forms of binding become urgent. "The body did acquire boundaries," Theweleit writes, "but they were drawn *from the outside*, by the disciplinary agencies of imperialist society"—hierarchical academy, military drill, actual battle and the like.[54] These (proto)fascist agencies bind through a special sense of the body "delibidinized" through pain: the body as armor. According to Theweleit, this armor serves as an ego stopgap, one which tends the subject to an extreme aggressivity, if not to an asocial autism.[55] Such aggressivity seems necessary to the (proto)fascist not only for self-definition but also for self-defense, and it is thus that he attacks Jews, Communists, homosexuals, proletarian women, and "the masses." In doing so, however, this subject aims at his own desiring production, and finally it is this, for Theweleit, that he most fears and loathes: his unconscious and sexuality, drives and desires, coded, as are his more social fantasms, as feminine.[56]

However, even as the (proto)fascist requires this armor, he also strives to be free of it; thus his great ambivalence regarding comminglings of all sorts (sexual, social, racial . . .). This contradictory demand is treated most effectively in war (whether national as in World War I, or civil as in the Freikorps terror), for there the subject can be defined and defended in the very act of discord and discharge.[57] This in turn compounds the extraordinary mystique of war in (proto)fascist ideology as an "inner experience"[58] in which both body and psyche

52. "I can think of no single psychoanalytic term developed with reference to the psychotic child that could not equally be applied to a behavioral trait of the 'fascist' male. In both, object relations are equally impossible: both are distanced from the libidinal, human object world. Both have an 'interior' that is chaoticized, saturated with aggression: both fear that their boundaries will disintegrate on contact with intense external vitality . . ." (Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 2, p. 220). This is dangerous—to see the fascist as psychotic, or (worse) vice-versa—more dangerous than the association of autistic and avant-gardist. In effect, it may repeat by reversal the charge of "degenerate" leveled by Nazis against modernism; in any case, it is to remain within a system of the normal and the pathological. And yet Theweleit asserts that this psychopathological type *is* "the norm in Germany . . . far more 'normal' and common than Oedipus, for example" (vol. 2, p. 213).

53. See Mahler, *On Human Symbiosis and the Vicissitudes of Individuation.*

54. Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 1, p. 418. In this regard etymological aspects of "fascism" become suggestive. For example, "*fasces*—Latin. Rods or branches wrapped around an ax. Carried by Latin 'lictors' (executioners) as a show of power." Or "*fascia*—English/French . . . In medicine: tissue supporting and binding the muscles . . ." (quoted from Kaplan, xxvii). Of course, dadaists and surrealists militated against such "binding" institutions.

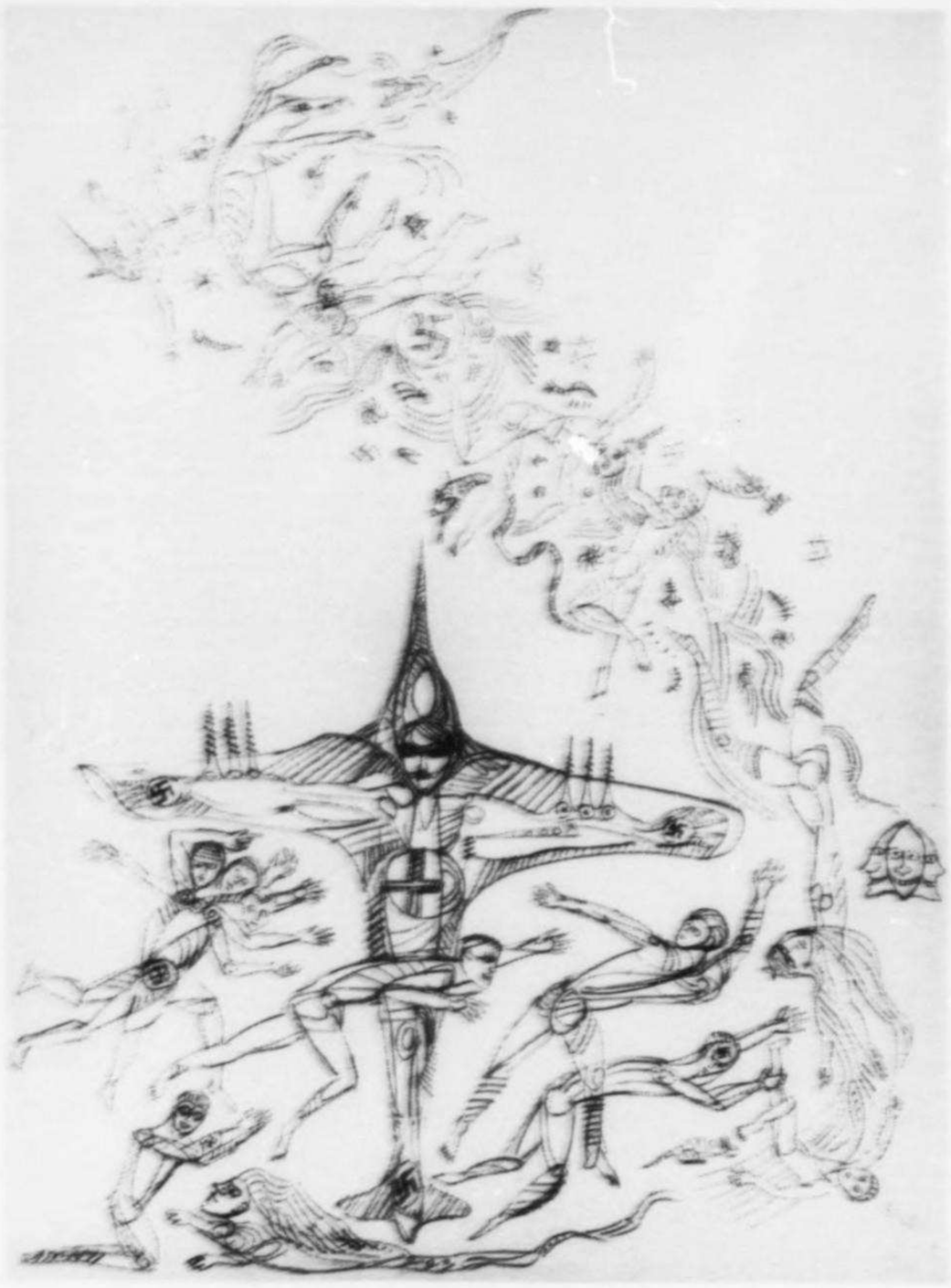
55. For Mahler, autistic "deanimation" is a defense against a dread of dissolution, a fear of engulfment, as is, for Theweleit, armored aggressivity.

56. See, for example, Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 1, p. 258, and vol. 2, pp. 74, 77, 403.

57. The Freikorps soldier "rediscovers his boundaries only as a killer . . ." (vol. 2, p. 38). Also see vol. 2, pp. 87, 192, 196–97, 208.

58. The phrase derives from Ernst Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (1922).

Robert Smithson. From Hitler's Opera. *1960.*



become weapon. "Was I now perhaps one with the weapon?" Ernst von Salomon, World War I soldier and Freikorps officer, writes. "Was I not machine—cold metal?"[59]

For Theweleit this reconfiguration of body and psyche as weapon is fundamental to fascism, for it allows for desiring production to be both suppressed and expressed as "murdering production." Such armoring becomes programmatic in the fascist modernism of Ernst Jünger, the most important writer of the German interwar right, for whom "technology is our uniform."[60] Indeed, Jünger urged that technology be "intertwined with our nerves," and that the "pain" of military-industrial experience be transformed into a "second, colder consciousness."[61] Aristocratically critical though Jünger was of Nazism, such "political

59. Quoted in Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 2, p. 179. Solomon was also an accessory to the murder of the prominent Jewish politician and financier Walter Rathenau. In Freikorps literature Theweleit notes a persistent version of the trope of man coupled with machine, the (machine) gun as whore, the sadism of which Bellmer exposes in his *Mitrailleuse en état de grâce* (1937).

60. Jünger quoted in Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 2, p. 179.

61. Ernst Jünger, "Photography and the 'Second Consciousness,'" in Christopher Phillips, ed., *Photography in the Modern Era* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), p. 207. In this text he actually advocates "objectification"—deadness recoded as vitality. This is also valued in the fascist modernism of Wyndham Lewis: "Deadness is the first condition of art. The armoured hide of the hippopotamus, the shell of the tortoise, feathers and machinery. . . . With the statue its lines and

algodicies of the solid block, strength-through-joy, iron front, shoulder-to-shoulder, steel-ego, reconstruction ego type"[62] soon became crucial to its ideology—that is, once its *völkisch* anticapitalism was played down in favor of a technical rationality recoded in terms of a national *Kultur* rather than a corrosive *Civilization.* In this recoding not only politics but also technology was aestheticized as "the embodiment of will and beauty."[63]

How might the Theweleit account of this ideology, problematic though it may be, illuminate the machinic figures of Ernst as well as the fragmented dolls of Bellmer, and vice versa?[64] On a first level, the Ernst machines are not just dysfunctional; they are corrosive of (proto)fascist "will." So too the Bellmer *poupées* do not simply belie sublimation; they shatter (proto)fascist "beauty" with the effects of sexuality. Moreover, where (proto)fascist subjectivity exults in the "metallization of the human body,"[65] Ernst refers it to a damaged ego, and Bellmer exposes its sadistic ends. Finally, against a "damming up" of the unconscious, for Theweleit the *sina qua non* of (proto)fascist subjectivity, both artists incite a flowing of desires and a mixing of boundaries (this is the very raison d'être of the Bellmer dolls). Clearly these appositions need to be refined, and one way to do so is to turn to the Bellmer *poupées*, the works that provoked these remarks in the first place.[66]

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masses are its soul, no restless inflammable ego is imagined for its interior: it has *no inside*: good art must have no inside: that is capital" (*Tarr* [London: Calder and Boyars, 1968], pp. 279–80). Jameson glosses this modernism suggestively here: Lewis, he writes, "stages something like a search for the ego, for the unifying principle of some autonomous, central subject, at the same time exploring the effects of the systematic dispersal of psychic unity by various historical agencies . . ." (*Wyndham Lewis*, p. 97).

62. Sloterdijk, p. 468. "Algodicy means a metaphysical interpretation of pain that gives it meaning" (p. 460). Although Sloterdijk does not cite Theweleit, he too regards the "armoring of the ego against its suffering" as "part of the Weimar zeitgeist" (pp. 467–68).

63. See Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 30, and Anson Rabinbach, "The Aesthetics of Production in the Third Reich," *Journal of Contemporary History* 11 (1976), pp. 43–74.

64. There is a whole critical literature on *Male Fantasies*; let me mention just two points. The first concerns the (proto)fascist as "not fully born." Influenced by Mahler, Theweleit discounts regression as an explanation of the "psychotic" traits of the (proto)fascist: "His stabilizations derive from external sources; and when these disappear, he has no need of 'regression.' Instead, all the qualities otherwise concealed and dammed up in inside him are suddenly released in their original form" (vol. 2, p. 259). But what then is his sense of (sexual) difference—and all that it subtends? And, on another level, how might this "psychotic" designation relieve him of responsibility? This points to a double bind: criticized on the psychoanalytical front, Theweleit is also chastised for an overly psychoanalytical account, i.e., one which does not attend to economic determination or racist ideology—the anti-Semitism of the Nazis, the *Tremendum* of Jewish oppression. However, his subject is not fascism or Nazism *in toto* but rather its imaginary in certain German men of the 1920s. (I am indebted in these formulations to Mary Kelly and participants in the Whitney Program.)

65. The term is Marinetti's, as quoted by Walter Benjamin in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 241.

66. My delay signals the dilemma that to discuss this work is already to defend it, and that it is very

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While Ernst may only allude to (proto)fascism, Bellmer responds directly to Nazism.[67] Too young for World War I, he rejected engineering, the profession dictated by his father, for publicity, which he also rejected when the Nazis came to power lest he abet them in any way. It was then that he turned to his *poupées*—again, as an attack on fascist father and state alike; an attack, however, played out on the compulsively (dis)articulated image of a young female body. How are we to reconcile these two data, the avowed politics and the evident sadism of the dolls?[68]

In *Die Puppe* (1934) Bellmer writes of his "joy, exaltation, and fear" before his fragmented first doll.[69] This intense ambivalence is evidently of a fetishistic sort, as the second doll (begun in 1935), less anatomical, makes more manifest. Here Bellmer manipulates the *poupée* excessively: photographed in different positions, each new version is a "construction *as* dismemberment" that simultaneously signifies castration (in the disconnection of body parts) and its fetishistic defense (in the multiplication of these parts as phallic substitutes).[70] This reading is not discouraged by Bellmer. In *Die Puppe* he speaks of the doll as a way to recover "the enchanted garden" of childhood, a familiar trope for a pre-Oedipal moment before castration. Moreover, in a later text, *Petite Anatomie de l'inconscient physique, ou l'Anatomie de l'image* (1957), Bellmer locates desire specifically

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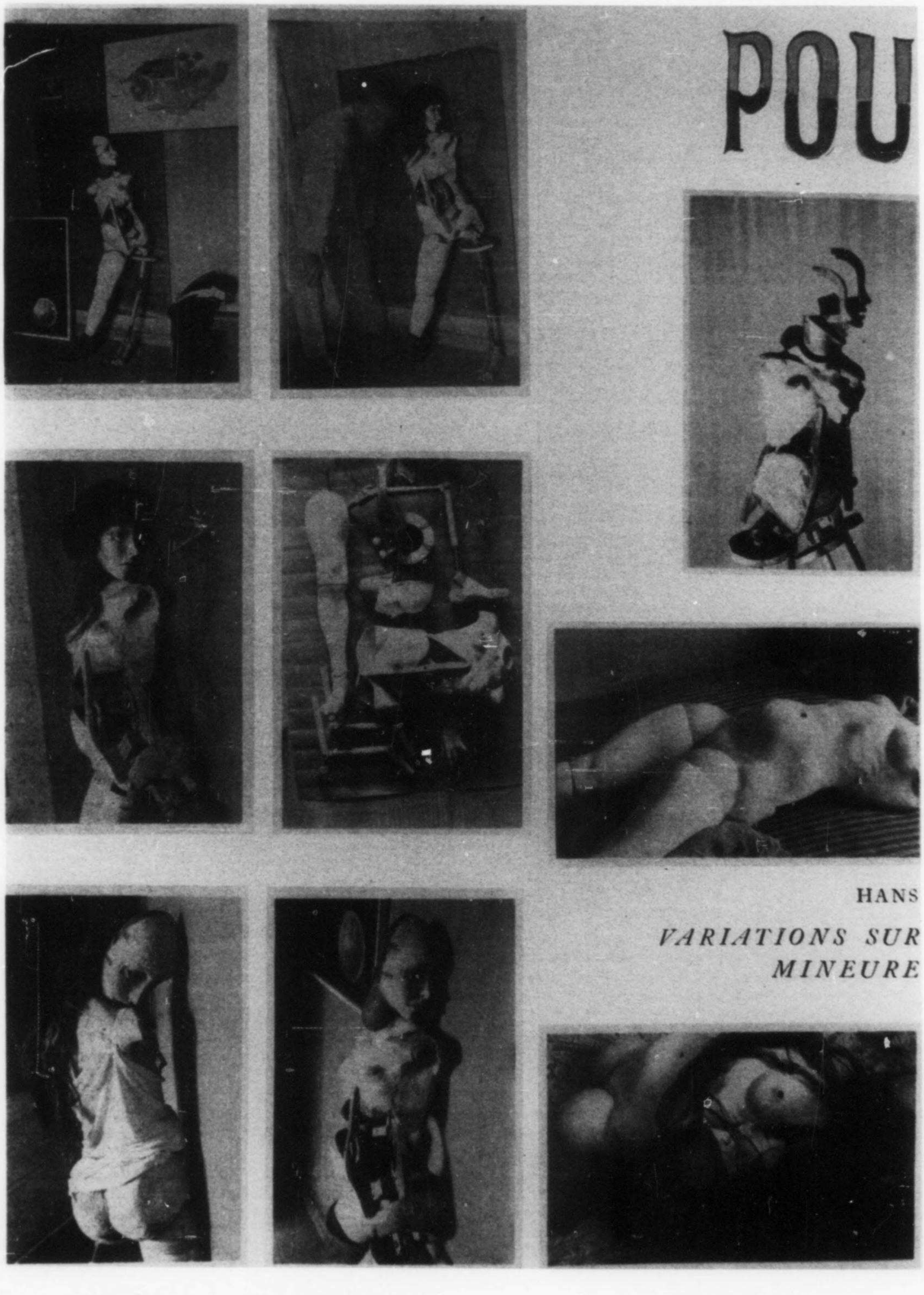
difficult to defend morally—that is, in terms of its disposition to its figured other. So why consider it at all? Because ethically—that is, in terms of its insight into a constituted self—it is incisive about certain aspects of both male (hetero)sexuality and fascist subjectivity. I do not deny that Bellmer produces misogynistic effects that may overwhelm his liberatory intentions. I also do not deny that my own revulsion is mixed with a certain fascination. But precisely for these reasons it seems important to me to confront this work. Charges of misogyny are often laid against surrealism (especially so, in this country, since the 1985 exhibition "L'Amour fou: Photography & Surrealism" cocurated by Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston). However, some surrealist practices are ambiguously reflexive about masculinist fantasies rather than merely expressive of them: they involve an inquiry into (hetero)sexism that should not be simply dismissed.

