ART HISTORY

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON METHOD

EDITED BY DANA ARNOLD

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ART HISTORY

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EDITED BY

DANA ARNOLD

WILEY-BLACKWELL
A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

This edition first published 2010
Originally published as Volume 32, Issue 4 of *Art History*

Blackwell Publishing was acquired by John Wiley & Sons in February 2007. Blackwell's publishing program has been merged with Wiley's global Scientific, Technical, and Medical business to form Wiley-Blackwell.

Registered Office
John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, United Kingdom

Editorial Offices
350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK
The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Art history : contemporary perspectives on method / edited by Dana Arnold.
p. cm.—(Art history special issues)
''Originally published as Volume 32, Issue 4 of Art History.''
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-4443-3359-6 (pbk.: alk. paper) 1. Art—Historiography. I.
Arnold, Dana. II. Art history.
N7480.A773 2010
707.2'2—dc22

2010009540

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Set in 10/12pt SwiftEF-Regular by Macmillan India Ltd., Bangalore, India
Printed in Singapore

01 2010

CONTENTS

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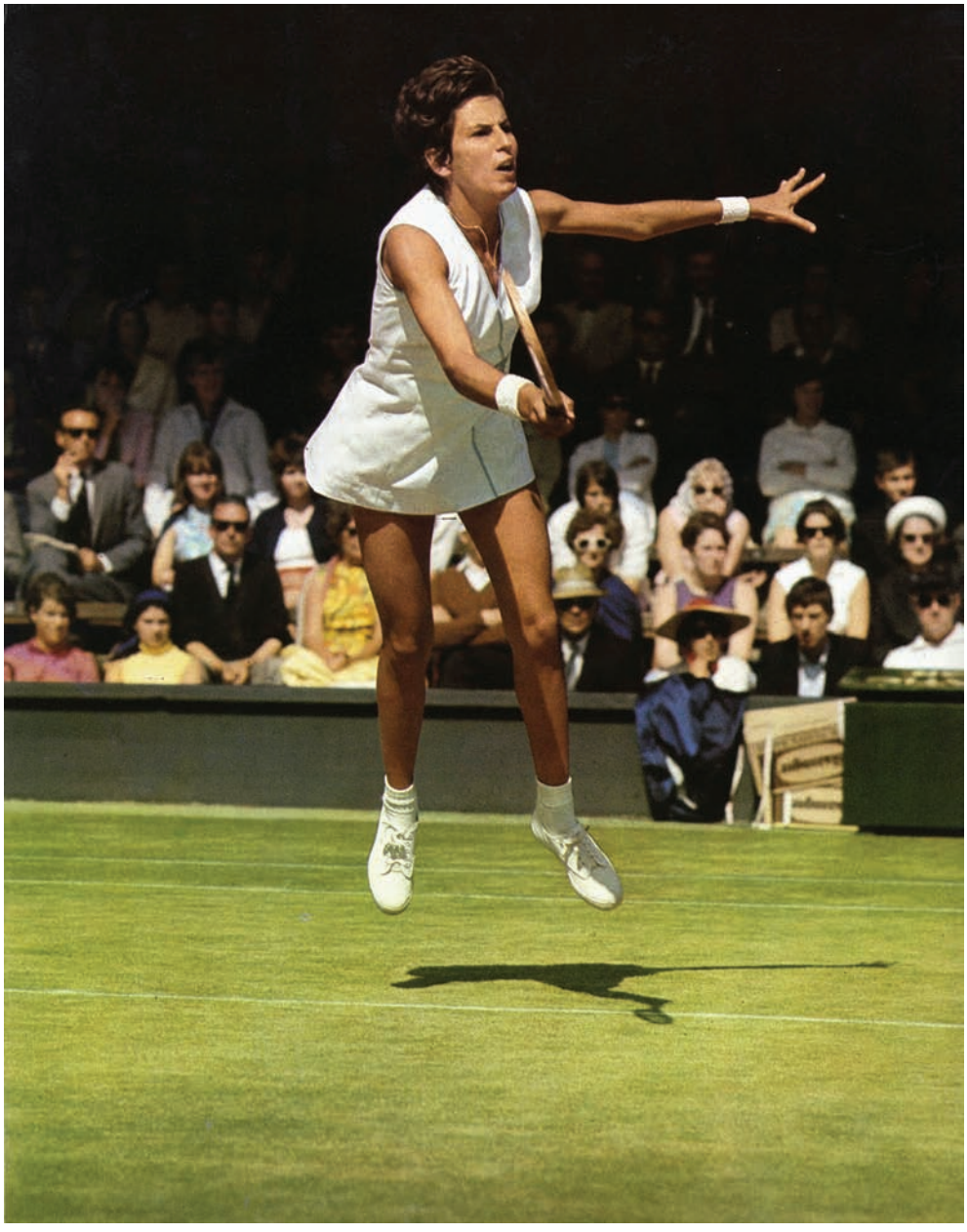


1 Unknown photographer, *Maria Bueno*, *c*. 1962.

1

ART HISTORY: CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON METHOD

DANA ARNOLD

The historiography of art history has been a potent theme in the discourses of the discipline of the last thirty years. And the approaches and methods in the study of the visual are probably more varied, and more vigorously debated, than in any other area of historical enquiry. This is so much so that the interest in the practice and history of the history of art history has at times appeared to be equal to object-based study and it is arguable that this now forms part of the archive of the discipline. There is of course no doubt that since the inception of art history as a field of academic study, works of art have been 'read' in a variety of ways. These different modes of description and interpretation inscribe meaning in to art and it is here that art and its history are perhaps most intricately linked.

The interest in historiography and method is manifest in a broad spectrum of the literature of art history from the general introduction or survey to the highly focused academic monograph. At points art history and the history of art history become so closely intertwined as to be almost indistinguishable. This is evident for instance in surveys of art history that are at once general introductions which aim to explain what art is and how it has been written about.[1] These studies present overviews of the different ways art histories have been written, covering such large topics as Hegelianism, Marxism and post-colonialism as well as the influence of the work of individual historians. But a common theme in these analyses and explanations of art and its history is the effect that a chosen method of enquiry has on the objects themselves and on the subjects of art history. In other words the ways in which the methods used define the artwork. The study of the historiography of art history has also occasioned several anthologies of key writings taken from a broad historical sweep.[2] Here the authentic voices of art history whether it be Giorgio Vasari's biographical narratives, Jacob Burckhardt's historical observations, or Johann Joachim Winckelmann's reflections on the cultural context of art speak for themselves, albeit annotated and truncated by the deft hand of the volume editor. Needless to say, art historians have also added to this body of literature in the form of both collections of newly commissioned sets of essays and monographs.[3] At least from Vasari, if not before, the concept of the artist as genius continues to be a mainstay of art historical enquiry. And the debates around authorship, authenticity and how biographies determine our understanding of the myth of the artist remain live. An equally important theme is the organization of symbolic form and the processes through which the visual

world has been, and continues to be, systematized and homogenized into a unified field of enquiry – art history – and the ways in which art can in fact resist these pressures. This line of enquiry follows the development of art history as an academic discipline in Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the work of historians such as Panofsky, Warburg, Riegl and Benjamin through to the engagement with structuralist and post-structuralist thought.

The chapters in this volume aim to respond in a range of ways to these various patterns in and approaches to the discipline of art history as they are manifest across the scholarship of all periods over the last thirty years. There are points of contact and common themes across the chapters as they examine the impact and influence of a given approach on the formulation of histories of art alongside its intellectual consequences. A central concern in the volume is how these issues in turn raise questions to do with our preoccupation with authorship, authenticity and chronologically defined linear progression, all of which have informed the canon of art history but which may be only one way of looking at, analysing and historicizing art. Of particular interest is what is lost or left out through these methods of historical enquiry and the points of contact and convergence with other methodologies. In addition, the porosity between art history and other related disciplines is brought to the fore and in turn how the archive of the discipline has changed over time. We now see the link between cognate fields such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology and art history as a given, and a significant number of recently published studies of these trans-disciplinary trends confirm this.[4] Together the chapters combine to present a cross-section of art history and offer timely new perspectives on method.

A central concern is the emergence of how other kinds of histories – social histories of art, feminist art history, queer art history – differ from and interact with the writing on art history at the moment when it emerged as a discipline during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Specific attention is paid to the bias towards a male interpretation of the subject, which it is argued leaves its trace in feminist art history through the binary categories of gender. Our bodily experience of artworks and the effect this has on art history is also re-evaluated, and this takes us back to one of the fundamental art-historical problems, the complex business of turning visual phenomena into verbal history. The result of this process is the establishment of canonical subjects for art history and the notion of linear progression as these are placed in chronological order to provide stepping stones across the temporal spread of the discipline. Here the limits of chronology and with it our expectations of progress are reviewed.

The role of Germany as a locus for the beginnings of art history is also revisited, and the effects and reception of the intellectual diaspora that spread from there in the middle years of the twentieth century. The idea of the trans-disciplinary nature of art history is again a common theme across the chapters and this extends beyond art history's relationship to philosophy and sociology to investigate the ways the narratives of artists' lives become subjects of fiction, both literary and filmic, and finally how the intertwining of the biography of the historian and his/her subject object produces discourse.

In the opening chapter, Nick Chare works to destabilize the ways in which our categories and taxonomies of art are tacitly based on heterosexual discourse.

Gender is defined as a social construct – in this it is unlike sex, which is biologically determined – and the implications of this established position within art history are worked out for the discipline. The gendered nature of art-historical discourse is here undermined in order to disturb our habitual acceptance of male/female binaries. Chare demonstrates how the discourses of art history are often complicit with biological and philosophical 'Old Master narratives' of sexual difference, and explores the various ways this complicity has been challenged over the past thirty years. He considers how concepts of gender have enabled art historians to expose the ways in which both art and art history have contributed to the cultural construction of identity. This growing interest in sexuality has encouraged some art historians to displace the predominantly heterosexual framework that has characterized the discipline's understanding of difference. Through his case studies Chare demonstrates how some of these gendered approaches to art history have proved problematic and may actually have inhibited our understanding of visual cultures of the past. For instance, the *Venus of Willendorf* is usually interpreted as a representation of a Mother Goddess, but Chare suggests that this relies upon a cognitive style that would have been alien to any prehistoric beholder. Chare argues that such an interpretation actually reveals more about the sexual politics of the late twentieth century than about any possible gender relations in the Upper Palaeolithic period. He goes on to consider the representation of sexual difference in art and how ideas about gender have historically been articulated and reproduced through specific media and techniques. There has been much scholarship on the ways in which both the spaces of production and reception and the subject matter of artworks at given historical moments have functioned to reinforce or subvert norms of femininity and masculinity, but less research has been devoted to how different media and techniques enact sexual difference. Chare shows how unstable these binary categories of male/female can be by examining the ways in which the gendering of the materials and modes of making art have contributed significantly to the construction or deconstruction of sexual difference.

The object–viewer relationship and the physicality of both the art work and onlooker is analysed in a very different way by Amanda Boetzkes. She moves our attention towards a consideration of the role of phenomenological interpretation in art history, specifically how one's encounter with an artwork calls embodied experience into question. Particularly since the 1960s, when Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) and *The Visible and the Invisible* (1959) had a substantial influence on artists, critics and art historians, the issue of embodiment has centred not purely on embodied perception, but specifically on the extent to which the spectator perceives from a state of quasi-immersion in the artwork. She investigates how our bodily experience in relation to the artwork can in fact operate to confirm and reproduce our expectations of it, and so produce a fiction of the object, providing distance rather than engagement with it. In this way the chapter calls into question our acceptance of phenomenological approaches in the study of artworks. Boetzkes argues that, as the validity and possibilities of phenomenology as an art-historical method are reconsidered, we must take on board the fact that not only are our interpretations of art informed by our embodied condition, but, even more strongly, that this condition exteriorizes the subject and denaturalizes our perspective rather than affirming it.

Using examples from contemporary art, postminimalist sculpture, and installation art, Boetzkes explores the ethical questions surrounding our phenomenological approach to art-historical interpretation. Through her investigation of the notions of embodiment, intentionality, and modes of confrontation, Boetzkes suggests that phenomenology not only mediates a trenchant understanding of the perceptual experience of the artwork, but that it is predicated on an acknowledgement of the resistance of art to interpretation. In this way, phenomenology demands a recognition of the ethical dimension of aesthetic experience. This ethical dimension is potentially of crucial importance to the writing of art history, as it calls into question a predetermined history of representation by shifting our focus to the immediacy of the work of art.

In Dan Karlholm's chapter, our understanding of chronology as a standard tool in the writing of Art Histories comes under scrutiny. Karlhom examines a widespread and influential art-historical genre, the survey text, and concentrates on how the 'contemporary' has been absorbed into this form of narrative since the early 1980s. He is mainly concerned with the uses of language and the problems of classification and periodization in the writing of these large-scale and broadly ranging art histories. Karlholm focuses on the accounts given in a series of survey texts of two conceptual artists, Joseph Beuys and Cindy Sherman, and forges links between contemporary art of recent decades and philosophical constructions of the contemporary in the nineteenth century. In this way Karlholm questions our established notions of chronology and sequence in art history. He proposes instead the idea of co-existing temporalities for art that run contrary to these accepted norms.

Karlholm's chapter opens up debate about the function of a genre which, by definition, presumes the existence of a continuing story of art that has a linear direction and no end point. At the crux of his argument is the theoretical understanding of art, prevalent in recent decades, that has privileged the context and institutions of art over the artwork and artist. This prompts Karlholm to question first of all how we should engage with this way of thinking about the art of the last thirty years. Secondly he asks what methods we should use to incorporate the notion of the contemporary into our chronological, object-based, histories.

Another aspect of how we write about art is examined in the concluding pages of Catherine M. Soussloff's chapter in which she reflects on the relationship between art history and visual studies. Soussloff concentrates on Michel Foucault, but shifts attention away from Foucault's acknowledged role as one of the founders of the field of visual studies to ask what happens if we consider him as an art historian. This question is explored with specific reference to the four essays Foucault wrote between the years 1965 and 1975, addressing the importance of high art, its history, and its episteme, through the medium of easel painting. Soussloff demonstrates how Foucault used painting to address technical and theoretical matters of significance to art history and theory. Many of the themes raised connect with the concerns of the chapters in this volume: for instance, the nature of the medium of painting, and with it the role of light, shade and colour; the meaning of representation and resemblance in Western art; the relationship between word and image; and the effects of photography on painting.

Soussloff goes on to argue that Foucault's choice of painting, rather than another medium, is significant in his exploration of its history, or, rather, in his own terms, its archaeology. For Foucault this archaeology of painting is not about

intentionality but is instead about the discursive practice that is embodied in techniques and effects. Foucault shared this understanding of the history of painting with his contemporaries, including Hubert Damisch, and the writing they produced differed significantly from the phenomenological approaches found in mid-twentieth-century writings on art by the philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. While Foucault accepted the primacy of painting in the visual arts, as Merleau-Ponty and Sartre had, unlike them he turned to earlier, Renaissance theories of painting in rejecting a phenomenological approach.

Jeremy Tanner turns our attention to Karl Mannheim, as he says a somewhat forgotten figure by both sociologists and art historians. Mannheim's ambiguous role in the history of art history is outlined by Tanner. On the one hand, he has been characterized as a secondary player in the development of iconology and iconography for which Mannheim's contemporary Erwin Panofsky is better known. On the other hand, and less positively, Mannheim was the focus of both Karl Popper's and Ernst Gombrich's rage as an 'enemy of reason'. Tanner takes a more affirmative view of Mannheim and explores how he and Erwin Panofsky used Alois Riegl's concept of *Kunstwollen* as a common point of departure in the development of their theories of cultural appropriation. The very different readings and uses of Riegl by the two thnkers as they grappled with the problem of how to construct feasible histories of the visual is closely mapped by Tanner. He shows how the sociological appropriation and transformation of the concept of *Kunstwollen* was central to the development of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, and in particular to the analysis of 'styles of thought' in his classic study *Conservative Thought* (1927).

The journey that Tanner takes us on in his analysis of Mannheim passes through the early years of art history as an academic discipline in Germany during the opening decades of the twentieth century. The repositioning of Mannheim in the group of writers who set out the parameters of the discipline at this time allows Tanner to offer a new configuration of the relationships between them. In this way, connections we do not regularly make become apparent between Mannheim and, for instance, Walter Benjamin and Wilhelm Dilthey. And the resonance of Mannheim's thinking is traced forward by Tanner into the work of Foucault, Bourdieu and Baxandall. The academic diaspora occasioned by the rise of Nazism in Germany is also unravelled by Tanner, and here he makes particular reference to the limited reception of Mannheim's synthesis of sociology and art history as interpreted in the intellectual context of early post-war Britain.

The biographical trace receives very different treatment in H. Perry Chapman's consideration of three recent novels that fictionalize early modern Netherlandish painters and paintings. These are Tracy Chevalier's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (1999); Susan Vreeland's *Girl in Hyacinth Blue* (1999) and Michael Frayn's *Headlong* (1999). Chapman argues that fiction about art elucidates a form of art history that runs in parallel with the more traditional loci of the academy and the museum, but which also rests outside these powerful and coercive institutions. This enables her to examine how such fictionalizations operate as mirrors to our own practices as art historians. The novels focus on paintings of life in ordinary domestic settings and use similar narrative techniques as artists such as Vermeer and Bruegel in order to make these everyday scenes appear extraordinary. Chapman argues that each of these books both exploits and challenges recent

trends in art-historical method. For instance Chevalier responds to the emphasis of the social history of art on economics and cultural context in preference to the artist. Vreeland and Frayn both take on board reception theory that privileges the viewer's response to the artwork and so moves attention away from the artist. Chapman uses this fact to critique the tendency in visual studies and material culture to downgrade the status of both artist and work. Through her discussion of art fiction she argues against this tendency, exploring the unfamiliar idea that, however determinedly we downplay the role of the artist as author/creator, images continue to have a vital impact on humankind.

The multifaceted nature of art history is explored further by Adrian Rifkin in a discussion which delves forcefully into the discontinuities and diversity of the discipline. Rifkin argues that the strength of art history is rooted in what he sees as its constitutive irrationality, precisely the quality in art that ultimately prompts us to speak about art, or to speak through and with it, and to desire art in the first place. For Rifkin, art history as an academic subject encompasses such a vast archive and broad spectrum of knowledge that it can sustain scholarship that ranges from Aby Warburg to Bernard Berenson, Griselda Pollock to Herbert Read. The relationship between these various modes of art history is complex and, he argues, sometimes unexpected. These considerations lead Rifkin to reflect on his own work, especially the notion of a finished piece of writing. For Rifkin, articulating the almost infinite possibilities of meaning and interpretation in art history helps him to understand the reasons why he can never think of a piece of work as complete and what this implies for the project of the discipline and for its capacity to help us understand and think about the world that art and its commentaries can offer us.

My ambition in this volume has been to try to refocus attention on contemporary views on method in a series of newly commissioned chapters. The range of subjects and the ways in which the authors chose to frame their arguments are representative of the breadth, complexity and ultimately the richness of the discipline. The format of the edited volume is also important here. Rather than trying to put together a monograph by many hands I instead wanted, in editing the volume, to explore and exploit the diversity of the subject matter, methods of writing, and ways of expressing the authorial voice possible in art history writing. In this way, Contemporary Perspectives on Method offers a picaresque journey through the discipline of art history, which I hope is as thought provoking as it is inconclusive.

Notes

A volume such as this is the product of the hard work of many for which it is easy for the editor to receive too much credit. First of all I would like to thank the David Peters Corbett for giving me the opportunity to return to *Art History* and guest edit this review of the discipline as it has evolved over the thirty years of the journal's existence. This would not have been possible without the contributors, all of whom stepped up to the plate to provide me with a fascinating set of chapters that are as intellectually rigorous as they are original and incisive. I am also grateful to my editorial assistant Karen Fielder whose organizational and technical skills have been invaluable assets to this project and to Sam Bibby for his help in preparing and designing both the journal and book versions of this volume. Any lapses and shortcomings in this collection remain my own responsibility.

1 See *inter alia* Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, *Art History: A Critical Introduction to its Methods*, Manchester, 2006, which surveys approaches from Hegel to post-colonialism again with an undergraduate audience in mind. Similarly, Vernon Hyde Minor, *Art History's History*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 2000, and Laurie Schneider Adams, *The Methodologies of Art: An Introduction*, Boulder, CO, 1996 are both aimed specifically at undergraduates in the United States. My own *Art History: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2004, attempts to explore thematically the different ways in which art has been written about, historicized and presented in galleries and exhibitions.

2 Eric Fernie, *Art History and its Methods*, London, 1995; Steven Edwards, ed., *Art and its Histories: A Reader*, New Haven, CT and London, 1996.

3 See, for instance, Karen Lang, *Chaos and Cosmos: On the Image in Aesthetics and Art History*, Ithaca, NY, 2006; Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept*, Minneapolis, MN, 1997; Patricia Lee Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History*, New Haven, CT and London, 1995; Mark A. Cheetham, Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey, eds, *The Subjects of Art and History: Historical Objects in Contemporary Perspectives*, Cambridge, 1998.

4 See, for instance, my book series 'New Interventions in Art History' that explicitly aims to explore the interaction between art history and other disciplines, and my complementary series 'Companions to Art History' and 'Anthologies in Art History', both of which aim to include historiographical and methodological aspects of the discipline. All of the above are published by Wiley-Blackwell.

1 Anonymous, *Venus of Willendorf*, *c.* 25,000 BCE. Oolitic limestone, 11.1 cm (height). Vienna: Naturhistorisches museum. Photo: © Photo SCALA, Florence.

2

SEXING THE CANVAS

NICHOLAS CHARE

> Painting women on to a male-primed and outlined canvas palls as quickly as painting by numbers as an excitement-generating activity.[1]
>
> Frances Heidensohn, 1992

OUT OF TOUCH

The origins of art are to be found in male fantasy, specifically in the ancient reveries of the Aurignacian men of the Upper Palaeolithic period.[2] In idle moments these hunter gatherers engaged in daydreams about 'the sight of a nice edible reindeer or the touching of a nice rounded pair of buttocks' and were then 'led by the strength of such fantasies to scratch silhouettes of animals on pieces of rock and to form stone into the resemblance of female bodies'.[3] At least this is what was suggested in the inaugural issue of *Art History* in 1978 in an article, 'The Origins of Art,' co-authored by Desmond Collins and John Onians. The essay puts forward the argument that early animal imagery emerges out of hunger and the desire to hunt, and that representations of the female form such as the Venus of Willendorf should be understood as evincing a prehistoric interest in love-making (plate 1).[4]

The evidence provided for the latter assertion is that the areas of the Willendorf figurine's 'body which are shown in all their rounded perfection are precisely those which would be most important in the preliminary phases of love-making, that is the belly, buttocks, thighs, breasts and shoulders, while the lower legs, lower arms, feet and hands are withered to nothing'.[5] Figures from the period are 'shown either in the round or in high relief and so respond to the palm of the hand in much the same way as would the buttocks and breasts of a real woman'.[6] The likely identity of the fabricators of these hand jobs are, it is suggested, 'adolescent, or adult males'.[7] In this interpretation, the Venus of Willendorf is perceived as a prehistoric equivalent to modern and contemporary glamour models. She is envisaged as the ancient antecedent of the Playboy playmate, a plastic form created to embody erotic daydreams and sate sexual urges.

The reading of the Venus of Willendorf provided by Collins and Onians certainly contains strong elements of fantasy. The desire to see woman as a passive presence in prehistory is so great that they amputate the Willendorf Venus in their interpretation, withering her limbs to nothing. This description ignores the reality

of the figurine's carefully carved arms, the hands held against her bosom, the individually sculpted fingers. The male hands that craft art's origins cannot be seen to give woman her own grip in prehistory.

For Collins and Onians, men were initially stimulated to make figurative imagery because they developed a 'faculty of projection'.[8] This enabled our male ancestors of 30,000 years ago to 'have imagined female genitals warming to their finger tips as they touched pieces of limestone or have visualized a running horse as they looked at a broken rock'.[9] It is a more recent employment of the faculty of projection that allows Collins and Onians to paint what is, in many ways, a stultifying picture of prehistory. Their interpretations of the past carry particular assumptions about gender and sexuality. The X-rated reading of figurines they provide, for example, only makes sense if nakedness is taken to be a sign of eroticism.[10] As Sarah M. Nelson suggests, however, there are a number of possible reasons that could account for it in figurines. The women of prehistory may 'have been usually unclothed inside the cave or hut, so that nakedness was not a special condition' or the sculptures 'could have been teaching devices for girls' puberty rites'.[11] This latter interpretation is developed by Catherine McCoid and LeRoy D. McDermott in their article 'Toward Decolonizing Gender', in which they suggest that figurines such as the Venus of Willendorf can be seen as 'a form of self-representation by women'.[12] The plastic images, they say, were created to play a didactic function in relation to feminine health and hygiene.[13]

Collins and Onians also presume that sexual desire in prehistory is predominantly heterosexual. The existence of a perceived carved stone phallus is acknowledged in the article but it is implied that it is made by a man for males, for reasons unknown. The notion that a stone phallus could have been made by a woman as an expression of her desire or by a man as an expression of his is not countenanced. Those carvings which are interpreted unquestioningly as stone vulvas are, however, explicitly perceived to be erotic objects created by men.[14]

'The Origins of Art' constructs a particular vision of gender. It is one in which men are associated with culture whilst women are aligned with nature. Collins and Onians fantasize the role of prehistoric woman to be that of 'playmate' for the men who hunt and create. A very different vision of prehistory was, however, also being offered in the late 1970s by the archaeologist Marija Gimbutas. It is to that image of the past that Collins and Onians are responding when they explicitly challenge the idea that the mass of imagery of the female form represents evidence of a fertility cult.[15] The three scholars join in deploying history for what Ludmilla Jordanova has called 'openly manipulative ends'.[16]

Gimbutas argued that it was possible to see continuity between figurines of the Upper Palaeolithic period and those of the Neolithic. Her research focused primarily on Neolithic figurines fabricated between 6500 and 3500 BCE in the region she called Old Europe.[17] She suggested, however, that the origins of these later carvings were to be found in the earlier Venuses.[18] Gimbutas explained that 'the Palaeolithic motif of a pregnant woman with her hands on her abdomen continues into the Neolithic'.[19] This means, in Lucy Lippard's words, that it 'is possible that Old Europe was heir to Palaeolithic goddess religions'.[20] For Gimbutas,

the figurines of women provided evidence for a culture which venerated a mother goddess. This goddess was one of regeneration. She gave life and promoted fertility. The carvings, with their large breasts and stomachs symbolizing fecundity, were created for a ritual purpose to be used as part of communal worship.

The work of Gimbutas had a great influence upon second-wave feminism. Lippard explains that with 'the rise of the new feminism in the late 1960s, women's longing for a history and mythology of our own found an outlet in a revisionist view of prehistoric matriarchies'.[21] Gimbutas used the past 'as an historical authority for contemporary efforts to secure gender equality (or superiority) in spiritual and social domains'.[22] Collins and Onians, by contrast, used the past to reassert gender inequalities. Both these approaches reveal that historiography has often not been gender neutral in relation to its representation of prehistory.

The facts of prehistoric artefacts have been 'not so much found as constructed by the kinds of questions which the investigator asks of [them]'.[23] This can be said of all practices of archaeology and of art history. The questions produced from within such discourses hold specific, historically contingent, ideas about gender. Theresa de Lauretis has argued that gender 'is the product of various social technologies ... and of institutionalized discourses, epistemologies, and critical practices, as well as practices of daily life.'[24] The histories provided by Collins, Onians and Gimbutas form such social technologies, reflecting and reproducing them by way of particular representations of a past culture.

The argument that follows, beginning with the example of prehistory, seeks to analyse how particular discourses about gender have governed the kinds of questions that can be asked of artworks of the past. It will suggest that on occasion an overemphasis on gender as an issue has acted to impede historical understanding. It will also argue, however, that the study of gender could potentially offer greater insights into the significance of past artworks if it moved beyond a limited concern with a work's obvious subject matter to engage with the import of its medium and/or technique. Medium is never gender neutral. Both the artist's and the art historian's relationship to the substances out of which art objects are crafted is, and probably always has been, mediated by values and assumptions about the sexes. These beliefs are often disavowed and unacknowledged in the writing of art history, yet have held prominence for artists and critics in the past and continue to influence attitudes towards artistic media today.

IN TOUCH

In the study of prehistoric culture, questions governed by issues of gender are not necessarily the most productive ones to pose if we wish to further our understanding of the period. Collins and Onians fragment the female body into a set of delectable parts on hand for (prehistoric) man to appraise and appreciate. This interpretation seems to manifest the 'obsessive, unreasonable nature of physical desire' that Kenneth Clark describes as having sought 'relief in images' from earliest times.[25] The notion, however, that the oolitic limestone of the Willendorf Venus somehow feels like a woman's buttocks, breasts, or thighs seems far-fetched. The scale of the figurines means that their bodies are miniaturized. A reading that argues that they are made to create arousal by way of acts of fondling thus seems at odds with real erotics of touch: the stone breasts, for

example, cannot be cupped. If these objects were just to be looked at then such an interpretation would make more sense. The naked men and women in pornographic magazines, for instance, are usually diminutive, shrunk to fit an A4 environment.

Touch has, however, been advanced as a sense which played a key role in the appreciation of figurines in prehistory. It is a rich, complex sense, albeit one that as Elizabeth Grosz explains is difficult 'to analyze as it is composed of so many interacting dimensions of sensitivity, involving a number of different functions (touch, pressure, texture, frequency, pain, and heat)'.[26] Douglass Bailey has recognized how important this complex sensation was for the prehistoric beholders of figurines. He has endeavoured to render some sense of touching prehistoric sculpture by way of visual representation by means of a set of photographs he includes at the beginning of *Prehistoric Figurines*. In one carefully focused image the grimy hand of an archaeologist gently clasps a figure (the dirt sticking to the person's fingers and palm providing the picture with a kind of archaeological veracity, giving it a 'fresh from the soil of the trench' feel). A later image of the same figurine, this time resting in a clean palm, has been deliberately manipulated.[27] The photograph ripples and bulges. The sense here is that the significance of the figurine cannot be 'grasped' through seeing alone. To merely see these objects is to have a distorted view of them. They were designed to be handled, wielded. In feeling figurines, however, in 'turning over [a] figurine in one's hand, the spectator (or the handler) never holds the entire view at any one time'.[28]

In this sense, as Bailey suggests in *Prehistoric Figurines*, 'three-dimensional objects escape complete comprehension'.[29] He recognizes that facets of a figurine will always remain out of reach as it is clasped and manipulated by the hand. Bailey fails, however, to address the ways in which complexity of touch itself (rather than its limited contact with the surface of a given object) always mitigates against complete comprehension. Even if the entire surface of a figurine could be touched, total tactile understanding would be impossible. It is feasible, for example, to understand the relative solidity of a figurine through the act of squeezing, but this action is not one which could ascertain its weight. In order to weigh a small sculpture a lighter touch is required. The hand can be still as it gauges heaviness but it must move if it is also to understand texture. Both touch and seeing are processes of sequential revelation.[30]

The key point here, however, is that Bailey's arguments about touch would not be possible if gender were adopted as the principal means of explaining the significance of figurines. Touch, in fact, works against the recognition of sexual difference. The perception of physical difference – be it masculine or feminine – is more a product of seeing than touching. Through touch, difference is threatened with redundancy. This proximity underlying physical intimacy holds within it the potential of a 'nearness so pronounced that it makes all discrimination of identity [. . .] impossible'.[31] The contact of skin against skin or against another substance brings together two different bodies in such a way that the possibility of 'distinguishing what is touching from what is touched' no longer exists.[32] The act of touching, when unaccompanied by seeing, is touch without gender, leading the fingers that trace another's sex, for example, to become sexless.[33]

GAYDAR IN THE ARCHIVE

There may be an anxiety about engaging with touch in relation to the art of the past because it undermines reassuring visions of sexual difference and of sexuality. Political struggles related to sexuality have led it to become an important aspect of gender studies in art history. Historians have sometimes felt a need to seek precedents for contemporary ideas about sexuality in the art of the past. Recently, to take one example, there has been a strong desire to cruise the archive in search of homosexual artists. The work of Caravaggio, which will not form the main focus of my enquiry, is perhaps the most obvious case.[34]

In relation to Caravaggio, it is worth noting that Adrian Rifkin has written of the challenge to queer art history posed by the paintings of Mattia Preti. Rifkin accepts that queer art historians wish to discover artists who echo their desires, that there are images by these artists which you would want 'to be *like yourself*, or in which you would like to hear yourself'.[35] Preti's paintings are troubling in this context though because, whilst they sometimes pass for Caravaggio's work, there are no legal records or other documents in the archive that are at all suggestive about the later artist's sexuality.[36] The fact that images by both artists are not that different from each other therefore tests the queer art historian who invests their desire in the Caravaggesque.

Here, however, I want to examine the way in which Michelangelo's works are now sometimes interpreted as manifestations of a gay subjectivity. To understand either Caravaggio or Michelangelo as homosexual is problematic. In *The Will to Knowledge*, the first volume of his history of sexuality, Michel Foucault argues that it is only from the nineteenth century onwards that sexual acts have come to define individuals rather than to constitute mere fleeting pleasures. He gives as an example the nineteenth-century homosexual who:

> became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away. It was consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature.[37]

This modern conception of lives governed by sexuality, in which an individual's actions express their sexuality, has been adopted, implicitly or explicitly, in some readings of Michelangelo's art. Howard Hibbard, for instance, suggests that while there are 'few if any desired female figures in his entire oeuvre', Michelangelo 'shaped the buttocks of David and Christ alike with sensuous joy'.[38] The reason for this, according to Hibbard, is that when the artist's 'infatuations did crop up they were overwhelmingly homosexual in form'. Hibbard, however, refuses to read any evidence about Michelangelo's sexuality as conclusive.[39] He contends that there is 'no evidence that Michelangelo had a sexual life of any kind'.[40] This statement is a tacit recognition of the fact that in the Renaissance 'doing' was 'being'.

James M. Saslow, however, feels able to claim that Michelangelo was a suppressed homosexual. He acknowledges Foucault's work and admits that in the 'pre-Freudian era, connections between an individual's sexual psychology and other behaviour were not so readily assumed or investigated'.[41] He also

recognizes that the: 'two crucial factors in defining the modern ''gay'' identity are a sense of core individual identity as an inherently homosexually oriented person and a sense of group identity based on this shared orientation and participation in collective institutions. Neither, it is argued, could come into existence prior to the rise of self-aware urban subcultures in the eighteenth century and the invention of the medico-psychological term, hence the social category, of the ''homosexual'' in the nineteenth.'[42] Yet Saslow still suggests that during the artist's lifetime 'many important elements of the modern conception of homosexuality – as a distinct psychological construct and social status, requiring its own expressive vocabulary even if it sometimes had to be concealed – were beginning to emerge.'[43] He believes that the temporal frontier of an emerging sense of distinctive homosexual identity can be pushed back, 'at least in embryonic form, to the beginning of the sixteenth century'.[44]

Saslow's major sources of evidence for 'outing' Michelangelo are the latter's poetry and also the gossip recorded during the artist's lifetime about his sexual preferences. This is an odd strategy to adopt if the aim is to claim Michelangelo as a gay artist rather than poet. The only artworks Saslow refers to at length are the paired drawings of the *Rape of Ganymede* and the *Punishment of Tityos* which Michelangelo gave to Tommaso de' Cavalieri.[45] He argues that Michelangelo's drafts for the letter which was to accompany the drawings 'strongly imply that there was something in the drawings which was best left unstated'.[46] In support of such an interpretation it should be acknowledged that it was during a discussion of the artist's drawings for Cavalieri that Adrian Stokes writes, 'art requires of unconscious bents that they be poeticized' and 'there has never been a more careful vehicle than the Greek myths'.[47]

Frequently, however, art historians have turned to other artworks for evidence of the artist's sexual proclivities. As Anthony Hughes acknowledges, 'there is a good deal in Michelangelo's painting and sculpture that betrays a purely sensual delight to be found in gazing at naked men.'[48] This delight can be seen to extend to Michelangelo's depictions of the feminine form which Hughes regards as being often only minimally differentiated from those of the masculine.[49] When Michelangelo paints women they frequently manifest a bulk and musculature conventionally associated with men. The Cumaean and Libyan sibyls of the Sistine chapel ceiling, for example, possess powerful physiques (plate 2). These bodies refuse an easy visual differentiation of their sex. The oracles could pass for men. In writing of the Libyan sibyl and of its chalk preparatory drawing (which reveals that the model for the figure was male), Hibbard notes that she is 'not a believable figure – the artifice of the pose and elegance of conception far outweigh the references to the possible and the real.'[50] She is, he states, 'not so much a Sibyl as a Style'.[51] The pose is indeed counter-intuitive, a mannered turn; but the unreal quality of the depiction seems to rest more in the sibyl's physique than in her positioning. It is therefore tempting to read Hibbard's description as enacting a form of displacement. The pose is emphasized over the figure's androgyny, yet it is really the latter that renders the figure unbelievable.

This act of displacement can either be understood as a symptom of Hibbard's lack of desire to engage with Michelangelo's sexuality, something not borne out by *Michelangelo* in its entirety, or as a refusal to contemplate the sibyl's massiveness, the way she exceeds the norms of female corporeality. The modern spectator

2 Michelangelo, *Libyan Sibyl*, 1508–12. Fresco. Rome: Sistine Chapel, Vatican Museums. Photo: © Photo SCALA, Florence.

perhaps baulks at sibylline bulk. Although 'bulk is an essential element of the male nude's athleticism', for 'a woman to be big with muscle – rather than with child or with fat – puts into question deeply held beliefs about gender.'[52] The decision to read the oracles as men masquerading as women – that is, to read their bodies as evidence of Michelangelo's homosexuality – suppresses their potential to challenge conventional ideas about female corporeality. The kinds of bodies the sibyls foretell, whilst still uncommon, have after all now been attained and exceeded by some women.

The desire to see the sibyls as big men, expressions of homosexual desire, or as big women, prefiguring contemporary female bodybuilders, whilst potentially empowering for some, does not do justice to the way the works were received and understood in the early sixteenth century. If the sibyls did offer obvious evidence of 'unnatural' urges, then this was not remarked upon at the time or for a long period afterwards. The matter is complicated by the fact that the nude figures of the *Last Judgement*, in which female figures were also often heavily muscled, were adjusted under the papacy of Pope Paul IV so as to no longer give offence. But, while the puritans of the curia could not countenance the representation of nudity in the Sistine chapel no repainting was carried out on the sibyls. This suggests that the notion these figures were an expression of Michelangelo's sexuality was not held at the time. The danger of a queer reading, and also of a feminist one, is that it can obscure the historical significance of artworks in this way.

It would therefore seem ill-informed to read Michelangelo's art as an expression of his sexuality. In the Renaissance, an art commission was an exercise in skill rather than an act of individual confession. Anthony Hughes suggests that Michelangelo's art reflects the Renaissance tendency to 'regard the male body as superior to the female'.[53] In this light, 'the perfect body of a man could be quite legitimately admired as a pinnacle of creation'.[54] The women who are only minimally differentiated from men in Michelangelo's art therefore have their inferiority deemphasized. The practicality of painting figures on a ceiling to be viewed from a distance may also have contributed to their portrayal larger than life.[55] The photographic reproductions made of the sibyls and other figures from the Sistine ceiling as details of the fresco, are too proximate to reproduce the actual viewing experience of a visitor to the chapel. The images exaggerate the size of the figures.

This should not, however, detract from the reality of how enabling the fantasy of the gay Michelangelo has been. It was this fantasy that permitted small-scale figurines of *David* fabricated in the 1950s to signify 'in a safe and respectable way (i.e. to those in the know), the homosexual orientation of [their] owners'.[56] These figurines, unlike those of prehistory, were certainly erotically figured and fingered.

THE FEMALE FRESCO PAINTER

As the previous examples of Michelangelo and of the Willendorf Venus attest, the history of the study of gender within art history has been predominantly structured around analyses of the sex of the artist, the sex of the audience, and sexed subject matter, such as the female or male nude. The sexing of substance has been overlooked. Material is instead seen through. As David Peters Corbett suggests, 'too often the response to mark-making, the physical manipulation of paint, or surface is edited out of professional dialogue and confined to personal experience, as if the encounter with the object is somehow not a part of what art history

is about.'[57] The various media that have been employed in art-making are perceived by many art historians as vehicles of meaning, seen as superfluous to interpretation, rather than as possessing meaning in their own right. Artists' materials are, however, always invested with significance.

The meanings impressed upon, or within, these materials shift with time. In his life of Sebastiano Viniziano, for example, Giorgio Vasari famously quotes Michelangelo as having denounced oil painting as 'a woman's art and only fit for lazy well-to-do people'.[58] By implication, fresco in the High Renaissance is man's work. By the late eighteenth century, however, such a view of oil painting had shifted. It was firmly established as masculine, whilst drawing and watercolour were sometimes coded as feminine. Fresco was still perceived as a man's medium at the time as practitioners of watercolour sought to assert watercolour's status by linking it to *buon affresco*. The watercolourist William Marshall Craig, for instance, contended that watercolour was fathered by fresco painting, an ancient medium which, in part, involved employing pigments suspended in water applied to wet plaster.[59] This argument served to align watercolour paintings with 'masterpieces' of the past such as Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel frescoes. Craig claimed that both fresco and watercolour painting required greater skill than oil. Watercolour, he stated, was 'founded in the soundest deductions of reason and philosophy'.[60]

It seems unlikely that Michelangelo would appreciate Craig's comparison, however, for what differentiated oil from fresco for the Renaissance artist was not so much the reduced skills required for the former as the absence of endeavour. Frescoes on the scale of those in the Sistine and Pauline chapels were substantial physical undertakings. The humorous sonnet complaining of his body's woes which Michelangelo sent to Giovanni da Pistoia during the painting of the Sistine ceiling attests to this:

> This miserable job has given me
> a goitre like the cats in Lombardy
> get from the water there – or somewhere else.
> The force of it has jammed my belly up
> beneath my chin. Beard to the sky, I feel
> my seat of memory rests on a hump.
> I've grown a harpy's breast. Brush splatterings
> make a mosaic pavement of my face.
> My loins have moved into my guts.
> As counterweight, I stick my bum out like
> A horse's rump.[61]

This quotation emphasizes the manual, rather than mental, labour involved in fresco painting. Art-making is not here simply a mental exercise, a product of 'reason and philosophy', but of hard, deforming, graft. Fresco painting is man's work because it requires endurance, strength, the ability to tolerate and transcend discomfort. Michelangelo's gendering of oil painting as feminine should therefore be understood to stem from the relative lack of effort required to produce works in that medium when contrasted with the exertions necessary to create a fresco. And it is only when we understand the artist's criticism of oil in this context that we can comprehend the rhetoric of an image such as Artemisia Gentileschi's *Self-Portrait as an Allegory of Painting* (plate 3). Gentileschi's depiction

3 Artemisia Gentileschi, *Self-Portrait as an Allegory of Painting*, 1630. Oil on canvas, 96.5 × 73.5 cm. The Royal Collection. Photo: © 2009 Her Majesty the Queen.

of herself an allegory of painting is noteworthy for its breadth of gesture, particularly the height of the right hand poised to apply paint to canvas.[62]

In her chapter on the self-portrait in her 1989 study *Artemisia Gentileschi*, Mary D. Garrard compares this painting with Felice Antonio Casoni's *Portrait Medal of Lavinia Fontana* (1611), which possesses an image of an allegory of painting on the reverse.[63] This image, Garrard suggests, 'carries an implied possibility of interpreting Fontana the artist and the Allegory of Painting as overlapping identities'.[64] The female personification of painting can potentially fuse with the identity of an actual woman painter in Fontana. The personification is seated, painting at an easel. A palette lies at her feet. She is shown holding a brush in her right hand at a height just below the level of her chin, and applying a stroke of paint to a canvas.

The pose in the image created by Gentileschi is far more dynamic. The artist stands rather than sits, she holds the palette, her right arm reaches outwards towards a canvas but, unlike the Casoni medallion, also upwards. Garrard reads the pose as designed to evoke both theory and practice, 'one arm raised ... the hand stretched toward the top of the canvas, suggesting the higher, ideal aspirations of painting, ... the other resting on a table, the hand holding the brushes and palette, which are the physical materials of painting'.[65] In this

interpretation theory and practice, art and craft, are 'joined in the mind of the artist, here the head of Artemisia Gentileschi, which intersects the curve of the arms and, as the compositional fulcrum, provides the point of resolution for the two aspects of painting'.[66] This reading, which is also echoed in Garrard's later book *Artemisia Gentileschi around 1622* (2001), ignores the significance of the medium the artist employs in the image, the importance of oil paint itself.[67]

Gentileschi's gestures are far more expansive than many contemporary or later self-portraits by male artists of themselves working in oil paint.[68] The pose she adopts in the portrait is reminiscent of the outstretched right arm of Michelangelo in the self-caricature that he drew in the margin of the sonnet he sent to Giovanni about the labour of painting the Sistine ceiling. Several feminist art historians have recognized the importance of Gentileschi's depiction of herself as allegory given her profession. Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, for example, see the work as playing on 'the contradiction between woman as painter's muse, symbolic embodiment of the art, and woman as professional practitioner of the art'.[69] The emphasis on the gender of the portrait's subject, the allegory-artist, however, comes at the expense of a consideration of its medium.

The oil out of which Gentileschi's portrait is made forms a part of its subject matter as does the pigment and plaster of Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling. The latter represents masculinity not just through the many male and 'she-male' figures, but through the matter out of which it is created, the plaster surface impregnated by pigment. In the High Renaissance, the medium of fresco signalled masculinity whatever the subject matter, just as works in oil could connote femininity. Gentileschi, however, paints herself painting in oil in the guise of a fresco painter. Garrard describes the artist as showing herself 'in the heat of work'.[70] It is this work, this labour, which is of note. This not simply because Gentileschi is participating in a profession dominated by men but because she is working in a medium which was, in the past century, gendered as feminine. The 'heat' of her work identified by Garrard can be read to imply a rapidity of execution comparable with that required of the fresco painter engaging with the *intonaco*. Garrard draws attention to the artist's golden chain 'that has slipped aside on her breast'.[71] The displacement of the chain captures a sense of rapid movement.

This is not to suggest that Gentileschi rushed her work, the artist's careful use of colour and controlled, precise, handling is evinced by the finished portrait. It is a painting into which much thought has been invested – undoubtedly it took a considerable period of time to plan and complete – but the composition had to stress physical action over passive contemplation. The pose had to be coded as that of the conventionalized artisan of the previous century, the fresco painter. Gentileschi's portrait explores gender assumptions that adhered to the mediums of fresco and oil. The painting argues both that a woman can paint alfresco, can paint on the scale and with the vigour of a man, and that oil painting offers them the possibility of doing this. The work is both a proto-feminist statement and an argument for the status of oil paint. The moment Gentileschi depicted herself painting in oil but with the athleticism and expansiveness of an artist working alfresco she made a statement not just about herself as a woman artist but also about the manliness of the medium she employed. The medium is a part of the message here, and any interpretation, such as Garrard's, that ignores the work's material, materiality as signifier, will miss this. This metaphorical mixing of media will be written out of the artwork's history.

MIXING MEDIA

The significance of gender in Thomas Girtin's watercolour *View of Pont Saint* (plate 4) or J. M. W. Turner's watercolour *Warkworth Castle, Northumberland* (plate 5) is not immediately apparent from the subject matter but it becomes obvious when viewed in the context of art criticism from the period about watercolour as a medium. The paintings, which provide picturesque views, were created only a few years before Craig was staking a claim for watercolour by attempting to locate its provenance in the tradition of fresco painting. This means the medium out of which *View of Pont Saint* and *Warkworth Castle* were made would have been coded by many spectators in the early nineteenth century as feminine. These works were looked at in gendered terms although, in the case of watercolour, the specificity of that gender was hotly debated.[72]

Kay Dian Kriz has examined the way criticism from the period sometimes employed tropes which aligned painterly surface effects and brilliant chromatics in landscape paintings, traits frequently achieved through using watercolour, with illicit sexual desire. Works that manifested these suspect qualities were described as cosmetic-wearing courtesans. The paintings were figured as female which made their 'gaudy colour and painterly effects assume the status of ornaments or make-up applied by the artist, who becomes identified as a pimp – the lowest form of 'merchant' within the commercial sphere'.[73] This kind of language, whilst constructing the medium as feminine, left the artist's manhood intact, if debased.

It seems probable, however, that some painterly effects, while they contributed to the femininity of a finished painting, played a different role during its actual creation. Whilst the gendering of watercolour was being negotiated at the turn of the century through criticism and practice, it was the way certain effects

4 Thomas Girtin, *View of Pont Saint*, *c.* 1800. Watercolour on paper, 150 × 234 mm. London: British Museum. Photo: © Trustees of the British Museum.

5 J.M.W. Turner, *Warkworth Castle, Northumberland*, 1799. Watercolour on paper, 81.5 × 107.7 cm. London: Victoria & Albert Museum. Photo: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

were achieved which may have prompted an artist to utilize them. The focus of art criticism at the time and of later art-historical analyses has been on such paintings as end product rather than on the creative decisions and processes behind them. A desire to mitigate the unmanning engendered by operating in the medium of watercolour sometimes manifested itself in an artist's choice of materials and techniques. The act of scraping the surface of painted paper, for example, produces a particular effect.[74] This effect, whilst it might be interpreted as a signifier of femininity within the work, would have been produced from without by an aggressive action coded as masculine. The scrape could be read as a kind of maquillage but it is one applied with violence.

There are anxieties in play during the making of an artwork that influence its final form but which are often excluded from subsequent interpretations. In his analysis of Thomas Girtin, for example, David Hill remarks upon the artist's choice of 'a coarse-looking paper, a prominently wire-marked cartridge flecked with the detritus of the recycled linen rags from which it was made'.[75] This paper, which was bought folded like foolscap, had creases in it that accumulated greater quantities of paint than the rest of the paper, causing the colour to pool and end up darker in those areas. This effect was sometimes admired at the time. The paper also absorbed paint in such a way that rubbing and scrubbing was not possible. This leads Hill to contrast Girtin with Turner, whose choice of tough Whatman paper allows him to 'work out his colour much further, and to overwash, soak, scratch, abrade and recolour'.[76] In this formal analysis Girtin is seen as spontaneous whilst Turner is studious. If we recognize the importance assumed by gender

6 J.M.W. Turner, *Norham Castle, Sunrise*, *c*.1845. Oil on canvas, 908 × 1219 mm. London: Tate Britain. Photo: © Tate, London 2009.

in relation to the medium of watercolour at the time, however, we find the underlying motivation for the two practices to be the same. Girtin's rough paper and Turner's technique of abrading both act as masculine counters to the feminine medium the two artists employ. They both assuage the anxiety of the artists over their choice of material, an anxiety whose nature I will return to later.

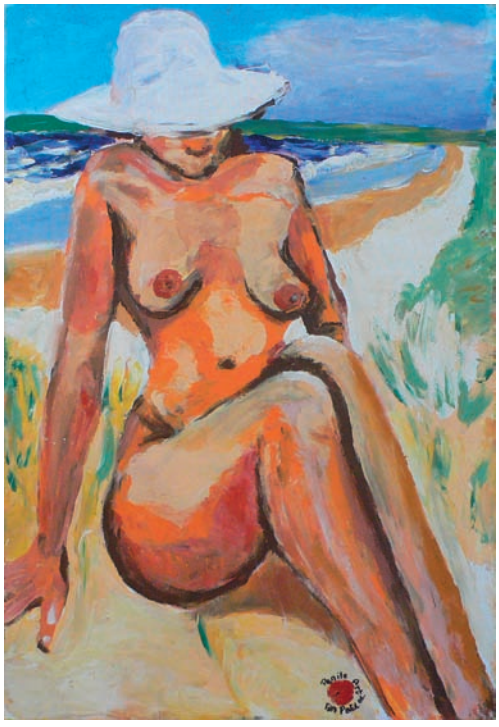
Paying greater attention to the sexing of media also assists the historian when it comes to reading past critical writings on art. In *Image of the People*, T. J. Clark recommends reading art criticism as an analyst might listen to his or her patient.[77] The unconscious manifests itself through caesuras and silences in critical discourse. Greg Smith offers a way into, although he does not pursue, some of these silences when he examines critical writings from the early years of the nineteenth century in his book *The Emergence of the Professional Watercolourist*. Smith identifies a great concern at the time that oil paintings were contaminated by watercolour practice. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Britain there was 'a crisis in the identity and integrity of the oil medium'.[78] He quotes George Beaumont, who felt that great harm had been done 'by endeavouring to make painting in oil to appear like water colours, by which in attempting to give lightness and clearness the force of oil painting has been lost'.[79] Smith also discusses the example of William Hazlitt who singles out Turner for criticism. He claims that Turner's landscapes in oils 'are nothing but stained water-colour drawings, loaded with oil-colour'.[80]

Beaumont and Hazlitt are both made anxious by works that refuse easy differentiation at the level of medium. They do not appreciate works in oil that have the appearance of watercolour, that we might think pass as such. Gender is not mentioned by either author, but when the mediums are sexed in criticism of the time oil is allied to masculinity and watercolour to femininity.[81] Beaumont's and Hazlitt's silence on the question of gender, which Smith does not examine, can be read as a product of the anxiety caused by works in oil that do not announce their sex, their oiliness, or which could even be mistaken for the fairer sex, the watercolour. Turner's oil painting *Norham Castle: Sunrise* (*c.* 1835–40), although of a later date than the criticism, provides a good example of such a work. Seen from a distance the fine, almost evanescent, tones of this landscape mean that it could pass for a watercolour. This is not to suggest that *Norham Castle* is an oil painting in drag (plate 6). For a drag act to work it requires the recognition that the gender of the performer differs from that of the gender being performed. *Norham Castle* is oil simulating watercolour to such an extent that it possesses many of the qualities, such as translucence, associated with the former. Through its ability to feign the appearance of watercolour, the oil threatens traditional distinctions between the two media and by extension between the sexes connoted by each.

MACHO IMPASTO

The reluctance in art historiography to engage with the gendering of a medium carries forward into histories of the art of the second half of the nineteenth century. The shift to an emphasis on surface in French avant-garde painting is discussed by T. J. Clark as the product of several 'complex and compatible values' that derive 'from elsewhere than art'.[82] Clark suggests, for instance, that flatness could be understood as an acknowledgement of the 'honest manual labour' that constituted picture-making; that it could signify modernity, a painting's surface conjuring the 'two dimensions of posters'; that it could constitute an attack on 'the ordinary bourgeois' by acting as 'a barrier put up against the viewer's normal wish to enter a picture and dream'.[83] He goes on to acknowledge that for some painters flatness also signified something that resisted transformation into metaphor, foregrounding paint as mere stuff. Even for these painters, however, he writes, 'there was no fact without the metaphor, no medium without its being made the vehicle of some sense or other'.[84] Nowhere, however, does he suggest that this sense might be linked to gender.

Thick accretions of oil would seem obvious signals of masculinity considering how the medium was coded, some impressionists and post-impressionists even describing paint as semen. Pierre Auguste Renoir notoriously told his son that he painted with his prick.[85] Vincent Van Gogh also referred to his paintings as seminal.[86] In a letter to Émile Bernard, from early August in 1888, Van Gogh advised the artist, who was scheduled to embark on military service, to 'eat a lot, do your military exercises well, don't fuck too much; when you do this your paintings will be all the more spermatic'.[87] These avant-garde artists appeared to view painting as not just a creative but a procreative act. The practice of applying paint to canvas can be seen as always 'charged with sexual connotations'.[88] These connotations are carried over into contemporary art practice by Pricasso who creates acrylic works, often of women, which are literally made by using his posterior and penis as paintbrushes (plate 7).



7 Pricasso, *Portrait of Ree*, 2006. Acrylic on canvas, 70 × 120 cm. Private Collection, Photo: © Timothy Patch, courtesy of the artist.

Sperm, however, in its viscidity, has an ambiguous relationship with the masculine. Fluids have traditionally been aligned with femininity. In a phallocentric economy focused upon the hard-on, the hard one, liquids and fluids are fantasized as feminine. The fluid nature of sperm, and of its analogues such as paint on the palette or in the tube, therefore renders it female. Fluid is usually conceived of as a continuum: 'a hypothetical continuous substance'.[89] It is indiscrete. Patriarchy privileges symbolization that 'grants *precedence to solids*'.[90] It harbours fantasies of firm contours and fixity. These are catered for by paint when it dries.

During the creative process artists of either gender, however, must confront the feminine as it is manifested through the fluid medium of paint, molten bronze, wet plaster, or other similar media. At the moment art-historical writing is too insensitive to the psychic value of (un)certain materials. Michelangelo's preference for fresco can, in part, be explained by how quickly it ossifies. Oil paint remains sticky for some time after its application. It is a slimy, 'aberrant fluid'.[91] It takes longer to get hard. Once paint or those other media that metamorphose from liquid to solid states are rigid, however, they can become representative of a triumph over the feminine. The act of art-making has the potential to 'fix' anxiety-inducing materials.