67. For biographical information as well as critical analysis, see in particular Peter Webb (with Robert Short), *Hans Bellmer* (London, 1985). Incidentally, Bellmer had ties to (Berlin) dada; at the Berlin Technical School of Art he met Grosz and Heartfield, among others.

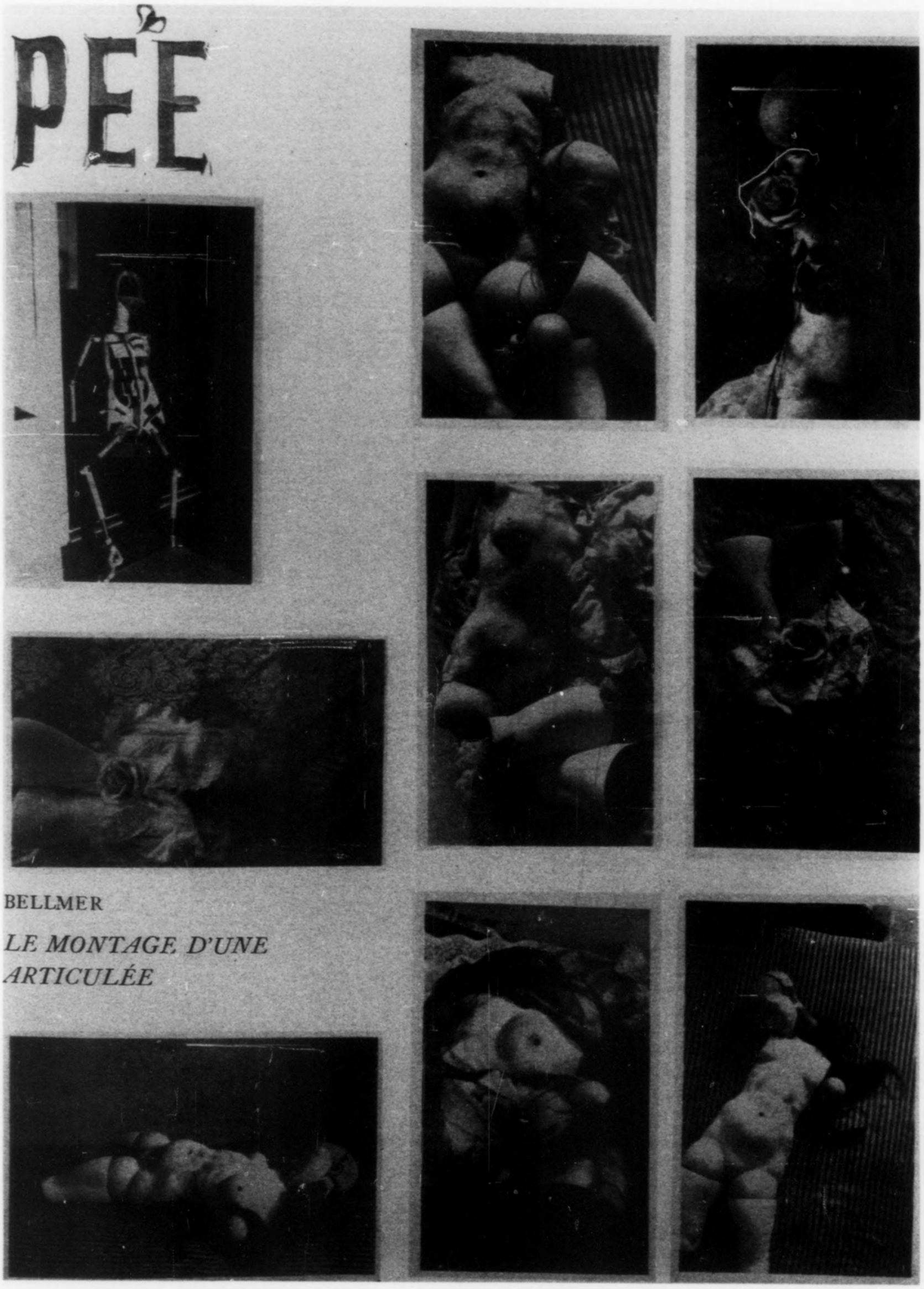
68. In this regard Bellmer makes explicit that the ground of Oedipal conflict is the female body.

69. *Die Puppe* (Karlsruhe: Th. Eckstein, 1934), the first publication of the first doll, contained ten photographs; eighteen photographs were then published in *Minotaure* 6 (Winter 1934–35) under the title "Variations sur le montage d'une mineure articulée." I have mostly drawn on the French translation of *Die Puppe*, *La Poupée*, trans. Robert Valencay (Paris: Guy Lévis-Mano, 1936), n.p. Recently a new English translation by Peter Chametzky, Susan Felleman, and Jochen Schindler was published in *Sulfur* 26 (Spring 1990). This issue includes an insightful reading of the dolls (which also deals with sadomasochism) by Therese Lichtenstein, a text by Herbert Lust, and an exchange with Clayton Eshleman.

70. See Krauss, "Corpus Delicti," p. 86; also see my "L'Amour faux," *Art in America* (January 1986). Freud briefly discusses such multiplication in relation to the threat of castration in "Medusa's Head" (1922).



Hans Bellmer. Variations sur le montage d'une mineure articulée. Minotaure 6, *Winter 1934–35.*



BELLMER

LE MONTAGE D'UNE ARTICULÉE

in the bodily detail, which is only real, he argues, if desire makes it artificial, that is, if it is fetishized—sexually displaced and libidinally overvalued. Such is the "monstrous dictionary of the image," he writes, "a dictionary of analogues-antagonisms."[71]

Yet the *poupées* involve more than fetishism. The very notion of a "dictionary of the image" suggests a shifting of desire more than its fixing (as in the Freudian account of fetishism). So too the production of the dolls, especially the first, is revealed more than concealed (as in the Marxian account of fetishism); in fact, the photographs of the first *poupée* detail its construction explicitly. Moreover, the sex of this doll is not effaced or disguised; rather, it is subjected to obsessive investigation. (Like little Hans, Bellmer manipulates the doll as if to ascertain the signs of difference and the mechanics of birth.) Finally, not only are the *poupées* broken up rather than made whole, but they are also posed in fantasmatic scenes suggestive of rape rather than sightings of castration. In short, castration is not disavowed here; on the contrary, it is staged again and again. Indeed, it often appears punished, with "horror at the mutilated creature or triumphant contempt for her."[72] And yet is it strictly the fantasm of a castrative woman that is avenged in the dolls, or does the figure of a castrative father lurk behind?[73]

The *poupées* thus concern the sadistic as much as the fetishistic, though the two are hardly opposed here.[74] Again, the first doll attests less to an arresting of desire than to its shattering effects,[75] and the second doll is "a series of endless anagrams" that are aggressively manipulated.[76] This sadism is hardly hidden; Bellmer writes openly of his drive to master his "victims," and to this end the dolls are often posed voyeuristically. In the second *poupée*, this look masters through the various mises-en-scène of the doll, while in the first *poupée* it is even

71. Hans Bellmer, *Petite Anatomie de l'inconscient physique, ou l'Anatomie de l'image* (Paris: Le Terrain Vague, 1957), n.p. This text was mostly written during World War II, part of which Bellmer spent interned, along with Ernst, as a German alien in France.

72. Freud, "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" (1925), in *On Sexuality*, ed. Angela Richards (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 336.

73. This is suggested by one origin story about the dolls: that they were inspired when Bellmer saw the 1932 Max Reinhardt production of Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann*. For Freud, who glosses one such tale, "The Sandman," in "The Uncanny" (1919), associations of castration and fetishism cluster around the doll Olympia (or in the ballet *Coppélia*), but behind her lurks Coppélius, the evil father figure. More generally in Freud, the threat of castration may be posed for the male subject by the female body, but it is only guaranteed, as it were, by the paternal figure. See "Splitting of the Ego in the Defensive Process" (1938).

74. The second doll appears more fetishistic-scopophilic, its structure one of ambivalence, a recognition-disavowal of castration; while the first doll appears more sadistic-voyeuristic, concerned to reveal, even to persecute, such castration.

75. As we will see, this is a shattering of the subject as much as it is of the object. On this shattering see the provocative argument in Leo Bersani, *The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 29–50.

76. Hans Bellmer, *Obliques* (Paris: Borderie, 1975), p. 109; also quoted in Christian Jelinski, *Les dessins de Hans Bellmer* (Paris: Denoël, 1966), p. 15.

made internal to the doll: its interior is filled with miniature panoramas intended "to pluck away the secret thoughts of the little girls."[77] Involved here, then, is a patriarchal fantasy of control not only over creation but over desire as such.

But exactly what is this desire? And precisely how masterful is it? At least two points call out for consideration.[78] The first concerns the political implications of the apparent sadism of the *poupées*, and here two related remarks seem useful. The first comes from Benjamin, also in the midst of the fascism of the 1930s: "Exposure of the mechanistic aspects of the organism is a persistent tendency of the sadist. One can say that the sadist sets out to substitute for the human organism the image of machinery."[79] This formulation is in turn specified by Adorno and Horkheimer toward the end of World War II: "[The Nazis] see the body as a moving mechanism, with joints as its components and flesh to cushion the skeleton. They use the body and its parts as though they were already separated from it."[80] In this light the sadism of the mechanistic dolls might be seen, at least in part, as second-degree—that is, as a reflexive sadism aimed as an exposé at the sadism of the fascist father.

Bellmer constructed his first *poupée* under the erotic inspiration of his young cousin, with the technical help of his brother, and out of childhood things provided by his mother. In its very making, then, it constitutes an incestuous assault against the father. Indeed, as his friend Jean Brun graphically stages it, this assault turns the very tools of his father, a stern engineer and a zealous Nazi, perversely upon him:

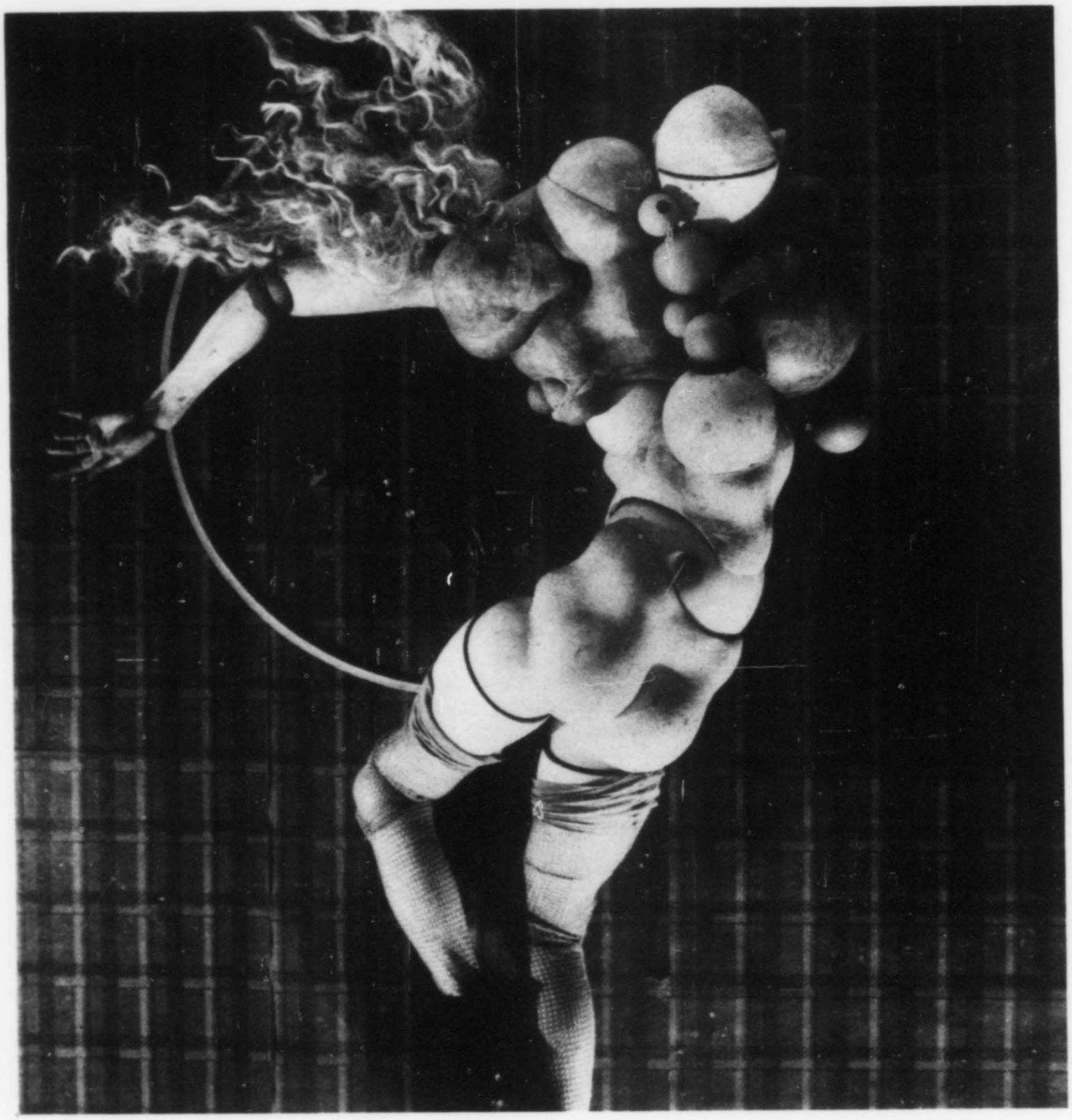
> The father is vanquished. He sees his son holding a hand-drill, securing a dolly's head between his brother's knees, and telling him: "Hold on to her for me, I've got to pierce her nostrils." Pallid, the father

77. Bellmer, *La Poupée*. An illustration in *Die Puppe* connects this mechanism directly to voyeurism, as does a reference in the text to a "conscious gaze plundering their charms." Paul Foss writes of the second doll: "What is this 'thing' or composite of things but the gaze pulled to pieces by the eyes, an open combinatory of spatial vision?" ("Eyes, Fetishism, and the Gaze," *Art & Text* 20 [1986], p. 37). This remark holds for many of the drawings as well, especially as they tend to disjunctive superimpositions.

78. A third point concerns the nature of the sadomasochistic agreement. The sadist does not destroy his other; his part of the agreement is to preserve him or her: such is one stake at least of his mastery. Thus when Bellmer claims that the desires of his other are also figured in the dolls, we cannot merely dismiss it as an obscene rationalization. On this particular bond of Love, see Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), pp. 51–84. Also suggestive in this regard is the 1987 Sylvère Lotringer/Chris Kraus film *How to Shoot a Crime*.

79. Benjamin, *Passagen-Werk* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1982, V), p. 466. Contrast Bellmer: "I want to reveal scandalously the interior that will always remain hidden and sensed behind the successive layers of a human structure and its lost unknowns" (*l'Anatomie de l'image*).

80. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), trans. John Cumming (New York: The Seabury Press, 1972), p. 235. "Those who extolled the body above all else," they add, "the gymnasts and scouts, always had the closest affinity with killing, just as the lovers of nature are close to the hunter." Adorno and Horkheimer also touch upon the masochistic aspect of this sadism.



goes out, while the son eyes this daughter, now breathing as it is forbidden to do.[81]

Upon this transgression with the *poupées*, Bellmer experiences "a matchless pleasure," a *jouissance* that defies the phallic privilege of the father.[82] Here we may see the *perversion* of the dolls precisely as a *turning away* from the father, from his law. This notion is developed suggestively by Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, for whom perversion involves a disavowal of the genital capacities of the father, a challenge to his law through an "erosion of the double difference

81. Jean Brun, "Désir et réalité dans l'oeuvre de Hans Bellmer," in *Obliques*, quoted in Jelenski, p. 7. This reading is supported by a bitter prose-poem by Bellmer titled "The Father," which attests to the subversive power of fantasy. But, again, the ground of this "subversion," the female body, seems all but forgotten here.

82. From a 1964 letter to Herta Hausmann, quoted in Webb, p. 162.

Hans Bellmer. Poupée. *1935.*

between the sexes and the generations."[83] Bellmer enacts this erosion not only in his willful usurpation of the paternal perogative but also, on the one hand, in his imaginary interpenetration with the female other and, on the other hand, in his scandalous seduction of the "little girls."[84] Moreover, throughout his oeuvre he positions the body in the dimension where this erosion of sexual and generational difference is said to be most extreme: "the undifferentiated anal-sadistic dimension."[85]

But what does all this have to do with fascism? Like Ernst, Bellmer contests it even as he participates partly in it, i.e., from within its construction of subjectivity, and he does so as seen from a range of perspectives. For example, he contests this subjectivity as theorized by Freud in *Group Psychology*: a subjectivity which, though it dreads the group leader as a primal father, also identifies with him—indeed, to the point that "this group ideal" comes to "govern the ego in the place of the ego ideal."[86] Bellmer is far from any such identification through idealization. But he also contests this subjectivity as very differently theorized by Theweleit in *Male Fantasies*: this subjectivity that insists on bodily separation and persecutes all desiring production.[87] As opposed to such separation, Bellmer seeks a release from "the outline of the self" through an interpenetration with its other. And as opposed to such persecution, he aims for "a physical unconscious," a fully libidinal body.[88] In short, against a fascist armoring of body and psyche, he is pledged to a surrealist *amour fou.*

Again, this *amour fou* is hardly free from aggressivity, as his mechanizing of

83. Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, *Creativity and Perversion* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984), p. 2. This text includes a brief discussion of Bellmer (pp. 20–22) to which I am indebted. Bellmer: "To an extent [the dolls] represented an attempt to reject the horrors of adult life as it was, in favour of a return to the wonders of childhood, but the eroticism was all-important, they became an erotic liberation for me" (quoted in Webb, p. 34).

84. Bellmer: "It is a question of the peculiar hermaphrodite interconnection between the male and the female principles in which the female structure predominates. What is always vital is that the image of the woman must have been 'lived' (experienced) by the man in his own body before it can be 'seen' by the man" (*l'Anatomie de l'image*).

85. Chasseguet-Smirgel, p. 78.

86. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p. 59.

87. Again I have mixed theories. Theweleit is critical of the Freudian account of the fascist subject vis-à-vis paternal authority, intent as he is to explore its pre-Oedipal aspects. He is no less at odds (though here tacitly) with Chasseguet-Smirgel, who has her own theory of fascism—as a "fatherless universe" that permits a regressive fusion with the mother, with *Blut und Boden*, etc. (On these points see the helpful foreword to *Male Fantasies*, vol. 2, by Jessica Benjamin and Anson Rabinbach; also see Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love*, pp. 144–55, which includes a critique of Chasseguet-Smirgel.) My own argument is also mixed, internally conflicted. Can one follow a theory of the fascist subject in terms of perversion (as in Theweleit) on the one hand, and propose a critique of this subject also in terms of perversion (as in my reading of the *poupées*) on the other?

88. See *l'Anatomie de l'image.* There Bellmer discusses what his dolls and drawings perform: different displacements and superimpositions of male and female organs and limbs, sometimes in difficult articulations, sometimes in dangerous dissolutions. It is as if he seeks to be *horsexe* (in the sense of Catherine Millot). Bellmer: "Man in that which I appear, I am woman in my physiological horizon, in my amorous vocation" (quoted in Webb, p. 143).

the female body suggests. This leads to my second point regarding the sadism of the dolls, now in relation to masochism. "I wanted," Bellmer would say in retrospect, "to help people . . . come to terms with their instincts."[89] Here we must take him at his word, for the *poupées* do appear to negotiate a struggle between psychosexual fusion and defusion. Beneath its Bretonian flourishes this struggle is fundamental to *amour fou*, to "the innumerable *integrating and disintegrating* possibilities," as Bellmer puts it, "according to which desire fashions the image of the desired."[90] And within this struggle Bellmer reveals more clearly than any other surrealist the tension between binding and shattering tendencies, the play between sadistic and masochistic impulses. In his work the struggle crucial to dominant surrealism between the erotic and the destructive, the one never pure of the other, is most blatantly played out, and most blatantly its ground is the female body.[91]

For Freud there is a nonsexual drive to master the object which, when turned inward, is sexualized for the subject. When turned outward, this drive to master becomes properly sadistic. But there remains an aggressivity within the subject that the Freud of the death drive theory termed an "original erotogenic masochism."[92] It is this interrelation between sadism and masochism, sexuality and fantasy, life and death drives, that the *poupées* evoke. For in his sadistic scenes Bellmer leaves behind masochistic traces; in his destruction of the dolls he expresses a self-destructive impulse. In effect, he sets up an "anatomy" of love, only to display the deathliness of sexuality, which the dispersed female body is made to represent. In this regard the dolls may go beyond (or is it inside?) sadistic mastery to the point where the masculine subject confronts its greatest fear: its own fragmentation, disintegration, and dissolution. Perhaps this is why this subject seems not only to desire the (dis)articulated female body but also to identify with it, not only to master it sadistically but to become it masochistically as well.[93]

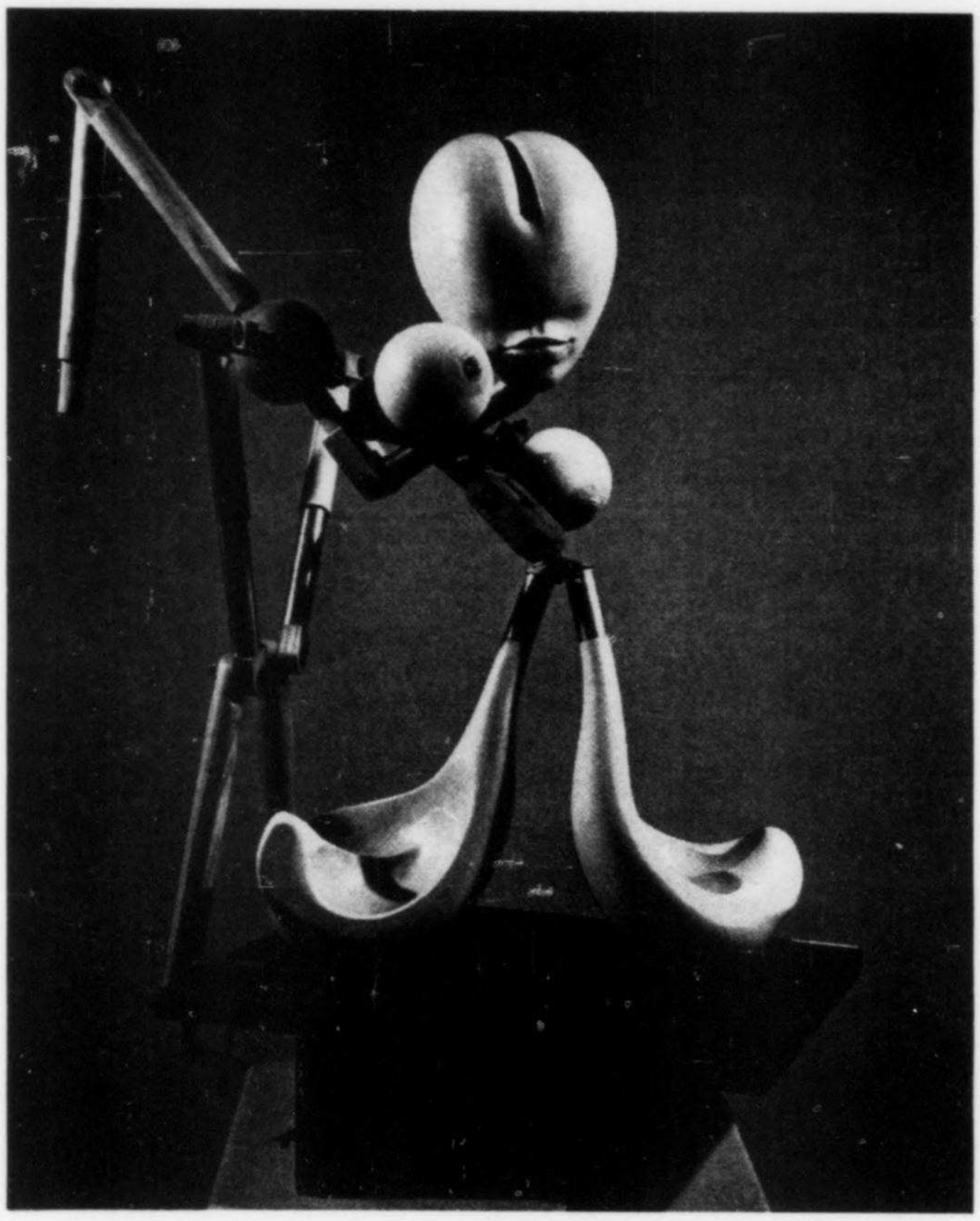
89. Bellmer quoted in Webb, p. 38.

90. Bellmer in the exhibition catalogue for "Le Surréalisme en 1947" at the Galerie Maeght, as quoted by Dawn Ades in *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed* (London: Hayward Gallery, 1978), p. 296 (italics added).

91. This may be one reason why Bellmer is marginal to the literature on surrealism: not because his work is eccentric to it but because its articulation of the sadomasochistic basis of sexuality is all too central. On this point, brilliantly articulated, see Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 85–102, and Bersani, *The Freudian Body*, pp. 29–50. Laplanche traces three related routes through this tangled terrain depending on which moment in the Freudian corpus is privileged.

92. See Freud, "The Economic Problem in Masochism" (1924). In the past few years as theory has turned to problematize masculinity, it has largely focused on the problem of masochism. See in particular the work of Kaja Silverman, especially her "Masochism and Male Subjectivity," *Camera Obscura* 17 (May 1988), pp. 31–67.

93. In one photograph in *Die Puppe* Bellmer appears with the first doll less as its maker than as its double. Such a masochistic identification is also suggested by another origin story about the *poupées*: that they were partly inspired by the ravaged Christ of the Isenheim altarpiece.



With this point we might return once more to fascist armoring. Again, for Theweleit this armoring is developed against the other of the fascist subject, whether seen as a weak, chaotic interior (his unconscious and sexuality, drives and desires) or a weak, anarchic exterior (Jews, Communists, homosexuals, proletarian women, "the masses"). Its purpose is to defend against the fragmentary and the fluid, the dispersed and the dissolute, as represented by the feminine. This is a psychic key to the fascist imaginary, for this subject can only be confirmed in violence against its other, this other that is also "the female self within."[94] Now one way to develop this account might be to see this self in terms of the masochistic aspect of the psyche (which Freud did describe, however problematically, as feminine). In this respect the fear of the feminine within might also be the fear of this destructive or defusive drive within. And this finally may be the place where the Bellmer dolls participate most deeply in the fascist

94. Jessica Benjamin and Anson Rabinbach, "Foreword," in Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 2, p. xix.

Hans Bellmer. Machine-Gunneress in a State of Grace. *1937.*

imaginary, only to expose it most effectively. For in the *poupées* this fear of the destructive and the defusive is made manifest and reflexive, as is the attempt to overcome it in violence against the feminine other—that is a scandal but also a lesson of the dolls.[95]

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What does all this have to do with the relationship of high and low forms in modern culture, the primary subject of this issue of *October*? This subject has produced many theoretical positions with different political stakes; I just want to point to two sets of terms that seem to me to govern much contemporary discourse. On one side is the narrative of *implosion*—of the high into the low. When this collapse is not celebrated in anti-elitist challenges and/or apocalyptic gestures, it is denounced: on the right in moral tales of cultural degradation usually innocent of economic considerations, on the left in critical relation to the economic imperialism of the culture industry. These positions also project an inverse, the familiar condemnation of the appropriation of the low by the high, which has right and left spins too.[96]

Opposite this narrative of implosion is that of *sublimation*—of the low into the high. This narrative has apparently conservative and progressive versions as well. In both versions, however, the low is seen as more vigorous, vital, *sexual*, in analogy with related projections onto "the primitive" and the proletarian of patently Eurocentric and bourgeois provenance. In the first version (sublimation proper), the vulgar low is refined into the sophisticated high, while in the second version (countersublimation may be the more accurate term), the etiolated high is reinvigorated by the carnal low. If conventional art history tends to follow the first model (often in terms of a sublimation of iconographic sources), academic cultural studies tend to follow the second (often in terms of a repudiation of high/low distinctions altogether). However opposed, both versions are nonetheless redemption myths; they each posit a degraded or dead term to be rescued or revived; and they have exact equivalents in discourses around primitivism.[97]

95. Bellmer: "If the origin of my work is scandalous, it is because, for me, the world is a scandal" (quoted in Webb, p. 42).

96. Obviously, for many more, cultural hierarchies of high and low still exist—as blatant as the social divisions which subtend them. Typically those on the right wish to see them preserved against historical change, while those on the left work to reverse them, however temporarily or locally, in critical strategies often carnivalesque and deconstructive in nature. There are alternative positions as well. For some, though social hierarchies clearly exist, cultural operations are far less distinct, and they point to the continual exchange, sometimes critical, sometimes collusive, between the two realms. In my attention to the structure of these positions I do not mean to imply that they are somehow value-free or merely complementary.

97. This brings us to two important productions of the Museum of Modern Art. Stung by critiques of the 1984 "Primitivism" exhibition, the primary curator of the recent "High & Low" show was intent not to primitivize the low—or, for that matter, simply to collapse or purely to sublimate it into the high. This caution may have led him to reinvent *the wheel* as his primary model of this relation-

Clearly these two narratives project an ideological closure, to which my own text indirectly points, for its test cases fit neither model. Neither Ernst nor Bellmer implies an implosion of high and low; indeed, they play on the tension between printer proof and traditional painting, between (dis)articulated doll and classical nude. And though they may appear to sublimate low into high, neither is involved in a desexualization. On the contrary, *desublimation* is the order of the day: a psychic regression (or at least withdrawal) as intimated in the Ernst figures, an instinctual defusion as displayed in the Bellmer dolls. Posed against bourgeois identity, they are also posed against Oedipal subjectivity, and in this regard they may again participate in fascist tendencies, at least to the extent that these tendencies (especially in Germany) eroded such constructions. I have argued that Ernst and Bellmer are less ideologically complicit with these tendencies than critically expository of them, and that this anti-Oedipal critique remains liberatory, at least in principle. The alternative argument regarding "modern art and desublimation"[98] calls up too many echoes of Habermas, let alone shades of Lukács. Nevertheless, if the function of fascism as antitype to modernism is to be questioned, if the ideological use of its repressed status is to be explored, then difficult implications must be confronted. At the very least, this other deployment of the base, this different mobilization of the mass, should be dealt into discussions of high and low.

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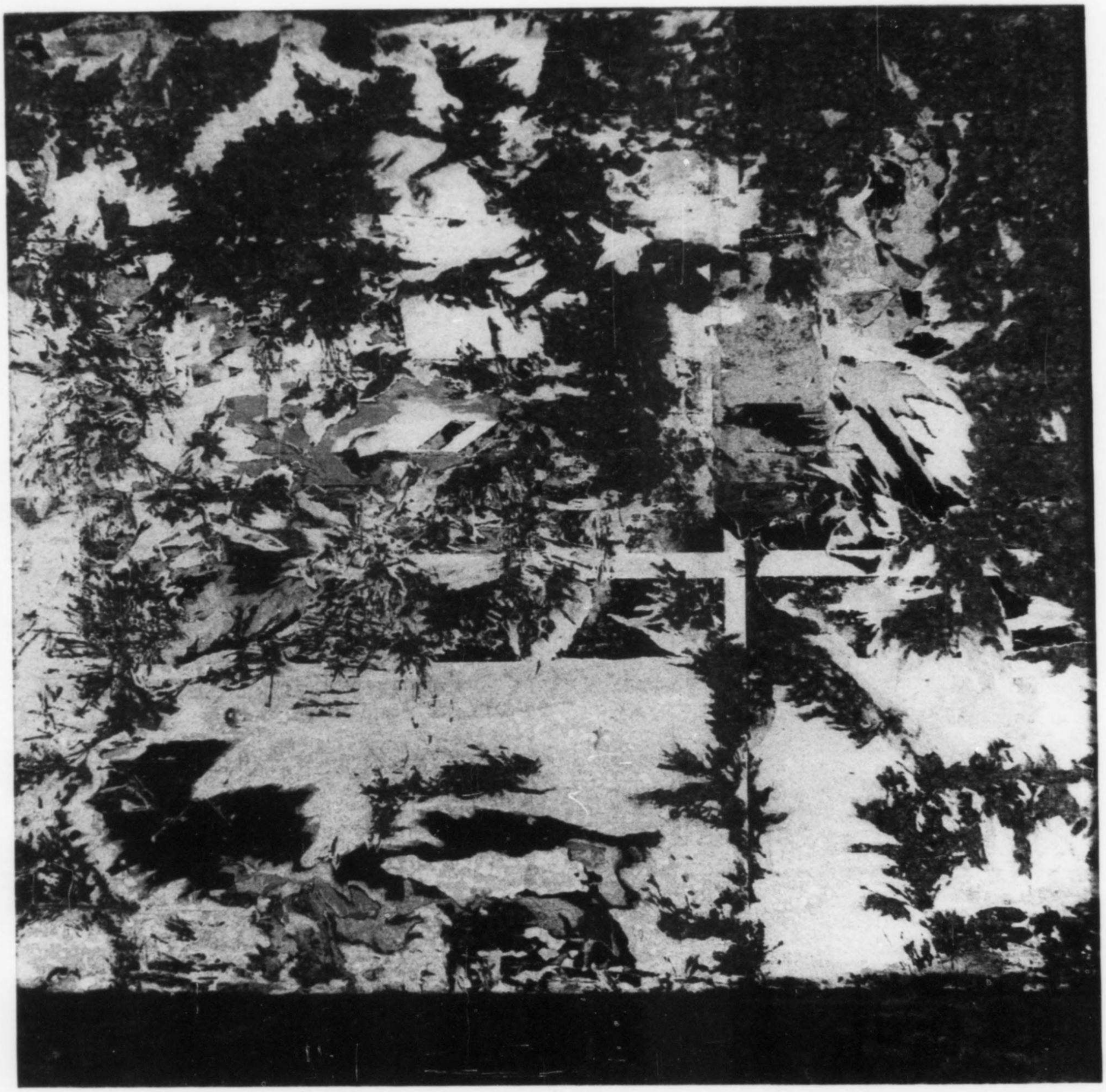
ship, largely regarded as a free circuit of high and low terms. Hardly a critical model, this allows a celebration of an entrepeneurial modernism, a modernism seen in terms of capitalist modernization, a modernization mostly purged not only of negative effects but also of political challenges. Thus, in its account of engagements with the commodity, the MOMA show tended to disregard the psychophysical effects of commodification—as if a manipulation of images or objects were the only issue. Such an account is not specific to MOMA; indeed, it may be typical of any corporate institution pledged (still?) to its partial account of modernism. But is there a structural reason why a museum of modern art cannot participate in its (own) critique? Such, of course, is a principal activity of much contemporary art and theory, indeed of much modern art and theory.