In existing scholarship that has acknowledged the issue of gendered materials the feminine aspect of paint has been largely ignored. It is usually only the canvas that is coded as female. Griselda Pollock, for example, argues that the legacy of the sexual hierarchy of the male artist and the female model pictured in Brassai's photograph of *Henri Matisse in his Studio* (undated) is carried over into pictorial practices such as that of Jackson Pollock, in which 'the potency and activity of the masculine body now directly [masters] the supine feminine space of the canvas, patterning that surface, that imaginary body, with his inscriptions'.[92] In this reading paint is gendered as masculine and linen as feminine. The canvas represents a troubling lack that must be covered over. This ignores Pollock's relationship with the substance of the paint in its fluid state. His aggressive handling can be explained as a response to anxiety about touching such a viscous medium. The 'metaphorics of masculinity', which T. J. Clark perceives as characterizing abstract expressionist facture, are symptomatic of an aggressive dislike for wet paint, for the womanly within pigment.[93]

The artist's identification of the canvas with the feminine has been given a contemporary twist by Jack Vettriano, whose *Scarlet Ribbons, Lovely Ribbons* depicts a woman tied to a paint-spattered easel (plate 8). In this original composition, Vettriano presents us with a woman in place of a painting. She literally stands in the stead of canvas. The ribbons that tie her to the easel can be interpreted as metaphors for the role of paint itself: a material designed, in figurative painting at least, to secure a likeness, to fix an image for all time. This is indeed what has occurred in *Scarlet Ribbons, Lovely Ribbons*.[94] It is a work which can be understood to reflect the process of painting, to provide a metaphor for the painter's practice. The ties that bind the woman to the easel are composed of pigment that has itself become affixed to canvas, that is now dried and secure. It can also be understood, however, to refer to the fact that it is through the solidification of paint that the feminine within pigment itself is seen to be mastered. In patriarchy the desire is to see paint 'dry'.

8 Jack Vettriano, *Scarlet Ribbons, Lovely Ribbons*, 1996. Oil on canvas, 15 × 12 in. Private Collection. Photo: © Jack Vettriano, courtesy of the artist (www.jackvettriano.com).

The metaphorics that Clark and Pollock recognize to be at work in some exponents of abstract expressionism, and which are given an updated outing by Vettriano, can produce a disturbing hostility. Artists such as Pollock (popularly referred to as 'Jack the Dripper') and Willem de Kooning (whose 'Women series' is manufactured out of a particularly macho impasto) handle fluid paint with an overt aggression. When coupled with this quality, the gendering of the canvas as feminine leads the application of paint to signal a form of hostility towards women, even when the subject matter is entirely abstract as in Pollock's drip paintings. This violence against women, part of the historical cultures to which these artists belonged, is enacted through technique. Susan Brownmiller has written that 'the theory of aggressive male domination over women as a natural right is so deeply embedded in our cultural value system that all recent attempts to expose it ... have barely managed to scratch the surface.'[95] This exposure has indeed too seldom been applied in art history to the meanings of paint as surface.

RESISTING AN EITHER/OR

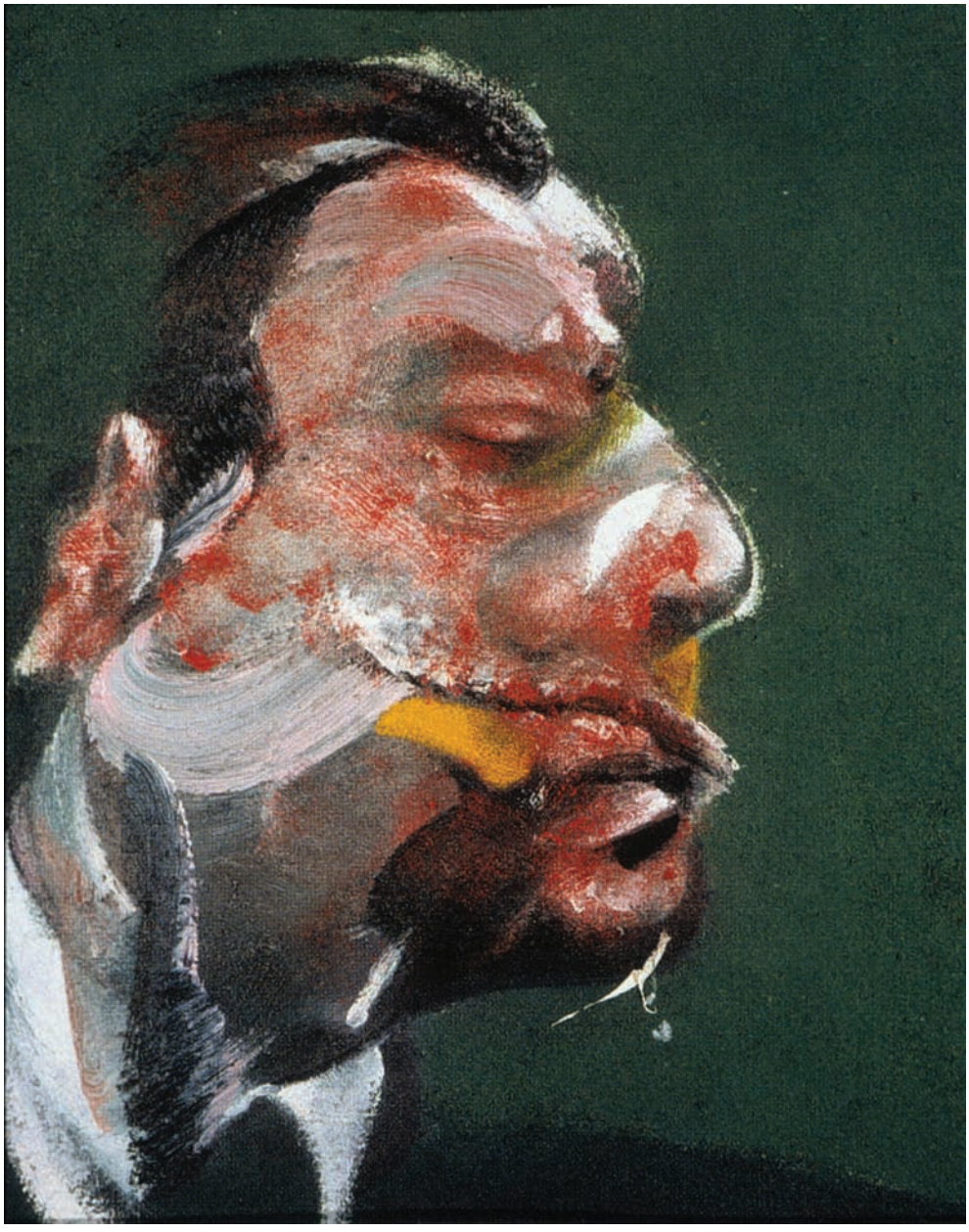
The aggressive masculinity favoured by many proponents of abstract expressionism was not espoused by all artists. Some members of the second generation

of the New York school practised very different techniques. Helen Frankenthaler, for instance, through her slower, more intimate, technique of staining canvases caused an 'uneven saturation' of colour to occur.[96] Frankenthaler diluted her pigment to the consistency of a wash causing her acrylics to bear similarities to watercolours. The artist also sometimes worked with watercolour. The uneven colouring of the canvases created both an emphasis on surface and a representation of depth. Alison Rowley perceives the works as creating 'a seeing of depth, an illusion of space triggered by the flat, dyed material, but *differentiated* surface: a surface maximizing the potential of coloured paint as *differance*, as the space of movement between the proximity of surface and distance as illusion of depth'.[97] This *differance* or neither/norism, a perpetual oscillation between surface and depth in Frankenthaler's works, 'holds in balance a space between surface and depth which is neither a falling into the undifferentiated, a collapse into the inscription of femininity as a claustrophobic engulfment in tactile surface qualities, nor a distance so great as to deny the possibility, the pleasure, of a tactile involvement.'[98] Rowley therefore sees Frankenthaler's work as forming a hinge between proximity and distance, between touch and vision, between femininity and masculinity.[99]

Frankenthaler's practice demonstrates that it is possible to operate with a technique that refuses to be fixed as either masculine or feminine, and cannot be readily resolved as a particular gendering. A similar argument has been made about the handling demonstrated by Jasper Johns. As part of an analysis of Johns' *Flag* (1954), Fred Orton reads the range of adjectives associated with the artist's touch by critics 'as not securely gendered as masculine'.[100] The artist's technique is one that is 'caressing and gentle; concerned; controlled; elegant; delicate and refined; fastidious; fluent; patient; intimate; most personal; sensual and sensuous, beloved and loving, of and affecting that feeling of attachment that is based on sex'.[101] The handling and touch 'may have been seen and written as veering towards the feminine, but its finesse and refinement prevented it from being compromised and written as that'.[102] The critics employed a language of sexual difference to write about Johns' technique but could not resolve it into 'either a masculine or a feminine handling and touching'.[103] Orton reads this as a reaction to the character and technique of the first generation of New York school painters. Johns makes something that differs from the works of that generation, which goes against abstract expressionism, with its 'machismotifics'.[104] The artist seems to be striving to work with and against a form of masculinity through his technique, in an effort to mark 'a space for the situation of another identity'.[105]

For Orton, this other identity is a gay identity. Orton argues that Johns' touch provides 'an allegory of homosexuality made at a moment when there was no space available in avant-garde practice for its self-representation or identification'.[106] Gavin Butt also contends that Johns' 'painterly handling evinces a kind of ''queer touch'', one which works at the limit point of the heterosexist constructions of gender difference purveyed within the languages of 1950s painting'.[107]

Johns' technique is similar to Frankenthaler's in the undecidability it engenders about the sexing of technique. The motivations may differ but the effect of irresolution is the same. Both the artists refuse to privilege methods of making art that connote either masculinity or femininity. A greater emphasis within art history on analysing artistic media and techniques in gender terms



9 Francis Bacon, *Study for Head of George Dyer, 1967*, 1967. Oil on canvas, 35.5 × 30.5 cm. Private Collection. Photo: © The Estate of Francis Bacon, all rights reserved. DACS 2009.

would undoubtedly reveal more instances of such a resistance to the either/or logic of gendering. I suggest, for example, that Francis Bacon's technique can be understood to operate in a similar way to that of Johns.

Bacon's impasto smears in portraits such as *Study for Head of George Dyer, 1967*, invite in their thick intensity coding as aggressive in the same way as many of De Kooning's and Pollock's works (plate 9). Bacon, however, also liked to abandon the brush – Renoir's 'prick' – and apply paint using other means. He would often squeeze paint onto the door or walls of his studio and then press fabric into the pigment, which he would then print the canvas with. A number of pairs of corduroy trousers were found in his studio that carried traces of this activity. He also found 'cashmere sweaters, ribbed socks, cotton flannels, even towelling dressing gowns all served his purpose'.[108] Quantities of red paint in *Study for Head of George Dyer, 1967* appear to have been impressed on the canvas by textile. The technique of using fabric is also visible in the centre panel of *Three Studies for Portrait of Henrietta Moraes* (1969, private collection).

Bacon's varied handling has been recognized for some time, but has not yet, to my knowledge, been interpreted as a means of articulating sexual difference. The fine patterning of colour created by applying paint by way of fabric, however, contrasts markedly with the thick strokes of paint that parallel it. The delicate traces of colour left by pigment-soaked textiles connote intimacy, whereas the swift smears of thick paint come across as more aloof. The masculinity of the abstract expressionist, their painterly aggression, manifested itself by way of a brief yet brutal interaction with the canvas. Paint was usually flung and daubed from a distance and with speed. The fabricant of *Study for Head of George Dyer, 1967*, however, carefully pressed an expanse of corduroy against canvas in an act of conjoining that brought the hand of the painter close to the 'skin' of the canvas, the threads of the linen. In the paintings by Bacon that make use of textiles to enhance their tactile effects there seem to be two different registers of handling at work. Those touches that involve the use of fabric can be gendered as feminine. Those that make use of impasto, however, denote masculinity. Bacon's facture possesses in the oscillation of variant touches such as these a similar quality of neither/norism to Johns'.

Bacon also disrupts the masculine metaphorics of much avant-garde art through parody. The gobs of paint that Bacon was known to lob onto his paintings in their final stages, an example of which can be seen below Dyer's chin in *Study for Head of George Dyer, 1967*, were, he claimed, efforts to cultivate chance effects in his works. In an interview with David Sylvester, Bacon suggests that by throwing paint he hopes to exploit its extraordinary suppleness as a medium; he enjoys the fact that an artist can never 'quite know what paint will do'.[109] In the section of the interview devoted to chance, Bacon also twice endeavours to distance himself from abstract expressionism, which he regards as undisciplined.[110] It is noteworthy that abstract expressionism is on Bacon's mind when he discusses chance. Not I think simply because he is loathe to let his paintings look like them, although the chance blobs and spatters of paint necessarily bear some resemblance to Pollock's drips. I suggest the thick globs of pigment Bacon threw onto his paintings amount to an exaggeration of the aggressive techniques of the abstract expressionists. It is an exaggeration that makes the underlying masculinity of abstract expressionist technique overtly obvious. The thrown paint

frequently looks like ejaculate. This is powerfully the case in a work like *Triptych* (1976), where this similarity is exploited deliberately. In the left panel of the triptych there are two thick blobs of white paint. The sheer quantity of pigment has caused oil to bleed outwards into the light green ground forming dark circles. The effect resembles ejaculate as it seeps into a bed-sheet.[111] The contingent globs of paint that Bacon throws onto his painting represent a hyperbolic performance of abstract expressionist technique, a parodic enactment of its masculinist values paraded as dirty laundry. If maleness is to be equated with aggression, then Bacon shows that he can out-male Pollock and his ilk.

Bacon, as I have argued, is also fully capable of adopting a feminine touch when it suits him. The variety of techniques in his works allows them to resist a straightforward embodiment of sexual identity. In this they are similar to those of Johns. It is only through a historical understanding of the gendering of paint and forms of handling it, that readings that can engage with and reveal these meanings becomes possible. At present art history is not sufficiently willing to entertain discussion of such potential relationships between gender and technique in the art of the past.

We also need more investigation into how the particular gendering of mediums and techniques originate and are maintained and into how they have worked to structure the artistic canon. In *The Subversive Stitch*, Rozsika Parker explores how embroidery has become 'indelibly associated with femininity' and has therefore fallen off the page of art history.[112] She does not, however, consider how thread has actually come to be gendered in this way. Thread always threatens to become unfixed, to unravel, to emasculate.[113] Parker argues that the 'art/craft hierarchy suggests that art made with thread and art made with paint are intrinsically unequal: that the former is less significant. But the real differences between the two are in terms of *where* they are made and who *makes* them.'[114] This misses the point. Both media are equally significant but one – paint – transcends its femininity in the act of drying. The other, however, whilst its femininity is held in check as weave, always threatens to unmake itself. The real anxieties that exist about *what* a work is made of need to be investigated.

Whilst disquiet about fluidity and loss of fixity persist, whilst patriarchy still exerts a hold over the 'matter' of art history, certain forms of art-making will always risk being overlooked. This includes some made possible by very recent technological advances. Sadie Plant has written of digital fabrications, such as computer generated art, as extensions of textile art.[115] She suggests that 'the sampled sounds, processed words, and digitized images of multimedia reconnect all the arts with the tactility of woven fabrications.'[116] The rootedness of contemporary art-making technologies in textiles, which Plant feels privilege tactility, helps to explain why there is still a strong tendency to disdain or overlook works created in these new media. Plant connects such works with art made with thread. She writes of the latter's producers that they are 'written out of an official history which draws them in only as its minor footnotes to itself, cloths, weavers, and their skills turn out to be far in advance of the art forms digitization supersedes'.[117] The digital as today's textile art currently risks being treated as inferior, as relegated to the margins of art-historical writing, because weaving is still gendered as feminine and the feminine is perceived as anxiety-generating and inferior within patriarchy. Until relationships of this kind

between gender and medium are properly acknowledged and examined oversights and inequalities within art history will persist. The reluctance of art historiography to confront this issue may, perhaps, be traced to an added anxiety about revealing history's own embroidered status. It is itself lacking in fixity. 'History is a yarn.'[118]

Notes

I would like to thank Dana Arnold, Eckart Marchand, Angela Mortimer, and *Art History*'s anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and criticisms of earlier drafts of this chapter. I would also like to acknowledge the generous support of the Leverhulme Trust for my research on aspects of this topic.

1 Frances Heidensohn, *Women in Control?*, Oxford, 1992, 12.

2 The Aurignacian period is dated roughly as 32,000–26,000 BCE and the Upper Palaeolithic in its entirety as occurring 40,000–10,000 BCE.

3 Desmond Collins and John Onians, 'The origins of art', *Art History*, 1: 1, 1978, 15. I am indebted to Olivia Horsfall Turner, Maria Mileeva, Marion Richards and Patricia Rubin for our discussions around the possible interpretations that can be offered for prehistoric figurines.

4 Collins' and Onians' decision to focus on the origins of figurative rather than abstract imagery allows the origins of 'art' to be securely located in what is now called Europe. If the article had explored abstract work instead, then the earliest imagery, dating from 77,000 years ago, has been found in the cave of Blombos in the southern Cape of South Africa. It is 'a piece of ochre, carefully engraved with crosses with a central and a containing line'. See David Lewis-Williams, *The Mind in the Cave*, London, 2002, 98.

5 Collins and Onians, 'The origins of art', 12–13.

6 Collins and Onians, 'The origins of art', 13.

7 Collins and Onians, 'The origins of art', 14.

8 Collins and Onians, 'The origins of art', 17.

9 Collins and Onians, 'The origins of art', 17.

10 Even if nakedness is taken to suggest eroticism at the time, Collins and Onians do not take account of the fact that the body's erogenous zones are not set in stone but are historically contingent. The Venus of Willendorf, for instance, may have been given hands because hands were considered alluring in prehistory. As Carolyn Steedman discusses, as recently as the late eighteenth century 'the hand mattered in ways that have now disappeared from our own erotic register'. See Steedman, *Master and Servant: Love and Labour in the English Industrial Age*, Cambridge, 2007, 45.

11 Sarah M. Nelson, 'Diversity of the Upper Palaeolithic "Venus" figurines and archaeological mythology', in Caroline B. Brettell and Carolyn F. Sargent, eds, *Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, New Jersey, 1993.

12 Catherine Hodge McCoid and LeRoy D. McDermott, 'Toward decolonizing gender: female vision in the Upper Palaeolithic', *American Anthropologist*, 98, 2, 1996, 319–26, esp. 319.

13 McCoid and McDermott, 'Toward decolonizing gender', 323.

14 The stone 'vulvas' may actually be carvings of entoptic phenomena. Navicular entoptic forms can, by way of our retrospective projections, be seen to resemble the vulva.

15 Collins and Onians, 'The origins of art', 12.

16 Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice*, London, 2000, 163.

17 For Gimbutas, Old Europe occupies an area that 'extends from the Aegean and Adriatic, including the islands, as far north as Czechoslovakia, southern Poland and the western Ukraine'. Marija Gimbutas, *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe: Myths and Cult Images*, London, 1982, 17.

18 Gimbutas, *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*, 195.

19 Gimbutas is not referring here to the Venus of Willendorf which she does not believe represents a pregnant woman. Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, New York, 2001, 141.

20 Lucy Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, New York, 1983, 62.

21 Lippard, *Overlay*, 41.

22 Lynn Meskell, 'Goddesses, Gimbutas and "new age" archaeology', *Antiquity*, 69, 1995, 74–86, esp. 75.

23 Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Baltimore, 1978, 43.

24 Theresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, Bloomington, 1987, 2.

25 Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study of Ideal Art*, London, 1956, 64.

26 Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Bloomington, IN, 1994, 98.

27 Whether the two photographs are of the same hand is uncertain. The first, dirty hand has no jewellery whereas the second, dirt-free, wears two rings. The presence of jewellery implies the second hand could be feminine whereas the size of the first is suggestive of that of a male. The images are open to being interpreted as active/passive, one holding and the other resting. The implied message is that the male archaeologist is willing to get his hands dirty manning the trenches whilst the female archaeologist is only fit to cradle the fruits of his manual labour.

28 Douglass Bailey, *Prehistoric Figurines: Representation and Corporeality in the Neolithic*, London, 2005, 40.

29 Bailey, *Prehistoric Figurines*, 40.

30 Bailey also appears to operate with a reductive notion of seeing. The eye cannot see in several ways simultaneously, so an object cannot be comprehended instantaneously. Eyes cannot glance and contemplate, scan and focus, concurrently. In similar fashion the eye cannot see both the rabbit and the duck in the trick drawing Ernst Gombrich discusses in *Art and Illusion*. Gombrich writes that 'we can switch from one reading to another with increasing rapidity' but 'we cannot experience alternative readings at the same time'. See Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, London, 1962, 4–5.

31 Luce Irigaray, *This Sex which is Not One*, trans. C. Porter, Ithaca, NY, 1985, 31.

32 Irigaray, *This Sex which is Not One*, 26.

33 In this context the modern desire, the fetish, for long, manicured nails on a woman, for example, can be understood as a means by which to counteract the loss of secure markers of sexual difference that attends touch. The fine, sliding, teasing, tingling touch of a woman's manicured nails or their sharp dig, graze and scratch can come to represent reassuring tactile signals of difference against a lover's skin.

34 The scholarship on the topic is voluminous and the list that follows can only give a flavour of it. The earliest scholarly account of Caravaggio to imply that the artist's paintings could be interpreted as exemplars of his 'homosexuality' appears to be Roger Hinks's *Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio*, London, 1953. Hinks discusses Caravaggio's relief at turning from the 'unsatisfying experiment' of *St Francis in Ecstasy* (Hartford, Wadsworth Athaneum, *c.* 1595) to the 'alluring youths' of *Una Musica* (New York, Metropolitan Museum, *c.* 1595) who are clad in 'inappropriate draperies' (45). Another key early consideration is Donald Posner's essay, 'Caravaggio's homo-erotic early works', *Art Quarterly*, 34, 1971, 301–24. Howard Hibbard provides a nuanced reading in *Caravaggio*. Hibbard tracks Caravaggio's potential homosexual identification with his namesake Michelangelo through the artist's use of the Sistine *ignudi* as sources of inspiration. See Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, London, 1983, 151–60. More recently Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit discuss Caravaggio's desire to 'give head' for the spectator in *Caravaggio's Secrets* but ultimately refuse to ascribe a specific sexual identity to the artist. See Bersani and Dutoit, *Caravaggio's Secrets*, Cambridge, MA, 1998. Though not works of art history in the conventional sense, both Derek Jarman's film *Caravaggio* (UK, 1986) and Peter Robb's novel *M* have contributed significantly to the construction of Caravaggio as a homosexual artist. See Peter Robb, *M*, London, 1998. I am grateful to Simon Lee for drawing my attention to this last text.

35 All emphases are present in the originals unless otherwise stated. Adrian Rifkin, 'Inventing recollection', in Paul Bowman, ed., *Interrogating Cultural Studies: Theory, Politics and Practice*, London, 2003, 101–24, esp. 122.

36 Adrian Rifkin, however, is far from concerned by the visual similarities between Caravaggio's and Preti's works, seeing them as enabling in that they permit both the emergence of a critique of existing criticism about Caravaggio as homosexual 'figure' and an expansion of queer theory's potential. A queering of Preti, as against Caravaggio, permits a radical interrogation of desire itself. See Adrian Rifkin, 'Waiting and seeing', *Journal of Visual Culture*, 2: 3, 2003, 325–39.

37 Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley, London, 1990, 43.

38 Howard Hibbard, *Michelangelo*, London, 1978, 232.

39 Hibbard, *Michelangelo*, 233.

40 Hibbard, *Michelangelo*, 231.

41 James M. Saslow, '"A veil of ice between my heart and the fire": Michelangelo's sexual identity and early modern constructs of homosexuality', in Wayne R. Dynes and Stephen Donaldson, eds, *Studies in Homosexuality*, New York, 1992, 135–48, esp. 136.

42 Saslow, '"A veil of ice between my heart and the fire"', 138.

43 Saslow, '"A veil of ice between my heart and the fire"', 144.

44 Saslow, '"A veil of ice between my heart and the fire"', 139.

45 Saslow, '"A veil of ice between my heart and the fire"', 141–3.

46 Saslow, '"A veil of ice between my heart and the fire"', 143.

47 Adrian Stokes, *Michelangelo*, London, 2002, 153.

48 Anthony Hughes, *Michelangelo*, London, 1997, 327.

49 Hughes, *Michelangelo*, 327.

50 Hibbard, *Michelangelo*, 128–9.

51 Hibbard, *Michelangelo*, 129.

52 Joanna Frueh, *Monster Beauty: Building the Body of Love*, Berkeley, CA, 2001.

53 Hughes, *Michelangelo*, 327.

54 Hughes, *Michelangelo*, 327–8.

55 Charles De Tolnay, for instance, emphasizes how Michelangelo took account of the viewing distance when designing the sibyls. See De Tolnay, *Michelangelo Volume 2: The Sistine Ceiling*, Princeton, NJ, 1945, 62.

56 Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948–1963*, Durham, NC, 2005, 62.

57 David Peters Corbett, *The World in Paint: Modern Art and Visuality in England, 1848–1914*, Manchester, 2004, 259.

58 Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects: Volume 3*, trans. A. B. Hinds, London, 1963, 119. Michelangelo's views on the gendering of oil help explain the comment attributed to him by Francisco de Hollanda that works by Flemish artists 'will appeal to women'. See Hollanda, *Four Dialogues on Painting*, Oxford, 1928, 15–16. Oil was a medium commonly employed in Flanders. Michelangelo appears to be saying that Flemish art is made by 'women' for 'women'. This demonstrates how the meaning of a given medium is always overdetermined. In this instance regional rivalries are being played out alongside and through the gendering of substance. For a discussion of the authenticity of Hollanda's dialogues, see Clare Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale: Alessandro Farnese*, New Haven, CT, 1992, 237.

59 Greg Smith, *The Emergence of the Professional Watercolourist: Contentions and Alliances in the Artistic Domain, 1760–1824*, Aldershot, 2002, 34.

60 Quoted in Smith, *The Emergence of the Professional Watercolourist*, 34.

61 Quoted in Hughes, *Michelangelo*, 132.

62 I am grateful to Alison Wright for our discussion about the significance of the artist's pose in this painting.

63 Mary D. Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, Princeton, NJ, 1989, 337–70.

64 Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 358.

65 Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 358.

66 Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 358.

67 Mary D. Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi around 1622*, Berkeley, CA, 2001, 68–70.

68 See, for example, the resting figure in Rembrandt's *Painter in his Studio* (*c.* 1629) or Velázquez, poised to paint, in *Las Meninas* (1656). The deliberate underplaying of the physicality of picture-making in many seventeenth-century portraits is symptomatic of a desire to emphasize the intellectual aspect of painting, to represent painting not as a menial craft but as elevated idea, as art.

69 Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, London, 1981, 27.

70 Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 354.

71 Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 354.

72 Watercolour became established as a respectable medium for art-making in England because concerns about the gender of the technique were overridden by pride in national identity. Watercolour became celebrated as a particularly English medium, one to be contrasted with the French preference for works in oil.

73 Kay Dian Kriz, *The Idea of the English Landscape Painter: Genius as Alibi in the Early Nineteenth Century*, New Haven, CT, 1997, 46. For further discussion of the way particular forms of handling became associated with a certain class of society in art criticism of the time see Sam Smiles, '"Splashers", "scrawlers" and "plasterers": British landscape painting and the language of criticism, 1800–40', *Turner Studies*, 10, 1, 1990, 5–11, esp. 5–6.

74 See, for instance, Kriz's discussion of scraping in Turner's *The Upper Falls of the Reichenbach: Rainbow* (*c.* 1810). Kriz, *The Idea of the English Landscape Painter*, 109.

75 David Hill, *Thomas Girtin: Genius in the North*, Leeds, 1999, 24.

76 Hill, *Thomas Girtin*, 24.

77 T. J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, London, 1973, 12.

78 Smith, *The Emergence of the Professional Watercolourist*, 38.

79 Quoted in Smith, *The Emergence of the Professional Watercolourist*, 38.

80 Quoted in Smith, *The Emergence of the Professional Watercolourist*, 38.

81 See the first chapter of Smith's *The Emergence of the Professional Watercolourist* for a discussion of the media hierarchy of the time, 13–51.

82 T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, Princeton, NJ, 1984, 13.

83 Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, 13.

84 Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, 14.

85 Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude*, London, 1992, 56. The analogy between penis and paintbrush was more recently made in *Internal Affairs* (Dir. Mike Figgis, 1990, USA). There is a scene in this film in which the wife of the main character praises her husband for being 'a good painter' and reassures him that his 'brush' is fine during a discussion of their sex life.

86 Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 83.

87 Vincent Van Gogh, *The Complete Letters of Vincent Van Gogh: Volume 3*, New York, 1959, 509.

88 Nead, *The Female Nude*, 56.

89 John F. Douglas, Janusz M. Gasiorek and John A. Swaffield, *Fluid Mechanics*, Fourth Edition, Harlow, 2001, 9.

90 Irigaray, *This Sex which is Not One*, 110.

91 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, London, 1989, 607.

92 Griselda Pollock, 'Painting, feminism, history', in Michèle Barrett and Anne Phillips, eds, *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*, Cambridge, 1992, 142.

93 T. J. Clark, 'Jackson Pollock's abstraction', in Serge Guilbaut, ed., *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris and Montreal 1945–1964*, Cambridge, MA, 1992, 229.

94 At some stage Vettriano most probably positioned a model in the pose depicted and then photographed her before going on to create this painting. For a discussion of Jack Vettriano's working practices, see Jack Vettriano, *Studio Life*, London, 2008, 26–35.

95 Susan Brownmiller, *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, New York, 1975, 389.

96 Alison Rowley, 'On viewing three paintings by Jenny Saville', in Griselda Pollock, ed., *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*, London, 1996, 101.

97 Rowley, 'On viewing three paintings by Jenny Saville', 101.

98 Rowley, 'On viewing three paintings by Jenny Saville', 101.

99 Griselda Pollock offers a different reading of the technique of staining and soaking, suggesting that it is 'useful to view [them] through the prism of sexual difference' but that doing so reveals how they function to create a site through which to communicate the 'feminine dimension of loss and separation' that characterizes 'the loss of the maternal body'. See Pollock, 'Killing men and dying women', in Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, eds, *Avant-gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, Manchester, 1996, 258.

100 Fred Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, London, 1994, 120.

101 Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, 120.

102 Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, 124.

103 Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, 124.

104 Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, 123.

105 Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, 124.

106 Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, 124.

107 Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me*, 71.

108 Margarita Cappock, *Francis Bacon's Studio*, London, 2005, 208.

109 David Sylvester, *Interviews with Francis Bacon*, London, 1993, 93.

110 Sylvester, *Interviews with Francis Bacon*, 92–4.

111 See, for example, Nan Goldin's photograph of *Brian B after coming* (1983) which is reproduced in Nan Goldin and David Armstrong, *A Double Life*, New York, 1994, 88.

112 Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, London, 1984, 2.

113 This capacity for reversion to a 'fluid' state helps to explain why artworks in wax have not been accorded great status within histories of art. See Georges Didi-Huberman, 'Viscosities and survivals: art history put to the test by material', in Roberta Panzanelli, ed., *Ephemeral Bodies: Wax Sculpture and the Human Figure*, Los Angeles, CA, 2008, 154–69.

114 Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, 5.

115 See Sadie Plant, *Zeros and Ones*, London, 1998, 189–90.

116 Plant, *Zeros and Ones*, 185.

117 Plant, *Zeros and Ones*, 190.

118 Graham Swift, *Waterland*, London, 1992, 68.

3

PHENOMENOLOGY AND INTERPRETATION BEYOND THE FLESH

AMANDA BOETZKES

The ethical quandaries surrounding issues of subjectivity and the interpretation of art often revolve around the questions of who is representing, who is represented, and who is looking; and around how these dynamics produce and reproduce visual systems of power on the basis of gender, race, and libidinal desire. On a slightly different trajectory, phenomenology interrogates how we interpret in the first place. Though it presumes that the artwork and the spectator situate one another within a shared network of sense, this is not to say that information is easily communicated between them. The viewer's task is not to ascertain the artwork's objective meaning, but rather to respond to the artwork with the question, 'how does this artwork mean to me?' The ethical charge of this questioning lies in its acknowledgement that the meaning of the artwork is not inherent but rather presents itself to the spectator, historian, or critic through the body's actions, reactions or non-actions. Meaning may be either enabled or encumbered by the viewer's response to the artwork.

In this way a phenomenological approach to writing art history usually entails an analysis of how an artwork's meaning presents itself through the spectator's field of perception. It is predicated on an understanding of the meaning of the work of art as co-extensive with – as defining and defined by – the spatial, temporal and material conditions it shares with the viewer. What is often at stake in a phenomenological interpretation is the issue of how the artwork brings these conditions to attention. The most significant contribution of phenomenology, however, is not simply that it raises questions about this embodied experience of art, but that it calls both the body itself and the meaning of the artwork into question through one another. Otherwise put, a phenomenological standpoint presumes that the work of art and the viewer are enmeshed in a contingent encounter, in which 'embodiment' is neither a natural or predetermined position from which to interpret, nor is the meaning of the artwork inherent to the object. Phenomenology has thus served as a counterpoint to art-historical analyses that explain the meaning of an artwork through deference to the historic context (or socio-political framework) from which it emerged. That is to say, it challenges the presumption that the artwork's meaning is confined to its historic period, as well as the presumed stability of a given context. This is not to suggest that phenomenology ignores the ideological apparatuses at work in artistic production and reception. On the contrary, it addresses them in the most

trenchant way by investigating how structures of language and power materialize in the artwork, the spectator, and the relationship between. In this way, it asserts that the materiality of the artwork, and the way in which it presents itself to the viewer, actually constitutes what we understand to be 'historic context'.

Insofar as phenomenology takes the relation between the viewer and the artwork to be variable, it foregrounds the fact that the writing of art history, and particularly making claims about the meaning of the artwork, takes place through acts of interpretation. While it may seem that this would invite a kind of relativism – as though as many meanings could be 'applied' to an artwork as people to 'read into' it – in fact the real risk is not that phenomenology might invoke a plurality of meanings, but, quite the opposite, that it might permit a solipsistic interpretation that would close down the potential meanings of the artwork. That is to say, the main concern is that the historian's reading of the artwork cloaks it in a narrative that affirms her or his preconceived judgement of it, thus limiting the possibilities and power of its meaning.

The spectre of solipsism is not merely present in the discipline of art history, but appears to have haunted phenomenology since its inception. Indeed, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh, which is predicated on the entanglement of the subject with others and with things of the world, aimed to deflect various charges of solipsism. He insists: 'We are interrogating our experience precisely in order to know how it opens us to what is not ourselves.'[1] As I will discuss, the intertwinement with the other, or with the art object, forecloses a totalized knowledge of it. It does mean, however, that one is always privy to the object's invisibility, the way in which it defies categorization, judgement, and historical narration. The crucial issues for art historians in their deployment of phenomenology, then, are, firstly, how the embodied entanglement with the artwork reveals its resistance to preconceived meanings, and, secondly, how its taciturn quality gives rise to meanings beyond the restrictions of the interpreter's assumptions.

Perhaps it is precisely because phenomenology has had to contend with the charge of solipsism that it has also had to account for the ethical dilemmas of interpretation. Though a phenomenological approach in the wake of Merleau-Ponty often emphasizes the spectator's individual (because bodily) experience of the work of art, it nevertheless also posits this encounter as a precondition for an intimate awareness of the material object and a description of it that responds to its subtleties. It therefore positions the viewer in a state of extreme openness to the artwork that allegedly precedes any preconceived notions about it, and gives rise to the inevitable crystallization of sense into knowledge – be it an aesthetic judgement, historical categorization, or conceptual assessment. The phenomenology of art is located at the crossroads between a receptive mode of confrontation – one that is acutely aware of the way in which the artwork initially presents itself to the senses – and a commitment to making a critical statement about what and how the artwork means in the history of art now. Otherwise put, the writing of art history generates a disarticulation between the embodied experience of the object in its sensorial excess and the interpretation one brings to it. The ethical impetus of phenomenology is to reveal this disarticulation as it occurs.

In speaking about phenomenology as an approach to art history that is attentive to the artwork's alterity, I will focus on three areas in particular: embodiment, intentionality, and mode of confrontation. My goal is to show how each of these recurrent themes galvanizes the ethical questions of art-historical interpretation. I will examine post-1960s art, with particular focus on post-minimalist sculpture and the rise of installation art, as way of highlighting the stakes of a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology's influence in the discipline is more varied than I can undertake to explain in depth here.[2] This discussion aims to highlight its strengths and drawbacks, as well as point towards its convergences with other methods of art-historical inquiry.

THE PROBLEMATICS OF THE FLESH

Phenomenology is often associated with the notion of embodiment, and this is largely due to the considerable influence of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's writings. In the 1960s, that theorist's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) and *The Visible and the Invisible* (1959) had a profound impact on artists, critics, and art historians, particularly in the United States. Though since then other theorists of phenomenology have come to the foreground of the discipline, his work still poses a number of ethical challenges that are worthwhile considering further.[3]

Merleau-Ponty initiated a line of questioning on the *a priori* conditions of perception. He hypothesized that perception is founded on a pre-objective awareness of oneself as interwoven in a network of sense with other people, objects, and the world. Moreover, each of the body's senses, particularly the senses of touch and sight, inform one another to produce a coherent perception. His term 'the aesthesiological body' best captures this notion of a subject that is both physically embedded in the fabric of the surrounding world and wholly geared towards garnering sense from it with every facet of the body, in its every motion, gesture, and expression.

In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty deliberates on the issue of how and why one perceives the world and things as stable and coherent, despite one's mobility and infinitely shifting perspective. He puts forward a critique of Kantian transcendentalism, which argues that the perception of objects as constant results from our logical understanding of those objects. By contrast, Merleau-Ponty maintains that prior to any concept of the world, the body is engaged with it in a pre-logical encounter by which the subject comes to grips with objects as part of a wider system that constitutes the spatial and temporal environment. Because of this pre-cognitive multi-sensorial contact, the world has a unified appearance within the perceptual field. Among the most significant aspects of Merleau-Ponty's elaboration of the bodily experience are his insistence on the primacy of the sense of touch, and his emphasis on the active, expressive body. He argues that tactility gives the fullest articulation of the object's visual properties. From the sense of touch, which localizes an object in its environment, the other senses formulate an understanding of that object's implicit nature, including its colour and organization in relation to other things and one's own body. For this reason, perception is not achieved by senses that passively await stimulation from the external world, but rather is delivered through the movements, gestures and expressions of the body.

In *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty further developed his argument that perception arises from the body's intimate connection to the world. Through the metaphor of the chiasm he describes an intercorporeal relationship, whereby what we know of ourselves and others is generated by a sense of the body's flesh as intertwined with, what he calls, 'the flesh of the world'. The ontology of the flesh, however, elucidates more than a physical connection with the external world. The figure of the chiasm has both bodily and linguistic connotations. Derived from the Greek letter 'chi' (X), it implies a criss-crossing structure, as is found, for example, in the optic chiasm, the point in the brain where the optic nerves from the right visual field cross to the left side of the brain and vice versa. In rhetoric, a chiasmus is a figure of speech involving two clauses, in which the second clause inverts the order of words in the first, as in the phrase 'Fair is foul and foul is fair'. This structural intertwining and inversion is the basis of Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the constitutive relation between the body and language, between the subject and the other, between the seer and the visible, between the one who touches and the one who is touched. Perception does not come simply from seeing and touching; it is developed through the sense of being seen and touched as well. The subject of the aesthesiological body knows itself as both subject and object to another, is both seer and seen. These two domains of experience, the visible and the invisible, respectively, are the reverse and obverse sides of embodied perception. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty extends this model of reversibility to the relationship between the senses of vision and touch, postulating that the latent tangibility of the world is the condition of its visibility. Vision is founded on pre-cognitive touching, gesture and movement, and thus the look behaves like a hand that 'envelops, palpates and espouses visible things'.

For this reason, the term 'embodiment', as it appears in the history of post-minimalist sculpture, and more recently in that of installation and virtual art, is understood to refer to the spectator's state of quasi-immersion in the artwork. A phenomenological interpretation often assumes that the viewer is not merely physically located in relation to the artwork, but is actually incorporated by it, and formulated as a viewing subject through this corporeal relation. But even this description does not do justice to the more complex predicament of the chiasmic relation, for if it were merely the case that the artwork formulated the viewing subject, in the sense that it prefabricated how the viewer sees it, there would be no need for critical or historical interpretation. Perception would be reproduced from one viewer to the next. A phenomenological account of the artwork would merely describe how it 'enframes' the viewer (to borrow a phrase from Heidegger) as though art is merely a technological apparatus that anticipates and produces its own viewer.[4] In fact, Merleau-Ponty's fleshly ontology prevents us from understanding the relationship between art and the spectator in this way precisely because of his fundamentally ambiguous definition of the flesh.

Judith Butler astutely asks what exactly Merleau-Ponty means when he refers to the 'flesh', for this term is not to be taken as simply synonymous with the body *per se*.[5] It might be more accurate to say that the flesh is the shared corporeal condition between oneself and the world which makes visibility possible. Thus, corporeity is not limited to the individual body; it is the more generalized elemental state of the world. Merleau-Ponty writes: 'The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term ''element'', in

the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a *general thing*, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being. The flesh is in this sense an ''element'' of Being.'[6] Merleau-Ponty goes to great pains to expand his notion of perception from individual sense reception to a broader notion of the visible that evokes the body's touch, motility, and expression and coalesces it into a 'style of being'. He thus explains the discrete body's entrenchment in and communicability with the world at large.

Interestingly, this relation between the body and the world, between oneself and another, between vision and touch – a relation that Merleau-Ponty describes as 'reversibility' – comes to fruition in *The Visible and the Invisible* through an analogy to language and speech:

> As there is a reversibility of the seeing and the visible, and as at the point where the two metamorphoses cross what we call perception is born, so also there is a reversibility of the speech and what it signifies; the signification is what comes to seal, to close, to gather up the multiplicity of the physical, physiological, linguistic means of elocution, to contract them into one sole act, as the vision comes to complete the aesthesiological body.[7]

In this way, embodiment itself is not just a corporeal foundation, but is the prerequisite for thinking outside oneself and interacting with that which lies beyond the horizon of one's own being. There is thus a certain malleability to Merleau-Ponty's definition of the flesh that has led art historians away from the body as a topic (the question of how bodies are represented in art, for example) and toward questions about how the body functions as a locus of transaction; how discursive relations are incorporated; and, more strongly, how this process of incorporation in the visible (the relation between artwork, spectator, and the visible world) constitutes the trajectory of an artwork's meaning. The art historian's goal is therefore not to uncover an objective meaning, but to explain the work of art through reflection on the tenor of its appearance to her or him, and how this appearance positions her or him as a viewing subject.

A phenomenological description, however, is not meant to concretize this relation between viewer and object; rather, it enacts what Merleau-Ponty terms an interrogative mode, a way of following experience through a questioning of it without deducing a thesis or definition of Being (whether the artwork's or the spectator's) that could be realized as fact. Since phenomenology takes a prior ontological connection between the viewer and the object as a starting point, the goal is not to question the meaning of the object as a discrete entity. Instead, it is to ask what brings the subject and the object into relation, such that the question of their meaning to one another might be posed in the first place. In this respect, Butler argues, Merleau-Ponty concurs with Heidegger's insistence in *Being and Time* that the ontological relation that binds subject and object leads the path of questioning, and that it is in being guided by this interrogation that meaning is discovered.[8] Thus, when Merleau-Ponty declares that interrogation is an ontological organ that bears the ultimate relation to Being, he echoes Heidegger's statement that 'in what is asked about there lies also *that which is to be found out by the asking* [*das Efragte*] ... Inquiry, as a kind of seeking, must be guided beforehand by what is sought. So the meaning of Being must already be available to us in some way.'[9]

1 Robert Morris, *Untitled (L-beams)*, 1965. Stainless steel in 3 parts, dimensions variable. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art (gift of Howard and Jean Lipman). Photo: © Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Bearing in mind the primacy of the ontological connection between the subject and the object, we can understand phenomenology's influence in North America in minimalist and postminimalist art beginning in the 1960s. Michael Fried's condemnation of minimalist art as theatrical, for example, is at its basis an observation that the art objects were conceived and built with the express purpose of acknowledging the spectator's place in the space of exhibition. The artist Robert Morris thereby justifies this alleged 'theatricality' by claiming that there was a trend in post-war art to expose the process of production as part of the artwork itself, a move that revealed the ontological primacy of the subject–object relation. In positing the artwork as unformed, or at different stages in its formation, artists presented the artwork in a state prior to its emergence as a distinct object. They therefore positioned the basis of the artwork's meaning in the interaction between its raw materiality and the bodily behaviour of either the artist or the viewer. In his 1970 essay, 'Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making: The Search for the Motivated', Morris traces this tendency to Jackson Pollock, whom he sees as one of the first artists to attempt this surfacing of the interaction between materials and artistic process. The drip technique, he suggests, directly involved the use of the entire body as opposed to merely the hand and body. Pollock investigated how paint behaves within the restraints of gravity in such a way that the canvases divulge the possibilities of form that arise from the tension between the body's movement and the set of constraints imposed by the natural world and the materials. In this way, Morris concludes,

postwar art became engaged in making its means visible in the finished work. By 'means', he is referring to the 'factors of bodily possibility, the nature of materials and physical laws, the temporal dimensions of process and perception'.[10] He does not merely speak of a stable relation between the artwork and the body that views it, but makes the stronger contention that the artwork is predicated on the exploration of the limits and possibilities of bodily behaviour. To retrieve the artwork's meaning, then, would be to track this exploration.

In the same way that Morris emphasizes the bodily behaviours involved in the process of making the artwork, Rosalind Krauss underscores the bodily behaviours at stake in viewing it. Indeed, she argues that Morris's work thematizes the very gestures by which one perceives the world. In *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (1977) she suggests that Morris's *Untitled (L-beams)* is analogous to the human body (plate 1). For this work, Morris positioned three identical large plywood Ls in different positions relative to the ground; one upended, another on its side, and a third standing on its two ends. Though each is 'objectively' the same, the *a priori* structure of the beams is not visible. The appearance of their difference from one another is the basis of their sculptural meaning. Morris's work, she argues, addresses itself to the way in which our bodies and gestures are dependent on the other beings who perceive them. The L-beams 'serve as a kind of cognate for this naked dependence of intention and meaning upon the body as it surfaces into the world in every external particular of its movement and gestures'.[11] Morris uses phenomenology as a framework through which to understand a trend towards revealing the means of the artwork's production, and thus sees artistic meaning as rooted in the relation between the artist and the object. However, Krauss deploys it in order to disrupt the notion that the object possesses an inherent meaning (which is usually taken as the expression of, and an analogy for, the inner psychological life of the artist), and locates it instead in the relation between the art object and the viewer.

There are two important implications to this understanding of the artwork's contingency: first, it presents a model of interpretation that is based on the communication between viewer and object; and second, insofar as this communication is predicated on a shared language, it raises a dilemma concerning the point at which an object's expression may depart from a viewer's interpretation. Since the meaning of the artwork is activated in the encounter between object and viewer as two discrete entities, it is their separation from one another that sparks interrogation, gesture and movement in the first place. Merleau-Ponty writes: 'We understand then why we see the things themselves, in their places, where they are, according to their being . . . It is that the thickness of the flesh between the seer and the thing is constitutive for the thing of its visibility as for the seer of his corporeity; it is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication.'[12] Once again, it is significant that Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh, and particularly the embodied subject's interrogative mode of encounter with others and the world, operates under a linguistic model. As Butler argues, the relations to which the 'interconnective tissue', or flesh, give rise are parallel to a linguistic web in which the totality of language supersedes apparent differences.[13]

Butler's observation raises the question, if, as Heidegger suggests, one's interrogation of the world is already guided by it on the basis of one's ontological connection to it, does this not ultimately close down the possibility that the world (including the Other, and, as in this case, the art object) can express something

more than or different from what one already expects to perceive in any given encounter? In art history, does phenomenology prevent new meanings from arising in presuming to link the object and the viewer together in the condition of shared flesh? If the object invites a particular look, and a specific path of questioning, what allows the possibility of reading it differently? How can one ask new questions if all the answers are presupposed? Or, to modify the question, can a different look ever find its place in the chiasmic relation between the seer and the object?

Luce Irigaray criticizes Merleau-Ponty on precisely the grounds that the flesh ontology risks masking the alterity of the other and the subject from one another in the totality of the embodied relation. Irigaray argues that the model of the chiasm never delineates a recognizable distinction between oneself and the flesh of the world, so that the phenomenological subject exists in a state of primordial indeterminacy akin to being in the womb. Because Merleau-Ponty does not identify a point of birth and separation for the subject, the visible world becomes like the interior of the maternal body to which the subject has unencumbered tactile access. The subject never really sees what lies outside the sensory network of the flesh in which she or he is immersed, and therefore cannot see the other and the world from outside an egocentric position. The flesh is a totalizing structure that reaffirms the subject's centrality in the world through bodily perception. Perception occurs within a 'fog' or 'mist' of the seer's intentions, and the subject is thus incapable of a truly reciprocal exchange with the other. Irigaray maintains that this failure to recognize a process of differentiation results in a model of perception based on solipsism. All sensation becomes translated into 'Sameness', a visible world that merely fulfils one's perceptual expectations so that no true understanding of difference can register. She writes:

> The world cannot be perceived without language, yet all language exists virtually in silence. All that remains to be said is that the world is isomorphic with the subject and vice versa, and the whole is sealed up in a circle ... According to Merleau-Ponty, energy plays itself out in the backward-and-forward motion of a loom. But weaving the visible and my look in this way, I could just as well say that I close them off from myself. The texture becomes increasingly tight, taking me into it, sheltering me there but imprisoning me as well.[14]

Irigaray's assessment of the flesh ontology raises the doubt that there is ever an opportunity for the subject to perceive the alterity of the other and the world. Her focus is on how the intimacy of the chiasm both relies on metaphors of the feminine body, and at the same time disavows the specificity of that body. Thus, sexual difference is negated in order to reinforce male subjectivity as the default, central, and universal position of perception. This analysis is equally applicable to other differences; as post-colonial theorists have explained, differences such as race, religion and nationality are defined within a framework that supports and justifies the ideology of the colonizing empire. At its core, Irigaray's argument is that at the threshold of one's perceptual field all differences are inhibited or construed in such a way as to reinforce what the seer already knows about his or her place in the world. The seer is never really shaken, touched, or moved out of this solipsistic standpoint by that which does not fulfil the intention of his or her look. The act of seeing and the visible world are merely extensions of the seer.

Interestingly, Irigaray seizes Merleau-Ponty's idea of an interrogative mode, and indeed it becomes the basis of an ethical relation that would allow irreducible difference to register. For Irigaray, Merleau-Ponty does not fulfil the promise of this possibility, however. She argues that 'the phenomenology of the flesh that Merleau-Ponty attempts is without question(s). It has no spacing or interval for the freedom of questioning between two.'[15] What is required is a disruption of the system of signification that sublimates differences, an ethical imperative that is initiated for Irigaray by the paradigmatic questions: 'Who art thou? ... Who am I? What sort of event do we represent for each other when together?' The ethical relation, then, is one that both recognizes the co-implication of oneself with the other, and at the same time gives rise to a recognition of the other's excess beyond that co-implication.

THE INTENTIONAL EXPERIENCE AND EMBODIED ACTION

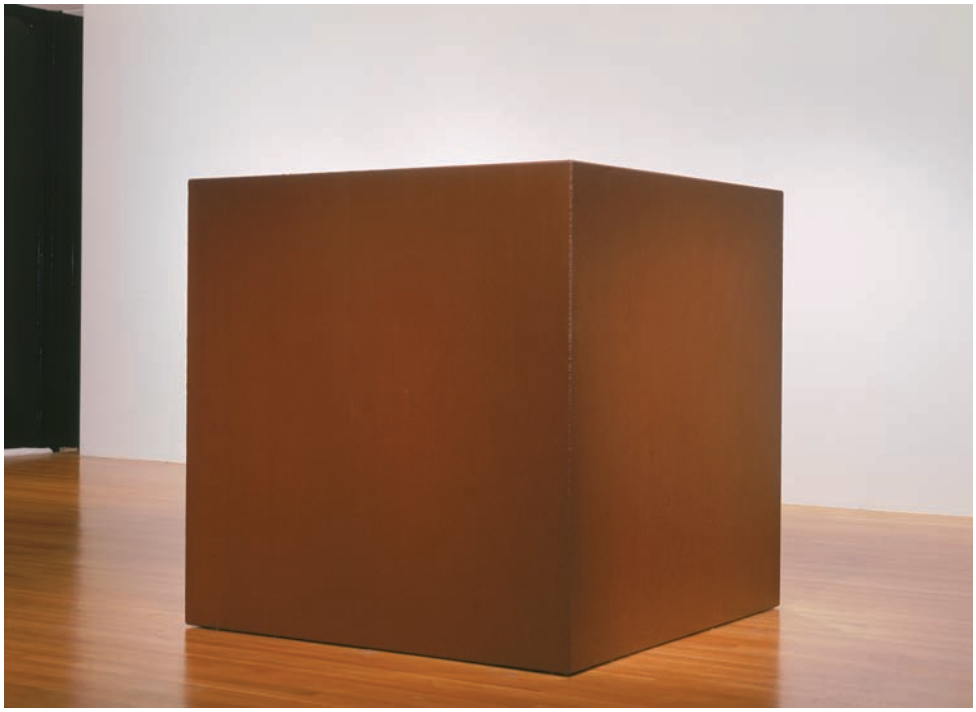
The ethics of phenomenological interpretation, it seems, comes to rest on the balance between the seer's intentionality and her or his return to the 'spacing or interval for the freedom of questioning between two'. To speak of intentionality is to raise a topic that has been at the heart of phenomenology since Husserl. It might therefore be useful to investigate the term, and its appearance in art history, in order to consider further the ethical terrain of phenomenological interpretation.

From his mentor, Franz von Brentano, Husserl inherited an interest in how objects appear through what Brentano called 'psychical acts'. Essentially, Brentano initiated a line of questioning into how objects are perceived through psychical phenomena such as judgements, emotions and presentations (by which he means the manner in which consciousness refers to an object). Husserl ultimately argues that there is no perception of objects without these psychical acts and he binds the two together under the term 'intentional experience'. He notes, 'There are ... not two things present in experience, we do not experience the object and beside it the intentional experience directed upon it, there are not even two things present in the sense of a part and a whole which contains it: only one thing is present, the intentional experience ... '[16]

Using an example that calls to mind Tony Smith's *Die* (plate 2), Husserl demonstrates not only the inextricability of the perceived object and the visual experience but also how intentional experience reveals the object as a stable entity. He writes:

> I see a thing, e.g. this box, but I do not see my sensations. I always see *one and the same box*, however it may be turned and tilted ... In the flux of experienced content we imagine ourselves to be in perceptual touch with one and the same object ... For we experience a 'consciousness of identity' ... Must we not reply that different sensational contents are given, but that we apperceive or 'take them in the same sense' and that *to take them in this sense is an experienced character through which the 'being' of the object for me is first constituted*.[17]

The intentional experience is at the core of perception; the presentation of the thing, in this case a box, constitutes its essence (being) for the seer. In other words, the subject's perception of the object reveals its essence. Cinching together the being of the thing with perception, Husserl turns attention away from empirical statements about the world and towards questions of how it appears.



2 Tony Smith, *Die*, 1962. Steel, 6 × 6 × 6 ft. New York: Museum of Modern Art. © Tony Smith (ARS). Photo: Museum of Modern Art, New York/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY.

In doing so, however, Husserl opens the possibility of an anthropomorphic world, in which things do not merely exist in and of themselves, but rather as things that present themselves quasi-consciously to the subject. In the case of the perception of a box, the sense of it comes as an experienced character, or a 'consciousness of identity'. When Michael Fried addresses Smith's *Die* in 'Art and Objecthood', he emphasizes how the object's theatricality stems from its anthropomorphism. At 6 feet high, the object stands at an imposingly human scale, a fact that shows how, in its very construction, the object acknowledges, and aims to interact with, the spectator who views it. As a stable object that is identical from every vantage point, *Die* overcomes any influx of sense that may come from moving around it. In this respect, it seemingly presents its 'being' as a cube to the viewer.

Yet in anticipating a viewer and addressing itself to her or him, *Die* demonstrates its own intentionality, reversing the relation so that it appears not simply as an object but as an 'other' who is experiencing, or at least responding to, the spectator. Through this shifting between its status as an object for the viewer and as an anthropomorphic object for whom the viewer is the object, *Die* implements an awareness of the reciprocity underlying the intentional experience. *Die*'s anthropomorphism brings the matter of reversibility to bear on intentionality. And it is the possibility of a reversible relation that Merleau-Ponty grapples with in his model of the chiasm, and which for Irigaray is the threshold to the domain of ethics.

For Merleau-Ponty, the intentional experience is mediated by the body, and not merely by psychical acts. Indeed, in his later work, he attempts to completely

relocate the intentional experience to the body and eschew notions such as 'acts of consciousness' or 'states of consciousness'.[18] Indeed, what is most relevant for Irigaray, despite her critique, is that Merleau-Ponty shows a striking awareness of the complexity of the meeting of two intentional perceivers. He describes the coupling of oneself with another in such a way that the subject is thrown out of the world she or he already knows, and returns to a state of exploration, not just of the other, but of oneself through the other. As soon as we see other seers, he explains:

> I appear to myself completely turned inside out under my own eyes ... For the first time, the body no longer couples itself up with the world, it clasps another body, applying [itself to it] carefully with its whole extension, forming tirelessly with its hands the strange statute which in its turn gives everything it receives; the body is lost outside of the world and its goals, fascinated, by the unique occupation of floating in Being with another life ... And henceforth movement, touch, vision, applying themselves to the other and to themselves, return toward their source and, in the patient and silent labor of desire, begin the paradox of expression.[19]

Much as Merleau-Ponty attempts to forestall the charge of solipsism in his elucidation of the embodied subject, Irigaray insists that in the very bodily gestures of expression, the subject ultimately fabricates the other through a projection of the intentional experience and ultimately re-establishes her or his own perception as primary. Thus, she posits that reversibility is in actual fact a sort of animism in which seeing and the visible, oneself and the other are merely two metamorphoses of oneself.[20] She suggests further that when the body and its expressions 'apply themselves', they are not seeking a reciprocal touch, but are reinforcing and repeating the relation that the subject already knows. And so, in Merleau-Ponty's many vivid examples of how touch elaborates vision and creates a passage to the world and others, a certain hierarchy is established through active gestures that ultimately cover over the other and the world: my hands form tirelessly; my body clasps the other's body; my eye envelops and palpates the world, and so forth.

The difficulty of bringing the intentional experience to bear on the embodied condition appears, then, in the conflation of actions that deliver tactile sense with those that seek a stable and defined sense of the object, the other, and the world. The interrogative mode that Merleau-Ponty advocates is perhaps at odds with the expressive actions that forge the intentional experience of the embodied subject. Or it may be more accurate to say that the subject's interrogation through expressive actions closes her or him off from the world and the other. This criticism of the relation between the subject and another person might be equally pertinent to the relation between a spectator and an art object. This is not to suggest an easy parallel between other people and objects, but rather to propose that there is always a general risk that the subject inhibits reciprocal communication with the world in her or his interrogation of it.

It is with this dilemma in mind that we might consider Alex Potts' discussion of sculpture in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[21] Potts argues that at this time artists were questioning the parameters that defined the medium of sculpture; more precisely they were challenging the presumption that sculpture should be defined in terms of a harmonious relationship between the material of the object and its structural form. He posits that painters and sculptors alike were blurring

3 Joseph Beuys, *Felt Suit*, 1970. Felt suit and wooden hanger. © ARS, NY. Photo: Tate, London/ Art Resource, NY.

the definitions of their respective media by privileging the tactile and through an unrelenting focus on the raw materials of the object, a move that subsequently led to the disappearance of the category of sculpture altogether. Where traditionally, a presumed separation of visual and tactile senses had underpinned the distinction between painting and sculpture as media, in the 1960s the widespread investment in the substance of artistic materials forged a common field of practice between the two. Joseph Beuys, for example, cultivated a shared space for two-dimensional and three-dimensional media in *Felt Suit* (1970), a work that like many of his projects considers the physical qualities of its material, felt (plate 3). It does so, however, in such a way that it negates formal structure. Though *Felt Suit* is suspended from a wooden hanger on the wall, the fabric is heavy and one is instantly aware of its mass. Furthermore, its thick bulk and stark lines override the human form that a piece of clothing would normally connote. Like his many other works which foreground unprocessed materials such as fat, wax and wood, Beuys' use of felt overturns the notion that a work of art emerges through the process of endowing an inchoate material with a compelling structure.[22]

Significantly, Potts suggests that the insistent attentiveness to the tactile sense evoked by unformed materials displaces the structural qualities associated

4 Claes Oldenburg, *Floor Cake*, 1962. Synthetic polymer paint and latex on canvas filled with foam rubber and cardboard boxes, 58 3/8 in × 9 ft 6 1/4 in × 58 3/8 in. © Claes Oldenburg. Photo: Museum of Modern Art, NY/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY.

with sculpture, such as plastic form. Indeed, in the case of *Floor Cake* by Claes Oldenburg the overwhelming invitation to touch effects the deformation of the art object (plate 4). Here, the sculpture of an oversized slice of cake, made of canvas and stuffed loosely with foam rubber, invites the sense of touch by evoking food that is handled and tasted. At the same time, because it is enlarged and pliable the work verges on an amorphous heap of matter. It is therefore precisely because *Floor Cake*, in its gigantic size and yielding shape, anticipates and pursues the spectator's touch, or at least a tactile eye, that its armature has collapsed.

Potts maintains that before the 1960s the understanding of medium specificity was grounded in the presupposition that the structure of the object emerged from the mind's way of processing the distinct sensory effects produced by the particular medium. In the case of sculpture, the form of the object would figure the mind's grasp of three-dimensional space delivered from the sense of touch. However, works such as those by Beuys and Oldenburg exacerbate tactility, bringing it to an extreme that exceeds form, and thus yielding no perceptual grasp as such, only an abundance of matter. Furthermore, the artwork as excess of material can also be understood as a visual spectacle, traversing sculpture in its appeal to the pictorial imagination. For this reason, Potts argues, in the contemporary era the notion of sculpture as a discrete medium has been liquidated.

What is interesting about Potts' analysis for phenomenology is his demonstration that the structural integrity of the object is rendered redundant in the quest for an unencumbered tactile access to the artwork through which the spectator assumes a position of quasi-immersion in the texture and substance of its material.[23] The armature that defines the object and separates it from the spectator crumples in the wake of her or his interrogation of its materiality. This situation reiterates Butler's supposition that the fleshly ontology risks subsuming difference within the totality of the intersubjective relation. Within the paradigm offered by the flesh, the object becomes amorphous and the medium of sculpture is dispelled into a postmedium condition that delivers a multi-sensory experience in which tactility is co-extensive with visuality.

The postmedium predicament that Potts describes also opens onto a series of historiographic difficulties in the field of contemporary art history, such as the problem of how to track changes, transitions, and developments that are not bound to a medium.[24] The phrase 'installation art', for example, is readily used to describe contemporary art, specifically works that are self-consciously integrated into and responsive to the space of exhibition and the spectators that occupy it. Yet installation remains a broad category that refers to a wide variety of media and practices, and calls upon any number of discursive frameworks, many of which stem from phenomenology, from relational aesthetics to institutional critique, theories of identity and embodiment, to site-specificity and the political economy of art. The appearance of this category arose from the incisive exposure of the broader social, political and economic fields determining artistic production and reception that coincided with the rejection of medium specificity in the 1960s. However, the term is not, in and of itself, rooted in a specific critical investment with regard to the art in question. Indeed, the word 'installation' suggests that the art merely reifies the structural relations between the spectator and the artwork that it aims to reveal. Indeed, as Jonathan Crary argues, installation might give the mistaken impression that much contemporary art gives the spectator a clear sense of position through spatial homogeneity.[25] Thus, in the same way that the chiasmic relation runs the risk of fulfilling the subject's solipsistic fantasy of the other, the notion of installation art is haunted by the possibility that it will merely satisfy perceptual expectations and stabilize the spectator's pre-existing sense of her or himself.

The Danish artist Olafur Eliasson acknowledges this risk in his installation projects, though ultimately they strive against this tendency. His works deploy various strategies to disrupt the viewer's orientation. The installations situate spectators in constructed environments that alter the expected dimensions of a space by, for example, building a ground that slopes upward on one side, or by saturating the space with colour, or again by framing it with angled mirrors so that multiple perspectives interfere with the singularity of one's own view. However, despite these attempts to upset the viewer's position of visual mastery of the space, implying the contingency of perception on the varying temporal, spatial and environmental conditions, there is a certain ambivalence in the titles of Eliasson's works which, time and again, refer to the individuality of the spectator's perceptual experience through an emphasis on the word 'your': *Your color memory* (2004, plate 5), *Your spiral view* (2002), *Your space embracer* (2004), *Take your time* (2008) and so forth. On the one hand, the titles are a restatement of Merleau-

5 Olafur Eliasson, *Your colour memory*, 2004. Wood, stainless steel, fluorescent lights and colour filter foils (red, green, blue), control unit and projection foil, 323 × 530 × 887 cm. Berlin: Neugerriemschneider. Photo: Courtesy of the artist.

Ponty's initial claim that perception is mediated through the subject's bodily contact and intertwining with the world. At the same time, the insistence that this sensual experience is confined to the limits of individual perception is a concession to the solipsism of the embodied condition.

Interestingly, Eliasson's work is usually discussed in terms of how it invites the formation of new social relations within the space of exhibition. Crary, for example, argues that the perceptual disruptions at play in Eliasson's installations establish 'conditions out of which other events might tentatively occur, out of which communication, interpersonal exchange, and provisional forms of understanding might be possible.'[26] From this perspective, the excesses of perception that invite interrogation also generate the need for 'interpersonal exchange'. This is not to say that installation subsumes all viewers into one. Rather, it provokes viewers to reconstitute themselves in response to a shared set of environmental alterations that at once posit, and elicit a striving beyond, the solipsism of perception. Not only are the limits of the flesh understood by phenomenology in linguistic terms, then, a domain that extends far beyond the relation between the subject and the other, they are the locus of the subject's constitutive relationship with the world as an ethical response to its excess.

RECIPROCITY AND THE ETHICS OF INTERPRETATION

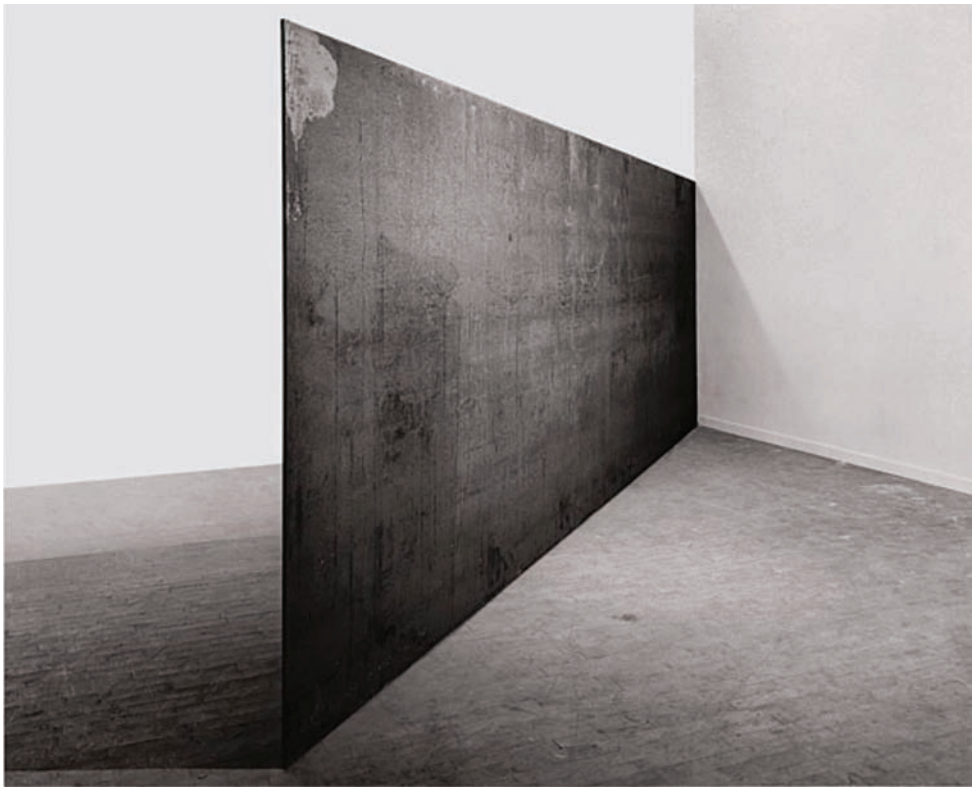
The dispersal of specific media into a postmedium condition is now often described as a field of social, political, psycho-sexual and bodily relations. It signals a turn towards an exposure of the limits of the embodied subject as a

means to identify the parameters within which the interrogation of the artwork takes place. Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the flesh is not confined to the relationship between oneself and an other, or oneself and the world, but rather is socially charged insofar as it includes the communication of language as well as the expression of the body. The issue at stake in a phenomenological account of art is therefore how the totalizing bond of the flesh might be the site at which new possibilities of interpretation, beyond individual investments, are born. How does phenomenology reinvigorate a truly interrogative mode, in the sense Irigaray intends, as a questioning of the other/object that recognizes its fundamental alterity?

In her reading of Merleau-Ponty, Judith Butler notes that despite the solipsistic orientation of the senses, there are significant ways in which Merleau-Ponty shows how the world flesh overcomes the closure of the subject's perceptual field. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty points to the excess of the other and the world in the fleshly relation, often grappling with the asymmetry between the subject's perceptual grasp and the intentional object. He is impelled to concede that the reversibility of the flesh 'is a reversibility always imminent and never realized in fact. My left hand is always on the verge of touching my right hand touching the things, but I never reach coincidence; the coincidence eclipses at the moment of realization . . .'[27] However, he explains that this 'incessant escaping' is not an ontological void or a non-being. It is 'spanned by the total being of my body, and by that of the world; it is the zero of pressure between two solids that makes them adhere to one another.' In other words, it is precisely because of this asymmetry that the subject is hinged to the world. Butler considers this equally in semantic terms, recalling the use of the chiasmic structure in grammar, in which the order of words in one of two parallel clauses is inverted in the other. Thus, a phrase such as 'when the going gets tough, the tough gets going', appears to have a formal symmetry, but in fact there are two meanings of the term 'going' and two of the word 'tough', so that the two clauses are not semantically equivalent at all.[28] In a similar way, she argues, despite its seeming totality, the flesh always has the potential to escape itself.[29]

It is this potential for meaning to exceed the fleshly relation between the artwork and the spectator that allows for a phenomenology of difference. One might consider, for example, Rosalind Krauss's use of phenomenology in her reading of Richard Serra's work, as a means of thinking sculpture outside a modernist narrative. In *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Krauss challenges the assumption that sculpture can be read as an inherently meaningful object, the form of which is taken to be an analogy for the private psychological space of the artist in which thought is generated. Krauss presents a counter-narrative, in which meaning is externalized and seen to occur in the intertwining between the spectator and the object. The sculpture and the spectator are brought together in a 'field of reciprocity', which Krauss defines using the metaphor of a passage – a moment-to-moment experience of movement through time and space. More strongly though, she elucidates the formation of meaning through this movement, so that not only are the sculpture and the spectator bound to one another as though in a common flesh, but meaning emerges through the spectator's motility, actions and gestures in response to the artwork.

In her analysis of Richard Serra's work, bodily actions become synonymous with gestures of interpretation. Or, to put it another way, Krauss shows how the object comes into consciousness through the activity of the viewer. She observes that in the early 1970s, Serra began to structure the sculptural object as a kind of



6 Richard Serra, *Strike: To Roberta and Rudy*, 1971. Hot-rolled steel, 96 × 288 × 1 1/2 in. Installation view, Lo Giudice Gallery, New York, 1971. © Richard Serra/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Photo: Peter Moore.

perceptual cut in a given space, thus inviting the spectator to actively suture together the continuity of the visual field in her or his movement through that space.[30] For example, Serra's *Strike: To Roberta and Rudy*, an 8-foot high and 24-foot long steel plate that projects out of the corner of the room, interrupts a clear view of the space (plate 6). Krauss notes that as one moves around *Strike*, it contracts from a flat plane to a single line when one faces it head-on, and then expands once again to a plane. Correspondingly, the space is blocked off, then opened up on either side of the edge, and finally blocked once again.[31] In its alternation between a plane that occupies the visual field, obscuring the surrounding space, and an invisible depth that gathers behind a single edge, *Strike* cuts the visible world and locates the spectator as 'the operator of this cut' who must work to reconvene visual continuity. For this reason, Krauss sees a parallel between the perceptual effect of Serra's work and a cinematic montage, whereby the spectator knits together meaning from completely disparate shots that appear in sequence in a film. Likewise, Serra invites the spectator to suture together a perception of space through embodied action. Thus, Krauss states that the wholeness of the viewer's body becomes the guarantor of the reconstructible wholeness of the room's continuity.[32]

Much as the spectator actively re-forms a coherent view across the visual break that the sculpture presents, however, the artwork nevertheless prevents the

assembly of a totalizing perception that would reinforce the spectator's ontological centrality and separateness – a solipsistic orientation. Precisely because the artwork impels movement through space, it physically locates the spectator within the same visual fabric that it occupies and structures. The disruption of the object calls to mind that which is disavowed from the transcendental perspective, namely, the situatedness of vision in the body, and the situatedness of the body in space.

Although Serra's work might seem to locate the viewer within the sculpture in the same way that Merleau-Ponty describes the subject as immersed in the world flesh, however, Krauss's analysis shows that the phenomenological experience is determined by the way in which the artwork appears as an exterior surface that runs against the limits of the visual field. Furthermore, in her later account of Serra's work she posits the artwork as a fissure that binds and separates the horizon of the body with that of the world beyond it. The flesh, then, is not the amorphous envelope of the world that houses and is continuous with the subject but rather an abutment between the subject's body and the world, that is always transitive. Krauss argues that this jointure must be seen as the subject matter of the work.[33] The interpretation of the artwork, indeed the only meaning one could posit, is founded on the shifting conditions that the work sets against the body. Bodily action, then, is not necessarily an expression of the subject's will or pre-existing intention towards an object, which might manifest as the covering over, grasping, or assimilation of it, but rather is a response to the spatial conditions that the artwork asserts in the first place.

By insisting that the meaning of the artwork is determined by the friction between the artwork and the viewer's attempt to stabilize a perception of it, Krauss gets to the heart of the ethical dilemma: the question is whether the external world genuinely informs perception or whether the subject merely conceals/blankets it in her or his attempt to grasp it. She resolves the problem by maintaining that the relation between the body and the world is reciprocal. This is not to suggest that phenomenological interpretation is a kind of give-and-take between the material world and one's personal responses to it. On the contrary, her understanding of reciprocity assumes the asymmetry of this relation, as seen between the viewer and the artwork. To elaborate her alternative model of sculpture as passage, she remarks, 'the image of passage serves to place both viewer and artist before the work, and the world, in an attitude of *primary humility* in order to encounter the deep reciprocity between himself and it' (my emphasis).[34]

Interestingly, a phenomenological interpretation here is a way of first, 'placing the viewer and artist before the artwork', which is to say that the artwork confronts the viewer/artist as something outside her or himself. Second, it is to demand an attitude appropriate to that placement. The term 'primary humility' is notable insofar as it assumes the bodily connection of the subject to the earth, for the word 'humility' derives from the Latin word *humilis*, meaning 'from humus', the decayed organic matter that composes soil. Humus evokes the elemental basis of growth, and the land into which the body is committed when it dies.[35] In advocating for humility as a humble stance or modesty of behaviour in the face of the artwork, Krauss insists on differentiating the viewer and the artwork from one another, despite the intimacy of the corporeal bond. What Krauss describes as a relation of deep reciprocity, a stance that recognizes both the continuity between the viewer and the artwork in a broader corporeal, spatial

and linguistic field and a fundamental differentiation between the two, recalls Butler's understanding of the asymmetry of the flesh as the locus of an excess of meaning. The suggestion is not that one cannot presume to know or make statements about the artwork (and the world) because it always escapes our grasp, but rather that, in order to do so, one must first be receptive to that which lies beyond the limits of what one knows. This is why Merleau-Ponty is at pains to insist that the flesh of the world is always imminent, but never realized in fact. Interpretation is not to make an initial proclamation about the meaning of the artwork (a statement of fact about it), but rather to respond to the demands the work makes of the viewer, particularly how it overturns, upsets or otherwise departs from one's expectations.

To further explore this disarticulation between the subject and the world, as well as the viewer and the artwork, art historians have turned to Emmanuel Levinas' understanding of ethics, particularly the paradigmatic encounter of the 'face-to-face' which he describes in *Totality and Infinity*. For Levinas, the subject is constituted as a response to the other's appeal or demand for recognition. Essentially, the other calls the subject into being – an imperative for the subject to differentiate itself. The other's command is the initial moment that the subject recognizes the other's irreducibility to her or himself. For Levinas, this recognition defines ethics: the subject is constituted as a fundamental acknowledgement of the other. The subject is therefore founded upon her or his ethical response – a confrontation with the alterity of the other, which Levinas calls the 'face'. He writes, 'The way in which the other presents himself, exceeding *the idea of the other in me*, we here name face. This *mode* does not consist in figuring as a theme under my gaze, in spreading itself forth as a set of qualities forming an image. The face of the Other at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me ... It does not manifest itself by these qualities ... It *expresses itself*.'[36]

Clearly, Levinas is not concerned with the image of the other, but rather how the other exceeds that image, and thereby exceeds the subject's knowledge of it. Similarly, and to return to an earlier point, phenomenological interpretation does not attempt to explain the meaning of an image or representation, but to examine how art means, beyond and in spite of representation. Noticeably, Levinas insists that the face appears as a mode, as opposed to an image or set of qualities. Insofar as the face is a stance, or manner of being, it is best understood as a kind of bodily assertion. It is a presentation that exceeds, destroys and overflows the idea. Furthermore, as Alphonso Lingis explains, the ethical imperative of the face is a demand for bodily reciprocity. That is to say, the subject differentiates itself from the other in order to offer itself as a physical recognition to that other. For this reason, the other's face does not manifest as a look, but as a gesture, 'a pressure on the hand', or a 'shiver of the skin'.[37]

Ethics, then, is an acknowledgement of the artwork's alterity that takes place through the interrogation of the limits of the perceptual field. For Krauss, this interrogation takes place through bodily acts that are predicated on a stance of primary humility in the presence of the object. In this mode of confrontation, actions are responsive rather than pre-emptive. Further, bodily actions are synonymous with gestures of interpretation. The artwork's demand for the expression of the body – and correspondingly, a revealing of the limits of the flesh – establishes reciprocity. Interestingly though, Krauss's notion of primary humi-

7 Pipilotti Rist, *Pour Your Body Out (7354 Cubic Meters)*, installation view, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2008. Courtesy of the artist, Luhring Augustine, New York, and Hauser & Wirth, Zurich and London. © Pipilotti Rist. Photo: Libby Rosof (http://theartblog.org).

lity is equally pertinent to artworks that distinctly limit movement and bodily action, as is often the case in installation art. Indeed, contemporary art has recently demonstrated a persistent investment in problematizing and encumbering movement. In many of Olafur Eliasson's works the viewer often remains still, or, in the many *Skyspaces* of James Turrell, the visitor lies down to fully experience the work, as though to literally enact humility as a 'grounding' of the body by relocating it to a horizontal register.

The specifically horizontal positioning of the body is particularly noticeable in Pipilotti Rist's video and sound installation *Pour Your Body Out (7354 Cubic Meters)* designed for the atrium of the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2008 (plate 7). The richly coloured panorama created by a 25-foot high and 200-foot long video projection spanning three walls, saturates the senses with close-up images of tulips in a field, a hand reaching into dirt, earthworms, a snail, a pig sniffing the ground, the gentle lapping of water against a woman's legs. The camera explores these 'earthly' themes from a distinctly low vantage point, skimming the surface of the ground and water, and slowly homing in on the creatures and vegetation in such a way as to enlarge even the tiniest details.

To reinforce her humble perspective, Rist constructed a large sculptural seating area in the shape of an eye. A grey, doughnut-shaped sofa set on a round white rug, surrounded a black interior space – the pupil located in the centre of the atrium. Visitors were invited to lie down on the sofa and view the video from a

supine position. In this way, Rist's installation invokes a stance of humility through which the viewer can enter into an appropriately transitive relation with the artwork. The experience of the video projection takes place on the sculptural eye, the very site where the viewer lies. That is to say, the figure of the eye becomes the point of transaction between the intensely colourful projection and the body *as* exposed surface. This horizontal position of abandon upends verticality, and with it, perceptual closure. Correspondingly, we can read this as a move from a solipsistic grasp of the world to a stance of openness in which interpretation is suspended and an abundance of sensation ensues. The interior subject is turned inside out as vision is relayed via the exterior surface of the body, a condition subtly implied by the title of the work, *Pour Your Body Out*. Rist thereby brings the body to an ethical stance before the artwork by foregoing both the standard upward position from which one usually views the world, and discouraging definitive actions (even reactions) in the space. Instead, the encounter between viewer and artwork, between the body and its elemental basis (a key theme of the installation), is forged through the limitation of the body, and attentiveness to the excess of the artwork.

CONCLUSION

The strength of phenomenology lies in its effectiveness at uncovering the way in which an artwork means: that is to say, the way in which it expresses, communicates or presents itself to a viewer. In foregrounding a bodily condition shared by the artwork and the viewing subject, and taken to be mutually constitutive of each, phenomenology opposes itself to historical narratives that wish to disavow the contingency of its statements of 'fact'. However, a legitimate criticism arises that in its deep concern with the individual embodied experience, phenomenology conceals the potential meanings of an artwork; or rather it obscures the possibility that the artwork is meaningful in 'other' ways. This risk became acutely present in the 1960s when a noticeable staging of the artwork's deformation appeared in conjunction with an emphasis on tactility. The destructuration of the artwork and the transition into a postmedium condition appears as the artwork's refusal to deliver itself to the senses in a totalized form.

As I have shown, the fleshly relation does not guarantee an exclusive knowledge of the artwork, nor can it be the pretext for a kind of positivist authority. However, by considering the flesh itself as interpenetrated by language, phenomenology opens the bodily relation to a larger social sphere charged with acts of communication (speech, motions, moods and expressions). The linguistic dimension of embodiment testifies to the fundamental disarticulation between the viewer's perception and the artwork itself, for this divide is the condition that impels communication, but also leads to slips and alterations in meaning. The ethics of interpretation in phenomenology thus hinge on an acknowledgement that the artwork cannot be reduced to preconceptions of its place in a seamless art-historical narrative. Ethical acknowledgement, moreover, appears as a distinct surfacing and overflowing of the limits of the embodied subject through gestures of concession or humility in the face of the artwork's alterity. In this attentiveness to the differentiation of the subject and the artwork from one another, and to how this provokes a specific mode of confrontation, phenomenology foregrounds the ethical dimension implicit in the aesthetic experience.

Notes

1 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Preobjective being: the solipsist world', in Claude Lefort, ed., *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Evanston, IL, 1968, 159.

2 To name just a few trajectories, the convergence of ecology with phenomenology has raised new lines of inquiry in the domain of geoaesthetics, earth art, and urban space; see Elizabeth Grosz, *Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*, New York, 2008; Amanda Boetzkes *The Ethics of Earth Art*, Minneapolis, MN, 2010; Gary Shapiro, 'Territory, landscape, garden', *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 9: 2, 2004, 103–15. The domain of relational aesthetics extends the phenomenological encounter to the socio-political sphere, provoking a rethinking of how the ethical relation can be developed into a model of community and political democracy; Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon, 2004; Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History*, New York, 2005. For scholarship on the encounter between the body and new media technologies, see Eugene Thacker, *The Global Genome: Biotechnology, Politics, Culture*, Cambridge, MA, 2005; Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, MA, 2001; Pierre Lévy, *Becoming Virtual: Reality in the Digital Age*, New York, 1998. This line of inquiry has also stimulated an interest in models of time, and particularly how new media technologies provoke varying experiences of time in the body; Mark Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media*, Cambridge, MA, 2004; Christine Ross, 'The temporalities of video: extendedness revisited', *Art Journa*, l 65: 3, 2006, 92–9.

3 Particularly in the field of contemporary art, Henri Bergson's writing on temporality has become increasingly important, as has the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

4 Martin Heidegger, 'The question concerning technology', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, New York, 1977, 19.

5 Judith Butler, 'Sexual difference as a question of ethics', in Dorothea Olkowski and Gail Weiss, eds, *Feminist Interpretations of Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, University Park, PA, 2006, 117.

6 Merleau-Ponty, 'The intertwining – the chiasm', in Lefort, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 139.

7 Merleau-Ponty, 'The intertwining', 152.

8 Butler, 'Sexual difference', 113.

9 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York, 1962, 24–5.

10 Robert Morris, 'Some notes on the phenomenology of making: the search for the motivated', *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, Cambridge, MA, 1993, 73.

11 Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Cambridge, MA, 1996, 267.

12 Merleau-Ponty, 'The intertwining', 135.

13 Butler, 'Sexual difference', 114.

14 Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill, Ithaca, NY, 1993, 183–4.

15 Irigaray, *Ethics of Sexual Difference*, 183.

16 Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations, Volume II*, trans. J.N. Findlay, London, 1970, 558.

17 Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 565–6.

18 Merleau-Ponty, 'Preobjective being', 158.

19 Merleau-Ponty, 'The intertwining', 143–4.

20 Irigaray, *Ethics of Sexual Difference*, 172.

21 Alex Potts, 'The interrogation of medium in art of the 1960s', *Art History*, 27: 2, April 2004, 282–304.

22 Potts, 'The interrogation of medium', 288.

23 Potts, 'The interrogation of medium', 286.

24 There is also the added difficulty of defining contemporary art according to its historical position. The phrase 'contemporary art' is used to describe a great range of art since the 1950s. The rubric of 'the contemporary' therefore begs the question, what is shared in the art of the last five decades that continues to renew itself?

25 Jonathan Crary, *Installation Art in the New Millenium: The Empire of the Senses*, London, 2003, 7.

26 Crary, 'Your color memory: illuminations of the unforeseen', *Olafur Eliasson: Minding the World*, Aarhus, Denmark, 2004, 223.

27 Merleau-Ponty, 'The intertwining', 147.

28 Butler, 'Sexual difference', 124.

29 Interestingly, she argues, it is precisely because Merleau-Ponty's essay on the flesh has this same potential to exceed itself, and to be read differently, that enables Irigaray's critique.

30 Rosalind Krauss, 'Richard Serra: sculpture', in Hal Foster and Gordon Hughes, eds, *Richard Serra*, Cambridge, MA, 2000.

31 Krauss, 'Richard Serra', 119–20.

32 Krauss, 'Richard Serra', 120–1.

33 Krauss, 'Richard Serra', 133.

34 Krauss, *Passages*, 283.

35 This is especially relevant to the relationship of phenomenology to ecology and geoaesthetics.

36 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh, 1969, 50–1.

37 Alphonso Lingis, *Sensation: Intelligibility in Sensibility*, New Jersey, 1996, 101.

1 Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still # 35*, 1979. Black and white photograph, 10 × 8 in, edition of 10. Photo: Courtesy of the Artist and Metro Pictures.

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SURVEYING CONTEMPORARY ART: POST-WAR, POSTMODERN, AND THEN WHAT?

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> This book is a survey of the richest, most controversial and perhaps most thoroughly confusing epoch in the whole history of the visual arts – the period from 1960 to the present.[1]
>
> Edward Lucie-Smith, 1995

> How can what is defined as *in existence now* – the contemporary – be written into (a) history? Is the notion of 'contemporary art history' or a 'history of contemporary art' a contradiction in terms?[2]
>
> Amelia Jones, 2006

> How is it possible to write a survey of contemporary art in an era of apparently anarchic pluralism?[3]
>
> Eleanor Heartney, 2008

Some of the difficulties in writing a history of contemporary art evidently have to do with the character of the 'epoch' or 'era' of which this art is a sign or expression. Another difficulty concerns the alleged opposition between historical or past and the contemporary or present: in popular abbreviation, art now.[4] A historiographic study of various solutions to these problems, in surveys of contemporary art in whatever form or shape (teleological, thematic, chronicle-like, and so on) would perhaps focus on how this epoch or age is historicized by these texts. For example,what artists and artworks are selected; what tendencies registered; what links are established between them and between the art and the era, or art and life, culture, or society? What difference does it make, for instance, that Edward Lucie-Smith's *Art Today* begins in 1960, Amelia Jones's anthology begins in 1945, and Eleanor Heartney is dealing, in *Art & Today*, with art from the 1980s to the present? How are we to understand such terminological and conceptual disagreement about the contemporary among authors contemporaneous with each other?

This chapter is historiographic, too, but in a different sense. I am interested in the notion of contemporary art, and how it is used, explicitly or implicitly, in history writing from around 1980 to the present. I will not discuss particular

artists or artworks taken to belong to this category in detail, because my interest here is in the activity of labelling and its uses in standard texts of, and on, art history from the last three decades. Following Michel Foucault's method of archaeology, it would be as futile to try to get to the core of contemporary art as a historiographical problem by studying 'art now', as it would be to 'look for the unity of the discourse of psychopathology or psychiatry in ''mental illness''.[5] Paraphrasing Gombrich, assisted by Foucault, we could perhaps say that there is no such thing as contemporary art – there is only a discursive formation.[6] We could ever only aspire to reveal the content of this discursive formation by searching for textual repetitions and regularities in the discourse of contemporary art at large. As part of a more extensive historical project on the genealogy of contemporary art, I will restrict my investigation of this discourse to texts devoted to art-historical representation in a global context. My brief survey, in other words, will cover a selection of the most widespread survey texts on world art history where the latest period is linked in different ways to what came before. Foucault stressed that '[n]o book exists by itself, it is always in a relation of support and dependence vis-à-vis other books; it is a point in a network – it contains a system of indications that point, explicitly or implicitly, to other books, other texts, or other sentences.'[7] Nevertheless, I will not take into account publications which specifically deal with art after 1945/1960/1980, since they tend to be preoccupied with art criticism, and to list the most recent distinguished art. Without a non-contemporary time frame, however, they are less serviceable in determining the function of the 'contemporary' assignment – for example, when this word enters the discourse and how the issue of periodization is handled with respect to previous art history. There are very few texts – compared to the cultural and financial boom in, and 'massive expansion in the infrastructure of',[8] contemporary art – that critically investigate how this notion is put to use, and what interests are thereby served.[9]

When I ask someone involved in the business of contemporary art, as a critic, curator or dealer, how this class is delimited; when it begins or whether every artistic product of the same span of years belongs here; they tend to twist uncomfortably, or pretend not even to understand such a boring academic question. What they *mean*, they will sometimes acknowledge, is the advanced art or 'potentially the cutting edge of what people calling themselves artists (or understood by others as such) are making and doing'[10] on the international (that is, Western-based) art scene, from at least a couple of decades back, or however far they choose to extend the 'now' of art. What this implies is that the seemingly innocent temporal determinant 'now' covers, when applied to art, two complementary principles of exclusion; or, more positively put, two ways of selecting and sorting members of the contemporary class. One is of course the temporal or historical principle, based on a working definition or hunch of what constitutes the present. This is the easy part, despite the range of opinions hinted at above. The other principle is based on a typically tacit judgement of quality and/or relevance. What art is potentially cutting edge? What art faces up to 'our own troubled times'[11] and is able to connect, critically or affirmatively, to 'our' bewildering present?

Contemporary art as a category involves a dual logic of exclusion: from that which precedes it diachronically; and from that which is deemed other to it on a synchronic plane. We could perhaps call the first dividing line historical and the

latter aesthetic. Although the conundrum posed by the first (how to define contemporary art temporally or historically) is safely academic, that raised by the latter (how to choose between all the 'candidates for appreciation' of art made by professional artists in the present – to use George Dickie's term) is of critical political importance for artists and other art-world representatives on both sides of the great divide between contemporary and non-contemporary, and has substantial economic, cultural and social implications.

Having made this distinction, however, I have to note that the synchronic and more clearly value-based determination re-introduces the issue of temporality. Diverging temporalities co-exist in the global art community because of regional and cultural differences as well as the fact that certain artists, and their works, are simply taken to belong to the current historical moment (as defined by those in power to define such things and get credit for it). This 'now' is perhaps not, despite how it sounds, so much a temporal extension as a kind of space or privileged place, intimately connected to 'our' expectations of the future. Artists outside this definition, undoubtedly the majority, are ungraced by the *Zeitgeist* and remain in the past or in those spaces of the present where exits are permitted exclusively through the backdoor. They belong to a 'noncontemporaneous contemporaneity'[12] upsetting a conventional idea of modernity, governed by homogenous historical progression, 'whereas the temporality specific to the arts is a co-presence of heterogeneous temporalities', according to Jacques Rancière.[13] The argument is that this aesthetic regime is established with Romanticism: but whether we agree or not with the author's assumption that this regime runs seamlessly into our own present, the stakes in the discourse on contemporary art are predicated on much older conflicts and longer cultural developments than is usually acknowledged.

Unless we subscribe, as I think we still do, to Charles Baudelaire's high evaluation of the present's 'essential quality of being present',[14] we would find the word 'contemporary', that is 'now',[15] almost completely empty and meaningless. Contemporary art, however, has become a saturated sign indeed, and overdetermined in its commercial implications. Since the market 'boom' of the 1980s, and during the 1990s especially, contemporary art has been increasingly valorized, symbolically and economically. More than that, it has become increasingly de-relativized, by which I mean that it is paradoxically assuming period term status, as witness my initial examples. The language game of contemporary art, it seems, retains a number of key modernist features, such as the imperative to be in sync with one's own time, which is presumably better (since 'newer') and more interesting (since 'our') than times passed. We seem to be drawn into a continuous competition of development and improvement, conducted partly on a global scale despite being told that we have left that behind for postmodernism or contemporary multiculturalism, perpetuating old figures of development, novelty and progress. The contemporary, however, is itself a cultural product or, better, the expression of a highly differentiated cultural process, and not some real time, unmarked 'now'. It may have more to do, again, with certain issues of, and spaces for, exchange and communication than with time, despite the ring of it. It may have more to do with 'us' than with 'them', and it most certainly invokes old attempts to divide the world in terms of power relations between the present and the past, where some people's present is other

people's past. To take this to the next level, we need to turn to the textbooks themselves, where many of the labelling problems of contemporary art, or what amounts to the same, are revealed.

1945 AND/AS CONTEMPORARY

The last chapter of the very first edition of Helen Gardner's *Art Through the Ages: An Introduction to its History and Significance* (New York, 1926) is entitled 'Contemporary Art in Europe and America. 1900–1925 AD'. The book, which would become 'the most disseminated model for world art history'[16] begins thus:

> Any evaluation of the art of the last two decades must be only tentative. The best we can do is to estimate the general trend of the present, and consider to what extent contemporary art is an expression of contemporary life.[17]

The first sentence does not necessarily refer to the conventional wisdom that it is precarious, not to say impossible, to try to cover historically what is still developing. Instead, the author finds this particular period uniquely difficult to arrest; a view attested to in passing in the Preface as well: 'these decades have been an age of restlessness and transition in all aspects of life'. While this perception of one's own time as particularly complex belongs to the oldest of historical topoi, the first two decades or so of the twentieth century did indeed set the agenda for the century to follow. The second sentence could almost be written today, although it would sound a little different, more assertive than tentative. Something like this:

> Largely due to the vitality of the innovations in the visual arts over the past 60 years … the visual arts are now arguably one of the most crucial areas of cultural practice in terms of understanding what and how people convey, contest, or otherwise negotiate aspects of contemporary life.[18]

Given a relativist understanding of the contemporary in art, the historical limit should logically be pushed forward in time, instead of back towards the 1939–45 war. From Amelia Jones's perspective in 2006, Gardner's 'contemporary' has become a petrified part of the history of modern art or modernism. Drawing on the demarcation line of '1945', to use an appropriately military metaphor, Jones, however, is not just reviewing the latest years or the 'general trend of the present', as did Gardner, but is, in effect, writing history.[19] But to what effect? Is '1945' simply a year, or has it become an overdetermined symbol, like 1968 or 1989? Is it not Eurocentric, despite the established term 'world' war?[20] And furthermore, does it not indicate that contemporary now overlaps with (late) modernism and postmodernism in a new, seemingly more neutral or de-historicized guise? I am not arguing here with any specific author, and could as well refer to the anonymous Wikipedia entry on 'contemporary art' where the term is 'defined variously as art produced at this present point in time or art produced since [and presumably closer to] World War II'.[21]

If we were for a fleeting moment to compare the uses of contemporary art and contemporary fashion, following Baudelaire's attempt to arrest the 'ephemeral' moment of his modernity, a striking difference would be that, in fashion,

contemporary is a very short time span.[22] The collections of last year are surpassed by those of the present year. A handful of years is the utmost limit for something to be still 'contemporary'. Meanwhile, in art, the contemporary category is curiously expanding backwards into the 1940s. Many of today's artists were not even born then, and nor were their parents. The 1940s is ancient history. Moreover, this relatively arbitrary threshold invalidates some commonly used yardsticks with which to differentiate contemporary art from non-contemporary art without value judgements: artists born after 1950; artists beginning to exhibit in the 1960s, for example. To cover artists working in the 1940s within the (still) contemporary category threatens to obliterate any historical distinction between contemporary and non-contemporary or modern, let alone between modern and postmodern. Where and when, in other words, does contemporary (post-world war) art connect with or metamorphose into contemporary (postmodern or post-postmodern) art? Some survey texts would respond by dividing the contemporary into different chapters, others would follow Sotheby's and think 'modern and contemporary', without having to decide exactly where to insert the 'and'.

LAST CHAPTERS OF THE HISTORY OF ART

Before turning to the last chapters of the history of art within the latest histories of world art, something should perhaps be said about the genre itself. A widespread view is that this kind of writing – which is directed towards the general reader, art lover, artist or, and nowadays almost exclusively, student of art history – is merely educational, basic or comprehensive, viz. not part of the progression of *Wissenschaft* itself.[23] Such a view, which is almost as old as the genre itself, seems prompted by the scholar's need to distance him- or herself from the very foundation on which he or she is standing so as not to threaten the claims of art history to be numbered among the human sciences. But at the very centre of the professional pursuit of art history, since Hegel, is the conception of a field of study which is ultimately held together by a grand narrative of art's unfolding through time and space. The centrality and importance of this assumption is, paradoxically, linked to the inclination of professional art historians to resist every attempt actually to write the history of art unless it is directed towards the novice and thus de-legitimized as *Wissenschaft*. Each instance of this seminal narrative comes across as an offence to the learned. However, this allegedly popular abbreviation is the narrative foundation – brief, biased and blatantly constructed – upon which all scholarly activities rely and towards which they ultimately point. Differences in degree between popular and expert discourse notwithstanding, art history as a Western discipline is still – after all the critical revisions and canon-bashings – based upon the monographic History of Art. And the evidence for this, of course, is the continuing success of this genre, with its individual instances gradually thickening with every edition, as the educational foundation of all future professionals.

Among a number of current candidates to choose from, I have decided to look at the following five tomes on world art history, all of which have been widely distributed and read throughout the Western world despite their Anglo-American bias. Using their brand name-like abbreviations these texts are: Gardner, Gombrich, Janson, Honour and Fleming, and Stokstad.[24] I will not discuss the changes to the various editions of each volume. Instead, I will proceed roughly

chronologically, highlighting particular statements and patterns rather than authorial preferences. This procedure is not only in tune with my Foucauldian proclivities, but with the sublimely generic quality of the universal survey itself as a genre, where new authors change places with old without much fuss. The reader is clearly meant to be following the unfolding of history, or 'how it all happened',[25] and not some individual's historical interpretation. I will also not attempt a sustained discourse analysis, but attempt to provide what I see as the characteristic features of each text. However, even the latest editions of these histories present too vast an amount of material to cover here. I have opted for the following shortcuts: one being to focus on a particular art form of strategic interest – conceptual art[26] – and another to look at how two different artists are represented by these texts: Joseph Beuys and Cindy Sherman. Conceptual art is old enough to be represented by all of these texts, and apparently deemed important enough to be still counted as contemporary. Beuys and Sherman are two of the most famous artists of the later twentieth century, a European male, dealing with objects, performance and installation, and an American woman working with photography and film. I will omit architecture, despite its alleged introduction of postmodernism, but finally look at how these open-ended narratives terminate. The impatient reader jumps to the conclusion.

THE (LONG) 1980S

Gardner's Art Through the Ages, ed. Horst De la Croix and Richard G. Tansey (6th edn, New York, 1975), contains a timeline and an interesting map showing the unilinear succession of art movements during 'The Twentieth Century' followed later on by a flow chart on 'interrelations of major movements of twentieth-century art' reminiscent of Alfred Barr's, which partly contradicts the first map.[27] The relevant section is contained within part four, 'The Modern World', chapter 17, 'The Twentieth Century', and begins with: 'Sculpture and Painting after World War II'. This edition does not yet mention postmodernism and ends with process and conceptual art. What unites these two tendencies is that process becomes 'more important than the eventual product'. While process-based thinking was central to abstract expressionism as well, the advance of conceptual art makes the concept more important than both object and process. Conceptual art is literally unrelated to minimal art as diagrammed in the chart. Both process and conceptual art arrange '"environments", ... which are composed of both objects and audiences'. This introduces the importance of audience participation: 'The audience is introduced into a setting that is automated, sometimes in such a way that the audience itself becomes an element of the circuitry, functioning, via "feed back", like a component of some modern electronic system.' The audience is subject to various sensory experiences, but '[a]s receptors of the informational output the audience need not deal with images and appearances that stay to be evaluated; rather, they need only react.' What this means, is 'that the artist is himself a node in such a network of informational relationships, rather than an isolated system. ... Art, artist, and audience become functions of systems modelled on those of modern electronically controlled universes.'[28] Thus ends this history of world art in 1975.

Ernst Hans Gombrich's *The Story of Art* (13th edn, Oxford and New York 1978) stops a considerable distance from the contemporary disarray.[29] A few words on

art after the 1930s are gathered in 'The Changing Scene: A Postscript' (inserted into the 11th edn, 1966), which begins:

> Can one write the history of art 'up to the present day' as one can perhaps write the history of aviation? Many critics and teachers hope and believe that one can. I am less sure. True, one can record and discuss the latest fashions, the figures that happen to have caught the limelight at the time of writing. But only a prophet could tell whether these artists will really 'make history', and on the whole critics have proved poor prophets.

The 'figures who happen to have caught the limelight' at the time of this piece of writing are Kurt Schwitters, Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, Pierre Soulages, Zoltan Kemeny, Nicolas de Stael, and Marino Marini.

The chapter entitled 'Contemporary Art' of Hugh Honour and John Fleming's *A World History of Art* (1st edn, London, 1982) begins with a description of the American art scene after the war, in which abstract expressionism is succeeded by pop art. The sub-chapter of relevance here is called 'Minimal and Conceptual art to Photo-Realism'. Minimalism is presented as quintessentially American, anticipated in Europe by Yves Klein and Christo. Photo-realism is presented as a reaction to minimalism, as are a number of other movements; process art, land art, body art and eventually conceptual art. 'The general idea of Conceptual Art is that the work of art is essentially an idea which may (or may not) generate a visible form.' It was 'foreshadowed' by John Cage and Klein. Sol LeWitt's *Untitled cube (6)* is illustrated (1968). All postminimal and conceptual art assumes the product to be of less importance than the process. A chapter follows tracing 'Modernism and Post-Modernism' in architecture and ending with Joseph Beuys, prefaced by a conclusion on the art of today:

> In the present century . . . [f]or the first time, an artist is inevitably, unavoidably aware of the art of the whole world from prehistoric times to the present day, and this has provoked anxious and often introspective enquiry into the meaning and purpose of art. In the past the question hardly arose – art, as we have seen, was predominantly sacred. Today art has largely lost this religious function and nothing comparable has taken its place, unless it be a preoccupation with the problem of the artist's and art's role. (This has, indeed, increasingly become the subject of art itself.)

This text recalls the situation in early nineteenth-century-Germany when Hegel in his lectures on aesthetics stated that 'art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past', and declared that it could no longer satisfy us in the way it used to.[30] Hegel's scope, like that of his more empirical art-historically minded successors, was worldwide, from prehistoric times to the present. What troubled him was that the artist became aware of this predicament and began to ponder what art was, philosophically and historically. Franz Kugler, who wrote the first survey art history with a global scope, suggested in 1837 that art had to be rescued from this situation, otherwise – the unspeakable implication – this was really the end of it.[31]

'The German sculptor Joseph Beuys (b. 1921) is . . . one of the most significant living artists, the creator of intensely personal but widely relevant, transient yet haunting images.' His 1965 performance *How to explain pictures to a dead hare* is singled out for description in the conclusion to the chapter on architecture that ends the book. The ritual and mythic aspects of this performance, in which the face

of the artist himself is covered in honey and gold leaf, are noted. This work is said to deal with problems of thought and communication. Beuys is quoted on his ambition to transform the idea of art in general. His guiding principle as a teacher is that '[o]ne can no longer start from the old academic concept of educating the artists [but now must start from] the idea that art and experience gained from art can form an element that flows back into life'. The verb 'flow' may connote high technology or monetary transactions, but also something more romantic. Instructing students/dead hares on art or pictures is perhaps doomed to fail, whereas art itself may reconnect with life. Beuys's latter conclusion – rhetorically turned into a final phrase for this book by Honour and Fleming – rings with powerful German precedents – Nietzsche as well as Hegelesque art history. The performer's inaudible murmur arises from behind a dehumanized face and addresses his passive audience (the dead hare connotes 'life' as an animal, however bizarrely) in an evacuated art gallery. As it does so a rather tragic image of the historian emerges, talking himself through his passion while inevitably widening the gap between art and life rather than re-connecting the two. Nietzsche's famous disgust at history's invasion of life is paralleled here by an allegorical God/father of art history obsessively trying to invade or influence life.[32]

Included in Horst Waldemar Janson's *History of Art*, rev. and expanded by Anthony F. Janson (3rd edn, New York, 1986) for the first time are two sections on the history of photography; 'though its status is still challenged, photography now merits treatment as a legitimate field of art historical investigation'.[33] This, however, does not entail discussing Sherman in his survey, despite the inclusion, for the first time too, of 'the achievements of women artists'. 'My primary aim was to preserve the humanism that provided the foundation of this book', the new author explains.

Conceptual art is represented in 'Part Four: The Modern World', ch. 4: 'Twentieth Century Painting and Sculpture', subheading 'Painting since World War II', between 'Environments; Assemblages; Installations' and 'Photorealism'. The short section is called 'KOSUTH' and is illustrated with *One and Three Chairs* (1965) (plate 2). 'This deliberately anti-art approach, stemming from Dada,' the text begins, 'poses a number of stimulating paradoxes'. But:

> As soon as the documentation takes on visible form, it begins to come perilously close to more traditional forms of art (especially if it is placed in a gallery where it can be seen by an audience), since it is impossible fully to divorce the imagination from aesthetic matters.

The text never mentions what it argues against, namely the general aim of the conceptualists to avoid traditional art forms or aesthetic considerations and to emphasize the idea rather than the work or object of art. The making of the work of art, however – '[w]hatever the Conceptual artist's [still unmentioned] intention' – is said to be as important as ever in the history of art. Beuys is absent here, but a new addition to this edition is 'Painting of the 1980s' discussing two representative names: Clemente (without Francesco) and Anselm Kiefer (presented by his full name). A general remark on the art of the present moment prepares the ground for them.

> For all the recent ferment, the direction of art has yet to appear in sufficient clarity to let us chart the future. Having received a rich heritage, artists are sorting through a wide variety of alternatives without yet arriving at durable conclusions. The first sign of this transition

2 Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs*, 1965. Chair, photograph of chair, and photographic enlargement of dictionary definition of chair. New York: Museum of Modern Art. Photo: Courtesy of the artist.

> occurred in the early 1970s with the widespread use of 'Neo-' to describe the current tendencies. Art in the 1980s has been called more simply Post-Modern. The term is, of course, incongruous: modernity can never be outdated, because it is simply whatever is contemporary.

The lack of distinction between a relative and a more absolute sense of 'modern' will be discussed in my conclusion. The concluding chapter of the book deals with architecture and photography and the final artwork to be presented is David Hockney's photographic montage *Gregory Watching the Snow Fall, Kyoto, February* (1983).

THE 1990S

Marilyn Stokstad's *Art History* (1st edn, New York, 1995) is decorated with a frontispiece, as it were, to the chapter 'Art in the United States and Europe since World War II' (written by Bradford R. Collins): Allan Kaprow's *The Courtyard* (1962). This happening was apparently criticized for being too enjoyable and entertaining to the public, which certainly marks the distance from earlier avant-garde attempts of *épater le bourgeois*. This is deemed to raise questions about what art is and what role it may have in society in the 'richly innovative period following World War II'. In the sub-chapter 'Alternative Developments Following Abstract Expressionism', we learn that 'three related styles that emerged in the wake of Abstract Expressionism – post-painterly abstraction, Hard Edge, or Minimalist, art, and Concep-

3 Joseph Beuys, *Coyote (I Like America and America Likes Me)*, 1974. Week-long action staged in the René Block Gallery, New York. Photo: © Caroline Tisdall, courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York/www.feldmangallery.com.

tualism – shared a commitment to reducing art to its essentials.' Conceptualism as style is represented with one work only: Bruce Nauman's *Bound to Fail* (1966–67/70), followed by this sentence: 'Although Conceptualist works usually provide little for the mind to ponder, on a second level the work suggests that given the overly ambitious social agenda of the modernist artist, he or she was bound to fail.' Nauman's visual pun is turned into a pun on the failure of modernism, or perhaps conceptual art. The attitude that conceptual art has little for the mind to ponder is articulated through a twist on the more conventional lament that in its espousal of the conceptual, it has little for the eyes to offer. Nauman's work is also invoked to represent 'the end of modernism'. The many new 'approaches' to art are brought together by the [italicized] term '*postmodernism*'.

In the next, longer, sub-chapter 'From Modernism to Postmodernism', we encounter 'Post-Conceptual Art', represented by Hans Haacke 'who employed the Conceptual vocabulary of the preceding decade' and William Wegman. The following sub-chapter is entitled 'Postmodernism'. Beneath the heading 'The Resurgence of European Art', Beuys is presented after Anselm Kiefer whose 'unofficial mentor' he was and who 'helped shape Kiefer's sense of art's social mission'. Foregrounded is *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974), where the artist, covered in felt, spent three days in an empty gallery space with a live coyote (plate 3). Beuys is thus inserted into this chapter – into art history – as virtually already historical (he was, in fact, already dead), but reawakened or actualized by Kiefer. The place for Beuys in history is provided by his Postmodern

successor. Also we learn that 'Neo-Conceptualism' is a 'style' – an 'analytical and often cynical style' – emerging in the mid-1980s (reflecting the ideas of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard and Foucault). The representatives are Mark Tansey, Louise Lawler, Peter Halley and Sherrie Levine. Sherman is presented as 'one of the most prominent' among the group connected to 'Later Feminism'. Not one of the most prominent contemporary artists, obviously, she is certainly among the top late-feminist (women) artists. Her work is reduced to the *Untitled Film Stills* series, one of which is illustrated (from 1978 without identifying number). The last work of this book is Rebecca Horn's *High Moon*, an installation with two rifles and two pools of red liquid from 1991.

The first thing to note in Gombrich (16th edn, London and New York, 1995) is perhaps Table 1: The Millennial Perspective 3000 BC–AD 2000, which ends with the following currents: abstract expressionism, pop art, op art and post-modernism (putting a uniquely strong emphasis on op art). The last chapter had been added to the original text with the 11th edn in 1966 (Postscript 1966). This chapter is now inserted into a larger one entitled 'A Story Without End: The Triumph of Modernism'. It is not a regular last chapter, but remains a kind of postscript containing some comments on the state of art and art history. Gombrich's 1966 view of the task of the historian was firmly Rankean: 'It is the job of the historian to make intelligible what actually happens.' The job of criticizing it is assigned to the critic. Thirty years later, the historian agrees with his former 'critical' self: the list of artists from the 1966 Postscript is preserved, except for the replacement of Pollock by Morandi. The text concludes by listing three male artists who might not accept the 'slogan' 'Post-Modern': Lucian Freud, Henri Cartier-Bresson and David Hockney. Beuys and Sherman never enter this history, nor does conceptual art.

In 1995, the 5th Janson edition, revised by A. F. Janson, 'has more changes than all previous ones combined since it first appeared' according to the Preface. But we should look first at 'Part Four: The Modern World', which has a section on 'Twentieth Century Sculpture'. Further down, 'Sculpture after 1945' encompasses 'Conceptual Art'. References are made to Marcel Duchamp and Kaprow. Conceptual art is presented as a 'view' that bypasses execution: 'According to this view, works of art can be dispensed with altogether, since they are incidental by-products of the imaginative leap', which is to take the outer form for the entire work of art, bypassing precisely the conceptual element. Galleries can also be 'dispensed with' and 'even the artist's public', which amounts to the opposite position on the audience to Gardner's in 1975. Conceptual art also 'eliminates aesthetics from art', in tune with some of the conceptualists' own statements. Two examples are given and illustrated. Following Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965) is John Baldessari's *Art History* (1972), which is a photograph with added typed text (not immediately readable as sculpture, that is). This work is praised for its 'ironic humour', if ultimately rejected as an empty gesture. Before the conclusion there is a short section on performance art, the only representative of which is Beuys. It is, despite its heavy reliance 'on the shock value of irreverent humour or explicit sexuality', perhaps 'the most characteristic art form of the 1980s'. The piece *Coyote* [subtitle missing] is illustrated, and judged in fairly positive terms. Beuys comes across as a sincere (political) but hopelessly romantic artist.