If the "High & Low" show occluded alternative approaches to this relationship (e.g., the representation of Berlin dada was slight), it is important to see what supports this occlusion in the present. One factor is *perestroika*, that is to say, its ideological capture in the West by the right. Far from a reversal of cold war triumphalism, this capture may be its grand culmination, and it is one which has penetrated the humanities. In fact, there is a *perestroika* art history already in the making. In this revisionism, for example, Russian constructivism is to be rescued from the Revolution, now revealed to be an error, and/or trashed as the precedent of Stalinist culture. As socialism is now excoriated as Stalinism in dominant culture, so the different moderisms pledged to various socialisms may soon be dismissed as so many historical aberrations in dominant modernist studies. (For all the paranoia about "tenured radicals," it might be time to question subsidized reactionaries.)

98. For the best contemporary articulation of this position see the essay of this title by Russell Berman in his *Modern Culture and Critical Theory*.



Raymond Hains. Tôle. *1965.*

From Detail to Fragment: Décollage Affichiste

BENJAMIN H. D. BUCHLOH

> *The collage of the future will be executed without scissors or razor or glue etc., in short: without any of the utensils that were necessary until now. It will leave behind the worktable and the artist's cardboard surfaces and it will take its place on the walls of the big city, the unlimited field of poetic achievements.*
>
> —Léo Malet, 1936

Malet's prophetic statement is of threefold interest here: first as a prognosis concerning the transformation of the medium and technology of collage; second with regard to the programmatic shift of the site of artistic intervention (from the studio worktable to the "walls of the big city"); and third because of the naive utopianism with which a second generation surrealist projects the walls of the city of 1936 as the "unlimited field of poetic achievement" of the future.

What would *actually* happen on the "walls of the big city" was of course the exact opposite of Malet's heroic aspiration. At first, after the German Nazi invasion, these walls would become the site of intense *political* propaganda and of fascist prohibition (interdictions that many dared to oppose at the risk of their lives). Then, after the liberation from German Fascism, these very same walls would become the site of a rather different form of propaganda and a subtler form of violence: the newly devised strategies of advertising, initiating the reemerging consumer culture of the 1950s.

As one of the essential *dispositifs* of enforcing consumption on a heretofore unimaginable scale, advertising would at first deploy the newly refined technique of large-scale color offset lithography on outdoor billboards, a technology that would contribute tremendously to the transformation of the experience of public urban space. This upgraded version of the nineteenth-century technology of the large-sized public poster, identified already at the time of Toulouse Lautrec as *l'affiche américaine* (primitive and arcane by comparison to its electronic successors), would insure from now on that not a single moment of distracted strolling

in the city could be spent in the absence of the commodity image. Its pervasive presence would in fact correspond to the more universal regimentation of leisure activities in the spaces of the city and the home.

And a third condition is perhaps even more important for the transformation of collage aesthetics in the postwar period. Once the technologies of invading and controlling the *private* space of the home had become securely (re)established in the early 1950s by means of radio and glossy illustrated magazines—tools which would soon be displaced in turn by television advertisement—the formerly embattled *public* space of the city would gradually be *evacuated*. First the leisurely passers-by relaxing from the regimen of work would progressively abandon these spaces, leaving them to make place for a new industrial work force, the haunting masses of tourists; so that, as an immediate consequence, the campaigns and signs that had striven to engage the attention of distracted citizens came to wither away from their fields of daily vision. The flaneur would become as much a literary myth of the past as now the walls of the city came gradually to shift—in the order of public attention—from a position of centrality to one of marginality, reaching near-obsolescence in the late 1960s when—as had the flaneur already—they would acquire the poetic dimension of an extinct species.

Already within the first period of postwar reconstruction until the mid-1950s, the formerly public spaces of the big cities became increasingly rationalized: either planned to serve as organized spaces of traffic flow in areas of urban labor and production; or designed to allow crowd control in areas restricted for organized mass consumption (malls); or, again, instrumentalized as axes for rapid transportation between these spaces and the correlative suburban dormitories. Complementary to these rationally managed urban spaces would be the more and more uninhabitable areas of urban leftovers and increasingly derelict spaces of the (sub)urban agglomerations—the *banlieue*.

The decline of the formerly powerful (and innovative) technologies of advertisement would be indicated either by their relocation to these marginal areas or by the fact that this type of advertising had itself deteriorated (as in the seemingly still prominent billboards of the Paris subway for example) to the level of a mere backup system for the electronic media controlling leisure and consumption at the homefront.

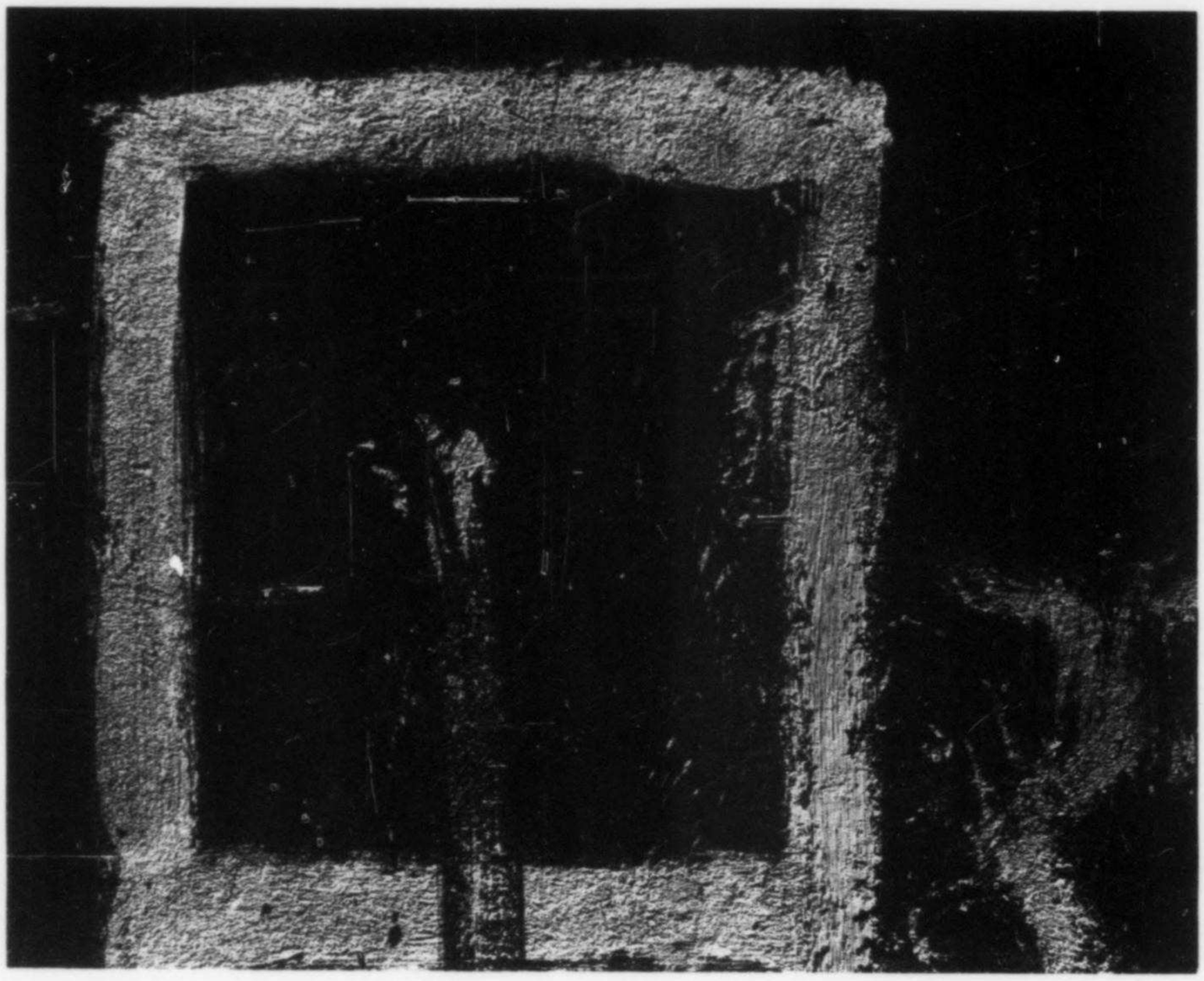
Accordingly, by the early 1950s, the sites of public urban display, the formats of the billboard, the *affiche américaine*, and the technique of the large-scale printed image/text message would have experienced their last climactic moment. Once on the wane, they would increasingly qualify as an artistic attraction, in the manner that all evacuated locations (ruins) and obsolete technologies appearing to be exempt from or abandoned by the logic of the commodity and the instrumentality of engineered desire had so qualified.

In direct continuation of the surrealist attraction to the outmoded, these urban spaces and their derelict forms of advertisement would now become sites

where the articulation of a new artistic rebellion could be inscribed. Brassaï's photographic collection of the anonymous gestures of defacement prefigures the *décollagiste*'s recordings of the gestures of the anonymous lacerators of billboards by more than fifteen years, sharing as well a concern to articulate a powerless gesture of rebellion in an abandoned urban space and in a medium of obsolescence. In order to recognize the intricate connection between obsolescence and aesthetic attraction at this moment one has only to remind oneself that the truly viable new media and spaces of advertisement would obviously never have tolerated any such anonymous destructive intervention. Similarly, a different moment in the complex history of interactions between advertising and the avant-garde might help us recognize the particular element of romantic desperation in the oppositional gestures of the postwar activities: the delusion in the 1920s on the part of the historical avant-garde that it could cooperate with, if not co-opt and optimize, the dynamic conquest of public visual experience at the time of advertisement's first triumph (Schwitters, Moholy Nagy, or Rodchenko, albeit under radically different social circumstances, all imagined the necessity of designing consumer products and product propaganda on avant-garde terms, presumably in order to improve the efficiency of such propaganda and the socially beneficial effects of a successful dissemination of new design products).

By contrast, the rebellious subject enacting the postwar *décollage* procedures is not only an anonymous vandal of product propaganda, but also an artistic agent whose aspirations to intervene in public space have diminished drastically. Neither the anonymous vandal nor the artist who collects these gestures of defacement wrought upon the advertisement can associate his or her activities with the utopian hopes of the prewar artist-designers who were aiming at a successful collaboration between avant-garde artists and product propaganda in order to achieve a democratic distribution of the amenities of consumption. For the first time, this mounting pessimism on the part of the most radical of the postwar artists recognizes the extreme reduction of public experience and self-determination to which advertising culture would subject its audiences, as it would also understand what impact the deprivation of public social space would have on the definition of avant-garde practices themselves.

The specificity of the *décollage* aesthetic becomes even more apparent in a comparison with other artistic conceptions of resistance and the gestures of intervention that artists proposed within the diminishing options of social intervention in public spaces of the '40s and '50s. Brassaï's photographic recording of the graffiti gestures (and Aaron Siskind's subsequent stylization of the material) reintroduces a wider concern for the primitive scriptures of the anonymous *agent brut*: a figure who—while not novel in twentieth-century art history (e.g., Prinzhorn's collections and exhibitions of the mid-twenties)—reemerges out of the shambles of the Second World War with renewed credibility. Dubuffet will romanticize that figure, in his devotion to *art brut* as a collector as much as in his new iconography of the city and its inhabitants: here the solution to the blight of



urban industrial life and the new consumer culture seems to consist in a continuous regression to the imagery of childhood and a celebration of the expressive forms of the demented as heroic acts of resistance. It goes without saying that these imaginary last resorts of traditional concepts of artistic creativity neither address the actual conditions of such a reduced state of existence nor, least of all, articulate the external conditions which determine the present confinement of artistic conceptions, i.e., the postwar position. For it is only from within this position that the primitivist rebellion against an all-consuming industrial culture could appear as a true artistic opposition when in fact it ultimately opened up even the last spaces of that imaginary freedom of the deranged and the deviant to a more efficient control and to aesthetic consumption.

One of the basic fallacies of recent studies of neo-avant-garde practices of the 1950s—traditional iconographies disguised as social art history (for example, Sidra Stich's study *Made in USA*)—seems to be the misconception that it is only in the postwar reconstruction period that an aggressive language of product propaganda and an enforced ideology of consumption and spectacle culture were put into place, thereby leading to the uniquely American imagery and distribution forms of pop art for example. Needless to say, the mid 1920s had seen an unimaginable expansion of these strategies right up to that moment when they collapsed into or became congruent with fascism. Another and possibly more objectionable misconception of postwar practices—the one incidentally that governed the Museum of Modern Art's "High and Low" exhibition in its entirety—is the assumption of an iconographic, morphological, and structural

Aaron Siskind. Uruapan, Mexico 4. *1955.*

continuity of the interaction of avant-garde practices with the media and the spaces of mass culture as though artists operate in fact from a position of conscious control. A more careful approach would recognize that the rapidity with which options over public space diminish after World War II determined the manner and scale of artistic interventions within the culture industry once it had been established successfully in a position of unchallenged power.

In the following remarks on some of the Parisian postwar *décollage* artists I will try to clarify to what extent radically altered circumstances actually generated a historically specific *discontinuity* while their practices could be—and still *are*, in fact—presented by art historians as an apparent continuation of the paradigm of collage aesthetics (see, for example, William Seitz's 1962 *Assemblage* show: the first and only American museum display of the *décollage* artists' work until their recent inclusion in the "High and Low" exhibition).

In his brief autobiographical essay, "In illo tempore,"[1] Jacques de la Villeglé precisely and polemically outlines the dilemma of defining an artistic position in the immediate postwar years in Paris. Arriving in his early twenties from provincial Brittany where he had met Raymond Hains, with whom he would soon (in 1949) collaborate on the first *décollage*, he seems to have experienced a strong sense of confinement—both aesthetically and politically. *Artistic* confinement would have been felt by the artists of this generation (both were

1. Jacques de la Villeglé, "In illo tempore," in *Urbi et Orbi*, ed. Alain Coulange (Mâcon: Editions W. Gramma, 1986), pp. 7–13.

Jean Dubuffet. View of Paris, The Life of Pleasure. *1944.*

born in 1926) first of all with regard to the ensconced practices of Ecole de Paris abstraction, in all of its governing modes of *abstraction chaude*, represented by artists such as Fautrier, Hartung, Soulages, and Wols and by the artists of *abstraction froide* such as Dewasne, Herbin, and Vasarely.

Constituting what Jean-Phillipe Talbo, in a first essay on Hains and Villeglé, called the "eye of the cyclops of the Ecole de Paris,"[2] these artists of the third generation of the Ecole de Paris were defended by established critics such as Michel Seuphor and Michel Tapié, Charles Estienne and Leon Degand (around the journal *Art d'aujourd'hui*), who, like the artists themselves, were engaged in a desperate project to restore prewar modernist pictorial aesthetics and establish a credible continuity within the present. This was an effort at reconstruction that was all the more bound to fail in that the various factions of the historical avant-garde (particularly within the Parisian dada and surrealist context) had already been highly incompatible, and they certainly could not be reconciled under the claim for a reconstituted hegemony of Ecole de Paris painting. Postwar abstraction in Paris was first of all understood to provide the moral and artistic expression of liberation from the fascist yoke of German occupation and the reactionary Nationalist culture of the collaborating French Vichy régime. Furthermore, the new abstraction seemed to promise liberation from the Stalinist threat which had emerged from within the ranks of the French intellectual and artistic Left, represented paradoxically both by Socialist Realist artists such as Fougeron and by the Stalinist faction of former dadaists and surrealists, in particular figures like Louis Aragon and Tristan Tzara.