Cindy Sherman does not feature in 'Twentieth-Century Photography'. In Janson, her work makes its debut in the chapter entitled 'Postmodernism'. A perhaps unprecedented diatribe in the history of survey texts is followed by a tiny sub-section on (the?) two approaches to blame for the current state of affairs: 'Semiotics and Deconstruction'. The latter is characteristically described as 'destructive, not constructive'. These theories are said to have had a devastating effect on art. The next section of the text is 'Postmodern Art'. In the main, it 'can be traced back to Conceptualism, which led the initial attack on modernism. . . . Indeed, it has been argued that the beginnings of postmodernism can be dated to the rise of Conceptualism in the mid-1960s.' The text denounces appropriation, which borders on 'bankruptcy', a position that resonates with the old Hegelesque concern about artists turning to established styles instead of facing the new. Baudelaire is summoned to disqualify postmodernism as inferior eclecticism. After having dealt extensively with architecture in comparison, the text turns, as it always has in previous editions, to the next art form, sculpture, followed by painting: 'To the extent that it can be said to exist at all, however, postmodern painting is an outgrowth of Conceptualism, Pop Art, and Neo-Expressionism'. As the text approaches photography, Barbara Kruger is introduced, followed by Sherman as 'a paradigm of postmodernism', which sounds disquieting in this context. Yet the discussion her work is afforded is positive in tone, complimenting the artist for her originality and non-textual approach. The price for this is a depoliticized reading. Her *Untitled Film Stills* are so 'skilful that they look like the real thing' (see plate 1). Her work's supposed feminism is questioned, but the photographic example chosen 'is strangely affecting in its aura of nostalgia and the sense of mystery it communicates'. This is the last work of art in Janson's world history, followed merely by a postscript on theory in which semiotics and deconstruction are revisited in a negatively biased manner.

The differences from the third Janson edition are striking, although some elements are retained, such as the decision to focus on a small number of individuals. Other than that, this text is wholly concerned with the perils of postmodernism, which turns it into a pamphlet. For example: 'Postmodernism is a trend that [is] opposed to the world order as it exists today and to the values that created it.' And: 'Deprived of traditional guidelines, the postmodernist drifts aimlessly in a sea without meaning or reality.' Finally: 'Postmodern people are thus fated to become pleasure-seeking narcissists without any strong identity, purpose, or attachments. Cynical and amoral, they live for the moment.' This text survived into the edition of 2002, but was then replaced.

The last chapter of Gardner's survey (10th edn, Fort Worth, 1996) is 'The Later Twentieth Century'. It includes, apart from the usual timeline, a map of the post-colonial world of today featuring the spread of religions. Before turning to art in the ordinary sense, several pages are devoted to fashioning a more political picture of the situation (attested to by labels like post-imperialism, international migration, political equality and cultural equivalence). This amounts to an unusually ambitious post-colonial embedding, defining 'the ideology of egalitarianism/multiculturalism [as] the most widespread and significant of those ideologies that comprise Postmodernist thinking'. As we head into the text, we find the sub-chapter 'Pop Art and Postmodern Trends' and more familiar language. Tying 'Happenings, Performance Art, Conceptual Art' together into one

heading means that conceptual art (divorced here from minimalism), shares the section with Beuys and Sherman. Let us first see how this particular sub-chapter fits into the previous history of modern(ist) art:

> Readers will notice that in the course of narrating the stylistic changes of twentieth-century art we have been shifting from labelling it 'Modern' to 'Modernist'; and its ideology, the set of ideas by which it explains itself, we now call 'Modernism'. The complex of Modernist styles originating at the end of the nineteenth century is now identified as a distinct period; its art-historical development seems to be reaching a conclusion or, at least, a bewildered pause – perhaps a transition to something new. Modernist art and ideology are being revised and reacted against. The revisions and reaction go by the name Postmodernism.

After presenting Kaprow's happenings (in general; there is no specific example), Beuys is represented by a performance, *Iphigenia/Titus Andronicus* (1969), which means this time that he features as a living representative of the then contemporary scene. The text on Beuys ends rather cynically by noticing that 'the artist believed that the world could be changed'. Immediately following this is a dry description of the next phase:

> Conceptual art communicates message and meaning through the more permanent media, two dimensional or three dimensional or both, often in combination with printed text. The primary purpose is to get across an idea, a concept, with whatever visual means are available. In this respect, Conceptual art resembles advertising art and display, which no doubt have strongly influenced it.

The examples are Sylvia Plimack Mangold, *Two Exact Rules on Dark and Light Floor* (1975) and Gilbert and George, *We Are* (1985). Conceptualism is then associated with feminist activism, where it is claimed it can be 'most effective'. Sherman is represented by *Untitled* (1992). 'The concept clearly determines the expressive distortions of the forms, and Sherman's art can be classified as both Conceptualist and Expressionist, with more than a touch of Surrealism' and, presumably, as activist or feminist, although these are not labels of style. The last picture of this history of art is not an artwork, but an Associated Press Photograph: *Tinnamen Square, June 6, 1989*, showing the individual figure who confronted a parade of tanks in front of the international news media. The attached comment is not on contemporary visual culture or the end of art, but an expression of political hope for moral force and bravery.

THE 2000S

Two chapters are of interest in Honour and Fleming (6th edn, London, 2002, without John Fleming). The first is 'Post-War to Post-Modern', including the section 'Minimal and Conceptual Art', where conceptual art is diminished to a few lines following minimalism, without mention of Kosuth or any more prominent representative. No illustration covers this phase. This is, pretty much, it: 'The central theory of Conceptual Art is that the work of art is essentially an idea which may, or may not, generate a visible form.' The next chapter, 'Continuity and Change: The Twilight of the Second Millennium', extended by Michael Archer (from 'The Post-Medium Condition' to 'Globalization'), begins to sketch a

political situation, then turns to art and the distinction between modern and postmodern in particular: 'By the latter half of the 1990s . . . increasing familiarity with the critical positions articulated in Post-Modern art made artists feel much less need to work in explicit opposition to Modernism.' This introduces a new theme, and suggests ways away from postmodernism. Instead of concluding the chapter on contemporary art in 1982, Beuys is now part of this chapter's very beginning ('Questioning Modernism'), tagged with the words 'most provocative questioner of all received ideas about art'. The hare performance is joined by an illustration of 'his last and perhaps greatest work': *Plight* (1985). 'Art as Identity' features Sherman represented by two illustrations; an *Untitled Film Still* (unnumbered, from 1980) and *Untitled No. 120* (1983), the latter a development along the same lines of mask and identity, now in colour. The last artwork illustrated, in the sub-section 'Spectacle' within 'Globalization', is Tracey Emin's mixed media installation *My Bed* (1998).

In Honour and Fleming (7th edn, London, 2005) the section from the former edition on minimal and conceptual art has more than doubled in size, and has been divided into two headings. The text on conceptual art has been completely rewritten and fleshed out with three illustrations and two longer quotations from LeWitt and Kosuth. *One and Three Chairs* (1965) is back – in colour! References are made to Fluxus, Cage, the Gutai group, Happenings, Black Mountain College, Duchamp, Dan Graham, Daniel Buren, the 'Information' exhibition of 1970, computer technology, Vito Acconci, Ed Rusha, Baldessari, Bernd and Hilla Becher. The new title to the last chapter, extended again by Michael Archer, is 'Into the Third Millennium'. The text is virtually the same, but some headings are changed or new, most notably 'Art after Post-Modernism' (reprinting the same text, however, on painters like Laura Owens and Luc Tuymans). A new sub-chapter is 'The Turn of the Millennium', which reveals nothing about its content. The last artist is Beatriz Milhazes and the painting *Mares do Sul* (2001).

In Stokstad (rev. 2nd edn, Upper Saddle River, 2005), 'The International Avant-Garde since 1945' starts off with an example – Jannis Kounellis' installation of twelve horses in a Roman gallery in 1969 – which sets the (conceptual) tone for the chapter. This work 'stimulates our imaginations even as it defies our normal expectations of a work of art and – like much innovative art since World War II – causes us to question the nature of art itself.' The sub-chapter 'Conceptual and Performance Art' (following minimalism and postminimalism) contains Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs* (1965), in which the artist is 'eliminating the art object itself. Although the Conceptualists always produced something physical, it was often only a printed statement, a set of directions, or a documentary photograph.' Duchamp's growing importance is asserted, as (for Kosuth) is Wittgenstein's. Bruce Naumann is represented by a new work, *Self-Portrait as a Fountain* (1966–67), followed by Beuys' *Coyote* (1974), while Fluxus and Cage are mentioned in passing. In the section entitled 'Postmodernism' the so-called 'Neoconceptualists' are still represented by Halley and Levine, but Jeff Koons has replaced Tansey and Lawler. Enumerated under 'Later Feminist Art', immediately following, are Kruger and Sherman (represented by *Untitled Film Still # 21*, 1978). Postmodernism is said to be a nebulous term, but whatever its significance, 'it involves rejection of the concept of the mainstream and recognition of artistic **pluralism**, the acceptance of a variety of artistic intentions and styles [bold in original]'. The last artwork is

by Wenda Gu, *United Nations – Babel of the Millenium* (1999), a site-specific installation made of human hair. The text picks up a comment by the artist, on the possibility of a 'great "utopia"' within the art world, if not the world.

The 7th edn of Janson (Upper Saddle River, 2007) is officially renamed *Janson's History of Art: The Western Tradition*, which follows the pattern set by Gardner in 1975 and is part of a growing tendency openly to declare what the geo-political boundaries of texts like these actually are. Six authors are listed for this edition.[34] Two chapters cover the period of interest here: 'Postwar to Postmodern 1945–1980', and 'The Postmodern Era: Art Since 1980'. This draws a clear dividing line between modern and postmodern exactly thirty years ago. The title word postmodernism is exchanged here for postmodern, perhaps indicating an era or period more than aesthetics, expression, or style.

The caption containing conceptual art now sounds like conceptual art: 'Conceptual Art: Art as Idea'. The Kosuthian reference notwithstanding, the text now contains two artists: Kosuth and Beuys (Baldessari is gone). Idea is emphasized 'rather than the aesthetics of style'. Furthermore: 'In Conceptual Art, the art generally exists solely as an idea, with no visual manifestation other than words.' This cliché is spawned by the conceptualists themselves, with very little basis in fact (as acknowledged by Stokstad in 2005). Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* is referenced here as well. Kosuth's piece *One and Three Chairs* (1965) is now interpreted, with more sympathy and understanding, as a 'textbook study in *semiotics*'. The work also reflects a new approach to photography – sculpture is not a viable context anymore. The next representative of conceptual art is Beuys, 'who produced work so complex and rich in ideas it is nearly impossible to pin down exactly what his art is', which threatens to dilute the sense of conceptual art beyond reason. His performance *How to explain pictures to a dead hare* (1965) is described and contextualized, but the *Coyote* is left out. Former references to Fluxus and Cage are now covered under a new subheading: 'Television Art: Nam June Paik'.

Sherman is divorced from feminist art and Judy Chicago. Her appearance is in 'Deconstructing Art: Context as Meaning', sub-section 'Photography and LED Signs'.[35] Illustrated is the *Untitled Film Still # 15* (1978) about 'the complex ways in which images become invested with meaning' and thus also pointing to semiotics. The very last illustration in this book is Cai Guo-Qiang, *Light Cycle: Explosion Project for Central Park* (2003). The artist is presented as 'primarily a conceptual artist working in a broad range of media'. References are made, by artist and author, to extraterrestrials and to an art for the universe.

Gardner's *Art Through the Ages: A Global History* (13th edn, 2009, international student edition, not for sale in the US) has a new subtitle and once again a single author in Fred S. Kleiner. It is interesting to compare the ambitions, communicated by the subtitles, between Janson 2007 and Gardner 2009 (in which the wider geographical scope is made possible by a more condensed textual coverage of areas and ages). 'Europe and America After 1945' (with a reference to the international terrorism plaguing the world today) contains just a few sub-chapters, one of which is 'Painting and Sculpture since 1970', in which postmodernism is introduced with the following words: 'By the 1970s, the range of art produced in both traditional and new media in reaction to Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, and other formalist movements had become so diverse that only a broad general term can describe the phenomenon: *postmodernism* [italics in

original].' This art 'comprises a dizzying array of artworks in different media. Only a representative sample can be presented here.' While these lines disclaim any historical account more elaborate than the sample, they still claim to provide the correct sample; representative, presumably, of what has actually happened.

Between Miriam Schapiro and Barbara Kruger, we find Sherman as a sample of 'feminist art'. Her art is represented by *Untitled Film Still # 35* (1979), a series supposedly influenced by the stereotypical depiction of women in 'soft-core pornography magazines', as well by popular film genres. The next, and last, section is called 'Performance and Conceptual Art and New Media'. Beuys exemplifies performance art, illustrated by the hare piece. The story of his rescue is retold here without reservations.[36] There are two conceptual artists: Kosuth and Naumann. The former is presented by *One and Three Chairs*, and the latter by the neon piece *The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths* (1967). But perhaps after all there is only one conceptual artist rather than two or three. Naumann's identity as a conceptual artist is effectively denied when his 'work of the 1960s' is said to have 'intersected with that of the Conceptual artists'.

The last artist in the most recent edition is Matthew Barney, represented by the *Cremaster* cycle (1994–2002). The cycle, installed in the Guggenheim Museum rotunda in 2003, 'typifies the scale of many contemporary works' which are deemed congruent to 'the immense scale and often frenzied pace of contemporary life'. Underlined in this concluding paragraph on the global history of art are multimedia and new (i.e. digital) technologies:

> No one knows what the next years and decades will bring, but given the expansive scope of postmodernism, it is likely that no single approach to or style of art will dominate. But new technologies will certainly continue to redefine what constitutes a 'work of art'. The universally expanding presence of computers, digital technology, and the Internet may well erode what few conceptual and geographical boundaries remain and make art and information about art available to virtually everyone, thereby creating a truly global artistic community.

CONCLUSION

It is not altogether easy to detect a steady course of development in this material – either in the sense of increasing sophistication or of narrative improvement between the 1980s and the end of the 2000s. What was understood to constitute art history after the 1939–45 war has of course been increasingly augmented with new empirical material, information, and challenges from the impact of developments in the interpretative possibilities of art history, visual studies, and related approaches.[37] My interest has been in the terms in which the new material has been cast, and, ultimately, what historical trajectories compete with each other in defining this art-historical era.

Why, to begin by looking at the whole three decades, does the Gardner text of 1975 sound more up-to-date or modern than the survey competitors of the mid-2000s? They are, after all, almost twice the size. Was Gardner's grasp of the material still saturated with optimistic expectations for a new role for art, involving audience interaction enhanced by new technology? As well as the expectation that art should be orientated towards the future, and encouraged to embrace it by this technology? One might say, in hindsight, that these attitudes

define the first Gardner as still modernist, or perhaps pre-postmodern. But it was also, at least in this regard, less prone than modernist thought to cling to the idea of succeeding 'isms', movements or art forms. It was less occupied with form, style and artistic individuals than was modernism, and instead showed interest in addressing what seemed visible on the horizon, such as audience participation, systems theory and a digital revolution.

Before turning to the 'contemporary' assignment and to postmodernism, let me comment on how the test cases were dealt with in these texts. Conceptual art was closely linked to minimal art in 1982, but then largely disassociated from it in many later texts until the 2000s. No one places such weight on conceptual art – or conceptualism – as a style as Stokstad (which is the only survey to specify post- and neo-conceptualism by headings). In the earlier texts, conceptual art is almost wholly identified, not only with Joseph Kosuth, but with *One and Three Chairs* (1965), which seemed almost to denote conceptual art to the exclusion of any possible competitor. The exceptions to this are Honour and Fleming (who in 1982 favoured Sol LeWitt and in 2002 no one) and Stokstad (1995), where the only (negative) example of this art form is by Naumann. As the years pass, however, conceptual art is awarded more space and appreciation, which is a sign of its increased functional contemporaneity, whereby work from the Vietnam War era is treated as contemporary with art practices from the present decade or so. At times (Janson, 1995), a lack of insight and sympathy is likely due to perceived links between conceptual art and postmodernism.

For some of these authors, Joseph Beuys is a distinguished representative of conceptual art, and for others, of performance art or of postmodern art. His work is illustrated by his most fetching performances, and almost never by his more conceptual installations (except in Honour and Fleming, 2002). Cindy Sherman enters this history in the mid-1990s. For most authors she is evidently a feminist artist, with only Janson (1995) contesting the identification, with the apparent consequence that he bestows considerable lyrical praise on her art. Feminist or not, Sherman apparently belongs for all commentators to the postmodern scene, and is strongly identified with her *Untitled Film Stills* series. The choice of which one to illustrate is not deemed overly important, due most likely to the conceptual underpinnings of her work. Sherman is also described, following traditional art-historical procedure, as a combination of previous styles (Gardner, 1996), and as iconographically coupled to issues about identity (Honour and Fleming, 2002).

Looking at who is awarded until further notice the symbolic status of the last artist in art history gives a sense of the structure of these narratives, which are open-ended, and to that extent optimistic. Those who are posited at the threshold to the future are, at various moments and in various editions, Joseph Beuys, Marino Marini, David Hockney, Rebecca Horn, Cindy Sherman, an Associated Press Photograph, Tracey Emin, Wenda Gu, Beatriz Milhazes, Cai Guo-Qiang and Matthew Barney. These latter artists especially are connected to something greater than themselves and art: the world, peace, the human spirit, democracy or the universe.

When 'contemporary art' is invoked, on the one hand, as a chapter title in 1982, I read it as completely relative, comprising whatever is deemed the latest work of interest. Since divisions of time such as ages, centuries, periods and

movements, all belong to the chronological logic of the survey genre, and provide a foundation for the discipline of art history, we might say that this chapter collects art belonging to a period that does not yet have a name. When, on the other hand and at the other end of the time span, 'contemporary art' is referenced in 2009 in connection to the 'frenzied pace of contemporary life' we recognize the topos from Gardner, who spoke in 1926 of art as a reflection of life. More importantly, I would suggest we understand 'contemporary' here as pointing to a perception of some higher level of complication, based on certain developments in 'life' due to new information technology, multiculturalism, globalization and so forth, which are understood to have altered and literalized the meaning of contemporary. Contemporary no longer refers only to the latest work or moment of interest – and as such to phenomena notoriously difficult to summarize (a commonplace clearly expressed here by Gombrich and Janson). Now it signals a new era, with its quicker pace, frenzy, dizzying qualities, etc., all of which are instantly recognizable as modernist tropes – already present in Baudelaire and ceaselessly elaborated in his wake – that by the 1960s had attained the status of cliché. However, when contemporary today points to co-existing approaches, styles or problems; to 'time–space compression',[38] or a perceived simultaneity made possible by digital communication networks; we seem to have rather material justification for the growth of 'contemporary' in our terminology. Another reason is that the term is 'liquid' or fluid enough to move at high speed in a transcultural environment of capitalist exchange without having to confront prevailing problems of historical periodization (modern, modernist, late modern, postmodern, post-historical, most prominent, though there are others), which ultimately refer to larger, more content based, issues of identity and power.[39]

Postmodernism is first mentioned in 1982, and with exclusive reference to architecture. When Janson refers with disdain to this term in 1986, it is to accuse it of being both facile and illogical, since 'modernity can never be outdated, because it is simply what is contemporary'. The modern and the contemporary can be and have been used as synonyms, but by 1986, 'The Modern World', a concept referenced in almost all of these texts, has gained a fairly stable period quality, extending by most accounts from sometime in the nineteenth century to the present. The problem of any usage of 'contemporary' is that it causes confusion between what is 'simply' the latest, most recent, and the like, and what is coloured, in a more absolute and definitive way, by 'modern' characteristics. The *OED* lists four meanings of the adjective 'contemporary', the first three of which are relatively neutral, having to do with the co-existent, coeval and simultaneous, whereas the forth reads as follows:

> 4. a. Modern; of or characteristic of the present period; *esp*. up-to-date, ultra-modern; *spec*. designating art of a markedly *avant-garde* quality, or furniture, building, decoration, etc., having modern characteristics . . .[40]

When the adjective 'modern' is connected to expressions such as 'ultra-modern' and 'avant-garde' it is anchored in history, more precisely to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. 'Modern' can and is, of course, still commonly used in a relative sense to describe periods preceding as well as succeeding the so-

called modern period. But by and large 'modern' without qualification has come to designate the cultural period preceding our own. The issues of delimitation opening up here, however, are too vast to pursue in the present context; given, to take just a single instance, the widespread reading of the postmodern as an aspect of the modern.[41] Formulating what is now a common position, Hal Foster claimed in 1982 that, 'if postmodernism is truly deconstructive of modernism, it would seem to be a discursivity within it', and continued by positing that 'it may be less a break with modernism than an advance in a dialectic in which modernism is re-formed'.[42]

In my survey, postmodernism is described as a straightforward and incongruous term (Janson, 1986), a 'slogan' (Gombrich, 1995) and a 'trend' (Janson, 1995, Gardner, 1996), none of which is very helpful in determining its historical implications. In Stokstad (1995), postmodernism is an 'approach to art' in reaction to modernism; and in Gardner in 1996 it is not only a 'trend' but also a 'revision' or 'reaction' to the period of modernism. But whether such a revision is a passing fad, or something more durable, the text does not say. The first clear use of postmodern as a period term in the texts I have considered is in Honour and Fleming, 2002, where the chapter title reads 'Post-War to Post-Modern'. The latter word appears to be distinguished from 'postmodernism' in lower case, which refers to the aesthetic response to this captitalized historical phase.[43] In 2007, Janson complies with this precedent. 'Postwar to Postmodern 1945–1980' is followed by 'The Postmodern Era: Art Since 1980'. But more than that, the periodization has been nailed down to a precise moment between post-war and postmodern, the year 1980. In a sense then, all of the texts included in my survey belong, following Janson, to 'The Postmodern Era' (which is taken to begin in the 1960s or 1970s and reach its peak in the 1980s). Now, in order for such an era to be established or be distinguishable as such, it would need to have ended, and in fact both the last two editions of Honour and Fleming (2002, 2005) have moved beyond 'The Postmodern Era'. This alerts us to the peculiar place of 'the contemporary' in this discourse. The page is turned towards a new chapter, connected not to centuries or movements, but to millennia: 'Into the Third Millennium' is Honour and Fleming's. This text was the first to include postmodernism, and the first to leave it behind. What this draws attention to, among other things, is the problem facing those accounts of contemporary art that stretch back to 1945. How could 'contemporary' cover – without innumerable distinctions – what precedes as well as what succeeds the postmodern? How much further into the third millennium will the contemporary label be applicable if it is to preserve any substantial number of its meanings for us? What might succeed it?

Talking about postmodernism in this way may warrant a word of warning. This kind of 'isolation of different points of emergence does not conform to the successive configurations of an identical meaning; rather, they result from substitutions, displacements, disguised conquests, and systematic reversals'.[44] While I have indeed presented various isolated points of emergence of the postmodern in these texts, the issue is neither which point is the correct one, nor which text is the more accurate description of the world; the point is that no such coherent formation of meaning exists against which to measure variations or deviations. What these histories give us are not different interpretations of a solid and factual historical phenomenon; they constitute this phenomenon through

their discourse. In a certain sense, postmodernism conforms in reality to all of these partly conflicting descriptions. It is only what it is being conjured up as. Thus, it is simultaneously, among other things, a style, an approach, a trend, a rejection, a slogan, a phenomenon and a period. Where we would put our money is a different matter, which ultimately the critic within us (not the genealogist) will decide.

Notes

1 Edward Lucie-Smith,*Art Today*, London, 1995, 7.

2 Amelia Jones, *A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945*, Malden, MA, 2006, 3.

3 Eleanor Heartney,*Art & Today*, London, 2008, 7.

4 e.g. Uta Grosenick and Burkhard Riemschneider, eds, *Art Now*, Köln, 2001, and the *Art Now* exhibition programme on current developments in contemporary British art at Tate Modern, begun in 1995.

5 Michel Foucault, 'On the archeology of the sciences: response to the epistemology circle', in Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James Faubion, London, 2000, 312.

6 The reference is to the opening lines of E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 13th edn, London, 1978, 4: 'There really is no such thing as Art. There are only artists.'

7 Foucault,*Aesthetics*, 304.

8 Brandon Taylor,*Art Today*, London, 2005, 9.

9 See Julian Stallabrass,*Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art*, Oxford, 2004; Terry Smith, 'What is contemporary art?: contemporaneity and art to come', *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History*, 2002, 71, 1–2, 3–15; Arthur C. Danto, 'Introduction: modern, postmodern, contemporary', *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, Princeton, 1997, 3–19.

10 Amelia Jones, 'Introduction: writing contemporary art into history, a paradox?', in Jones, ed., *Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945*, 3.

11 Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *A World History of Art*, 7th edn, London, 2005, xii.

12 Harry Harootunian, 'Remembering the historical present', *Critical Inquiry*, 33, Spring 2007, 471–94, esp. 475. See also Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe, Cambridge, MA and London, 1985.

13 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. with introduction by Gabriel Rockhill, London and New York, 2004, 26.

14 Charles Baudelaire, 'The painter of modern life' in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne, London, 2003, 1.

15 Jonathan Harris, *Art History: The Key Concepts*, London and New York, 2006, 67.

16 James Elkins, *Master Narratives and their Discontents*, New York and London, 2005, 157.

17 Helen Gardner, *Art through the Ages*, New York, 1926, 466.

18 Amelia Jones, 'Writing contemporary art into history', 4.

19 Contemporary history, however, habitually uses either the 1914–18 war or the 1939–45 war to delimit the contemporary period.

20 My survey certainly is Eurocentric, since I have not been able to discuss here what is presented as the most recent state of the arts within the chapters, in so far as they exist, on non-European art.

21 'Contemporary art', http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contemporary_art (accessed 13 October 2008).

22 Baudelaire, 'The Painter', 1–41. See also Stephen Bann, *Ways Around Modernism*, New York and London, 2007, which is highly relevant apropos the relationship between modernism and postmodernism and what preceded both.

23 I base this on my larger study of the general survey art history in Germany, *Art of Illusion: The Representation of Art History in Nineteenth-Century Germany and Beyond*, Bern, 2004.

24 My choice of these five – three American and two produced in the UK – has to do with the fact that they are probably the most influential survey texts of general art history since the twentieth century.

25 Gombrich, preface to the 15th edition (1989), included in *The Story of Art*, 16th edn, London and New York, 2002, 12.

26 The interpretation of conceptual art is undergoing significant changes during the period, which point to its esteemed increasing relevance as a foundation for postmodern or contemporary art practices. See, for example, Claire Doherty, ed., *Contemporary Art: From Studio to Situation*, London, 2004; Alexander Alberro and Sabeth Buchmann, eds., *Art after Conceptual Art*, Vienna, 2006.

27 Alfred H. Barr Jr's diagram of the development of cubism and abstract art (1890–1945) has been discussed by many. See for example Sybil Gordon Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr Jr and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art*, Cambridge, MA and London, 2002, and James Elkins, *Stories of Art*, New York and London, 2002, ch. 1.

28 For the whole context of these artistic interests, see Donna De Salvo, ed., *Open Systems: Rethinking Art c. 1970*, exh. cat., London, 2005.

29 The book was first published in 1950. For commentary and criticism, see Elkins, *Stories of Art*, New York and London, 2002 and Dana Arnold, *Art History: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford and New York, 2004, ch. 2.

30 G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, 1, trans. T. M. Knox, Oxford, 1998, 11.

31 Franz Kugler, 'Über die gegenwärtigen Verhältnisse der Kunst zum Leben' (last chapter of his *Handbook on Painting*, 1837), reprinted in Kugler, *Kleine Schriften*, 3, Stuttgart, 1854, 206–32. The equivalent of an art, in the 1980s (post-conceptual if not yet unequivocally named postmodernist) in the nineteenth century is what Baudelaire and others referred to as philosophic art, which was precisely concerned with the role and meaning of art as such.

Baudelaire, 'Philosophic art', 205–13. See also Karlholm, *Art of Illusion*, 2004, ch. 4.

32 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History* (1873), New York, 2005.

33 H. W. Janson, *History of Art* was first released in 1962.

34 Penelope J. E. Davies (ed.), Walter B. Denny, Frima Fox Hofrichter, Ann M. Roberts, and David L. Simon.

35 LED = light-emitting diodes, a medium used by Jenny Holzer, among others.

36 Already in 1980, serious doubts about the authenticity of this recollection, and more, were recorded by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Beuys: the twilight of the idol, preliminary notes for a critique' (1980), reprinted in Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Cultural Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975*, Cambridge, MA and London, 2000, 41–64.

37 See for example A. L. Rees and Frances Borzello, eds, *The New Art History*, London, 1986; Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, London and New York, 1999; Elkins, *Visual Studies: A Sceptical Introduction*, New York, 2003.

38 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Malden, MA and Oxford, 1990, part 3.

39 'There are reasons to consider ''fluidity'' or ''liquidity'' as fitting metaphors when we wish to grasp the nature of the present, in many ways *novel*, phase in the history of modernity.' Zygmut Baumann, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge and Malden, MA, 2000, 2.

40 'contemporary', *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2000, http://dictionary.oed.com/

41 Among the first to formulate postmodernism's intricately paradoxical relation to modernism, as prior to it, in effect, was Jean-Francois Lyotard. See his 'Answering the question: what is postmodernism?', included as Appendix in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Manchester, 1984.

42 Hal Foster, 'Re: post' (1982), reprinted in Brian Wallis, ed., *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, New York, 1984. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*.

43 This conforms to a widely accepted reading, for instance, in Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London and New York, 1991, and Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, Malden, MA and Oxford, 1996.

44 Foucault, 'Nietzsche, genealogy, history', in Donald F. Bouchard, ed., *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, Ithaca, NY, 1977, 51.

5

MICHEL FOUCAULT AND THE POINT OF PAINTING

CATHERINE M. SOUSSLOFF

Commençons par comprendre qu'il y a un langage tacite et que la peinture parle à sa façon.[1]
Merleau-Ponty, 1960

What would it mean to consider the major French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–84) as a historian of art who specialized in European painting, in addition to his already established position as one of the fathers of the field of visual studies? How are Foucault's views on painting entailed in the fields of art history, aesthetics, and visual studies in the twenty-first century? In this historiographical introduction to Foucault's writings on painting, I seek to understand their significance for art history in Foucault's time and in ours.

By way of introduction, I remind readers that Foucault's first essay on painting explored a single masterpiece by Diego Velázquez (1599–1660), *Las Meninas*, which art historians have long considered one of the most important works in the history of art. Each of the subsequent four essays provided a monographic treatment of the canonical works of a single major European artist: the French realist and Impressionist, Edouard Manet (1832–83); the Belgian Surrealist René Magritte (1898–1967); and Gérard Fromanger (1939–), Foucault's contemporary and a member of the movement called 'La Figuration Narrative'.

PAINTING IN HISTORY

I presume the seriousness of Foucault's address to painting in both its specificity and in its cumulative effect. There is a wide range of references to the visual and to the art-historical in Foucault's writing, but his study of painting has a particular weight at a particular time in both the development of his thought and in the historiography of art history.[2] There was nothing exceptional in taking painting as central to the theory of art or even to aesthetics, but Foucault's unique contribution to art history was to see painting, at least for a time, as both evidence of and explanation for 'the discontinuity of events and the transformation of societies' that both led to modernity and distinguished it from his own time.[3] In 1972 he wrote: 'Serial history makes it possible to bring out different layers of events as it were, some being visible, even immediately knowable by the

contemporaries, and then, beneath these events that form the froth of history, so to speak, there are other events that are invisible, imperceptible for the contemporaries, and are of a completely different form.'[4] Foucault's systematic study of painting occurred during that period of his early work often called his structuralist phase. The essays on painting, therefore, are of a piece with his elaboration of an approach to history as the search for the contacts between moments of transformation and typological analyses. Painting and particular paintings provided the actual and material points of contact, or sedimentations if you will, of what could not be seen elsewhere or explained using other means.

Foucault's essays on painting take up the relation of painting to knowledge (*savoir)* – particularly the question of how visual language means – using this innovative approach that he termed historical. Like the phenomenologists who preceded him, Foucault understood painting as in some way contributing to an understanding of how knowledge is communicated. By the third quarter of the twentieth century, when Foucault focused on painting, it had already been a major topic of interest for Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Sartre's essays included 'The Paintings of Giacometti' (1954), who was primarily known as a sculptor, and 'The Prisoner of Venice' (1957) on Jacopo Tintoretto. Merleau-Ponty wrote three essays on painting: 'Cezanne's Doubt' (1945); 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence' (1952); and 'Eye and Mind' (1960). Like these older philosophers, Foucault accepted the primacy of painting in the field of the visual arts as a whole, but unlike them he sought to understand painting's significance as historical, that is, as occurring over time.[5]

Foucault looked at and understood Italian, Spanish, and French painting and theory from the early modern period to his own day. Foucault's biographer Didier Eribon reports on an early and long-lasting fascination with the history of art, particularly the painting of the Italian Renaissance.[6] According to Jacqueline Verdeaux, she and Foucault journeyed to Florence and Venice in the summer of either 1952 or 1953 '"He loved painting . . . he made me understand the frescoes of Masaccio in Florence"'[7] (plate 1). This early interest by Foucault in the paintings by Masaccio in Florence in the Brancacci Chapel in Santa Maria del Carmine and in Santa Maria Novella signals an interest in the Western art-historical canon and its masterpieces, particularly its history paintings that would surface in Foucault's work in the following decade. These frescoes were understood by art historians to have initiated the pictorial narrative histories, or discourses, so integral to the history of European art.

The paintings on the walls of the Brancacci Chapel are visually ordered and framed for legibility in accordance with the biblical stories they depict. The frescoes depict figures which, in their novel anatomical precision and sombre, yet clear colours, demonstrate a new naturalism. Perhaps for the first time in the history of art, Masaccio employed a form of geometrical perspective in the composition of the frescoes in Santa Croce. These scientific principles, as they were called at the time, led Leon Battista Alberti (1410–72) to name the deceased Masaccio in the dedication of his book *On Painting* (1435).[8] In Masaccio's Florentine frescoes Foucault would have found many of the topics that engaged him in the essays on painting written between 1965 and 1975: the naturalism of the classical age, which he explored at length in the essay on *Las Meninas*; the use of

1 Adrian Fletcher, *The Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence*, *c.* 2000. Digital photograph. Photo: © Adrian Fletcher, www.paradoxplace.com.

darks and lights to give the illusion of shape and roundness to the figures in space that he explored in Manet; the use of pictures to illustrate words that he explored in Magritte; and the ways in which numerous pictures can be disposed coherently in a pictorial space that he found elaborated and transformed in Fromanger.

PAINTING AS KNOWLEDGE

During approximately one decade Foucault wrote four essays that addressed the question of art, its history, and its relationship to the *episteme* through the high art medium of easel painting. Foucault's lengthy definition of the *episteme*, given in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (*L'Archéologie du Savoir*) in 1969 and published only two years after his first essay on painting, i.e. the chapter on *Las Meninas* in *The Order of Things* (*Les Mots et les Choses*), provides a useful starting point for a historiographical understanding of the place of painting in his thought: 'The episteme is not a form of knowledge (*connaissance*) or type of rationality which, crossing the boundaries of the most varied sciences, manifests the sovereign unity of a subject, a spirit, or a period; it is the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them at the level of discursive regularities.'[9] In some more or less obvious ways Foucault certainly understands painting as possessing a 'discursive regularity', or *episteme*, but painting differs in that 'it is discursive practice that is embodied in techniques and effects'.[10]

Discussing technique in the visual medium of film, Barthes had said that 'the ingredients of "technique"' constituted 'this glue which established ... *naturalness*'.[11] This different discursive practice, embodied by the techniques and effects of the painted representation, is what gives painting a theoretical shape unlike the sciences and philosophy. Foucault wrote: 'In this sense, the painting is not a pure vision that must be transcribed into the materiality of space; nor is it a naked gesture whose silent and eternally empty meanings must be freed from subsequent interpretations. It is shot through – and independently of scientific knowledge (*connaissance*) and philosophical theme – with the positivity of a knowledge (*savoir*).'[12]

From Alberti onwards, arguments have been made for the superiority of painting as a method or medium of knowledge production, distinct from writing. Primary among these positions is the understanding of painting as speaking without words: 'Painting does not speak', wrote Leonardo, 'but it is self-evident through its finished product. ... If you call painting mechanical because it is primarily manual, in that the hands depict what is found in the imagination, you writers draft with your hand what is found in your mind ... painting embraces not only the works of nature but also an infinite number that nature never created.'[13] Importantly, in his writings on painting, Foucault insisted on a further distinction: that between painting as *savoir* and the kind of knowledge produced by philosophy or science, which he called *connaissance*.[14] Here the postmodernist Foucault diverged dramatically in his conception of painting from earlier art theorists, most importantly the influential French art critic and philosopher Paul Valéry (1871–1945), who had understood painting as *connaissance*.[15] Valéry saw the paintings by Leonardo as the exemplification of *connaissance* as a style of knowledge.[16] In his 1929 essay, 'Leonardo and the philosophers', Valéry argued that the artist painted as a philosopher and that painting is philosophy: 'Leonardo is a painter: *I say that he has painting for philosophy*. In truth, he says it himself and he speaks painting as one speaks philosophy: that is, he brings to it everything. He makes of that art (which at first appears so distinctive in regard to thought and so far from the possibility of satisfying all intelligence) an excessive idea. He sees it as the ultimate effort of a universal spirit.'[17]

In understanding painting as *savoir*, Foucault followed Merleau-Ponty's suggestions on how to proceed in delineating the differences and similarities between verbal and visual signs in the essay 'Indirect language and the voices of silence', first published in a two-part instalment in the journal *Les Temps Modernes* in 1952 and subsequently as one essay in the book called *Signes* in 1960.[18] Originally intended as a chapter of his never-completed book called *The Prose of the World* (*La prose du monde*), it can be no accident that Foucault used this title for the second chapter of *The Order of Things*. In this essay, Merleau-Ponty contested André Malraux's analysis of painting by attempting to demonstrate the nature of its being in the world. The argument is complex and long, but aspects of it related directly to Foucault's later essays on painting and these are the ones that concern me here. Merleau-Ponty began his essay with a homage to Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistics: 'What we have learned from Saussure is that, taken singly, signs do not signify anything, and that each one of them does not so much express a meaning as mark a divergence of meaning between itself and other signs.'[19] In an interview, Foucault acknowledged that Saussure had been a major influence in

his exploration of 'the relation between meaning and the sign' in *The Order of Things*.[20] In the explanation of the *episteme* Foucault cast Saussure's 'divergence of meaning' in a distinctly historical light: 'the episteme is not what may be known at a given period, due account taken of inadequate techniques, mental attitudes, or the limitations imposed by tradition; it is what, in the positivity of discursive practices, makes possible the existence of epistemological figures and sciences.'[21]

Further, and more directly concerned with the topics to be found in Foucault's writing on painting, a long passage in Merleau-Ponty's essay explains the prominence that Foucault gave to oil painting, its techniques and masterpieces, and to the focus on changes over time in ideas of visual representation. Merleau-Ponty begins by acknowledging the specificity of oil painting both in its technique and in its history of representing the world.

> To begin with, oil painting seems to enjoy a special privilege. For more than any other kind of painting it permits us to attribute a distinct pictorial representation to each element of the object or of the human face and to look for signs which can give the illusion of depth or volume, of movement, of forms, of tactile qualities or of different kinds of material ... These processes, these secrets augmented by each generation, seem to be elements of a general technique of *representation* which ultimately should reach the thing itself (or the person himself), which cannot be imagined capable of containing any element of chance or vagueness, and whose sovereign function painting should try to equal.[22]

Merleau-Ponty continues with an explanation of the masterpiece in painting as being the result of this accretion of the knowledge of technique over time:

> The career of a painter, the productions of a school, and even the development of painting all go toward *masterpieces* in which what was sought after up until then is finally obtained; masterpieces which, at least provisionally, make the earlier attempts useless and stand out as landmarks in the progress of painting.[23]

From the idea of the masterpiece Merleau-Ponty goes on to posit the exceptional kind of representation found in 'the classic age', the era in which Foucault found *Las Meninas*.[24] Merleau-Ponty asks whether we do not all see the representation in the same way with the same senses; a question he answered in the negative in the following paragraph by insisting on the importance of both the painter and the cultural specificity in what we see.

> The fact remains that the classical painters were painters and that no valuable painting has ever consisted in simply representing ... That is why the works of the classical painters have a different meaning and perhaps more meaning than the painters themselves thought, why these painters frequently anticipate a kind of painting that is free from their canons, and why they are still necessary mediators in any initiation to painting. At the very moment when, their eyes fixed upon the world, they thought they were asking it for the secret of a sufficient representation, they were unknowingly bringing about that *metamorphosis* of which painting later became aware. ... The perception of classical painters already depended upon their culture, and our culture can still give form to our perception of the visible. It is not necessary to abandon the visible world to classical formulas or shut modern painting up in a recess of the individual.[25]

Here Merleau-Ponty insists on understanding the transformations that occur in the masterpiece which are beyond the norms of representation prior to them and beyond the consciousness of the painter. One could say that these are made visible if the meaning of a masterpiece is known. Additionally, Merleau-Ponty asserts the validity of contemporary painting. These points were to be key to Foucault's thinking about painting.

HISTORICAL METHOD AND REALISM IN PAINTING

In the first Preface to *The Order of Things* Foucault went much further than simply acknowledging the importance of a chronologically structured comparative method as essential to his approach.[26] He distinguished the results obtained using his comparative method from other mono-disciplinary approaches. Foucault's novel comparative method that takes place over time, and which I see as profoundly important for the four essays on painting, pertains to a historiographical analysis. Foucault called it a revelation of 'a *positive unconscious* of knowledge: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of scientific discourse'.[27] After the publication of *The Order of Things* he explained it this way: 'But I can define the modern age in its singularity only by contrasting it with the seventeenth century on the one hand, and with us, on the other hand; so, in order to effect this transition it is necessary to bring out in all our statements the difference that separates us from it. It is a matter of pulling oneself free of that modern age which begins around 1790 to 1810 and goes up to about 1950, whereas for the Classical age it's only a matter of describing it.'[28] The conscious freeing of oneself from the immediately preceding era ('up to 1950') allows the historian to achieve the critical distance necessary to an archaeology of knowledge. For these reasons, perhaps paintings, as both the objects of description and as material artefacts with which one could either identify or from which one could be physically separated ('pulling oneself free'), served as ideal methodological elements in Foucault's historiography. Foucault's repeated defence of *The Order of Things* rested on his understanding of its place as a 'history of discourse'.[29] Thus, when taken together we might think of Foucault's essays on painting on both the macro and micro levels: as a history of visual representation and as a partial history of art. On the level of method, Foucault's history of painting may be considered partially fractured and containing deep contradictions and tensions inherent to painting – particularly the masterpiece – rather than as a continuous, and predictable, narrative about art.

The essays on painting follow Foucault's approach as expressed in the preface to *The Order of Things*. He began in the seventeenth century, the classical age, that is, with an extensive description of Velázquez's monumental oil painting of 1656 known as *Las Meninas*. This is Foucault's best-known writing on art, in one of his most read books, and although many art historians and philosophers in France, England, Spain, Germany and the Americas have interpreted it extensively since the late 1970s, they have done so without considering it of a piece with the three later essays on painting.[30] After this book, Foucault moved from baroque Spain to France in the mid-nineteenth century, that is, the modern age, with his three lectures on Manet written between 1967 and 1971. Foucault had planned these as a book entitled *Le Noir et la Couleur* (no doubt a pun on Stendhal's realist novel of

1830 *Le Rouge et le Noir*). The centrepieces of this chronological study were three of Manet's masterpieces: *Music at the Tuileries* (1862), *The Balcony* (1868–69), and *The Bar at the Folies Bergère* (1881–82). Although under contract directly after *Les Mots et les Choses* appeared, this book was never published, the essays have been lost, and it is known only through the publication in French of a recording of a lecture Foucault gave in Tunis in 1971 as a coda to a course on Italian Renaissance painting.[31] Foucault moved on to Surrealism in an investigation of pictures and words in the essay on Magritte *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*. His essay of 1968 was named after a painting of 1926 by Magritte of the same name, was expanded and published as a book in 1973, and was later translated into English.[32] In that essay, Foucault's associative method manifests itself in a discussion of Manet's *The Balcony*, with its internal references to Goya's painting of *Majas on a Balcony*, and returns in an analysis of Magritte's response to it. Finally, in 1974 Foucault published an essay, which appeared the next year as an illustrated book, on his contemporary, Gérard Fromanger, entitled 'La peinture photogenique' ('Photogenic painting'). This essay was translated into English in 1999 in an extremely valuable edition with facing French text.[33] Fromanger has been given serious consideration in France and Britain, but otherwise he is not well known despite his close affiliation with the Situationists, the performance artist and painter, Yves Klein, the filmmaker Jean-Luc Goddard, and the philosophers Felix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze, and Foucault, most of whom he portrayed in portraits.[34] Considering what Merleau-Ponty had said regarding the continuing value of painting for the transformation of representation, it is worth noting that Foucault concluded his writings on painting with a discussion of Fromanger. His work depicts current events using painterly techniques together with photographic projection, thus remaining within the tradition of the history of painting while at the same time transforming it. Fromanger's paintings can be said to bring into visibility simultaneously that which is known about the history of painting and that which is known about the events of the present.

Certain conclusions regarding Foucault on painting may now be drawn. First, Foucault thought about painting chronologically, century by century from the seventeenth century to his own day.[35] Indeed, painting is central to his analysis of modernity, for, according to my analysis of the four essays, it is through painting or with paintings in mind that the major concerns of the modern age may be seen and by which they are revealed.

A second, related point may also be made: Foucault was one of the first scholars of the post-war generation to explore the place of realism in painting, in particular how French realism with its concerns for the representation of a contemporary reality played a role in and helped to construct the modern *episteme*. In more recent art history, the new direction in painting that took place in the middle of the nineteenth century has been called realism or realist figure painting.[36] But for Foucault the topic of realism in painting and elsewhere had intertwined in philosophy since Hegel and in political theory since Marx. The meaning of reality and the nature of realism in philosophy and cultural criticism had occupied numerous thinkers important for the intellectual formation of Foucault. Most notably, his mentor and teacher Jean Hippolyte had offered a structuralist revision of the earlier thinking of the French existentialists on the relationship between Marx and Hegel that included in it some thoughts on

realism and reality.[37] In Hegel, according to Hippolyte, reality pertains to appearance; it can be construed as the actualization of appearance. He argued that for Hegel: 'Reality is the manifestation that does not aim beyond itself; it not dependent but sufficient in its own self-manifestation.'[38] Following Hippolyte, Foucault desired a history 'detached from the ideological system in which it originated and developed'.[39] In his four essays on painting, Foucault looked to realist painting – that which could be said to have been apparently sufficient in its own terms – in order to escape the ideological system in which it, like all art, was imbedded. Foucault explored this painting because issues of resemblance, representation, appearance, and social class or position are all central to the modes and methods of depiction. Taken together, using both Marx and Hegel, these are the issues for 'realism' according to Hippolyte. If Foucault's choices for his exploration of painting followed Hippolyte, as I argue here, then he found in this art not a universal or absolute reference to knowledge as philosophy (*connaissance*) but exactly what he found depicted there: knowledge (*savoir*) as situated in what it represented; transparent only to the actual appearance of the painting and contingent upon it.[40]

In the study and practice of nineteenth- and twentieth-century art and literature – in Stendhal for example – realism indicated first and foremost a visual and verbal verisimilitude, such as that found in Manet's paintings, or in the individual pictorial elements in Magritte's Surrealism. But it also indicated, as Hippolyte had argued, a significant relationship to historical representation and the attendant political realities writ large. 'The characters, attitudes, and relationships of the dramatis personae, then', wrote Erich Auerbach in his influential study of the problem of the representation of reality in literature, 'are very closely connected with contemporary historical circumstances; contemporary political and social conditions are woven into the action in a manner more detailed and more real than had been exhibited in any earlier novel, and indeed in any works of literary art except those expressly purporting to be politico-satirical tracts.'[41]

It is significant that Foucault's argument about modernity and representation in *The Order of Things* based itself upon a historiography of realism in literature and art that had been established in France in the nineteenth century, as I will demonstrate in due course. So too, Foucault continued this argument about realism throughout the subsequent essays on painting. Again, signalling the importance of nineteenth-century realism even in his study of his contemporary, Foucault wrote that Fromanger re-created a kind of reality effect of the image that had been released at the time of the invention of photography: 'The emergence of realism cannot be separated from this great surge and flurry of multiple and similar images. A certain penetrating and austere relation to the real, suddenly demanded by the art of the nineteenth century, was perhaps itself made possible, balanced and alleviated by this mania for ''illustrations''. Fidelity to things themselves was both a challenge to and the occasion for this glide of the images that danced and turned about them, always the same and imperceptibly different.'[42]

Foucault explored masterpieces and canonical artists with a particular focus on French painting and on what was considered by art historians in the nineteenth century to have been the major art-historical influence on the beginnings of modern French painting: the Spanish tradition. The Galerie Espanole in the

Louvre had been established by 1838, indicating the importance of the Spanish masters for the French context. By the 1880s Velázquez had become 'the harbinger of modernity in painting'.[43] Recent studies by Gary Tinterow, Svetlana Alpers, and others have revealed the extent of the indebtedness to Spanish painting, particularly to Velázquez, on the part of Manet and those radically inclined artists who sought in the middle of the nineteenth century to revise painting in order to make it 'modern'.[44] Twenty years ago, T. J. Clark observed that the contribution of Manet to modernity lay in his revision of the meaning of representation: 'Something decisive happened in the history of art around Manet which set painting and the other arts upon a new course. Perhaps the change can be described as a kind of skepticism, or at least an unsureness, as to the nature of representation in art.'[45]

With Foucault's essays in mind, we can now see how these perceptions of realism's contributions to modernity lay in a distinctly French historiography of art, as well as *in* French painting itself. Foucault's recognition of the centrality of Manet's debt to the Spanish School and its significance for the history of art owed much to his familiarity with French nineteenth-century art history. A primary source for Foucault's concerns with the role of painting in the archaeology of knowledge, as delineated in *The Order of Things* and in the essay(s) on Manet, may be found in a book by *Inspecteur des Beaux-Arts* Paul Lefort (1829–1904). Lefort began his monograph *Velazquez* with the caption: 'Caractères de la peinture de Velazquez, ses affinités esthétiques avec les tendances de l'art moderne'.[46] Lefort's first chapter explained the significance of '*le naturalisme*' in modern art by allying it with the observational and positivistic sciences, such as archaeology and ethnography.[47] Moreover, as Lefort explained his understanding of the tendencies of the art of the present, he also stated his belief that the art of the future would respond to the sea changes brought about in modern society by science and philosophy because it remained true to the nature of its own techniques and realities. In terms that have much in common with Foucault's essays on Velázquez and on Manet's paintings, Lefort spoke of the nature of the realism of both Velázquez and of the nineteenth-century French painters as faithful to the laws of light, as close to scientific in its observational qualities, and as taken from real life.[48]

In *The Order of Things* Foucault began with an extensive and expansive analysis of a Spanish painting. As Foucault stated in the preface to the book, the painting of *Las Meninas* by Velázquez epitomizes the classical age of representation, when parity and cohesion existed among the domains of representation, language, science, wealth and value.[49] It was no accident that the essay(s) on Manet followed directly upon Foucault's point in the chapter on *Las Meninas* that established the function of the visual representation of reality. Foucault had claimed that beginning in the nineteenth century a rupture occurred with the qualities of the classical age that he had delineated so extensively in *Las Meninas*: 'It is this configuration that, from the nineteenth century onward, changes entirely; the theory of representation disappears as the universal foundation of all possible orders; language as the spontaneous *tabula*, the primary grid of things, as an indispensible link between representation and things, is eclipsed in its turn; a profound historicity penetrates into the heart of things, isolates and defines them in their own coherence, imposes upon them the forms of order

implied by the continuity of time.'[50] In the Manet essay it is light cast from outside the painting that illuminates within its penumbra the meaning of the figures found there.

Turning again to Foucault's essay on Fromanger, it becomes clear how the concerns found in the first and second essays on painting continued to develop for him. For Foucault, Fromanger's paintings functioned as contemporary histories, just as Velázquez and Manet had painted the histories of their times. *La peinture photogenique*, the title of the essay, is a pun on *le dessin photogenique* (literally, 'photogenic drawing'), the French phrase normally used to translate 'William Henry Fox Talbot's name for the results of his first, cameraless photographic process'.[51] At the beginning of the essay, Foucault positions us in the history of the medium and institution of photography to which Fromanger's paintings refer and which they transform. Next, Foucault turns to the techniques use by the artist, in order to demonstrate how they are intertwined with his subject matter. Fromanger projected black-and-white snapshot slides or transparencies of contemporary events onto canvas, such that Foucault called these paintings 'photo-slide-projection-painting'. Once the photographic image had been thrown onto the canvas by the projector, Fromanger fixed it there by painting it *alla prima*, as the Renaissance technique is known. He added the colours later, after the first layer of black and white or monochromatic paint dried. Of this process, which combined the technologies of photography with the time-honoured techniques of oil painting, Foucault wrote:

> . . . the most intense and disturbing moment is when, having finished work, he turns off the projector, causing the photograph he has just painted to disappear and leaving his canvas to exist 'all by itself'. A decisive moment when, the current switched off, it is the painting itself and its own powers which must let the event through and sustain the existence of the image. The image and its colours, from now on, must generate the electricity; it has the responsibility for the celebrations it will ignite. In the movement by which the painter removes the photographic substrate from the painting, the event slips through his hands, spreads out in a sheaf, gaining infinite speed, instantaneously joining and multiplying points and times, generating a population of gestures and looks, tracing a thousand possible paths between them – and ensures indeed that the painting, emerging from the night, will never again be 'all alone'.[52]

According to Foucault, Fromanger's paintings made using this innovative technique possess the residue of the process of projection, including its 'electricity', which virtually generates the painted image seen on the canvas. When combined with the subject matter of the photographed and then painted contemporary event, the method promises a knowledge of both event and technique that is visible and known.

PAINTING'S PLEASURES

Thus far we have seen that Foucault used painting to address technical and theoretical matters common to the history of art and its theory: the nature of the medium itself; the meaning of representation and resemblance in the mimetic system of Western art history; the meaning of light and shadow; the differences between words and pictures; the effects of photography on the fine art of painting. For Foucault all of these issues of painting pertain to its place in

knowledge (*savoir*). However, it was also of interest to Foucault that since the beginning of the Renaissance, painting has been acknowledged in art theory as the medium that most appealed to the mind, precisely through its ability to give pleasure as a result of its beauty. 'How much painting contributes to the honest pleasures of the mind, and to the beauty of things, may be seen in various ways but especially in the fact that you will find nothing so precious which association with painting does not render far more valuable and highly prized', wrote Alberti in 1435.[53] In an interview in 1975 Foucault echoed Alberti's views on the pleasure of painting: 'That which gives me pleasure in painting is that one is truly obliged to look. So, that gives me a sense of repose. It is one of the rare things about which I write with pleasure and without having to argue with anyone about it. I believe I do not have any technical or strategic relationship with painting.'[54]

The pleasure (*plaisir*) to be found in painting, referred to twice here by Foucault, was a commonplace in art theory. Foucault also used the term in a similar fashion in the second volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1984), whose title in French, *L'usage des Plaisirs*, can be associated with the theoretical aspects attributed to painting in Foucault's archaeology of knowledge. In the introduction to *The Use of Pleasure[s]*, Foucault explained the history of sexuality as an exploration of the 'arts of existence' by which men 'seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria'.[55] Here, Foucault used a familiar art-historical terminology: the 'singular being' could have referred to the figure of the artist; 'oeuvre' is the French term used commonly in art history for a collection of works by the singular artist; the 'stylistic criteria' referred to that which distinguishes the singular artist's oeuvre from that of others; and 'aesthetic values' referred to the methods of discriminating works of art or connoisseurship.

Near the end of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, published in 1969, Foucault had asked whether one could 'conceive of an archaeological analysis that would reveal the regularity of a body of knowledge, but which would not set out to analyse it in terms of epistemological figures and sciences?'[56] Answering himself in the affirmative, Foucault provided three other possible 'orientations' to the episteme: the archaeological descriptions of sexuality, of painting and of political knowledge.[57] The choice of painting, rather than the fine arts or sculpture, is significant and, once again, specific to it. According to Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, the aim of an archaeology of painting would not be centred on the artist and the 'murmur of his intentions' 'transcribed' 'into lines, surfaces, and colours'.[58] For that matter, in this articulation of the point of painting, Foucault rejects the singular artist as promoter of the meaning of the work of art, just as he had refuted the traditional idea of the author in his famous essay written at the same time.[59] Instead, the archaeology of painting would demonstrate that 'it is discursive practice that is embodied in techniques and effects', and as such, that it possesses what Foucault calls 'the positivity of knowledge itself (*savoir*)'.[60] The *savoir* in painting returns us again to the historiography of art.

FOUCAULT AND FRENCH ART HISTORY

Foucault shared his understanding of the history of painting with his contemporaries, post-war French art historians, particularly those working on Italian

Renaissance art. The early twentieth-century French art historian, Émile Mâle (1862–1954), who had held the Chair of Art History at the Sorbonne, had mainly studied medieval sculpture and architecture: most particularly, the history of the French Gothic. His successor at the Sorbonne, Henri Focillon (1881–1943), who began as a historian of prints, also turned in later years to the study of the Gothic.[61] In this regard it should be noted that in France in the related field of medieval philosophy, there had been great interest in the problems of reality and realism.[62] With the turn towards Italy in French and American art history after the 1939–45 war, the medium of painting again emerged in the ascendant. The art historian, Hubert Damisch (1928–), Foucault's exact contemporary, held posts at the École des Hautes-Études en Sciences Sociales from 1958 to 1971 and from 1974 to 1996 and at the École Normale Superieure from 1967 to 1973. In his first book, a study of the theory of painted clouds published in 1972 and subtitled *Pour une Histoire de la Peinture*, Damisch began, as had Foucault, from the assumption 'that the meaning of art can only be effectively addressed by considering it as a form of thinking'.[63] On close reading, Damisch's project in this book appears to have also been an elaboration and refinement of the arguments that Merleau-Ponty had made about painting in 'Indirect language and the voices of silence'.[64] Damisch's book on clouds posits them as closest to painting ('The cloud is the zero degree of painting') in their materiality and in their signification for pictorial theory.[65] He writes:

> And there is even less justification for postulating the existence, over and above the diversity of works of art, of an *aesthesis*, a network of structural constraints and formal and expressive possibilities that might bestow upon the pictorial products of any given period their historical coherence. No justification at all, apart from a few signs or indications to which the context lends a certain emphasis, a particular *charge* – signs around which it seems possible to construct the project of an analysis that might, by means of a kind of symptomology afford access to the deep structures of the images of paintings, seized upon within the unity of the semiotic process of which they are the object.[66]

In Damisch's pursuit of the unique theoretical value of painting through the semiotics of clouds and in Foucault's exploration of realism in painting as the sign of modernity I find an important historiographical conjunction.

FOUCAULT ON PAINTING AND THE DISCIPLINES

I will now consider some disciplinary positions on Foucault and painting in the context of his considerable prominence as a philosopher and cultural theorist. It can be said that Foucault's total body of work on painting has received little attention from philosophers, historians, and art historians, particularly outside France, with the exception of Hubert Damisch.[67] In 1987 Allan Megill published an interpretative account of some quantitative data that he had gathered on the reception of Foucault's books, mainly by American, British, and French historians. In his discussion of Foucault's influence on the discipline of history he argued that 'Foucault's failure to adhere to ''the usual criteria of historical scholarship''' meant that his influence on the discipline – with the possible important exception of his books on sexuality – could only be minor.[68] Because, argued Megill, Foucault's work is '*anti*-disciplinary' he tended to be seen as isolated in his

approaches which could not be assimilated into the disciplinary canons and approaches of academic history.[69]

While Megill speaks from the disciplinary perspective of history, the critiques that he finds there against Foucault may be related to the attacks on Foucault's historical method levelled by Jean-Paul Sartre and others immediately following the publication of *Les Mots et les Choses*. In 1966 Sartre wrote of Foucault: 'A historian today cannot be a communist; but he knows that one cannot write of a serious history without putting at the forefront the material elements of the life of men, the connections with production, the superstructures that constitute relatively autonomous regions. . . . One cannot invent a new system that, in one way or another, does not mutilate this ensemble of conditioned conditions.'[70] Foucault countered in 1966 and 1967 by insisting that he operated as a historian; and second by insisting that the failure to recognize his form of history occurred because intellectuals could not see that history no longer functioned as 'the final refuge of the dialectical order'.[71] Proclaiming periodization as the necessary first step in a historical analysis gave Foucault license to see, as he put it, 'a set of delicate problems . . . depending on the periodization that one provides, one will reach different levels [of events]. In this way one arrives at the complex methodology of discontinuity.'[72] These discontinuities, necessary to his archaeological method, mark Foucault's essays on painting. Each of his four essays exemplifies a different sedimentation in the problem of visual representation. Foucault's discontinuity, although ordered chronologically, goes against the *telos* of the traditional historical narrative and against a strictly Marxist history, as Sartre complained.[73] In the series of interviews that took place in 1978 with Duccio Trombadori, Foucault responded again to both the attacks of the historians and the existentialists. He expressed a deep dissatisfaction with the results of traditional historical research, he insisted that he always 'referred to and used many historical studies', and he refused 'an analysis based on changes of economic structure' as being 'in itself of explanatory value'.[74] Although much of the criticism that I have outlined here concerns the book in which Foucault's most famous discussion of painting occurred – the first chapter on Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* in *The Order of Things* – the chapter and the painting were barely mentioned.

Turning now to recent philosophers on Foucault and painting, in his book on Foucault and Nietzsche Gary Shapiro gives an extensive summary of the points made by Foucault in the essay on Velàzquez and also touches on the essays on Manet, Magritte and Fromanger.[75] Shapiro finds Foucault's writing on painting to be part of a broader theoretical interest in the significance of language versus visual representations, or 'seeing' versus 'saying'. Martin Jay's earlier research on Foucault's approach to visuality allows us to understand that Shapiro's perspective derives from that of the philosopher Gilles Deleuze.[76] Just after the death of Foucault, Deleuze argued that Foucault's originality lay in a concept of knowledge (the purview of the philosopher) that 'is defined by the combinations of visible and articulable that are unique to each stratum or historical formation'.[77] Deleuze does not go into the essays on painting; however, Jay was certainly correct in understanding that Deleuze has had considerable influence on later understanding of Foucault's views about art as concerned with vision and the gaze, for this is the Foucault that has been taken up by visual studies.

In this field Foucault has emerged as an important presence. But, and significantly for the points made in this essay, without painting. The conclusion of Roy Boyne in an essay on Foucault and art may serve as emblematic of the current state of the historiography: 'Foucault's writing on art is both interesting and symptomatic of some of his wider concerns. It is, however, his innovative and controversial histories of the body, of sexuality, of the self and, overarching all of this, his approach to the understanding of power, that probably hold most significance for the field of art.'[78] A survey of the general introductory texts on visual studies published over the last fifteen years reveals a consistent regard for Foucault's work.[79] However, visual studies emerged as a field or, perhaps, an inter-discipline, ten years after the death of Michel Foucault and it took from Foucault what it needed at that time.[80] Visual studies engages with images and artefacts of all kinds, including high, low and global cultural objects; photography, moving, and digital images, and the cultural institutions that contain and address them, including museums, galleries, markets, festivals, ritual practices, and the internet. Foucault's impact on this relatively new area of study can be understood as significant because he sought through much of his work to address the issue of the construction of modern and contemporary subjects and subjectivities, which today may be increasingly understood as having emerged due to the effects of globalization as seen and constructed mainly through the mass media, including the internet.

The present-day emphasis in scholarship on Foucault's late lectures on politics and ethics reveals the value of his views for a contemporary critical politics. But it could be argued that at the heart of Foucault's critique of the subject is painting. Foucault's famous critique of the author underpins most approaches taken by visual studies towards the singular creator known as the artist: 'The author function is therefore characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation and functioning of certain discourses within a society.'[81] Visual studies as a discipline tends to relegate the artist to a low status, promoting instead observers and consumers as subjects and as subjectified by images and commodity culture. This kind of visual studies relies, therefore, on *The Birth of the Clinic*, *Discipline and Punish*, and Foucault's books on sexuality for their understanding of the production of the modern and postmodern subject.

Another strand of visual studies, most prominently identified with the writing of W. J. T. Mitchell, has tried to dislodge the Foucauldian concept of the subject and his insistence on a comparative historical method (or genealogy) in favour of a resuscitation of a form of iconology, as Keith Moxey has recently argued.[82] In this approach the partially idealized object of study, or the image, as it is always called in this discourse, regains a centrality and maintains an independence from its surroundings. In *Picture Theory* (1994), Mitchell called the image or the object 'a floating instrument of power and expression unto itself'.[83] While Foucault saw the author or singular creator in this light, such a characterization of *painting*, whether historical or contemporary, would have been unrecognizable to him. Foucault's insistence on technique and the particularity of painting has been discussed above. In contrast, in his writing on representation, W. J. T. Mitchell speaks of images and pictures with a striking lack of specificity regarding the techniques and media in the history of art. However, Foucault clearly thought that the historical specificity of the medium with the techniques and methods he

addresses in his four essays pertained to the meaning of representation itself and to its transformations over time.

Jonathan Crary's 1990 book, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, made a major contribution to the understanding of the periodization of new visual technologies by rewriting the story of the birth of photography and cinema. Crary's argument divorced the account, and to a certain extent the theory, of the modern image medium, photography – and by extension, film, video, and digital imagery – from the longer history of pictorial art. Crary's immediate purpose was 'to delineate an observing subject who was both a product of and at the same time constitutive of modernity in the nineteenth century'.[84] Crary's subtle approach to modernity through photographic images and technologies relied on the earlier work of Michel Foucault but without the latter's history of painting.[85] He offered an account reliant on the viewing subject, caught in the institutions of modernity through which the subject circulates, by which it is disciplined, and in which it becomes visualized. In a recent essay on the image, Crary writes: 'many of the current meanings and effects associated with image have their origins in C19 modernity. But those origins have much less to do with reproductive techniques (photography, for example) than with the emergence of new institutional requirements and social imperatives through which many kinds of images merged with dominant economic networks and the industrialization of cultural production.'[86] Here, the stress is on an institutional history and social pressures, rather than on a particular artistic medium. Yet, in the final analysis, like the art historian Victor Stoichita, Crary appears to take from Foucault in *The Order of Things* a fascination with the qualities of representation that would later be identified with 'the image' in the form that visual studies used it, i.e. 'framing', the 'mirroring' of subjectivities, the 'presentness', of images, the auto-circulation of images.[87]

While Crary's exploration of the history of photography as subjective medium in *Techniques of the Observer* simultaneously delineates the concerns of mainstream visual studies and opposes the contemporary iconographers, this is not to say anything new. The transformation of the discipline of art history into visual studies has occurred more rapidly than most changes in the university, when it has occurred at all. Given the scholarly literature in the field of visual studies this change from art history to visual studies in the academy may be due as much to the objects on which it chooses to focus and which it interprets, as it is to any innovative method or approach that it uses. For, the objects towards which visual studies has projected its critique have often been mass media images, television, film, and digital media. Focusing on these objects and their mediatized images, visual studies has produced a critical literature that engages with the social issues and institutions found there: race, gender and sexuality, global art markets, and a cultural anthropology of the museum, among the most prominent topics. It also intersects easily in the contemporary university with the disciplines and field in which these objects and topics are also found: sociology, cultural studies, women's studies, film studies, museum studies, performance studies and anthropology. However, the focus on such objects has also determined a perception of the 'currentness' of visual studies as opposed to a more historically orientated art history. Even if more traditional media and other periods might have provided visual studies with the material necessary to thinking about the social issues and

institutions through more historically and conceptually focused lenses, there is little acceptance of this point of view in visual studies. That is why Foucault's essays on painting are so important to the concerns of both contemporary visual studies and art history. Many have spoken and written about the pervasiveness, functions, and products of what Susan Sontag once called 'the image-world'.[88] In visual studies it has been extolled by W. J. T. Mitchell and the new iconologers, at times at the expense of both the historiography of art history and philosophy's complex analyses of painting in *its* history. Few speak any longer of the significance of painting as thought or philosophy, except in regard to particular historical artists. These are the intellectual consequences of the dimunition of painting's influence. This last sentence should not be taken as a lament for a lost and ideal kind of art history, which never could have existed in any case; nor should it be taken as a criticism of the project of visual studies in the academy today, which I have endorsed in some ways for many years. Rather, I am speaking here of the value of Foucault's *history of painting* for the present. Turning towards the image-world, to a greater or lesser degree, has meant a turning away from the lessons that painting from the early modern period to the present have been there to teach us about and concerning which Foucault's work remains central.

For, as much as Foucault's essays on painting may be used to help us to understand his times, his intellectual biography, and his considerable influence, they also pertain to larger questions and issues in the history of art and visual culture, which I will term historiographical and conceptual. The essays on painting give us an explanation of how the formation of a great thinker both responds to his own moment and rests, in part, on the traditions of disciplines which over time he helped to revise, if not perhaps ultimately bring to an end. There remains a great deal to be learned from them, not least a more precise analysis of Deleuze's assessment that Foucault established visual language as an essential component of the *episteme* for the modern and postmodern periods. Foucault dropped painting after 1975 and took up the history of sexuality. Since then, the 'death of art' has been predicted and asserted.[89] The historiographical introduction to Foucault's points about painting that I have undertaken here presents the very real possibility that the struggle over how to interpret the image, or how the image means, marks or distinguishes both the discipline of art history and its 'kissing cousin', visual studies, in particular ways related to techniques and to history. On the side of the recently 'unseen', Foucault's essays on painting would seem to deserve another look.

Notes

This chapter forms part of a book in progress on the essays on painting by Michel Foucault. At present there exists no comprehensive and scholarly study of Foucault's writing on painting. I am grateful to the editors of this *Art History* book for providing me with the opportunity to present my thoughts here. Preliminary versions of this essay were given at a conference on Foucault across the Disciplines, University of California, Santa Cruz, USA. on 1–2 March 2008 and in a lecture for the Department of Culture and Communication at Södertörn University College, Stockholm, Sweden, in September 2008. I am grateful to Colin Koopman, David and Jocelyn Hoy, Margaret Brose, and Hayden White in Santa

Cruz and to Sara Danius, Dan Karlholm, and Margaretha Rossholm-Lagerlöf in Sweden for encouraging my work on this book. I thank the anonymous readers at *Art History* for their valuable comments and suggestions.

1 'Let us begin by understanding that there is a tacit language, and that painting speaks in its own way.' Maurice Merleau Ponty, 'Indirect language and the voices of silence', in *The Merleau-Ponty Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, ed. Galen Johnson, Evanston, IL, 1993, 84. Originally published as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Le langage indirect et les voix du silence', in *Signes*, Paris, 1960, 59.

2 For a less specific study of Foucault on the related aspects of art and of seeing, see John Rajchman, 'Foucault's art of seeing', *October*, 44, Spring 1988, 88–117. See Leo Steinberg, 'Velásquez "Las Meninas"', *October*, 19, Winter 1981, 45–54, for a useful consideration of the significance of the concept of painting in Foucault's essay.

3 See the conclusion to Foucault's 1972 essay 'Return to history', in Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley and others,New York, 1998, 431.

4 Foucault, 'Return to history', 427–8.

5 Hayden White has persuasively argued that chronology is the basis of historical representation, see his 'The value of narrativity in the representation of reality', in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore, MD and London, 1987, 1–25.

6 Foucault gave a course for the public on Italian *quattrocento* painting in Tunis in 1968 prior to his lecture(s) on Manet, see Maryvonne Saison, *La Peinture de Manet*, Paris, 2004, 21, n. 1. I am grateful to Professor Saison for her generosity in regard to my work on Foucault.

7 Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault (1926–1984)*, Paris, 1991, 66: '"Il adorait la peinture, raconte Jacqueline Verdeaux, c'est lui qui m'a fait comprendre les fresques de Masaccio à Florence."' Verdeaux was Foucault's friend and the translator in 1954 of Ludwig Binswanger's *Dream and Existence*, for which Foucault wrote the introduction.

8 Leon Battista Alberti, 'Dedication of the Italian text to Filippo Brunelleschi', in *On Painting*, trans. Cecil Grayson, London, 2004, 34.

9 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, London, 1972, 191. I draw here from the longer discussion of the *episteme* which leads to Foucault's proposition that painting, among other subjects, could provide 'a much wider application' for an archaeology of knowledge than scientific discourses, see 192–5.

10 Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 194.

11 Roland Barthes, 'Leaving the movie theater', in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 348.

12 Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 194.

13 Leonardo da Vinci, *Leonardo On Painting*, trans. Martin Kemp and Margaret Walker, New Haven, CT and London, 1989, 46.

14 On the importance to Foucault of the distinction between *connaissance* and *savoir* – a linguistic distinction which does not exist in English – see, in particular, his interviews immediately following the publication of *Les Mots et les Choses*: Michel Foucault, 'The order of things' (interview with Raymond Bellour published in *Les Lettres Françaises*, 31 March 1966) and 'The discourse of history' (interview with Raymond Bellour pubished in *Les Lettres Françaises* 15 June 1967), in *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1961–1984)*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. Lysa Hochroth and John Johnston, New York, 1989, 13–18 and 19–32.

15 I explored Valéry's writing on Leonardo's art theory in relation to Foucault's analysis of *Las Meninas* in an earlier article, see Catherine M. Soussloff, 'The trouble with painting, the image (less) text', *Journal of Visual Culture*, 4, August 2005, 191–236. I have significantly revised some of that previous thinking here, but see also the essay revised in *Editing the Image: Strategies in the Production and Reception of the Visual*, ed. Mark A. Cheetham, Elizabeth Legge and Catherine M. Soussloff, Toronto, 2008, 67–92.

16 Paul Valéry, 'Léonard et les philosophes', in *Introduction à la Méthode de Léonard de Vinci*, Paris, 1957, 153: 'Peindre, pour Léonard, est une operation qui requiert toutes les connaissances, et presque toute les techniques: géométrie, dynamique, géologie, physiologie.'

17 Valéry, 'Léonard et les philosophes', 153: 'Léonard est peintre: *je dis qu'il a la peinture pour philosophie*. En vérité, c'est lui-même qui le dit; et il parle peinture comme on parle philosophie: c'est dire qu'il y rapporte toute chose. Il se fait de cet art (qui paraît si particulier au regard de la pensée et si éloigné de pouvoir satisfaire toute l'intelligence) une idée excessive: il le regarde comme une fin dernière de l'effort d'un esprit universel.' Valéry's understanding of Leonardo as philosopher who speaks knowledge (*connaissance*) resurrects a long discussion about the significance of Leonardo in French art theory, which began with the first publication of the artist's *Treatise on Painting* in Paris in 1651. The elevation of Leonardo to the status of philosopher began only when his theory and his art were presented together. In a recent article that examines the representation of Leonardo and his *oeuvre* in the *Treatise on* Painting I have argued that the

conflation of art and theory around the artist resulted in the earliest mapping of style onto what I have called the social surface of the history of art, see Catherine M. Soussloff, 'Discourse/figure/love: the location of style in the early modern sources on Leonardo da Vinci', in *Leonardo da Vinci and the Ethics of Style*, ed. Claire Farago, Manchester, 2008, 37–57. To understand art as knowledge (*connaissance*), whether produced by a theory of painting or in painting itself, requires a style that adheres to the figure of the artist, who may be then represented as a philosopher. This is how Valéry represents Leonardo in his essays on him. The reputation of Nicolas Poussin as philosopher is co-terminus with the publication of Leonardo's *Treatise* and dependent upon it. On Poussin and philosophy, see Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey, *Nicolas Poussin: Friendship and the Love of Painting*, Princeton, NJ, 1996. Foucault moved away from the traditional understanding of the artist as philosopher and posited painting alone as knowledge (*savoir*).

18 On this chronology see, Galen A. Johnson, 'Structures and painting: ''Indirect language and the voices of silence''', in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, ed. Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith, Evanston, IL, 1993, 14–15. Foucault's purported disavowal of structuralism, said to be also a rejection of Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, must be tempered with a close reading of Merleau-Ponty and Foucault on painting, which I can only begin to provide here.

19 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Indirect language and the voices of silence', in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, 76.

20 Foucault, 'The order of things', in *Foucault live*, 16.

21 Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 192.

22 Merleau-Ponty, 'Indirect language and the voices of silence', 85.

23 Merleau-Ponty, 'Indirect language and the voices of silence', 85.

24 Given the importance of 'the classic age' to Foucault's analysis of the painting of *Las Meninas* and to the history of art, it is perhaps useful here to remind ourselves of what his source, Merleau-Ponty, intended by it: 'Later, both [art and poetry] know a classic age which is the secularization of the sacred age; art is then the representation of a Nature that it can at best embellish – but according to formulas taught to it by Nature herself. As La Bruyère would have it, speech has no other role than finding the exact expression assigned in advance to each thought by a language of things themselves; and this double recourse to an art before art, to a speech before speech, prescribes to the work a certain point of perfection, completeness, or fullness which makes all human beings assent to it as they assent to the things which fall under their senses'. (Merleau-Ponty, 'Indirect language and the voices of silence', 84). Compare with Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, New York, 1970, 16: 'Perhaps there exists, in this painting by Velàzquez, the representation as it were, of Classical representation, and the definition of the space it opens up to us. And, indeed, representation undertakes to represent itself here in all its elements, with its images, the eyes to which it is offered, the faces it makes visible, the gestures that call it into being. ... and representation, freed finally from the relation that was impeding it, can offer itself as representation in its pure form.'

25 Merleau-Ponty, 'Indirect language and the voices of silence', 85–6.

26 Foucault, *The Order of Things*, x.

27 Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xi.

28 Michel Foucault, 'On the ways of writing history' (Interview originally conducted by Raymond Bellours in *Les Lettres Francaises*, 1187, 15–21 June 1967, 6–9) in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley, New York, 1998, 293.

29 Foucault, 'The discourse of history', 30.

30 Gary Shapiro's recent book *Archaeologies of Vision: Foucault and Nietzsche on Seeing and Saying*, Chicago, IL, 2003, is an exception to this statement in that he discusses all of the essays on painting, but in the context of an investigation of theories of vision and aesthetics from Nietzsche to Foucault. This approach does not presume nor investigate a specific historical integrity among Foucault's essays on painting. On Shapiro see below.

31 See the excellent publication of this lecture by Saison, *La Peinture de Manet*. Molly Nesbit has recently lectured in Buffalo and Moscow on Foucault's writing on Manet, see http://2nd.moscowbiennale.ru/en/light_in_buffalo. I am grateful to the anonymous reader for this reference.

32 Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, ed. and trans. James Harkness, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1982.

33 Michel Foucault, 'Photogenic painting', trans. Dafydd Roberts, in Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, *Gérard Fromanger*, London, 1999, 83–104. This book contains an essay on Fromanger, Deleuze, and Foucault by Adrian Rifkin that I will discuss in my forthcoming book.

34 For a recent reconsideration of Fromanger and his associations with artists and philosophers, see Jean-Paul Ameline and Bénédicte Ajac, *Figuration Narrative: Paris 1960–1972*, Paris, 2008.

35 The significance of the missing eighteenth century in this historiography must be bracketed here for exploration in another place.

36 See Linda Nochlin, *Realism*, Middlesex, 1971, 13: 'A basic cause of the confusion bedeviling the notion of Realism is its ambiguous relationship to the highly problematical concept of reality.' See also, Gary Tinterow, 'The triumph of Spanish

painting in France', in Gary Tinterow and Geneviève Lacambre, *Manet/Velázquez: The French Taste for Spanish Painting*, New York and New Haven, CT, 2003, 44, who uses the term 'Realist figure painting'. The literature that intervenes between Nochlin and Tinterow on nineteenth-century French painting holds so many interpretations of the meaning of realism and reality for this period that I cite only those that are immediately useful for the purposes of my interpretation of Foucault's essays here.

37 Jean Hyppolite, *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, trans. John O'Neill, New York, 1969. The book was originally published in French in 1955. The book contains an excellent preface and introduction by the translator on the historiography of Hyppolite's thinking.

38 Hyppolite, *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, 182.

39 Foucault, 'Return to history', 423.

40 Hyppolite, *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, 182: 'Essence is no longer the condition of reality but becomes its meaning and is identical with reality in so far as it is self-comprehension and no longer simply that which is understood.'

41 Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Litearture*, trans. Willard R. Trask, Princeton, NJ, 1953, 457. To date I have not been able to establish the extent of Foucault's views on realism in painting in relation to those of Auerbach on literature, but the analogies are extremely close and will be examined by me in my forthcoming book. Auerbach's book was first published in 1946 and would have been known to Foucault.

42 Foucault, 'Photogenic painting', 84.

43 Suzanne L. Stratton-Pruitt, 'Introduction: a brief history of the literature on Velàzquez', in *The Cambridge Companion to Velázquez*, ed. Suzanne L. Stratton-Pruitt, Cambridge, 2002, 6. Foucault is mentioned briefly in this essay on page 8: '*Las Meninias* has as well attracted the attentions of philosophers such as José Ortega y Gasset and Michel Foucault. The latter's 1966 interpretation of *Las Meninas* as a classical representation has spawned a number of articles influenced by linguistcs and structuralism.'

44 See the informative essays in Tinterow and Lacambre, *Manet/Velázquez*. See also the chapter 'Velázquez's resemblance to Manet', in Svetlana Alpers, *The Vexations of Art: Velázquez and Others*, New Haven CT, and London, 2005, 219–62. Foucault is not mentioned in either of these two books, both of which deal with his central argument in *Las Meninas* and the content of his essay on Manet concerning the nature of modern representation.

45 T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers*, Princeton, NJ, 1984, 10.

46 Paul Lefort, *Velazquez*, Paris, n.d., 3.

47 Lefort, *Velazquez*, 6.

48 Lefort, *Velazquez*, 8: 'Le caractère de cet oeuvre présente, en effet, de telles affinités et de si parfaites analogies avec les recherches d'exactitude, de sincérité et de d'absolu, naguère heureusement inaugurées par les paysagistes et poursuivies actuellement par notre école presque tout entière, que celle-ci rencontre assurément, en Velazquez, l'enseignement et les moyens d'expression qui répondent le mieux à ses aspirations. Velazquez est donc pour elle comme un précurseur, un initiateur. Autant par son mode d'interprétation de la vie que par la justesse de son observation des lois de la lumière, observation qui a chez lui quelque chose de rigoureux, de scientifique; autant par ses habituelles méthodes d'exposition simple et claire d'un sujet, ou pris dans la vie réelle, ou ramené à la vie réelle, que par ses pratiques si originales, si neuves encore, Velazquez marque une telle avance sur son temps qui'il paraît plutôt appartenir au nôtre.'

49 Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xxiii. See my discussion of the importance of this passage for establishing an idea of image theory in the postmodern era, Catherine M. Soussloff, 'Image-times, image-histories, image-thinking', in *Given World and Time: Temporalities in Context*, ed. Tyrus Miller, Budapest, 2008, 145–70.

50 Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xxiii.

51 Gordon Baldwin, *Looking at Photographs: A Guide to Technical Terms*, Los Angeles, CA, 1991, 64.

52 Foucault, 'Photogenic painting', 94–5.

53 Alberti, *On Painting*, 60.

54 Foucault quoted in Saison, *La Peinture de Manet*, 13–14: 'Ce qui me plaît justement dans la peinture, c'est qu'on est raiment oblige de regarder. Alors là, c'est mon repos. C'est l'une des rares choses sur lesquelles j'écrive avec plaisir et sans me batter avec qui que ce soit. Je crois n'avoir aucun rapport tactique or stratégique avec la peinture.'

55 Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure[s]*, trans. Robert Hurley, New York, 1985, 10–11.

56 Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 192.

57 Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 193–4. Foucault's ultimate decision not to pursue at length an investigation of painting, but rather to devote himself to the volumes on sexuality, has impacted many disciplines and the reputation of his essays on painting. See below.

58 Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 193.

59 Michel Foucault, 'What is an author?', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald Bouchard, trans. Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon, Ithaca, NY, 1977, 113–38.

60 Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 194.

61 See the excellent essay on Focillon by Walter Cahn, 'Henri Focillon (1881–1943)', in *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies on the Formation of a Discipline, Volume 3: Philosophy and the Arts*, ed.

Helen Damico, New York and London, 2000, 259–71.

62 See in particular Étienne Gilson (1884–1978), *Réalisme thomiste et critique de la connaissance*, Paris, 1939; Gilson, *Le réalisme méthodique*, Paris, 1948; Gilson, *Painting and Reality*, New York, 1957. The particulars of Gilson's views in relation to Foucault's remain to be explored, something I hope to do in my forthcoming book.

63 Ernst Van Alphen, 'Hubert Damisch', in *Key Writers on Art: The Twentieth Century*, ed. Chris Murray, London and New York, 2003, 87.

64 In an interview with Yve-Alain Bois, Denis Hollier and Rosalind Krauss, Damisch began by affirming the influence of Merleau-Ponty: 'It's a field with three poles and here my early training with Merleau-Ponty played a decisive part: the question of the unconscious; the question of history (which I would put in third place), and something I don't know whether to call form or structure. Why art? Because I thought that art would be the medium through which I could simultaneiously connect these three poles.

When I was studying with Merleau-Ponty, I wanted to work on Goya in relation to something I called ''the perception of history''. This interested Merleau-Ponty very much, It was the idea that there was a perception of history that connects to darkness in the sense in which you find this in Lucien Febvre, or intitially in Michelet: ''*l'histoire noire*''. It was the idea that in the midst of a history that was narrative, discursive, something suddenly occurred in the work of Goya and especially in the ''Black Paintings'' of the Quinta del Sordo: a kind of silence. It would be, then, a matter not of narrativizing history but of seeing it. What would a phenomenology of the perception of history be?' See, 'A conversation with Hubert Damisch', in *October*, 85, Summer 1998: 3–17. The important work of Hubert Damish on the concept of painting deserves much more attention than I can give it here. I hope to explore his work further in my forthcoming book.

65 'A conversation with Hubert Damisch', 8.

66 Hubert Damisch, *A Theory of/Cloud/: Toward a History of Painting*, trans. Janet Lloyd, Stanford, CA, 2002, 13–14.

67 I have cited studies of the separate essays in the notes to this chapter. To date, there exists no published study of all of the essays on painting, the topic of my forthcoming book. However, two additional citations should be made now: a dissertation by Matthew Barr, *Foucault and Visual Art, 1954–1988*, Courtauld Institute of Art, 2007 and Joseph Tanke, 'A specter of Manet: a contribution to the archaeology of painting', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66, Fall 2008, 381–92. I am grateful to the reader of this chapter for the first reference, which I have not yet had the opportunity to consult. At the conference on 'Foucault Across the Disciplines' at the University of California, Santa Cruz in March 2008, Joseph Tanke told me that he had written a dissertation on Foucault and art in the philosophy department at Boston College that he was planning to publish. I have not seen that dissertation. During a discussion in my undergraduate seminar on Foucault to which Tanke was invited in Spring 2008 it became clear that our very different views of Foucault on painting were determined on the one hand by my historiographical analysis of the essays and their relationship to the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty and on the other hand by his argument that the essay on Manet prefigures a self-construction by Foucault of the ethical philosopher as cynic and the interpretation of art as *askēsis*. For a very different view on the significance of this essay see Nesbit cited above in note 31. I am also grateful to Foucault scholar, editor, and translator Arnold Davidson for discussing the orientation of Foucault towards a philosophy of the self as historically situated at a later period in his life and work than the essays on painting.

68 Allan Megill, 'The reception of Foucault by historians', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 48, January - March 1987, 129.

69 Megill, 'The reception of Foucault by historians', 132–4.

70 Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Jean-Paul Sartre répond', *L'Arc*, 30, 1966 88: 'Un historien, aujourd'hui, peut ne pas être communiste; mais il sait qu'on ne peut pas écrire d'histoire sérieuse sans mettre au premier plan les élements matériels de la vie des hommes, les rapports de production, la praxis, – même s'il pense comme moi qu'au-dessus de ces rapports, les 'super-structures' constituent des régions relativement autonomes . . . On ne peut pas inventer un système nouveau qui, d'une manière ou d'une autre, ne mutile cet ensemble de conditionnements conditionnés.'

71 Foucault, 'On the ways of writing history', 280.

72 Foucault, 'On the ways of writing history', 280.

73 Foucault, 'On the ways of writing history', 280.

74 Michel Foucault, *Remarks on Marx: Conversations with Duccio Trombadori*, trans. R. James Goldstein and James Cascaito, New York, 1991, 124–8.

75 Shapiro, *Archaeologies of Vision*.

76 Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1993, 381–434.

77 Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, ed. and trans. Seán Hand, Minneapolis, MN, 1988, 51.

78 Roy Boyne, 'Foucault and art', in *A Companion to Art Theory*, ed. Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde, Oxford, 2002, 347. Boyne's discussion relies fundamentally on W. J. T. Mitchell, for which see below.

79 This statement and what follows here rely on my research in the English language books that I have found are most often used as visual studies texts. See, Margaret Dikovitskaya, *Visual Culture: The Study of the Visual after the Cultural Turn*, Cambridge, MA, 2005; Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, London and New

York, 1999; Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, London, 2001; Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, Oxford, 2001; Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall, eds, *Visual Culture: The Reader*, London, 1999; Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey, eds, *Art History, Aesthetics, Visual Studies*, Williamstown, MA, 2002.

80 A good, if partial, and brief discussion of this history of visual studies and its relationship to other disciplines may be found in Michael F. Zimmerman, 'Art history as anthropology: French and German traditions', in *The Art Historian: National Traditions and Institutional Practices*, ed. Michael F. Zimmerman, Williamstown, MA, 2003, 166–88. For some useful, if anecdotal, accounts of the rise of visual studies in the US, see Dikovitskaya, *Visual Culture*.

81 Foucault, 'What is an author?', 211. For the history of the relationship of theories of the author and theories of the artist, see Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept*, Minneapolis, MN, 1997. See now the very interesting discussion of author, authorship and authority in regard to Foucault, Barthes, and Arendt in Albert Russell Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, Cambridge, 2008, 3–64.

82 Keith Moxey, 'Visual studies and the iconic turn', *Journal of Visual Culture*, 7, 2008, 131–46.

83 W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, Chicago, IL, 1994. Both Mitchell's use and rejection of Foucault over many years and publications deserves further elaboration than I can provide here.

84 Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, MA and London, 1990, 9. See now the essays in Margaretha Rossholm Lagerlöf and Dan Karlholm, eds, *Subjectivity and Methodology in Art History*, Stockholm, 2003.

85 See especially, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York, 1979 and Foucault, *The Order of Things*. For further thoughts on Crary's book and some of the issues raised here, see Catherine M. Soussloff, 'Review article: the turn to visual culture', *Visual Anthropology Review*, 12, Spring 1996, 77–83.

86 Jonathan Crary, 'Image', in *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, ed. Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg and Meaghan Morris, Oxford, 2005, 178. In this recent essay on the image Crary has moved closer to Foucault and further from phenomenology.

87 Victor Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen, Cambridge, 1997. I found this book extremely thought-provoking at the beginning of my work on Foucault and painting.

88 Susan Sontag, 'The image-world', in *On Photography*, New York, 1977, 153: 'a widely agreed-on diagnosis: that a society becomes ''modern'' when one of its chief activities is producing and consuming images, when images that have extraordinary powers to determine our demands upon reality and are themselves covert substitutes for firsthand experience become indispensable to the health of the economy, the stability of the polity, and the pursuit of private happiness.' For a much longer discussion of the issue of the image in modern and postmodern art history and visual culture see, Soussloff, 'Image-times, image-histories, image-thinking', 145–70.

89 See here Hans Belting, *The End of the History of Art?*, trans. Christopher Wood, Chicago, IL and London, 1987; Arthur Danto, 'The end of art', in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, New York, 1986, 81–115; Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*, New Haven, CT and London, 1989. There are more recent variations on this theme that remain to be explored in the context of Foucault.

6

KARL MANNHEIM AND ALOIS RIEGL: FROM ART HISTORY TO THE SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE

JEREMY TANNER

INTRODUCTION

Karl Mannheim is not much read today by art historians, or indeed by sociologists of art. At best he performs the role of midwife in the story of the development of such fundamental disciplinary paradigms as iconography and iconology.[1] At worst, in the incarnation perhaps most familiar to art historians, he appears as one of the 'enemies of Reason' excoriated by Ernst Gombrich in emulation of his idol Karl Popper.[2] That Mannheim's work between the essay 'On the interpretation of Weltanschauung',[3] which provided the foundations for Erwin Panofsky's classic account of the iconological method, and his study of *Man and Society in the Age of Reconstruction*,[4] the object of Popper's venom, should be almost entirely unknown to contemporary art historians, is something of an anomaly. From Mannheim's earliest publications in the 1920s through to his most famous monograph, *Ideology and Utopia*, Riegl and his successors in the critical tradition of German art history are a constant point of reference,[5] as they were for Mannheim's contemporary Walter Benjamin. Benjamin's encounter with Riegl has been much celebrated in recent writing on the historiography of art. Riegl is seen as a major influence on Benjamin's analytical style in *German Tragic Drama*, connecting close reading of seemingly insignificant motifs with broader cultural transformations.[6] Yet Mannheim's engagement with Riegl was certainly as sustained as that of Walter Benjamin, and, it could be argued, of more fundamental consequence for his own work.

Like Benjamin, Karl Mannheim (1893–1947) had an interestingly ambivalent relationship to the Frankfurt School: he shared office space (but according to Norbert Elias, not much else) with Max Horkheimer and the Institute of Social Research for a brief period after the Institute's foundation and Mannheim's own appointment as Professor of Sociology at Frankfurt in 1929.[7] But it is the earlier background of Mannheim which is relevant to his encounter with Riegl and the Mannheim–Panofsky dialogue. Mannheim, born of a German mother and a Hungarian father, grew up and received his early education in Hungary.[8] Already as an undergraduate, he entered into correspondence with the philosopher and cultural critic Georg Lukacs, and was accepted into

the 'Sunday Circle' of intellectuals – including the poets Balazs and Lesznai, and art historians like Arnold Hauser and Frederick Antal – which met under the leadership of Lukacs. The discussions of this circle ranged widely in philosophy, literature and cultural criticism. One of their central concerns was with how, after aestheticism and modernism, autonomous art might re-engage with society and play a role in cultural renewal, in the face of the crisis of Western civilization which culminated in the 1914–18 war. In a lecture on 'The Soul and Form', given in 1917 under the sponsorship of the Sunday Circle, Mannheim cites Riegl, along with Cezanne, Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky, as one of the sources of inspiration drawn on by members of the group.[9] In the aftermath of the world war, and the failure of a communist revolution in which Lukacs had played a prominent role, most members of the Sunday Circle had to leave Hungary to live in exile. Giving up the beginnings of a literary career in Budapest, Mannheim ultimately took up residence in Heidelberg, and sought to establish an academic career in sociology and philosophy, studying for a doctorate under the direction of Alfred Weber, the brother and successor of Max.

The enthusiasm for Riegl amongst members of the Sunday Circle was certainly not restricted to Mannheim. Lukacs, in his seminal *History and Class Consciousness* (1922), had praised Riegl for noticing that 'the essence of history lies precisely in the changes undergone by those *structural forms* which are the focal point of man's interaction with his environment at any given moment and which determine the objective nature of both his outer and inner life.'[10] But it was for Mannheim that the ideas of Riegl were to have the most enduring significance. As we shall see, concepts drawn from Riegl are central to Mannheim's paradigm for the sociology of culture, best exemplified in his classic study 'Conservative thought' (1927).[11] Indeed it is the appropriation and reworking of Riegl's concept of *Kunstwollen* which plays a large part in Mannheim's ability to transcend the standard (but largely erroneous) textbook criticisms of his programme in the sociology of knowledge, namely self-destructive relativism, reductionism, and the reification of collective mind.[12] Yet social theorists have paid little attention to Riegl as a major influence on Mannheim's thought, and sociologists of art have ignored the significance of either Mannheim or Riegl for the social interpretation of art.[13] At the end of this chapter, I will return to the question of how this dimension of Mannheim's thought was forgotten. But my primary purpose is to explore the intellectual context of Mannheim's encounter with Riegl. Why was Mannheim so fascinated with the work of Riegl? What did Riegl offer Mannheim, and what was Mannheim able to take from Riegl? How were Riegl's ideas transformed in the context of the sociology of culture developed by Mannheim? Although Mannheim had encountered Riegl in the discussions of the Sunday Circle, we must start with the Mannheim–Panofsky dialogue, since it was in this context that Mannheim's sustained interest in Riegl was awakened. Furthermore, the character and significance of Mannheim's appropriation of Riegl is best understood by contrast with Panofsky's: as Christopher Wood has suggested, any evaluation of the significance of the successors of Riegl, left marooned by the vicissitudes of history, necessarily takes place against the horizon of the alternative paradigm, that of Panofsky and Gombrich, which we inherited.[14]

MANNHEIM AND PANOFSKY: DIALOGUE AND DIVERGENCE

In this section, I consider the Panofsky–Mannheim dialogue, from the perspective not of the evolution of art history as a discipline,[15] but from that of the sociology of culture that Mannheim was to develop during the same period as Panofsky codified the methodology of iconography and iconology. Both Panofsky and Mannheim start from, but seek to go beyond, Riegl's concept of *Kunstwollen* in developing a theoretically coherent account of the relationship between cultural objects and their larger contexts. The incipient sociological elements in Mannheim's 'Interpretation of Weltanschauung' afforded Panofsky a more practical interpretative schema than that developed in his earlier account of the concept of *Kunstwollen*, but the social elements theoretically essential to Mannheim's conceptualization remain a residual category in Panofsky's interpretive framework. It was only after 'The Interpretation of Weltanschauung', in his later essays (ignored by Panofsky), that Mannheim was able to characterize 'worldview' in more systematically historical and sociological terms,[16] largely by building on precisely the psychological and collective dimensions of the concept of *Kunstwollen* that Panofsky had rejected.

In his essay on 'The concept of artistic volition',[17] Panofsky sought to establish an 'Archimedean point' for the interpretation of individual works of art in intrinsic terms, rather than by reference to such extrinsic phenomena as developmental stylistic or typological series. In doing so he invoked Riegl's concept of *Kunstwollen*. But he fundamentally revised the character of the concept, arguing that in Riegl's work it had a psychological and hence subjective character on three counts: first, it invoked artistic intention, reconstructed on a circular basis from the work of art such intention was used to explain; second, it hypostasized fictive collective concepts such as 'Gothic man', as subjects of *Kunstwollen*; third, Riegl's starting point was irremediably subjective, namely the artistic volition of the modern viewer, which, according to Panofsky, was irrelevant to the character of the historical artistic objects which the historian aimed to address. Instead, Panofsky sought to understand the immanent or intrinsic meaning of single works of art, through transcendental or a priori aesthetic concepts parallel to Riegl's 'haptic' and 'optic', in terms of which the coherence of a work of art might be analysed. In doing so, he explicitly eschewed interest in temporal progression, historical causation and genetic methods.

In his essay 'On the interpretation of Weltanschauung', Mannheim also sought to establish the cultural sciences, amongst them art history, on a sounder basis, seeking, as he put it, to transpose the 'pretheoretical' apprehension of meaning through the concept 'worldview' into 'scientific and theoretical terms'.[18] But in place of a Kantian epistemological critique (ultimately assuming the Newtonian natural sciences as the model of knowledge), which Panofsky pursued,[19] Mannheim develops 'a phenomenological analysis of the intentional acts directed towards cultural objects', and constitutive of the cultural domain as fundamentally different than that explored by the natural sciences.[20] Mannheim argued that, in response to the premature Hegelian synthesis in which philosophy was the master code, the cultural sciences had been developed through perfectly legitimate acts of disciplinary abstraction, by means of which each field defined itself in terms of its own constitutive subject matter and method – style and style analysis in the case of art history. But any attempt to move beyond mere

description of the cultural series produced by such analysis, in order to explain patterns of change for example, required some kind of reference to the larger cultural whole from which style had been abstracted. Here one needed to invoke some concept such as *Kunstwollen* and behind *Kunstwollen* 'even more fundamental factors' such as Weltanschauung, in order to bring 'these various strata of cultural life in relation to each other, penetrating to the most fundamental totality in terms of which the interconnectedness of the various branches of cultural studies can be understood'.[21] In determining Weltanschauung as an intentional object, Mannheim takes Husserl's phenomenological philosophy in a different direction than had Panofsky. Mannheim distinguishes three levels of meaning characteristic of all cultural objects – objective, expressive, and documentary – which he illustrates with the example of giving alms to a beggar.[22] In seeing his friend perform this act, Mannheim grasps the visual data in terms of the social category of 'giving alms to a beggar', a meaning grasped by virtue of an objective social configuration, interpreted in terms of a shared social orientation, which allows the reconstruction of the 'intention' of the participants without any reference to their personal inner subjectivity. He contrasts this with 'expressive meaning', the act of giving performed as an intimation of sympathy to the beggar, of which full understanding requires reference to the 'stream of experience' of the subject. Both these levels form the basis of, and may be encapsulated in, a 'documentary meaning', framed within a broader context of significance, for example interpreting the friend's act of charity as a document of hypocrisy, when it emerges that it was only performed for the benefit of nearby journalists.[23] Mannheim then explores how this tripartite concept of meaning might be translated for use in the plastic arts, culminating in documentary meaning, grounded in the form and subject matter of a work of art, but not as such the consciously intentional product of the artist.[24]

The search for documentary meaning requires scrutiny of a wide range of instances of cultural expression, whether to detect an individual's hypocrisy, or the underlying meaning of a work of art, shared by all the works of an individual artist or the artistic production of a larger group and time. Mannheim cites Riegl's use of the concept of *Kunstwollen* to draw formal analogies between late Roman sculpture, architecture and philosophy as an exemplary instance of documentary interpretation, and suggests Weber's 'spirit' of capitalism, Sombart's 'economic ethos', Dilthey's 'Weltanschauung' as parallel concepts.[25] Having identified the legitimacy of the level of analysis represented by documentary meaning, Mannheim suggests that the difficulty from a scientific point of view lies in spelling out theoretically the links between different cultural fields which such concepts imply, and their imputation to social bearers (classes and races, the categories respectively of Marxist sociology and nationalist art history, are both rejected, but without satisfactory alternatives being suggested). Mannheim canvasses a number of possibilities for articulating the link: correspondence, function, reciprocity, causality. Riegl's mode of synthesis is clearly that which engages Mannheim most deeply, but ultimately he rejects it for too radical a reduction of complex differentiated cultural meanings in variant spheres to a rather thin typology of initial 'germinal' patterns.[26] Weber's concept of mutual causal determination of different fields is also rejected, not because Mannheim rejects causal analysis per se, but rather because he limits it to explaining the conditions under which specific meanings

are 'actualized', and rejects the causal-genetic explanation of (structures of) meaning as such. By a process of elimination, Mannheim was left to opt for the art-historian Max Dvorak's formulation of the linkage in terms of correspondence and parallelism, but with little conviction and no real justification.

It was this framework, in its still rather theoretically indeterminate and idealist state, that Panofsky appropriated as the basis of his methodological schema for iconography and iconology, developed in a series of papers starting with 'On the relationship of art history to art theory' in 1925, and ultimately codified in 'Iconography and iconology'.[27] As Joan Hart has shown,[28] Mannheim's beggar becomes Panofsky's man tipping his hat, and the three levels of interpretation are reworked as pre-iconographic description, iconographic analysis and iconological interpretation. With its correlation between levels of meaning (pre-iconographic, iconographic, iconological), relevant equipment for interpretation (practical knowledge, knowledge of literary sources, synthetic intuition), and controlling principles of interpretation (history of style, history of types, history of cultural symbols), Panofsky's schema is a neat and deservedly influential methodological framework, even if he was increasingly ungenerous in his crediting of Mannheim for its lineaments.[29] Theoretically, however, it is rather confused, as a number of commentators have pointed out, and represents in certain respects a step backwards from Mannheim's IoW. First, limiting style to a controlling principle on the pre-iconographic level reintroduced the dichotomy between form and content which Riegl (and following him Mannheim) had sought to overcome.[30] Second, the focus on single works of art, as the primary object of interpretation, abstracted from issues of artistic tradition and historical process, permitted connection to a larger historical context only through the invocation of 'synthetic intuition'. This interpreted the work of art as a symptom of some larger mentality, thus returning in effect to the mystical linkage between work and context characteristic of Riegl's *Kunstwollen* concept.[31] Last, Panofsky's schema is dependent on ideas of tradition and notions of collective meaning appropriated from Mannheim's IoW but retained as unexplicated, residual, categories in Panofsky's framework. The appeal to a history of types, to discriminate a woman with a sword carrying a head on a platter as Judith rather than Salome, presupposes the non-circular attribution of artistic intention on the basis of a sociological account of intersubjective meaning, which Mannheim had developed in part by placing some of the fundamental concepts and modes of analysis of Husserl's phenomenology in the frame of a theory of social interaction, much influenced by Simmel.[32] Moreover, the integrity of that tradition of iconographic types is grounded in affect, exactly the kind of subjectivity which Panofsky's avowed theoretical programme abhorred: it is the polarized charges attached to Salome, the 'lascivious girl', and the sword, the symbol of Christian martyrdom, which prevents their combination, whilst the imagery of the heroine Judith is easily fused with that of a head and a charger, which had become a relatively free-floating devotional image, disembedded from its original narrative context and charge.[33]

MANNHEIM'S RIEGL

Mannheim's subsequent theoretical development, like that of Panofsky, involved a return to Riegl, but in Mannheim's case the return was not disavowed. On the

contrary it involved a systematic integration of Rieglian thought into a comprehensive sociology of culture. Mannheim had clearly been extremely impressed by Riegl's *Late Roman Art Industry* (*LRAI*) and spells out its qualities in some detail in IoW: the horizontal differentiation of the concept across media (architecture, painting, sculpture, decorative art), the 'temporal differentiation of the *Kunstwollen* of successive periods' (oriental, classical, late antique), and the correlation of these with contemporary philosophy and religion to produce a kind of '*Weltwollen*' or '*Kulturwollen*', all traced back to a set of 'differentiated germinal forms' of which the diverse *Wollen* are logically derivable 'meaningful variations'.[34] As he struggled with the problems left unresolved in IoW, he discovered further affinities between his own intellectual projects and those of Riegl, and ultimately Riegl's *Kunstwollen* concept became the lynch-pin of Mannheim's own theoretical apparatus. It is the nature of those affinities, and the theoretical synthesis built on their basis, to which I now turn.

Mannheim and Riegl shared a theory of knowledge that differed fundamentally from Panofsky's search for an Archimedean point. Where Panofsky saw contemporary artistic inclinations as potentially distorting our understanding of the art of the past, and sought to replace subjective concepts with transcendental categories, Riegl sees affinities and tensions with the art of the past rooted in contemporary taste as being the very condition of productive engagement with the past.[35] In *LRAI*, modern prejudice against the Constantinian reliefs of the Arch of Constantine offers the grounds for analysing the late antique *Kunstwollen* as 'an entirely positive artistic intention', formulated on the basis of principles which on one level parallel (optical), on another are the inverse of their modern counterparts:

> In this respect, the Constantinian *Kunstwollen* appears almost identical with the most modern; nevertheless its works arouse in us the absolute opposite of artistic satisfaction! What for modern taste is offensive lies in nothing other than the relationship to space observed in it. This harshly separates the visual forms from one another, rather than integrating them with each other in mutual interrelationship, as in general all modern art wishes to do. The figures and their constituent parts set themselves sharply apart from the dark space, whilst we demand from them that they should melt into their environment by means of transition into atmosphere.[36]

Similarly, in *The Group Portraiture of Holland*, Riegl starts from the group portrait to characterize the Dutch *Kunstwollen* on the basis that modern indifference to the group portrait indicates the genre as, by contrast with modern art, the best entry point into the specific character of the Dutch *Kunstwollen*.[37]

Mannheim adopts a comparable stance in IoW, and develops its implications more fully in a series of theoretical and methodological essays, leading up to the publication of his 'Conservative thought' in 1927.[38] Flatly contradicting the scientistic aspirations of Panofsky's *Kunstwollen* essay, Mannheim asserts that the notion of an 'objectively correct' documentary interpretation is meaningless. On the contrary, in the cultural sciences, 'to understand the ''spirit'' of an age, we have to fall back on the ''spirit'' of our own – it is only substance which comprehends substance.'[39] Far from entailing a self-defeating 'epistemological relativism', such an 'existential relativism' is the condition of the development of

new knowledge adequate to the changing character of cultural and historical reality.[40] Echoing Wolfflin's famous example in *Principles of Art History*, Mannheim discusses how a series of paintings of a single landscape will differ in their perspective and foreshortening, according to the standpoint from which each was made. Indeed it is 'precisely by virtue of the fact that it is perspectivistic, [that] this location-bound image has its truth … If perspectivity disappears, the landscape disappears.'[41] Notwithstanding that the paintings are different, the object which they grasp, the landscape, is fixed: they are paintings of the landscape. The validity of each of the perspectives is grounded in the existential bond between it and the standpoint from which it is projected. Similarly, different perspectives on the same social or historical object may all be valid, in relationship to the social or historical standpoint from which they are produced. Correspondingly, the development of socio-cultural knowledge, of a period in history for example, does not take place through the accumulation of single univocal true facts which cancel previous falsehoods, but rather through the reorganization of 'the entire image' of an epoch or a historical figure around a 'new centre of organization' characteristic of a new period, realizing a new image which retains, but reconfigured and enriched, the facts and insights characteristic of the interpretation of an earlier generation.[42]

It follows that, for Riegl and Mannheim, histories of both art and cultural-historical knowledge are not simply accounts of the passive tracing of perceptions of the exterior world, but of the active volitions of subjects who had grasped or constituted the world from specific standpoints and with specific aspirations or commitments which shaped the character of their representation of the world.[43] Mannheim notes how the history of Western thought and art has been punctuated by calls to go 'back to nature', but 'the return to nature' is always to 'a new-formed representation' of nature 'since mankind never meets bare nature, unendowed with meanings'.[44] Comparably, Riegl, perceiving the variety of ways in which nature could be 'realistically' represented, abandoned a concept of art as objective knowledge in favour of one of art as fulfilment of subjective desire – 'the artist wishes to present to us the natural objects only on the strength of what pleases us in them'.[45] In the two versions of his *Historical Grammar of Visual Art*, Riegl shifts from an emphasis on 'truth to nature' (*Naturwahrheit*), a static objectivist concept, to one on the more experiential and dynamic 'truth to life' (*Lebenswahrheit*).[46] For both Mannheim and Riegl, how people represented the world was grounded in what they wanted from the world, in the desire to project a world consistent with their aspirations. As Riegl writes in the conclusion to *LRAI*:

> All human will is directed towards a satisfactory shaping of man's relationship to the world, within and beyond the individual. The plastic *Kunstwollen* regulates man's relationship to the sensory perceptible appearance of things. Art expresses the way man wants to see things shaped or coloured, just as the poetic *Kunstwollen* expresses the way man wants to imagine them. Man is not only a passive, sensory recipient, but also a desiring active being who wishes to interpret the world in such a way (varying from one people, region or epoch to another) that it most clearly and obligingly meets his desires. The character of this will is contained in what we call the worldview (again, in the broadest sense): in religion, philosophy, science, even statecraft and law … [47]

Correspondingly, Mannheim noted that modern sensitivity to 'class' and the development of concepts such as 'capitalism' was not simply a function of the

increasingly dominant role of economic organization in shaping experience, it also, as developed in socialist thought, implied a volition, namely the transcendence of class-based injustice and inequality.[48] Perspectival insight into the world is characteristically linked with our wishes to transform it (utopia), or to preserve a world under threat (ideology), as we shall see in more detail in 'Conservative thought', where Mannheim follows Riegl's lead in exploring the *Denkwollen* of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German political and legal thought (see below). Existentially determined truths in cultural representation themselves return to life and mould epochs.[49]

As a sociologist, Mannheim must also have been attracted by Riegl's increasingly well-developed suggestions not only that social groups might be the bearers of distinctive artistic volitions, but also that the nature of their group life might explain the shape of such volitions. According to received criticism, Riegl is an extreme formalist whose characterization of periods is informed by the 'metaphysical postulate' of a 'synchronic unity of style',[50] and who explained change in

1 Jan Van Scorel, *Portraits of Twelve Members of the Utrecht Jerusalem Brotherhood*, after 1525. Oil on panel,

terms of equally metaphysical hypostatizations, racial dispositions embedded in a unitary will to form.[51] Certainly, Riegl regards periods as in some sense unities, but those unities are much more differentiated than critics like Gombrich allow, generally along tacitly sociological lines.[52] He draws a distinction, for example, between the character of the optically oriented art of the Roman elite, continuing the tradition of Greek art, and the tactile character of popular art in Rome. The artistic impulse or *Kunstwollen* of the period allowed 'room for numerous subjective forms of expression which seemed to contradict one another'.[53] A turning point in the interrelation between these tendencies correlates with the crystallization of changes in political structure under the emperor Diocletian (284–305), giving rise in the fourth century to an 'aesthetic *Wollen*' which combined 'different and even seemingly opposite phenonema', paralleling the opposed 'ethical volitions' of paganism and Christianity.[54]

This linking of artistic volitions and their transformation to social groups and social change plays a relatively small role in *LRAI*, but becomes absolutely central in Riegl's study of *The Group Portraiture of Holland*.[55] Here, the varying formal

characteristics of group portraits are consistently interpreted in terms of differences and changes in the social organization of the corporations who were their sponsors, and the social commitments that underpinned those groups. The characteristic egalitarianism and individualism of Dutch religious confraternities is brought out by contrasting their group portraits with those of their Venetian counterparts. In the former, exemplified by the paintings of Jan van Scorel (plate 1), rows of single heads, coordinated through shared attributes of pilgrimage, but each individually oriented towards the space beyond the picture, gazing in various directions, systematically eschew the shared focus of action, and the subordination to distinct leaders, characteristic of Venetian merchant confraternities (see plates 2a and 2b).[56] It is only as the social character of such groups changes, from religious confraternities in which each individual is primarily oriented to his personal salvation, to civic guards in which fellow citizens acted together to defend their liberty against Catholic and imperial Spain, that the Dutch artistic volition became open to the Italian artistic volition. Italianate

48 × 275.8 cm Utrecht: Collectie Centraal Museum (inv. no.2379). Photo: Centraal Museum Utrecht.

stylistic tendencies emphasizing subordination permitted a clearer sense of a group engaged in common action, but in the work of Dirk Jacobsz such principles were transformed within a dominant 'Hollandisch artistic volition' (see plate 3). Italianate planimetric symmetry is softened, through a staggered composition of the figures in free space, such that the 'dominant' central figure, the captain, seems withdrawn into the centre, and to owe his position to his comrades. The latter, whilst acknowledging their leader with subtle hand-gestures, maintain their autonomous individuality in their bodily and facial orientations in relationship to each other, the space beyond the painting, and the viewer, the characteristic subjective 'attentiveness' of the Dutch tradition.[57] The whole story of the development of Dutch group-portraiture recounted by Riegl follows such a dialectical pattern as Italianate principles are appropriated to social and aesthetic-expressive purposes determined by the historically developing social structures of the civic guard units who commissioned the paintings, and those principles are refunctionalized in their new context, through synthesis with existing Dutch tendencies, to dramatize in the encounter with the viewer the

2a and 2b Domenico Robusti, called Tintoretto, *Group Portrait of the Confraternity of the Scuole dei Mercanti in Venice*, after 1591. Oil on canvas, 330 × 194 cm each. Venice: Gallerie dell'Accademia (inv. nos. 973, 974). Photo: Alinari Archives, Florence.