2. Jean-Phillipe Talbo, *Loi du 29 juillet 1881: Hains et Villeglé* (Paris: Colette Allendy Gallery, 1957).

Jacques de la Villeglé and Raymond Hains.
Ach Alma Manétro. *February 1949.*

These problematic positions of the members of the heroic moments of avant-garde history contributed to a sense of *political* confinement among the younger artists, corroborating that generation's suspicion that *all* the radical political agendas of the prewar avant-gardes, in particular those of dada and surrealism, had been annihilated by World War II. Thus, just as the newly reestablished ideology of consumer capitalism required altogether different responses, it now appeared that any aspiration toward a successful synthesis of aesthetic and political transgression had been once and for all discredited by these failed efforts.

The difficulties of the younger generation of postwar artists were compounded by the fact that actual knowledge about the various prewar avant-garde projects was both incomplete and erratic (Villeglé explicitly refers to this fact in another essay as the "climate of under-information"). They realized that they had to perform a labor of avant-garde archaeology—paradoxical in itself—in order to (re)discover the dadaist figures relevant to their own departures, such as Raoul Hausmann, Kurt Schwitters, and most importantly, Alfred Baader, whom Villeglé would later identify as one of two predecessors (the other being Léo Malet, the second-generation surrealist who in the 1930s coined the term *décollage*).

Yet at the same time a third element would have contributed to that sense of confinement and it would have determined the artistic attitudes of that generation to an equal if not higher degree as did the disenchantment with the political bankruptcy of the avant-garde. This feeling of containment emerged from the newly reinforced principles of consumer culture and its increasingly successful forms of domination. The generation of Hains and Villeglé clearly understood that artistic practice would be inconceivable outside of these collective forms of control. Yet if they wanted to develop strategies of artistic opposi-

tion and if they wanted to rupture the new forms of spectacle culture, they had to reconcile these strategies with their disenchantment with the political ambitions of the former avant-gardes, in particular those of the local surrealists.

Even at first glance, several parameters would seem to distinguish the practices of the *décollagistes* from the tradition of collage aesthetics. First of all the shift of location as predicted by Léo Malet. Rather than representing urban spaces iconically in the indirect trace of the found images of advertisement, newsprint, or photographic representation, the *décollagistes* shift their operation from the space of the studio to that of immediate intervention in the street. If in Schwitters's and the dadaists' work the found materials from the street had ultimately only invaded the space of painting, in the work of the *décollage* artists the street is the site where the artistic intervention actually takes place.

Secondly, rather than merely engaging in the elaboration of a new aesthetic of anticontemplative tactility as Walter Benjamin had discerned it in the work of the dadaists, tactility in *décollage* has already achieved the level of an *actual* collaborative act. Thus it seems that the *décollagistes* attempted to reactivate Louis Aragon's demand for an aesthetic of collective participation which ends his account of collage aesthetics, "La peinture au défi" (1930). By citing Isidore Ducasse's famous statement ("The marvelous must be made by all and not by one"), Aragon stressed in the last paragraph of his essay that the collective dimension was the quintessential difference between collage aesthetics and the conventions of painting. Yet neither surrealism as a historical project nor its various strategies as models of production and participation can adequately explain the strategies of Hains and Villeglé when in 1949 they decided to declare their first jointly found frieze of lacerated posters to be a work of art, naming it *Ach Alma Manétro*, after the three word fragments still legible in the vast field of scattered layers of torn paper.[3]

In the *décollagistes'* pact with anonymous vandalists of urban product propaganda these collaborative acts acquire a new and direct aggressivity. A type of intervention emerges that seems to anticipate the procedures that the lettristes and situationists would soon call *détournement*, practices responding to conditions that Debord would define in 1967: "A world at once present and absent which the spectacle makes visible is the world of commodity dominating all that is lived."

On yet another level, the *décollagistes'* acts would differ programmatically from the surrealists' notion of the chance encounter (even though Villeglé often invokes the devices of the *cadavre exquis* as an earlier model of collaboration). They negate the assumption that the delirious flaneur would in fact—as suggested in Breton's *Nadja*—encounter the female impersonator of the uncon-

3. Ironically, the syllable "ach" of the title is a residue of the name "Bach," which had already figured prominently in the original moment of the invention of collage in Braque's and Picasso's work of 1912–13.

scious as a liberating force of defetishization who reconstitutes subjectivity and experience. And to the same extent, they oppose the extension of surrealist automatism into the performative rituals of painting in the studio and on the canvas (as exemplified most compellingly by the emerging mythology surrounding Jackson Pollock in France). By contrast, the *décollagistes* redefine artistic notions of the collective unconscious, expressly resituating these not in mythical or archetypal models but as inextricably and exclusively constituted within the urban space of commodity consumption and spectacle culture. In direct opposition to the mythology of action painting, *décollage* would not "elaborate the spectacle of refusal but rather refuse the spectacle" (Vaneigem).

What then determines the historically specific structure of fragmentation, the spatial distribution and its temporal ordering, in the work of the *décollagistes*? What materials qualify at a particular historical moment to be subjected to a newly enforced fragmentation in the paradigm of collage, materials of emerging technologies or those newly evacuated, obsolescent ones? Since its historical beginnings within a very short period of time (1911–19), the paradigm of collage and the procedure of fragmentation had been radically and rapidly transformed according to the specificity of the technological processes of its "raw" *materials* (as for example in the shift from collage to photomontage). The same is true of course for collage's *procedure*: the spacing of its elements, the modes and criteria of their juxtaposition. The tearing gesture of Jean Arp's early 1916 *papiers déchirés* activates and temporalizes the fragmentation of collage to the same extent that the surface fissures and textural discrepancies had spatialized it.

If Kurt Schwitters has—not without great difficulties and delays of reception—acquired a position of masterful centrality for the definition of collage, this is in part certainly due to the traditional nature of his enterprise: within his work from 1919 onwards, it is precisely the discovery of a new cosmos of materials, surfaces, and textures that—paradoxically—rescues painting from its imminent extinction. To the *pictorialization* of surfaces and materials in Schwitters's work (advertisement fragments and printed phonemes, production processes and industrial refuse) there corresponds the *compositional differentiation* with which these elements are balanced in an infinite process of arrangements.

By contrast, the process of *décollage* introduces a number of different features into the paradigm of collage. Even while continuing an explicitly anti-painterly attitude in its attack on the advanced forms of urban mass culture as that governing language that contains and suspends traditional practices of artistic representation, it ruptures the collage paradigm both in terms of its *materials* and *procedures*. Rather than constructing a new pictorial universe from the affluence of industrial detritus and the languages and signs of consumer culture, it limits its choices to the images and messages of urban advertisement, the *affiches* found on billboards or dispersed on the walls of city streets. And rather than comparing fragments and textures, surfaces and seams, and arranging them

according to the laws of a balanced relational composition, *décollage* foregrounds the latent temporal quality inherent in the collage paradigm, a dimension which —with the exception of Arp's *papiers déchirés*—had previously remained hidden.

Random gesturality of tearing, and—as an inevitable consequence—seemingly infinite repetition of that gesture bringing with it a potentially infinite seriality in the resulting "work," determine the structure of *décollage* to an extent unprecedented even in the collage aesthetic of dada. There, by contrast, an organized pictorial totality, complete in itself, resulted from the procedure of balancing, matching, and shifting the found fragments in each instance (not only in Schwitters's work but equally in Hausmann's and Höch's, for example). At the same time, the *décollagistes*' insistence on gesturality and anonymous participation in the process of creation clearly transcends the legacy of surrealist automatism and its emphasis on random acts, leading to an increased fragmentation and to a potentially infinite repetition of the lacerating gesture with its implied abolition of the notion of a completed "work" or "object." Inevitably these also suggest the total disintegration of internal pictorial relationships and the almost complete erasure of the phonetic, semantic, and lexical dimension of the written signs found in the collaged fragments.

It is this quality that distinguishes the work of the *décollage* artists most programmatically from that of their avant-garde predecessors in any of the historical contexts with which one might want to associate them. Be it that of surrealist automatist poetry or that of Apollinaire's ideographic *Calligrammes*, be it that of dada sound poetry (Arp's, Hausmann's, and Tzara's in particular) or that of Marinetti's *parole in libertå*: in each of these cases it was the gradual reduction of the sentence to the word, of the word to the syllable, of the syllable to the phonetic and lexical unit that constituted the degree of fragmentation, just as this process would also occur within the language of post-cubist collages of the historical avant-gardes. And while individual letters were occasionally subjected to accidental fragmentation as well, it is within *décollage* that the total erosion of even the smallest semantic units is accomplished. And this could go even further. In 1954, for example, François Dufrêne discovers in his encounter with Hains and Villeglé that his own efforts at constructing a purely phonetic language that would eliminate all semiotic and semantic conventions was paralleled by their attempts to construct spatialized graphic devices to disentangle language from the possibilities of production of what they regarded as instrumentalizing meaning: what the Lettristes would call the "militarization of language."

The trajectory of Dufrêne's development, this third member of the Parisian *affichistes*, could be taken as symptomatic for the range of conflicts faced by these artists. Dufrêne was a poet and a member of the *Lettrisme* group, around Isidore Isou and Maurice Lemaître until 1952. In 1953 he disassociated himself from this group which was still attempting to expand the poetic positions of Breton's concept of automatism in order to found with Jean-Louis Brau, Guy Debord, and

Gil Wolman the *Internationale Lettriste*. When in turn this formation became politically radicalized—systematically criticizing the social role of the artist in postwar society along the lines of a Gramscian critique of the legitimizing functions of all cultural production (as for example in the comparison between artists and the police in the essay entitled "The Struggle for Control over New Technique of Conditioning"),[4] François Dufrêne did not participate in the transfor-

4. See for example the comparison between artists and the police in the essay entitled "La lutte pour le contrôle des nouvelles techniques de conditionnement," in *Internationale Situationniste* 1 (June 1958), p. 1.

François Dufrêne. Au 136 du Boulevard Saint-Germain, zone bleue. *1966.*

mation of the *Internationale Lettriste* into the *Internationale Situationniste* in 1957. Like Hains and Villeglé—whom he had met in 1954 and who had equally eschewed the liaison with the *Internationale Situationniste* in spite of their frequent and as it seems temporarily close contact with Wolman and Debord—Dufrêne would orient himself towards a more disillusioned and skeptical acceptance of the social compartmentalization of transgressive activities. In the same manner that he had rejected the poetical position of the *Lettriste* movement as too conservative in its naive attempt simply to expand surrealist concepts of poetry in a linear evolution, the *affichistes* would now resist association with any quest for a revolutionary political avant-garde activity (as proposed by their friends in the *Internationale Situationniste*, for example) as being too radical and politically naive. As Villeglé formulated this skepticism with hindsight: "The death of easel painting and the shift of the studio out into the streets did not happen."[5]

This element of a conservative skepticism is the basis for the entrenchment of the neo-avant-garde artists in the immediate postwar period in Paris in general; and in the case of Yves Klein it would lead to an outright reactionary attitude with regard to the political realities of the Fifth Republic. In the case of Dufrêne, Hains, and Villeglé, however, it led to a paradoxical position suspended between this pessimism concerning the revolutionary potential of the neo-avant-garde and an insistence upon radical gestures of opposition: to transform the internal structure of the aesthetic object; to emphasize the collaborative nature of the artistic project; and to demonstrate the relocation of the artistic practice in the collective urban space of advanced industrial consumer culture.

5. Jacques de la Villeglé, "Léo Malet," in *Urbi et Orbi*, p. 149.

"Nostalgie de la Boue"

ROSALIND KRAUSS

I'd like to open with a story of sorts—the story of the term *nostalgie de la boue*, a French expression which the Museum of Modern Art catalogue for "High and Low" informs us is "only partially translatable, involving a yearning to wallow in what is seen as low and filthy."[1] The application of this term—this nostalgia for mud—comes only once in the museum's account of "high and low." It is used to characterize that aspect of the surrealists' recourse to the operations of the unconscious which led them in turn to valorize whole ranges of expressive behavior that had been subject to social control and repression, and to include within this category not only so-called schizophrenic art but also the example of graffiti.

Graffiti itself is, of course, a valorized term within the museum's presentation of its subject—being one of the four divisions into which the museum has organized that subject-field—of which the others are advertising, caricature, and comics. And although the curators are anxious to tell the story of how graffiti's own transformative energies were released into the domain of art, they are just as anxious to make it clear that such a history does not properly begin until after World War II, such that surrealism has nothing but a purely predictive relation to it. Indeed, within the curators' account, surrealism has almost no relation to anything in the field they are mapping, a judgment that's given its ultimate form as dismissal in a concluding passage of the catalogue in which the use of the media image in the work of Cindy Sherman or David Salle is compared—at the level of effectiveness—to the operation on *its* sources by surrealism: "The media image," Adam Gopnik writes, "turned out to be as meaningless in the 1980s as the unconscious had been in the 1930s" (p. 375).

If the museum identifies surrealism's agenda with the term *nostalgie de la boue*, analyses taken from quite a different part of the discursive spectrum use it

1. Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, *High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1990), p. 79. Further citations to the catalogue will appear parenthetically within the text.

to characterize something quite pervasive within the whole of the pre–World War II or "historical" avant-garde. Thus Andrew Ross, speaking about the way, in the 1950s, middle-class, countercultural intellectuals and lower-class hipsters were able to make common cause through the medium of *hip*, uses the term as a periodizing device. "The spirit of this encounter, in the fifties," he writes, "between 'subterranean' intellectuals (as opposed to the older, straighter, and 'accommodated' anti-Stalinist intelligentsia) and hipsters is not the same as that which inspired the *nostalgie de la boue* of the historical avant-garde. To begin with, we must consider the initial ghetto expression of hip as a category of advanced knowledge about popular or commercial taste and style."[2]

Before getting into the important questions of periodization raised by Ross or the matter of surrealism's access to forms of image-making described by the Museum of Modern Art, I want to note that in both cases *nostalgie de la boue* is invoked within a general narrative condition of disapprobation: coloring, for Ross, the historical avant-garde's actual distance and detachment from the world of commercial taste; and, for the museum, surrealism's impotent and dandyish relation to the repressed practices they so admired. But further, it seems both interesting and surprising that if both texts flag their critiques by importing a French expression whose idiomatic nature makes it (according to the museum) "only partially translatable," they both do so in order to literalize that expression, giving to the word *nostalgia* its "properly" negative, disparaging, sentimentalizing ring. Still further, the parallelism between these moves is made apparent —highlighted as it were—by the peculiar circumstance that the expression *nostalgie de la boue* is not in fact idiomatic French; indeed, it is not a part of spoken French usage at all, being instead a purely Anglophonic invocation of the English notion of slumming transposed into the magically resonant frame of a supposedly French turn of phrase.

However—and here's the final double reversal: even while the two accounts invoke nostalgia to disqualify the objects of their critique—surrealism, the historical avant-garde—from a proper relation to the matter of popular culture, they both end up by putting a highly positive spin on the concept of nostalgia, using it for their own ends as a particular form of relationship to the past through which to structure and enable the history they wish to tell.

Now that parallelism, which I want to analyze in further detail, can only strike us as surprising. For the last thing one would have expected to find was the Museum of Modern Art's account of "high and low" sharing anything with an analysis like Ross's, which marks out and is marked by the set of positions collectivized under the rubric "cultural studies."

It is always dangerous of course to generalize over any field of endeavor, particularly one that contains the kind of burgeoning energies and intellectual

2. Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 82.

ferment that characterizes cultural studies today. And the only thing that leads me to want to do so is my sense that it might help to focus and possibly begin to explain the strange effect of mimicry between two positions that one would have thought would have been so completely antithetical.

In order to undertake that generalization I am relying on Meaghan Morris's essay "Banality in Cultural Studies," written as it is from within the field and with full sympathy for the way its fundamental theses have been extremely enabling.[3] These theses take off from a basic assumption, namely that consumption can be understood as a semiautonomous reality that diverges from production, with the result that, within this autonomously considered field, consumption will be treated as a set of practices that cannot be derived from or reduced to a mirror of production. Thus freed, "consumer practice," Morris writes, "can be seen as far more than just economic activity; it can be shown to be as well about dreams and consolation, communication and confrontation, image and identity. Like sexuality, it consists of a multiplicity of fragmented and contradictory discourses."[4] A further and related thesis is that, given the rich variety of these practices and their independence from production, consumers can now be viewed not as just some undifferentiated set of "cultural dopes," passively manipulated and programmed by an all-powerful culture industry, but as active critical users of mass culture able to rewrite or recode the materials they are given into new, critical, and above all creative readings.[5]

Yet another corollary of these theses is that the Frankfurt school analysis, with its notion of a monolithic culture of standardized production and standardized effects, its language of mass manipulation, systematic domination, and victimization, represents a deep misunderstanding of popular culture. For the Frankfurt School, in denying the critical potential of consumption as it is effected by the practices of distinct subcultures, has reserved any possibility for critique of the dominant culture for a small, elitist group of intellectuals on the one hand and, on the other, has placed the power of creatively recoding existing culture entirely in the hands of an avant-garde understood as restricted to artistic practice.