3 Dirk Jacobsz, *A Group of Guardsmen*, 1529. Oil on panel, 122 × 184 cm. Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum (inv. no. SK-C-402). Photo: Rijksmuseum.

types of social commitments which underlay the character of those groups.[58] This type of 'problem solving process', as Riegl refers to it,[59] was of course, engaged in by individual artists, whose own individual artistic volitions may stand in changing relations of harmony, or, most notably in the case of the later Rembrandt, contradiction to the dominant *Kunstwollen* of the time.[60]

Riegl did not develop his ideas in a vacuum, and Mannheim drew on other sources for sometimes very similar ideas. Riegl's hostility to neo-Kantian thought,[61] his emphasis on the historical character of knowledge, and on the knowing or artistic subjects as feeling and volitional as well as rational, are all characteristic features of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German tradition of *Lebensphilosophie*.[62] This tradition drew much of its inspiration from Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, but its most sophisticated representative at the time of Riegl's acme and the beginning of Mannheim's career was Wilhelm Dilthey.[63] Whilst Dilthey's empirical studies lack the extraordinary internal coherence and systematic rigour that so impressed Mannheim in the case of Riegl, Dilthey did much to develop a set of generalized concepts to inform the kind of cultural analysis exemplified by Riegl's work.[64] Reacting against the emphasis on 'abstract cultural ideals' in the neo-Kantian cultural sciences, Dilthey emphasized the whole man, developing through lived experience (*Erlebnis*) and self-expression through the course of life (*Lebensverlauf*).[65] In this course of life, the individual is the intersection (*Kreuzpunkt*) of various socio-cultural systems: structures of interaction, and social organizations, which bind people together into groups, and cultural systems, characterized as *'Zweckzusammenhänge'*, systems of purposes. Any person encounters such systems as pre-

existent, but also activates them in the pursuit of his or her purposes, formed by and in turn shaping such systems. Each individual is characterized by an 'acquired psychic nexus' (*erworbener seelischer Zusammenhang*), developed through such encounters during the course of life. This nexus transcends the inner–outer polarity, forming the ground of 'lived experience' (*Erlebnis* – contrast passive *Erfahrung*), through which the individual actively projects a perspective on the world in encountering and engaging with that world, in its social, cultural and material dimensions. The culture systems of which a person is the bearer, and those which he encounters or activates in the course of his life, are brought into relationship with each other and further developed through processes of 'articulation', regulated by the acquired psychic nexus.[66] All engagement with our environment is imaginative, and involves varying combinations of feeling, willing, and representation, although ideal-typically science is characterized by a primacy of the representational, art the feelingful, and practical activity the volitional.[67]

Thinking in terms of 'articulation' allowed Dilthey to characterize the poetic imagination in terms of its formative efficacy (*Wirkung*). This is an alternative to interpreting art merely as an expression of pre-existing ideas (in which technique functions as a more or less adequately transparent material medium), through the atomistic conceptions of science, or the kind of synoptic synthetic judgement of Kantian aesthetics.[68] Articulation mutually elaborates cultural systems – for example social ideas and systems of visual representation – in relation to each other: it is a creative 'life-process' in which social and aesthetic values 'become more and more differentiated in relation to an original continuum'.[69] Correspondingly, style is conceptualized as an active poetic and intrinsically temporal process, like Riegl's *Kunstwollen*, 'the inner form of a work from the initial process of extricating motifs from the material to the working out of tropes, figures, metre and language'.[70]

Dilthey draws together these dimensions of social and cultural life through the integrative concept of *Wirkungszusammenhang*, 'effective context' or 'dynamic system'.[71] The order which characterizes human life is a function of the dynamic interrelationship of individuals, cultural systems, systems of social interaction and social organizations in the historical process of which they are the co-carriers. None of these levels – the individual, social, cultural – is self-subsistent, nor can any be simply derived from the others. The 'individual' as logical subject is just as much an abstraction as 'culture' or 'society'. Each level is only realized in practice through its structural interrelationship with the others in the course of history, the totality of which the other elements are levels or abstracted dimensions.[72] Notions like the 'Zeitgeist of the Enlightenment' refer to 'a general direction common to a set of dynamic systems, "not a unity which could be expressed in terms of a fundamental thought, but rather a coherence among tendencies of life"'.[73] This seems to be very much the kind of idea, somewhat more effectively conceptually explicated, that Riegl seeks to develop in his account of the *Kunstwollen* of late Roman art industry.

In developing his own sociology of culture, Mannheim used Riegl's emphasis on volition to ground Dilthey's account of lived experience in social existence in a much more analytically differentiated and theoretically determinate fashion than Dilthey himself had achieved, without reducing culture to extrinsic social determinants in the way characteristic of much Marxist thought of the period. The importance of Riegl's theoretical legacy to Mannheim is marked not only in the pivotal role played by concepts of volition in Mannheim's new synthesis, but

also in his explicit referencing of Riegl as his model at key moments in the development of his argument.[74] Starting from a concept of socio-cultural knowledge as 'conjunctive knowledge', Mannheim gives a strong sociological foundation to Dilthey's phenomenology by thinking in terms of 'social contextures of experience'. He characterizes '*Weltanschauungen*' as structurally linked contextures of experience, and uses concepts of volition to mediate the relationship between 'inner' and 'outer' which were treated dualistically in positivistic and idealist thought.[75]

Mannheim uses the concept of 'conjunctive knowledge' to characterize the distinctive subject–object relationship characteristic of socio-cultural knowledge by contrast with the abstract, quantifying and calculative orientation characteristic of modern natural science, and of the capitalistic *Weltwollen* more generally. The existential ground of such knowledge has a sensorial foundation in the preconceptual 'contagious' awareness we have of another simply by virtue of their physical co-presence, as they enter into our space, for example walking into a room. Echoing Riegl, Mannheim suggests that even optical perception of others makes reference to a tactile sense, a kind of visual 'palpation' of the other with whom we share a common space. This is the ground of mutual awareness, of a shared experiential space, which can be further developed in the course of the common existence between two people.[76] Language and other cultural mediations such as art play a role in the elaboration of such experiential spaces, their sharing amongst larger groups, and their conceptual unification. But the tension toward the world, the volitional tendency, of such concepts is founded in their existential referent. The concepts of '*polis*' and '*polites*', for example, are existentially anchored in the institutional frameworks of social and political life of the Greek polis. They cannot be easily translated as 'state' and 'citizen', concepts which whilst ultimately related to those of classical antiquity, through Roman and Italian Renaissance traditions, imply for the modern reader quite different frameworks of social life, forms of social organization, and rights and obligations than those characteristic of their ancient Greek counterparts. It is the conjunctive character of such concepts as 'freedom', 'citizen', 'equality' which accounts for the fact that speeches which originally played catalytic roles in the course of a revolution may seem bland and lifeless to their modern readers. The concepts survive, but the existential ground which animated them has shifted.[77]

Our ability to respond appropriately to situations like that presented by the beggar of Mannheim's example suggests that we are in practice intuitively attuned to this social functionality of the cultural representations we encounter in everyday life. Such an implicit attunement to social functionality, also, according to Mannheim, characterizes art-historical concepts of style. In the slide from 'Gothic style' to 'Gothic spirit' or in such concepts as 'Impressionism', the objective features of style, on which purely immanent analysis focuses, are implicitly connected to broader experiential contextures which are collective and which underlie the shared principles informing a common definition of, and solutions to, problems of pictorial representation. Immanent analysis in principle progresses straightforwardly to genetic analysis, with characterizations of impressionism as the self-dissolution of bourgeois individualism or classicism as the style of the rising bourgeoisie. Left at that, such phrases would simply reproduce the kind of reductive extrinsic analysis characteristic of certain strands of Marxism, which Mannheim had already criticized. Instead he argued that

classes should also be seen as meaningful entities, communal contextures of experience. When we refer to the bourgeoisie, or the bourgeois class, we do not refer simply to a position in class structure (control of the means of production), but to 'experiential contextures following from this position', that is to say a certain vital tensioning to the world, a certain set of commitments or volitions,[78] existentially grounded in certain typical patterns of experience, constituting a 'life system', characteristic of a particular position, whether that of the 'citizen' of a Greek polis, or member of the bourgeoisie of eighteenth-century France.

The task of sociology is to spell out the structural interconnections between such phenomena as artistic styles, or styles of thought, and contextures of experience, existentially grounded in social positions and the systems of life to which they give rise. The concept of volition, elaborated from Riegl's art-historical theory, plays a pivotal role in allowing Mannheim to mediate inner and outer, to anchor experience in social contextures, and to link those contextures in terms of parallel volitions: the different contextures dynamically interact with each other in the course of historical process to produce new cultural forms, and new contextures of experience, which can be analytically derived from, but are not reducible to, either their ideal (Hegelianism) or their social (Marxism) coordinates. Following Riegl's example,[79] Mannheim coins a proliferation of volitions characteristic of different experiential contextures and appropriate to different levels of analysis – *Weltwollen* or 'world volition' as a dynamic concept to replace 'worldview', *Denkwollen*, *Erkenntniswollen*, *Gestaltungswollen* (formative will manifested in artistic technique), *Gesellschaftswollen* (social volition), *Wirtschaftswollen* (economic volition), and even '*Gesamtwollen*' (characterizing the overall tendency of a cultural formation).[80]

The analytical fruitfulness of this dynamic conception of culture in action, Mannheim argues, can be illustrated particularly clearly in class-stratified, historically evolving complex societies. Here, the static conceptions of culture characteristic of both idealist philosophy (art or knowledge as a simple expression or unfolding of a germinal *Weltanschauung*) and Marxist analysis (culture as reflection of class structure or expression of objective class interest), and their methods of analysis, respectively intuitive and mechanical, are particularly at a loss. Such societies manifest not only class conflicts, but conflicts of cosmic projects (*Weltwollungen*) linked to the variety of experiential spaces (for example rural versus urban) and the range of social strata (with their varying standpoints, and contextures of experience) who face each other in such spaces.[81] The volitions which inform cultural production, whether of art or knowledge, although inflected by these *Weltwollungen* are not directly determined by them. On the contrary, which of the germinal possibilities of those world projects of the primary social strata are elaborated as specific artistic projects or intellectual projects is in turn dependent on the character of the cultural elites engaged in such activities, who have their own specific social position and social standpoint, and impart their own vital tension in elaborating the world projects of the social groups they might represent.[82] The intellectual space within which such cultural production occurs is not a closed one. Culture-producing strata may activate cultural elements from an inherited tradition, as for example Renaissance artists drawing on classical motifs still embedded within late-medieval art, in the context of a dialectical process whereby the elements selected from tradition were determined by the developing *Kunstwollen* of Italian Renaissance artists, but

the objective possibilities implicit in those elements in turn inflected the character of that *Kunstwollen* with their own volitional tendency.[83] Similar processes can also occur in relation to foreign elements, which may be incorporated into the cultural space of indigenous intellectual strata, insofar as they meet the needs of those strata's own cultural volitions, and in the process both the incorporated elements and the indigenous tradition are transformed.[84] Such a process, characterized by Mannheim as the 'change of function' of a cultural form,[85] is perhaps best exemplified by Riegl's account of the role played by the Italian *Kunstwollen* in the elaboration of specifically Dutch volitions during the course of the development of group portraiture in Holland.

Performing such an analysis is by no means simple, but in large part by virtue of the concept of volition, Mannheim is able to integrate two forms of structural analysis, of stylistic cultural formations and of social structure, in a framework where each interacts with the other in the context of a dynamic historical process. Mannheim demonstrated how this analytical framework might be applied in practice in his classic study in the sociology of knowledge, 'Conservative thought'.

STYLES OF THOUGHT: THE ART-HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MANNHEIM'S SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE

The introduction to 'Conservative thought',[86] identifies three levels of analysis: the morphological analysis of conservative systems of ideas on the model of style analysis in art history; the sociological analysis of political and economic rationalization in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, in particular Germany, to which conservative thought is a response; and a social-historical synthesis which explores the interaction between social structure and cultural morphology in shaping the historical development and changing character of conservatism as a cultural formation.[87] The key concept articulating these different levels of analysis, and introduced by Mannheim in order to progress beyond the idealist formulations of IoW, is that of 'fundamental design' (*Grundintention*). This refers to basic orientations, which underlie not so much the specific ideational contents of systems of ideas, as their broader structural characteristics, enduring ways of formulating and organizing ideas which lie behind the changing contents of conservative thought and underpin its continuity in time through changing surface manifestations. As Mannheim notes, the concept is based on Riegl's *Kunstwollen*, but while for Riegl this 'principle of style, this *Kunstwollen* is something which needs no further explanation', Mannheim regards it as 'axiomatic' that that such formal principles (*Gestaltprinzip*) are always 'in themselves ''in the making'' ... and that their history and fate is in many ways linked up with the fate of the groups which must be regarded as their social carriers'.[88]

Any fundamental design articulates an existentially grounded formative attitude towards the world and experience. On one level that existential ground has an anthropological character, parallel to the tactile and optical bases of sensory experience which, in varying configurations, Riegl saw underlying all stylistic systems in the visual arts. In Mannheim's case, the basic anthropological orientations are an intuitive-qualitative orientation to the world, and a rational-calculative orientation. As with Riegl's optical/tactile opposition, these modes of orientation to the world and experience are (anthropo)logical counterpoints,

orientations which are both in principle always available to actors, not existing as pure essences, but found variably configured in relation to each other in the context of specific social and cultural systems.

Translating the insights of Marx and Weber in terms of the logic of his own conceptual scheme, Mannheim characterizes the development of the modern world in terms of 'social differentiation', 'reorganization of structures of thinking' and 'transformation in the structures of experience'.[89] What distinguishes the modern west from earlier eras or the world beyond the occident is not the presence of a rational-calculating orientation per se, since such an orientation is an anthropological given. Rather, the 'bourgeois capitalist consciousness is marked by the fact that it knows no principled limitation to such rationalisation'. The development of the analytic quantitative orientation of modern exact science, in contrast to the qualitatively oriented teleological Aristotelian conception of the world, may be understood as 'nothing but a consistent elaboration of this basic intellectual design'. The 'intellectual project' (*Denkwollen*) of modern science is 'directed towards a new conception of the world', which grasps things not in terms of their particular nature, determined by an intrinsic teleological cause, but in terms of 'universal causes and laws', in which the world can be apprehended 'as a composite of masses and forces'. This structure of thinking is embedded in a broader 'abstract' 'psychic attitude' and correspondingly 'has its parallel' in the modern economic system. In the feudal-patriarchal social order, production is qualitatively ordered towards needs, use value. Similarly, exchange and consumption are regulated in terms of particularistic and qualitative definitions of the needs and requirements appropriate to particular statuses, such as peasant and lord. In the modern economy, this is replaced by a 'quantifying orientation … to exchange value, which considers goods merely in terms of their monetary equivalent'. This '"abstract" mode of orientation' towards 'nature and the world of goods … gradually broadens into a universal form of experience' and 'also becomes the basic form for comprehending the alien subject', as a quantifiable magnitude of labour power, purchasable as a commodity for a specific price. These novel orientations to the world and forms of experience are characteristic of the 'world project' (*Weltwollen*) of a newly emergent social stratum, the bourgeoisie, but they come to be shared by other social strata which are absorbed into the life-world and patterns of social relations characteristic of this expansive social and cultural process, in particular the Enlightened monarchs and bureaucrats of the developing absolutist states.

But what of the 'vital relationships and attitudes' and 'the forms of thinking corresponding to them', the intuitive and the qualitative, that were displaced by rationalization? These were not eliminated but marginalized, surviving amongst groups which were not yet fully caught up in the processes of capitalistic rationalization – the nobility, the peasants, petit-bourgeois craftsmen – and in domains of bourgeois experience, such as the intimate sphere, which were disesteemed in comparison with rationalized public official life. These latent tendencies formed the basis of Romanticism, an 'experiential reaction' against and cultural antithesis to the Enlightenment, pitting community against society, 'family against contract', intuition against rationality, inner experience against mechanistic science. Originally taken for granted as the insensible 'substratum' of life in traditional patriarchal-feudal society, these tendencies of thought were raised to the level of self-conscious reflection in Romanticism.[90]

Conservatism, Mannheim argues, develops out of the use made of such tendencies of thought by strata either threatened or not engaged by political and economic rationalization to articulate their world-designs (*Weltwollungen*) as an explicit system of thought, and programme of action, intended to counter those characteristic of the bourgeois world-design.[91] In calling conservatism a 'style of thought', Mannheim sharply distinguishes it from the universal 'traditionalism', according to which individuals whose ideal and material interests are threatened simply oppose changes to established ways of doing things. Conservatism, by contrast, is an 'objective spiritual contexture' (*geistiger Zusammenhang*), which in its historical duration transcends the individual. The specific character of such a 'historical-structural dynamic complex' may change over time, according to the fortunes of the group or groups which are its bearers, but it retains a distinctive structural integrity, based upon its germinal core or 'fundamental design'.[92]

Morphological analysis of a wide range of instances of conservative thought reveals the structure of this 'fundamental design', characterized by an emphasis on the qualitative, the concrete and the particular, which had informed the modes of life and social values characteristic of both dominant and dominated strata in feudal-patriarchal society. This same design, characterized by Mannheim as a '*Wollen des Konkreten*',[93] underlies the formulation of conservative concepts of, for example, property and liberty. Hegel's concept of property as not a mere commodity subserving creatural needs, but a vehicle of the will which 'helps personality become something more than mere subjectivity' is informed by the same concrete and personalistic attitude which animated the feudal concept of property, as explicated by the German jurist and social philosopher Justus Moser (1720–94), in his essay 'Of Genuine Property'. Here Moser laments the passing of the vital relationship which bound proprietor and property, such that the original privileges of a landowner – hunting, jury-membership – were not transferable to the new man who purchased such land, but remained attached to the original owner in virtue of his 'personal nobility'.[94] Revolutionary thought, seeking the emancipation of individuals from the status-based economic and political restrictions of guild and estate, developed an abstract and universalistic concept of freedom, based on a norm of equality, as formulated in 'The Rights of Man'. Conversely, conservative thinkers like the literary and political theorist Adam Müller (1787–1829) develop a concrete and qualitative concept of freedom. This insisted on the essential inequality of individuals, and attacked the Revolutionary norm of equality, as an infringement of personal freedom, the individual law of development, and of the 'liberties' – specific concrete privileges – of the estates.[95]

Conservative thought is not simply an emanation of such a fundamental design (as styles may sometimes seem to be emanations of *Kunstwollen* in Riegl's less satisfactory formulations), but is occasioned and further shaped by an additional array of largely social factors, in what is a fundamentally creative process. First, in being specified to articulate conservative concepts of time, property and liberty, the fundamental design is transformed into 'mature theoretical constructions' by thinkers seeking to address contemporary social and political problems generated by the processes of societal rationalization to which they respond.[96] Second, the particular solutions to those problems are doubly determined on a cultural level, first, positively, by the fundamental design itself, second, as we have already seen, negatively, by the ideas of 'progressive' thinkers, particularly natural law thought,

against which conservatism is developed as a 'counter-system' in the competitive clash of ideas characteristic of modern ideological politics.[97]

Further, the development of conservatism both as a style of thought with a characteristic design and as a process unfolding in time is shaped by the larger historical 'life-space' within which that process is set: the developing social structure of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germany; the social character and situation of the intellectuals who articulate the new style of thought, including the structure of the market or production system within which members of such groups engage in the production and dissemination of the texts which embody such ideas; the contingencies of history, according to which new intellectual positions from external sources may become available to be appropriated and redirected within the parameters of the life-space in question.[98]

It is the varying configuration and interaction of these several distinctive levels of analysis that distinguishes different national traditions of conservative thought and shapes the specific historical trajectory of the development of a style of thought in any one tradition, such as the German, which is Mannheim's primary focus.[99] As in France and England, the formation of conservative thought in Germany was inflected not only by general processes of economic and political rationalization, but also by the shock of a specific event, the French Revolution. But the response both to the event, and to the revolutionary and reactionary ideas which issued from it, was very different in Germany than in either France or England. In France, the availability of a ready-made ideology of reaction in Catholicism limited the intellectual space available for the development of conservative thought. In England, the openness of the landed elite to new wealth, and the mediation of sectional interests, including those of the third estate, through parliamentarism, softened the polarization of tendencies of thought characteristic of both France and Germany: practical incentives for political compromise reduced motivation to pursue intellectual differences in all their logical sharpness. The exceptionally systematic character of the development of conservative thought in Germany, by contrast, was promoted by two factors. First, in 1789, there was as yet no substantial third estate in Germany, which was only at a very early stage of transformation into a class society. The two 'politically effective' strata were the old feudal nobility and the new rationalizing bureaucracies of the enlightened monarchs. Further, in contrast to both England and France, there was no developed literary market-place. Educated members of the middle class, who were the primary articulators of novel styles of thought, were unable to establish an independent position or cause of their own. Their unattached character rendered them sensitive to currents of thought with their 'social vitality elsewhere'. Those who wished to earn a living through their writing found themselves drawn either into the developing state bureaucracies, or into the patronage of the feudal nobility, whose causes they adopted as their own.[100]

In most of the major dimensions of his argumentation, Mannheim draws upon the concepts and analytical moves developed by Riegl in *LRAI* and *GPH*. Just as Riegl demonstrates the character of the late Roman *Kunstwollen* by showing structural parallels in the solution of problems of design which emerged in a number of traditions in late antique art (sculpture, architecture – the new problem of the congregational church, painting, minor arts – in particular the new body ornaments of the late Roman elite), so Mannheim does in the case of

conservative thought, showing how the same fundamental design informs the solutions of conceptual problems and practical problems occasioned by political and economic rationalization: how to characterize property and freedom, how in a changing world to think through the exigencies of social reform – starting from the actual and preceding piecemeal, rather than structural transformation informed by an abstract norm as in progressive thought. The interplay between opposed volitions – Italian and Dutch – and the transformation of imported elements of Italian artistic volition in terms of Dutch artistic (and social) purposes in Riegl's *GPH*, is echoed in Mannheim's account of the dialectic between the rational-calculative will to the world of the bourgeoisie and the state bureaucracies, and the qualitative-intuitive orientation of the surviving strata from the old feudal estates order, the nobility, the petty-bourgeois remnants of the guilds. In both cases the process of stylistic development is driven by the articulation of differences of each volitional tendency against its counterpart, and the effecting of new syntheses between them, differentiations and syntheses shaped by 'the experiential designs of socially distinct strata' and their distinctive 'locations within the stream of social happening'.[101] Mannheim's use of cross-national comparisons – with France and England – to bring out the distinctive character of the German development of conservative thought, and its social foundations, parallels Riegl's use of the group-portraits of the Venetian merchant confraternities as a comparative counterpoint to illuminate the characteristic *Kunstwollen* of early Dutch group portraiture, and their respective bases in the character of their group life. Mannheim, however, fundamentally transformed Riegl's legacy by virtue of his detailed elaboration of the sociological components merely intimated by the latter. In doing so, he made possible a cultural sociology which systematically relates both the material and the ideal dimensions, on a number of different analytical levels, in a coherent account of the development of a style of thought (or art) as a structured process articulated in historical time.

EPILOGUE: AFTER MANNHEIM

'Conservative thought' represents the moment when Mannheim's sociology and Riegl's art history are most closely interwoven. Thereafter, the ideas which Mannheim had appropriated from Riegl were effectively embedded in Mannheim's own theoretical thought, which continued to undergo development. Nevertheless, the Rieglian elements remained a visible and essential component of Mannheim's thought as it developed, and art history remained for him an important point of reference both theoretically and empirically.[102]

How then can we explain the collective amnesia of the history and sociology of art as disciplines in relation to the Mannheim-Riegl synthesis? One might propose two kinds of explanation. The first, following the logic of Gombrich and Popper's theories of knowledge, might suggest that Mannheim's ideas were simply eliminated in competition by ideas of greater intellectual coherence and adequacy to reality – the survival of the fittest. Alternatively, following the logic of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, we might argue that it was not purely intellectual factors that counted against the transmission and reproduction of Mannheim's ideas, but a lack of affinity between them and new intellectual volitions which emerged to dominance in the context of major social change and specific, generation forming, social and historical experiences.

This is not the place for a systematic evaluation of the competitive value of Mannheim's cultural sociology in relation to the whole range of paradigms in contemporary art history and sociology of culture. There are, however, some indicators that Mannheim's synthesis of art history and sociology should be considered – as Mannheim commented of Riegl – 'methodologically challenging even today'. One influential perspective in contemporary history and sociology of art, Bourdieu's theory of practice, is in significant part built on the foundations of Panofsky's programme in iconography and iconology, itself of course indebted to Mannheim's IoW, although Bourdieu shows no awareness of this. Panofsky's account of art interpretation in 'Iconography and iconology' provided the foundations for Bourdieu's sociology of art perception.[103] Bourdieu further argued that the concept of habitus, as used by Panofsky to articulate the stylistic parallelisms between Gothic architecture and scholastic thought,[104] could be used to ground social practices in strategies shaped by class-position.[105] Bourdieu, however, treats all action as rational and calculative, omitting the intuitive-qualitative counterpoint which in Mannheim's framework permits much more adequate analysis of the expressive and normative components of action. This explains the notoriously reductive character of Bourdieu's sociology of art, which like his sociology in general, represents in certain respects the mirror reflection of the idealist art history he appropriated from Panofsky.[106] As for Panofsky, so for Bourdieu, style is not formative. Interpreting art is a decoding exercise, and the different styles preferred by different viewers function merely to mark class difference, just as the stylistic choices of artists are simply strategies of distinction negatively defined against the positions of competitors within the artistic field, lacking positive meaningful content.[107] Similarly the parallelisms of style between the manner of appropriation on the part of elite viewers and the characteristic features of the organization of displays in museums has no cultural content nor any substantive formative significance for viewers beyond its function in excluding the culturally and socially dispossessed.[108]

Amongst other post-structuralist cultural analysts, Mannheim's concepts of *Denkwollen* and 'fundamental intention' make an interesting comparison with Foucault's concept of 'episteme'.[109] Like Mannheim, Foucault developed his concepts and theory in reaction against traditional internalist history of ideas, seeking instead to show the connections between transformations in systems of thought and those in social institutions. Like Foucault's, Mannheim's concepts operate at the level of a deep structure, a set of formative principles, shaping a wide range of manifest cultural, intellectual and social practices. One primary difference is their treatment of time, where Mannheim's account of the development of styles of thought as historical processes animated by formative interactions between cultural and social levels is perhaps more satisfactory than Foucault's notorious epistemological breaks.

Among art historians, it is perhaps Michael Baxandall whose work manifests the closest affinities with Mannheim's cultural sociology. Just as Mannheim showed how cultural concepts, such as that of 'citizen' or 'freedom' were animated by the existential ground – frameworks of social life, forms of social organization – which underlay them, so in *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, Baxandall demonstrates how specific visual concepts of Italian Renaissance art were animated by the frameworks of social life and forms of social interaction characteristic of Italian Renaissance cities. The groupings of figures in

Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* engage the sensibility of a viewer sensitive to the proprieties of advance and retreat required by partners engaged in the formally structured dance routines which played a central role in elite rituals of sociability.[110] The compositional techniques of the frescoes of Piero della Francesca – building complex represented objects out of simple geometrical forms such as cylinders or truncated cones – appealed to the visual skills of contemporary businessmen, trained to gauge and value the volumes of the variously shaped bales and boxes of commodities which they handled by means of similar intellectual operations.[111] Ostensibly iconographic in its method (looking for texts to elucidate the forms found in images), Baxandall's study actually has more in common with Mannheim's intellectual project than that of the iconography and iconology of the Warburg School from which it sprang. His characterization of the ideal Renaissance viewer as 'a church going businessman with a taste for dancing' might be taken to encapsulate the *Weltwollen* of the Florentine bourgeoisie.[112]

But although the concept of 'the period eye' has been extremely influential in art history, neither Baxandall nor his followers have given much explicit consideration to drawing out in any systematic way the sociological implications of their approach. The study by Mannheim's friend Frederick Antal – *Florentine Painting and its Social Background*[113] – suggests that the social context of Italian painting, and the volitions to which it gave rise, was both more differentiated and more systematically (class) structured than Baxandall allows. *Painting and Experience* is in some ways the most sociologically interesting of Baxandall's books. Although his later work consistently opens up the possibility of situating art in its social context, this is never accomplished in a very convincing manner, largely because Baxandall insistently deploys an atomistic concept of social structure, in terms of individual artists pursuing the goal of registering their artistic individuality in the context of a market.[114] In short, Baxandall never develops a very adequate theoretical or methodological formulation of the implicitly sociological principles which inform his studies. The result is a series of brilliant but (at least in their social aspects) not well interconnected insights. Consequently, the sense of a systematically structured dynamic historical process that characterizes Mannheim's account of the formation and transformation of styles of thought is lacking in Baxandall's work.

An alternative explanation of the disappearance of Mannheim from the horizons of active awareness on the part of historians and sociologists of art may be articulated in more Mannheimian terms, as the result of a conflict between world-volitions borne by members of groups with distinctively different social locations and trajectories. Many art historians first come across Mannheim in Gombrich's contribution to the Popper *Festschrift*, 'The logic of Vanity Fair: alternatives to historicism in the study of fashions, style and taste'. Mannheim is invoked as the common enemy of Gombrich and Popper, with 'a foot in both camps of political utopianism and historical holism', a purveyor of 'Neo-Hegelian Geistesgeschichte and Neo-Marxist sociologism'.[115] The affective and volitional underpinnings of Gombrich's orientation to Mannheim and his fellow 'enemies of reason' is clearly manifested in the tone of Gombrich's various tirades – 'frankly, a bit of a rant', as one recent commentator remarks.[116] Perhaps it is also indicated by the almost unbelievable misquotation and distortion of Mannheim's ideas in Popper's *The Poverty of Historicism*.[117]

In certain respects, Popper's political programme may be seen as a (theoretically not very coherent) counter-synthesis to Mannheim's sociological vision of a

planned society, within a radically individualist *Weltwollen*. The differing characters of the thought styles of Gombrich, Panofsky, Popper and Mannheim should be seen in the context of their broader social and intellectual formation. Mannheim's general intellectual orientations – a left-leaning political stance and a strong sense of the positive role of collectivities in cultural and social life – were shared by the group of Hungarian thinkers who composed the Sunday Circle focused on Georg Lukacs.[118] These included the social historians of art Arnold Hauser and Frederick Antal, as well as Mannheim. As members of an assimilated Jewish upper-middle-class urban intelligentsia, they were marginalized in three respects: from their Jewish background, by the anti-semitism characteristic of Hungarian nationalism, and as urban intellectuals in a country characterized by a still largely feudal-patriarchal agrarian social order. This marginality stimulated discontent with the present and a 'passionate investment in the future', in addition to a broad sympathy with the similarly marginal working class in Hungary.[119] As a student, Mannheim participated in the broadly social democratic Social Scientific Society, which, amongst other activities, organized Free Schools for worker education and popular enlightenment.[120] These were the model for the in practice somewhat more exclusive Free School for Humanities, established in 1917 under the leadership of Lukacs.[121] Mannheim gave an introductory lecture to the second series of lectures organized under the auspices of the school, a series which included contributions by Hauser and Antal, amongst others. In this lecture, 'Soul and Culture', Mannheim characterized the school's orientation as drawing on contemporary idealist philosophy and aesthetics (including Riegl) and the sociology of Marx. He articulates a very strong sense of generational and group identity, and a sense of cultural mission which shares a strong affinity with the more strictly Marxist revolutionary culturalism subsequently developed by Lukacs.[122]

This strong collective sensibility, and orientation to the future, distinguish this group from their Austro-German counterparts, like the Berliner Panofsky and the somewhat younger Popper and Gombrich, both Viennese, for whom the rise of fascism was the paramount formative political experience, and whose social identity as middle-class intellectuals was much more secure, their position less marginal than that of their Hungarian counterparts. These different 'experiential contextures' grounded distinctive 'fundamental intentions' that informed the character of their academic work, as well as their stances in relationship to the political challenges raised by the transformation of European states in the first half of the twentieth century.

Mannheim was no less liberal, in a broad sense, than his Viennese contemporaries. He was equally passionately concerned with the freedom of the individual: the last two sections of *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* are after all entitled 'Planning for freedom' and 'Freedom at the level of planning'. Mannheim believed that the crisis of Europe in the 1930s arose out of the inadequacy of the traditional self-regulating mechanisms of liberal society, as the relatively autonomous domains of the economy, politics, and culture increasingly impinged on each other in the highly complex modern social order. The crisis had not only economic and political manifestations, but also psychological ones: levels of substantive rationality on the part of the population declined, disoriented and demoralized in the absence of adequate leadership on the part of established elites committed to now outdated liberal ideologies. Mannheim's response to

crisis was a much more politically engaged programme of theoretical and empirical research. He sought to establish a diagnostic sociology, through which it would be possible to identify the 'principia media', the interacting structural forces which shaped developmental tendencies within a social order. Such diagnostic analysis should make it possible to rationally select and promote the most desirable possibilities from the alternatives afforded by such tendencies.[123]

By comparison with Mannheim's engaged and progressive response to the cultural and political crises of the mid-twentieth century, Gombrich's and Panofsky's response followed a rather more conservative direction, characteristic of many of the Mandarin humanistic intelligentsia of the period, namely a retreat into *Kultur*, seeking to preserve the values of the past from the social and cultural decay of the present.[124] In the 1930s, Panofsky regarded a return to classicism in art as a potential solution to the contemporary crises, and theoretically both his and Gombrich's writing privileges the post-Renaissance tradition of classical naturalism against modernism, attributing to works in this tradition 'redeeming universal or humanist content'.[125] Formed against the horizon of the rise of fascism, this orientation to the world was reinforced and refunctionalized in the polarizing context of the cold war. The humanities could be held to embody the specific values that characterized 'free society' in opposition to communism, in art history an emphasis on the creative artist, the individual man, as opposed to man reduced to a type as a member of a class or mass of people in the social sciences or Marxist histories inspired by economic determinism.[126]

CONCLUSIONS

As I draft the final revision of these concluding paragraphs, the United States Congress debates for the second time a rescue plan for the world's financial markets. Mannheim's diagnosis of the crisis of Europe in the 1930s as a consequence of the inadequacy of automatic self-regulatory mechanisms in increasingly complex modern societies seems strikingly relevant today, as do his criticisms of the failure of leadership of elites committed to outdated (because reified) liberal concepts of 'the free market'. Certainly his social democratic vision of rational planning seems more appealing now than the radical free-market ideology of the idol of Gombrich, Popper and the new right, Friedrich von Hayek. Who are the 'enemies of reason' now?

So also Mannheim's synthesis of sociology and art history can afford our discipline renewed intellectual challenge and stimulus today, in a political and intellectual environment for his reception which may be more favourable that that of the era of the hegemony of the Warburg School. Like other sociologists, Mannheim offers theoretical tools for a much more systematic analysis of the way in which both larger social structures and the social organization of cultural production may shape the character of cultural artefacts, whether political ideologies or artistic styles. Art historians, like Baxandall, have long been aware of the relevance of such factors to the understanding of art, but treat them merely as 'background', unwilling to incorporate them systematically into their analysis. In part this hesitation is a function of the often reductive character of sociologists' explanations of art. Formal interests of artists or the formal properties of art works are often treated as reducible to more fundamental social interests, whether, in the work of Bourdieu, strategies of distinction designed to maximize the symbolic

profits derivable from a specific position within a cultural field, or, in the production of culture paradigm associated with Howard Becker, the interests of artists in the economic rewards associated with working in conventional and established styles.[127] But where for Bourdieu or Becker, style is merely an epiphenomenon of more real underlying social factors, for Mannheim, by virtue of his integration of Riegl's dynamic formalism into a general sociology of culture, the social and the stylistic are two sides of the same coin. The social is not simply the background to or context of styles, but reaches deeply into the formation of styles. Social orders and the modes of social interaction to which they give rise have stylistic properties and are stylistically formed. Styles of social relating are part of the material substratum of art. Systems of artistic design in their turn operate on and transform these aspects of social order into specifically visual (Dutch group portraits) or literary-discursive (conservative thought) objectifications. The stylistic-organizational properties of such cultural objectifications in turn shape social formation, whether as exemplary models for the articulation of social relationships (Dutch group portraits) or normative codes shaping the institutional definition of property rights and political freedoms (Conservative thought). Through his appropriation of Riegl, Mannheim developed what remains a compelling exemplar of cultural sociology. It seems long overdue that we should profit by returning the compliment, and appropriate Mannheim as a model for the social analysis of art.

Notes

I am grateful to colleagues who have read, criticized, and materially improved this chapter, in particular: Dana Arnold, Jas Elsner, David Kettler, Victor Lidz, Fred Schwartz, and Helmut Staubmann, and also to Charles Ford for assistance with finding photographs. I am also grateful for the comments and suggestions of the participants in the sociology of culture round table at the meetings of the American Sociological Association in Boston in 2008. I alone am responsible for remaining shortcomings.

1 Joan Hart, 'Erwin Panofsky and Karl Mannheim: a dialogue on interpretation', *Critical Inquiry*, 19, 1993, 534–66.

2 Ernst Gombrich, 'The logic of Vanity Fair: alternatives to historicism in the study of fashions, style and taste', 1974, reprinted in Gombrich, *Ideals and Idols: Essays on Values in History and in Art*, London, 1979, 60.

3 'On the interpretation of Weltanschauung', 1923, cited from Kurt H. Wolff, ed., *From Karl Mannheim*, London, 1993, 136–86; hereafter 'IoW' and *FKM*; original publication 'Beiträge zur Theorie der Weltanschauungs-interpretation', *Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* II, 1923, 7–44.

4 Karl Mannheim, *Man and Society in the Age of Reconstruction*, London, 1940.

5 Very few of Riegl's recent commentators show any first-hand knowledge of Mannheim, or awareness of Riegl's importance to him: Michael Podro confuses him with the younger translator of Cassirer, Ralph Manheim, *The Critical Historians of Art*, New Haven, CT and London, 1982, 205; Benjamin Binstock does not include Mannheim in his account of the reception of Riegl, in his introduction to the translation of Riegl's *Historical Grammar of the Visual Arts*, New York and London, 2004, 19–25. Michael Gubser draws a distinction between theorists on whom Riegl had an acknowledged impact (including Panofsky, Feyerabend, Benjamin), and those like Mannheim (no works mentioned) who merely cited Riegl's work favourably – 452 in 'Time and history in Alois Riegl's theory of perception', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 2005, 451–74. But note Frederic J. Schwartz, *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War*, London, 1996, 21–3, on the reception of Riegl by Lukacs, Simmel, Max Weber and Mannheim as the sociological counterparts to the theorists of the Werkbund with whom Schwartz is primarily concerned.

6 Most notably: Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory*, Cambridge, 1993, 15, and Charles Rosen, 'The ruins of Walter Benjamin',

in Gary Smith, ed., *Walter Benjamin: Critical Essays and Recollections*, London, 1988, 135 and 158–69, with discussion also of Adorno's criticisms of the unmarxist character of Benjamin's analysis. Woodfield ('Reading Riegl's *Kunstindustrie*', 49–81 in R. Woodfield, ed., *Framing Formalism: Riegl's Work*, London, 2001, 66) and Peaker ('Works that have lasted ... : Walter Benjamin reading Alois Riegl', 291–309 in Woodfield, *Framing*, 294) celebrate Benjamin's appropriation of Riegl's approach to the historical conditioning of perception, both follow Adorno in criticizing Benjamin for failing to relate changes in perception to social change and class structure – exactly the purpose to which Mannheim put Riegl's *Kunstwollen* concept!

7 Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories and Political Significance*, Cambridge, 1994, 111–12; Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute for Social Research*, Boston, MA, 1973, 63–4.

8 My sketch of Mannheim's early life and education, particularly in the context of the Sunday Circle, draws on: Mary Gluck, *Georg Lukacs and his Generation 1900–1918*, Cambridge, MA, 1985; David Kettler, 'Culture and revolution: Lukacs in the Hungarian revolution of 1918/19', *Telos*, 10, 1971, 35–92; Kettler, 'The romance of modernism', *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 1986–7, 433–55 – a review essay on Gluck's monograph.

9 David Kettler, Volker Meja and Nico Stehr,*Karl Mannheim*, London, 1984, 77.

10 Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, London, 1971, 153.

11 'Das Konservative Denken', *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 57, 1927, Heft 1–2: 68–142; revised and translated as 'Conservative thought', in *Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology*, London, 1953, 74–164; hereafter cited as CT. The original 1925 habilitation dissertation on which the essay was based has been published as *Conservatism: A Contribution to the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. David Kettler, Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, London, 1986; hereafter cited as *CCSK*.

12 On the erroneous character of such criticism: A. P. Simonds, *Karl Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge*, Oxford, 1978, 9.

13 Riegl is famously commended by Mannheim's teacher and mentor G. Lukacs in his classic *History and Class Consciousness*, 153. But neither Mannheim scholars nor sociologists of art have shown much interest in Riegl. Confused with Ernst Riegl in David Frisby, *The Alienated Mind: The Sociology of Knowledge in Germany 1918–1933*, London, 1983, 112, 281. None of the standard introductions to the sociology of art – Janet Wolff, Victoria Alexander, Vera Zolberg – mentions Riegl. Robert Witkin, an important but sadly not influential exception, in his *Art and Social Structure*, Cambridge, 1995, which draws on Riegl and others of *The Critical Historians of Art*, mediated through Podro's study of the same.

14 Christopher S. Woods, ed., *The Vienna School Reader*, New York, 2000, 17–18.

15 The perspective of Hart's important essay, 'Dialogue'.

16 Simonds, *Karl Mannheim*, 46 for this development after IoW.

17 Original version 1920, trans. Kenneth J. Northcott and Joel Snyder, *Critical Inquiry*, 8, 1981, 17–33. Commentary: Hart, 'Dialogue', 542–5; Michael Ann Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History*, London, 1984, 79–96; Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory*, London, 1993, 149–56; Allister Neher, '"The concept of *Kunstwollen*", neo-Kantianism and Erwin Panofsky's early art theoretical essays', *Word and Image*, 20, 1, 2004, 41–51; Podro, *Critical Historians*, 179–85.

18 IoW, 136.

19 Neher, 'Concept of Kunstwollen', 42.

20 IoW, 145; Simonds, *Karl Mannheim*, 41–6.

21 IoW, 139.

22 Mannheim's discussion of his examples is not unproblematic, though in ways not really relevant to the purpose of this chapter, but see Simonds, *Karl Mannheim*, 42–3.

23 IoW, 149–50.

24 IoW, 150–8.

25 IoW, 160–1.

26 Hart, 'Dialogue', 547, correctly suggests that Mannheim considered Riegl's framework too rigid, and consequently rejected it; but Riegl was by no means (as Hart implies, 549) finished business for Mannheim, as he was (at least avowedly) for Panofsky. Hart's summary of Mannheim's characterization of Riegl's theory as 'reductionist and unimaginative' is belied both by the space attributed to discussion of Riegl (four pages alone as against just two between Weber and Dvorak), Mannheim's characterization of Riegl's *LRAI* as 'heroic', 'methodologically still challenging today' (IoW, 179, 182), and of course by the subsequent course of the development of Mannheim's thought (see below).

27 On the details of the development of Panofsky's thought in this series of papers: Holly, *Panofsky*, 147–8, 158–93; Podro, *Critical Historians*, 183–5; Neher, 'Concept of Kunstwollen', 43–4; Hart, 'Dialogue', 541–53.

28 Hart, 'Dialogue', 535–6.

29 By 1932, Mannheim's contribution had been reduced to identification of the third documentary/iconological level of analysis. In the final English version of the essay published in 1939, Mannheim's work is nowhere mentioned: Hart, 'Dialogue', 553. Ironically, Panofsky covered his tracks so well that although both Pierre Bourdieu and Robert Witkin use Panofsky's 'Iconography and iconology' as the starting point for their sociologies of art (impressed by the incipiently sociological character of Panofsky's interpretation of a man raising his hat, and seeing the iconological level of analysis as a potential opening to sociology), neither seems aware that both

Panofsky's interpretive schema and the specific example (somewhat modified) are borrowed from Mannheim's earlier essay IoW, or that Mannheim had already carried out a programme of theoretical research on exactly parallel lines in his essays on the sociology of culture.

30 Benjamin Binstock, 'Foreword: Alois Riegl, monumental ruin', in Alois Riegl, *Historical Grammar of the Visual Arts*, trans. Jacqueline E. Jung, New York, 2004, 19–23; David Summers, 'The ''visual arts'' and the problem of art historical description', *Art Journal*, 1982, 302–3, on the emasculation of the concept of form in Panofsky. Mannheim's discussion of style is, by contrast, both full and nuanced, insisting that style is only analytically separable from content, and must be considered an intrinsic component of artistic meaning even on the level of the formulation of iconographic contents (IoW, 150–9).

31 Elsner,'Kunstwollen', 762.

32 IoW, 146 n. 1, for the importance of Husserl's phenomenology to Mannheim; see also *Structures of Thinking*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro and Shierry Weber Nicholsen, London, 1982, eds David Kettler, Volker Meja and Nico Stehr (hereafter *ST*), 107–8.

33 Panofsky, 'Introductory: iconography and iconology', in *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, Oxford, 1939, 12–14.

34 IoW, 179–80.

35 Olin, *Forms*, 171–2; Iversen, *Riegl*, 7.

36 Alois Riegl, *Late Roman Art Industry*, trans. Rolf Winkes, Rome, 1985, 56 (translation modified), hereafter cited as *LRAI*; see also *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, Vienna, 1927 (original version 1901), 2–3; see also 6, 10, 46 (hereafter cited as *SRKI*).

37 Olin, *Forms*, 161.

38 Two of the most important essays – 'The distinctive character of cultural sociological knowledge', 'A sociological theory of culture and its knowability (conjunctive and communicative thinking)' – although written in the period 1921–3 were only published in 1980 (English translation 1982); their argument, though more open and subtle, is broadly congruent with those of the published essays 'Historicism' (1924), 'Problems of the sociology of knowledge' (1925) and 'The ideological and the sociological interpretation of intellectual phenomena' (1926). In what follows I treat this material as a unity, for reasons of simplicity and clarity of exposition, and in order to maintain a focus on the affinities and links between Riegl and Mannheim. Mannheim's essayistic style of writing permitted inconsistencies and contradictions even within single essays, which he preferred to forcing the often discrepant traditions of thought on which he was drawing into a premature synthesis. Excellent explications of the complexities of the internal development of Mannheim's thought can be found in the introductions to Mannheim's *Conservatism: A Contribution to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. David Kettler and Volker Meja, London, 1986, and *ST*, and also in Anthony P. Simonds, *Karl Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge*, Oxford, 1978.

39 IoW, 164.

40 'The problem of a sociology of knowledge', *FKM*, 190

41 *ST*, 191–2.

42 IoW, 164–5.

43 IoW, 166; 'Historicism', in Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. Paul Kecksmeti, London, 1952, 102–5.

44 *ST*, 152.

45 Olin, *Forms*, 120.

46 Olin, *Forms*, 94, 121, citing Riegl, *Historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste* 31, 249.

47 Last chapter of *LRAI*, translated in Woods, *The Vienna School*, 94–5; see also Elsner, 'Kunstwollen', 752.

48 *ST*, 46–7, 270.

49 Mannheim, 'Problems in the sociology of knowledge', trans. and repr. In *FKM*, 187–243 (hereafter PSK), 229–30; *ST*, 199.

50 Ernst Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: a Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*, London, 1979, 195.

51 Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, London, 1977 (3rd edn, originally published 1959), 16.

52 Riegl's ethnic and racial categorizations of some styles seem not a little embarrassing today, but should perhaps be interpreted charitably. 'The place of the Vapheio cups in the history of art', original version 1900, translated in Woods, *The Vienna School*, 105–29, was prescient in its identification of the Greek character of Mycenean culture. Further, in *The Group Portraiture of Holland*, trans. Evelyn M Kain and David Britt, Los Angeles (hereafter *GPH*), Riegl seems to be developing an account of national traditions which is far from essentialist. On the contrary, it suggests that their character is socially constructed on the basis of the character of the institution of art in a particular country (functions and purposes of art, and the artistic problems to which that gives rise), and the vital intentions brought to such traditions by the social groups who are their bearers, changing of course with the changing character of social structure, and the vicissitudes of history. Further, in the constant remaking of that tradition, it is open to influences/appropriations from other traditions, reworked in turn of its own inner logic. On the role of particular social strata giving decisive inflection to the 'national' culture of a country, at particular conjunctures in history, see Mannheim's discussion of Tocqueville: CT, 122–3.

53 *LRAI*, 74; *SRKI*, 124.

54 *LRAI*, 94–5; *SRKI*, 162.

55 Iversen, *Riegl*, 93; Olin, *Forms*, 168 for the continuity with *LRAI.*

56 *GPH*, 87–99.

57 *GPH*, 107–11.

58 See also *GPH* 140–4 for analysis of similar processes in similar terms in the 1550s – interplay between heightened Italianate

subordination and counter stress on individuality and subjectivity; 173–4, 183–4, 191–5 on Riegl's second period, 1580–1624. *GPH* 211–26, comparing the different inflection of this evolving artistic volition in Amsterdam and Harlem, the former more receptive to the use of subordination, the latter less so, not because the Harlem was socially more egalitarian but because the groups being portrayed were of a uniformly higher social status (officers only), so there was less need than in Amsterdam to mark an internal group hierarchy.

59 *GPH*, 144. Ironically, Riegl's approach anticipates by some fifty years Popper's call for *sociology* to replace mystical concepts of spirit of an age with 'something more sensible, such as an analysis of problems arising within a tradition … the logic of situations'. In his contribution to Popper's Festschrift, Gombrich (echoing Popper) dismisses Mannheim and Riegl as representatives of the 'poverty of historicism', purveyors of 'Neo-Hegelian Geistesgeschichte and neo-Marxist sociologism', only to quote the same passage of Popper calling for an approach in terms of 'problems arising in a tradition', apparently unaware that Riegl had developed an approach formulated in exactly the same terms more than seventy years previously ('Vanity Fair', 61, citing 'Art and Scholarship' for his more comprehensive attack on Riegl's neo-Hegelianism). Of course, by insisting on 'methodological individualism', despite constant reference to 'social institutions' (an unexplicated residual category in both Popper and Gombrich), Gombrich's analysis in 'Vanity Fair' never gets beyond rather trivial market-based fashions of conspicuous consumption driving forward a particular pattern of taste, paralleling the focus on individual psychology in *Art and Illusion*. Riegl's formulation of the development as 'links in a larger chain of evolution' characterized as a 'problem solving process common to artists working thoughout Holland' occurs again and again – *GPH* 254, 281, etc.; Gombrich must have read this, and its repression, whether conscious or unconscious, seems highly political in the light of his criticisms of Riegl.

60 *GPH*, 253–86 on Rembrandt; 254 'agent of the artistic volition of his nation and times', 270 *Night Watch* too far from the artistic volition of his fellow countrymen. As Binstock observes, this represents a fundamental contrast with Panofsky's iconological model of analysis, which 'allows for no conflict between the aims of the artist and his tradition, or his tradition and its time' – Binstock, 'Riegl', 38. The existence of plural, asynchronous, articulations of a stylistic tradition at any one moment in time within a given space was explored in Wilhelm Pinder's *Das Problem der Generationen in der Kunstgeschichte Europas* (Berlin, 1926), and later generalized and given coherent sociological foundations (as also the concept of Zeitgeist) in Mannheim's 'The problem of generations' (1927; *FKM*, 351–98). Of course, not all traditions are characterized by such a pattern of contradiction and dialectical synthesis, as Binstock points out, and Riegl was well aware, citing the counter-case of the Catholic, Spanish controlled Southern Netherlands, where the corporations remained primarily religious organizations and group portraiture does not develop beyond the first stage identified by Riegl for Dutch group portraiture (*GPH*, 61, 97, 173). The dynamism of the Dutch tradition is due to a very particular social configuration, grounded in the development of the social and political structures of the Netherlands, and in their relation to the broader international political system, most notably the struggle for independence from Spain.

61 Olin, *Forms*, 117.

62 For a good discussion on Schopenhauer and the importance of *Lebensphilosophie* to the development of social theory, see Hans Joas, *The Creativity of Action*, Cambridge, 1996, 116–26, esp. 118 on Schopenhauer and the experience of the will located in corporeality; 125 on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will, as opposed to locating the will in its intersubjective and objective contexts of action. On Schopenhauer and aesthetics: Charles Taylor, *The Sources of the Self*, Cambridge, 1989, 441–55.

63 On Dilthey and Lebensphilosophie, see H. P. Rickman, *Wilhelm Dilthey: Pioneer of the Human Studies*, London, 1979, 42–57, 'The philosophy of life'.

64 I rely here on the definitive study of Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Dilthey: Philosopher of the Human Studies*, Princeton, NJ, 1975, to develop a reasonably brief sketch.

65 Makkreel, *Dilthey*, 44.

66 On the acquired psychic nexus (versus transcendental logical conceptions of the subject), Makkreel, *Dilthey*, 108, 131.

67 Makkreel, *Dilthey*, 92, 100.

68 Makkreel, *Dilthey*, 184–5, 191–2: 'The components added to the image satisfy an inner demand. They are not synthetically added on, but articulated from the acquired psychic nexus, which constitutes the guiding framework of imaginative metamorphosis.' The two primary concepts of style against which Dilthey argues are identical to those which are ultimately used in Panofsky's iconography and iconology schema: (1) style as technical medium of expression, knowledge of which is required as a controlling principle on the pre-iconographic level, allowing us to recognize what in the real world motifs are supposed to represent, and (2) style as a dimension of intrinsic meaning apprehended, according to the Kantian model, by synthetic intuition, on the iconological level. Dilthey's emphasis on the active unfolding of style, both in stylistic articulation of meaning and in our explicative interpretation of style, revives Herder's expressivist anthropology, on which Joas, *Creativity*, 75–85, esp. 81.

69 Makkreel, *Dilthey*, 166–9, 185.

70 Makkreel, *Dilthey*, 196, quoting Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VI, 228.

71 In terms of theoretical logic, this is the functional equivalent of Panofsky's concept of intrinsic meaning, but in place of the over-unified static and idealist conceptualization of context of Panofsky, Dilthey offers a dynamic concept of context capable of grasping contradictions and conflicts as part of an evolving historical process.

72 Makkreel, *Dilthey*, 308–13.

73 Makkreel, *Dilthey*, 397, quoting Dilthey, *GS*, VII, 185.

74 *ST*, 233 on Riegl's concept of *Kunstwollen* as the model for Mannheim's own formulations of the volitional character of culture; *FKM* (PSK), 239, Riegl as model for development of a concept of groups characterized by 'world-postulates (*Weltwollungen*)' and at a given time 'committed to a certain style of economic activity and of theoretical thought', as an alternative to the Marxian concept of classes, defined only in terms of their place in the production process and characterized by objective 'interests'.

75 On the role of the concept of volition in mediating inner and outer, and articulating the relationship between meaning and existence, see Colin Loader, *The Intellectual Development of Karl Mannheim: Culture, Politics and Planning*, London, 1985, 71–3.

76 *ST*, 185–96.

77 *ST*, 197–8.

78 *FKM* (PSK), 236–7 on the distinction between the Marxist concept of 'interest', objectively given by economic position, and Mannheim's concept of 'commitment' to characterize the conditionings of the psyche by social experience, engendering motivations not directly reducible to economic interest. As Mannheim points out, economic systems are always embedded in a particular cosmos, at least at their origin, 'so that those who seek a certain economic order also seek the intellectual outlook correlated with it'. 'Commitment' is, therefore, the 'most comprehensive category in the field of the social conditioning of ideas', and prior to 'interest'.

79 For example, *LRAI*, 11 (*SRKI*, 11–12), where Riegl talks not only of *Wollen* as manifesting itself in art and also in other fields such as 'government, religion and scholarship'.

80 *ST*, 233 for Riegl's *Kunstwollen* concept as the model for Mannheim's own formulations of 'the communally conditioned will' characteristic of 'each field of culture', economic volition, social volition, etc.

81 *ST*, 241–50; PSK, 238–43.

82 *ST*, 266; PSK, 238–9.

83 *ST*, 234.

84 *ST*, 242, 267.

85 *FKM*, 241.

86 In their introduction, and notes to *CCSK*, Kettler et al. discuss the differences between CT and *CCSK*, which I largely ignore since they are not important to the main theses of my chapter.

87 CT, 77–94; *CSSK*, 34–56; Kettler, Meja, Stehr, *CCSK*, 'Introduction: the design of *Conservatism*', 2–3.

88 CT, 78.

89 *CCSK*, 59–63; CT, 85–8.

90 *CCSK*, 63–5; CT, 87–90.

91 *CSSK*, 66; CT, 90.

92 *CSSK*, 74–5; CT, 95–7.

93 *CSSK*, 100.

94 CT, 104–5; *CSSK*, 89–90.

95 *CSSK*, 91–5; CT, 105–110.

96 *CSSK*, 87.

97 *CSSK*, 83–4; CT, 99–101.

98 *CSSK*, 111–12.

99 See also CT, 83, *CSSK*, 114–15 for Mannheim's suggestion that 'national character' and characteristic 'national' traditions of thought can be linked to the social circumstances of the formation of fundamental attitudes and key ideas, on the parts of representative strata, at turning points in a national community's historical development.

100 CT, 120–9;*CSSK*, 112–25.

101 Quotation –*CSSK*, 90.

102 'The problem of generations' (1927;*FKM*, 351–95) draws on Riegl's account of formative principles in giving a more systematically sociological basis to the art historian Wilhelm Pinder's reformulation of the concept of 'Spirit of the Age' in generational terms. It is primarily through such formative (Gestalt) principles that Mannheim sees society as not merely influencing culture or individuals from without, but as being a dimension of life with 'creative energy', transforming the individual and culture from within. The key eponymous concepts of *Ideology and Utopia* (*IaU*) are formulated in Rieglian terms as 'volitional impulses', and, Mannheim traces the same formative principles in the art, if only briefly, as well as the thought of the bearers of ideologies and utopias (*IaU* 5, 215–16, 221–2), as also in *Man and Society in the Age of Reconstruction* (with specific reference to Riegl, 87).

103 P. Bourdieu, 'Outline of a sociological theory of art perception', *International Social Science Journal*, 20, 1968, 589–612.

104 Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism: An Inquiry into the Analogy of the Arts, Philosophy and Religion in the Middle Ages*, New York, 1951.

105 Pierre Bourdieu, 'Postface', in Erwin Panofsky, *Architecture Gothique et Pensée Scholastique*, Paris, 1967, 135–67; trans. 221–44 in Bruce Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory*, Chicago, IL, 2005. On Bourdieu's appropriation of Panofsky, Jeremy Tanner, *The Sociology of Art: A Reader*, London, 2003, 20–2; Holsinger, 'Indigineity: Panofsky, Bourdieu and the archaeology of the Habitus', *Premodern Condition*, 94–113.

106 Jeffrey Alexander, 'The reality of reduction: the failed synthesis of Pierre Bourdieu', in Alexander, *Fin de Siècle Social Theory*, London, 1995, 128–217.

107 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, Cambridge, 1996, esp. 87–100; with Tanner, *Sociology of Art*, 20–2.

108 Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *The Love of Art: European Museums and their Public*, Cambridge, 1990, 37–70.

109 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London, 1972.

110 Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford, 1972, 77–81.

111 Baxandall, *Painting*, 86–93.

112 Baxandall, *Painting*, 109.

113 Published in London in 1948, the year after Mannheim's death.

114 In *Patterns of Intention*, London, 1985, for example, Baxandall recognizes that the direction of 'intentional visual interest' may vary across social situations, but consistently defines the institutional contexts in which painters operate in modernizing terms, as 'a specific view of past painting' against which the painter seeks to register 'his individuality' (47–8). I have discussed this briefly in Tanner, *Sociology of Art*, 17–19.

115 'The logic of Vanity Fair', 60. Originally published in Paul A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*, London, 1974. Reprinted in and cited from Gombrich, *Ideals and Idols: Essays on Values in History and Art*, London, 1979, 60–92.

116 Elsner, 'Kunstwollen', 763.

117 Ostensibly quoting Mannheim's own words from *Man and Society in the Age of Reconstruction*, Popper (*The Poverty of Historicism*) argues that Mannheim 'as an advocate of holistic social engineering aims at ''seizing the key positions'' and ''extending the power of the state . . . until the state becomes nearly identical with society''. On the pages referenced by Popper (337–8), Mannheim is actually advocating the development of democratic structures of control in order to ameliorate the threats created by the extending power of the state. The phrase about 'seizing the key positions' is simply added by Popper, on the basis of Mannheim's discussions (never mentioning 'seizure') of 'key positions of control' in other passages (269, 295, 320, 381). It is never made quite clear how Mannheim's social planning and attention to who occupies positions of control would differ from Popper's own insistence that 'Institutions must be well designed and properly manned' (*Poverty, 157*).

118 On the Sunday Circle, and for the following discussion of their location within Hungarian culture and society, see Mary Gluck, *Georg Lukacs and his Generation 1900–1918*, London, 1985, esp. 8–21; David Kettler, 'Culture and revolution: Lukacs in the Hungarian revolutions of 1918/19', *Telos*, 10, 1971, 35–92. Note also David Kettler's review article 'The romance of modernism', *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, Winter 1986–7, 443–55 for some qualifications of Gluck's arguments, and a more analytically differentiated account of the varying cultural and political commitments of different members of the Sunday Circle.

119 Gluck, *Lukacs*, 8 on investment in future, 182–209 on political activities of members of the Sunday Circle during the crises at the end of the 1914–18 war, with the qualifications of Kettler, 'Romance'. Mannheim and some other members of the Sunday school participated in the popular protests in support of the broadly leftish National Council of Michael Karolyi in 1918 – Gluck, *Lukacs*, 197–9. Mannheim also, like many members of the Free School, received appointments as professors during Lukacs' period as Comissar of Culture of the Soviet regime in Hungary in 1919. But he never went so far as become a full-fledged Marxist or join the Communist party (Kettler, 'Culture and revolution', 69–70).

120 Kettler, 'Culture and revolution', 40–5, 55–69

121 Kettler, 'Culture and revolution', 44–5 on the relationship between the Free School of Social Studies and the Workers' Schools.

122 Kettler, 'Culture and revolution', 66–7 on the appropriation of German idealism as a dialectical response to the reductive Marxist formulas of the Hungarian social democratic party.

123 For a sympathetic account of Mannheim's later work, which they characterize as 'diagnostic sociology', see David Kettler, Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, *Karl Mannheim*, London, 1984, 80–128.

124 On Gombrich's characterization of art history not as a social science oriented towards systematic research and discovery, but a humanity serving to preserve universal values inherited from the past, see Jan Bakos, 'The Vienna School's hundred and sixty eighth graduate', in R. Woodfield, ed., *Gombrich on Art and Psychology*, Manchester, 1996, 234–57, esp. 248 on Gombrich's accounts of art history as scholarship, maintaining memory and preserving values, not a science making discoveries and explaining phenomena.

125 Woods, *The Vienna School*, 50–2, discussing Panofsky's article co-written with Fritz Saxl on 'Classical mythology in medieval art' (*Metropolitan Museum Studies* 4, 1932/3, 278), and Gombrich's indifference to contemporary art. On Panofsky's privileging of classical-Renaissance naturalism, see especially Iversen, *Riegl*, 149–66 'Postscript on Panofsky: three early essays'. In this respect, Mannheim and the members of the Sunday Circle (like Riegl) make an interesting contrast with the conservative taste shared by Gombrich, Panofsky and (in more gothic vein) Sedelmayr; see Gluck, *Lukacs*, on the critical progressive orientation of the members of the Sunday Circle towards various modernist movements in early twentieth century art, esp. chapters 4–5.

126 I draw here on Michael Orwicz's discussion of the (non-)reception of Arnold Hauser's *Social History of Art*, 'Critical discourse in the formation of a social history of art: Anglo-American response to Arnold Hauser', *Oxford Art Journal*, 8, 2, 1985, 52–62.

127 Howard Becker, *Art Worlds*, Berkeley, CA, 1982.

7

ART FICTION

H. PERRY CHAPMAN

Fiction about artists and art reveals a parallel extra-academy, extra-museum art history. This chapter examines three recent novels that draw on and to varying degrees fictionalize early modern Netherlandish painters and paintings. Tracy Chevalier's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* is 'art-historical fiction' that uses real paintings to craft a fictional Vermeer; Susan Vreeland's *Girl in Hyacinth Blue* is 'provenance fiction' that brings to life the history of ownership of a fictional painting by Vermeer; and Michael Frayn's *Headlong*, a tale of a modern-day amateur art historian's quixotic quest for a long lost picture by Pieter Bruegel, is 'art-history fiction'. These novels centre on paintings of daily life, which they situate in commonplace domestic settings, whether home or studio (Vermeer's studio was in his home). All rely on stylistic strategies of Dutch and Flemish genre painting to craft stories of ordinary lives that are made extraordinary by art. Held up as mirrors to our scholarly practices, each of these novels provides us with a glimmer of the gut-wrenching power of art; together they confront us with the popular ramifications of recent scholarly approaches to works of art and their makers.

In recent decades art-historical fiction has thrived and art history has pervaded other fiction genres, especially detective and espionage novels. I have chosen to focus on these three novels, all published in 1999, because of the different ways in which they buy into, challenge or subvert some of the levelling tendencies of recent art history. In the face of the death of the artist and the commodification of the work of art, they insist on art's emotional hold and play on our fascination with the engaged creative individual. They expose what happens in the popular imagination when the art historian turns social historian and philosopher, challenges the canon, researches the art market, and examines objects through the lens of science. Art history, especially in the field of Dutch and Flemish art, has been particularly focused on the art market and the economics of art, and the authors of these three novels have absorbed socio-economic investigations into the production and consumption of Dutch art.[1] Each novel is driven, in part, by money; yet each reminds us that what is one person's commodity is another's passion.

One outcome of the broader social history of art has been an (over)emphasis on art as the product of its culture rather than of an individual maker. This way of thinking has consequences for Chevalier's novel. The rise of reception theories that emphasize the viewer's response and thereby shift attention from artist to work of art is filtered through the novels by Vreeland and Frayn. Post-modern visual culture and material culture studies have even more profoundly

challenged the status of the artist and the work of art; the consequence is an *I'm OK, You're OK* relativism that relegates the artist to a maker and treats the work of art as an object no different from, say, a chair.[2] (Catherine Soussloff examines this phenomenon in this volume.) This chapter looks closely at how these three novels respond to, buy into, challenge, or mock – some more consciously than others – this levelling of artist and art by attending to the power of paintings, not in the Freedbergian sense but on ordinary people.[3] *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, *Girl in Hyacinth Blue*, and *Headlong*, to varying degrees, write the artist out of the picture, yet each concerns the passion for art and insists on art's vital human impact.

These novels all situate their pictures in people's homes and their stories concern people's domestic lives. It is no accident then that all three novels centre on and evoke sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Netherlandish paintings as strategies for imitating daily life and creating an effect of the real. Since the nineteenth century, realist novelists have been fascinated with and inspired by realist art. Ruth Bernard Yeazell, in *Art of the Everyday: Dutch Painting and the Realist Novel*, argues that seventeenth-century Dutch paintings were a crucial catalyst for nineteenth-century literary realism. Honoré de Balzac, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and Marcel Proust were inspired by Dutch pictures of the everyday life of ordinary people in their creation of fiction that evoked real people and real life in unprecedented ways. In Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*, 1913–27), Vermeer's paintings stir memories and spark brief moments of awareness that get at or bridge gaps between human uniqueness and connectedness. For its narrator, only through art do we gain access to 'the uniqueness of the fashion in which the world appears to each one of us, a difference which, if there were no art, would remain for ever the secret of every individual'.[4] For Proust, seventeenth-century Dutch paintings, most notably Vermeer's *View of Delft*, provide openings into his characters' inner desires for human bonds; they help forge psychological realism, a kind of interiority of the real.[5] Yeazell goes so far as to call the works of Balzac, Eliot, Hardy, and Proust 'novelistic versions of Dutch genre',[6] as if they are the literary-stylistic equivalents of the painting that had revolutionized art some two hundred years before. As literature, they were just as radically new even if, as Yeazell argues, their evocation of Dutch art was a backward-looking, nostalgic strategy.

The three novels discussed here confirm that realist art is again stimulating the literary imagination. Each invites the reader to imagine specific paintings and, in different ways, each relies on our ability to conjure up a type of painting. Chevalier's novel relies on our knowledge of the look of Vermeer's paintings and Dutch genre painting more generally; Vreeland crafts a chapter that evokes French eighteenth-century paintings by Boucher and Fragonard; *Headlong* reads like a Bruegelesque farce updated to the twentieth-century English countryside. Though a relevant detail may be reproduced on the dust jacket or cover, these books are not illustrated and are read, presumably, without illustrations at hand (even if the reader is unfamiliar with the works in question). Indeed, the point is that we rely on our imagination, our mind's eye, to conjure up the images and, more importantly, the passions they provoke. In so doing they ask us to examine our emotional responses to and satisfaction gained from works of art, our inclination to impress our own stories on them, and our desire to possess and to hold

them. Each also asks us to imagine an artist or, in *Headlong*'s case, a scholar as possessed as an artist.

Tragically flawed fictional artists have been a mainstay of popular literature since Balzac, in *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* (*The Unknown Masterpiece*, 1831), created Frenhofer as a tormented genius who spends ten years on a painting only to find that he had produced not a masterpiece but a canvas meaninglessly daubed with paint. Fictionalizing, or sensationalizing, real artists also has a long history of appealing to readers' fascination with the creative individual. The proliferation, in the past two decades, of fictional accounts of real artists has coincided with a renewed scholarly interest in how early modern biographies – by Giorgio Vasari, Karel van Mander, Gian Pietro Bellori, Arnold Houbraken, to name just a few – crafted individual artistic identities and shaped an idea, some would say a myth, of the artist.[7] The list of novels about seventeenth-century painters includes Peter Robb's *M: The Man Who Became Caravaggio* (2000); two fictional accounts of Artemisia Gentileschi, *Artemisia: A Novel* (2001) by Alexandra Lapierre and *The Passion of Artemisia* (2002) by Susan Vreeland;[8] multiple fictional accounts of Rembrandt, including Joseph Heller's *Picture This* (1988) and Sylvie Matton's *Rembrandt's Whore* (2003); and Michael Kernan's *The Lost Diaries of Frans Hals: A Novel* (1994). Most of these are coloured by, succumb to, or thwart an opening up of the canon and reassessment of the artist that, whatever its positive impact on the history of art, has come at the cost of a larger assault on the artist and on artistic agency. Broadly speaking, since the 1960s, post-modern ways of thinking have called into question the notion of the individual as a self-conscious, self-creating, free and autonomous agent. The metaphorical 'death of the author', from the title of Roland Barthes' essay (1967), separated the text or work of art from its creator and gave the reception of the text the status of the text itself. Michel Foucault, in *The Order of Things* (1966), thought of 'man as a recent invention', as a cultural construct, as the product of outside institutional forces and of the structures of power.[9]

Consequently, none of the recent art-historical fiction fully buys into the glorification of genius that epitomized Irving Stone's mid-twentieth-century fictional accounts of Michelangelo and Van Gogh. In *The Agony and the Ecstasy: A Biographical Novel of Michelangelo* (1961), Stone freely imagines the young Michelangelo's engagement with drawing, *disegno*, as a kind of rapture.[10] The physicality of Michelangelo's early working of the marble, which calls to mind Hans Namuth's photographs of Jackson Pollock splattering paint from can to canvas, is explicitly sexualized in this scene of sculptural *coitus interruptus*:

> [Michelangelo] had removed the outer shell [of the block of marble]. Now he dug into the mass, entered in the Biblical sense. In this act of creation there was needed the thrust, the penetration, the beating and pulsating upward to a mighty climax, the total possession. It was not merely an act of love; it was the act of love: the mating of his own inner patterns to the inherent forms of the marble; an insemination in which he planted seed, created the living work of art.
>
> Bertoldo entered the shop, saw Michelangelo at work, cried out, 'No, no, that's wrong. Stop! That's the amateur way to carve.'[11]

Art-historical fiction is like historical fiction in that it can illuminate the past or distort the past. It can be conventional and comfortable – we know the history

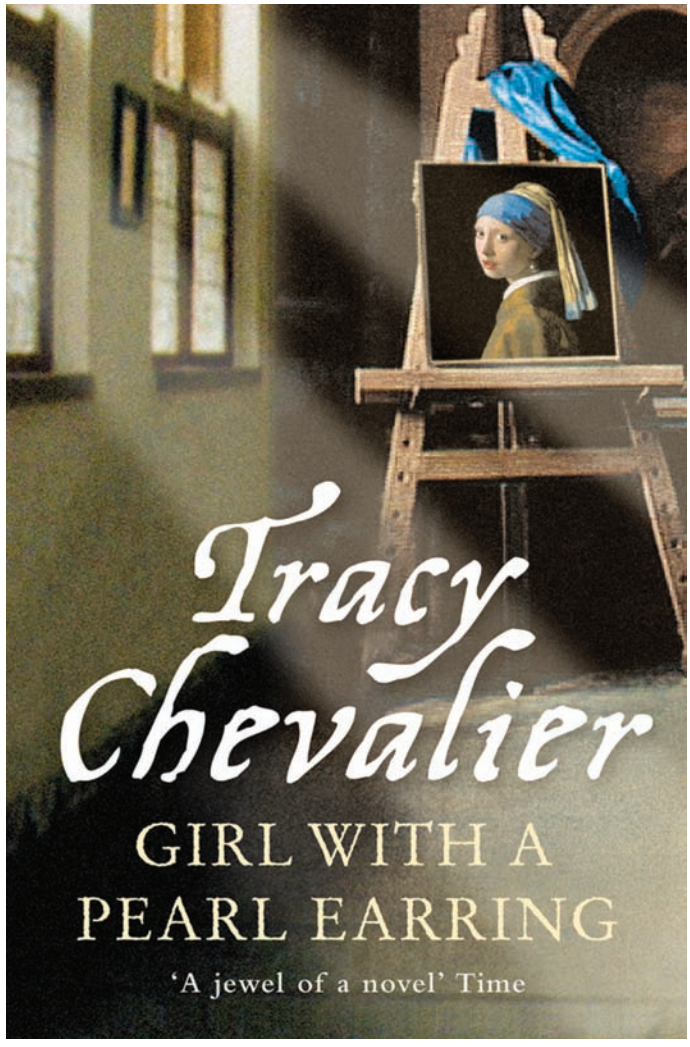
or the story already. Or it can challenge accepted wisdom by reaching beyond the rules of evidence that confine responsible historians.[12] While Stone employed the device of historical fiction to get at the unique, unknowable subjectivity of a real artist, *The Agony and the Ecstasy* reveals more about mid-twentieth-century notions of genius than it reveals about its historical protagonist.[13] (It also provides some perspective on subsequent reactions against the very idea of genius and claims that genius is a myth and an invention of romanticism.) *The Agony and the Ecstasy* serves as something of a benchmark and a standard by which to gauge more recent fictional accounts of historical artists. It claims, through its subtitle, 'a biographical novel', and its profusion of historical detail, a high degree of accuracy. Indeed, Stone spent six years researching and had Michelangelo's nearly five hundred letters translated into English 'to create a solid base for the novel'.[14]

GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING

Tracy Chevalier makes no such claims for the accuracy of the Vermeer in *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (plate 1). Yet, while she steers admirably clear of giving Vermeer thoughts or even words, she works hard to set her story in an authentically crafted seventeenth-century Delft. Author and Professor of creative writing Mary Karr would have us accept that, 'Distinguishing between fiction and non- isn't nearly the taxing endeavor some would have us believe . . . . And here's how readers know the difference: the label slapped on the jacket of the book.'[15] Yet there is no doubt that readers confuse fiction with reality (and that their confusion is actively exploited by publishers). Witness the review quotes on the paperback cover of Chevalier's novel: 'History and fiction merge seamlessly'; 'Chevalier re-creates common life in Delft with fascinating authenticity'; 'Chevalier brings the real artist Vermeer and a fictional muse to life.' When HBO shows the 2003 film, it is classified as 'biography'.[16]

But biography it is not. By combining a compelling, historically accurate setting with a fictional story, Chevalier creatively imagines how Vermeer's masterpiece came into being. She remains true both to research into seventeenth-century Dutch material, social, and religious life and to the limited documentary evidence about Vermeer. So little is known about Vermeer that it is impossible to fictionalize him with any authenticity. Readers are invariably disappointed when apprised of the limited truth of Chevalier's tale. The barest outlines of Vermeer's life are accurate but the rest – every bit of the plot – is pure fabrication. For example, documents confirm that the Vermeers had a maid; in seventeenth-century Holland, maids were stereotyped as threats to the stability of the family.[17] Thus, Chevalier merges meagre fact with popular culture to create the novel's protagonist and narrator, the teenaged maid Griet, who disrupts the Vermeer household.

Evoking Vermeer's paintings contributes to the novel's atmosphere of authenticity. Griet's arrival at the Vermeers' house, on her first day of work, brings to mind *The Little Street* (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum).[18] Just as Vermeer enhanced the naturalness of his images by painting precisely observed details, so, too, Chevalier uses the minutiae of daily living to bring the novel to life. Credibility comes with her description of laundering practices: collars are starched by being boiled in water with potato peelings. Details are accurate: Griet enters the house and sees eleven paintings in the front hall, precisely the number recorded in the inventory made at the time of Vermeer's death.[19] Aspects of Dutch culture



1 Cover illustration for paperback edition of Tracy Chevalier, *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006.

are conveyed effectively: Griet's father is a tile painter – the quintessential Delft trade – who can no longer work because he has been blinded by a kiln explosion. Hence, Griet finds employment with a painter of higher status. (Chevalier's understanding of the intricacies of social class is based on Michael Montias' *Artists and Artisans in Delft*.) Griet is Protestant and the Vermeers are Catholic, a difference that both sets the historical stage and builds a theme around the Protestant mistrust of images.

Yet, the closer we get to Vermeer the person, the more historical reality and tone are distorted for the sake of the plot. Vermeer and his growing family (eventually there were eleven children) did live with, and were supported by, his mother-in-law, Maria Thins; but there is no evidence that Vermeer's wife and mother-in-law were the clumsy dolt and monster of the novel. Likewise, a single client, Pieter Claes van Ruijven, acquired twenty-one of Vermeer's paintings but the novel's lecherous patron is pure fiction.[20]

Much of the story takes place in Vermeer's studio, which Griet cleans and where she becomes the painter's living muse. Since the 1980s, technical art history – the study of the broader art-historical implications of scientific investigation into materials, techniques, processes and studio practices – in the field of Dutch art has set new standards for the discipline as a whole.[21] Chevalier masterfully draws on scientific investigations into Vermeer's practice to construct a plot that revolves around the making of pictures in the workshop. Through Griet's eyes, Chevalier brings technical art history to life, thereby engaging our longing for entrée to the studio, our fascination with seeing the artist at work. Initially, Griet never sees Vermeer at work and the two barely speak. But one day she finds him with a curious box. The fictional Vermeer explains that it 'helps me to see in a different way . . . to see more of what is there' (60), which is a concise explanation of the way that many art historians suppose the real Vermeer used the camera obscura.[22] The *Woman with a Pearl Necklace* is the first painting that Griet sees on Vermeer's easel. Studying the picture, Griet notices that Vermeer had removed the large map hanging on the wall. Autoradiography shows that Vermeer had made this change, just as he simplified other compositions. To art historians it is exactly this kind of rethinking, revealed by looking beneath the painting's surface, that gives us some sense of Vermeer's way of composing a picture and, we like to think, some insight into Vermeer's artistic personality, his creative imagination. Here, at the limits of our knowledge, the novel speculates about the artist's motive. Griet likes the change: 'the painting looked the better for it – simpler, the lines of the woman clearer' (61). She dares to ask Vermeer, 'When you looked in the box, did it tell you to remove the map from the painting?' 'Yes, it did', he replies. The film revises Vermeer's reaction to her odd question: bemused, he replies, 'It helps'.[23]

The paintings drive Chevalier's plot. Van Ruijven and his family members pose for the pictures he has commissioned; his wife modelled for the *Pearl Necklace*. Vermeer's wife is put out because he never paints her. Increasingly, she resents Vermeer's attention to Griet, for it drives home that Vermeer completely excludes Catharina from his art. With his next painting, the *Woman with the Water Pitcher* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art), Vermeer begins to employ Griet as his surreptitious assistant. He sends her to the apothecary to buy pigments, teaches her to mix paints, and lets her set out colours on his palette. Then, he asks her to pose in place of the baker's daughter, who has fallen sick from standing by the open window. Griet's posing is a turning point in the novel; it initiates her as muse and takes the pair to the edge of impropriety. After not painting from May to July, Vermeer next sets to work on the *Lady Writing* (Washington, National Gallery of Art). Van Ruijven has decided he wants a picture of his wife looking out at the painter, and Vermeer's mother-in-law and wife will see to it that Vermeer complies, even though this is a pose he does not often paint. Painting extroversion is against Vermeer's nature. Indeed, the previous instance, the *Girl with a Wine Glass*, resulted in scandal: van Ruijven impregnated the maid who posed with him for the picture. Though crucial to the plot, all of this posing makes Vermeer more of a slave to nature than he must have been and challenges us to consider the gap between the mystique of painting directly from life and the painstaking, elaborate, imaginative process of creating the look of the real.

As the *Lady Writing* progresses, Griet becomes bolder and asserts her artistic judgement, falling victim to the muse's fantasy that she can be a painter too. She sees that the still life on the table is 'too neat', but waits to see if Vermeer will notice. When he does not, she makes the change, rumpling the tablecloth. Later, she explains, 'There needs to be some disorder in the scene . . . to contrast with her tranquillity', to which Vermeer's replies: '"I had not thought I would learn something from a maid"' (135–6). So, the maid becomes Vermeer's muse and his muse becomes his mind. Chevalier characterizes Vermeer through Griet's eyes, tantalizing us with access to the artist. From the outset Vermeer is a quiet loner; his studio is 'another place', off-limits to his family, especially to his jealous wife, and vastly different from his home, from which it is separated by a locked door. When Griet first sees the door, she is aware that 'Behind it was a silence that I knew was him' (20). Like many an art historian, Griet has a hard time reconciling Vermeer's many children with his art: 'It is Catharina who wants many children . . . He would rather be alone in his studio.' The novel's chaste Vermeer has roots in the art historian Lawrence Gowing's notion of him as distant and removed – he hides from women behind his camera obscura.[24] The film, via an almost expressionless Colin Firth, turns him into a caricature of the lone genius.

Yet, imagining Vermeer as solitary – intellectually solitary rather than emotionally solitary – is faithful to the period's notion of the painter; witness Rembrandt's exaggeration of aloneness in the *Artist in His Studio* (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts). The idea that the painter worked alone had been promoted since the Renaissance, if not antiquity. Michelangelo, with the help of Vasari, constructed himself as an artist who worked without assistants on the most unlikely of projects, the vast Sistine ceiling. In the seventeenth century, creative solitude was part of the mystique of the painter's studio, which had its conceptual roots in the scholar's study. It was also a practical necessity. The Amsterdam painter Gerard de Lairesse, writing in 1707, explained that inventing, which is the intellectual labour of art, works better without interruption 'lest it slip out of memory'. 'How often do we find, that when we betake ourselves to thought, we are by some outward cause interrupted, and our project spoilt by the confusion of our sense; to obviate which, it is best to be alone.' [25]

Chevalier's fictional Vermeer is in some ways a metaphor for the real Vermeer's anonymity. He is a reminder of how little we know about Vermeer, who left no letters, no diary. Unlike most of his contemporaries, no one wrote his biography. Perhaps it is out of respect for the lack of historical evidence about Vermeer the person that Chevalier refrains from entering his mind and giving him thoughts. Or perhaps it is out of respect for the period's notion that our access to the studio and the artist is limited. The result, however, is that the fictional Vermeer is an artist of compromised artistic authority.

Throughout the novel, circumstances dictate what Vermeer paints. The camera obscura tells him to remove the map from the *Pearl Necklace*. The *Lady Writing* looks out because that is what van Ruijven wants; the picture's array of objects on the table gets its crucial natural disorder from Griet's rumpling of the tablecloth. Van Ruijven has had his eyes on Griet and insists on posing for a picture with her. Vermeer's mother-in-law (now turned procuress, as in the painting by Dirck van Baburen that she owned) presses Vermeer to comply. *The Concert* (Boston, Gardner Museum) comes about because Maria Thins has told him

'You must paint a larger painting, with more figures in it, as you used to. Not another woman alone with her thoughts. When van Ruijven comes to see his painting you must suggest another to him . . . We're further in debt . . . We need the money' (151–2).

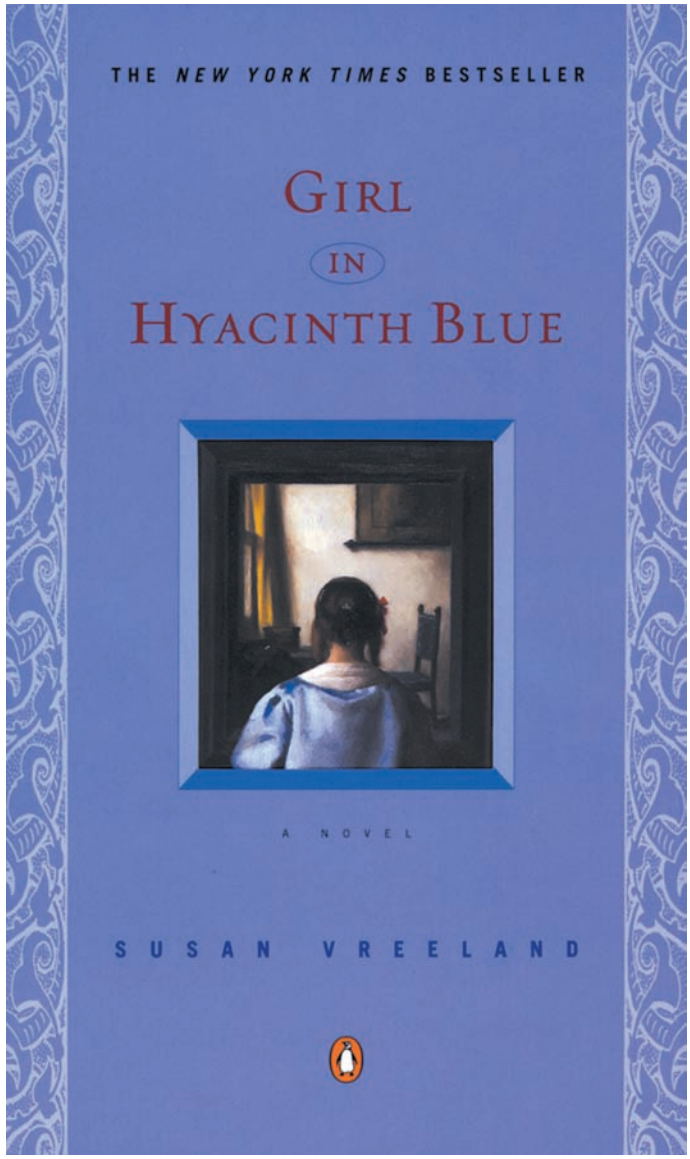
Nevertheless, Vermeer protects Griet from van Ruijven. When, at the book's climax, he paints the *Girl with a Pearl Earring* it is not because he is inspired to. Rather, in order to keep Griet out of his client's clutches, Vermeer paints her alone, in a separate picture, which he promises to van Ruijven. Griet wears the brilliant blue and yellow turban not because he has an idea of a stunningly original painting in his mind but because Griet is too modest to uncover her hair. Financial need may well explain much about the production of pictures in the seventeenth century. But recent scholarship has gone too far in attributing artistic motives to economics and in reducing paintings to commodities. Chevalier, in following that line, has chosen to imagine an over-determined, materialist Vermeer. The film, providing a corrective, points to the bankruptcy of reducing art to commodity status when, at story's end, as everything unravels, the mercenary Maria Thins shrieks, 'They're just paintings – pictures for money! They mean nothing!'

And so, the inscrutable, fictional Vermeer is robbed of his imagination, of his artistic authority, of love in the studio. As early as 1400, Cennino Cennini distinguished between ordinary craftsmen who worked for profit and true artists who worked out of enthusiasm. In the Dutch art theory of Vermeer's century – by Karl van Mander and Samuel van Hoogstraten – that enthusiasm was conceptualized as love.[26] Some artists worked for money, others for fame, but the most exalted were driven by love of art. Those are the chosen few that have the talent, drive, and burning desire to achieve something that has never been accomplished before. The fictional Vermeer is robbed of that kind of love.

GIRL IN HYACINTH BLUE

In *Girl in Hyacinth Blue*, a unique example of 'provenance fiction', Susan Vreeland takes as her subject the history of ownership of a fictional painting of a girl sewing at a window by Vermeer (plate 2). The picture's imagined provenance, ordinarily a list virtually meaningless to the non-specialist, comes to life in a series of vignettes that work backwards from the present to Vermeer's lifetime and the circumstances under which the picture was created. As the painting changes hands, its power over a succession of people, each of whom sees the girl in the picture differently, takes various forms. Each owner fantasizes about the girl's identity and wonders what she is thinking. At novel's end the reader learns that she is Vermeer's daughter Magdalena and what is on her mind.

The novel begins with the issue that has recently driven provenance research and brought it into the public eye, the Nazi looting of art in Jewish collections during the Holocaust. The picture's present-day owner is Cornelis Engelbrecht, 'single, modest dresser in receding colors, mathematics teacher, sponsor of the chess club, mild-mannered acquaintance to all rather than a friend to any, a person anxious to become invisible' (1).[27] Engelbrecht's self-effacement is 'invented' to hide a 'secret obsession'. He harbours a painting that he thinks is by Vermeer. Until today, when he summons Richard, a fellow teacher and this vignette's narrator, he has shown the picture to no one; 'I don't want to rock the



2 Cover illustration for paperback edition of Susan Vreeland, *Girl in Hyacinth Blue*, New York: Penguin Books, 2000.

art world', he maintains (9). In fact, he has been prevented from revealing the painting's existence, and from definitively establishing its authenticity, by its terrible secret. In Amsterdam on Black Thursday, 6 August 1942, Engelbrecht's father, a Nazi lieutenant, had looted the picture from the apartment of a Jewish family whom he had just 'sent to the trains' to Westerbork, the Dutch transit centre for Jews en route to extermination camps in eastern Europe. He had also stolen the picture from the Führer, which Engelbrecht imagined his father as justifying thus: 'All Jewish art collections had to be deposited with Lippman and Rosenthal, a holding company. But this was not a collection, only a single painting, blatantly displayed, or ignorantly' (17–18). Vreeland thus poses in microcosm the problem that Walter Benjamin, in 1940, posed for the museum-

goer who is moved to tears by the beauty of art although 'the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror'.[28] Engelbrecht's memories of his father call into question the humanity that arises (only) in response to art. The soothing calm of the painting makes all the more jarring the violent history of the circumstances under which it was obtained; the father who is profoundly moved by the painting of a beautiful girl (and infinitely kind to his own little boy) is thus rendered all the more monstrous in light of his violence against a Jewish child.

The picture, tainted with the blood of the Holocaust, has clouded Engelbrecht's entire life. His obsession with it has ruined his marriage: 'She left, saying he loved things rather than people' (20). Wracked by guilt, he has tried to destroy it once; it is implied that he may now succeed. Engelbrecht has had to live alone with this object of exquisite beauty that makes him complicit in his father's act. For once he shows the painting to someone. To his colleague Richard he describes the 'longing' in the girl's expression (4). His own longing presumably, for later we learn that it was longing for someone, anyone with whom to enjoy the painting – longing to delight with another – that had prompted him to invite Richard, risk exposure, and 'crack the eggshell of his scrupulously constructed self' (28).

Like *Headlong*, *Girl in Hyacinth Blue* raises the question of whether the fictional painting by the famous painter is authentic or whether a mere fake has had such a destructive impact, making the folly of irrationally succumbing to art's power all the more tragic. Richard explains Engelbrecht's irrational attachment to the picture's authenticity: 'If the painting was real so was the atrocity of his father's looting' (19). The guilt has been transposed to the painting. Yet Richard recognizes that 'If ever a man loved a work of art, it was Cornelius' (32). By the end, Richard understands why he has been chosen to learn the secret: 'It became clear to me why he picked me. He thought an artist might excuse, out of awe for the work, and if I excused, the painting could live.' His response to Engelbrecht: 'You know what they say, Cornelius. One good burning deserves another.' But even Richard cannot deal with the idea that a real Vermeer could cause such irrationality. His final verdict: 'Poor fool, ruining his life for a piece of cloth smeared with mineral paste, for a fake, I had to tell myself, a mere curiosity' (35).

From Engelbrecht, the novel works backwards through history and through the picture's changing attribution as Vermeer's critical fortunes ebb and flow. Vreeland imagines the picture's impact on a succession of lives, shaping style and content to historical setting. The result is in part fictionalized reception theory, in which the picture is seen through the eyes of different fictional characters from the past. Chapter 2 is set in 1942, in the Amsterdam apartment from which Lieutenant Engelbrecht has taken the picture that should have gone to the Führer. It has been decreed that Jews could not keep pigeons; a father is freeing his to fly back to Antwerp with the message 'Kill my pigeons . . . I can't expect you to feed them for the duration' (37). But they return. In these terrifying times, his daughter, who knows she must deal with the pigeons, finds solace in the painting:

> Hannah sat looking at the painting . . . It was of a girl her own age looking out a window while sewing. The way she leaned forward, intent on something, and the longing in her eyes cast a spell over her every time she looked. The girl wasn't working . . . Her hands were lax . . . because what was going on in her mind was more important. Hannah understood that (40).

Hannah was with her father when he had bought the painting at an auction of goods of poor Jews: 'When this painting came up for bid, she gasped. The face of the painting of the girl in the painting almost glowed . . . She seemed more real than the people in the room' (41). Briefly the painting permits Hannah escape to an alternative reality infinitely preferable to that of an Amsterdam Jew in 1942.

The chapter 'Adagia' is a brief morality tale – an adage brought to life and set in the nineteenth-century Dutch equivalent of a Victorian middle-class milieu – in which the picture temporarily disrupts a marriage. A girl from Vreeland is about to be married to an Amsterdammer and her parents discuss a suitable wedding gift. The wife suggests the painting: 'a touch of our home in theirs' (65); 'Our anniversary. Remember?' (67). She believes her husband bought the picture for her, but he lets slip that he acquired it (attributed to Pieter de Hooch) to commemorate an important period in his life and so cannot bear to part with it. Through it he has been vicariously reliving the euphoria of a lost first love. Ever truthful, he reveals too much, wounding his wife: '"It reminded me of someone I knew once."' He sees his own picture: '"The way the girl is looking out the window . . . Waiting for someone. And her hand. Upturned, and so delicate. Inviting a kiss"' (67). 'When he looked at the painting, he indulged in imagining Tanneke, and her braid of honey-colored hair, heavy in his hand when he unbraided it, and his life with her, what it might have been' (76). The picture goes to Amsterdam with the newlyweds.

The chapters 'Hyacinth Blue' and 'Morningshine' contrast high and low, international and local. 'Hyacinth Blue', capitalizing on the French presence in eighteenth-century Holland and the association of the Rococo with frivolity, puts the narration and the picture, now 'by a minor artist, some Johannes van der Meer' (85), in the hands of an elite French beauty, looking back on the discontent of her loveless, childless, marriage and her displacement to The Hague. She disdains everything Dutch, except for the painting of a young girl:

> She was looking out the window with such a sweet, naïve expression on her face, though at first I thought it a bit vacant. You see, the villagers are cut off from each other by water, always water. Such inbreeding that more than a few of the ladies are half-witted or decidedly curious in a bovine sort of way. Still, this child must have had parents who loved her, and that generated in me both tenderness and melancholy (84).

However, the painting is too plain; she 'made inquiries at the artists' guild to have a string of pearls painted in around the poor girl's naked neck' (85). The painting, a gift from her husband, to conceal his infidelity and assuage his guilt, becomes her ticket back to Paris. After her liaison with a 'Monsieur le C' is discovered she sneaks off with the painting, in which she now sees herself: 'What I saw before as vacancy on her face seemed now an irretrievable innocence and deep calm that caused me a pang. It wasn't just a feature of her youth, but of something finer – an artless nature. I could see it in her eyes. This girl, when she became a woman, *would* risk all, sacrifice all, overlook and endure all in order to be one with her beloved' (105). Having lost the documents identifying the picture as a van der Meer, she attempts to sell it as something better, a van Mieris. Without authenticating

papers, she has to settle for twenty-four guilders, 'barely enough for a hired coach and inns to Paris' (106).

Earlier in the century, in the aftermath of the St Nicholas flood of 1717, the picture fetched an astounding seventy-five guilders, a fortune to a provincial Groningen farm couple whose life it would profoundly alter. In 'Morningshine', the picture floats into the hands of a farmer's wife, along with a foundling carrying the message, 'Sell the painting. Feed the child' (114). Saskia has hauled her children, all the household goods and possessions, and even the family cow up to the house's second storey, out of harm's way. They settle in for a long stay; the flood waters cannot drain until the dikes are repaired. Though her husband tells her to sell the painting, Saskia intends to keep it. She sees it as a portrait of the infant's mother; she wants it for the baby boy but also for herself. Saskia has married down and 'didn't have many beautiful things' (122).

To her, the picture is a thing of beauty. But Saskia is also an aspirational viewer, the kind of viewer that art historians imagine takes pleasure in visually possessing through pictures, especially still life paintings, the luxury goods they cannot hope to obtain and the trappings of status to which they can only aspire.[29] She sees, 'The oriental tapestry on the table, the map on the wall, the engraved brass latch on the window – since Saskia couldn't have these things in reality, then she wanted them all the more in the painting' (123). But the food is running out. Saskia sees her husband's fear: 'The fear of having to abandon the farm and starve beside a canal in Amsterdam, the whole family inching forward their alms bowls in front of the poorhouse.' Nonetheless, to keep the picture, she does the unthinkable; surreptitiously, she feeds the family the seed potatoes, needed for the spring's crop. Caught, she has to sell the picture. To fetch a proper price for a Vermeer, she had been advised, take it to Amsterdam, to the dealers on the Rokin. There Hans van Uylenburgh offers her fifty-five guilders, which she refuses. Mateus de Neff makes no effort to hide his excitement and gives her seventy-five.[30]

How the painting came to be with the foundling floating in a skiff in the 1717 St Nicholas flood is revealed in the next vignette, 'From the Personal Papers of Adriaan Kuypers', a recollection written on a wet St Nicholas' Eve thirty years later, signed and dated, 'December 5, 1747, Rain all day'. The infant turns out to be the offspring of a brief, illicit liaison between Aletta, who was hanged as a witch for murdering her infant's twin, and the young Kuypers, a student from the College of Science and Philosophy at Groningen University, who has come to the village of Delfzijl to study windmill design. In Kuypers' recollection, madwoman and rational intellectual see the picture completely differently and that difference becomes a metaphor for the shifting relation between science and art circa 1700. The picture is in the countryhouse of Kuypers' aunt, wife of a slaver, 'an investor in ships doing Westindische trade, the Middle Passage of which everyone knew . . . was in bodies and souls'; unable to gain respectability in the eyes of God, she settles for its 'sham substitute in the eyes of man', spending well on charity and on decorating her townhouse 'and now she was starting on her country-house' (158–9).

Aletta, in a heap on the floor, cries before the painting for her mother, who died in childbirth. Kuypers sees in it the love and intimacy missing in Aletta's life:

'In the painting, the girl's mouth was slightly open, glistening at the corner, as if she'd just had a thought that intrigued her, an effect that made her astonishingly real. To me, she was the embodiment of Descartes's principle, ''I think, therefore I am.'' She was everything Aletta wasn't – peaceful, refined, and contemplative' (161). The fiery, wild-haired, reckless-eyed Aletta, who haunts the marshes following storks, beguiles the close-cropped, rational Kuypers, who is fascinated by the 'flat domesticated northland ... [where] wind helped to manage the land scientifically – Descartes in action' (163). The pair take to meeting surreptitiously in the bell tower of the church. In the aunt's house, the painting falls from the wall – an omen. In the bell tower, Aletta gives birth to twins, another omen, and kills the hare-lipped baby girl. From the bell tower, where he has been harbouring the baby boy, Kuypers watches the hanging: 'flood was on everyone's mind, so no one came to see Aletta Pieters hang' (183). As the dikes give way and floodwaters rise, he returns to his aunt (who had given Aletta up to the authorities). She's hauling her possessions up the stairs, 'in one arm a Ceylon urn, in the other the painting of the girl, each one acquired by sending a soul to hell on earth in the Americas' (191). Afraid for her reputation, even in the face of deluge, she asks,

> 'If I give you something, will you promise to take the child away?' ... 'Take this.' She held forward the painting. 'Sell it in Amsterdam. I'll give you the dealer's paper. It was her favorite despite her tears.' Her chin quivered. 'I can't enjoy it anymore' (192).

The final two chapters take us back to Vermeer and the girl in the painting, his daughter Magdalena. Vreeland's Vermeer is a wonderful contrast to Chevalier's. At the house of his patron Pieter van Ruijven, where Vermeer has come hoping to be alone with his own paintings, Van Ruijven, urging Vermeer to paint another picture, reminds Vermeer of his obligation: '"I don't mean the debt. I mean a deeper obligation. The obligation of talent."' Vermeer's response casts him as a domesticated version of Stone's Michelangelo: '"But the cost ... '' And he didn't mean the price he would set. The cost was to his household. The cost was to Catharina who never had him fully to herself. Any anticipated private moment with him was invaded by his intimacy with a painting' (204–5).

Vreeland's Vermeer is a functioning melancholic. Currently in the down phase of the cycle, he is suffering from painter's block. He is torn between his family and his art. He is a perfectionist who craves the quietness that seems beyond reach in the household full of children where he paints. He plays with his boys but is too busy for his daughter Magdalena; seeing her worn clogs sends him into 'an abyss of despondency' (209). In 'the imminent maw of nonpainting', he is plagued by self-doubt that scrapes 'raw his need to be in the security and joy of the next painting' (203–4). In response to van Ruijven's urging, he smiles and thinks:

> No one but another painter could know the delicacy required to balance the complexities, to keep reality at bay in order to remain in the innermost center of his work, without which he knew he would only exist at the periphery of art, a mere provincial painter. Limited output and limited following (205).

He has 'plunged into the melancholy of being between paintings, and feverish with longing for the moment when the next would reveal itself to him' (206).

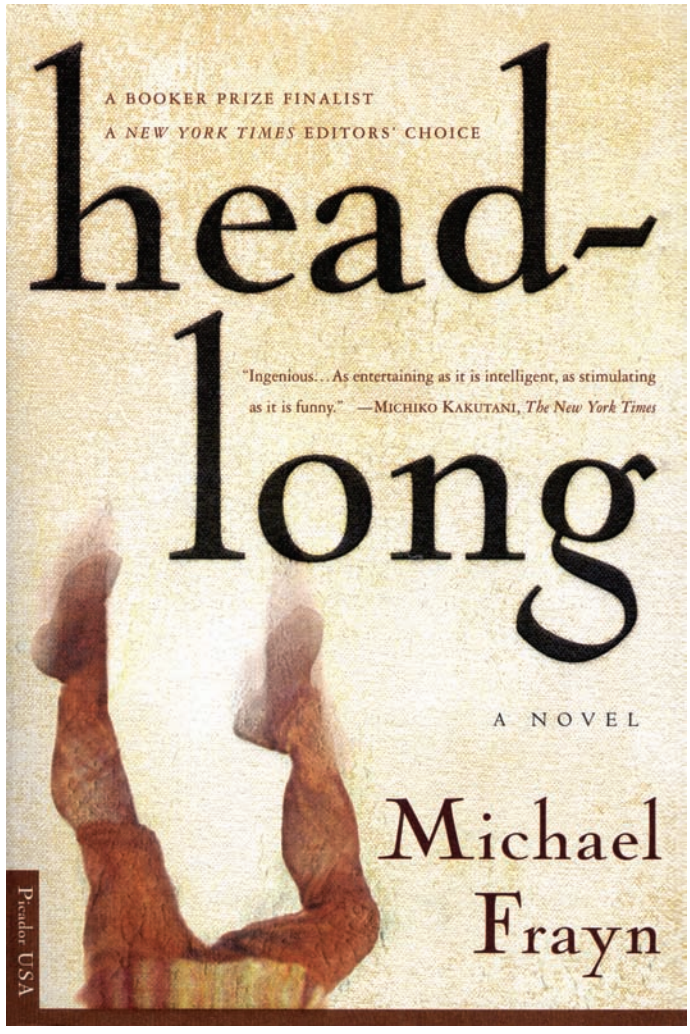
Torn, too, between the demands of his art and the need to make a living, he considers giving up painting to go into the cloth business with a cousin. His mother-in-law urges him to hire himself out to one of the potteries as a faience painter, which sends him into despair: 'Plate after relentless plate. He imagined them stacked in a wall before him. His knees weakened' (212). He then sees a shiny metal pitcher, which he wants to paint in a picture. Vermeer's despair at the possibility of being reduced to a mere craftsman is based on distinctions between high and low status painting in seventeenth-century Delft. It is also Vreeland's way of saying that, despite the rise of material culture studies, pitchers and pictures are not in the same category.

The shiny pitcher has inspired him. Back in the studio, engrossed in 'pulverizing a small block of ultramarine . . . loving the intensity of the blue . . . he heard a commotion in the main room'. It is Magdalena: 'There was something in this girl he could never grasp, an inner life inscrutable to him. He was in awe of the child's flights of fancy, her insatiable passion always to be running off somewhere.' He wants to 'still it for a moment, long enough to paint' it for eternity. '"If you sit here, I will paint you, Magdalena. But only if you stop that shouting"' (222). She hears him say, '"If you sit here mending, I will paint you, Magdalena"' (232). Boxed into her girl-world of mending and sewing, the inscrutable Magdalena, it turns out, wants more than anything to paint. Vermeer never teaches her and she never does.[31] Poignantly, she comes 'to understand that he looked at her with the same interest he gave to the glass of milk' (234). The picture that so many would come to love is passed over by van Ruijven and hung without a frame in the Vermeer household's 'outer kitchen where the younger children slept' (235).

HEADLONG

Headlong, by Michael Frayn, is 'art history fiction' (plate 3). Set in present-day England, it tells the story of a fictional art historian's tragic pursuit of a fictional painting by a real sixteenth-century Flemish painter, Pieter Bruegel. Fiction appropriates real works of art for all kinds of reasons; whatever its function, the work is usually seen. In Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, just before the gory shower scene, the camera briefly pans over a reproduction, hanging on the wall, of a baroque painting of the bathing Susanna as she is spied on by the Elders. The characters in *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and *Girl in Hyacinth Blue* are deeply engaged in looking at paintings; that Griet is never able to see the picture Vermeer painted of her makes her final rupture with the Vermeer household all the more painful. In *Headlong* the fictional painting is never within grasp or even really within sight of the novel's protagonist. *Headlong*'s plot revolves around the pursuit of a lost painting. Once glimpsed, it seems to be increasingly elusive the harder it is sought. In this way the painting might be taken as an allegory of the artwork's fundamental alterity (see Amanda Boetzkes's chapter in this volume).

Headlong capitalizes on art's capacity to create desire. It is a tale of deception and bungled thievery told by an amateurish art historian who is obsessed with his



3 Cover illustration for paperback edition of Michael Frayn, *Headlong*, New York: Picador, 2000.

aristocratic neighbour's painting, a large, filthy, unframed panel, which he has spied not over the mantel but covering the fireplace to keep out the drafts. He is convinced that he has found the long-lost sixth painting in the series of *Months* that Pieter Bruegel painted in 1565 for the Antwerp merchant Niclaes Jongelinck. And he is so possessed by his 'great scheme' to separate the picture from its down-at-heel owner that he cannot grasp the contradiction between his ploy to acquire a masterpiece for a few thousand pounds and his fantasy of making his mark as its discoverer. (In contrast to Vreeland's Engelbrecht, *Headlong*'s protagonist hopes to rock the art world with his discovery.) Real art anchors both the fictional painting and the fiction, especially for the savvy reader who can conjure up Bruegel's *Hunters in the Snow*, *Gloomy Day*, *Return of the Herd* (Vienna), *Hay Harvest* (Prague) and *Harvesters* (New York). Indeed, even the lost painting is 'real' in that one picture, probably representing April and May, from Bruegel's series is believed to have gone missing long ago.

Headlong intersperses a riveting, hysterical pursuit of the painting in the countryside with a dull record of library research in London. *Headlong*'s tragi-comic art historian is named Martin Clay – 'clay' is apt as there is something rather unformed about him. He has changed fields, dropping philosophy to write the definitive study of the Master of the Embroidered Foliage, an obscure minor painter of the Northern Renaissance. He is a man prone to whim and with sufficient internal contradiction to be a convincing parody of the solitary scholar. He puts in his hours at the British Library, though. If Chevalier's research shows through, Frayn shows research, in excruciating detail. Clay ploughs through the Bruegel literature by Fritz Grossmann, Max Friedländer, Walter Gibson, Wolfgang Stechow, Charles de Tolnay, Charles Cuttler, and Craig Harbison, only to conclude that Bruegel 'is an absence, a ghost, which scholars characterize more or less however they choose' (125–6). Next, he turns to historical context and John Lothrop Motley's *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* (1855!). Though the reader learns a good bit of sixteenth-century history, whole chunks of *Headlong* read like a bad graduate student seminar paper that begins with a free-floating biography, throws in vaguely relevant historical background, quotes at length from secondary sources, gets no further than reporting the steps of the investigation, and seems to have missed the latest scholarship altogether.

The effectiveness of this regurgitated information about Bruegel and sixteenth-century Flanders must vary. For the specialist it reinforces Clay's buffoonishness; for the uninitiated reader it may provide an illusion of scholarly authenticity, which would make the narrator's fanciful attribution of the painting seem plausible. In addition, it takes us behind the scenes to expose the intellectual labour of the scholar, which it casts as detective work: the blurb on the cover reads 'Part detective story, part art history lesson, part cautionary tale, and entirely funny'. *Headlong*'s appeal might be compared to that of Jonathan Harr's *The Lost Painting: The Quest for a Caravaggio Masterpiece* (2005), which brings non-fiction art history into the detective genre by transforming the real authentication and conservation of Caravaggio's *Betrayal of Christ* (National Gallery of Ireland) into a riveting tale of sleuthing and intrigue. The difference is that Clay's library sleuthing is ultimately futile, as it cannot help him to authenticate a picture he cannot see.

Martin Clay's appeal lies in his enthusiasm and his tendency to imagine himself in Bruegel's paintings. Coming home to his wife one day, he pictures their kiss as like that of Bruegel's peasants in the *Wedding Dance* (Detroit). In his dogged pursuit of the painting, he has to contend with – and betray – the women from whom he wants to keep his find and his scheme secret. In the face of his disapproving wife, a 'comparative Christian iconographer' who will become his enabler, he slinks off to the refuge of London libraries and bookstores. Back home, he thinks he can hide his pile of Bruegel books behind his laptop computer, even though he and his wife work across from each other at the kitchen table. He loves his wife and young daughter, but he is so much more in love with Bruegel that he is blind to the havoc he is creating in his life. Clay is not totally oblivious to the wiles of the neighbour's wife; yet, when she gets him, half undressed, in her bedroom, he is only interested in measuring the painting.

He has Bruegel on the brain. When his wife says, 'Martin, listen to me. That picture isn't a Bruegel. I'm sorry – I know how much you want it to be. But it's not.

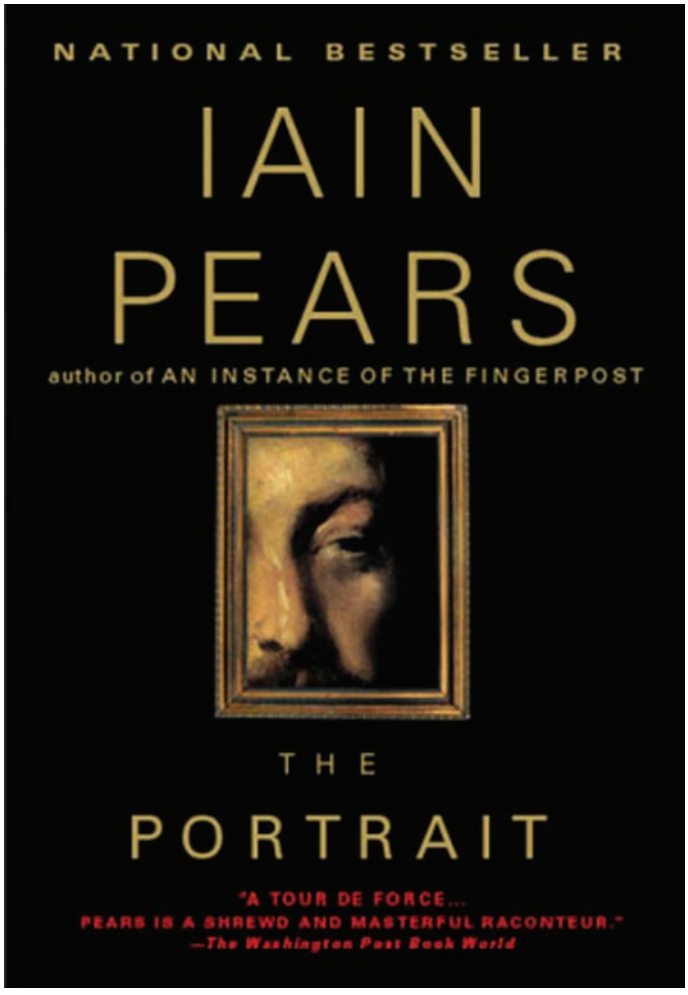
It's truly not', he imagines himself 'as isolated as Saul', in the great *Conversion of St Paul*. 'I'm lying at the side of the Damascus road, felled and blinded by the narrow laser beam from heaven that has sought out me and no one else . . . What none of them [meaning his wife and the rest of mankind] knows is that I shall arise as Paul, and my awkward little fit will have changed the world' (112).