That the avant-garde's role of recoding and rewriting is now not only shared by the subject/practitioners of popular culture but—given the way the artistic avant-garde has been recuperated by the dominant culture—is carried out far more effectively as a form of resistance *by* those subjects is another thesis of cultural studies. And, indeed, in the eyes of these theorists, their dramatic relocation of avant-garde practice not only points to the bankruptcy of the old

3. Meaghan Morris, "Banality in Cultural Studies," *Discourse* 10 (Spring–Summer 1988), pp. 3–29.
4. Ibid., p. 16.
5. The refusal of the notion of "cultural dopes" is from Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular,'" *Peoples, History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

notions of the avant-garde but serves as yet another ground on which to see how discredited are the voices that speak in the Frankfurt School's name.

For Meaghan Morris, all of these ideas have been so frequently rehearsed by her colleagues in the field that, sometimes flipping through the journal *Cultural Studies*, she says,

> or scanning the pop-theory pile in the bookshop, I get the feeling that somewhere in some English publisher's vault there is a master-disk from which thousands of versions of the same article about pleasure, resistance, and the politics of consumption are being run off under different names with minor variations. Americans and Australians are recycling this basic pop-theory article, too: with the perhaps major variation that English pop-theory still derives at least nominally from a left popul*ism* attempting to salvage a sense of life from the catastrophe of Thatcherism. Once cut free from that context, as commodities always are, and recycled in quite different political cultures, the vestigial *critical* force of that populism tends to disappear or mutate.[6]

Now, it was my experience — my extremely surprised experience, as I have said — that on reading the catalogue of "High and Low" I encountered a version of most of the theses of this master pop-theoretical article. For there as well, theories of production, particularly those of the Frankfurt School, are energetically rejected, along with phrases like "culture industry" or "consciousness industry," which, focusing on a mode of production, stigmatize the outlets for this industry as "mass markets" and its products as "mass culture." Refusing this label and its concomitant notions about dominance and manipulation, the museum insists instead on the use of "popular culture," with its opening onto diversity, specificity, and subcultural practice. "Bland assertions," they write,

> about the "corrupting" or "hegemonic" social role of jazz, or the movies, or comics, abound, unaccompanied by any sense of the variety within these categories, or investigation of the diverse individuals and histories that have shaped them. (If we only take, for example, a characteristically confident condemnation of kitsch that derides "movies, tap-dancing, slick commercial fiction, comics, and popular songs," and replace its categories with real people — such as Charles Chaplin and Pier Paolo Pasolini, or Fred Astaire, or Paul Bowles and P. G. Wodehouse, or George Herriman, or Duke Ellington, and so on — we see how complexly riven may be the ground on which such theories claim to stand. (p. 18)

In this attack on theories of production, the "High and Low" catalogue is

6. Morris, "Banality in Cultural Studies," p. 15.

happy to employ the concept of subcultures, meaning by this small groups who share a given cultural identity acknowledged to be extremely marginal to centers of power, but who are able to recode given cultural material into specific sites of resistance. Graffiti artists riding the New York subways in the early 1980s recoding the balloonlike lettering of Disney comics into gigantesque and magical writing of their own names as signs of a new-found personal freedom serve as one such subculture. Another is composed of 1970s comic book aficionados whose expertise in archaic and brutalized comic styles allowed them to participate in the rewriting of those very styles into forms of protest both against the florid banalities of the mass-marketed superhero comic book and against a broader field of cultural lies. Thus the catalogue states that Robert Crumb's drawings "are a fan's notes, a peculiarly intense and personal extension of the general new spirit of comic-book connoisseurship that grew up in the seventies. A new comic-book culture came into being that, far from passively consuming whatever new products the D.C. and Marvel assembly lines turned out, instead showed an obsessive, tender concern for old comic-book styles and history. "This new subculture," the writers continue, "—the subculture of the fanzines, and comic-book conventions—was often, ironically, granted an authenticity that had always been denied to the objects of its attention" (pp. 216–17).

It is to these subcultural practices that the museum's catalogue is more than willing to grant not only the avant-garde's former role as operators of a site of resistance, but the accolade as well of makers of "art." Writing of the subway graffiti artists, it says:

> If by art we mean, as we have for more than a century, a self-propelled and self-generating competition in style, a serious game that begins as an in-group game that gives meaning to the life of the maker and to his enthralled small audience, and ends by producing a new and widely shared style—well, then, of course it was art. (p. 382)

Now, for the writers of the catalogue, one of the payoffs of writing this story of high and low as a history of the relationship between various subcultures —Pop artists like Warhol or Lichtenstein on the one hand, and the "handful of young artists" working for D.C. comics, on the other—is that not only do they thereby escape from having to take seriously the whole question of modes of production, but the very idea of high or museum culture is bracketed off from the charge of elitism by being just another one among a whole diverse group of subcultures. Indeed, the story they want to tell is one of ceaseless cross-cultural exchange as one subculture recodes the constructed signs of another: Lichtenstein rewriting the realist narratives of D.C. war and love comics by means of an extreme simplification and formalization that not only reinscribes these commercial images in a tradition that "would come to be seen as the latest step in the long chain of avant-garde invention that descended from Degas and Gauguin" (p. 208), but becomes the basis for the next generation of commercial artists to save

the sagging market for comic books by recoding their style in the very image of Pop.

But in this story, intent as it is on the specificity of cultural practice and wary of what it repeatedly stigmatizes as the "stalemates of empty theorization," a theory is indeed progressively elaborated. And that is that the very medium of high art's creative consumption of popular culture is something with its own particularity, something the catalogue sometimes calls "retrospective vision" but at others gives the simpler name "nostalgia." Thus, from the opening description of the cubists' relation to their newspaper sources, the museum observes "choices that were willfully regressive," keyed to "the trickling residue of styles passing out of mode," and demonstrating "a reprobate affection, even a certain nostalgia," for the crude sans-serif typefaces of nineteenth-century mass-produced design" (p. 33). Nostalgia reigns with Schwitters as well as a means, in the museum's interpretation, of structuring his relation to the media world as intimist and "intensely personal" (pp. 65–66).

Whatever the individual motives might be, however, it is this particular modality that structures the encounter, whether it is Magritte "recuperat[ing] the style of antiquated catalogues and charts" (p. 302), or Andy Warhol exploiting, in both their form and subject, the "archaic and nostalgic" condition of Campbell soup cans (p. 344). Indeed, the catalogue says, Warhol, whose comic-strip paintings "belong to this nostalgic and backward-looking strain of imagery, long shadows cast at twilight," had "a genius for the lag moments in culture, for the thing just on its way out: the tabloid headline in the age of television, the movie star in the age of rock. He had an unerring instinct for those occasions when the iconic image was just beginning to disconnect from its audience" (p. 193).

Lee and Fred. New York City subway cars with Soup Cans. *1980. (Photo: Henry Chalfant).*

Now it is exactly this same unerring instinct for the thing just on its way out, for the pathetic powerlessness that the movie star suddenly comes to epitomize in the age of rock, or more certainly in the age of MTV, that Andrew Ross, speaking from the position of cultural studies, analyzes as the hallmark of camp taste. For the nostalgia form—nostalgia as a modality of the temporal—he argues, is the very medium within which the ironical posture of camp sensibility takes place. The schema Ross constructs for camp is organized in relation to changes in cultural technologies—silent films replaced by sound films; the triumphant Hollywood studio system then outpaced by the rising television industry; network television itself threatened and shoved aside by the cable and video revolution. Within this succession, camp gravitates toward those anachronistic spectacles provided by one or another strange holdover displaced, dinosaur-like, into a new technological world and serving there, alienated and powerless, as a symptom of the very evanescence of that newer, more powerful world, itself on the verge of being rendered obsolete by a next generation of media. "The camp effect," Ross writes, "is created not simply by a change in the mode of cultural production, but rather when the products (stars, in this case) of a much earlier mode of production, which has lost its power to dominate cultural meanings, becomes available, in the present, for redefinition according to contemporary codes of taste."[7]

Camp taste works, then, as a peculiar celebration of marks of disempowerment within a media or commodity culture. So, for example, it now savors the appearance of the former Hollywood stars as they come to star in television's own aristocratic soap operas, like "Dynasty"; just as tomorrow it will embrace the

7. Ross, *No Respect*, p. 139.

made-for-TV movies, which it will see in the retrospective light of their early, futile response to the takeoff of cable and video. Or again, for the 1960s British rock culture, the Union Jack could become a delicious object for camp precisely, Ross writes, as a symptom of "the eclipsed capacity of real British power to play the imperialist game of dominating foreign taste."[8]

The nostalgia form of camp taste, as it promotes—through its own version of "retrospective vision"—the newly outmoded, reactivating it as an object of consumption, is described by Ross as doing the work of revealing that the inherent modality of the commodity is the condition of obsolescence. It is this obsolescence that camp celebrates and consumes and in so doing lays bare. But this laying bare, far from being a critique of the commodity form of production, is instead encoded as an act of taste. And for Ross, this gesture of linking taste to obsolescence was the ultimately liberating gesture of camp. For it had the effect of "problematizing the question of *taste* itself . . . Not only did it deny the imposition, from above, of seemingly arbitrary boundaries of taste, but it also questioned the distanced contemplation, interpretive expertise, and categories of aesthetic judgment which accompanied that imposition. Nothing could be more execrable to a tradition of taste that was founded on the precepts of 'universality,' 'timelessness,' and 'uniqueness' than a culture of obsolescence: i.e., specifically designed not to endure."[9]

This nostalgic embrace of the obsolete, which positively recodes it, reentering it into circulation and exchange, forms the armature of both the histories I've been sketching. If they are separated by their different attitudes toward the question of whether consumption can be understood as a politics, with Ross seeing the potentially transgressive activity of camp as incipiently political and the museum restricting its account to a depoliticized version of the exchanges it outlines, they share, as I have been trying to show, a surprising number of presuppositions. One of these, about the irrelevance of both the Frankfurt School and Walter Benjamin to their analysis, must strike one as particularly ironic given the centrality to both accounts of the question of nostalgia and the outmoded.

As Benjamin allowed his own early contact with surrealism to give him access to an experience of the outmoded as a source of revolutionary energy, and as a way of decoupling historical time from the concept of progress, the presence of the outmoded began to play an increasingly central role in his thinking about history. But patterning his own attitudes toward the outmoded on that of the surrealists, he conceived of it as a category of objects over which commodity logic no longer has any sway; having dropped out of the logic of capitalism, these objects became powerfully symbolic of the possibility of imagining an "outside"

8. Ibid., p. 140.
9. Ibid., p. 149.

of the commodity system, an outside of exchange. Camp, which is a way of reinvesting the derelict with, precisely, exchange value, would thus have been incompatible with Benjamin's notion of the outmoded. Indeed, addressing this precise problem within surrealist practice itself, in relation to the difference for example between Ernst's expression of the outmoded and Dali's connection to the modishness of retro style, Hal Foster recently wrote of Dali's attitude, "Rather than a cultural revolution keyed to disjunct modes of production, it abets a compulsive repetition calibrated to smooth cycles of consumption."[10]

Now to this it could be argued that in Benjamin's very notion of the outmoded, however it might be repressed in both the museum's catalogue and Ross's account of camp, there is a prefiguration of the idea of the revolutionary or at least avant-garde potential of cutting consumption free of production and thinking the former as an autonomous field.

Addressing this major premise of cultural studies, with its corollary that "production 'processes' are well known, but consumption 'practices' remain enigmatic," Meaghan Morris writes a refutation, with which I wish to conclude my own reflections:

> There are a number of difficulties with this even as a rough working assumption: for example, consumption (albeit as "practice") can only be opposed as an equivalent term to "production" once the concept of "*mode* of production" has been reduced to "factories making goods, capitalists making profits." Only in this utterly vestigial economic sense can the practice of consumption be predicated as a "separate sphere" rather than one of the necessary, complex, variable *phases of* a productive process—which is no more autonomous from, than it is metonymic of, that process.
>
> More concretely, at a time when it is impossible to determine to what extent, and in which places, "practices" like program-trading and arbitrage in foreign exchange futures are effects or causes of a catastrophic stock market crash which is immediately reconstituted as banal in media *also* functioning indeterminately as causes and effects in the process, the assumption that production is "known" and consumption enigmatic is, to say the least, unhelpful.
>
> . . . In an era of de-industrialization and increasing integration of markets and circuits alike, the problem of theorizing relations between production and consumption (or thinking "production" at all) is considerably more complex than is allowed by a reduction of the effort to do so to anachronistic terms. . . . In cultural theory [she concludes], "production" is often used as a shorthand term for "talk-

10. Hal Foster, "Surrealism in the Service of Psychoanalysis: A Reading of the Surreal as the Uncanny" (Ph.D. Diss., City University of New York, The Graduate Center, 1990), pp. 253–54.

ing economics." "Consumption" means talking about sex, art, "cultural politics," and fun. Before completely relegating the former to the realm of the déjà vu, however, it may be as well to consider that in the late twentieth century, after a century of romanticism, modernism, the avant-garde, and psychoanalysis, economics, in fact, may be considerably more enigmatic than sexuality.[11]

11. Morris, "Banality in Cultural Studies," pp. 21–22.

Capital Effects

JONATHAN CRARY

How should we assess the significance of certain widely noted events of the last few years? Take for example, the purchase of MCA and Universal Pictures by Matsushita Corporation, the sale of Picasso's *Yo Picasso* to a Japanese realtor for $48 million, the purchase of Columbia Pictures and CBS Records by Sony Corporation, the Time-Warner merger, the battle for control of newly deregulated television networks in Europe, and the purchase of Van Gogh's *Irises* for $54 million by an Australian investor.

Is this brief and merely suggestive list an indication of a relatively recent and unprecedented collapse of what had once been distinguishable cultural and economic spheres, part of a set of global conditions so novel as to constitute a social epoch that is no longer modernity? Or are these highly visible corporate strategems merely signs of an intensification of processes that, however fluid and mutating, are essentially continuous with events in the early twentieth and even late nineteenth century that, in other words, are part of an ongoing dynamic of capitalist modernity? Before going any further I will say that my position is much closer to the latter than the former. Although we *are* in fact witnessing sweeping reorganizations of markets, collectivities, cultural forms, and social relations beneath the surface of the abovementioned events, it is important to insist that such phases of transformation are synonymous with certain abiding features of capitalist modernity right up to the present: the incessant production of new consumption and the dismantling of temporal and spatial barriers to circulation. A set of related styles or aesthetic fashions known as modernism may well have been supplanted by other styles, just as Fordist mass production may have been succeeded by flexible specialization, but both are merely developments within a logic of modernization that is all too enduring, whatever its new and unpredictable guises.

With that said, let me return to the globalization of the entertainment/electronics industry and the institutional investing in art works. Obviously in one sense we are talking about several distinct economic networks—i.e., there are functional differences between, say, the asset value of the Universal film library

(*Jaws, Back to the Future*, etc.) and the more sumptuary status of a Van Gogh painting. But such distinctions have increasingly little significance, as ownership of certain brand names or film studio logos have no less prestige value, and as the exchange value of art works becomes more bound to financial indexes, mutual funds, and other investment strategies based solely on estimated return percentages, within which status is irrelevant.

We are watching the continuing assimilation of what were once cultural products or experiences on the terrain of everyday life into primary economic processes; but it is an assimilation that began as early as the 1870s, in what T. J. Clark calls "a massive internal extension of the capitalist market—the invasion and restructuring of whole areas of free time, private life, leisure, and personal expression . . . a new phase of commodity production." As many critics have shown, since the late nineteenth century there have been several key stages and shifts in this ongoing rationalization and industrialization of the cultural, such as one described by Horkheimer and Adorno and, most notably, a phase coinciding with the aftermath of the 1960s. I want here to suggest some of the more recent experiential and affective consequences of the heightened abstraction of cultural products and art works within a more homogenized global marketplace, a process that has certainly intensified over the last two decades.

In one sense, Sony, Matsushita, and the rest are conforming to a corporate model of consolidation and control that is hardly new. We saw it, for example, during the early twentieth century in the formation of integrated oil companies that managed all phases of the economic life of their product—extraction, refining, distribution, and retailing of petroleum-based commodities. We now have the phenomenon of integrated multinational media/entertainment empires that control various amalgams of means for the production, distribution, and consumption of cultural products. And in this environment American entertainment and media production have almost the status of raw material, a natural resource that is purchased for processing and distribution elsewhere (the Japanese buy-in to reap the fruits of MIT's famed Media Lab is a widely noted example of this kind of exportation).