Then, prophetically, he rehearses in his mind the worst case: 'I'm not Saul but Icarus . . . who has flown too near the sun, and who has fallen headlong, . . . unnoticed by the world . . . to disappear ignominiously beneath the waves forever.' The spectre of disastrous failure does not deter him. Unhinged and out of control, he forges on in his Bruegel fantasy world.

Frayn's art historian is a single-mindedly inept and remarkably out-of-touch scholar, whose momentary madness reveals his complete obliviousness to the real world and real art. Part of his scheme involves selling his neighbour's other pictures. When it comes to the art market he has no clue, yet he ends up in central London, circling Christie's with a large Italian baroque painting in a horse trailer. Too bookish for his task, he thinks the answer to his attribution problem lies in his library research into the picture's subject matter and historical context; he never makes the trip to Vienna to look at other paintings in Bruegel's series. Too afraid to show his hand, he never even gets a really good look at the mystery panel. Nor does he get its measurements, so he has no idea whether it is the same size as the others in the series of the months. We do not know if it is the same size. Here is where the novel succeeds: when, at the end, the panel goes up in flames, the reader is left with excruciating uncertainty and despair. Was Clay deluded or on to a brilliant find? Was the panel the right size? We never know.

Treating the artist with ambivalence is nothing new; the nonconforming, creatively engaged individual has long been simultaneously celebrated and suspect. That Chevalier, Vreeland, and Frayn cast their protagonists as home wreckers or, at the very least, deficient on the domestic front may smack of 1950s concepts of what artists do and of contemporary conflicts between work and home life. Yet neglect of family was also a concern in seventeenth-century Holland, witness the pair portraits in which women distract their husbands from their scholarly work.[32] Chevalier's Vermeer heartlessly shuts his family out of his art: '"You and the children are not a part of this world . . . You are not meant to be"' (214). Vreeland's Vermeer is pained by his inattention to family: 'Whenever he approached the completion of a painting he could sense a shameful dread of resuming contact with the realities of hearth and family. His family receded into vagueness when he was deeply at work on a painting, but, between paintings, it advanced into sharp responsibility' (203). However much enabled by his wife, Frayn's Martin Clay is wracked with guilt over the domestic crisis toward which his Bruegel obsession unavoidably hurtles him.

All three novels exhibit a certain ambivalence toward the artist and the work of art, a reflection of the state of art history today. Each shifts attention from the artist, whether to the work of art or to the market, muse, viewer, or scholar; yet none of them can escape the lure of the creative, engaged person. *Headlong*'s hapless but impassioned art historian becomes a picture thief, yet he comes across as positively inspired; it is not without irony that Frayn imparts the mythic engagement of the creator to the destroyer of a Bruegel painting. Revenge for the



4 Cover illustration for paperback edition of Iain Pears, *The Portrait*, New York: Riverhead Books, 2006.

displacement of power from artist to audience and market plays out in former art historian Iain Pears' *The Portrait* (2005, plate 4), a short novel of suspense about a fatal encounter between a reclusive elderly English painter and his sitter, 'the foremost critic in the land', champion of Whistler, Gauguin, Cezanne, van Gogh, 'whose opinion has the weight of the divine behind it'(3). The painter, who has withdrawn to a desolate island off the Brittany coast, sees the visit from his long-time 'friend' as

> An opportunity to renew the battle and fight it to a conclusion. Who will emerge triumphant from this encounter of ours, do you think? The painter or the sitter? Will it be 'portrait of a gentleman by Henry Morris MacAlpine', or 'portrait of William Nasmyth, by anon'. The National Gallery or the National Portrait Gallery? We shall see. It will be your fame against my abilities, and the results won't be in until long after we're both dead (4).

For once, the artist is in control of the critic who has controlled his work and life. He does not let Nasmyth see the painting in progress: 'And no you can't see it.

This isn't a collaboration. I paint; you sit. When you are in that chair you are stripped of your expertise, of your taste and discernment . . . You are defenceless until I am finished' (21). He transforms Nasmyth's chair into a throne and gives him the pose of a pope, 'as painted by Velazquez, to remind everyone of the power that people like you wield in our modern world . . . You change the way people think . . . A great power wielded without check . . . A despotism of the arts in which you are the high priest of the true and the beautiful' (33). MacAlpine imagines his sitter's smirking confession: 'Of course I am a charlatan . . . That is my profession . . . I persuade people to love what they hate, buy what they do not want, despise what they love' (54). And he imagines Nasmyth's assessment of the artist: 'The painter is merely the means by which the critic's ideas take form' (69). In response, he dismisses his sitter: 'I can enter into your soul through the canvas and the paint, and make sense of you better if you are somewhere else . . . Having you here in person is a complete nuisance' (82–3). The painter's lifetime of rage let loose against his critic/mentor/friend, though set circa 1910, is art fiction for our times.

Iain Pears was trained as an art historian. The author of *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680–1768* (1988), which is about the rise of the collector, connoisseur, and critic, he has been an active contributor to the art-historical shift from the work of art as artistic creation to art object as commodity, from art's makers to its consumers.[33] But Pears then opted for the creative side and became a novelist.[34] *The Portrait* consciously plays out the precarious situation – and angered outrage – of the debunked (post-)modern artist whose position and artistic authority have been usurped by the critic. In the three novels discussed here, fiction, though blindfolded and with hands tied, fights back against the commodification of art, debunking of the artist, and demystifying of the creative process, and lashes out against the constraints of scholarship. *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and *Girl in Hyacinth Blue* are, as their titles tell us, about paintings. For all that each narrative appears to buy into the levelling of the artist, each novel ultimately stands up for the emotional impact of the work. Frayn's *Headlong* takes a more jaded, comic look at the power of art. Its title describes not a painting but the frenzy of its protagonist. Here the artist's creative fury is displaced to the amateur art historian who, like Icarus, plays with fire in his headlong pursuit of a painting. In 1999, it seems, the death of the artist had so thoroughly permeated the culture that fiction could resuscitate him only with a dose of delicious irony.

Notes

1 The socio-economic study of Dutch art was pioneered by J. Michael Montias, *Artists and Artisans in Delft: A Socio-Economic Study of the Seventeenth Century*, Princeton, NJ, 1982, and *Vermeer and his Milieu: A Web of Social History*, Princeton, NJ, 1989. A distinctive aspect of the social history of Dutch art has been a focus on the economics of art. The Dutch in the seventeenth century invented new financial systems and it was in Holland that the open market for paintings first developed. Until recently, 'open market' meant little more than that works were made not on commission but on spec. Thanks to the economic historian Montias (and others) we now have a much clearer idea of how exactly paintings were sold in the varied venues – lotteries, dealers, auctions, direct sales – that comprised the open market. However, economics and assumptions about the mercantile motivations of the Dutch have also driven the interpretation of paintings, entire genres of paintings, and artist careers to the extent that the commodifying of Dutch art and artists has become problematic.

2 Thomas A. Harris MD, *I'm OK, You're OK*, New York, 1969, was a best-selling self-help book. Compare Raymond Boudon, *The Poverty of Relativism*, Oxford, 2005.

3 David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Chicago, IL, 1989.

4 Marcel Proust, *Le temps retrouvé*, 4, 474, quoted in Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Art of the Everyday: Dutch Painting and the Realist Novel*, Princeton, NJ, 2008, 192.

5 Yeazell, *Art of the Everyday*, 192.

6 Yeazell, *Art of the Everyday*, xvii.

7 On van Mander, H. Miedema, ed., *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters, from the First Edition of the Schilder-boeck (1603–1604)*, Doornspijk, 1994–96; on Caravaggio, P. Sohm, 'Caravaggio's deaths', *Art Bulletin*, 84, 2002, 449–68; for Jan Steen, H. P. Chapman, 'Persona and myth in Houbraken's life of Jan Steen', *Art Bulletin*, 75, 1993, 135–50. Thirty years ago, it was still widely held that what little (if any) art theory there was in the seventeenth-century Netherlands was recycled from Italy. Investigations into the writings of van Mander (1604), Angel (1642), Hoogstraten (1678), and Houbraken (1718), by Miedema ('Phillips Angel, *Praise of Painting*', trans. M. Hoyle, *Simiolus*, 24, 1996, 227–49), W. Melion (*Shaping the Netherlandish Canon: Karel van Mander's Schilder-boeck*, Chicago, IL, 1991), E. J. Sluijter ('In praise of the art of painting: on paintings by Gerrit Dou and a treatise by Philips Angel of 1642', in *Seductress of Sight: Studies in Dutch Art of the Golden Age*, Zwolle, 2000), C. Brusati (*Artifice and Illusion: The Art and Writing of Samuel van Hoogstraten*, Chicago, IL, 1995), and T. Weststeijn (*The Visible World: Samuel van Hoogstraten's Art Theory and the Legitimation of Painting in the Dutch Golden Age*, Amsterdam, 2008), among others, have helped to identify a distinctly Dutch art theory and artistic self-consciousness. This comes, however, at a time when much scholarship, following current theoretical trends, has written the artist and artistic agency out of the history of Dutch art.

8 Richard E. Spear, 'Artemisia Gentileschi: ten years of fact and fiction', *Art Bulletin*, 82, 2000, 568–79, examines these and other fictional treatments of Artemisia Gentileschi.

9 Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: More to Shakespeare*, Chicago, IL, 1980; John Martin, 'Inventing sincerity, refashioning prudence: the discovery of the individual in Renaissance Europe', *American Historical Review*, December 1997, 1309–42. In the New Historicism of Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, the assumption is that Renaissance people were so shaped by social, political, and cultural tensions that the self was not a self-conscious, autonomous individual but a series of roles or masks that were generated by codes of culture and power. For a compelling critique of Greenblatt's 'view of the self as a cultural artifact, a historical and ideological illusion', see John Martin's analysis of the early modern tendency 'to view the self as an agent or subject in increasingly individualized terms'.

10 Irving Stone, *The Agony and the Ecstasy: A Biographical Novel of Michelangelo*, New York, 1961, 30.

11 Stone, *Agony and Ecstasy*, 115.

12 Mark C. Carnes, ed., *Novel History: Historians and Novelists Confront America's Past (and Each Other)*, New York, 2001.

13 Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919) bases its protagonist British stockbroker Charles Strickland, who escapes from his middle-class world to paint in Tahiti, on the French painter Paul Gauguin. This colonialist fantasy is a morality tale about the destructive swath of selfishness in the name of Art in which the genius's magnum opus is ultimately destroyed.

14 Stone, *Agony and the Ecstasy*, 759. Michelangelo's letters, translated by Charles Speroni, were published as Irving and Jean Stone, eds, *I, Michelangelo, Sculptor: An Autobiography through Letters*, Garden City, New York, 1962.

15 Mary Karr, 'His so-called life', *New York Times*, 15 January 2006.

16 *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, directed by Peter Webber, 2003.

17 For Vermeer, John Michael Montias, *Vermeer and his Milieu*, Princeton, NJ, 1989; on maids in seventeenth-century Holland, see Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, New York, 1987.

18 It is more satisfying to imagine the painting than to see the film, which is so dark and dreary that it brings to mind not sparkling Delft but smoggy Pittsburgh.

19 For the inventory, see Montias, *Vermeer*, 339–44.

20 Montias, *Vermeer*, 134–5, 246–54, 260–2, was first to propose that van Ruijven bought over twenty paintings by Vermeer, probably at the rate of one a year. See also Montias, 'Recent archival research on Vermeer', in Ivan Gaskell and Michiel Jonker, eds, *Vermeer Studies* (*Studies in the History of Art* 55), Washington, 1998, 93–9.

21 For the interpretation of technical studies of Vermeer's paintings, see Arthus K. Wheelock Jr, *Vermeer and the Art of Painting*, New Haven, CT, 1995; E. Melanie Gifford, 'Painting light: recent observations on Vermeer's technique', and Jørgen Wadum, 'Contours of Vermeer', both in Gaskell and Jonker, *Vermeer Studies*, 185–200 and 201–19. For technical analysis of Rembrandt's Paintings, David Bomford et al., *Art in the Making: Rembrandt*, London, 2006; and Ernst van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work*, Amsterdam, 1997. Technical art history made such early and advanced strides in the Netherlands in part because of the Dutch government's long-term funding of the Rembrandt Research Project, the work of which is published in the still incomplete *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, 4 vols, The Hague, 1982– .

22 Wheelock, *Vermeer*, and Walter A. Liedtke, *Vermeer: The Complete Paintings*, New York, 2008. Also Philip Steadman, *Vermeer's Camera: Uncovering the Truth Behind the Masterpieces*, Oxford, 2001.

23 The film provides other correctives. Whereas models pose for days on end in the novel, Vermeer uses a life-size wooden mannequin in the film. See H. Perry Chapman, 'The wooden body: representing the manikin in Dutch artists' studios', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 58, 2008, 189–215.

24 Lawrence Gowing, *Vermeer*, London, 1970.

25 Gerard de Lairesse, *Groot schilderboek: waar in de schilderkonst in al haar deelen grondig werd onderweezen, ook door redeneeringen en printverbeeldingen verklaard*, Amsterdam 1712, trans. *The art of painting: in all its branches, methodically demonstrated by discourses and plates, and exemplified by remarks on the paintings of the best masters; and their perfections and oversights laid open*, trans. J. F. Fritsch, London, 1778, 24.

26 See Joanna Woodall, 'Love is in the air: amor as motivation and message in seventeenth-century Netherlandish painting', *Art History*, 19, 1996, 208–46.

27 Perhaps it is no coincidence that this self-effacing person evokes Vermeer as crafted by Lawrence Gowing and to a certain extent by his own lack of self-portraits.

28 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, New York, 1969, 256–7, 1940.

29 'Aspirational viewer' is my term; for the interpretation of still life as commodity display, see J. B. Hoochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age*, London, 2007.

30 On the Uylenburgh family art business, see Friso Lammertse and Jaap van der Veen, *Uylenburgh & Son: Art and Commerce from Rembrandt to De Lairesse, 1625–1675* (exh. cat. Rembrandthuis Museum and Dulwich Picture Gallery), Zwolle, 2006.

31 Benjamin Binstock, *Vermeer's Family Secrets: Genius, Discovery and the Unknown Apprentice*, New York, 2009, posits that Vermeer's eldest daughter Maria painted some of the pictures now attributed to Vermeer.

32 For example, Jan de Bray's *Abraham Casteleyn and Margarieta van Bancken* (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum).

33 Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680–1768*, New Haven, CT: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 1988.

34 Pears is the author of *An Instance of the Fingerpost*, London, 1998, *The Dream of Scipio*, London, 2002, and the Jonathan Argyll series of art history mysteries: *The Raphael Affair*, London, 1991; *The Titian Committee*, London, 1992; *The Bernini Bust*, London, 1993; *The Last Judgment*, London, 1994; *Giotto's Hand*, London, 1995; *Death and Restoration*, London, 1996; and *The Immaculate Deception*, London, 2000.

8

DANCING YEARS, OR WRITING AS A WAY OUT

ADRIAN RIFKIN

> Spinoza ends up by defining desire as 'self conscious appetite'. But he puts it forward only as a nominal definition of desire, and that consciousness adds nothing to appetite (we do not reach/lean towards a thing because we judge it good, but on the contrary, we judge that it is good because we reach/lean towards it).[1]
>
> Gilles Deleuze, 1981

> There is another happiness also, yes there is an other, I've seen it and you made me feel it. In the air you showed me its lustrous reflections, I have seen the hem of its floating garment sparkle in my gaze.[2]
>
> Gustave Flaubert, 1846

> Stranger than that we're alive . . . [3]
>
> The Incredible String Band, 1968

> For a philosopher the creation of a singular being is an ethical act.[4]
>
> Yve Lomax, 2000

This chapter eventually concerns a piece of my own writing, but rather as if it had been written by someone else, a person to whom I have a privileged biographical and archival access. Thus it sets out to mimic the problematic of much cultural-historical or critical writing that arises from how we understand the tensions between the author and the text, but here by setting it up as if it were not the kind of problem that it has turned out to be. Or, more precisely as it has become – a doxa or a procedural and limiting trope of critical writing; a doxa, for example, concerning the end of the Cartesian subject. Here no longer a problem, but a play, in enunciation; somewhere, between reaching or leaning towards, and a vision of a happiness towards which, as was the case of Gustave Flaubert, we might fear to reach.

Some years ago, when I began to realize that the archive, in the more limited and technical sense of being a series of organized historical records, more often than not, and too easily, gave me what I was looking for, I decided that it was an interesting departure to make things up. Either I had had a 'nose' for a good series of dossiers, or I was very thorough or I just had good luck – the box, found in the

Archives Nationales, on gay sailors in Toulon circa 1929, for *Street Noises*, was a case in point.[5] It had to exist in one form or another for a major navy town in the period; that much one could predicate from fiction and reportage. And I needed it to authenticate what I felt it was already obvious to say about homosexuality and class difference, but which I wanted badly to 'prove'. To the best of my knowledge, and only sometime after my examination of it, I realized that the dossier had possibly been consulted once before, but then merely plundered for some photographs and not referenced at all. So it was a find. This is one of the processes that we call research, the well-tried model of 'seek and you will find . . . ', the seeking comfortably pushed along by research questions – and its results duly revealed. Yet, some of my best discoveries, the ones that most satisfied my desire to underpin certain guesses, once satisfied, I kept to myself and never tried to publish even though this meant leaving some assertion in its speculative state. And perversely, in a research culture dominated by the commodity-notion of 'output', their privacy is all the more treasured.[6]

But clearly enough when 'research questions' – and this is one way of thinking about disciplinary development over the last three decades – come to be framed first and foremost through a theoretically abstract take on what it is to ask a question and what it means to look, then the outcome, while nonetheless serendipitous, also questions the value of such empirical confirmation, which itself is inextricable from a topology of knowledges. More often than not in the kind of historical work with which I was engaged the evidence is so complex, if it is taken to include textual reading in the post-Kristevan sense as well as inferential criticism, a notion of *différance* in terms of any sign or set of signs, or of a dispositif, then the field of speculation is wide open at each level of procedure rather than an outcome in itself;[7] to speculate alone makes proper sense, to speak out of a grounding so protean in its densities as to carry forward their potential into the archive as the next form of a question rather than as a response, as something anyway made up or like a ready-made, a constellation perhaps. Or, as Gayatry Spivak made so compelling in her *Rani of Sirmoor* or her more comprehensive *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, research and its theory are a reflexive practice of imbricated procedures and affective histories, political and sexual investments and so forth.[8] Again we could take the exacerbated element of singularity in Jacques Rancière's discoveries of being given to see in poetry or image or film, in which the degree of singularity and theoretical acuity excite and defeat one another at the same time. Each act of theoretical perception is sui generis, yet sustains an argument that is itself nothing but a making visible of an aesthetic and political possibility of seeing, of enunciation, of liberty.

These are combinations of relations that always imply some kind of undoing as their result, an un-proving or a dissolution, a looking away. Strange then that in contemporary research bids the speculative should be only one pathway, and then the exception, and required to be declared as such. After all it is nearly a century since the philosopher C. D. Broad wrote:[9]

> It seems to me that the main value of Speculative Philosophy lies, not in its conclusions, but in the collateral effects which it has, or ought to have, on the persons who pursue it. The speculative philosopher is forced to look at the world synoptically, and anyone who does not do this at some time in his life is bound to hold a very narrow and inadequate idea of Reality.[10]

And even this is far from being as 'radical' as Aby Warburg's discipline, which, as we have become accustomed to say, 'exists but without a name . . . '; in which already, decades earlier, a form of unending inadequation had become the driving force of enquiry and reflection.[11] (Better by far to think of this as a name with-out a discipline.) When I first read the *Serpent Ritual* in its primitive, 1938 version by Gertrud Bing, in the late 1960s, it seemed perfectly normal, given that the intellectual fervour of the moment was directed to the recent translation of Claude Lévi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind*.[12] I can now see this conjunction served to efface the *Serpent*'s historical and enduring craziness as a non-disciplinary thing, teetering on the edges of Western self-consciousness.[13] The clumsy hostility that Ernst Gombrich shows for the subject of his *Aby Warburg, an Intellectual Biography*, which turns his title itself into crudest oxymoron, only emphasized Warburg's intoxication as the happier guide to action – an intoxication since dampened by the superior accuracy of the 'authoritative' edition of the piece. As Philippe-Alain Michaud suggests in his *Aby Warburg et l'mage en mouvement*, in Warburg's writing, as I find with Immanuel Kant in his discussion of the sublime, the amazement of the text is not its argument – but that it hacks its way from one point to another at all – again, the intoxication of our reading![14]

In such a culture of speculative writing, are the beliefs of Warburg and Freud analogous in respect of the returning or continual existence of affects and cultural forms of feeling as the grounds on which we build the 'civilized', but only on condition that thought still lives in the enigma of what we have repressed? One answer is obviously; they parallel one another. A second is that it is always too late to know this, to turn out to have read them, or any other texts, or to have seen or heard or connected things in the 'right' order: the proper text of the Serpent Ritual can never speak to me more or 'better' than did Bing's.[15] And in this sense it's hard to finish with anything, least of all to let go that moment for which I was so unprepared. (Ironically Marxism, which was so much a part of the way we prepared to deal with the world, least of all encouraged us to be unprepared. Little of that here; the tracings of this chapter are only fragments of the picture. But it is worth noting that the ultra-Hegelian side of intellectual Marxism was a happy match for the manoeuvrings of an Aby Warburg or an Edgar Wind, as much as a new Nietzschianism was to be soon after.)

So speculation is little other than the natural value of the question. If luck or hard work turn out to have diminishing returns, then we are saved precisely by this collapse of question and the finding – the found is the form of a question not an outcome. 'Find and you shall seek' – to appropriate the famous formulation of Picasso and Lacan, so aptly elaborated by the latter in his critique of the very idea of research, his insistence that Freud did not look for the unconscious, but that he did anyway discover it. For Lacan it was as if to have found (which I take to derive an aspect of its meaning from the Latin *reperire*, and so to have something to do with a range of things, an address book or lists, sublime stupidity in the mode of Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet*) is thought's obligation.[16] Reversing the normative axiom may seem slight enough, but even just to begin with it engrosses the immense difference between the inductive and the deductive, and in that alone comes to look like an antidote to the protocol of research questions and speculative quasi certainties that are the peer culture of our time. At the same time it also opens a space within histories of intellectual process that have become rather

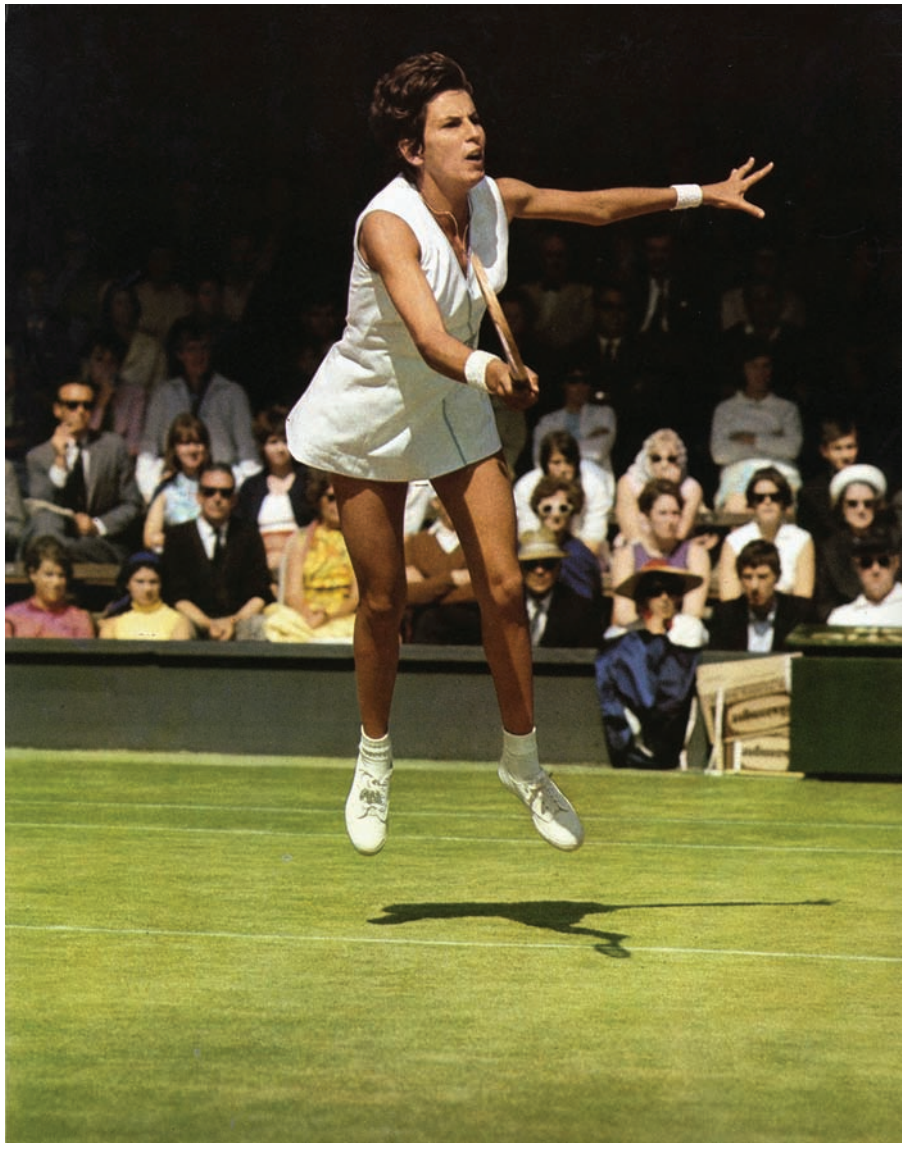
a routine of difference between more or less radical models – such as connoisseurship vs *Wissenschaft*.[17] In privileging the more modest axis of naming and of inference over speculation, the finding merely adequate names for objects, we drift into a vaster dimension of invention, disclosing in this apparent loss a relative liberty. That is to say the purposeless aporetics of drift, the drift that, for example, came between Walter Benjamin and the 'completion' of his *Passagenwerk*. After this we can see how it is that when his angel looks upon the ruins of history, it is us whom (s)he regards.[18]

Moreover this work of trying to find a name for some (possible) minimal level of material, for an only part-symptom, has the huge advantage of delivering us from the travails of the interdisciplinary – of the genre visual culture, for example. In taking any question from its inside before it has a title that predicts the combination of methodologies that in itself is a freezing up it leaves open the space of aporia rather than the answer, the time of deferred action rather than that of finality, the outside. You could say that this is the material practice of not having origin; only a starting point that will turn out to have been without a necessary significance, from the beginning, other than what it had seemed to be as such; no point of return that can be valued as such. 'What if' I were to shape something, an object, and to call it this or that, especially if naming it causes it to fall apart through the dis-function of the name? What if – having found some thing – I were then to lose (forget) it? I have only to introduce the verb 'to lose' as a 'research criterion' and a poetics of research condenses on its protocols: the thetic cut, the murmur of the pre-semiotic, forgetfulness, fix the searching gaze on the absence of its object. It's difficult to show what one has lost. Nonetheless I will proceed as if all were lost, but as if it is I who am found (remembered), procuring and procured (supine of *reperire, repertum*, or a gerundive). But I am not a seismograph, nor shaken; only found out, disclosed a little to myself. (Style victim.) The archive remains the next thing, not before, the spilled baggage of having found, and lost.

While I have begun with an approach to some rather general reflections concerning argument and methodology in the history of art and some of the humanities, I want now to set them aside. I find that by now they are, apart from the matter of losing, banal enough. They are part of a lingua franca, though no less difficult for having become so, and all the more in need of re-thinking – a glance at the argument of Arnold Hauser's *The Philosophy of Art History* (1959) or Herbert Read's *The Meaning of Art* (1931) is enough to touch the longevity of this discourse in something like our generational time. Rather I want to set out anew from the notion of liking or a preference, of liking art or preferring one kind of art or work of art to another so much that one wants to write about art, to work on it or with it. I want to find the beginnings of something I will call a freedom and even an equality of value in arriving at the moment of a desire to work rather than from a predictive theory. For, in our subject, it is as well to admit that when it all began, then it began with a leaning and, in particular, a leaning towards the most mytho-maniacally driven cultural form of a spectacle-society. Vicente Minelli's *Lust for Life* came out when I was eleven, *An American in Paris* when I was six. Picasso was one of the most famous people in the world, even more so than Grace Kelly. When Mark Rothko killed himself in 1970 he was, according to *Time*, the richest artist who had ever lived – a record Picasso beat by several hundred per cent three years later.

1 Gerard David, *The Judgment of Cambyses*, 1498. Oil on wood, 202 × 172.8 cm, Bruges: Groeninge-museum. Photo: Giraudon/The Bridgeman Art Library.

So if I, for example, as an adolescent, much preferred looking at Flemish painting of the fifteenth century to watching Wimbledon on the TV, this must have been a preference that was and remains necessarily a complex enunciation of whatever had been socially or sexually or politically possible.[19] Constantly, I think, one sees before one is ready, and becomes ready at the price of forgetting what had been given to see; and there is no means of attributing a proper order to this processual effect, which has sometimes an instructive, analogical relation to trauma, and its figuring and resolutions in the time of deferred action. Given to see – the writer of fictions, Marcel Proust was in *La prisonnière*, and through the



2 Unknown photographer, *Maria Bueno*, *c.* 1962.

eyes of the dying Bergotte, given to see and record the 'petit pan de mur jaune' in Vermeer's *View of Delft*, something I myself have been unable to find in the painting. This too is an involuntary complexity of art history, of how the visible is given, of the networks and surfaces where we find ourselves, and the mismatching between what we know (see) and what we are supposed to see (know).[20]

Nonetheless what was seen, or could have been seen, may be recovered by many means – diaries, archives, in web galleries or personal websites – and reduced to a matter of the record. The two images below are ones that I came across the one quite soon after the other, in this order, in 1962, and I could archivally demonstrate it; Gerard David, Easter in Bruges, Maria Bueno,

Wimbledon week in London – though then only on a black and white TV, and only in movement. What remains of these, as well as what may have become of me, I may never know, nor need to know. But it is waiting (supine) to know that activates the deferred time of what Warburg called the 'pathos formula', as distinct from being able to say that *was* indeed it, this image had that effect (studium/punctum – it was a mistake to have thought the studium and the punctum were concepts or even tools). Waiting (alive) rather than the specific survival of an affect-figure from an ancient culture or its intertwining with one from another, as with the snakes – the Pueblo cultures and Hermes, or the rag directing water in a Parisian gutter as with Georges Didi-Huberman.[21] Well over a century after Warburg came across his notion – it belongs to the nineteenth century and an upper-class education gone astray in ethnography – the classical seems not only a lot further away but less than ever urgent in the current global economies of culture. If the classical survival becomes a figure of or for something now, a fluttering or a moment of Orphic (Eurydicean) disappearance, then it is insofar as we can imagine it as a before, as an emptiness that lends a name to something now – in a restaging that can but be contingent and singular. And anyway, it is a mode of attachment to some past, not the haunting of one kind of past, that counts, even if that past is recent, or only imagined to have happened.

So, what was there in these two images? The all-too caring and attentively administered torments of the victim in Gerard David's *Judgement of Cambyses* remain very close to me (see plate 1). It has been one of my favourite paintings since I first set eyes on it. And the lesser travails of Maria Bueno for her Wimbledon championship have all but vanished, although I watched most of her matches in charmed amazement (see plate 2). Anyway, this outcome is not bad running in a consumer society, I became an art historian, and never gave spectator sport another thought. I can't make a virtue of this, there are plenty of people who have done both, or who glimpsed an attainable happiness on the centre court; all I can insist is that this was a focused and an exclusive leaning, nominal.

Moreover looking now for the first time at these images, side by side, I can see that a possible irony in this exaggerated claim to have become a specialist is that in turning away from one, the tele-visual, towards the other – a painting then rather lost in a little-visited Belgian museum, I had also turned my back on the fluttering of fabric of the surviving nymph, and so from the image-movement that it makes visible. Unaware, inevitably, that the hem caught in movement by the technology of time, would eventually become one major figure of a discipline in rethinking; even if this is more often than not a dark figure of anxiety and loss, rather than one of 'another happiness', which is a different model of anxiety. Bueno, trapped between her shadow and her own concentration on the unseen ball, in colour at least, belongs with the stills from Douglas Sirk's *The Imitation of Life* that are disclosed by Laura Mulvey in her discussion of cinema's iteration of death, another, filmic tissue of impossible survival.[22] Goya's print proffers mediation, though at the risk of carrying me into something more sombre, overcharged with fatality for the path that I am uncovering here (plate 3).

I share with Jacques Rancière, in his *Destin des images*, 'intolerance' of a contemporary discourse on art marked by its 'inflated use of the notion of the

3 Franciso Goya, plate 20 from *Tauromaquia*, 1815. London: British Museum.Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

unrepresentable and a constellation of allied notions: the unpresentable, the unthinkable, the untreatable, the unredeemable ... surrounding them all with the same aura of holy terror.'[23] This is a phenomenon that I see as the naturalizing, in academic discourse, of a post-Heideggerian mode of feeling through a contemporary form of 'purple prose', a frustrated longing for anxiety that John Mowitt has also discussed in his essays on trauma, speaking of 'the troubling contemporary tendency to displace the political with the ethical'.[24] Evidently, then, one of the things I most dread in the writing of art history and criticism is the dithyramb, the clumsy athleticism of exalted prose, the rush of ontologically laden anxiety that more often than not asks of even the most complex or difficult of images an order of response that no image need make; the projection of the writer's actual or rhetorically assumed burden as a character of the image as other, or as ego ideal – either in an individual poesis or a wider field of political or religious agency and argument which is a different kind of object. Of course this is one fate of art as the form of a relation, or as a symptom in the random precipitation of affect; and if it repels me, then that too is my problem, a symptom of my own and, anyway, I am not free from it, nor do I wish to be.

The coming together of these three images suggests a cure, for it is an opening, nothing more; though it does open to a politics of thought that objectifies, in the best way, the idealized subjectivity that has shaped it as a fulcrum of reflection.

At the same time, what was that fluttering if it is not a movement of the self, a moment of its forming, a movement denied, half-felt, provisionally unnamed, for

which a theory might find it a provisional name – a survival, an Orphic instability? In remaining with the David, am I in some way not lost in my fidelity to that affect, the frozen loincloth that hardly flutters nor dares to stir, stilled by the exquisite and patient butchery of the flayers as well as Saint Augustine's terror of the penis's unruly movement in his *City of God*?[25] In either image the event is frozen by the spectators, caught in their regard, and by the freezing power of strain and effort, the forked legs different forms of an abstraction of the processes that variously bring the images into vision.[26] The being beside oneself of pain and effort, the disinterested and professional attention of the flayers, the fluttering of the high noon shadow and the red garment beneath the table, demand and offer a model for attention; the attention of the flayers to the dynamics of skin, the eye to the unseen, moving ball; these between them can model a future history of art, while the space beside the self, the gap, should be of its undoing or critique. I would like to name this gap the feminine or the queer, for as long as these terms will stick, as long as they point to this critical potential of being beside oneself.[27]

I would like to slip between these images, like one of Doris Lessing's Canopean agents in her *Shikasta* space-fiction slips between his universal time and a human embryo, and so watch me from within the image. The shadow in Goya's bullfight, merging man and beast into one new but transient and immaterial creature, does this, generating a series of outsides that belong to each other only here, contingently, shading and unsettling the spectator in the brilliance of the sunlight. Two men in a video, *Three Months* (2004) by David Haines act out an Internet sex-chat as if the chat room were a material place, and material fakes the virtual. It is Lessing, Goya or Haines who undo my own speculation and its work, they who push me towards making something up. It was out of envy for such writing, as for art itself, that I find an impulse to do some work, to make something up. I put what I most wanted to say behind a pseudonym or into a little fragment of fiction where the characters could speak as they wished, make mistakes, live in error without guilt.[28]

Seen at such an angle there is, I guess, no other form of scholarship so undermined by its constitutive irrationality as this history of art, which embraces as if a sufficient truth the substances of its self-invention; and in this respect the development of classificatory or hermeneutic systems from connoisseurship to the social history of art, psychoanalytic models or phenomenology might all be seen as attempts to establish a 'public' sphere of discourse, the translation of a leaning into a common cause or understanding. All of this is difficult to negotiate, as taste or leaning is what precisely is disputed or repressed even as it is foundational.[29] How can I entrust myself to the philosopher of my incipit – a philosopher who expects so much from an artist I frankly dislike? Deleuze on Francis Bacon neither convinces me of Bacon's value nor of Deleuze as a philosopher of art, though his essay on Gérard Fromanger I greatly admire. Or how can I sustain my affection for a friend who is moved by Bill Viola or admires Jeff Wall, but who cannot see that, on the contrary, Vicente Minelli's *Some Came Running* (1958) is a great work of art, probably and precisely because neither critique nor emotion are its material nor its objective? To close the space between levels of philosophical significance and the obsessions of the movie buff is at least to recall the disagreement out of which agreement thrives.

Then it is straightforward enough to see that much the same applies to the writing of art history as to art, to the leanings of the writer as of the reader; and that this implies a history of art-historical writing that is a part of more general literary history on the one hand, theoretically strung out perhaps between Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes and Erich Auerbach, and also specifically and constitutively fissured by the difference between 'judging good because' and 'leaning towards', reconciled through an agreement of ethical or political commonality à la David Hume. Indeed the linking of Foucault, Barthes and Auerbach is useful in that it overlaps the critique of the author and the concept of a regime with the thinking of figural writing. If the latter might be understood as one aspect of both deferred action and of *nachleben*, of the waiting for a reoccurrence that is the form of a becoming new, the first two draw us to a general theoretical and political understanding of the conditions out of which we effect this appropriation and reflect upon it. Now, for example, Warburg might stand in a relation to our future much as the prophet Isaiah had for the once uncharted future of Christianity after the Gospels and Saint Paul. In the recent thinking of Griselda Pollock, for example, I would suggest that it is through her understanding of Warburg as a form of the outside that we can recognize his writing as being inside the Kristevan concept of the feminine, doubly disabused of the promises coming to be a subject; a concept of the feminine that she can now reinscribe within feminism itself as a 'pure' relation to the dominant. Warburg in a sense foretells the work of undoing that will have become the substance of feminist art history today and after our own time.[30] The epistemological loss that is conjured from Warburg's catastrophe, understood as its premonitory vector, is that of woman's thought, restituted in the anachronistic act of overwriting him. Another important instance of such a process is Paul Vandenbroeck's exhibition at the Palais de Beaux Arts in Brussels, *Azetta, l'art des femme berbères* (2000). Here the palimpsest of architecture, in Zaha Hadid's design, Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger's psychoanalytic thinking of the feminine, in part inscribed as ghostly slogans on the walls, and an astonishing scholarship of the objects, the Berber weavings, invented a new figure of interiority as if it were really visible in the museum space.

Hypostatized as authors, we write on the surface that we call a discipline, and which persists as a history of art after all its upheavals and the emergence of so many interdisciplines. But this surface is a topology in which closeness and distance, presence and absence interchange, concealing and revealing the shifting relativities of difference, and the art of writing is its navigation. Arguably circumlocution, periphrasis and its semi-colons, moving around image, theory and modes of writing all at once – these are always more complex than the dithyrambic.[31] They draw out surfaces to which differing densities of connection, explication or commentary can hold and form as surface; surface on which parallel lines may be invisible the one to the other but which, in the oxymoron of mathematical possibilities, sometimes cross or touch; arguably this is the space of finding.[32]

I take this particularity, singularity, arbitrariness, endlessness, as being a disciplinary strength. It is for all of this that art history is especially apt to political appropriation, as we can see in its many contemporary configurations, and it is in part the urgency of such demands that has made it both a valuable and a contended field of study. If the famed and thornily undecidable 'autonomy of art'

adds up to anything as a concept, in these days, then it is in part due to the way in which art is available to all of these appropriations – that it can be both addressed and made to speak. So why not make things up; to allow figures of urgency to emerge, spaces of liberty which regain these qualities from the suffocation of protocol? Yet the section of my book on Ingres that I did make up, the queer parable of *The High Window*, turned out, without my having noticed it, to contain something already made up, but not by me – a history of art that begins with Vasari and that I thought I had set aside in my invention, but was a reoccurrence on the surface that I completely overlooked. Yet it was before my eyes, and I guess that the overlooking happened because I was not trying to look, but rather to look reflexively at what we call the gaze, in this case a gay gaze, and to generate an anachronism that would disclose this gaze as a relation to the image rather than as an aspect of it.

One function of parable is to deploy what is readily recognized in a narrative that has slid away from simple recognition (studium), so that you either get it or you don't. It is not easy to quote from parable for it readily fragments into nonsense, and, according to the *Robert historique*, its Greek roots happily merge with an Indo-European syllable that also gave rise to ballare, to dance.[33] All I had wanted to be understood from the parable I set out to write was that it is idle to expect too much of an image and, at the same time, this longed for excess may go unnoticed. As Paolo Berdini puts it, writing of painting that takes parable as its subject matter, 'How do beholders recognise an image or ordinary life as a religious image?' (62),[34] and in *The High Window* I set out to substitute 'theory' or 'historiography' for the word 'religious'. The 'excursus and parable' is an everyday story of gay life, it even has an element of reportage, but it turns away from the idea that any image has a specifically and exclusively gay subject, a male nude, a young man with lipstick displaying grapes or bitten by a lizard, or whatever. Instead it pretends that if we don't look, but only see or allow ourselves to be seen, the excess that touches us will be made out of interleaving affects that we cannot simply determine within the field of the visible.

The *pathosformel* is so thought as being something to do with the splitting of the subject in perception and in the gaze of the other, which can invade the substance of a work of art or of a set of social relations, and so bring them into being together in such a way that we can speculate on how they might interact; to imagine that, amongst other things, and at a certain moment, a gay singularity might be thought. This is not verifiable, for while it is derived from the exploration of substantial archives, these are of incommensurable qualities and essentially anachronous; but it is not in this much different from the vast body of art writing that uses the unit 'it is' more often than not to objectify a feeling, a supposition or the rigorous study of a theoretical model. I take it that catachresis is the very breath of our discourse. The two points of light in Ingres' *M Bertin* (1832, Paris: Musée du Louvre) and the curious squinting of the cruising gaze touch one another as quite particular embodiments of an episteme of uncertainty, and in this the everyday life of text is restored to a desiring body on the one hand and the aporetics of making an image as a material practice on the other.

This I take as a perfectly if quixotically post-Warburgian move, the more so as it is animated by a desire for liberty, a freedom from the qualifications of the disciplinary procedures which we have invented and in which we enchain

ourselves within the institution. If then it was urgent to escape from philology or the connoisseur, here it is to evade alike social history as well as deconstruction, the critique of the Cartesian subject and the notion of the performative: a utopian fantasy. After all it is hard to argue that these mark the shape of a rising curve of civilization, unless they are assimilated, forgotten and turned into a common speech that enables them to be remembered as what might be said rather than what must. Also it may well be that, as is my case, a book like Berenson's *The Sense of Quality: Study and Criticism of Italian Art* (1901) or some other piece of villainy, was once a text that served to animate desire – though I believe that I once found an art-historical collection truly without interest![35] We have learned that the relation between a political argument and its objective, for a form of equality, or against exploitation, depends upon the relative standing of a type of argument, on shifting tactical values and not on an essential quality. And if at some point, now for instance, the theory of the performative impedes the performance of contradictoriness, of critical contariety or of finding, then it becomes just another gloomy academic routine. It was because of these considerations that I came to see Ingres as an artist who, haunted by his own resistance to the proprieties he desired, acted out such scenarios; and then I became increasingly attached to his painting, resting with it all these years as a ground for thinking about more than art or its histories. To my surprise it returns to me the iterated shock of that hope for a critical dissolution of social norms that I guess we envisaged in the 1960s. And though enthralment has settled into leaning, I must resist making Ingres over into judgement.

Anyway, if the parable concerned wanting too much, and set out to show that tiny details, two points of light, are *signifiant* in a way that the image as a social and a formal whole is not, and open out to more fields of knowing, then it was through one of these that Vasari returned. For the high window, the reflection in the arm of M. Bertin's chair is, and we probably all know this, the same reflection as that in the pommel of Pope Leo X's chair in Raphael's portrait of him – on which Vasari commented with delight.[36] It is the same reflection as the one Ingres had already included on the pommel of Napoleon's throne in the coronation portrait. At the exhibition 'Citizens and Kings', held at the Royal Academy in London in 2007, where Napoleon enthroned hung facing the entrance and M. Bertin in glory at the end, these two reflections in effect inaugurated and concluded our viewing; a display concerning state and civic relations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was, whatever its objective, framed by a Vasarian concept of the history of art. My parable turned back on me as one that now intimated the problem of wanting too little of the image, or too much of the detail or the name.

Ingres, it now seemed to me, in making this reflection twice, was living in a practice of painting for which light comes neither from a window nor from other paintings, but from the history of art, as a pure convention of transmission; it passes through him, he reflects and refracts it in the present, captures an afterlife; and in this sense the portrait of M. Bertin is a lightless painting, a blacker painting than either Kasimir Malevich or Ad Reinhardt were eventually to make, even though Ingres is historically stranded within the paradigm of representation.[37] At the same time, for me, another anxiousness now transcended the question that had troubled me of the coexistence of different forms of light in

M. Bertin, the conventional and the natural, as if there were no difference between them and as if I had to resolve this oxymoron by writing it out, in transmitting it. This new feeling probably concerns the nature of compulsion and repetition as modes of finding. But if this is important, then incompletion returns as an objective for my work.

Notes

This chapter is the rather abstract version of a much larger project that tries to map the connections between seeing and leaning, so as to speak, almost as if their relations were as vast a topography as a structural anthropology of myth. It arrives at the end of a year and a half of being in Art Writing as a practice of teaching, and is enabled by the work of friends and colleagues who have already long since taken this direction, Yve Lomax, Irit Rogoff and Carol Mavor spring to mind, mapped onto half-forgotten readings of *Tel Quel* before I had any idea what it was. If it plays fast and loose with, amongst many thinkers, Deleuze and Rancière, it is not because I am not indebted to the immense scholarship that has come into being around their work, studies of the visible, of democracy, of singularity, of being beside oneself, for example. It is because I want to capture certain moments of thinking as if they were just points from where I might have set out. At the same time I wanted this work to be specifically art historical, and this required me to tighten its frame. Even then I wanted to start over again with the development of a new hybrid object made up out of a Breughel (*The Massacre of the Innocents*, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 1565–67), Ingres (*The Duke of Alba in St Gudule*, Montauban, Musée Ingres, 1815) and the *Master of the Saint Ursula Legend* (Groeninge Museum, Brugge, 1475–85) as memories of the present, but that will come next. The point of the final project is that the image will always be theory, and everything said will set out from an image.

1 Gilles Deleuze in *Spinoza, philosophie pratique*, Paris, 1981(2004), 32 [my translation]. 'Il arrive à Spinoza de définir le désir comme "l'appétit avec conscience de lui-même". Mais il précise seulement qu'il s'agit d'une définition nominale du désir, et que la conscience n'ajoute rien à l'appétit ("nous ne tendons pas vers une chose parce que nous la jugeons bonne, mais au contraire nous jugeons qu'elle est bonne parce nous tendons vers elle").'

2 Gustave Flaubert, *Correspondance*, 1, 1830–1851, édition présentée, établie et annotée par Jean Bruneau, Paris, 1973, letter to Louise Colet of 13 August 1846, 298 [my translation]. 'Il y a aussi un autre bonheur, oui il y en a un autre, je l'ai vu, tu me l'as fait sentir. Tu m'as montré dans l'air ses reflets illuminés, j'ai vu chatoyer à mes regards le bas de son vêtement flottant.'

3 The Incredible String Band, 'Job's Song' in *Wee Tam*, Elektra, 1968.

4 Yve Lomax, *Writing the Image*, London, 2000, 181.

5 Adrian Rifkin, *Street Noises: Parisian Pleasure 1900–1940*, Manchester, 1993, in Chapter 4, 'Neighbouring states, soldiers and sailors'.

6 Mainly these have concerned the tension between the textual elucidation of a document and its historical framing and my reluctance to reveal an archival proof of a speculative reading to colleagues who doubted or refused a textual methodology in the first instance.

7 By this I refer to a field of knowledges, but one to which I have assimilated myself in a specific way. The processes of thinking and investigation that include Mikhail Bakhtin, Tzvetan Todorov and Julia Kristeva's understanding of the dialogic, the textual, the intertextual and the choric, suppose an archive that is constantly inferred anew with each interpretative move between words and images, feeling and methodologies, reactions and their unravelling, and their summation remains Kristeva's *La Révolution du langage poétique. L'avant-garde à la fin du XIXe siècle, Lautrèamont et Mallarmé*, Paris, 1974 and her *Polylogue*, Paris, 1977. Of course the whole adventure of that great journal *Tel Quel* into hyper-structuralism on the one hand and *différance* on the other was crucial and the limit case of this remains Jean Louis Schefer's *Scenographie d'un*

tableau, Paris, 1967 as well as his subsequent renunciation of his book. For a discussion of this see my article 'From structure to enigma, and back, perhaps', *The Journal of Visual Culture*, 4, 3, December 2005, 365, note 381.

8 Gayatry Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Rani of Sirmur: an essay on reading the archives', *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*, 24, 3, 1985, 247–2. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, Cambridge, MA and London, 1999.

9 The terms of submission for grants from Arts and Humanities Research Council can be found on its website. The plight of practice-based research is especially dire, but, by implication so is that of other research, which is improperly constituted as if not a practice. For Broad see www.ditext.com/broad/bybroad.html. For Georges Didi-Huberman see his *Ouvrir Vénus*, Paris, 1999, 27.

10 *Contemporary British Philosophy: Personal Statements* (First Series), ed. J. H. Muirhead, London, 1924, 77–100.

11 Didi-Huberman in his generally important book on Warburg, *L'image survivante, histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg*, Paris, 2002, is insistent on his own hero's having preceded Freud and the *Traumdeutung* in his conception of image and time. But I see no point at all in this play of precedence in the context of deferred action as an historical time, as to do so undermines the very point. Nor can I feel happy with the excessive investment in the personality of Warburg as seismograph, ontologizing him as a symptom of his times in a way that collapses the life and the work as a single text. See also Giorgio Agamben, *Image et mémoire*, Paris, 1998, for his 1984 text here entitled 'Aby Warburg et le science san nom', translated by Marco dell' Omodarme.

12 Aby Warburg, 'A lecture on serpent ritual', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 2, 4, April 1939, 326–45 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, London, 1966.

13 See Sigrid Weigel, 'Aby Warburg's schlangenritual: reading culture and reading written texts', trans. Jeremy Gaines and Rebecca Wallach *New German Critique*, 65, Spring-Summer 1995, 135–53.

14 Philipp Alain Michaud, *Aby warburg et l'image en movement*, preface Georges Didi-Huberman, Paris, 1998. E. H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography*, Oxford, 1970.

15 Aby Warburg, *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*, trans. Michael P. Steinberg, Ithaca, NY and London, 1997.

16 In the opening passages of Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire livre XI, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, Paris, 1973, 12.

17 See Karen Lang's fine study, *Chaos and Cosmos: On the Image in Aesthetics and Art History*, Ithaca, NY and London, 2006. Her brief discussion of positivism, around pages 182–6 is useful here. Also Weigel et al.: 'In turning to the hybrid book that was published as *Schlangenritual*, it is not my intention to bring together various isolated insights yielded by the different disciplines' viewpoints of it mentioned above. Such an approach, adding up individual scholarly aspects, may be customary today. This approach likes to go by the name of ''interdisciplinary research'', particularly when addressing financial sponsors.' See Weigel, 'Aby Warburg's schlangenritual', 137.

18 See O.K. Werckmeister, 'Walter Benjamin's angel of history, or the transfiguration of the revolutionary into historian', *Critical Inquiry*, 22, 2, Winter 1996, 239–67 for an understanding gloss on this by now sadly exaggerated figure of cultural theory.

19 For an earlier gloss on this in the development of my concerns see my essay on Jacques Rancière written for his Colloque de Cerisiy, May, 2004, 'JR Cinéphile', in *La philosophie déplacée, Autour de Jacques Rancière*, Paris, 2006, 371–8, and available on my site, www.gai-savoir.net/now.html. A slightly adjusted version appears in *Parallax*, 52, 2009.

20 Sigrid Weigel, 'The symptomatology of a universalized concept of trauma: on the failing of Freud's reading of Tasso in the trauma of history', trans. Georgina Paul, *New German Critique*, 90, Autumn 2003, 85–9.

21 See Georges Didi-Huberman, *Ninfa moderna: essai sur le drapé tombé*, Paris, 2002.

22 Laura Mulvey, *Death 24 × a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, London, 2006. See Chapter 8, 'Delaying cinema'.

23 Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliott, London and New York, 2007, 109 [translation modified].

24 See above note 19 for my citation of Rancière and see also John Mowitt, 'Trauma and its cultural aftereffects', *Cultural Critique*, 46, Autumn 2000, 272–97.

25 See Monique Schneider, *Généalogie du masculin*, Paris, 2000, 246.

26 See Brett Rothstein's fine essay on this painting, 'Looking the part: ruminative viewing and the imagination of community in the early modern Low Countries', *Art History*, 31, 1, 137–8.

27 My interest in this intensely discussed notion of 'beside oneself' which cuts across all kinds of theories of the subject from the religious to the psychoanalytic as well as anti-psychoanalytic aspects of Deleuze really came to me in wondering about the relation between the back and the front of some canvases by David Pearce and my thinking about this through St John of the Cross. It came rather differently from the occupation of generating hybrid images, in which the combination of a painting by Mattia Preti and a poem by Wilfred Owen sent me off on the track of an idea of the dejected-masculine. As becomes more common, the theoretical elaboration reappeared through the found or made-up object. The David Pearce essay, originally as 'Putting-off, the painter's tense & some

speculations on gay time', *parallax*, 5, 1, 1999, 103–19, is at gai-savoir.net/then.html – 'Putting Off'. See also Schneider, *Généalogie*.

28 First there were a couple of pseudonyms who took their inspiration from Carol Duncan's Cheryl Bernstein. There were Sister Mary McGill and then Davida Pendleton, who recently made a comeback in Christopher Bannerman, Joshua Sofaer and Jane Watt, eds, *Navigating the Unknown – The Creative Process in the Performing Arts*, Enfield, 2006, 120. There Davida, whom I believe to be my Jewish and once suburban self, encounters the alter ego of performance artist Richard Layzell, Tanya Koswycz, thus intensifying the exploration of fictional practices and theories in the intertextual. Then followed my 'porno-theories' in which a group of gay men, led by David, commit theoretical errors as sex-acts. The final chapter of my *Ingres Then, and Now*, London, 2001, is the outcome of one of these. The most recent and probably final porno-theory is at www.gai-savoir.net/now.html, Queer Matters.

29 Between Hume's Morals and Kant's concept of taste – classic and inescapable topos of the aporetics of judgement.

30 This is written after hearing her Slade Lectures of 2008 in Cambridge, and particularly looking at the movement between her changing power point images, accumulating and transforming meaning in a complicated palimpsest with the spoken text, something that reminds me of Edgar Wind's seminar slide technique, even if this involved only single, black and white 6×6 slides. See also Margaret Iversen, 'Retrieving Warburg's tradition', in Donald Preziosi, ed., *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, Oxford, 1998, 215–25.

31 My own attempt to push this almost too far is to be found in my article 'Addressing Ekphrasis, or a prolegomena to the next', *The Journal of Classical Philology*, 100, 2007, 72–82.

32 That is to say, topological writing that opens up presents and histories to one another, if only in the moment of the next, the very next phrase. The work of Jean Louis Schefer, who deploys the notion of a surface, exemplifies, again and again, the difference of different works and arts, the uneven relations of the visible and how the split of the leaning and the knowing can be explored. While Rosalind Krauss in her atypical *The Picasso Papers*, Cambridge, MA, 1998, in her mimicry of Picasso's palimpsests, derives a form of history from the details of a gesture. T. J. Clark's in many ways beautiful and fascinating *The Sight of Death, and Experiment in Art Writing*, London, 2006, is successful rather because it is not an experiment than because it is one, as signalled in the title. It carves out a space between Schefer and Krauss, but this space is given by other experiments, by authors who did not see their writing as such; rather it is a departure. Another appealing interlocutor here is Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, *Annexes – de l'oeuvre d'art*, Paris, 1999.

33 *Le Robert Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, ed. Alain Rey, vol. 2, Paris, 1992, 1421.

34 Paolo Berdini, *The Religious Art of Jacopo Bassano: Painting as Visual Exegesis*, Cambridge, 1997, 1–35, for his discussion of parable as method of exegesis.

35 It is this, a pre-1914–18 war collection, *Mélanges offertsà M. Henry Lemonnier, par la Société de l'histoire de l'art français, ses amis et ses élèves*, preface M. Ernest Lavisse, Paris, 1913.

36 It was Pat Rubin in her *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History*, New Haven, CT and London, 1995, who brought me up against this ineluctable immanence. I owe her thanks for setting me off in much of this rethink of Ingres. For a neat conjunction of image and text, see http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/giorgio.vasari/raphael/pic72.htm.

37 I explored this in some detail at a lecture that Marcella Lista invited me to give at the Auditorium du Louvre in March 2006; an mpeg of the lecture is available on the home page of www.gai-savoir.net.

INDEX

Note: Page numbers for illustrations are in **bold type**.