However, it is not simply a question of the formation of powerful communication industry cartels. Rather, the continuing rationalization of the entertainment commodity involves intensifying the mobility and exchangeability of objects and formats: maximizing the modalities through which any given property may be consumed, whether as movies, cassettes, compact discs, cartoon characters, books, apparel, theme parks, television shows, celebrities, gossip magazines. And the proliferation of new hybrid media, recording, and graphics techniques and products continues unabated (e.g., in the near future, the so-called "paperback movie"). These are commodities with a mutating polymorphic existence in which the number of potentially profitable refashionings is multiplied, leading to individual products with increasingly brief life cycles. Most significant now is not the so-called content of videos, Hollywood films, compact discs, or television

programming but the sheer velocity with which products succeed one another. As Fredric Jameson has indicated, we have become habituated to accept switching our attention rapidly and continually from one thing to another as natural. Corporate success depends on this human perceptual adaptability and on the capacity to speed up their productive networks of consumption and circulation while at the same time ceaselessly creating new social and libidinal needs for data and images.

Obviously the lines demarcating information, communications, and entertainment are hardly distinct, and we may soon see more consolidation between these spheres. Communication corporations with fiber optic cable, for example, may want to have larger stakes in both the data and entertainment products that circulate through them. In any case, there is no question that a new level of competition for global management of these interrelated markets is still going on. Thus the importance of controlling both satellites and fiber optic cable, two of the main highways of global flow and instantaneous circulation. Clearly these are new developments, but again they are part of processes known for a long time. What Marx wrote in the *Grundrisse* in 1858 sounds undeniably contemporary: "While capital must strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e., to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to annihilate space with time, i.e., to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another. The more developed the capital . . . the more does it strive simultaneously for an even greater extension of the market and for greater annihilation of space by time." Again, rather than passing beyond modernity, we are watching another systemic characteristic of modernity at work: value in motion, "the unobstructed and fluid transition of value from one form into another." Whether a music video on MTV or a Morris Louis in a Chase Manhattan Bank art portfolio—both forms are essentially moments in a mundane circuitry of economic time.

The representation of the experience of modernization, of the "creative destruction" of capitalism since the mid–nineteenth century, has fluctuated between images of loss, nostalgia, subjective fragmentation on the one hand and futurist exhilaration at the jettisoning of the historical and the outmoded, immersion in the technological imaginary of a given present on the other. But in the last two decades, those poles of response have become effectively meaningless. This is, in part, because of our inability to absorb, let alone evaluate, even symbolically, the proliferation of new technologies, whether robotics, genetics, microchip design, or weapons, and also because of the rapidity with which fashions and commodities become obsolete. There is time neither for the former levels of emotional investment or familiarity to occur nor for any technological novelty to become either emblematic or constitutive of the shape of a new future. Thus the cyberspace and virtual-reality cheerleaders spend more time breathlessly enumerating the nonstop emergence of new corporate products and never,

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as far as I can tell, attempt to explain why an abstract and synthetically constructed reality is a desirable future.

One can now detect the pervasive and routine joylessness accompanying the imperatives of this speeded-up marketplace. As a minor and fleeting instance of a modernization effect, consider the obligatory changeover in the music/electronics industry from vinyl LP to compact disc. What occurred within the space of little more than a year, almost without notice, was the eradication of a whole material order of sensuousness and social exchange bound to the LP, with intricate layerings of habitual pleasures, memories, and physical rituals and their embeddedness in the unconscious of everyday life. Inseparable from this uprooting is the impact of the compulsory repurchasing of the *same* musical objects again in compact disc. It represents the installation of a staggering new logic of consumption, unlike buying a new car or cologne, one that induces a literal repetition: buying *again* what one already owns, because of the planned dissolution of an earlier system of consumption.

But most significantly, within the schema of the CD format the perceptual experience of the music is transformed in ways that have nothing to do with audio technology. One hears, on any compact disc, a faintly detectable supplement: whether it is a Brahms piano trio or Loretta Lynn, one is impelled to listen, beyond the music, for the sound of the product's own justification, for the confirmation that the CD represents authentic "progress," the elusive evidence that in some way it "sounds better." Thus all the claims for the product's necessity and our own hopes for it adhere like a hollow echoing layer, faintly flattening out our affective relation to whatever might be the sensory content of the disc. And the forced repetition is made more anxious by the subliminal awareness of the brief time span before a newer format will require another, similar uprooting.[1]

A different but related kind of modification of aesthetic experience is inseparable from the increasing abstraction of works of art within various arenas of capitalist exchange, e.g., *Yo Picasso* (and in an era of leveraged buyouts and junk bonds, does it really matter whether the full amounts in question were literally paid by anyone?). Obviously paintings are a distinct form of capital, one in which speed of circulation is certainly less essential than others. One U.S.-based art mutual fund requires a minimum investment of $10 million for a minimum period of five years. Not quite the liquidity of other commodities, but until quite recently forty years was considered acceptable "hang time" for art investors. Of course the current trading in high-priced art works takes on additional meanings in the context of recent developments such as massive corporate

1. It is becoming clear that most compact discs may have an astonishingly short life span (possibly about eight years compared with well over half a century for vinyl) because the aluminum inside is subject to oxidation, which would degrade the integrity of the disc.

art sponsorship, museum deaccessioning, the franchising of museums, and other forms of art capitalization.

What interests me is how the prominence of the stratospheric valuation of certain works of art has a bearing on one's actual perception of an art object. Let me take Van Gogh's *Irises* to stand for any of a class of similarly valued and publicized works (and assume hypothetically that one can still in fact *see* the work, that it is not sealed in a bank vault somewhere).

As spectators we do not simply oscillate between an awareness of the painting's monetary value on one hand and some approximation of aesthetic contemplation on the other. The anomalous status of a painting like *Irises* is due to the inevitable commingling of all the utopian hopes one brings to a work of art—whether for some kind of perceptual renewal, the figuration of an autonomous sensory experience—with the sublimity of the exchange values imposed on the viewer by its exorbitant cost. To "see" a Van Gogh is only secondarily a perceptual experience—although the observer may be anticipating, on an optical level, an auratic or compensatory radiance, one is instead to find oneself enveloped in an aura of a different sort (as the word originally means: a breeze or

Vincent Van Gogh. Irises. *c. 1888.*

atmosphere, a rustling). It is a new libidinal apprehension of the intoxicating economic potency of the mere object; the same kinds of desires and utopian phantasms of fulfillment associated with a winning lottery ticket; the unfathomable abyss separating its physical existence from the apparent boundlessness of its exchange value; and the evocation of a class system dominated by a global plutocracy of such enigmatic extravagance. But along with the dull failure of the work of art to deliver on its talismanic promises and our own entanglement in the effects of its revaluation, the object itself takes on an insistent, even disconcerting physicality. One sees the congealed handmade surface in which all the kinetic tactility and desiring production of its origins lie embalmed as strange affronts to the lambent and disincarnate status its inflated reputation betokens in advance. Finally, the mute opacity of such an object becomes the concretization of a collective atrophy of a kind of looking that has long ceased to have any social utility.

Related to the fate of the modern masterpiece is the inherent incapacity of the museum to bestow monumental status or guaranteed value on post-1960s art. This results in a somewhat different experience of contemporary institutional art. The museum relies on the temporal construction of its displays to allow value of an older kind to irradiate onto recent art. As viewers we are exhorted to expect that over time there will be an inevitable rise in value of most of the work at the very recent end of the museum's historical continuum. Equally we bring to contemporary art, still even today, the lingering hope of provocation by the new and unprecedented. As Ernst Bloch insists, the desire for the new, however degraded by consumer culture, is also at the same time a desire that can exceed the logic of capitalist modernity by its hope for something external to that system. But even that appetite for the new remains perpetually unsated, less by the vacuousness of contemporary institutional art than by its monotonous repose within the wider economic rationalization of cultural production.

Current models of valorization prevent today's art industry from relying on the vagaries of individual behavior and the whims of a "free agent" artist for the production of art. The possibility that an artist might be "discovered" late in life, for example, is incompatible with the efficient mapping of effective career and marketing strategies. Thus the need for art entrepreneurs to develop and supervise artist-products at a young age so that full value can be extracted over time in concert with planned diversification and the continual introduction of new products.

But for the investors who are "long" on a Van Gogh, contemporary artists are like strategic metals—a risky short-term investment, subject to a range of unpredictable factors. Even for those who want most to believe in the claims of institutional art, the cynicism of forms that rules the trading of this class of objects (cornering gambits, quick unloading, and market flooding) permeates the works themselves. Thus while the glow of prominent contemporary art is indistinguishable from the luster of any highly coveted fashion product, one also

perceives the transient flicker of that glow, portending, as Guy Debord describes, its inevitable displacement from the center of acclaim and "the revelation of its essential poverty."

To step back for a moment, modernization has always been about the obsolescence of affects, the progressive undermining of any stable subjective relation to objects, and the experience of a certain groundlessness. Curiously, one of the richest and most compelling accounts of the contemporary conditions I am alluding to is the work of Philip K. Dick from the mid-1960s. I present this work as a way of reiterating that the makeup of our contemporaneity and its collapsing of spheres is not the result of some dramatic and decisive deposing of modernity in the 1970s, but rather that important features of the affective shape of our present-day experience was largely already in place in latent if not explicit form when Dick was writing.

As Fredric Jameson has indicated, the most significant science fiction is a literary strategy "to defamiliarize and restructure the experience of our own present," a present that to us is "inaccessible directly, numb, habituated, empty of affect." Thus, especially in the eighteen or so novels he wrote between 1964 and 1970, Dick's dystopian near-future is a world of hallucination, simulacra, prosthetic surgery, potent psychoactive drugs, weapons fashion designers, robotics, and vast image industries—a world whose substantiality is continually undermined by synthetic realities, where celebrities and talk show hosts are political leaders, where multinational corporations oversee a friendly mediatized fascism. It is a vision of modern power, not as an institutionalized repressive force, but as an accumulation of what Deleuze and Guattari call "micro-assemblages," in which subjection takes the form of being made into a component of social and technical machines, reflex arcs, and feedback loops. For example, in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1964), consumption is organized not around actual consumer products but through the purchase of miniature simulations of commodities manufactured by a single corporate conglomerate. Over time, one continually adds new surrogate products into doll-house sized "layouts" for the occasions when ingestion of a drug sold by the same corporation briefly induces the hallucination of exhilarating participation in one's inert "layout" world.

But what elevates Dick's work is hardly the "prophetic" details of the world he draws for us. Far more crucial is his piercing elaboration of the subjective costs of living within a reality undergoing continual cancellation and demolition. Dick is the chronicler of a phantasmagoric, commodity-filled world, colored by transience and loss, by the unremitting and petty ruin of everyday life. A Dick novel is almost always about an individual subject who in a limited way resists but more often struggles merely to adapt and survive amid an ongoing devaluation of the world. Dick's protagonists contend less with power than with the onset of despair and psychosis. Like Pynchon's *V* (1963) and J. G. Ballard's *The Crystal World* (1966), which mapped out the historical ascendancy and psychic experience of "the inanimate," Dick's work provides one of the great literary accounts

of the subjective costs of reification, of what he calls "a peculiar malign abstractness," within the field of late twentieth-century capitalism.

Dick describes a social field that has been repeatedly remade and modernized but always preserves a sense of the present as stratified and littered with the wreckage or abject persistence of earlier moments of modernization. Thus the perpetual coexistence of, for example, schizophrenic experiences of hyperreal image manipulation and the depressing immediacy of a cramped and cluttered condominium apartment. Again and again in Dick we are trapped in a world of things that are rapidly and inexorably consigned to a squalid uselessness that insinuates itself as a condition of human existence. Like the spectacle of waste provided by an outmoded computer or an LP turntable that has to be thrown away, it is the overflow of these experiences that Dick details. But in addition to calculated technological obsolescence, it is also an experience of the kind of sad recoil, even distaste that one feels looking at a necktie that is too wide or a jacket with lapels that are too large—the intense conviction and annoyance that the object itself has changed and the difficulty of summoning up the memory of when that same object had its original sheen and provided the gratifications of a product securely fastened into smoothly functioning symbolic codes. It is the experience of our inability to trace backwards the myriad little increments of a process through which the product imperceptibly has mutated into something hopelessly marred, into a reminder of our own complicity in a system of institutionalized disappointment. And in Dick's work it is this fall into decay and disuse that negatively reveals the shape of history and memory against the seamless present of the spectacle. *Ubik* (1969) concerns a corporation that markets an all-purpose aerosol spray that is able, at least temporarily, to restore dilapidated and out-of-date consumer products to their original luster, to reestablish the unified surfaces and pseudo-coherence of this object-filled world, rendering history and entropy invisible.

In the near-future world of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968), one of the rarest commodities is living animals, most of which have become extinct due to environmental disasters. Large corporations invest in them. Only the wealthy can hope to own one. Any middle-class person is able to afford a robotic animal, identical in almost every respect to a live one, except that it has no awareness of the existence of a person, no capacity for response, and remains at its core an obdurate, insensate "thing." Thus the centrality in this novel of the regularly published price list of the going cost of any surviving type of live animal: the very price tag, the dollar figure itself becomes the locus of the most acute emotional resonance in channeling the yearning for that which would overcome "the tyranny of the object," something living, capable of even the most primal relation of interdependence or empathy. It is not unlike the desire that Van Gogh's *Irises* "speak" back to the viewer somehow, even through its status as sheer quantified value.

An interesting question that I cannot pursue here is why Dick's work more

fully represents the functioning of our present than the much more immediate cyberpunk novels of the 1980s whose content is sometimes superficially related to Dick's. But it must be said that Dick's work in the 1960s is emphatically the product of a historical moment of great cracks, rifts, and an opening up of what had been more smoothly functioning social mechanisms in the 1950s. Dick's vision of the precariousness of what he calls "reality supports" is inseparable from the creative and disruptive effects of worldwide political and cultural upheavals in the 1960s and from the incipient installation of new media-based modalities of power and consumption. The fullness of his disjunct social universe is a function of the very extent to which the foundations of that world were being put in question on many fronts while he wrote.

It's also important to insist how much the shape of the present, the continuing rationalization of art and culture, is still determined by the overwhelming systemic reaction to oppositional movements of the 1960s. The extirpation and neutralization of the historical memory of those years continues with a remarkable ferocity, requiring endless falsifications and even "show trial" recantations, especially from those most directly involved, with the aim of eliciting from everyone, young or old, the repetition and internalization of the catch phrase "the 1960s failed." As though this "failure" were not, in some small way, due to the relentless efforts of the state and marketplace to recapture and regiment those energies that had been set in motion, to reinsert them into new methods of control and exchange, to transfigure a fledgling counterculture into an immensely profitable new market sector.

In the context of the United States, as many have noted, two parallel developments become increasingly apparent in the 1970s: a new stage of industrialization and economic rationalization of a cultural sphere and its fuller integration with primary political, social, and disciplinary spheres; and the creation of the National Security State and the massive remaking of a military megamachine based on computers and smart microchip weaponry. The U.S.-Iraq war certainly has vindicated much of Paul Virilio's work in the 1980s, in which he insisted on the now all-too-real convergence and fundamental interdependence of media and televisual culture and military technostrategy, and the erasure of political discourse by the practice of war.

One result of 1970s and '80s reaction was the closing off of routes explored by the most important art of the 1960s: work that was generally insupportable institutionally, since it pointed further and further away from a traffic in objects. If artifacts from the 1960s like Dick's fiction still provide a partial glimpse of some of the components of our own present, much of the art practice of the late 1960s retains another kind of historical value: not as anything to be imitated or recovered, but as indications of a sheer plurality and scope of practices that might resist or exceed the institutional cultural logic discussed here.

It has often been asserted wrongly that there was a certain disjunction between the art of the 1960s (usually meaning "cool and emotionless" pop and

minimalism) and the volatile heterogeneity of the various countercultures that developed simultaneously. But in fact much of the important art activity of the late 1960s (say from 1966 to 1973) was immediately adjacent, conceptually and pragmatically, to the multiple innovations of counterculture movements. I am referring to a wide range of work associated in varying degrees with the nebulous categories earth art, performance art, body art, minimalism, conceptual art, happenings, process art, situationism, real time systems, etc. I deliberately do not name individual artists because the significance of art activity in those years lies not in any individual careers but rather in the remarkable collective diversity of *formal* experimentation. And again, it was a range of work and thought that paralleled in many ways the mobile actions and inventiveness of new collectivities, groups, subjectivities, and communities who had no ostensible links to an art world. Among what took place in both art and countercultures, often stammeringly, naively, incompletely, were new mappings of temporal experience, the transient occupation and activation of social spaces, de-individualized or deprivatized notions of the body and self, overlapping concepts of "meaning" and "event," reorganizations of language and exchange, unforeseen conjunctions of materials and processes, disruptions of dominant perceptual models, the construction of new sexualities, and the creation of marginalities that were not defined by a molar repressive center but by their own fluid modes of self-organization.

During the 1980s one of the prominent echoes of this period was the well-known range of "appropriative art," but whether most of this work is finally more akin to Warhol than to situationist *détournement* in its efficacy is an open question. In any case, now that appropriative strategies have played themselves out over ten years to the point of invisibility on the same terrain as Time-Warner and Matsushita Corporation, an effective cultural politics must turn to a broader field of possibilities and zones of activity. Clearly it is important to reinvent a kind of formal thought and action, in which form is always a shifting and tactical relation between forces, or is conceived as provisional groups, spaces, subjectivities, or processes whose local singularity is made incompatible with the circuitry of global integration and homogeneity.

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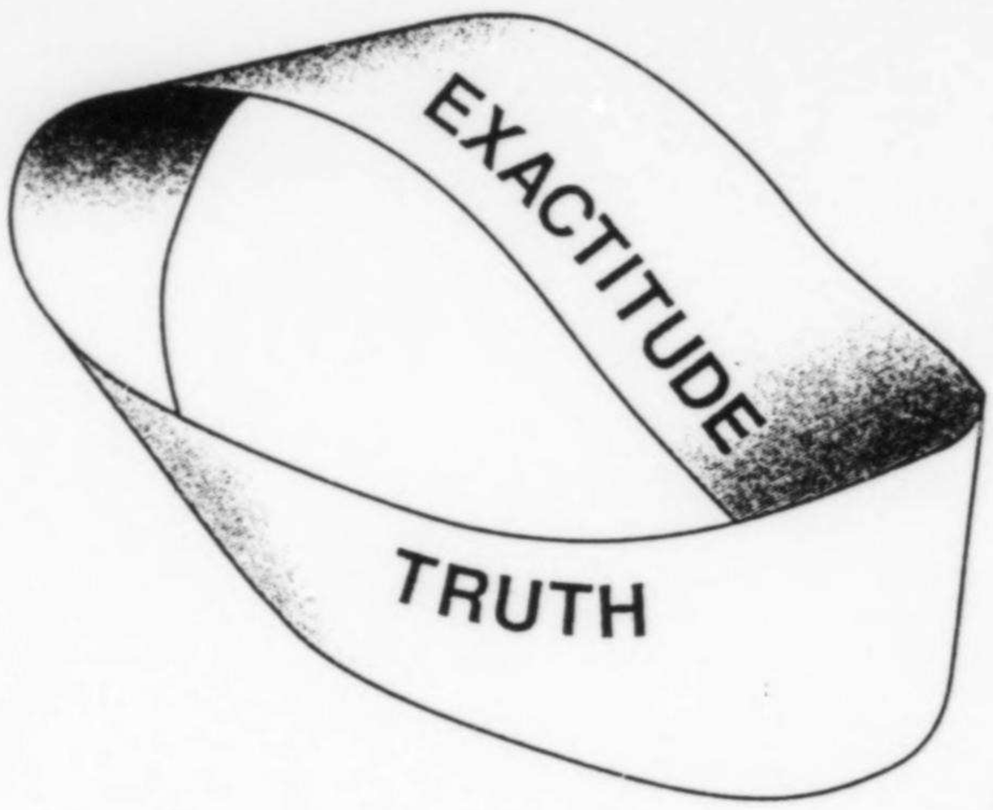

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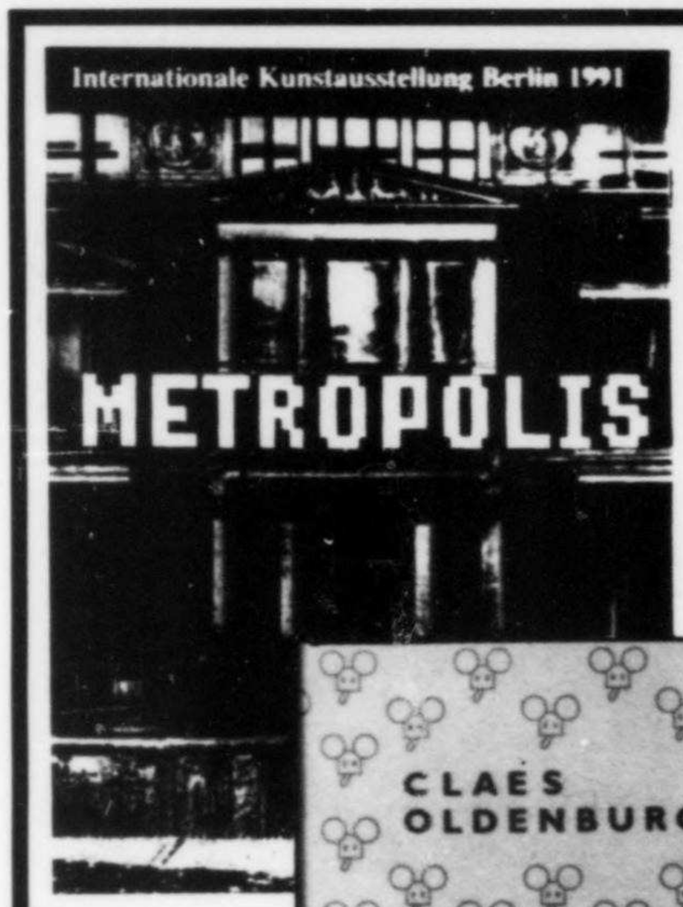

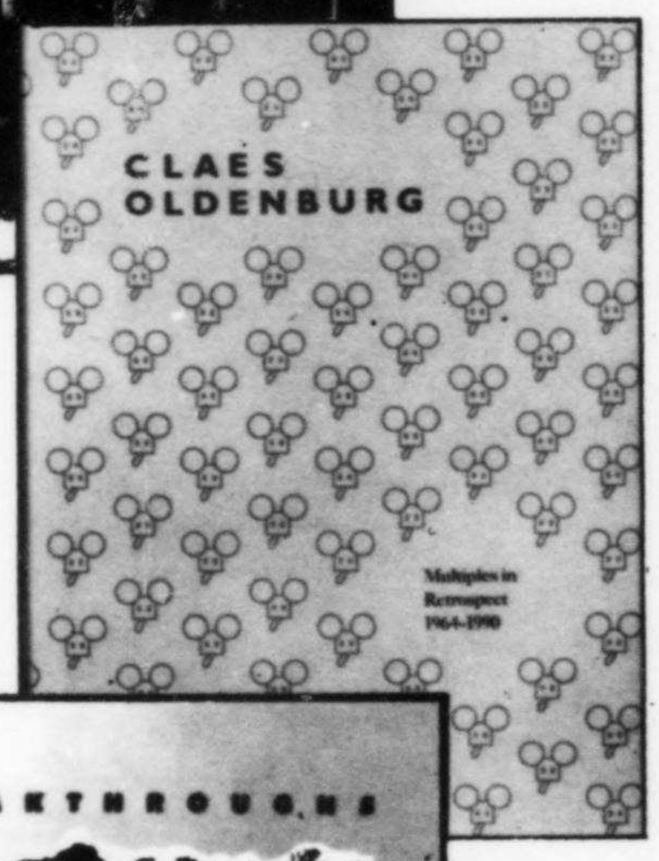

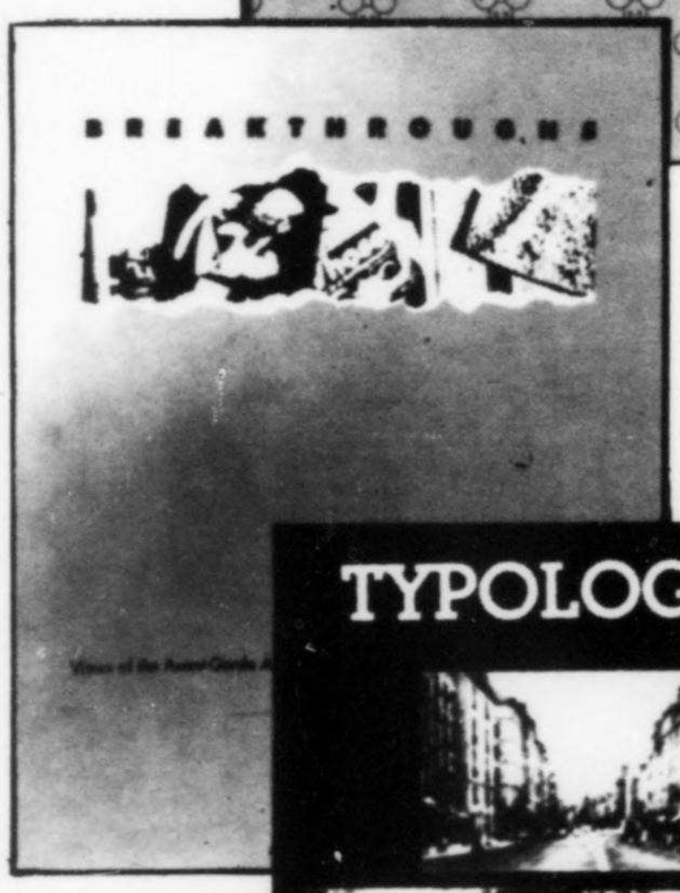

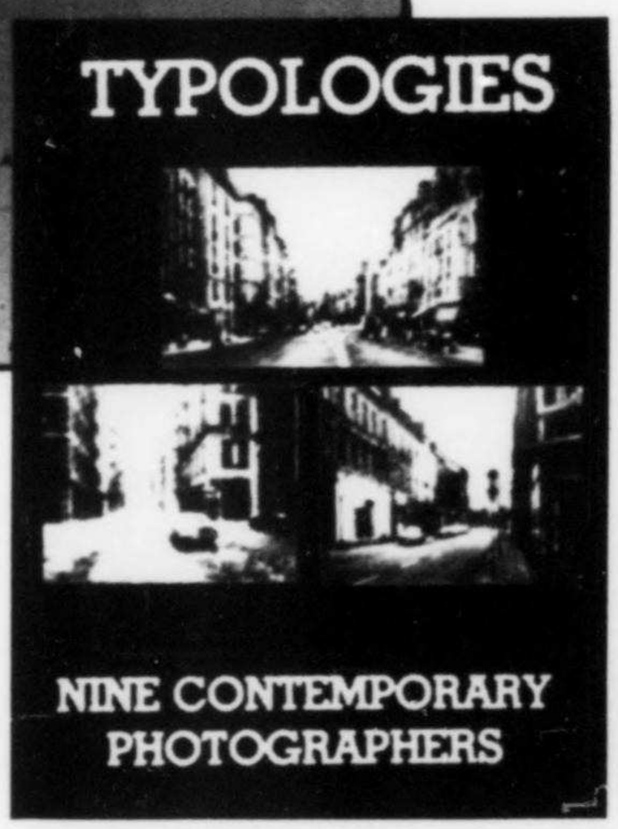

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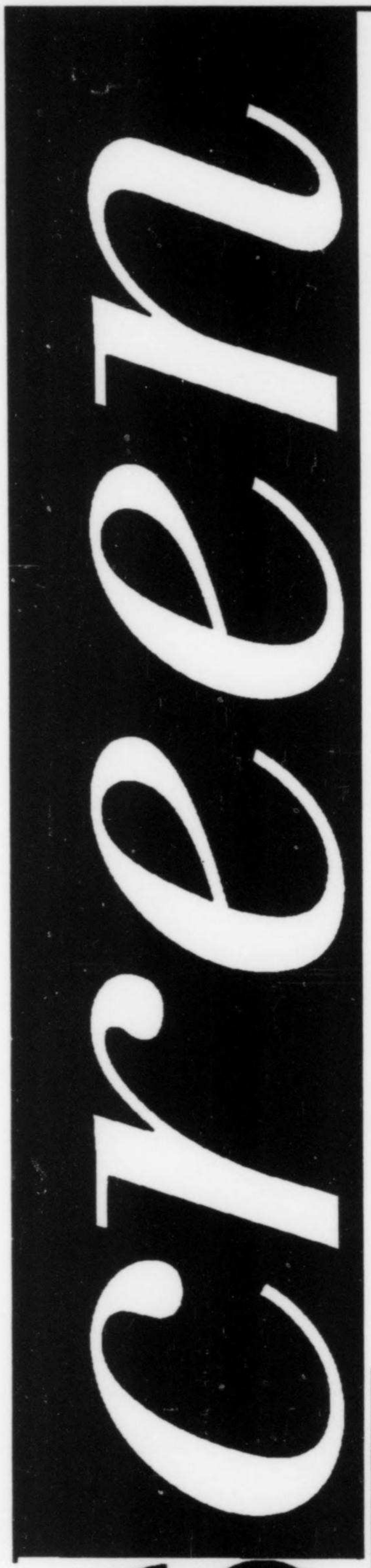

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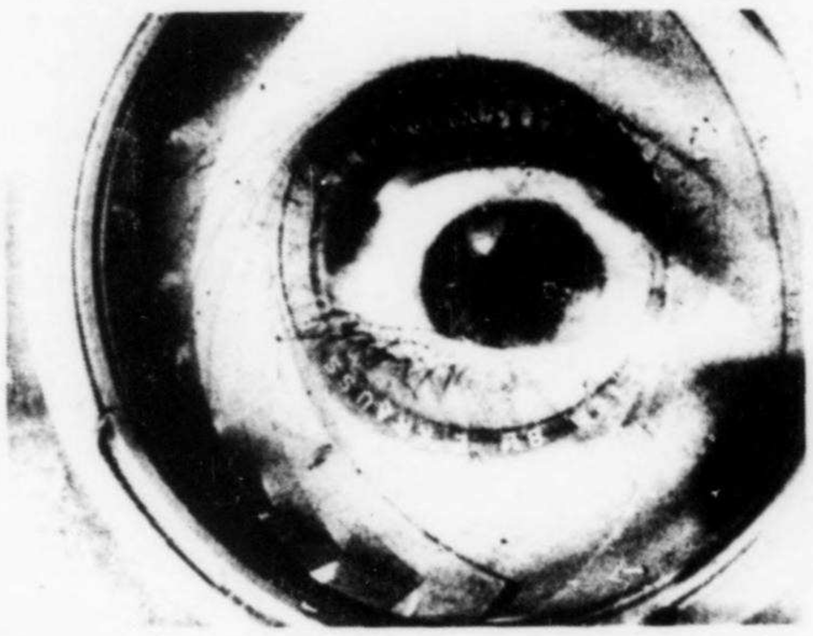

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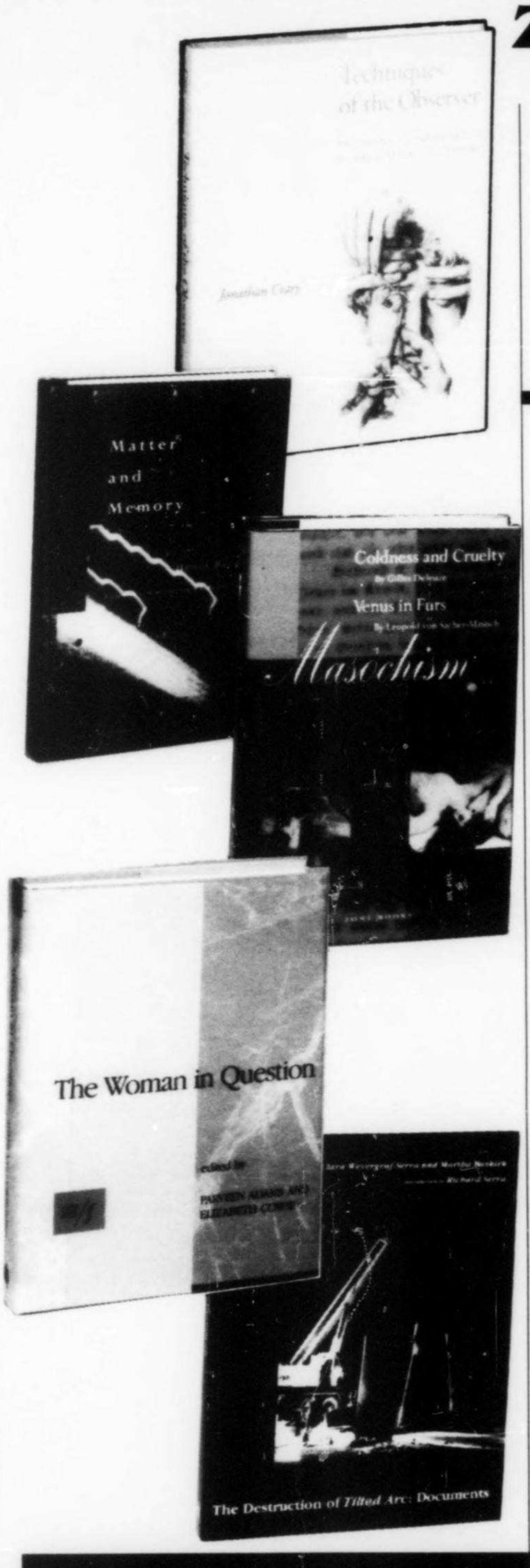

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